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Constellations of Desire:
The Double & The Other
in the Works of Dante Gabriel & Christina Georgina Rossetti

by
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A Thesis Submitted
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

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Theoreticians of the problem of the other have overlooked a crucial distinction between two competing modes of alterity: The Other, a classic strategy of metaphorical, externalized singularity, and The Double, a modern strategy of metonymical, internalized multiplicity. The discovery of these two modes of alterity untangles many of the difficulties encountered in attempting to reconcile the theories of writers frequently seen as inimical to one another, including Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, Emmanuel Levinas, Sigmund Freud, Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, Edward Said, and Tzvetan Todorov. These two strategic modes enable women and men, artists and writers, to create "constellations of desire"—traditional and non-traditional "imaginary" psychological outlines constructed from the fixed points of reference in our lives—to deal with loss and alterity.
While this paradigm can be profitably applied to many eras of loss, one particularly enlightening local instantiation of the problem occurs in the Victorian era, specifically in the life and works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Christina Georgina Rossetti. The Rossettis fall under the sign of Gemini in the Victorian constellations of desire: brother and sister poets, standing in the same place, they yet face in opposite directions and follow reversed trajectories with reference to their fixed stars of family, faith, and the female. The strategies of The Double and The Other occur repeatedly throughout their lives, in their interactions with their father and their siblings, where questions of voice and textual incest become prominent; in their problematical relationships to ascetic, aesthetic, and erotic forms of faith; and in their relationship to the female—mother, fallen woman, and beloved epipsyché—both as lived experience and as envisioned/revised object of the gaze. Particular eruptions materialize in poems and paintings such as Dante Gabriel’s “Jenny,” “Blessed Damozel,” “Proserpine,” “Ecce Ancilla Domini!,” Sister Helen,” “Ave,” “Hand and Soul,” “A Last Confession”; and Christina’s “Goblin Market,” “A Royal Princess,” Sing-Song, “Maggie A Lady,” “Maude Clare,” and “Monna Innominata,” as well as her drawings. The picture that emerges allows Christina the strength as well as the anguish of her faith, making her a more complex and interesting writer than previously acknowledged, while it recuperates Dante Gabriel’s reputation from accusations of chauvinism and obscurantism.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

[While knowledge runs apace, ignorance keeps ahead of knowledge: and all which the deepest students know proves to themselves, yet more convincingly than to others, that much more exists which still they know not. As saints in relation to spiritual wisdom, so sages in relation to intellectual wisdom, eating they yet hunger and drinking they yet thirst.

—Christina Rossetti, Seek and Find]

A dissertation is never finished. But there comes a moment when even the deepest student (I would never claim to be a sage) must put down the pen, turn off the word processor, and admit that ignorance will ever keep ahead of knowledge.

That moment has come for me. But I find that, eating I yet hunger, drinking I yet thirst. Although I have often heard how weary one becomes of one’s subject at the end of a dissertation, I do not find that to be true for me. After many (some would say, too many) years of research, writing, and thinking, the “Rossetti text”—the combination of the lives and works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Christina Georgina Rossetti—remains as fascinating to me as ever.

My heartfelt thanks go to my dissertation directors, surely two of the best directors a student ever had: Dr. Wesley Morris, whose hand-holding willingness to read this dissertation page by page and even—in moments of despair—paragraph by paragraph,
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Most especially, my thanks to Alice Landru Wood, who labored long and hard to persuade me that the all I know about the Rossettis proves my ignorance much more convincingly to myself than to others; and to her family, who were my family.

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CHAPTER 1

AN INTRODUCTION

Appropriately enough, this project is doubled from the outset, as it attempts both to untangle the theoretical problem of the other in a paradigm which identifies two competing strategies of alterity which have been overlooked by previous theoreticians of desire; and to trace one local instantiation of the problem in the Victorian era, specifically in the life and works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Christina Georgina Rossetti. The outcome of this project is a study of “constellations of desire”: the traditional and non-traditional “imaginary” outlines, constructed from the fixed points of reference in our lives, that allow us to deal with loss and alterity. Like the constellations in the sky, the constellations of desire appear from our perspective to change over time, as interstellar drift moves us through a psychological zodiac from the classic, metaphorical, externalized singularity of the strategy of The Other to the modern, metonymical, internalized multiplicity of The Double. The specific focus will be on the Gemini of the Victorian constellations of desire, Dante Gabriel and Christina Rossetti: brother and sister poets, standing in the same place, they yet face in opposite directions and follow reversed trajectories with reference to their fixed stars of family, faith, and relationship to the idea of the female.
The idea of loss as the central paradigm for understanding the Victorian age has become a scholarly truism in our time. Yet it is a fact that all eras (at least since the Middle Ages) can be understood as times of loss and that all generations, to some extent consider themselves as "lost generations." Whether the event of loss is understood as J. Hillis Miller's disappearance of God, as Jacques Derrida's epoch-making rupture, Julia Kristeva's loss of faith in a Master Signifier or, on an individual level, the realization of the unassimilable real in Jacques Lacan's mirror stage, it is clear that most Victorian writers felt it necessary "to recover immanence in a world of transcendence" (J. H. Miller 15), as they found themselves in a "time when God is no more present and not yet again present, and can only be experienced negatively, as a terrifying absence. In this time of the no longer and not yet, " where humanity is "Wandering between two worlds, one dead, / The other powerless to be born," in a situation of disconnection (J. H. Miller 2). It was not that all Victorians had simply lost their faith; rather, the intellectual climate of the day fostered intense questioning of religious dogma rather than easy acceptance, and this disconnection filtered into the gestalt of the era. In the face of this disconnection, then, the Victorians searched—some more frantically than others; some in a willed acceptance of the conventions and others in a less conventional way—for a Something that would make the self complete again saying with Swinburne's "Hertha", "Man, equal and one with me, man that is made of me, man that is I"; a Something that would re-make the connection allowing the self to say: "I am equal and whole."

How then did Victorian man, looking inward, attempt to fill the emptied center of his selfhood?
And how did his sister, Victorian woman, watching the disappearance of God, endeavor to replace the gaping absence left behind?

Perhaps more importantly, how were their strategies for coping with the sense of loss permeating the nineteenth century related, and how did they differ? That is to say, where are the nineteenth-century Shakespeares, the Victorian family that will provide critics both a Judith and a William?

The answer lies in the Rossetti household, in the works of the brother and sister poets, Dante Gabriel and Christina Rossetti. Dante Gabriel (1828-82) was one of the founders (and later the grand old man) of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, a group of artists, critics, and poets who, with youthful idealism, sought to rescue the art of their day from the moribund strictures of the Royal Academy and return to the purity of a time before the authoritarianism of Raphael and his school. Christina Georgina (1830-94) proposed for membership but excluded from the Brotherhood by reason of her gender, was nonetheless intimately connected with the group throughout her life. She contributed several of her early poems to their short-lived publication The Germ; modeled for some of their paintings; became engaged to the painter James Collinson, an original member of the PRB; and was memorialized after her death by Algernon Charles Swinburne, a second-generation PRB, who had called her the "Queen of the Pre-Raphaelites." In addition, Dante Gabriel and Christina maintained an active relationship throughout their lifetimes, both living in London, and exchanging regular visits, letters, and editorial comments on each other's works. Christina modeled for Dante Gabriel's paintings, and he contributed illustrations and criticism to her published works.
And yet, with as nearly identical background and environment as two human beings can possess, the Rossettis show striking differences in their poetical works and persona, and especially the ways in which their works deal with that which is not the poetic speaker. To indulge for a moment in radical oversimplifications: Dante Gabriel, doubled from the outset in paired art forms of painting and poetry, indulges in a number of avatars or doubles, moving from an aestheticized religiosity that still looks to God and Christ in the Art Catholic phase of his youth [painting the simple purity of Ecce Ancilla Domini and The Girlhood of Mary Virgin, with the accompanying two-part poem "Mary's Girlhood (For a Picture)" in 1849-1850] to the frantic multiplications of his later lush, erotic pantheon of women [painting his inamorata Jane Burden Morris in an endless series of mythologized persona such as Proserpine, and Astarte Syriaca (both 1877) and writing mournful evocations of an inevitable division in "He and I" (1870) and "Severed Selves" (1871)]. Christina, on the other hand, appears to move in the opposite direction, from a young woman's desire for love [most often expressed bitterly, as in "Song (When I am dead my dearest)" (1848) or in erotic sublimations climaxing with "Goblin Market" (1859)] to her late religious meditations [as in the feast-day-linked poems of "Some Feasts and Fasts" (1885ff)] and expressions of hard-won resignation ["Sleeping at Last" (1896)].

In dealing with the Victorian sense of loss, the Rossettis use both of the crucial strategies of alterity, the strategies of The Double and of The Other. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, poet and painter by turns throughout his life, is most frequently situated within the realm of The Double, is doubled from the outset, even to often creating paired poems, or "doubled works of art," combining poetry and painting. His doubled personae was so
thoroughly established that he is supposed to have had the following conversation with the American poet Longfellow:

"I have been very glad to meet you, Mr. Rossetti, and should like to have met your brother too. Pray tell him how much I admire his beautiful poem, 'The Blessed Damozel.'"

"I'll tell him." (Grylls 115)

Dante Gabriel's biographer, Oswald Doughty, frequently refers to Rossetti's "divided self," and his need to look for ultimate unification—a need forever deferred. This sense of his life is reflected in his art, with Dante Gabriel's poems characterized as evoking "a sense of otherness, of separation, of the world's imperfections, and of a desire for a transcendent, total merger" (Howard 19). But Dante Gabriel is also in the position of The Other, particularly The linguistic Other, as both poet and, peripherally, "native." With his inescapably Italianate name, he began his career by translating Italian poems and ended it by celebrating the female body in a style avowedly patterned after the early Italian Renaissance. Dante Gabriel's original obsession begins as a profoundly pessimistic search for The Other, first within an aestheticized version of traditional, religious belief (during his Art Catholic phase), but soon following the path of the diminished Romantic longing (Riede 120-1) which substituted a lover/Double for The inaccessible deity/Other. But he quickly multiples that Other through the use of Doubles. In his life, Dante Gabriel's search focuses on two apparently unobtainable women whom he turns into his

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1 Although the appellation "native" is most precisely reserved for victims of colonialization, the inveterate insularity of the British extended at times to include most continental Europeans under the rubric.
epipsyches: his dead wife Elizabeth Siddal Rossetti and his friend William Morris's wife, Jane Burden Morris. Lizzie and Janey become almost interchangeable parts, as is suggested in Brian and Judy Dobbs' *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: An Alien Victorian*, where they note that in both poems and poetry, Rossetti would write/depict Janey with Lizzie's golden hair—a process that occurred as early as the Oxford murals, where the newly-met Janey was substituted for Lizzie as a model for Guinevere. The ostensible purpose may have been to avoid scandal, but the substitution cannot be seen as unmeaningful. Nor was scandal long in coming. "Jenny" shocked contemporaries with its "violent yoking" of young man and prostitute, as well as its suggestions that the young man might be as guilty as the woman and that both had something to teach each other in this momentary yin-yang relationship. "The Blessed Damozel" makes explicit the necessity of uniting the Doubled selves, where even the Blessed Damozel in heaven is incomplete without her earthly lover. *The House of Life* sonnet sequence repeatedly refers to "Severed Selves," a woman who can be approached only through the man who portrays her ("The Portrait"), and Doubles who are needed to complete the self. "The Birth-Bond" even goes so far as to compare the alliance of the epipsychean Beloved Double with the Self to the natal bond of brother and sister. It is interesting to note that Dante Gabriel Rossetti was always uneasy in his position as poet, alternating among his various personas of poet, painter, and even prose writer ("Hand and Soul"). In addition, the narrative structure and vivid pictorial details of most of his poetry and paintings ally them closely with the metonymic bias Jakobson claims for poetry. Christina Rossetti, on the other hand, was resolutely poetical—even her ostensibly prose devotional works read with the fluidity and symbolism of poetry. Her occasional attempts at straightforward prose tales (such as
"Commonplaces") are generally considered awkward and undeveloped, unequal to her exquisite sense of prosody for which she was celebrated in her life and afterwards.

The constellations of desire change for Christina Rossetti. Herself a woman and a poet, she is left only with God as traditional Other. Indeed, something like half of her 1100 poems are religious. But she also takes a what at first glance appears to be a traditionally female approach through her works for children. Christina, too, is obsessed with women, but as Doubles not Others, from the doubled sisters of "Goblin Market" (positioned against The goblin/Others) to the children of her Sing-Song nursery rhyme series. A believer in an age of burgeoning disbelief and a circle that took the possibility of negative answers to religious questions seriously; a woman in a Pre-Raphaelite circle of men; a female poet in an age of industry, progress, and marching rhythms, her accommodation to life is to become The Other that she is. Her lifelong confrontation with alterity as she fought to affirm a religious belief in The Other as deity may reflect her position as the M-Other who intuits the untruth of truth even as she struggles to impose unity and meaning within the undifferentiated realm of the chora.

Although the genesis of this project proceeded inductively, from the textual materials to the theory, for the convenience of the reader it will be presented deductively, beginning with a presentation of the theoretical paradigm before examining the ways in which this paradigm enriches the readings of the Rossetti text. Accordingly, in Chapter 2, "The Theoretical Paradigm of Double and The Other," I examine the powerful but problematic relationship between these two strategies of alterity. The relationship is oddly
hierarchical: The Other is a continuing motif in the work of critical luminaries such as Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, Julia Kristeva, Emmanuel Levinas, and Edward Said, while The Double remains the province of such relatively unknown critics as Otto Rank, Ralph Tymms, and Jean Paul Richter. “Double” is the more “popular” term, springing from folklore and myth. To oversimplify for a moment, the two strategies may be differentiated grammatically between the narrowly-focused definite article of “The” Other (connoting specificity and singularity) and the diffusive indefinite article of “An” Other, “A.nother” or “Double” (connoting diffraction and multiplicity). The Other is a strategy of metaphor and substitution, replacing one incompleteness with that which is (or is perceived as) wholly Other, The Double is a strategy of metonymy and repetition, trailing the traces of all those others which it is not, hoping to fill the emptiness (void, abyss) with repetition. The Other is the transcendental signifier, the Wholly Other, the originary lack. For the believer, It is Deity; for the patriarchy, Woman. It may be manifested as Ideal, as Native, as Poet. But The Other is always foundational in a negative way—the absent made present through opposition, language, and desire. Doubling is perhaps the quintessential modern disease—a dis-ease born of disunion and fragmentation where the center—a terrifying abyss once deity has disappeared—cannot hold. Despite its multiplicity, concepts of The Double fall into three main categories: the epipsycche, the twin, and the Doppelgänger, as component parts of The Double respectively complete, resemble, or repel one another.

Chapter 3, “The Rossetti Family Romance,” focuses on the ways The Double and the Other are implicated in the family romance—a term I use here, not in its strict Freudian sense, but to designate that tale told by and about the family, that unique matrix of psychological formation, cultural heritage, socialization, and even daily interactions
that form both the person and the poet. The experiences of the Rossetti family, while certainly unique, can profitably be extrapolated to study the problems that faced many British families—including those productive of poets and painters—during this era, as the affective family fully replaces the dynastic family. The Rossetti’s Italianate heritage, placing both the voice and the name of the father in a foreign sphere, positions the intergenerational constellation with the father primarily but problematically within the strategy of The Other. On the other hand, the sibling relationships, predicated on metonymic continuity of generation rather than the metaphoric replacement across generations which characterizes the parent-child axis, falls primarily within the noncoercive unity of The Double, dependent on internal rather than external cohesion, and allowing for both individualism and generational rebellion; i.e., for The Double’s forces of cohesion within The Other’s mechanism of rebellion. Finally, cross-gender considerations complicate the issue as similarities of family, class, genetics, and generation collide with differentiations of gender to create the productive tensions of textual incest.

The constellation of desires that fall under the rubric of faith, providing the central ground of the discourse between The Double and The Other, are discussed at length in Chapter 4, “Faith in Alterity.” Deity is the classic form of The Other; however, “faith” goes far beyond the bounds of conventional religion, to encompass aesthetic faith, as art and literature became mediators for direct Faith, as well as erotic faith, as belief in the salvific potential of union with the beloved. Although Christina and Dante Gabriel Rossetti employed many strategies of both The Other and The Double in their attempts to resolve their individual crises of faith, these three approaches (asceticism, aestheticism, and
eroticism) predominate, with brother and sister tracing the movement in opposite directions. Their trajectories of faith manifested two of the possible responses to the nineteenth-century loss of God: Christina’s passage toward the strategy of The Other as she reasserted her faith in deity as an act of will; and Dante Gabriel’s movement toward the strategy of The Double, replacing deity with humanity. The concept of asceticism provides a surprisingly suggestive model for the trajectory of desire followed by the Rossettis between an unmediated religious faith and the various artistic and erotic mediations of that faith that they practiced. In fact, the ascetic imperative—aimed at transcending the self and attaining the absolute alterity of The Other through processes of negation, narrative, and restriction—relates closely to the definition in Chapter 2 of The Other as “the absent made present through opposition, language, and desire.” Once again, we are talking about the move beyond binarism that allows these strategies of alterity to manipulate the complex tensions within the multiple constellations of desire. While Christina resolutely pursued unity with God The Other through an ascetic “exfoliation” of her life and language, Dante Gabriel searched for a personal myth that would replace his fading moment of religious faith. His pursuit of erotic faith changes the object of the desiring cry from The external Other of deity to The internalized Double of the romantic partner, as human love came to take the place once occupied by religion.

The concept of erotic faith entails drastic visions and revisions in the role of the female, as discussed in Chapter 5, “(en)Gendered (re)Visions: Female Alterity.” From the time of Lilith and Eve, Woman has been implicated in the strategies of both The Other and The Double to the extent that many theorists and philosophers suggest that alterity is woman For Dante Gabriel and Christina Rossetti, expectations of woman—as mother,
M-Other, fallen woman, and beloved epipsyche—both converged and diverged. The two Rossettis necessarily shared the same familial heritage and followed comparable life paths in regard to the family; in matters of faith, they traced similar if reversed trajectories. But in the constellation of desires based on the female, these oppositely gendered siblings moved from necessarily opposing heritages into radically divergent paths. Yet, despite the differences between Dante Gabriel's obsession with The romantic Double and Christina's unwavering glorification of motherhood, even to the verge of radical feminist views, both were engaged in works that held the potential to reverse binarisms that perpetuate the degradation of the female. For both siblings—again in very different ways—the revisioning of these gendered constructions of Woman was a priority.

The interesting aspects of the application of the paradigm to the life Rossettis rest in the complications of movements that are all too easily oversimplified: the way Dante Gabriel's Blessed Damozel, even in heaven, dreams of her earthly lover while her bosom warms the gold bar of heaven; the way Christina's "Goblin Market" sisters advocate purity and self-sufficiency while hungering after the fruit of the goblin men. My project is to employ a variety of critical apparatus (many of which have not previously been brought together, being regarded as inimical) in a close textual study of the writings, paintings, and lives from within a theoretical model of the strategies of The Double and The Other that accounts for the cross-currents and contradictions involved in dealing with alterity. Since the Rossettis were intimately aware of the central concerns of the day in art, science, religion, and philosophy, my study includes occasional glances at historicist concerns, to
account for the ways in which the Rossettis molded and were shaped by the Victorian era. The picture that emerges allows Christina the strength of her faith as well as the anguish of her loss, making her a more complex and interesting writer. Dante Gabriel’s reputation is recuperated from accusations of chauvinism, showing that, as a Victorian man, he was remarkably free-thinking in matters of gender equality. And the study establishes, in the Rossetti household, a constellation of relationships and desires which I have termed “textual incest”—a productive intercourse of themes, plots, and imagery which functions unconsciously and consciously, through modeling, editorial revision, and explicit suggestions—rather than the accusations of abuse and pathological relationships.

The Rossettis present an unparalleled opportunity to combine poetry with paintings, as well as to study gender differentiations within a single family in a non-sexual mode. To study the male-female dyad in this nonsexual formulation carries the possibility for exorcising some of the venom too often associated with analyses of nineteenth-century women’s works. Feminist studies over the last decade have almost necessarily defined the female experience against that of the patriarchal male, bringing to the project a negativity that, while not invalidating their work, does render it both suspect and confrontational. To use Elaine Showalter’s old terms, I would like to move nineteenth-century women’s studies beyond the “feminist” moment to a “female” position that would study male and female as separate but equal. I would recall the alterity, not only of woman, but of man, in a move that recalls Derrida’s insistence on dyadic structures in Dissemination, where it is no longer possible to counts by ones, twos, or threes. In this dyadic movement, we must not simply reverse the process of propriation by subordinating Man to Woman, but focus on traces and distinctions without positive and negative terms.
In the Rossettis' poetry, the two crucial strategies for dealing with the sense of loss are The Double and The Other, related but not identical terms. The two exist in uneasy alliance, frequently used in theory and criticism but neither clearly equated nor rigorously differentiated. Theoreticians may deal either with The Double or with The Other, occasionally substituting one term for the other, but without a clear negotiation of the movement.¹ Jacques Lacan and Julia Kristeva use grand Autre and objet petit a (“the capital-O Other” and “object small-o”) to describe a scheme intriguingly but not precisely parallel to The Other and The Double. Lacan, for instance, speaks of the other as that whose “presence can only be understood at a second degree of otherness which puts it in the position of mediating between me and the double of myself” (“Insistence” 135; emphasis mine). The objet petit a appears to refer to The Double, since, as Kaja Silverman

¹The single exception to the confusion and/or conflation of The Double with The Other is a slim volume by Paul Coates, entitled, appropriately enough, The Double and the Other. A more problematic, but at least conscious, negotiation of the movement between the two terms occurs in the opening and closing sections of C. F. Keppler, particularly in his final statement of the meaning of the "Second Self" (his term for The Double), which culminates in a desire "to know the Other who is also the I" (199). These two authors will be discussed in more detail below, in a specific section negotiating the passage from The Other to The Double.
comments, “[t]his rubric designates objects which are not clearly distinguished from the self and which are not fully grasped as Other (Autre)” (156). The paradigm is more fully elaborated in *Powers of Horror* where Kristeva differentiates between an Other (similar to The Other) and an other (akin to The Double) in her discussion of The “Other in place and stead of me: not an other whom I incorporate, but an Other who possesses me” (10). Her schema, here complicated by the addition of an “abject” appropriate to a literature of horror, assigns different objects or focuses to the varying types of otherness: L’Autre’s obscure object is an “ob-jest, an otherness ceaselessly fleeing in a systematic quest of desire” while the other/The Double produces “my correlative, which, providing me with someone or something else as support, would allow me to be more or less detached and autonomous” (10). Ralph Tymms, too, moves tentatively toward such a two-part scheme when he adopts A. E. Crawley’s classic distinction between double-by-division, which “may be of a different substance from the original, in other words, may be a spiritual double” and the double-by-duplication, which seems to be an extension of the self (16-17). But later in his 1949 study of The Double in literature as a premonition of late nineteenth-century psychology of the Unconscious, Tymms confuses the issue by adding a double-by-enchantment and occasional references to the double as the “other self” without explanation. Similarly, Joanne Blum centers her discussion of *Transcending Gender* on *The Male/Female Double in Women’s Fiction* (emphasis mine), but then uses the idea of the “self and other” to define the double, with no definition of the term “other” (55). C. F. Keppler presents what he explicitly terms “an ‘anatomy’ of The Double” (xiii) in *The Literature of the Second Self*, where he differentiates second selves as twins, pursuers, tempters, horrific visions, saviors, and the beloved; but his subsequent novel,
which he says "[embodies] the theme of which The Literature of the Second Self is a critical study" (frontispiece), is entitled The Other.

Clearly, a powerful relationship exists between The Double and The Other and, equally clearly, it is a problematic one. In general, the relationship is oddly hierarchical, as even a cursory listing of critical alliances shows. The Other is a continuing motif in the work of such critical luminaries as Jacques Derrida, Lacan, Kristeva, and Edward Said, while The Double remains the province of such relatively unknown critics as Otto Rank, Tymms, and Jean Paul Richter. “Double” is the more “popular” term, springing from folklore and myth, mesmerism and tales of the occult. The concept of The Double is generally relegated to a critical backwater associated primarily with nineteenth-century fin de siècle malaise and populated by theorists who often feel compelled to apologize for their subject; “facile” is an adjective frequently used by critics of The Double to characterize both the concept and its manifestations. And yet, these theorists of The Double form a coherent group, clearly working on the same, inescapable topic, working together in a sometimes contentious unity. On the other hand, theorists of The Other are found scattered throughout the disciplines: anthropology, psychology, theology, literary theory, colonial studies, and history each has its own body of work on The Other. Considerations of The Other present themselves as more “serious,” more deliberately philosophical and theological; as “high theory.” When theorists of The Other discuss concepts which parallel that of The Double, the hierarchy is even carried into the orthography, as in Lacan's Le Grand Autre/les objets petit autre and Kristeva's Other/other systems. Closer investigation is needed to clarify the terms, detailing a substantive distinction grounded in essence rather than mere presentation.
The tradition of Western metaphysics has focused most often on the frightening Other who is the metaphor for the Self, a substitute Self that is at once radically different and yet part of the same Ideal, even as Plato's bed-in-the-world is at once separate from and simulacrum for the Ideal bed. The union of the Self with The Other is a frightening thing, calling up visions of vagina dentata and the "violent yoking together" by which T. S. Eliot characterized the Elizabethan conceit metaphor. The Double comes from the alternative Dionysiac tradition that culminates in Nietzsche and Derrida. Doubling is predicated on a belief that accretion and substitution, the making of enough doubles, will lead to sufficiency. It is a metonymic approach, filling in through free play all the links in the Great Chain of Being, following up all the traces of meaning.

Both terms partake of otherness, or alterity. A surprisingly clear genealogy emerges syntactically once we posit "Other" as the parent term and discriminate the second level grammatically between the narrowly-focused definite article of "The" Other (connoting specificity and singularity) and the diffusive indefinite article of "An" Other, "Another" or "Double" (connoting diffraction and multiplicity). While The Other is a strategy of metaphor and substitution, replacing one incompleteness with that which is (or is perceived as) wholly Other, The Double is a strategy of metonymy and repetition, trailing the traces of all those others which it is not, hoping to fill the emptiness (void, abyss) with repetition. Both strategies require some increase in numbers, but The Other also implies a change in quality while The Double relies almost entirely on an increase in quantity.

To use Derrida's terms, the task is always parergonal, a work of both constituting and separating the self. The difference lies in the size and focus of the frame. The Double
is self-focused, a framing of the self as something larger, a (completing or divisive) totality
the self creates or splits. Here, incorporation is a given; the question is whether the
subject is attempting to incorporate its Double or to split (dis-incorporate) The Double
from the self. Incorporation is more problematic for The Other, which is necessarily
unassimilable; the subject may accept and rejoice in this unassimilability, or it may fight
against it, attempting vainly to merge with the unmergeable. The Other implies an
external focus, positioning the self within a larger Something (society, the réel, sexual
differentiation, the universe) with which the self attempts and/or represses merger. “The
real, Lacan maintains, is unassimilable . . . This radical Other is a ’pure negativity”
(Taylor 94).

In the Victorian economy, the search for The Double and The Other is a search for
something of great value, a quest for an unknown Something desired at the deepest levels.
Although this search is evident throughout Victorian culture and society, it was
particularly acute within the meaning-making economies of language and literature where
“writing and style occupy the place left empty by the eclipse of God, Project, and Faith”
(Horror 186-87). Metaphor and metonymy become crucial tools in the pursuit of absent
desires. As Silverman notes, absence is always implicit in formulations of metaphor and
metonymy: In “the 'classic' metaphoric situation . . . one term stands for another which it
in some ways resembles, and the 'classic' metonymic situation, in which one term stands
in for another to which it is in some way contiguous . . . [the] principle of absence is thus
central to the formulation” (112-113). Further, these manipulations add value to the
linguistic structures they inhabit, or, as Silverman argues:
Metaphor and metonymy can be used to increase the value of a given term by suppressing it. Desire, as Lacan is at pains to demonstrate, is created by absence—not only by the signifiers which 'name' a missing signified, but by the other signifiers which replace those signifiers in the event of an additional metaphoric or metonymic discussion. (114)

Desire is always already part of the formulation, for the entire structure of The Double and The Other is motivated by nostalgia for "the lost or impossible presence or the absent origin" (Derrida, Writing 292). The Victorian disappearance of God is but one of the historic moments when "everything became discourse" (280) in the absence of a transcendental signified. At such moments, language gains new substance, as writers seek to put into words what they previously were content to trust to faith. "Though religiously, theologically, and philosophically significant, the death of God is fundamentally a linguistic event. A god dies when a community loses 'faith in One Master Signifier'," Mark Taylor (179) tells us, quoting Kristeva. The forms of discourse change at such moments, making them crucial points for the study of linguistic and poetic strategies. As long as belief is maintained in at least the possibility of a transcendental signifier, the strategy of The Other looks totally outside the self to fill the void. But, coincident with the loss of "faith in One Master Signifier" comes the strategy of The Double, a response that allows of no external sources of alterity, rather filling the void with variations on the human subject. Both strategies are, therefore, responses to the self's desire for wholeness, a desire which was deemed incapable of fulfillment by rationalist Victorians who professed to have lost their faith in a transcendental Being.
When our desires are thus blocked, Freud tells us, the Unconscious responds to perceptions of affinities and adjacencies with condensation and displacement, respectively (Silverman 89). Psychoanalytic and feminist thinkers have built on Freud's work to erect an elaborate framework around metaphor and metonymy, similarity and contiguity, which can be extended to enrich the paradigm of The Double and The Other. The metaphoric stance of The Other aligns with similarity, condensation, context, predication (and thus nouns); while the metonymic position of The Double is correlated with responses of contiguity, multiplication, code, [correlation] (and thus connectives).

**Metaphor and Metonymy**

Metaphor and metonymy give a linguistic habitation to the airy thematics of The Double and The Other. Metaphor's grounding in similarity links it with The Other, whose radical alterity is merely the extreme antonymic pole to similarity. Metonymy, based on contiguity, is correspondingly associated with The Double, positioned to follow up all traces of meaning in the contiguous links of the chain of Being. This linkage is made explicit in Roman Jakobson's discussion of “The Metaphoric and Metonymic Poles” (90-96), which extends and polarizes the classical definitions of tropes by focusing on similarity and contiguity, effacing other correlations traditionally ascribed to metonymy (such as cause and effect, container and contained, place and event) (Barbara Johnson 155). Since most of these other relationships can be generally subsumed under “contiguity,” Jakobson's formulation usefully simplifies the metaphor/metonymy distinction. His theory is based on psycholinguistic studies which show that “The development of a discourse may take place along two different semantic lines: one topic
may lead to another either through their similarity or through their contiguity. The
METAPHORIC way would be the most appropriate term for the first case and the
METONYMIC way for the second” (90).

Jakobson shows that the privileging of one figure over the other mirrors individual
psychological and linguistic preferences: “In manipulating these two kinds of connection
. . . an individual exhibits his personal style, his verbal predilections and preferences”
(91). Further, Jakobson associates the genre of poetry with metaphor and that of prose
with metonymy:2

The principle of similarity underlies poetry; the metrical parallelism of
lines, or the phonic equivalence of rhyming words prompts the question of
semantic similarity and contrast; there exist, for instance, grammatical and

2Other connections posited by Jakobson (72-89) are shown without comment in
the chart below. Their usages will be detailed as they become pertinent in the following
chapters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>METAPHOR (THE OTHER)</th>
<th>METONYMY (THE DOUBLE)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>context (message)</td>
<td>code (language)</td>
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<tr>
<td>alignment</td>
<td>alternation</td>
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<tr>
<td>similarity</td>
<td>contiguity</td>
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<tr>
<td>privileges nouns</td>
<td>privileges connectives</td>
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<tr>
<td>combination</td>
<td>selection/substitution</td>
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<tr>
<td>metalinguistic operations</td>
<td>linguistic hierarchy</td>
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<td>predication</td>
<td>substitution</td>
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<tr>
<td>Romanticism</td>
<td>Realism</td>
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anti-grammatical but never agrammatical rhymes. Prose, on the contrary,
is forwarded essentially by contiguity. Thus, for poetry, metaphor, and for
prose, metonymy is the line of least resistance. (95-96)

While in Jakobson's work with aphasia, and in Freud's work with dreams, the linkages for
similarity or contiguity are seen as potentially extreme and possessing the possibility of
becoming a permanent part of the Unconscious, metaphor and metonymy are mediating
structures which suggest and negotiate differences and similarities. As negotiators rather
than absolute dictators, metaphor and metonymy allow poets of The Double and The
Other to explore possibilities, rather than shutting down options in a psychotic fashion.

In other words, metaphor and metonymy . . . assert neither the complete
identity nor the irreducible difference of similar and contiguous terms, but
rather what Proust would call their 'multiform unity.' Within metaphor
and metonymy the primary and secondary processes find a kind of
equilibrium, one which permits profound affinities and adjacencies to be
discovered without differences being lost. (Silverman 109)

Thus, with its "violent yoking of opposites," metaphor enacts the leap of faith to The
Other, the move from personal incompleteness to fulfillment through a condensation of
self with The Other. It does not require a loss of self in The Other, although this may, be
contemplated, even attempted momentarily; rather it allows a linguistic creation of brief
harmonies. Metonymic Doubling, on the other hand, allows the writer to move along a
continuum of contiguities, tracing out the possibilities of a chain of signifiers before the
final choice is made. When the secondary process reasserts itself in the guise of reason,
the poet retains access to the accommodations reached through metaphor and metonymy.
These accommodations are “real” and not mere linguistic exercises because metaphor and metonymy are not merely verbal tropes but are rooted in nonlinguistic relationships between things, not just the differences between arbitrarily motivated signs (Silverman 110). The writer's psychic investment in his terms serves to give the accommodations thus reached emotional, mental, and psychological value. Indeed, as Barbara Johnson reminds us,

articulate language requires the co-presence of two distinct poles, not their collapse into oneness. . . . For it must be remembered that what is at stake in the maintenance of both sides—metaphor and metonymy, inside and outside—is the very possibility of speaking at all. The reduction of a discourse to oneness, identity . . . has as its necessary consequence aphasia, silence, the loss of the ability to speak. (164)

What begins as a strategy for dealing with the loss of the transcendental signified becomes a motivation for discourse between two poles, set within the framework of binary opposition (but refusing to be strangled by rigid binarisms), where each pole which must be maintained for the conversation to continue; a conversation that transmutes a potentially blocked desire for wholeness into language, literature, and new accommodations to life.

**The Other in Theory and History**

For poststructuralists, The Other is the transcendental signifier, repeatedly invoked only to be put under erasure, deconstructed, deferred. In the Lacanian economy, The Other is psychologized and sexualized as the originary lack at the foundation of
signification, an absence that is never to be erased. For the believer, It is Deity; for the patriarchy, Woman. It may be manifested as Ideal, as Native, as Poet. But The Other is always foundational in a negative way—the absent made present through opposition, language, and desire.

The absent made present—a contradictory formulation that points out the essential paradox at the heart of The Other. For The Other to ground meaning through completion (of the self, of language, of desire), it must reside at the point of absolute origin, a central point anchoring the play of meaning into an organized coherence. This central point, The structuring, meaning-giving Other has always been thought of as paradoxically both inside the structure (its center) and yet outside (exceeding) the structure, “a central presence which has never been itself, has always already been exiled from itself into its own substitute” (Derrida, Writing 280) so that the center became absence instead of presence. With the loss of The Other—the absence of the transcendental signified and its absolute origin—consciousness and subjectivity themselves are threatened. Thus, The Other embraces both presence and absence, sense and non-sense—structuring the meaning of meaning, the bringing to consciousness of consciousness within irreconcilable conflict, unending opposition.

Opposition is crucial to formulations of The Other for, stripped to its simplest and most banal level, The Other is the not-I, that which is opposed to the self and against which the self is constructed through a complex process of virtually simultaneous affiliation and antagonism. Such a definition takes note both of the contention inherent to opposition and the continuity of categorization implied by opposition. The hierarchically-privileged binary oppositions which structure Western society are based upon principles
of metaphoric substitution, the replacement of one item by another which is at once recognizably different and yet the same in kind. Although opposed, both items must belong to the same category, or be re-classified so that they do. For example, “red” would be not considered The Other of “loud” except through an unnecessarily convoluted process which would position “red” as an adjective of the visual and “loud” as an adjective of the aural and then re-define “visual” as “not-aural.” The very complexity of such a process robs it of emotional force. But when the categorization is more instinctual and immediate—as, for instance, defining Woman as The Other of Man—the dissonance between the visceral perception of similarity (both are Human) and the intellectual positing of opposition triggers unease and fear.

Such a feeling of unease and mystery pervades contemporary formulations of The Other. Derrida announces as his “final intention in this book [Grammatology]” to “make enigmatic what one thinks one understands” in the concepts which bring to presence The absent Other (70). Enigma also characterizes the Lacanian conception of le grand Autre which underlies so much of current theory. For Lacan and those who follow/oppose him, The Other is the field through which the subject emerges into subjectivity: “The subject is born in so far as the signifier emerges in the field of the Other” (Four Fundamental Concepts 199). This field of The Other is an inner space which is also an outer space, but which can only be spoken in the outer space. It is

a question of something inside that is also outside. . . . [S]uch considerations are particularly necessary when it is a question of the unconscious, which I represent to you as that which is inside the subject, but which can be realized only outside, that is to say, in the locus of the
Other in which alone it may assume its status. (Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts* 147).

Just as Derrida's de-centered center grounds meaning, the Lacanian Other exists in an inside which can only be realized through entry into the outside, into the symbolic realm of language. Grounded in such oppositions, the relationship of the subject to The Other is fraught with the contentious inherent to hierarchizing binarisms. Despite The Other's situation in absolute alterity, its simultaneous position as the field in which the subject comes to consciousness means that the subject is always already implicated in an attempt at synthesis with The Other, an attempt which is also always already doomed. The subject's desire is for merger with alterity, even while foreclosing the possibility of such affiliation, unconsciously complying with the truth that desire “is always involved in some way with the sense of incompleteness” (Tanner 87), an incompleteness that cannot be subverted.

Thus, the subject and The Other are entrapped in the extremism of binary opposition—lack and fullness, fulfillment and abyss engaged in eternal contention, as Taylor explains in his gloss of Derrida:

Forever inaccessible to reason, the Unknown withdraws in its very approach and approaches by withdrawing. This approaching withdrawal or withdrawing approach is 'the abyss of distance . . . distance itself, if one could still say, which is impossible, distance itself' (Éperons, 49). . . .

[Thus] 'God' inscribes, without representing the lapsus absolu that repeatedly disrupts the free flow of the restricted speculative economy and incessantly interrupts the circulation of discourse and the circuit of
communication. The absolutely different or wholly Other cannot be translated into any language. To the contrary, this altarity [sic] inflicts an incurable wound upon language. . . . This difference is not the dialectical contrary of identity; but is the difference that infinitely defers the eschatological movement of reappropriation. Offering no promise of arrival, this Other calls: 'Come.' (Taylor 343-4)

The call of The Other also founds desire. When the originary desire for The Other is thwarted, as it inevitably is, the subject turns to an/other (The Double) in a series of metonymic replacements for the lack caused by the subject's introduction into the sexual reproductive order and its concomitant signifying system: "The real lack is what the living being loses, that part of himself qua living being, in reproducing himself through the way of sex. This lack is real because it relates to something real, namely, that the living being, by being subject to sex, has fallen under the blow of individual death" (Four Fundamental Concepts 205). If le grand Autre (The Other) is the originary lack, the unobtainable object of desire, then objet petit a (autre opposed to L'Autre in Lacan; others or autrui in Kristeva)\textsuperscript{3} stands in the place of The Double as a strategy that domesticates the Desire of The Other through the construction of metonymic substitute desires which disguise the original desire and purport to fill the original Lack. In fact, desire is the deferring aspect of différcance, able to be indefinitely deferred, even as The desired/desiring Other can be moved infinitely far from the center. For example, Irigaray moves Woman as The Other.

\textsuperscript{3}OBJET PETIT a. The 'a' in question stands for 'autre' (other), the concept having been developed out of the Freudian 'object' and Lacan's own exploitation of 'otherness'. The 'petit a' (small 'a') differentiates the object from (while relating it to) the 'Autre' or 'grand Autre' (the capitalized 'Other')." (Alan Sheridan, "Translator's Note," Four Fundamental Concepts 282).
from a position of immediate opposition to Man to a place at the outskirts of the Symbolic Order and, therefore, the extremity of all meaning. She contends that “there is only one sex, the masculine, that elaborates itself in and through the production of the 'Other'” whereby women are not a subject but 'difference' in action, “a 'difference' that cannot be understood as the simple negation or 'Other' of the always-already-masculine subject. . . . they are neither the subject nor its 'Other,' but a difference from the economy of binary opposition” (Butler 18).

The Other, then, is that which is lacking, either the lack felt inside the subject as a necessary emptiness within that needs filling from without, or the lack which the subject perceives as an external abyss the subject must fill with discourse, a calling that must be answered. It is, as Lacan says elsewhere, “man's desire [which] is the desire of the Other” (Four Fundamental Concepts 115), both desire for the Other and the desire belonging to the Other. This call, this “Come,” is an invitation to language, an invitation from “the capital Other (le grand Autre), the locus of speech and, potentially, the locus of truth” (Lacan, Four Fundamental Concepts 129). But it is more than an invitation, it is a command, a desire that must be pursued, for the Other as language (in the sense of Langue, or the generalized discourse) is the very ground through which the self is first defined. That is to say that “when we do start thinking, we think in and with the discourses that were implanted in us but were none of our making. . . . that there is no prior fully constituted self that then engages in thinking; rather the self is to a large extent constituted in and through its engagement in the existing discourses and paradoxically, therefore, comes into being via a medium that is precisely not itself” (Tanner 91).
In answering the invitation to and demand of language, the subject seeks to further the merger with The Other by taking on the power of language, which is the power of law and, indeed, of civilization. In fact, Todorov suggests that “the very existence of this other is measured by the space the symbolic system reserves for him: . . . [a] space [which] is not the same, to evoke only one massive and by now familiar example, before and after the advent of writing” (157). “Arche-speech,” the language which comprises both the phonic and the graphic, most fully embodies this logocentric merger of the self’s desire with the desire of The Other, as the writing which is law, a “natural law. The beginning word . . . understood . . . as the voice of the other and as a commandment” (Grammatology 17). This externalized law is then taken as the basis of “civilized” behavior: Rousseau, in Essai sur l’origine des langues, takes it as the grounds of differentiation between savage, barbaric, and civilized, while Hegel, in his Enzyklopädie, identifies even its tiniest bits, the alphabet, as “in and for itself the most intelligent” (Grammatology 3). It is important to note, however, as Derrida does in Grammatology (3, 12), the ethnocentrism operating behind these conceptions of writing. In fact, the study of other cultures and other writings, “which is incarnated by ethnology [is] at once the child of colonialism and the proof of its death throes” (Todorov 250). Logocentrism and the Western metaphysics of writing which support the determination of the being of the entity as presence also allow the structuring of incomprehensible (native, poetic) languages as non-sense, as absence, and therefore as The Other, but The Other on the negative side of the binarism. For “each of us is the other’s barbarian, to become such a thing, one need only speak a language of which that other is ignorant: it is merely babble to his ears” (Todorov 190). When The Other speaks The Other’s language, Western ethnocentric
binarism quickly seeks to position him as superior or inferior; and intrinsic self-love always comes down on the side of superiority, even while fighting with the outward-directed desire of The Other.

On the positive side of the binarism is the logocentrism of St. John's Logos, the Word made Flesh, the Transcendental Signifier come among us. The creational Word of God, absent Father and present Son, allows the possibility of the transcendental signifier which grounds "the difference between signifier and signified to be somewhere absolute and irreducible" (Grammatology 20), an irreducible, absolute three-in-one. This dichotomy is crucial, for the transcendental signifier, the ground of arche-writing, "is that very thing which cannot let itself be reduced to the form of presence" (Grammatology 57) but neither can it be simply absent: rather, it must be, as was said above, absence made present, at once incomprehensible and almost-perceptible, the opposition made speech, as it were.

For the presencing—or at least the sign-ing—of absence is necessary if the subject is to deal with The Other. Caught within binarism, the subject's desire is embedded in the contradictions between the inescapable perception of difference and oppositions, and the equally inescapable need for closure and communication. The absent Other is thus made present through a system perhaps more aptly termed "manifestation" than "presentation," where, "according to the . . . 'phenomenology' of Peirce, manifestation itself does not reveal a presence, it makes a sign" (Grammatology 49). Manifestations of The Other, then, despite the apparent presencing of the concepts, always maintain the intrinsic absence of The Other, revealed through the irreducible difference of the signified and the signifier in the sign. Each of the most historically significant manifestations correlate most
directly with one of the forces defining The Other. Opposition, the abstract force of extremity and contention, coalesces as Deity, Ideal, or psychoanalytic l'Autre. Desire, a sexual/psychosexual dynamic, focuses most clearly on Woman. And language, socially defining and socially defined, leads to the Poet and the Native.

These manifestations of The Other move through history like waves lapping at the shores of the isolated atoll of mankind: approaching from afar, momentarily touching, and then once again receding. Classically, The Other occupied the position of absolute opposition, the abstract Platonic Ideal that could not be comprehended, only posited; the Hebraic deity Who could not be named but Who gradually was transmuted into a more personal God. In subsequent eras, the Other moved closer to humanity as it was defined in terms of The Other sex (Woman) or The Other speaker, the Romantic poet. For a brief historical moment, from the end of the eighteenth century to the end of the nineteenth century, in the depths of the abyss, The Other was nearly absorbed into the self as The Double, but the association was quickly severed with the introduction of the psychological paradigm. In the twentieth century, then, the trajectory of The Other reversed direction and became ever-receding, from the psychologically internalized Other (the Freudian unconscious) to the psychologically externalized Other (the Jungian collective unconscious), from The inscrutable Other sex (the female) to The inscrutable Other outside hegemonic society (the native). Finally, contemporary theorists posit The Other as so totally alien that it is outside the possibility of discourse—the Lacanian Grande Autre, a secularized version of Yahweh, He-(now It)-Who-Cannot-Be-Named, only translated from The Other to l'Autre; The postmodernist Other so radically
fragmented by gender, class, sexual orientation, and race that no one can speak for him—not even herself.

Abstract formulations of The Other—as deity, Ideal, or l'Autre—are bound up not only with absence and presence but also with concerns of speech and aphasia. In general, religious formulations of The Other point to the Word as God--creative, self-manifesting, giver of the Word as Law and Being. Derrida characterizes the “age of the sign [as] essentially theological” (Grammatology 14), explaining that “[t]he difference between signified and signifier belongs in a profound and implicit way to the totality of the great epoch covered by the history of metaphysics, and in a more explicit and more systematically articulated way to the narrower epoch of Christian creationism” (Grammatology 13). Philosophical manifestations of The Other move from the position of the giver to the position of the given, from the signer to the Sign: “for modern linguistics, if the signifier is a trace, the signified is a meaning thinkable in principle within the full presence of an intuitive consciousness” (Grammatology 73). No longer the Word-made-Flesh, it is now the word-made-signifier, the trace of the signified/real presenced only within the economy of the sign, the Transcendental Signifier joining signified and signifier in The Other.

For it is all a matter of self(Other)-definition. The movement by which the subject defines itself/is defined through The Other is a movement which has been enshrined in Western metaphysics at least since Descartes posited the initial cogito, basing selfhood on doubt of self, and “handing back . . . truth into the hands of the Other”:

For Descartes, in the initial cogito . . . what the I think is directed towards, in so far as it lurches into the I am is a real. But the true remains so much
outside that Descartes then has to re-assure himself—of what, if not of an
Other that is not deceptive, and which shall, into the bargain, guarantee by
its very existence the bases of truth. . . I can do no more than suggest the
extraordinary consequences that have stemmed from this handing back of
truth into the hands of the Other, in this instance, the perfect God . . . (Four
Fundamental Concepts 3)

This is the classical formation of The Other as “the perfect God,” a totally external Deity
which defines the subject by its differentiation and its lack of totality. Attempts to merge
with The Other as God permeate Western literature in ages of faith (most notably, in the
Middle Ages), at which point The Other is seen as positive and the subject as lacking. By
negating the self, the believer hopes to replace his unworthiness with the fulfillment of
The perfect Other, God. In more skeptical eras, on the other hand, Deity itself becomes
defined as lack, the absent or dead God, figured as an abyss that still defines subjectivity,
but only through a calling out to fill this emptied center.

For the believer, then, God as The Other is unequivocally the locus of all things,
particularly of truth, and of speech, or at least of true speech. False speech, on the other
hand, is often attributed to non-absolute Others, particularly The Other sex, or Woman.
Woman as The Other with a reversed relationship to truth becomes important in Derrida
and Kristeva. Derrida’s playfully serious meditations in Éperons link the concept of
Woman with The Other, style, speech, and truth in an intriguing constellation of images
often combined unconsciously but seldom presented in such a self-conscious grouping.

Because, indeed, if woman is truth, she at least knows that there is no
truth, that truth has no place here and that no one has a place for truth.
And she is woman precisely because she herself does not believe in truth itself, because she does not believe in what she is, in what she is believed to be, in what she thus is not. (53)

Indeed, The first Other encountered by the subject meets these criteria of split truth/untruth and knowing the un-truth of her truth: the mother, the M-Other who has become a critical cliché of alterity as the one from whom the child splits when breaking the originary mother-child dyad at the entrance to subjectivity. This undifferentiated, prelinguistic, unified M-Other is opposed to the alterity of the nom du père, God-as-Other at the outset, through “the process by which significance is constituted. Plato himself leads us to such a process when he calls this receptacle or chora nourishing and maternal, not yet unified in an ordered whole because deity is absent from it” (Kristeva, “Revolution” 94). Allied to non-truth and to knowing the untruth of truth, the M-Other is considered as the dis-unified Other, opposed to the logocentrically-organized deity. It is important also to note the possibility of betrayal implicit in this formulation of the Mother; an element that becomes crucial in configurations of the woman as Other/Lover that becomes important in more mature stages of life. For the Woman/Wife/Lover who leaves or betrays the Man is the Double become Other (Coates 4), a pivotal figure in Victorian literature. Indeed, in the Lacanian economy, Woman is necessary to ground the meaning of Meaning: The “Other that lacks the Phallus is the one who is the Phallus . . . clearly [suggesting] that power is wielded by this feminine position of not-having, that the masculine subject who 'has' the Phallus requires this Other to confirm and, hence, be the Phallus in its ‘extended’ sense” (Butler 44).
Since the subject is constituted by language and emerges to subjectivity only within the field of The Other, it is not surprising that the masterful user of language (i.e., the poet) at times becomes constituted as The Other, as is his opposite, the apparent misuser of language (the native). Where Deity occupies the positive side of linguistic binarism, as the unmediated signification, the poet and the native are exiled by the “exteriority of the signifier” (Derrida, *Grammatology* 14) which has only a mediated relationship with the signified. Within the tradition of Western metaphysics as described by Derrida, “There is, therefore, a good and a bad writing: the good and natural is the divine inscription in the heart and the soul; the perverse and artful is technique, exiled in the exteriority of the body” (*Grammatology* 17). Divine inscription, defined as “the good and natural,” is here opposed to the “technique” of the poet and the “exteriority of the body” enfleshed in the native. For Victorians, simultaneously espousing a puritanical exiling of the body and an imperialistic ethic of conquering the native (body), The linguistic Other became particularly troublesome.

The poetic Other, speaking out in language the desire for the now-absent center that became crucial at the time of the event variously referred to as the “rupture” (Derrida), “the disappearance of God” (J. H. Miller), and the Freudian revolution, foregrounds the problematics of The Other. As Todorov reminds us, “[l]anguage exists only by means of the other, not only because one always addresses someone but also insofar as it permits evoking the absent third person” (157) and the presencing of the absent originary desire. The poet becomes an acentric center of discourse, attempting to stand outside the structure of language to write the “truth” that cannot be spoken inside language. If, then, “one imagines . . . the experience of want itself as logically preliminary
to being and object . . . one understands that . . . its signifier, then, is none but literature” (Kristeva, Horror 5). Thus, literature speaks the originary absence, functioning as signifier for the unspeakable signified, and the project of the poet as The linguistic Other then is to write the word that signifies, the word that speaks the meaning of the originary want, a want prior to language, a want that is the foundation of desire; in short, to oppose the writing of The Word that presences to the inescapable absencing of The Other.

**BRIDGE: FROM SYMBOL TO SIGN**

The movement of The Other and The Double is not unrelated to J. Hillis Miller's observation that in Baroque poetry, created after "the loss," "a great flood of metaphors and symbols, doubling one another to infinity, strives desperately to say what a single phrase of the old poetry, in its calm possession of spiritual meaning, could say in a moment" (Miller, Disappearance 7). According to Karl Miller, "The double stands at the start of that cultivation of uncertainty by which the literature of the modern world has come to be distinguished, and has yet to be expelled from it" (Doubles, viii).

Paul Coates, too, makes the transition from The Other to The Double a matter of historical progression, with the moment of crisis located in and after the Romantic Era. His volume, The Double and The Other, Identity as Ideology in Post-Romantic Fiction, focuses on a move from the belief in transcendental necessity inherent in The Other to the acceptance of the deceptiveness of the unified self implicit in The Double. For Coates, The Double embodies the modern realization that "the unity of self is a pseudo-unity, achieved through an exclusion and projection of otherness . . . , a denial of the actual fragmentation of the self in the modern era" (xi). Coates sets forth fifteen theses defining
the relationship of the two terms, primarily in terms of the emergence of The Double. His project quickly situates the concept of The Double with regard to fiction, love, authorial intent, the Industrial Revolution, colonialism, Romanticism, bilingualism, sciences, and imagery (particularly in photography and film). Coates' concern is always chiefly with The Double, as the appropriate modern representation of self; The Other is primarily an outgrown alternative, the embodiment of external threats to the unified self, and thus the catalyst for the creation of The Double. Coates's formulation stresses the independence of The Other and the interdependence of the two selves of The Double. This interdependence also mirrors the condition of the modern world, as science draws disparate cultures closer, both physically (through improved transportation) and philosophically (through wider dissemination of ideas). The Double, then, is for Coates The transcendent Other metamorphosed by science, psychology, and the entire apparatus of post-Romantic philosophy into the representative of the self fragmented by the loss of that very transcendence.

Although she uses different terminology, Julia Kristeva, in her discussion of the movement “From Symbol to Sign,” also situates the passage from The Other to The Double historically as well as within the economy of linguistic figuration. Like Masao Miyoshi and both Millers (J. Hillis and Karl) discussed above, Kristeva deals with a transition from wholeness to anguish, although she focuses on a different moment of crisis, “the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Renaissance” (“Symbol” 63)—another crisis of Faith like the dawn of the Scientific Era during the Victorian age, a moment when transcendence was being replaced by skeptical rationalism. In Kristeva's paradigm, the development of the arbitrarily-motivated sign “indicates at once a
disintegration of the epic system . . . and a move to another way of thinking” (63).\footnote{Peirce's consideration of the transition from icon to symbol and Derrida and Ferdinand de Saussure's discussions of a change from symbol to sign allow for similar movements from the motivated to the unmotivated trace, although in less historically-situated frameworks. In Grammatology, for example, Derrida discusses Peirce's "de-construction of the transcendental signified" (49) which would say "[i]n Saussurean language, what Saussure does not say . . . : there is neither symbol nor sign but a becoming-sign of the symbol" (47).}

Similarly, the move from the metaphoric, poetic strategy of The Other to the metonymic, naturalistic pose of The Double at the dawn of modernism denotes the disintegration of belief systems.

The idea of The Other is allied to Kristeva's early concept of the symbol as transcendental closure. In the strategy of The Other, as mediated by the symbol, the connection between Self and Other is naturally or transcendently dictated. “The symbol . . . refers to the object that it denotes by virtue of a law” (“Symbol” 63-64), even as the metaphoric stance of The Other posits a relationship ruled by a necessary connection between the Transcendent and the Self. On the other hand, motivation is arbitrary in the strategy of The Double, which follows Kristeva's concept of the sign as implying a metonymic, open-ended structure: “Within their horizontal function, the units of the sign's semiotic practice are articulated as a metonymic chain of deflections [écarts]” (70-71).

Kristeva designates the thirteenth through the fifteenth centuries as a “period of transition for European culture: thought based on the sign replaced that based on the symbol” (“Symbol” 64). During this moment of transition, she says, “the serenity of the symbol was replaced by the strained ambivalence of the sign's connection, which presents the elements as similar and identical, despite the fact that it first postulates them as
radically different" (66). This correlates the sign with The Double, for the essence of The Double is to split Good Self from Evil Self, Male Self from Female Self, etc., and to posit these divisions as absolute; indeed, in most cases, as fatally inimical to one another. Yet The Doubles are also necessarily identical, as is betrayed by the second term of the divisions: Good Self vs. Evil Self. The division must be absolute for the psychological effects of splitting to obtain; but it must also be erased, or there would be no need for splitting in the first place.

In its general outlines, Dante Gabriel Rossetti's career recapitulates the movement from symbol to sign outlined in Kristeva's essay, drawing on models poised on the very cusp of the transition Kristeva defines. Beginning in an epic mode, Dante Gabriel's earliest works were translations of Dante Aligheri's late thirteenth century lyrics and other works from this period of epic spirituality. Dante Gabriel's second main period, often termed "Art Catholic," employs the transcendental symbols of medieval art as he attempts to go backwards to a time of perceived wholeness. When he joins the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (PRB), Dante Gabriel moves into the late fifteenth century, the time of Raphael (1483-1520), and begins work in the "Sign" mode, all the while explicitly reaching back to an earlier time, a "PRE-Raphaelite" moment when the transcendental connection between signifier and signified had not yet been broken, when, as the PRB put it, art was more "authentic." Dante Gabriel's move from a religious desire for union with transcendent deity to a humanism focusing on an erotic and spiritual intercourse and re-union with his epipsyche\textsuperscript{5} parallels Kristeva's discussion of the transmutation of Creation

\textsuperscript{5}Coates's militant postmodernism would insist that Dante Gabriel Rossetti is merely deluded: "He who sees the Other as female or a female native mistakes the human other for the transcendental Other" (80). And, in the postmodern world Coates is describing (here, the world of
stories from the original *ex nihilo* creation by a transcendental Word before 1350 to fabrication by a humanized old man with a white beard after 1350. Christina, on the other hand, reverses the chronology, experimenting with humanism in her earlier stages but finally coming to rest securely within the transcendentalism of The ultimate Other—God.

While Kristeva’s discussion implicitly situates the transition from The Other to The Double within an historical framework and linguistic economy, C. F. Keppler, in *The Literature of The Second Self*, attempts to define explicitly the differentiations and overlappings of The Other and The Double. Keppler adopts the term “second self” rather than the more common “Double” or “Doppelgänger” terminology because he feels the familiar terms have become corrupted by overuse. Keppler’s “true second self” double is one that is simultaneously objective (with a “real,” physical duplication of form) and subjective (with a psychical duplication rather than an objective manifestation), neither of which can be explained away by readers/bystanders:

Thus we can bypass [as not being Doubles] all cases of the purely objective “other,” satisfactorily real in his possession of an independent being, and linked to his counterpart by external ties such as visible resemblance, but having no deeper kinship with the latter in the realm of personality. . . . The subjective second self does share a basic psychical identity with the first self but lacking external reality lacks any convincing

Conrad, he would be right. But such a description is anachronistic to Dante Gabriel, who inhabits a world on the cusp of the change from The Other to The Double. Conrad’s world has already made this step, and resolutely exiled The Other to the position of the native in a colonial economy.
simultaneous identity of its own; it is “self,” but not “second.” Therefore as
the true second self is never either of these alone, so he is always, in some
combination, and always at the same time, both together. (6-10)

Keppler’s prose is nearly irresistible in its most lyrical moments, speaking of the force that
motivates the creation of Doubles, “the will . . . to become acquainted with this strange,
expanded version of what and who one is, to know the Other who is also the I” (199); or
elucidating the siren call of the epipsychean Double with the explanation that “For to live
as only half oneself is to live a kind of lie, and to live a kind of lie is to live a kind of
death” (201). But his paradigm is flawed by an exposition that confusingly uses “other” to
denote both the primary level of alterity (otherness), and a level below that of The Double
and The Other, which is occupied by both an “objective other” and a “subjective other.”
Keppler’s work is also undercut by his insistence on such a narrow definition of the
“second self” double that it excludes Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (on the grounds that they
lack physical separation, but simply alternate in their possession of a single objective
body) and first includes (as introductory paradigm, 1) and then excludes (as “nothing but’
reflected light waves,” 6) the legend of Narcissus. Perhaps the confusion is allied to his
pennant for paradox, particularly in explaining the simultaneous attraction and repulsion
of the first and second selves which powers the “dynamic tension that always e.ists
between them” (11). He hints at this prejudice in his closing chapter, when discussing
Jung’s anima and emphasizing the positive aspects of The Second Self—those which lead
to the Second Self as Savior or Beloved; i.e., to forms allied to the epipsyché. Indeed,
Keppler’s theoretical paradigm applies most aptly to those forms of The Double occupying
the portion of the spectrum adjacent to the epipsyche (discussed below). For what Keppler clearly (if only implicitly) does understand is the concept of The Double/Second Self as a disease of desiring, a need to recapture knowledge of the unified self which has disappeared in the wake of post-Romantic disillusionment, in the postmodern economy of fragmentation and loss; i.e., in a world where The Other has vanished, and only The Double remains viable.

**THE DIS-EASE OF THE DOUBLE**

Doubling is perhaps the quintessential modern disease--a dis-ease born of disunion and fragmentation where the center--a terrifying abyss once deity has disappeared—cannot hold. Flung out from this emptied center, the modern self flies apart, fracturing into multiple (or at least doubled) personae. It is a disease which became prominent for modern man when the Romantic self failed to support the apparatus of the universe formerly borne by deity. Significantly, literary doubles became most prominent towards the end of the Romantic era, and remained epidemic at least through the early years of the twentieth century--more than 100 years of turmoil following scientific and philosophical discoveries that at once signaled the disassociation of man from Nature and yet heralded the importance of such an organic connection. The disease spread rapidly, infecting German Romantics, English Romantics, and Gothicists alike, with the classics of the genre appearing mostly between the end of the eighteenth and the end of the nineteenth century: the various works of E. T. A. Hoffman (1776-1822); James Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824); Edgar Allan Poe's "William Wilson" (1839); Dostoevski's *The
Double (1846); Robert Louis Stevenson’s The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1885); Oscar Wilde’s The Picture of Dorian Gray (1891).

Akin to measles or chickenpox, this modern dis-ease of doubling infects its critics who are prone to multiplying the already-divided figure of the double into a confusing array of categories. Like small children who cannot resist scratching and thus spreading the “spots,” critics of The Double appear compelled to further duplicate the divisions. Thus, we have The Double as twin brother, pursuer, tempter, vision of horror, savior, the beloved, and in time (Kepler); as mirror image, secret sharer, opposing self, fragmented mind, or “baroque” (Rogers); as twin and orphan, double life and double self (K. Miller). Even the terminology is infected. “The Double” is so familiar that it provokes a nearly-irresistible urge to coin a new phrase that will be uniquely one’s own. The first victim was perhaps Jean Paul Richter, a German Romantic of the early 19th century and inventor of the word Doppelgänger for a form of duplication by division, characterized as “pairs of friends (in the original sense of ‘fellows,’ two of a pair) who together form a unit, but individually appear as a ‘half,’ dependent on the alter ego” (Tymms 29). Modern critics betray their psychological bent with formulations such as “second self” (Kepler) or “divided self” (Miyoshi). The impulse to multiply terms is most generally explained as an understandable, even laudable, desire to clarify and restrict the study of a figure previously named by a term “embarrassingly vague” (Guerard qtd. in Kepler 212n). And yet, the critic/doctor must resist this infection, for much of the usefulness of the term “The Double” lies in its very commonality and universality. We all know what “the flu” is and how to treat it generally; even if researchers identify a variety of flu viruses responding most ideally to specific antibiotics, a doctor committed to telling his patients that they had this
or that obscure-itis would only succeed in confusing (if not terrifying) his patients, and quite likely impede the basic cure of rest and liquids. Similarly, when "Doctor" Keppler changes his term from "The Double" to "The Second Self" and uses it to exclude the classic case of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (8-9), he succeeds only in confusing readers and alienating his work from the rich mainstream of studies of The Double. The better move is to define The Double rigorously, but not into *rigor mortis*.

Some replication of categories and types is apparently unavoidable. Modern *tan, once a child of nature, is now a child of science, and manifests even his dis-eases quasi-scientifically, through the mathematical manipulations of division and multiplication (with preference given, in our always already binary system, to multiplication by 2; i.e., duplication). Indeed, the most common apportionment is between the double-by-division and the double-by-duplication. A. E. Crawley's authoritative and much-quoted article "Doubles," in the 1908 edition of *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, sets forth this cardinal distinction:

The beliefs to which the term "double" refers may be traced back to two psychological sources. In the first place, they may result from elementary speculation on the category of duplication; in the second place, the phenomena on which the notion of the divisibility or duality of personality is based are such that a potentially duplicate existence was ascribed to every concrete object of thought. The two sources constantly mingle. *The main characteristic of the former is that a double or counterfeit arises by multiplication; of the latter, that it arises by division.* (emphasis mine, 853)
This major division should not actually divide rigid categories of The Double, but rather bracket the rich heritage of The Double, a continuum in which each part evokes traces of the next. The Double is, in fact, closely aligned with the continuum of the trace which underlies all representational writing, that is, with the writing which doubles representation, mirroring the external signified in the linguistic signifier, “writing, the letter, the sensible inscription, [which] has always been considered by Western tradition as the body and matter external to the spirit, . . . and to the logos” (Derrida, Grammatology 35). Unlike The Other, The Double does not refer to an absent origin, a transcendental signifier, but exists as “an infinite reference from one to the other. . . . There is no longer a simple origin. For what is reflected is split in itself and not only as an addition to itself of its image. The reflection, the image, the double, splits what it doubles” (ibid 36). Mirroring representation, The Double traces the continuous manifestations in the present of The absent Other—a domestication and linguistication of alterity. Unlike The Other, The Double does not replace, it continue—even if it contradicts—in a metonymic chain of responses to the dissolution of the unified self, moving from fear to hope, discomfort to joy. The clinical manifestations of the dis-ease change as the symptoms move along the chain. Although each variety of The Double shades into the next, there are perhaps three primary colors on the spectrum: the epipsyche, the twin, and the Doppelgänger, as component parts of The Double respectively complete, resemble, or repel one another.6

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6Duality has said, of each of the pairs . . . that the component parts may complete, resemble or repel one another. But in most circumstances, whether of conflict or accord, part and counterpart are both perceived to be true. . . . This is a context in which duality is mutuality." (K. Miller 21)
The epipsyche, the least malignant shade of the dis-ease, occupies that area of the
continuum where the components complete one another, and is distinguished by
symptoms of hope and joy. At this point, the movement of The Double most closely
approaches the strategy of The Other. The connection between The external,
unreachable Other and The internalized, epipsychean Double is made explicit in Carlos
Baker's formulation of the epipsyche as the "inmost soul which participates in the world-
soul . . . a special kind of selective mirror which 'reflects only the forms of purity and
brightness'" (219). Similarly, Lacan links The Double with the reflectivity of the mirror
stage, in which the subject assumes an imago, or self-image, which anticipates its
acquisition of a coherent, constituted self in "a primordial form, before it is objectified in
the dialectic of identification with the other, and before language restores to it, in the
universal, its function as subject" (Écrits 2). In this stage, the self, postulating The Double
in the form of an imago, "manufactures . . . the succession of phantasies that extends from
a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality" (Écrits 4). These narcissistic fantasies
enable the fragmented self to posit a wholeness based on yet distinct from the absolute
alterity of The Other:

from the framework of narcissism . . . nothing represents in it the Other, the
radical Other, the Other as such.

This representation of the Other is lacking, specifically, between the
two opposed worlds that sexuality designates for us in the masculine and
the feminine. (Four Fundamental Concepts 193)

Thus, in the case of the epipsyche, the strategy of The Double allows the fabrication of a
wholeness predicated on union with an oppositely-sexed self.
The epipsyche is one of the oldest forms of The Double, beginning in Plato's *Symposium*, which attributes to Aristophanes the poignant, humorous tale of a humanity split in half, an androgynous, originally-unitary subject divided sexually by jealous gods, and doomed to a hopeless search for completion, primarily through sexual union and procreation (Silverman 152).\(^7\) Although the word *epipsyche* is not to be found in the OED or most major dictionaries, it has become a critical commonplace, springing from discussions of Shelley's *Epipsychedion*, as a convenient locution for the male/female double in which each part is half of a formerly unified self. The term *epipsyche* has been variously identified as meaning a “a soul within our soul,” “this soul out of my soul,” and “a little additional soul” (from Shelley's *Epipsychedion* and *Essay on Love*, Wasserman 418). As a critical apparatus, the epipsyche is that form of The Double in which the self is split between a male and a female half, such that the re-union of the two would create a full, complete self, a synergistic combination in which the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Combining a quasi-scientific approach with older religious aspirations, the movement toward the union of the psyche and epipsyche depicts “the evolution by the mind of an ideal pattern toward which it aspires; and it involves a longing for completion, the fulfillment of the unfinished self, the search for a true mate”; a desire for the elements

\(^7\)Lacan's interpretation of the Aristophanic myth is opposed in several ways; not surprising, since he works primarily with The Other instead of The Double. For Lacan, "Aristophanes' myth pictures the pursuit of the complement for us in a moving, and misleading, way, by articulating that it is the other, one's sexual other half, that the living being seeks in love. To this mythical representation of the mystery of love, analytic experience substitutes the search by the subject, not of the sexual complement, but of the part of himself, lost forever, that is constituted by the fact that he is only a sexed living being, and that he is no longer immortal" (*FFC* 205). This interpretation, positioning the search for the originary lack within death and alterity works for The Other (Lacan's concern) but not for the subject at hand here, The Double.
perceived as missing in the psyche and without which one cannot “accomplish any great and noble work” (Howard 198).

Springing from the paternalistic works of Plato and Shelley, it is not surprising that the epipsyche’s originary self is most frequently identified as male, with the female portion assigned a more etherealized position as the specular object and embodiment “of the mind’s or soul’s quest for its own highest ideal of beauty and good” (Riede 32n). In this formulation, the dangerous, thanatopic aspects of the epipsychean double are most apparent. According to Carlos Baker (the contemporary founder of this particular critical mini-industry), the poet in search of his epipsyche “is unable to cope with his environment effectively unless he is able to establish a connection with some epipsychoal counterpart, through whom he is completed and strengthened, wakened to energy, shielded from impurity, disciplined and directed” (55). Deprived of the epipsyche, “in the end [he] perished through the intensity of his search after an absolute he could not find again, either in the flesh or elsewhere” (59). But the female version of the epipsyche is at least potentially salvific. When women employ the motif of the male/female double, it becomes “a productive interaction in which the male and female selves overreach their culturally prescribed gender identities” (Blum 1). Joanne Blum suggests that female versions of the epipsyche use the male/female double to imply “that transcendence of one division in human life extends easily, and even necessarily, to another: crossing the boundary of sexuality leads to that of another, gender, and of another, ego” (33).8 Such

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8Blum’s examples include Ursula Le Guin’s Left Hand of Darkness, Cathy and Heathcliff in Wuthering Heights, Margaret Drabble’s The Needle’s Eye and, more problematically, Rochester and Jane in Jane Eyre.
boundary crossings would make possible a real cure to the dis-ease of doubling, a true union of selves based on completion rather than repulsion. The wrenching-apart symptoms caused by hierarchically privileged divisions are eased if not cured in female-created cases of the epipsyche. In these cases, the divisiveness associated with the doppelgänger and other malignant forms of The Double is transformed into complementarity: “The male and female selves are more than opposite, but complementary, gender identities which must be combined for true selfhood to be possible for each” (Blum xi). Further,

one self does not necessarily take precedence over the other, nor can one self be usefully considered as a representation of some aspect of the other.

Both are complete selves which, through their interaction with one another, transcend gender identity to attain a deeper awareness both of selfhood and of relationship (Blum 3).

This is the most hopeful form of the disease. Like pregnancy (another feminine medical “complaint”), it is actually a “happy disease,” one which promises deliverance and dyadic union.

Another relatively benign and even humorous form of The Double disease is the Twin. Beginning with Plautus and reaching a sort of apogee with Shakespeare (in Twelfth Night and other works), Twins are a stock comedic plot, invoking laughter at a variety of predictable cases of mistaken identity. Situated in the center of the continuum of The Double, Twins partake both of hope and of fear. Over the past half-century, interpretations of the place of the Twin in literature have followed the more general philosophical movement from a post-Romantic fearfulness of duality toward a post-
modernist embracing of multiplicity. The flow is most concisely mirrored in the contrasting definitions of The Double given by the 1908 edition of Hastings's *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* and Mircea Eliade's 1987 *Encyclopedia of Religion*. In the 1908 volume, A. E. Crawley focuses on primitive beliefs about Twins as sacred but dangerous, emphasizing the ways in which doubles weaken and endanger the original self. But by 1987, Maria Gimbutas's interpretation of primitive beliefs about Twins has evolved from harbingers of death to symbols of fecundity.

Twins, of course, are implicated in kinship structures, in biological families as opposed to the intentional families associated with the *doppelgänger*. One of the earliest appearances of the Twin is in Greek mythology, where a version of the Narcissus myth provides him with a sister—thus opening the field to male/female doubles as well as the more traditional all-male pairing:

> We know that the person of the pursuer frequently represents the father or his substitute (brother, teacher, etc.), and we also find in our material that the double is often identified with the brother. . . . The appearance for the most part is as a twin and reminds us of the legend of the womanish Narcissus, for Narcissus thinks that he sees in his image his sister, who resembles him in every respect. (Rank 75)

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9Perhaps the most striking example, given under the section on "Spiritual Doubles," is that of the Kaffir, who believe that the father is reincarnated in the child, and that the birth of twin children, therefore, draws off a dangerously excessive amount of the father's strength: "A Kaffir will frequently kill one of his twin children, the belief being that otherwise "he will lose his strength." (857)

10The prehistoric culture of Europe used images of doubles to indicate potency or abundance (Gimbutas 423).
Otto Rank’s work on the Narcissus myth demonstrates how the traditions associated with seeing one’s own image move from the classical fear of death (in primitive tribes, he says, death could be summoned by seeing your image, losing your shadow, etc.) to the popular evocation of love (e.g., myths in which girls may see their true lovers in mirrors or dreams). According to Rank, a late version of the myth in Pausanias combines both major aspects of the myth, “the ruinous and the erotic” (67) when Narcissus, inconsolable over the death of his twin sister (who was identical to him in clothing as well as physical appearance), is comforted by his own reflection, a water-image of his beloved, dead twin sister. Thus, the Twinned Double can involve death and love.\(^{11}\)

Repulsion and fear predominate in the virulent Doppelgänger infection, the “predestined motif” of the German Romantics (Tymms 16). Rank, one of the first lay analysts (who would later break with Freud) has traced the connections between the doppelgänger and the concepts of narcissism and death. According to Rank, the doppelgänger is primarily a duplicate-by-division, through which the (usually neurotic) artistic personality\(^{12}\) separates his primary ego-self from unacceptable desires and actions:

The most prominent symptom of the forms which the double takes is a powerful consciousness of guilt which forces the hero no longer to accept

\(^{11}\)Note the incestuous nature of this love relationship; The Double as Beloved often includes incest among his homogeneous overtones. Although I would not argue the existence of technical incest between the Rossetis (nor, to my knowledge, does any other Rossetti scholar), they clearly practice a form of textual incest, as discussed in Chapter 3, \textit{The Rossetti Family Romance.}

\(^{12}\)The literary representations of the double-motif which describe the persecution complex confirm not only Freud’s conception of the narcissistic disposition toward paranoia, but also, in an intuition rarely attained by the mentally ill, they reduce the chief pursuer to the ego itself, the person formerly loved most of all, and now direct their defense against it\(^{a}\) (Rank 74).
the responsibility for certain actions of his ego, but to place it upon another
ego, a double . . . As Freud has demonstrated, this awareness of guilt,
having various sources, measures on the one hand the distance between
the ego-ideal and the attained reality; on the other, it is nourished by a
powerful fear of death and creates strong tendencies toward self-
punishment, which also imply suicide. (76-77)

The doppelgänger, as the repository of guilt-provoking actions and desires, is the
part of the self which appears “expendable,” a quasi-externalized scapegoat which can be
hated and/or destroyed. The doppelgänger then, can die “for” the self, and so becomes
both a harbinger of death and a “wish-defense against a dreaded eternal destruction”
(Rank 86). But, since the Narcissistic doppelgänger comes originally from the self, based
on a thwarted desire for The Other which causes the return of the same as The Double-d
self, the attractive force is nearly as strong as the repulsive; thus the ambivalence
characteristic of this form of The Double. Note also, that the “implied affinity and
relationship” between the doppelgänger and the ego-self brings in the idea of intentional
families, groups created by an exercise of will, bound together by desire and spiritual
affinity rather than ties of blood kinship (Tymms 28). Such intentional families reinforce
the ambiguity of fear and longing between the two components of this form of The
Double.

It is no very large step from doubling to binarism; critics frequently double-
underline the connection between the human propensity toward doubling and the
binarism implicit in both physical and kinship structures:
The family, like the human body—each an aggregation of pairs and opposites, replications and resemblances—has served to justify, as mirrors, pools, and shadows have, certain strains of dualistic conjecture. Man and wife are among the most compelling of all dualities—opposites of a sort, a pair who may become the parents of a pair of opposing subsidiary self (K. Miller, 24).

In fact, a complete mapping of the figure of The Double would virtually diagram the entire problem of binarism that underlies Western culture. The Double, however, resists the rigidly hierarchical form of binarism that is intrinsic to The Other; rather its binarism is more fluid. The Double partakes of Self and Other (as an/Other), body and spirit, separation and connection, masculine and feminine.

The cure for this dis-ease of The Double lies in ease: in an acceptance of it as a condition which is chronic but not necessarily fatal. The remedy lies in the “simultaneous entertainment and overthrow of dualistic outlooks” (K. Miller ix), the creation of a self as a “decentered unity that tolerates rather than proscribes the other,” (Coates xii) advocated by Derrida and other poststructuralist proponents of the move beyond binarism. Beyond binarism: a move beyond the now-discredited Enlightenment conception of a unified self; beyond the Victorian and Romantic fear of binarism; past the trinarism of Hegel's thesis-synthesis-antithesis; and into a post-modern acceptance of multiplicity, of Protean selves that are “seamless and continuous, momentary,” not characterized by the break of “the split self [which] is successive, and may even be amnesiac” (K. Miller 38). It lies in “a dialogue of cultures . . . in which no one has the last word, in which neither voice is reduced to the status of a simple object” (Todorov 250). It lies in an “insistence on
balance and interdependence instead of hierarchy and opposition [which] reflects . . . [a] characteristically feminine moral stance" described by Carol Gilligan and others (Blum 62). This dialogue must begin within the family, where the romance of alterity is first invoked, as gender roles are assigned and mirrored, as parental and sibling constellations are first created. It is here that one can lay the groundwork to overthrow hierarchical binarisms, working to invoke the cure that lies in a position which not merely reverses but also subverts, explodes, and deconstructs the habits that privilege the hierarchical oppositions of The Other over the more equal-handed valuing of differences of The Double.

“A PEEP AT THE GOBLINS”:
PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS OF GENDER

The relationship of woman to Other and Double is as old as the Biblical stories of creation. Lilith, created separately from Adam, is The Other who spurns union with man and becomes frighteningly Other. Eve, created part for whole from Adam's rib, is a Double, not a substitute but a supplementation. Indeed, Woman and otherness, or alterity, are inextricably interwoven in Western thought—not, certainly, as an equation of true identity, but psychologically close enough that definitions and concepts move freely between the two and to allow theorists to suggests that alterity “is” woman.

If one follows the lead of Lacan and Bataille, it appears that alterity [sic] has something to do with woman. Perhaps alterity “is” woman—The Woman who is the other Woman, the Woman who is The Other. Perhaps this Other is “the nonlogical difference of matter,” matter that is mater,
mater who is Mother. Perhaps the Mother that matters is the Mother who is M-Other. (151)

A possible (but not necessary or exclusive) correlation seems to exist between males and use of The Double, females and use of The Other. The difficulty of making such connections is always already inherent in the disjunction between culture and reality, a fact noted by even such a resolutely patriarchal theorist as Freud who, as Kaja Silverman explains, “notes in 'An Outline of Psychoanalysis' the difficulty of attributing any absolute value to the terms 'male' and 'female' because they do not correspond to any human essence” (139). To suggest a correlation between strategies of alterity (or any other strategies, forms, styles, etc.) and the author's gender is not to espouse a simple and simplistic belief in a “human essence,” nor to postulate biologically-based universalizations. It is to affirm a strong belief in a concept that seems intuitively obvious but is nevertheless under fierce debate: that somewhere in the biological/historical/psychological/sociological matrix we call “woman” there exists an essence that is different from the matrix named “man.”13 In general, the gender assignment remains constant for a designated subject; however, since the matrix includes performative as well as constructive aspects, the gender assignment is not absolutely fixed. That is to say, a male-

13The belief and formulation above are my own; however, I am indebted to Teresa de Lauretis for having the courage to move beyond conflicual binarism, to say that there is something essential about women somewhere, although it is nothing so simple as biological destiny: “the ‘essence’ of woman is . . . the specific properties (e.g., a female-sexed body), qualities (a disposition to nurturance, a certain relation to the body, etc.), or necessary attributes (e.g., the experience of femaleness, of living in the world as female) that women have developed or have been bound to historically, in their differently patriarchal sociocultural contexts, which make them women, and not men” (265). If all essential differences were erased (or, conversely, irredeemably inscribed and unchangeable), the whole feminist conversation would be impossible.
gendered subject may occasionally "perform" in a female-gendered way and produce a text more consonant with the matrix "woman." (See, for example, the categorization of Joyce's writings as "feminine" by early theorists of *écriture féminine*.)

I will go so far as to risk this hypothesis: The sex of the addressee awaits its determination by or from the other. It is the other who will perhaps decide who I am—man or woman. Nor is this decided once and for all. It may go one way one time and another way another time. (Derrida, *Ear* 112)

Such a performative definition of gender seems particularly appropriate for the Rossettis. Dante Gabriel was known for his rejection of the resolutely masculine persona of the bluff Victorian, from his somewhat feminized appearance (with small hands and a seductive voice) to the feminine endings of his poetical lines. Christina, on the other hand, held the problematically-gendered title of "Queen of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood."
Questions of absolutes aside, tentative connections can at least be suggested
between The Other and females through the maternal logic of metaphor, between The
Double and males through the patriarchal logic of metonym's arbitrary signifiers. If
metaphor is the substitution of one thing for the other, or, more importantly, of The Other
for one, then a contradiction is involved, for The Other is, by definition, contradictory to
the same/self. But contradiction is at the heart of both rhetorical and maternal logic. As
Barbara Johnson has pointed out in World of Difference, all figure, and particularly
metaphor, is implicated from the outset in contradiction:14

If the figure does violate the logic of contradiction, it is not in order to call for
a "corrective" reading that would bring it back to that logic, but rather to
lead us into the domain of a different logic. The logic of figure is such that it
makes the logic of contradiction dysfunction. It suspends the system of
binary oppositions on which contradiction is based (presence vs. absence,
animate vs. inanimate, life vs. death, reparable vs. irreparable), but without
reducing these oppositions to the same. The gap described by such polarities
remains as irreducible as it is undecidable, for while each pole can cross
over to the other, it is not thereby totally erased. (italics mine, 110)

We are talking about a move beyond binarism, beyond reductionist either/or thinking to a
point where multiple positions can be simultaneously entertained and savored. The

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14Interestingly, Woman is also aligned with contradiction and questionable truth values, in
rigorous theoretical works as well as in the popular imagination. See, for example, Derrida,
Éperons: "There is no such thing as the truth of woman, but it is because of that abyssal divergence
of the truth, because that untruth is truth. Woman is but one name for that untruth of truth" (51); and
Taylor, Altarity: "Perhaps this dirt [of dirty Mother Earth] is the soil that soils everything clean and
proper, even 'Truth' itself" (151).
maternal logic of metaphor, then, allows the poet the possibility of circumventing patriarchal hierarchies of binary opposition, of preserving identity-in-difference, of suspending contradiction in a dyad that recalls the *chora* which precedes and grounds the move into symbolic language. As such, it offers access to a richer world-view and language. In its suspension, maternal metaphor supports the requirement of articulate language for “the co-presence of two distinct poles, not their collapse into oneness” (Barbara Johnson 164). These workings of metaphor to support the “two distinct poles” hearkens back to the Jakobsonian discussion of metaphor and metonymy, in which “what is at stake . . . is the very possibility of speaking at all. The reduction of a discourse to oneness, identity . . . has as its necessary consequences aphasia, silence, the loss of the ability to speak” (Johnson 164).

In its opposition to both the aphasic collapse into oneness and the paternal logic of binarism, metaphor becomes implicated in maternal logic, in the *fort-da* of the repetition compulsion whereby the child consoles itself for the absence of the mother in a game that draws absence and presence together (without erasing either) into a movement over which the child gains control by abandoning control (throwing the ball away). Similarly, the user of metaphor seeks a measure of control through a relinquishment of control, a move which recalls the stereotypically female move of passive dominance. This simultaneous move toward and away from control can be seen as the ground for all signification, a sort of Mother Earth for language, which must be both maintained and split from in the acquisition of language. In Kristeva’s view, such a move grounds all language, when “The sign can be conceived as the voice that is projected from the agitated body (from the semiotic *chora*) onto the facing *imago* or on to the object, which simultaneously detach
from the surrounding continuity ("Revolution" 100). It is "the process by which significance is constituted. Plato himself leads us to such a process when he calls this receptacle or chora nourishing and maternal, not yet unified in an ordered whole because deity is absent from it" (94).

On the other hand, metonymy, from the Greek for "change of name" is implicated in the paternal logic of arbitrary signifiers, where the Name of the Father is assignable and changeable almost at will, or at least at the will of the gestalt behind the langue. In some formulations, metonymy is aligned with the feminine because of the spatially contiguous relationship of the mother and the fetus. This is based on an assessment of the mother-child bond as primarily physical. A richer understanding includes but is not limited to the position that Woman can incorporate The Other more comfortably than can men, speaking from her body, from her inner knowledge of bearing a child within her body. This knowledge cannot be simply psychically innate (as it is also available to spinsters such as Christina and Elizabeth Barrett before her marriage) or physiologically hormonal (Chodorow has shown that "We can draw no unambiguous conclusions about the relation of hormones to maternal instincts. . . the conclusions we can draw say nothing about the effects of female hormones on maternal behavior, feelings or preferences. They suggest only that male hormones may suppress maternalism" 25). Rather, it is part of the "always obvious fact that [a woman] is from the mother half of humanity" (Snitow 35), and thereby differently situated along social, cultural, and historical as well as biological and psychological axes.

In this more complex formulation, the mother-child relationship is figured as metaphorical with the child radically Other from the parent. Although physically the
child is "blood of my blood, bone of my bone, gene of my gene," the psychological movement of the child is away from the mother/parent, toward adulthood through separation from the mother (and ultimately a replacement for the same-sex parent). Kristeva notes that "As a child becomes an other, the mother becomes The Other" (Horror 164). Especially within the psychoanalytic framework, the entire history of the child is a struggle away from an overdetermined dyadic union into a "healthy" normal adulthood. Here, all growth is postulated from the point of view of the child; while the mother’s attempts to "hold on" are seen as detrimental, unhealthy, etc., it is "natural" for the child to be/become Other.\footnote{As Helena Michie points out, the "mother point of view" has been woefully absent from fiction, and has only recently been considered at all in critical and theoretical literature. Robert L. Patten supports this view with his extensive observations on the nearly pathological absence of mothers in the work of Dickens and other male Victorians, and their positioning as monsters or fools when present (personal conversations).} Within Kristeva's linguistic/psychoanalytic framework, the mother-child relation is clearly positioned in the place of the Other as it initiates language:

As the addressee of every demand, the mother occupies the place of alterity. . . . The gap between the imaged ego and drive motility, between the mother and the demand made on her, is precisely the break that establishes what Lacan calls the place of the Other as the place of the 'signifier'. . . . this want-to-be confers on an other the role of containing the possibility of signification; and this other, who is no longer the mother (from whom the child ultimately separates through the mirror stage and castration) presents itself as the place of the signifier that Lacan will call 'the Other'. (Kristeva, "Revolution" 101)
Within this paradigm of the mother-child relation, works focusing on the child become entangled with strategies of The Other, although additional complications come into play for the daughter as a same-sex offspring of her mother. On the other hand, depictions of lovers—a bond which, unlike that of the mother and child, is arbitrarily chosen, not necessarily/biologically determined—can best be seen as involving strategies of The Double. The connection with the lover is a movement toward union, closeness. While it is “natural” for the child to struggle away from union to be/become Other, it is “natural” for the lovers to become Doubles. The implications of these arguments will be more fully teased out in subsequent chapters, particularly in the discussion of the family in chapter three and of the place of the female in chapter five.
CHAPTER 3

THE ROSSETTI FAMILY ROMANCE

Both The Double and the Other are deeply implicated in the family romance—a term I use here, not in its strict Freudian sense, but to designate that tale told by and about the family, that unique matrix of psychological formation, cultural heritage, socialization, and even daily interactions that form both the person and the poet. Although the experiences of the Rossettis (as of any individual family) are unique, the Rossetti family romance exemplifies the problems that faced many British families—including those productive of poets and painters—during this era. For, despite critical disparagement of the old formulation of “Life and Letters,” biographical and literary experience are intertwined, as the New Historicists are rediscovering and as Dante Gabriel believed when he argued in “Transfigured Life” that “true poetry must be in essence autobiographical, the ‘transfigured life’ of the poet” (Doughty 550), or “to use his own description of his earlier writing, ‘autopsychological’” (Doughty 367). In “Transfigured

1David Sonstroem makes a similar point: “Indeed, the frequent recourse to Rossetti's life for a key to his works, and vice versa, is less a commentary upon his explicators than it is upon Rossetti himself, who (I would argue) often let art and life complete and answer for each other—who insisted upon the personal application. Almost everyone who has ever written about him, those whose knew him and those who studied him, from Christina and Watts-Dunton to Doughty and Grylls, has remarked on his habitural way of seeing events and people (in Miss Grylls' phrase) sub specie litterarum. He seems to have looked for the reappearance of literary figures in real life, and also to have translated his own experience into literature” (5).
Life" (LX, 178). Dante Gabriel explicitly compares the "growth of form or momentary glance / in a child's features [which] will recall to mind / The father's with the mother's face combin'd" to the process through which "in the Song, the singer's Joy and Pain, / Its very parents, evermore expand / . . . By Art's transfiguring essence subtly spann'd." Kristeva would call this intertwining of life and letters transposition, the movement from "one (or several) sign-system(s) into another; . . . [which] specifies that the passage from one signifying system to another demands a new articulation of the thetic—of enunciative and denotative positionality" (111). Through this medium of transposition, biographical material and literary productions each correlate with the signifying system of the other, gaining, in the movement, additional resonances of articulation and positionality.

The family romance of the Rossettis, then, provides both a means to study the psychological and cultural dynamics that produced Dante Gabriel and Christina, their lives and their works; and a path by which to extrapolate from their situations unto the more general Victorian culture. For, as social historian Stephen Mintz notes,

The family provides a bridge between two fundamental domains of human life and experience—between social processes and psychological processes. As a primary agent of socialization, the family provides a vehicle for studying the transmission and adaptation of cultural and psychological patterns from one generation to the next . . . . The

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2 Wherever possible, references to poems by Dante Gabriel Rossetti will be to the standard edition of his works, the revised and enlarged 1911 edition of The Works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, as edited by his brother, William M. Rossetti. Since this edition does not include line numbers, parenthetical references will be to page numbers only. In the case of sonnet sequences such as The House of Life, the sonnet number will be given in roman numerals where relevant (eg., LX, 178 for sonnet 60 on page 178).
family... permits us to see relationships between changes in individual personality and larger social and cultural changes (2).

The family is foundational in many ways. Psychologically, the family is the site of the Oedipal trauma through which the subject first experiences the loss of the Mother/Other to the law of the father, thus establishing the unobtainable object of desire, le Grand Autre, The Other. This process sets in motion the subject’s sexual identity and the entire gendering process which determines the subject’s expectations, roles, and strategies of accommodation. Linguistically, this discovery of the nom du père initiates the traumatic rupture of the mother-child dyad and the subject’s subsequent initiation into the symbolic realm. Culturally and socially, the family situation determines the child’s language, heritage, and class.

For the Victorians, these questions were particularly vexed, for the very definition of the family was in flux as the British economy moved from cottage industries to the defamiliarization—and de-familization—of industrialization. Moving, too, from the dynastic to the affective family,3 the Victorians thus put the role of paterfamilias into double jeopardy. Indeed, Mintz argues that Freud’s Totem and Taboo was motivated by a general concern with

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3 The idea of the “affective family” comes from Lawrence Stone’s work on the evolution of family structure from 1500 to 1800. The “affective family,” based on concerns of affect (i.e., romantic love and companionate interests), replaces the earlier dynastic family founded on arranged marriages and distribution of land and property. Similarly, Foucault claims that “since the eighteenth century the family has become an obligatory locus of affects, feelings, love” (108). Note that this time frame overlaps with the period that Kristeva claims saw the transition from the serenity of the necessarily-connected symbol to the strained ambivalence of the sign. (See “Bridge: From Symbol to Sign” in Chapter 2 above for more on Kristeva’s theory.)
the psychological effects of the drift away from traditional hierarchy, prescribed authority, and ascribed status. The killing of the "primal father" symbolized the destruction of boundaries of all kinds—psychological, religious, political, and economic. In an effort to overcome the divisive forces unleashed by this overleaping of social and psychological boundaries, and to mitigate the excesses and uncertainties of freedom, Freud argued that people responded by attaching enormous stress to the importance of fraternity and the associated values of voluntary submission (187).

The values thus put into question were foregrounded and assumed increased importance. As more and more boundaries were disrupted, Mintz argues, Victorians became obsessed with restraining chaos and the destruction of all boundaries; losing faith in transcendent restraints (familiarized as the cross-generational controls of filial duty and obedience to authority), they turned to more internalized, voluntary controls (such as the importance of fraternity and repression). This emphasis on wife-husband and parent-child roles and bonds fits into the context of an emphasis on duality (and hence The Double) evident throughout the nineteenth century as deployments of alliance and the dynastic family (with their focus on The unobtainable Other of larger, external groups and concerns) gave way to deployments of sexuality and the affective family (focusing on The Doubled husband-and-wife). The couple, a Doubled pair motivated by love to create a nuclear family in which all members are literally brothers and sister, became normative: "The legitimate and procreative couple laid down the law. The couple imposed itself as a model" (Foucault I: 3). Within this movement to the nuclear family, desire became
domesticated and, at least theoretically, obtainable: the objet petit a of The Double rather than the Grand Autre of The Other.

For the Rossettis, the importance of these crucial events in the history of the family was further emphasized by the many tensions inherent in their particular situation. A poor Italian family posing as middle class Victorian; a personally phlegmatic, religiously passionate English mother balanced against a personally fiery, religiously agnostic Italian father; two brothers and two sisters, allied in their religious beliefs along gender lines yet with personal psychologies repeatedly cross-characterized in mixed-sex pairs as the calms and the storms—all the divisions were in place and held in dynamic tension only by the force of will of the participants. The divisions within the Rossetti family were no doubt exacerbated by their strongly Italian heritage for, if language is the law of the father, the Rossettian law of the father was also the law of the Other, since the language of the father was, in this case, Italian while, on the other hand, the law of the Mother and the Motherland in which they lived was English. As Dante Gabriel and Christina sought to answer The Other’s invitation to language by taking on the power of the word (both the commonplace spoken word and the more powerful written word of the poet), their choices were rendered especially problematic from the outset by the choice of a (m)other tongue. If, as Derrida has proposed, “The beginning word . . . [was to be understood] . . . as the voice of the other and as a commandment” (17), the child was here faced with the choice of commandment even prior to obedience. Thus Dante Gabriel’s early translations from the Italian and Christina’s late love poetry in Italian provide evidence of their desire to merge with The Other of their Italianate heritage, while the fact that the majority of their work was produced in English shows a very different choice made in everyday life.
Like Todorov's contention that "ethnology" or the study of other cultures "is at once the child of colonialism and the proof of its death throes" (250), Dante Gabriel's and Christina's fetish for the Italianate is at once proof of their emotional "colonial enslavement" and their refutation of their Italian heritage from Gabriele.

Noting the presence of these tensions is a truism of Rossetti scholarship, almost an obsession in biographical studies. Oswald Doughty positions Dante Gabriel on the cusp of two eras as "A Victorian Romantic"; Brian and Judy Dobbs dub Dante Gabriel "An Alien Victorian"; Helen Rossetti Angeli focuses her biography of Dante Gabriel as a study of his relationships to "Friends and Enemies"; while Rosalie Glynn Grylls' Portrait of Rossetti is of a man formed in the collision between the genes of his Italian agnostic father and his Victorian governess mother. The paucity of outward event in Christina's life makes it less easily radicalized, yet her biographers still present hers as "A Divided Life" (Georgina Battiscombe) and insist on portraying her as a woman torn between love of God and the love of a married man (Lona Mosk Packer), as "pricked to a pattern" of Victorian womanhood which ill-accorded with her passionate nature (Kathleen Jones), or as a saint in a circle of sinners (Mackenzie Bell). All of these divisions are true, but it is more productive to look beyond the problem and the immediate pain it causes to see the strategies and even solutions engendered by the tension. As Battiscombe notes,

A conflict between the two sides of our nature is the common experience of every human being. For Christina, however, the struggle was an unusually painful one, partly because being peculiarly gifted she was also peculiarly sensitive, partly because in her two cultural streams met and mingled without becoming a unity. Maybe truth, beauty, goodness, call it
what you will, is not in itself an absolute but proceeds from the tension between two opposites. If this is so, the tension between two nationalities, two cultures, two ways of thought, meeting in one gifted personality can be very fruitful of results, though it will inevitably be the cause of much stress and suffering to the person concerned (13-4).

The danger of hierarchical binarisms that focus on only the biographical pain or only the literary production is that such a view does not allow one to look beyond the “either-or” situation to the “both-and” solutions. These “both-and” solutions provided both Dante Gabriel and Christina Rossetti with strategies which enabled them not only to endure a divided life but to make their lives richly productive of poetry, painting, and rewarding relationships with friends and relatives.

ITALIANTANE HERITAGE:
THE OTHER IN ENGLAND/DESIRE OF THE OTHER

“You,” he [Gabriele] says, addressing his children, “are in your own country but I am in exile.” (Waller 73)

Contrary to Gabriele Rossetti's belief that his children were comfortably assimilated into British culture, Dante Gabriel and Christina Rossetti struggled all their lives with a sense of being exiles—neither wholly English nor completely Italian, they were nowhere at home “in their own country.” Children of an aggressively Italian father and a half-Italian/half-British mother, both felt themselves to be The Other in England, and both were often overwhelmed by a sense of desire for/of The Other that was England as
well as feelings of what Mintz calls “liminality” or a “sense of standing on the periphery of two cultures and of being incompletely assimilated into either” (51-2). This sense of liminality and of an originary lack of clear cultural self-definition precipitated for both Rossettis a lifelong movement between English and Italian affiliations. For Dante Gabriel, the journey originated in the Italianate phase—translations of “The Early Italian Poets” formed his first published work, while Northern Italian models inspired the formation of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in his early twenties—moving to a more domestic position as the Double of his lover when, in his later years, he ceased to write in Italian and focused on portraying his mistress(es). Christina, on the other hand, did not claim her Italianate heritage until maturity, when she wrote articles on Italian writers and other celebrities for Dr. Waller’s *Imperial Dictionary of Universal Biography* (Bell 32: Jones 65) and chose Italian as the language of her most intimate love poems (“Il Rosseggiar dell’ Oriente”). But both brother and sister engaged in a lifelong struggle, poetically and personally, with their position as the Italianate Other in England.

Dante Gabriel and Christina’s discomfort was greatly aggravated by the divergence of the Rossetti family from the familial model endorsed by contemporary British culture. Stephen Mintz outlines this model in his provocative study of the Victorian family as *A Prison of Expectations* where he analyzes father/child conflict within a Freudian Oedipal

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4In line with Mintz's emphasis on “the enormous emotional and psychological importance of the father in the Victorian home, who stood as the embodiment of intellectual and moral authority” (12), while, in contrast, “the recurrent image of the mother is one of selflessness” (50-1), I will focus on the father as I study the parental role in setting up the family romance. This focus on the father is particularly relevant in the case of the Rossettis, where Gabriele's Italian heritage and colorful character defined the special characteristics of the family which rendered the parent-child relationship within the framework of The Other. Frances Lavinia's half English/half Italian heritage duplicates that of the children, while her religious faith and experience as a governess are so typical of the Victorian mother as to render her contribution to the family romance virtually a Victorian
context as part of the evolutionary struggle to define and refine the self against the
previous generation while still retaining those things of value from the previous
generation; in other words, within the framework of opposition and problematic union
characteristic of The Other. This is in contradistinction to the orientation toward The
Double characteristic of the couple and siblings, intragenerational rather than
intergenerational groupings. The father’s position as head of the family, although he is
not precisely the “‘representative’ of the sovereign or the state, and the latter are not
projections of the father,” does involve a collaboration with the mechanisms of power
(Foucault I: 100).

The family does not duplicate society, just as society does not imitate the
family. But the family organization, precisely to the extent that it was
insular and heteromorphic with respect to the other power mechanisms,
was used to support the great “maneuvers” employed for the Malthusian
control of the birthrate, for the populationist incitements, for the
medicalization of sex and the psychiatrization of its nongenital forms. (100)

That is, the father as head of family is complicit with the great social mechanisms for
control of power. But what then happens when the Father is himself Other to and
subversive of the society in which the family must function?

cliche. Since, in addition, any examination of the role of the mother is inextricably bound up with
female concerns and feminist conceptualizations, Frances Lavina’s influence will be more properly
taken up within that context in Chapter 5, “(en)Gendered (re)Visions.”

5“Filial rebellion directed against a father at the onset of adulthood, far from signaling a lack
of identification between family generations, was a vehicle for the transmission and internalization
of cultural patterns between generations” (198).
This disjuncture between the approved Victorian view of the *paterfamilias* and Gabriele Rossetti proved problematic for Dante Gabriel and Christina. To base poetic representations of the father on the truth of their own experience would involve serious disloyalty to their father, by portraying him in a light unlikely to be perceived as flattering by most Victorians. On the other hand, to follow the Victorian tropes of fatherhood would give the lie to their own experience. Strategies of The Other provided a way for both Dante Gabriel and Christina to deal with this dilemma via opposition and paradox, through the metaphorical stratagem of replacing the individual father by the cultural Fatherland. The space of the father, rejected and cast out of their psyches, returned intensified as a preoccupation with the Fatherland in a sort of repetition compulsion which not only reiterated but amplified the repressed material. Dante Gabriel’s resolute rejection of the Father as The Other amplified into the Italian fatherland, was strikingly demonstrated in his “obsessive need to not-visit Italy” (Grylls 172). Time and again, he toured the continent but stopped virtually on the Italian border. His closest approach to Italy occurred in his several visits to France—a country whose inhabitants he quickly dismissed, saying of the million Frenchmen in Paris that “Cast up, they’ll make an Englishman—perhaps” (Doughty 84). Indeed, for all the immorality and bohemianism imputed to Dante Gabriel throughout his life, he confided to his brother William that he found French morals, as demonstrated by the cancan, to be alterior, repugnant and alien to his natural bent:

A toofsome feast

Of blackguardism and whore flesh and bald row,

No doubt for such as love those same. For me,
I confess, William, and avow to thee,

(Soft in thine ear) that such sweet female whims

As nasty backsides out and wriggled limbs

Nor bitch-squeaks, nor the smell of heated q____s

Are not a passion of mine naturally. (Weintraub 43)

On the other hand, when Christina visited Italy (in company with her mother and brother William Michael), “once among smiling Italian faces and musical Italian voices, she felt herself at home. She, whose entire life had hitherto been spent in the North, ‘ice-bound, hungry, pinched and dim,’ had at last found what she recognized as her own country and her own people” (Battiscombe 122). For Christina, already irrevocably Other as woman and poet, The Other in the guise of the Fatherland need not be so rigorously rejected. She could respond to The Other as that which is both eternally in opposition and yet part of the self—a place of self-definition through alterity. As William Michael was to note in a letter to Christina’s biographer, Mackenzie Bell, “The passionate delight in Italy to which the second section of ‘En Route’ bears witness suggests that she was almost an alien—or, like her father, an exile—in the North” (Bell 48). In “Italia, Io Ti Saluto!” Christina clearly characterizes her return from Italy in terms of an exile bemoaned by accepted, as one accepts one’s fate:

To come back from the sweet South, to the North

Where I was born, bred, look to die;

Come back to do my day’s work in its day,

Play out my play—

Amen, amen say I.
To see no more the country half my own,

Nor hear the half familiar speech,

Amen, I say; I turn to that bleak North

Whence I came forth—

The South lies out of reach. (ll: 74-5)⁶

Even more telling, perhaps, are the lines of “En Route” where Christina uses the metonymy of physical visitation to construct a strategy, based on love, to recast the Fatherland as a sibling, moving from The Other of the patriarchy to The Double of the sister: “Farewell, land of love, Italy, / Sister-land of Paradise: / With mine own feet I have trodden thee / Have seen with mine own eyes” (Bell 48).

It is the movement of intensification, of amplification that marks the return of the repressed fatherland as The Other rather than The Double. When the return takes place as a simple personification, it can become The Double in the traditional scapegoating mode which allows vicarious satisfaction and punishment of the unacceptable impulses (Irwin 33). But the radical displacement of the father onto the Fatherland marks a departure into opposition and paradox, a movement of metaphor rather than metonymy, and engages The Other as the field through which the subject emerges into subjectivity. The transposition is emphasized in the case of the Rossettis as soon as it engages the question of The Other in language, invoking the symbolic order, the Kristevan chora which must

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⁶ All references to poems by Christina Georgina Rossetti will be to Rebecca Crump’s excellent The Complete Poems of Christina Rossetti: A Variorum Edition. References to entire poems will be by volume and page (ll: 217), while partial quotations will be cited by line numbers as well (ll: 217, 44-45). Within complex explications of individual poems, after the first reference, citations will be to line numbers, with roman numerals indicating sonnet numbers where applicable.
experience the coupure into différence—complete with contradiction, disruption, silence, and absence—before it can become meaningful (Moi 13).

For the Rossettis, the Voice of the Father inevitably spoke Italian for, despite the Italian heritage on both sides, the Rossetti family romance put Gabriele, come direct from Italy where he claimed to still hold a politically significant status, in the position of the exiled Other, aligned with the Italian F/Otherland. Mother Frances Polidori’s family, two generations removed from the Italian Fatherland, was aligned with the English Motherland, for the Polidoris had greatly Anglicized themselves, one brother even changing his name to the more English “Polydore.” Dante Gabriel, too, changed his name, usurping the father’s Adamic naming power, and rejecting his assigned nom du père. Christened Gabriel (for his father) Charles (for his godfather Charles Lyell, Senior) Dante (for his Italianate heritage and his father’s obsession), he renamed himself Dante Gabriel, metaphorically replacing the father with the Fatherland and repressing altogether the English scientist. It is significant that this renaming occurred in 1848, at the moment when he turned twenty, took his first painting studio outside the home, and formed the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood—all important steps marking his initiation into the symbolic realm, as he laid claim to the estate of manhood—as person, as painter, and as poet.

This renaming was only one symptom of the poignant personal struggle that tore Dante Gabriel between his Italianate and English heritages, despite the blusteringly English front he put on. Again and again, he was defined, by friends and critics, as Italian—often with the negative overtones endemic to the insular Britishers. Hall Caine, one of the last of Dante Gabriel’s secretary/assistant/worshippers, described his manner as “Italian in its spontaneity . . . English in its manly reserve” (Angeli 180). Leigh Hunt described him as
“a young man of decidedly foreign aspect” (W. M. Rossetti 95) while Stanley Weintraub claims for him a “combination of Latin grace and Anglo-Saxon wit” (82). His primary biographer, Oswald Doughty, claims that “It was upon the ‘foreigner’ Rossetti that the angry and alarmed [Pre-Raphaelite] Brethren vented their exasperation and dismay . . . . ‘A sly Italian,’ cried Mrs. Millais” (102); and claims that Rossetti, “the Italian in London,” was ever an “outsider at heart” (248). When Buchanan replied to Rossetti’s “Stealthy School of Criticism” in 1872, he attacked Dante Gabriel as “an amatory foreigner, ill-acquainted with English” (Grylls 147). And, indeed Dante Gabriel chose as his “amatory” partner Janey Morris, about whom Mrs. Bell Scott said she could not “think what countrywoman Mrs. Morris is like . . . not an Englishwoman, certainly” (Doughty 375). Even within his own family, Dante Gabriel was perceived as the Italian in London. For example, when his friend Coventry Patmore claimed that “he had that sweet and easy courtesy peculiar to his nation—i.e., the Italian nation,” his brother William concurred, saying “This I think correct: and in fact I must always regard my brother. . . . as more an Italian than an Englishman. . . . And yet he was mentally very far from being like his Italian father, and was wholly unlike his Italian grandfather” (408), underlining the alterity of Dante Gabriel’s position. His sister Maria, too, recognized that “Gabriel was the closest, among the other Rossettis, to herself in Italianate instincts, despite his outward Englishness” (Weintraub 200-1).

While descriptions of Dante Gabriel’s Italianate appearance and character were frequently cast in a derogatory light, similar descriptions of Christina tend to be laudatory,
perhaps because, as a woman, the position of The Other was properly hers.\textsuperscript{7} Lona Mosk Packer describes Christina in her early thirties as "Dark, slender, Italian in appearance . . . she appeared to Grace Gilchrist, then a child, like 'some fairy princess from the sunny south'" (162), while Katharine Tynan Hinkson claims that the elderly Christina in 1885 was "not Italian for nothing. . . . What on earth had she to do, this flame-hearted saint with the gray streets of London. . . . There was nothing at all of England in her way of loving, the mortal love, or the Divine Love" (Jones 208). Christina's family-authorized biographer, Mackenzie Bell, wrote in a particularly telling way of Christina's Italianate voice and personality:

\begin{quote}
Her voice attracted me at once: never before had I heard such a voice. . . . Indications of her foreign lineage were very noticeable on the occasion I am describing. Not of course that it was discernible in accent, nor even in mere tone or inflexion of voice, certainly it was not markedly observable either in her modes of speech or in her ideas. . . . Perhaps the nearest approach to an illustration of my meaning would be to say that the effect produced was as though a highly educated foreigner, thoroughly acquainted with the grammar and the vocabulary of the English language, were to speak English, and continue to do so for years, although English was not his mother tongue. No one, I think, can fully understand Christina's many-sided personality without
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{7}Formulations of The Other often feminize males from other cultures because they do not fit the dominant masculine model. The female from another culture, however, may at least partially fit into the dominant feminine model because even females from the dominant culture are cast as Other to the males in that culture. Tzvetan Todorov advances this argument in his discussion of The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other. It has also been profitably used by Maxine Hong Kingston, King-Kok Cheung, and Frank Chin with regard to the Chinese in America.
taking into account that foreign origin, and there can be no doubt that under
some circumstances the blending of races has much to do with the
possession of certain gifts. (136-7)

Bell’s paean seems particularly overwrought, as though he were at once struggling with
his own prejudices and rising to defend his “saint Christina” from the linguistic
logocentrism of British insularity. If her speech and, following that, her writing, were
deemed totally Italianate, it would be by definition the false speech of the woman and the
native, the disunified Other: barbaric and undignified. But Scott is at pains to claim that
Christina is “thoroughly acquainted” with the rules of “true” English speech, and to
distance her from accusations of “foreigner” by casting the description metaphorically (“it
was as though a highly educated foreigner. . .”), while emphasizing her education and
adherence to proper British culture.

Descriptions of their speaking voices abound in biographies of both Dante Gabriel
and Christina, and questions of speech and voice become important. Grace Gilchrist
attributes a rich though alien value in her description of Christina’s “beautiful Italian
voice,” with its “strange sweet inflection and silvery modulations” (Packer 162)—the silver
of reflected moonlight, the very paradigm of absent light, which speaks The Other through
reflection. A similarly magical power was attributed to Dante Gabriel’s mode of speaking
and “the natural authority in his rich voice” (Weintraub 175) which “charmed all who
heard it” (Doughty 231)—a quality of much value in his lifelong habit of acquiring
intentional families to supplement his birth family. The magic of music, a kind of alterity
to “true” or common speech, was claimed for the voice of Dante Gabriel by Sir Sidney
Colvin. In an essay on “Famous Voices I have Heard,” Colvin described Dante Gabriel’s voice in these terms:

In reading or recitation, and not to a much less extent in daily talk, he was the greatest magician of them all. To hear him was to listen to a kind of chant, almost a monotone, but one which managed to express with little variations of pitch or inflection a surprising range and power of emotion. A kind of sustained musical drone or hum, rich and mellow and velvety, with which he used to dwell on and stress and prolong the rhyme words and sound-echoes, had a profound effect in stirring the senses and souls of his hearers. (Doughty 231-2)

Like the defense by Bell of Christina’s voice quoted above, this is an evaluation by an insider to the British system of the voice of an outsider, of one who is The Other. For insider Colvin, Dante Gabriel’s voice was the voice of the outsider, The Other, more akin to magic and music, to chant and illusion, than to everyday British speech. Eschewing the commonplace variations of pitch and inflection, Dante Gabriel yet managed to mesmerize his listeners, as the exotic often haunts the dreams of the domestic.

Taken one by one, these concerns of voice and person may seem insignificant; but in the mass they accrue weight until they can be seen as a brilliant accommodation to the problems Dante Gabriel and Christina faced in their dealings with their father. In his native Italy, Gabriele’s reputation had been based more on his skill at extemporaneous composition and presentation than on his questionable talent for the written poetic word. Dante Gabriel and Christina transposed their father’s reputation as extemporaneous speaker and poet to the realm of everyday speech, internalizing his skill and projecting it
outward. The displaced father figure, most often repressed in their written word, returns in the spoken word. It is as though Dante Gabriel and Christina played out the Oedipal drama of the return of the repressed on the stage of the Voice, where the absent word of the father was made present through the spoken word of the child. If, as Lacan suggests, it is always the father's voice that the child hears in his/her own voice, then the acquisition of a powerful, "famous" voice allows the child to symbolically displace the father. The movement from the sign-system of the family to that of the Fatherland involved, for Dante Gabriel and Christina, a literally "new articulation of the thetic" (Kristeva 111), a re-speaking in their own voices of their father's voice. Gabriele's naïve political poetry presented little challenge to Dante Gabriel and Christina, but his extemporaneous speaking skill engaged them in a lifelong competition to make the voice of The Other their own, a movement toward an impossible union with the originary Oedipal lack, with The Other as uncivilized native. For

the syntax of the Word, which is perceived but not known, is never my own . . . the gift of perception makes one aware of an other that silently speaks "within" the subject. The savage, wild, untamed uncivilized, unsocial word, which cannot be known, is the unconscious that forever haunts consciousness. Since I am never able to incorporate or domesticate this "other," "my" voice is always also the voice of the other (Taylor 76-7).

The displacement onto questions of voice that Dante Gabriel and Christina employed to deal with the repressed father figure in everyday life was more problematic in their poetry. There, the answer often lay in silence. That is to say, in the absence of the word, for, as Taylor notes, "The absence of the word discloses the nothingness of the
thing. Both Heidegger and Lacan underscore the etymological link between “thing” (Latin, res) and “nothing or no thing” (French, rien). Within the strictures of the father’s word, the trace is always “the trace of a nothing” (88-89). Despite the preponderant focus on personal relationships in the works of Dante Gabriel and Christina, there is a curious absence of poems dealing with fathers. Father figures appear in only ten of Dante Gabriel’s poems, of which three use the father/parent as a trope⁸ and three are mere references.⁹ The father is personalized and/or given much force only in “A Last Confession” (58), a monologue addressed to an equivocal father; “The White Ship” (53), which details a voyage of father and son; and the heart-rending pair of sonnets entitled “Newborn Death” (XCIX-C, 217-218), spoken by a father to his dead infant metaphorizing Death itself. Even in “Dantis Tenebræ” (291) specifically dedicated “In Memory of my Father,” the focus quickly moves broadens from father to son, lover, and Fatherland in a move that Oswald Doughty terms Oedipal. Here, Dante Gabriel explicitly invokes the equation of Gabriel with father Gabriele and of Dante with both the poet and “that steep land,” the Italian fatherland. With the conferral of these weighted names, the speaker asks his father, “did thou know indeed” that you bequeathed your son both a problematic bride and “The vale of magical dark mysteries” that signals both the poetic and the Italianate

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⁸ “The Birth Bond” (XV, 133) employs the father/parent figure as a trope for the sibling bond; “Transfigured Life” (LX, 178) analogizes the parent-child relationship to the life-poem correspondence; and “Inclusiveness” (LXIII, 181) uses it to metaphorize age and the passage of time.

⁹ One sister refers to their fearsome father in “The Bride’s Prelude” (188); the child of “Stillborn Love” (LV, 173) invokes his “parents”; and the King’s identifies himself as a father in “The King’s Tragedy” (173).

More potent than these bland reference is the pointed lack, the non-reference to the father in “Stratton Water” (149) where Lord Sands blames his mother and brother—but not his father—for his abandonment of Janet.
heritage? But the force of personality and shift of focus is quickly transposed from Gabriele to Dante Gabriel, taking only these fourteen brief lines to complete the ritual Oedipal slaying of the father, to let “[a]ll the night” on the father’s “bowed head” while the “day still soothes” the son’s “lifted face.”

The absence is even more striking in Christina’s large opus: in her approximately 1500 poems, a personified father appears only once, in “A Royal Princess” (I: 149); in all other references the father occurs only as a metaphor or familial placeholder.\(^{10}\) The position of the father in these poems is most often aligned with considerations proper to the older dynastic model of the family, questions of property and place, and the related concerns of family and maidenly honor.\(^{11}\) In “The Iniquity of the Fathers Upon the Children” (I: 164-178), the place of the father is the place of absence per se, as it is his absence that dictates the shame of the speaker and her Mother. In Christina’s nursery rhymes, too, the father is metaphorically aligned with questions of substance and riches\(^ {12}\)

\(^{10}\) I find a total of 26 poems in which Christina makes even passing reference to a father—an incidence of less than 2%. Interestingly, the father once removed, i.e., Grandfather Polidori, is the subject of one bit of juvenalia, the unpublished verse letter “Lines to my Grandfather” (III: 130-131).

\(^{11}\) “Cousin Kate” (I: 32) attracts the great lord’s notice as she stands at the gate of her father’s house, while the speaker’s great treasure is her son for whom his “father would give lands.” “Sister Maude” (I: 60) betrays the speaker’s lover to their father, who exacts a deadly revenge for the insult to family honor. The woman at “The Convent Threshold” (I: 61) chooses the convent more as a refuge from the revenge of “father’s blood” that lies between her and her love than from a sense of vocation. Milly of “Brandons Both” (II: 102ff) smiles at the thought of her father’s palace and riches that will one day be hers. Minimal reference to the father in a dynastic/proprietary context include “Despair” (III: 124ff) and “By the waters of Babylon” (III: 282ff).

\(^{12}\) An odd reversal occurs in “Freaks of Fashion” (II: 115) in which the “gay papas” are concerned only the trivialities of color while substance is left to the mother who “resumed/The broken thread of speech” to say “Let colours sort themselves, my dears. . . / The main points, as it seems to me, / We mothers ahve to teach, / Are form and texture, elegance, / An air reserved, sublime.”
("My baby has a father and a mother, / Rich little baby!" [II: 19]) although, curiously, there are many families with mother, sister, brother, baby—but no father.\textsuperscript{13} The most famous example, of course, is "Goblin Market": in its puzzling conclusion, when sisters Lizzie and Laura have become "wives / With children of their own" (I: 25, 544-545), the husbands/fathers are curiously absent. Even references to God the Father\textsuperscript{14} are generally brief and undistinguished,\textsuperscript{15} although the second of the "Christmas Carols" (II: 174-5) focuses on the familial relationship between God the Father and God the Son by contrasting the "full grown," as it were, Father with the immature Son. The contrast is made through synecdoches of Crown, Hand and, most interestingly, Voice:

\begin{quote}
How comes He with a voice  
Which is but baby-noise?—
That Voice which spake with might  
—'Let there be light'—and light
Sprang out before our sight. (174, 26-30)
\end{quote}

The speaker marvels that the baby's voice, another (Doubled) voice still positioned within the maternal semiotic \textit{chora} even as he lays "on His Mother's breast" is, within the

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{13} Other poems in which the father is mentioned, but only as a placeholder in the family and without any specific alignments, include: "Maude Clare" (I: 44ff); "Eight o'clock," (II: 20); "Why did baby die," (II: 24); "Mother shake the cherry-tree" (II: 31-2); and "Changing Chimes" (II: 329).

\textsuperscript{14} "Martyrs' Song" (I: 182ff); "After This the Judgment" (I: 184ff); "By the Waters of Babylon" (I: 218ff); "The Master is Come, and Calleth for Thee" (I: 226); "It Is Finished" (II: 154-5); "Christmas Carols" (II: 174); "They toil not, neither do they spin" (II: 203-4); "All Saints: Martyrs" (II: 245); "I Do set My bow in the cloud" (III: 150ff); "Death is swallowed up in Victory" (III: 154ff); "Our widowed Queen" (III: 284-5).

\textsuperscript{15} The father also appears in a religious context in "A Prodigal Son" (II: 118-119) in again, a position of riches.
\end{footnotesize}
"fulness . . . of time" yet the same as that cosmic Voice of The Other, God the Father—the Logos which at once creates the universe and the semantic realm of meaningful language. The questions are invoked but not resolved, smothered within the innocuous lullaby requirements of the posited Christmas carol format.

The complex intersections between the voice of the poet and the word of the father and figurations of The Other and The Double are more completely explored and enacted in Dante Gabriel’s poem “A Last Confession” (58-83). As well as being one of his few works explicitly and extensively invoking the father, the poem is Dante Gabriel’s longest experiment in the speech-like form of blank verse (Dobbs 87), complicating the differentiation between the presence of speech and the absence of writing. The confusion is further underlined by the political background of the poem—atypical for Dante Gabriel—which touches “on the problems of Italian unification—the politics of which had brought his father to England and to exile” (Dobbs 87). The speaker in the poem is a nobleman and soldier, engaged in a familial inspired battle as he is fighting for “Italy, / The weeping desolate mother, [who] long has claimed / Her sons’ strong arms to lean on” (69). Indeed, multiple family positions are actuated throughout the poem, weaving a constellation of family relationships that invokes all the variations of duty and desire: the speaker justifies his profession as one followed by his biological father (70); he adopts his mistress first as a daughter (60) when she is a “merry loving child” (64); but he soon admits that “the first love/l had—the father’s, brother’s love—was changed” (67). Continuing in the familial mode, the Oedipus/Electra complex overtones of the relationship are somewhat ponderously emphasized when the speaker gifts his daughter/mistress with a glass Cupid that cuts her hand as she attempts to fix it above her
bed, leading him to bemoan “That I should be the first to make you bleed, / Who love and love and love you!” (66). While it is unclear whether the defloration troped here signifies the violence of rape or the more insidious violation of incest is unclear; what is clear, however, is that The Oedipal logic is reversed so that it is the parent (father/brother) who slays the child (daughter/mistress).

In the poem, the speaker constantly seeks to domesticate desire through the magic of his voice, controlling both reality and interpretation by his speech. Specifically, he seeks to turn The Other (embodied in the father and the lover) into The Double by re-interpretation and displacement. The poem is ambiguously addressed to a “Father” who is, at least potentially, the male parent, but who must be finally interpreted to be a priest, or “ghostly” father, eliding the difference between Gabriele the father and God the father, the biological and spiritual authors of Dante Gabriel’s existence. In his position as representative of God the Father, the addressee of the poem is unobtainably Other; in fact, the mechanism of confession (the poem is set as a deathbed confession) demands alterity between confessor and confessee. Yet the speaker seems determined to mesmerize the Father into The Double’s position of scapegoat, asserting that the burden of interpretation lies with the addressee, and that granting of absolution (based on a failure to understand) will paradoxically result in the priest’s damnation:

...If you mistake my words

And so absolve me, I am sure the blessing

Will burn my soul. If you mistake my words

And so absolve me, Father, the great sin
Is Yours, not mine: mark this: your soul shall burn
With mine for it. (77)

Through the repetition of “If you mistake my words” the speaker seeks to displace the sin, transferring his own damnation onto the Father’s soul. Later, the speaker continues the displacement when he seeks to confuse the source of sexual desire by a manipulation of pronouns between the “I” of the speaker and the “you” of the Father, as well as an elision from the Father’s desire for “your heaven” to the speaker’s desire for a woman:

. . . Father, father,
How shall I make you know? You have not known
The dreadful soul of woman. . .
What do you love? Your Heaven? Conceive it spread
For one first year of all eternity
All round you with all joys and gifts of God;
And then when most your soul is blent with it
And all yields song together,—then it stands
O’the sudden like a pool that once gave back
Your image, but now drowns it and is clear
Again,—or like a sun bewitched, that burns
Your shadow from you, and still shines in sight? (78-79)

Figures of The Double as an image in a pool or a shadow seek to obscure the alterity that stands between the speaker and the Father. If we both have doubles, the speaker says, then are we not each The Double of The Other?
Similarly, the speaker seeks to transform his mistress, the object of his desire, into a Double when, by leaving him for the German soldier, she has already allied herself with The Other. The speaker himself confirms her position when he gives her a dagger such as "Our Lombard country-girls along the coast" wear because they know they might "meet a German lover" (58). To make permanent the alliance, in the end the speaker weds her to the German dagger/phallus by stabbing her in the bosom, as he bids her keep it "Deep in her heart" (82). In a complicated linguistic move, the speaker quotes a long poem in Italian (ostensible language of the speaker, but alien within the actual English lines) and then seeks to displace responsibility for the song onto his mistress: "Yet was it I that sang? The voice seemed hers" (73). The confusion of languages replays the different roles language may play for men and women: to males of the dominant culture, a foreign language is the false speech of The Other, but for women, it can be a safe hiding place, the self as Double when it speaks another language (Coates 35). On the way to the fateful rendezvous, the mistress, too, is doubled in the speaker’s vision as he walks to meet her, seeing "Some fresh shape of herself as once she was" at every turn in the road until her Doubles seemed "gathered round" him "To plead my cause with her against herself / So changed" (58-59); that is, become so Other. But although her Doubles may speak against her, she herself seldom speaks in her own person; rather, it is her laugh that motivates movement and memory within the poem, time and again recalling the speaker to himself. A laugh, mocking or cheering—a voice without words but pregnant with meaning and, in this poem, allied with The Other world. "A woman’s laugh’s another thing sometimes: / I think they laugh in Heaven" (63), the speaker says, before launching into a vision of heaven populated by laughing women walking through heaven—a vision
which returns chillingly to haunt the final lines when the speaker anticipates his reception in heaven: “I shall hear her laugh/Soon, when she shows the crimson steel to God” (63).

The rejected Voice of the Father is also explicitly addressed by Christina’s “A Royal Princess” (I: 149-152) whose stated desire is “Once to speak before the world” (106) though her father-rejecting speech will most likely mean her death. For speech is denied her; she is “a poor dove that must not coo,” doubly guarded (“Two and two my guards behind, two and two before, / Two and two on either hand, they guard me evermore” [4-5]) against, it seems, both her self and her Other. The voice of her father decrees that she will be lost in The Double, denied access to The Other:

All my walls are lost in mirrors, whereupon I trace
Self to right hand, self to left hand, self in every place
Self-same solitary figure, self-same seeking face. (10-12)

Vision here is allied with The mirrored Double, entrapped and impotent, “lost in mirrors” and seeing only self—and a self which “A mirror showed... look[s] old and haggard in the face” (42). Power and knowledge come with the voice of The Others: the power of the King is seen when he “has quarrelled with his neighbors” (22) whom he then proceeds to scourge; the power of the peasantry comes when “Men are clamouring, women, children, clamouring to be fed” (56), their clamours gaining force as “they curse king, queen, and princess of this cursed land” (102) and the voice of their curses becomes the cursed reality. And it is through the voice that the princess gains knowledge and its concomitant power: she learns of the uprising when “two whispered” by her door, and other unidentified “Voices said” what was happening in the streets; she is allowed out of her chamber only when “Said my father” that she should go to her mother; the battle is
reflected only when she “caught [her] father’s voice in sharp word of command” (88, emphasis mine). Yet it is only sotto voce, in the voice of her heart, that she learns the truth which has evaded her father: “Once it came into my heart and whelmed me like a flood, / That these too are men and women, human flesh and blood” (34-35).

The movement of the poem constantly juxtaposes identification and rejection, power and impotence, vision and voice. It begins with the princess’s self-identification with her father, as “a princess, king-descended” (1) who has “an ivory chair high to sit upon, / Almost like my father’s chair, which is an ivory throne” (13-14), an identification at once accepted and rejected by the princess who “Would rather be a peasant with her baby at her breast” (2); that is, she rejects both fatherhood and riches (often aligned elsewhere in Christina’s poetry) in favor of motherhood and poverty. Indeed, the princess proposes to accompany her verbal denial of the father at the conclusion of the poem by the physical action of giving her gold and gems, “a king’s ransom” to the peasantry to purchase food.

With a ransom in my lap, a king’s ransom in my hand,
I will go down to this people, will stand face to face, will stand
Where they curse king, queen, and princess of this cursed land.

They shall take all to buy them bread, take all I have to give;
I, if I perish, perish; they today shall eat and live;
I, if I perish, perish; that’s the goal I half conceive:
Once to speak before the world, rend bare my heart and show

The lesson I have learned, which is death, is life, to know.

I, if I perish, perish; in the name of God I go. (100-108)

If the princess perishes, yet the peasantry shall live; in her death and perishing lies the goal she conceives (i.e., gives life to); if she gives voice to the speech which is the life and lesson of her heart, she will die in the name of God which commands silence. Life and death, identification and rejection, the spoken and the mute: these are the contradictions that motivate both princess and “Princess.”

And yet one more contradiction invades the poem in these closing lines. For the deeply religious Christina, such a battle between the Word of the earthly father and the name of God the spiritual father—a struggle that requires repudiation of the earthly father who does not live up to the ideal paradigm—must be deeply problematic. Thus the echo in the final verse of Esther (Robb 87), another princess who, in speaking up, defied the king to save the peasantry, denied the Word of the earthly Father to serve the Word of God, the heavenly: “and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish” (Esther 4:16). Death, then, is the inheritance of the princess from the father whose Double she is, but eternal life her patrimony from the Father who is unalterably The Other.

**Siblings**

If, then, the position of the father is primarily but problematically that of The Other, one would expect brother/sister relations to focus on The Double, since siblingship is predicated on metonymic continuity of generation rather than the metaphoric
replacement across generations which characterizes the parent-child axis. In the model of
the family advocated by Mintz and outlined above, the bond between siblings—
particularly between oppositely sexed siblings—“acquire[s] enormous symbolic
significance as a tangible representation of duty, unity, and continuity” (149) with “the
bonds of loyalty and affection between siblings . . . symbolic of a larger cultural ideal—of
harmonious, voluntary, and noncoercive unity that would not depend on authoritarian
discipline” (200). In other words, we find in the sibling bond the noncoercive unity of The
Double, dependent on internal rather than external cohesion, and allowing for both
individualism and generational rebellion; i.e., for The Double’s forces of cohesion within
The Other’s mechanism of rebellion: “what the sibling bond represents is a reconciliation
of the forces that appeared to be tearing society asunder. An emphasis on sibling loyalty
was a way to counteract the problems of generational discontinuity and the anarchy of
individualism” (Mintz 148).

Although there is a predisposition towards the strategy of The Double between
siblings, cross-gender considerations complicate the issue as similarities of family, class,
genetics and generation collide with differentiations of gender. Within the Rossetti family
there existed a tension between the family’s commonplace cross-gendered grouping of
Dante Gabriel and Christina against William Michael and Maria and the separatist
impulse embodied in Gabriele’s decision to move to 50 Charlotte Street in 1853 because
“my family has got to such a stage that it is necessary at all costs to separate the boys from
the girls” (Dobbs 9). Within these tensions, Christina and Dante Gabriel were generally
grouped on the same side of the fulcrum: “His sister Christina, the other poet in the
family, followed in the same mould—‘the most fractious,’ ‘hardly less passionate than
Gabriel, and more given to tantrums:’ Maria and William were more inclined to adopt
tight-lipped silence at times of stress. They were what Gabriele called his ‘calms’, as
opposed to Dante Gabriel and Christina who were the ‘storms’” (Dobbs 10). Brother
William Michael also reports an identification with suits of cards in which Christina and
Dante Gabriel represented the red cards of diamonds and hearts, respectively, while Maria
and William Michael were assigned to the black clubs and spades (Wm. M. Rossetti 41).
Perhaps predisposed by this family practice of doubling, Dante Gabriel and Christina often
resolved the Other/Double tension in their personal relationship in favor of The
epipsychean Double, reassembling the fragmented self through union with a cross-
gendered sibling—an epistemological and emotional but not erotic union whose
manifestations of desire are confined to textual incest.16

The epistemologically based, epipsychean brother/sister Double is strikingly depicted
in Dante Gabriel’s first published ballad, “Sister Helen” (134-148), a remarkable evocation
of the frame of mind of a woman engaged in wreaking sorcerous vengeance on a faithless
lover, an evocation all the more effective because it is depicted only through the
conversation of the sister with her “Little brother”; we are never given direct access to her
thoughts. Neither brother nor sister alone can fully comprehend the situation: Sister Helen
is surprisingly dependent upon Little Brother for her empirical knowledge of the situation,

16Despite the lifelong closeness between Dante Gabriel and Christina, none of their critics
or biographers have, to my knowledge, suggested the presence of physical incest between Dante
Gabriel and Christina, although Jan Marsh’s 1994 biography of Christina alleges the possibility that
their father molested Christina. Between Dante Gabriel and Christina there is, however, ample
evidence of what I call “textual incest,” which manifests through an intercourse of themes, plots and
imagery, an intercourse which is both unconscious and conscious (through modeling, editorial
revision, explicit suggestions). See below for a fuller treatment of this concept.
while he is almost wholly dependent on her for interpretation of events. Theirs is a divided, epipsychean epistemology in which each half supplements the deficiencies of the alternate self, and fullness of knowledge is obtained only through union of the two. The poem's vision is diffracted through a multiplicity of lenses (innocence, knowledge, irony) which must be combined to create a completed, interdependent view. The ballad relies on an "innocence-knowledge pattern" (Howard 73); in the early stanzas, the brother's childish questions and observations ("Why did you melt your waxen man"; "See, see, the sunken pile of wood, . . . Shines through the thinned wax red as blood!" [134, 135]) draw us into the black magic plot, as elucidated by Sister Helen's responses ("The time was long, yet the time ran"; "Nay now, when looked you yet on blood"[135]). The pattern soon reverses, however, as Little brother asserts his empirical knowledge ("I hear a horse-tread, and I see... Three horsemen that ride terribly"[137]) to a Sister Helen who must rely upon his observations ("Little brother, whence come the three...?" [137]). It is only through Little brother's eyes that Helen sees the advance of the three Keiths, the father, and the Lady of Ewern; it is only through his ears that she hears their pleas; it is only through his impossible vision that she finally sees the "white thing at the door" which is Keith of Ewern's lost soul. Through their alternating questions and answers, observations and interpretation, pictorial details are accumulated, telling of wind and fire, trees and stars, depicting an arrestingly realistic setting. In fact, it is this conjunction of realism with witchcraft, maintained through their sibling relationship, which contributes so much to the power of the poem. If he were not an innocent child, if she were not an attentive sister as well as a vengeful witch, the ballad would be less chilling. As Howard has noted, "One of the successes of the poem is that Helen is never just a witch; she is always also a woman, the sister of a young child,
preserving him from knowledge until she becomes totally wrapped up in her personal revenge. The sister/brother relationship serves in part to keep her human” (74)—a humanity which means she, too, has a soul to lose.

This strategy of knowledge in conversation with innocence, of sister in conflict with sorceress, throws into high relief the darkness of Sister Helen’s tortured psyche, driven by thwarted erotic desire, and further emphasized by the often ironic tone of the chorus. The atmosphere of witchcraft and emotional distress is evoked in part by the chant-like ritualistic repetitions of invocations (“Little brother,” “Sister Helen,” “O Mother, Mary Mother,”) and of the chorus, itself primarily an ironic and twisted repetition of earlier phrases. It is a reliance on repetition to create sufficiency—a repetition of language in the invocations; of visions between the siblings; and even of characters, in the three Keiths, metonymically linked through their white mane, white plume, and white hair with the Lady of Ewern’s wedding gown (which should be white but is black) and her bridal bed (which should be stained but is yet white). And, in the end, the repetition of melted waxen men culminates in a repetition of destruction, as Sister Helen’s vengeance rebounds on her, and she learns to know the price she will pay: “Fire shall forgive me as I forgive” (143); and “A soul that’s lost as mine is lost” (148), she says. Sister Helen is, as Howard notes, Dante Gabriel’s “first full-scale portrait of the demonic and the first full development of a theme of passionate self-destruction” (80).

The strategy of The Double set up in content and theme is rigorously enacted on multiple structural levels as well: speaker, function, and orthography are constantly doubled by both division and multiplication. In each seven-line stanza the empirical data reported by the unnamed brother (male Double) is given a supernatural interpretation by
Sister Helen (female Double), culminating in a chorus (completed Double) which picks up the crucial phrase of the preceding stanza and, transforming it through ironic repetition or agonized emphasis and union with the repeated phrase “between Hell and Heaven,” synthesizes and synergizes the combined epistemology. The split between the divided halves of The Double and the unified chorus is signaled orthographically by both italics and parentheses. The split siblings are not even allowed any unsplit lines. In each stanza, Little brother speaks the first three lines, but his triplet is always already interrupted with a call to “Sister Helen.” She, in turn, carries the next two lines, of which the final one is always a response to “Little brother.” Thus even their words are always interrupted by a call to their Double which divides their verbal allotment between information and invocation. Only the chorus is allowed to place its invocation in the leader line, allowing a full couplet for making its point—perhaps pointing to the fact that the chorus combines and synergistically augments the knowledge and positions of the sibling Doubles. The chorus’s couplet consistently opens with an invocation to “O Mother, Mary Mother”—an invocation further doubled by the ambiguity of its referent. Are “O Mother” and “Mary Mother” both calls to the Virgin Mother, or does the first call to an earthly mother—either the biological mother of the siblings or, in a circular reference, to Sister Helen herself, as demonic surrogate mother to Little brother?

The meter and rhyme of “Sister Helen” further bear out the variety of doublings introduced through structure and content. The feet in information (or “story”) lines are primarily iambic (i.e., disyllabic) with only occasional variations to tri-syllabic; virtually all are tetrameter (doubled doubles); and they bear the rhyme of the stanza, with one rhyme sound per stanza (abaaccb) (Vogel 55). The invocations set up an alternative pair
of rhymes (Helen/Heaven, brother/Mother); and are invariably trochaic (with an extra syllable for the “O” of the choric invocation to the Mother/Virgin, which may signal its ambiguously double nature). The poem also employs an atypically high number of anapests (73 per 100 lines), producing a sense of action and movement, signaling the “pounding passion” which drives Sister Helen’s vengeance, and, in Little brother’s lines, creating “an effect of naturalness and sincerity” (Vogel 34-36).

The image of The Double which haunts “Sister Helen” bears intriguing similarities to Christina’s use of the device in “Goblin Market” (I: 11-26). Both poems figure brothers and sisters as complementary opposites which, unified, offer a more complete access to knowledge than either sibling can obtain alone. In each case the male sibling is aligned with sensual/sensory knowledge of the world: Christina’s goblins, “Brother with queer brother” (94), represent sexual or perhaps economic knowledge, while Dante Gabriel’s Sister Helen’s “Little brother” (unnamed and therefore more powerfully associated with both his named sister and the poet) is the conduit for all sensory apprehensions. The female siblings, on the other hand, work from an epistemology that is at once more mystical and more practical, in the contradictory ways often ascribed to “feminine intuition”: Lizzie’s awareness that a second taste of goblin fruits will redeem Laura is both inexplicably mystical and eminently practical, as is Sister Helen’s skill at manipulating the wax doll of her faithless lover. The epistemological alignments are complicated by the scapegoating mechanism underlying the brother/sister pairings in these poems. This mechanism for dealing with guilt is endemic to the classic doppelgänger formulation of The Double as defined by Otto Rank: a double-by-division, onto which the artistic personality displaces the responsibility for guilt-provoking actions and desires. Both
poems deal with erotic, and therefore "evil," desires and actions for which the poet wishes to disavow responsibility. Thus, while the correlation of male with empiricism and female with mysticism is consistent, each poet displaces his/her particular neurosis onto the sibling bearing the opposite sex, who becomes the evil doppelgänger. With religious piety forbidding all earthly eroticism and womanly duty problematizing artistic creation, Christina creates male goblins whose sensual knowledge includes sexual knowledge, and whose seasonless fruits, "All ripe together/In summer weather,—" (15-16), Gilbert and Gubar associate with the "unnaturalness" of works of art (569). Similarly, Dante Gabriel's Sister Helen is the destructive voodoo priestess, an artist who perverts her art by using it to work her curse through a wax doll. This focus of power in a work of art also signifies the artists' commitment to controlling life through a means at one remove from life—and their ambiguity about the ethics of so doing.

Standard readings of "Goblin Market" cast it in the doppelgänger mode, focusing on The Doubled sisters, Lizzie and Laura. It is a critical truism to regard Laura and Lizzie as Doubles by division, although the particular form of division varies from critic to critic. Until recently, the standard reading of "Goblin Market" was a psychologized, Freudian interpretation of the sisters as two halves of the same personality epitomized by Winston Weathers' reading which posits Lizzie and Laura as the Apollonian and Dionysian sides of a "fragmented self moving or struggling toward harmony and balance" (81). More recent critics have tended to broaden the divided entity (and to attempt to account for the differentiation between the sisters and the goblins) by expanding the grounds of conflict from a single divided "self" to all women, the female role in society, the division of humanity into male and female, or the separation of Victorian capitalist society into
workplace and home. But no matter how the “self” is framed, the division is always epipsychean, a differentiation between complementary opposites tending toward a unification or reintegration of the divided entity. The precise valences of the divisions may be read in terms religious or erotic, psychological or social, Marxist or feminist—critics have suggested all of these and more. It is not important to decide on one “correct” reading; all are correct, and it is the power of the poem that it can support so many and such rich interpretations. Each has its place, and will be discussed in proper context in the chapters that follow.

But in “Goblin Market,” Christina presents us with not one but two pair of Doubles, the Double redoubled, as it were, into The Other, a structuring of the poem’s

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17For example, Dorothy Mermin, in “Heroic Sisterhood in Goblin Market,” sees the sisters as representing the conflicting options open to women within the accepted parameters of Victorian society, a dissonance she sees resolved in Christina’s Pre-Raphaelite vision of a world in which women can be heroic and self-reliant without men. Similarly, Helena Michie, in “‘There Is No Friend Like a Sister’: Sisterhood as Sexual Difference,” examines the Lizzie/Laura Double within the trope of sisterhood as “a structure for the containment and representation of sexual differences among women” (405) as well as providing “a safe, familiar, and familial space for its articulation” (404). Elizabeth Campbell moves to include the goblin/sister division when she poses the divided subject as a masculine/feminine clash created by the nineteenth century paradigm of separate spheres which split Victorian culture into the world of the mothers (assigned to the female, fantasy, the semiotic chora, and home-bound economies) and that of the merchants (alligned with males, reality, the Symbolic realm and the capitalist workplace), a segregated configuration she claims Christina attempted to overcome with a vision of cyclicality. Humanity itself is the subject divided along gender lines in “The Potential of Sisterhood: Christina Rossetti’s Goblin Market,” where Janet Galligani Casey claims to expand the term “sisterhood” from an exclusionary to a multi-leveled meaning in such a way “that it potentially includes the experience of both sexes” (63), positing a world without gender-defined roles, “a world in which all people are allowed to play all parts, to embrace a wholeness that is only possible with the dissolution of the traditional male/female dichotomy” (65).

18It might seem that the readings of “Goblin Market” as an indictment of capitalism or the marketplace, as well as those focusing on male/female conflict, would preclude such a reintegration. However, the defiantly positive tone of the poem’sstorybook ending dictates that readings must conclude with at least a touch of hope for unification.
world view which echoes Christina’s experience in the Rossetti family. Two parallel economies—the sororial world of sisters Lizzie and Laura and the fraternal world of the goblin brothers—coexist in opposition, in a productive tension induced by the simultaneous generational continuity and gender discontinuity that also describes the relationship between cross-gendered siblings. Within each economy, the strategy of The Double prevails, functioning through metonymic repetition and accretion, in the belief that enough repetitions (of words, of pictorial details) will spell sufficiency. When the Doubled sisters intersect with the opposing Doubled goblin brothers, the replication creates a multiplied embodiment of The Other. Interchanges between the two economies are governed by the strategy of The Other, a metaphors of exchange and substitution of items not entirely equivalent. The tension between the differing strategies and economies motivates the discourse which is the poem “Goblin Market.”

The fraternal economy is introduced by the “goblin cry”: the compendium of fruits which begins the poem. This cry is the goblins’ metonymic self-definition, naming themselves through a tempting listing of fruits brought to fruition (“All ripe together / In summer weather” [15-16]) as unnaturally as goblin progeny. The sororial economy is similarly although more briefly introduced in a series of metonymic descriptions of Lizzie and Laura in terms of arms and lips, cheeks and finger tips (38-39), as well as their initially confusing alliterative names. Later, The Doubled sisters are described within their

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19In an interesting bit of textual incest, Dante Gabriel picked up on this division of economies in the vignette he designed for the title page of the first edition of Christina’s Goblin Market and Other Poems in which he contrasts a naturalistic depiction of the sisters lying “Golden head by golden head” with a representation of the goblin realm within a dream-like sphere characterized by astronomical symbols (Goldberg 147). The later contamination between the two economies is suggested by the abstract symbols on the sisters’ coverlet.
domestic economy through the housewifely tasks they perform ("Laura rose with Lizzie:/ Fetched in honey, milked the cows. . .," [202-209]). In contrast to these metonymic internal descriptions of each economy, when members of one system attempt to describe the members of The Other system, they see only unassimilable singularities and metaphoric visions. Laura’s early descriptions of the goblin men are all a series of “ones”:

One hauls a basket,
One bears a plate,
One lugs a golden dish . . .

One had a cat’s face,
One whisked 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 skurry.

One set his basket down,
One reared his plate;
One began to weave a crown . . .
One heaved the golden weight

(56-58, 71-76, 97-102; emphasis mine)

From her position in an opposing economy, Laura cannot move beyond a perception of the singularities of the goblin men to formulate a coherent definition of their being. The
sisters cannot even accurately count them: Laura's first passage identifies three goblins; her second describes six separate creatures while her third lists four; and a later line in an outside voice describing Lizzie’s perception of the goblins numbers the goblin men at twenty (423).

Within each of the Double-defined economies, the metonymically-based descriptions are realistic enough—the fairy-tale aspects become apparent when the two worlds commingle and the metaphorics of The Other begin to take over. Laura's middle description of the goblin men quoted above is based on fantasy identifications with animals. And as she begins to succumb to the temptation to cross over between the economies, the descriptions of her movements begin to be cast as metaphors: “Laura stretched her gleaming neck / Like a rush-imbedded swan, / Like a lily from the beck, / Like a moonlit poplar branch, / Like a vessel at the launch” (81-85). Her payment for the unnatural goblin fruits is similarly metaphoric: she offers, not a golden coin, but the natural gold of the hills, the gold that “is on the furze” (120), and finally closes the transaction with “a precious golden lock” (126). Once the exchange is complete, and Laura has ingested the supposedly unassimilable fruits of The Other, she carries the contagion home to Lizzie. Following Laura's fall, the first description of the two sisters still relies on duality, but a duality of metaphor rather than metonymy: “Like two blossoms on one stem, / Like two flakes of new-fall’n snow, / Like two wands of ivory” (188-190; emphasis mine). As the infection progresses, the sisters become characterized as “one” rather than “two”: “One content, one sick in part; / One warbling for the mere bright day’s delight, / One longing for the night” (212-214; emphasis mine).
corruption becomes most intense when Lizzie herself describes Laura to the goblin men as “one” who is The Other: “one waits / At home alone for me” (383-384; emphasis mine).

Since the transaction between the two economies is ruled by metaphors, the “cure” for the contamination is another metaphoric exchange. Laura’s exchange, made with the metaphoric golden coin of her hair, recognized that the goblins are radically different yet similar enough to admit of cross-fertilization between the two “species”; Lizzie’s salvific transaction, in which she first offers a real silver coin, requires her to have the courage to make the connective leap between the two economies by substituting her living physicality for the lifeless silver. The “cure” also requires Lizzie’s knowledge that a second taste of goblin fruits will reverse Laura’s contamination. Lizzie intuits the difference between two forms of ingestion of the fruit—Laura’s first direct ingestion in which she eats and therefore literally internalizes the inassimilable fruit of The Other/the goblins; and her second indirect ingestion, which is mediated by Lizzie’s verbal manipulations through which she incorporates the fruit only externally and liminally in an act of will echoing the act of the poet. Lizzie’s special gift is to know that The Other can be incorporated only metaphorically, never physically. When Laura ingests the fruits from Lizzie’s body, she reenacts her original incorporation within her proper economy, accepting the fruits via her sisterly Double, in a milieu where assimilation is possible, not poisonous, and motivated by love rather than lust and violation. Laura’s famous cry to “Eat me, drink me, love me; / Laura, make much of me” (471-472), is an invitation to create something new from love which stands in stark contrast to the characterization of the earlier exchange (“To take were to purloin” [117]) which makes nothing of something through theft.
In the postscript to “Goblin Market,” the sisters have indeed created something new through love: their children. These children may be seen as the final step of the cure, replacing The goblin Others who Lizzie and Laura have exiled into alterity after a brief moment of impossible assimilation. The cure, however, seems incomplete. Even with the kinship of The sisterly Doubles restored, the final section has frightening echoes of the singularity of one-ness which dominated Lizzie and Laura’s fearful exchange with goblin men. In the closing moral Lizzie tells her story to the “little ones” (548) and casts it in the old terms of singularity:

For there is no friend like a sister . . .

To cheer one on the tedious way,

To fetch one if one goes astray,

To lift one if one totters down,

To strengthen whilst one stands.” (562-567; emphasis mine)

This closing scene underscores one striking difference between the evocations of The brother/sister epipsychean Double in “Goblin Market” and in “Sister Helen.” Dante Gabriel’s drive in “Sister Helen” is toward a unified synthesis of the male and female epistemologies, the creation of a male/female Double. Christina’s focus on The Other is revealed in her multiplication of The Double into two pair of Doubles, with the ultimate project being the expulsion of The Other (embodied in the masculine goblin economy) from the cozy, fatherless family home that the sisters create. Dante Gabriel’s approach domesticates alterity by focusing on cooperation and continuation, not expulsion and replacement. For the sisters of Christina’s “Goblin Market,” however, The Other (the male Doubles in opposition to the female Doubles) is evoked only to be erased and, perhaps,
metaphorically replaced by the children. Similar strategies controlled Dante Gabriel and Christina’s responses when potential romantic partners periodically invaded their sibling Double. Through physical closeness, support and surveillance, siblings, like Doubles, create a small intensely personal community, especially in “large families in which there is less parental individual attention to the child. Siblings provide primary care for one another in ways that may lead to a kind of subjectivity that experiences community differently” (Childers and Hooks 65). Within this community, sense of self may become blurred, encouraging a reliance on Doubles—a reliance that can either be threatened or supported by additional multiplicities, such as lovers.

In his relationships with women, romantic as well as familial, Dante Gabriel consistently promoted a strategy of The Double—not only between himself and his women, but between the women themselves—a move which Christina resisted and subverted into the more radical alterity of The Other. It is a commonplace in Rossetti biographies that Christina and Lizzie did not get along, although various explanations are proposed for the rivalry.20 Christina was the first Pre-Raphaelite woman, the source of “the pale-faced languorous womanhood which the early Rossetti delighted in. . . . the delicate pensive gravity of the poet’s sister Christina” (Waller 202). Christina served as Dante Gabriel’s earliest model when she posed as the Virgin in “The Girlhood of Mary

20 Jones sums up most of the possible grounds for the rivalry: “The fact that Gabriel was intent on tutoring Lizzie’s genius, and had turned his attention to her at Christinana’s expense, may have had something to do with it. Christina did not have a jealous disposition, but Gabriel’s playful phrase ‘take care not to rival the Sid’ is very provocative. There was also the knowledge that Lizzie had replaced Christina as the face of Pre-Raphaelitism—a move from ascetism towards the more erotic images of the later paintings” (58). Class snobbery on the part of Christina and her mother towards the uneducated Lizzie has also been suggested.
Virgin" (1849), his first completed painting (Surtees 10) and again in “Ecce Ancilla Domini” (1850). However, Lizzie soon took over this position as Dante Gabriel began obsessively to paint and sketch her face. Indeed, Waller has suggested that Dante Gabriel’s fascination with Lizzie sprang in part from the fact that he could double her with Christina, as she “corresponded to his preconceived ideal, being likewise pale, remote and mysterious” (ibid). Although photographs of the two women reveal only a superficial physical resemblance, Dante Gabriel’s penchant for The Double led him to merge their features, as can most clearly be seen in a comparison of the two paintings in which Christina appears as the Blessed Virgin with the study for “The Annunciation” (1855) in which Lizzie models for the Virgin.\(^{21}\) The most striking similarities are found in The Girlhood of Mary Virgin and the pencil sketch “Annunciation,” which parallel one another closely in the texture and movement of the long fair hair, flying back from the face; however, the elongated face, forward-jutting pointed chin, and prominent eyes appear in all three pictures. Dante Gabriel explicitly verbalized the doppelgänger competition with his playful though tactless admonition to Christina that she must “take are not to rival the Sid” (Jones 58).

In her relationship with Lizzie (called “Guggums” by Dante Gabriel), Christina took refuge in the strategy of silence that had served her with regard to her father, Gabriele:

\(^{21}\)According to Surtees, the whereabouts of the finished watercolour are unknown; however, the pencil study Surtees does include in her Catalogue Raisonné embodies the salient points needed for a comparison.
There is a coldness between her and Gabriel,” [Ford Madox] Brown observed, “because she and Guggums do not agree. She works at worsted ever and talks sparingly.” Silently plying her needles at the Browns’, she could not have failed to contrast the external bleakness of her own life with the golden richness of Miss Siddal’s. Not only was “Guggums” beloved by Gabriel and admired by his circle, but she was also absurdly exalted as a great artist by Brown and Ruskin. . . . As yet, Christina had received but slight recognition as a poet, and had met with total frustration as a woman (Packer 99).

When she did speak out to address the problem of Lizzie, in her poem “In an Artist’s Studio” (III: 264), Christina firmly usurped the position of power, both as speaker of the poem and as the viewer whose gaze reduces Lizzie to a mere image:

One face looks out from all his canvasses,

One selfsame figure sits or walks or leans;

We found her hidden just behind those screens,

That mirror gave back all her loveliness.

A queen in opal or in ruby dress,

A nameless girl in freshest summer greens,

A saint, an angel;—every canvass means

The same one meaning, neither more nor less.

He feeds upon her face by day and night,

And she with true kind eyes looks back on him
Fair as the moon and joyful as the light:

Not wan with waiting, not with sorrow dim;

Not as she is, but was when hope shone bright;

Not as she is, but as she fills his dream. (1-14)

Christina here aligns herself with Dante Gabriel ("We found her...") as his Double, resisting alignment with Lizzie, whom she casts as The Other—woman, object of both the gaze and of desire, powerless. Even the mirror, which "gave back all her loveliness," and the canvasses, which "mean" her "same one meaning," are cast as active, having more power than does the passive, "nameless girl" they portray. Although she may be "A queen," "A saint, an angel," these are all dependent positions which rely upon a king or a God to define them—here a king, a God who makes her "wan" by feeding on her face to fill his dream. The image conjures up pictures of vampires, a nightmare monster that, rike the doppelgänger, is a trope of Gothic fiction—and one that has been suggested as underlying Christina's treatment of perverse relations between the sexes in "Goblin Market."  

Interestingly, Christina cast neither Janey nor Fanny in the same threatening role that she assigned to Lizzie; perhaps because, as "mere" mistresses lacking the legal claims that Lizzie held as Dante Gabriel's wife, they could be easily exiled into the radical alterity of The Other. Despite (or perhaps because of) the irregularity of Dante Gabriel's

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22David Morrill suggests that Christina "uses certain details of the vampire myth—acts of biting and sucking, enervation, and death without grace" in Goblin Market and traces the source of influence to the 1819 sensational novel, The Vampyre, written by her mother's brother, John Polidori.
relationship with Janey, his friend’s wife, Christina appeared to accept her, maintaining an irregular correspondence with Janey that was “friendly if formal,” and asking after her in notes to Dante Gabriel. Fanny Cornforth’s position as housekeeper/model/mistress and her obviously lower class status made her even more resolutely Other to Christina’s relationship with Dante Gabriel. Despite the moral reservations Christina must have had about Fanny’s relationship with Dante Gabriel, she could refer playfully to Fanny (known as the “Elephant”) and her financial peculiarities in a way that she could never tease about Lizzie: “‘Delicious is the prosperous elephant,’” wrote Christina on one occasion, to her brother, thanking him for an ‘elephant book’ he had sent her. ‘I wish,’ she added drily, with an almost audible sigh for her incorrigible brother, ‘all Elephants were prosperous.’” (Doughty 586).

In contrast to Christina’s constant positioning of his lovers as The Other, Dante Gabriel consistently proposed his own Doubles to Christina as romantic partners, instigating her relationship with her fiancé James Collinson and introducing her to William Bell Scott (problematically alleged as her lover by Packer) in a manner reminiscent of Eve Sedgwick’s paradigm of homosocial bonding through men’s trade in women. In fact, Packer suggests that Christina’s engagement to Collinson was coincident, in both its formation and its dissolution, with the progress of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood of which Collinson was a member along with both her blood brothers (40), and that “Part of

\footnote{Battiscombe’s interpretation of the cordiality between Christina and Janey supports the idea that Christina could accept Janey because she was Other: “Paradoxically, the fact that the situation was so clear and obvious made it the easier to turn a blind eye. Because Janey and Dante Gabriel made no attempt at concealment it was possible to suppose that there was nothing to conceal” (152).}
his attraction for her was lent him by the Brotherhood. . . . [H]er brothers . . . presented Collinson to the young girl as almost a brother himself, practically a member of the family, for the Rossettis always looked upon their intimate friends as a kind of enlargement of the family circle” (32). Dante Gabriel even proposed Christina to the Brotherhood as a possible brother, his double—a suggestion which the other members of the PRB (and Christina herself) vetoed. Exiled from actual Brotherhood, Christina still managed to insinuate herself into the coterie, doing much of the work on *The Germ*, the PRB magazine which, Battiscombe suggests, “was in effect the work of the Rossetti family rather than of the Brotherhood as a whole” (53).

The formation of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood is perhaps the first overt manifestation of “a curious repetitive pattern” (Dobbs 205) in Dante Gabriel’s life by which he regularly formed intentional families which functioned as his Double. Dante Gabriel himself said, in later life, that it was the camaraderie, more than any affiliations of style, that motivated the creation of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.24 Narcissism was a constant element of these doublings, as the members of the groups consistently made Dante Gabriel their model. The effect is particularly striking in the case of the second generation of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, including William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones, who “adopted Gabriel’s ideas and ideals, his mediaevalisms, his love of colour, passion, dream. . . . They imitated his habitual slang, his special vocabulary, the

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24In his memoir of Dante Gabriel, William Michael quotes a letter his brother wrote on November 7, 1868, to M. Ernest Chesneau, in which Dante Gabriel says: “C'est la camaraderie, plutôt que la collaboration réelle du style, qui a uni mon nom aux leurs dans les jours d'enthousiasme d'il y a vingt ans” (129).
tones of his beautiful voice, and Jones even imitated his handwriting" (Doughty 231). He was, as Angeli notes,

always the centre of a circle, the flame irradiating warmth and light around him. But the circle changed: the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, the Oxford band, followed by the 'shop' (the Morris Art Decorators' firm), the Cheyne Walk company of the Sixties (which included Swinburne, Meredith, Whistler, Alphonse Legros, Sandys, and the questionable but fascinating Charles Augustus Howell), the Mount Temples, Miss Herbert and other true and false friends, some surviving from earlier times, Jane Morris and the beautiful Maria Spartali (Stillman), both of whom sat to him, Bell Scott, Watts-Dunton (whom he shared with Swinburne from the autumn of '79 onwards); Frederick Shields, William Sharps and, lastly, Hall Caine. And all along, Fanny Cornforth. . . (xix)

The persistence of the pattern, the scope and variety of people Dante Gabriel forced into his circle of Doubles, is breathtaking—and Angeli's list is not all-inclusive, omitting, at a minimum, the class he taught in 1854-55 at the Working Men's College which he soon put "quite on a family footing" (Doughty 168) and his curious relationship with Ruskin, who could easily be figured as father or brother to Dante Gabriel and Lizzie in the financial support he provided in return for access to their emotional life. Nor does it take

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25See also Val Prinsep, one of Dante Gabriel's later disciples: "Rossetti was the planet around which we revolved . . . we sank our own individuality in the strong personality of our adored Gabriel" (Doughty 231) and Max Beerbohm on Dante Gabriel's effect on the second generation PRB: "In the great days of a deep, smug, thick, rich, drab, industrial complacency, Rossetti shone for the men and women who knew him, with the ambiguous light of a red torch, somewhere in a dense fog" (Jones 82).
into account Dante Gabriel’s attempt in 1870 to create a literary/publishing family by gathering “together under one publishing banner—that of F. S. Ellis—‘a little knot of congenial writers,’ that is, a literary coterie of producing poets,” including Christina, Swinburne, Morris, and Scott, which, as Packer notes, evidences “the same agglutinative tendency responsible for the formation of the PRB and other of Gabriel’s cliques” (273).

This “agglutinative tendency” may also be allied to the parallel between Victorian familial and artistic paradigms observed by Mintz:

It may be only a coincidence that the Victorian ideal of family order and harmony arose at the same time that carefully arranged still-life paintings assumed prominence in high art. Yet both of these developments seem to have been linked by a common concern with an appearance of tranquillity and calm. Disorder, conflict, and contention were inconsistent with ideal sentiment. For people haunted by a nightmare vision of breakdown, splintering, and atomization, the exaltation of the harmony of the family seemed a necessary counterbalance to the divisive, disintegrating pressures of public life. (67)

“Disorder, conflict, and contention”: these were frequent aspects of Dante Gabriel’s life. It is then no accident that he sought to promote a stability sadly lacking in the reality of his life—wracked by debt, doubt, and drugs—through the creation of intentional families as Doubles. Further, Dante Gabriel’s early Art Catholic works were criticized for the rigidity of their style and composition—strictures equally applicable to still-life paintings. Significantly, it was Christina, his epipsychean Double, who was the model for these early paintings.
The narcissism of The epipsychean Double implicates it in the economy of the gaze and questions of surveillance. As Rossetti family biographer R. A. Waller notes, "throughout Dante Gabriel's feverish life he had always close at hand the clear-eyed sympathy of his mother and sister watching his career... He moved in a man's world and she [Christina] in a woman's, but far from each other as their paths diverged, their common starting-point was never forgotten by them nor can be long forgotten by their readers" (241). With the exception of an eleven-month period when Christina and her mother attempted to found a school at Frome in Somerset, London was the home base for both Dante Gabriel and Christina all their lives.26 In fact, they lived in the same home until 1852 (when Dante Gabriel was 24 and Christina was 22)—which is to say that they shared a house for nearly half the 54 years of Dante Gabriel's life. And at times of particular stress the family was always reunited, as when Dante Gabriel returned to the family home after Lizzie's death and again, in his later years, when plans were repeatedly made for his mother and Christina to join him at Cheyne Walk. In his final illness, when friends and family suspected mere hypochondria, it was Christina who nursed Dante Gabriel and defended him, even to their brother William Michael: "Pray do not ascribe all his doings and non-doings to foundationless fidgetiness, poor dear fellow... It is trying to have to do with him at times, but what must it be TO BE himself?" (Packer 347). Only Christina could clearly sympathize with the "fractious" Dante Gabriel, the other half of the Doubled Storms, in this bit of selfless identification. Waller may cast the closeness

26However, both made extended visits to friends' homes in typical Victorian fashion. In particular, Dante Gabriel spent much time with Janey Morris at Kelmscott, the second home whose tenancy he shared with the Morrises. Both Dante Gabriel and Christina also made extended visits to Penkill, the home that Alice Boyd shared with William Bell Scott.
and surveillance as "sympathy" but it is unlikely that Dante Gabriel consistently viewed it in such a favorable light. As Mintz notes, "although lengthened residence within the parental home could lay the basis for increased emotional intimacy . . . this factor could also be a source of potential strain" (18), and both intimacy and strain were apparent in the relationship between Dante Gabriel and Christina. The Victorian myth of family solidarity may have required smoothing over at least the surface of most personal disagreements, but professional altercations were often more visible.

Caught in the peculiarly powerless position of the Victorian spinster, Christina was most often on the receiving end of Dante Gabriel's well-intentioned meddling in her personal and professional life, with the result that her works most clearly manifest evidence of textual incest. As noted above, Dante Gabriel was instrumental in Christina's romances (real or imagined) with Collinson and Scott; recruited her as a sort of secretary for the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood; first sent Christina's poetry to Alexander Macmillan, who was to become Christina's lifelong publisher; and later briefly diverted her to the publishing house of Ellis and Co. Like the Little brother in "Sister Helen," Dante Gabriel shared with sister Christina the special knowledge of the world which he had as a male; for instance, he steered her away from a potentially embarrassing incident when she was approached for permission to set her poems to music by a Lord Henry who had been involved in a homosexual scandal (Battiscombe 166) and he alerted her to the link between her proposed title of Nowhere (for Speaking Likenesses) and the "free-thinking book called Erewhon, which is 'Nowhere' inverted" (Dante Gabriel Rossetti, qtd. in Weintraub 211). In general, Christina appeared to be "delighted to accept Dante Gabriel's help with practical matters . . . but not so happy over his interference with the
choice of poems or with her methods of writing poetry” (Battiscombe 115). The merest hint of the violence endemic to incest—even textual incest—is felt in Christina’s resistance to Dante Gabriel’s too intrusive suggestions, and in her self-described “‘stamping, foaming, hair-uprooting’ paroxysms” in response to his extensive revisions of her poetry, although in the end “she endorsed many of them, deleting lines, altering rhymes and adding stanzas at his direction” (Jones 131). Christina accepted Dante Gabriel’s suggestions for titles of her poems including “Heart’s Chill Between” and “Death’s Chill Between” (Battiscombe 42); for “At Home” (Bell 175); and “Goblin Market” instead of her original A Peep at the Goblins (Campbell 394). She even destroyed her story “Folio Q,” following Dante Gabriel’s opinion that it raised “dangerous moral questions” (qtd. in Jones 106). Dante Gabriel’s influence on Christina’s range from the macrocosmic to the microcosmic, even suggesting rhymes for specific lines (Jones 79-80); but nowhere is the evidence of textual incest clearer than in Christina’s “A Prince’s Progress” which grew from a brief lyric into a 500-line miniature epic at Dante Gabriel’s suggestion, with his thematic and textual revision at every step of the way.

Christina composed the original version in 1861 and published it in Macmillan’s Magazine in 1863. Entitled “The Prince who arrived too late” (in manuscript) or “The Fairy Prince Who Arrived Too Late” (1863), it comprised only the final sixty lines of the poem, the so-called Bride’s Song that begins with the lines “Too late for love, too late for joy, / Too late, too late!” (III: 108, 481-482). In this version the poem is sung after her death, by her attendants, a dirge of lost love and renunciation, of lovers made unalterably
Other by the Prince’s tardiness and the Princess’s death. In 1865, acting on a suggestion by Dante Gabriel, Christina added the Prince’s entire “progress” (Doughty 288-289n). In the original lyric, the Princess is unworldly, living all her life in waiting for the Prince’s arrival, untouched by the world, with a heart that “little heeded what she wore” (515), remaining “silent thro’ the noise / And concourse of the street” (525-526). Like Dante Gabriel’s Sister Helen, the Princess’s knowledge is all internal, little concerned with external realities. The Prince, on the other hand (like Sister Helen’s Little brother), looks out on the world. During his “progress”, dilatory though it may be, he is presented with a variety of visual and verbal knowledge about the world. This section is also noticeable for its remarkably vivid descriptions of the world through which the Prince passes. As Robb notes, these expanded passages are Pre-Raphaelite in their opulence, influenced perhaps by the Rossettis’ “touch of strangeness—something that came to them perhaps through their Italian inheritance—that makes them both appear as among the exotics of English literature” (86). The expanded progress also introduces a number of Doubles, for both Prince and Princess, in the episodes of the milkmaid (55ff), the old man (175ff) and the rescuing women (331ff). The inclusion of the strategies of both The Double and The Other is underlined by Dante Gabriel’s illustrations for the completed volume. The cover

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27 It is clear that Dante Gabriel’s proposal to expand the lyric into an epic was explicit and conscious. However, Battiscombe (116) suggests that the theme and plot may have been unconsciously influenced as well by Dante Gabriel’s long-delayed marriage to Lizzie Siddal. After nearly ten years of courtship, they wed only when he believed Lizzie to be at death’s door, and she lived only two years after their marriage.

In this connection, it is interesting to note that when Christina was publishing The Prince’s Progress and Other Poems, Dante Gabriel offered, and Christina gave serious consideration to accepting, the inclusion of Lizzie’s poems to fill up the volume.
design focuses on the singularity of The Other, showing the princess waiting in a pose of resignation and hopelessness as she gazes out a window which gives back only reflections in a pool of water, seen obscurely through leaded glass. The Other’s singularity is further emphasized in the circular motif seen in the leaded glass, the pool of water, and the ornamental patterns at the corner of the title, all of which present “a multitude of concentric circles which with their mazelike pattern suggest a perplexity of inner consciousness” (Goldberg 151). In contrast, the frontispiece highlights The Double. This is most obvious in the six attendants, ranged in parallel rows of three, all with remarkably similar faces and poses; but it is also apparent in the treatment of the Prince and Princess (here presented as doubles in their loss), both of whom are sketched in shadow with obscured faces. Finally, the woman reproaching the Prince for his tardiness may be a Double of Christina, for her face is reminiscent of Christina’s own; a fact which Christina herself noted in a letter to Dante Gabriel: “surely the severe female who arrests the Prince somewhat resembles my phiz” (qtd. in Goldberg 156).

If Dante Gabriel motivated the textual incest of The Prince’s Progress, in “An Echo from Willowood” (III: 53), Christina is the initiator, answering Dante Gabriel’s rewriting of the Narcissus myth in “Willowood” (168-170). Although both poems work from the same base of plot and imagery, Dante Gabriel’s version privileges reunion through The epipsychean Double while Christina’s version focuses on division and the singularity of The Other. The Narcissus myth underlies the plot of both poems, with lovers who are the two halves of the divided self meeting in an exchange of “mirrored eyes” (“Willowood,” 167) confined by the watery medium to silent visual interchange. But the identification of the lovers and the status of speech differs radically in the two poems. In Dante Gabriel’s
four-sonnet group entitled "Willowwood," the speaker meets with a masculine personified Love who miraculously embodies the speaker's female lover in his reflection. This trio of lovers is further multiplied into a "dumb throng" of "mournful forms . . . / The shades of those our days that had no tongue" (II, 168). Yet paradoxically, these voiceless forms are allowed to make broken moan of their separation, and Love conveys his message through song in the poem's third sonnet. This song reinforces the theme of multiplicity with its iterated opening address to "ye, all ye that walk in Willowwood" (III, 169). Yet despite the poem's burden of separation and parting, its resolution allows the reunion of the speaker with his beloved epipsyche, as he drinks "from the water where she sank, / Her breath and all her tears and all her soul" and feels "both our heads . . . in his [Love's] aureole" (IV, 170). Christina's briefer, single sonnet, "An Echo from Willowwood" (III: 53) disallows this union, as it disallows Love's song, permitting only separation in its reiteration of "parting," "dividing" and "parted" souls that may only "Each [eye] the other's aspect" in silence, "Resolute and reluctant without speech." Christina's lovers are not identified with the poem's speaker but presented in the third person, as a "he" and "she" about whose connection the speaker is dubious: "Not hand in hand, yet heart in heart, I think" (emphasis mine). The "I" of the speaker, the "he" and the "she" of Christina's poem are consistently separate, identified as a solitary "each" that may only exchange hungry looks with The Other. Unlike the final reunion of Dante Gabriel's lovers doubled in Love's aureole, Christina's "he" and "she" are allowed only a brief "One moment joined" before they "vanish out of reach" to be forever "parted so," unalterably Other.

Although most of the evidence for textual incest is found in Christina's poetry, she inspired Dante Gabriel's life and work as well. Perhaps the most startling (if unconscious)
impact came through her short story "Maude." Written twelve years before Lizzie Siddal's death, the story foretells Dante Gabriel's melodramatic burial of his poems with his wife in its description of another such entombment. The clearest evidence of Christina's influence on Dante Gabriel's works is found not in his poetry but rather in his illustrations. Obviously, his illustrations for "Goblin Market" and "The Prince's Progress" were written in response to her poems of the same names. These drawings are not, however, simply market-driven "illustrations," but rather interpretations (and re-interpretations) of themes and concepts that engaged both brother and sister.

Even more crucial is Christina's influence on Dante Gabriel's early Art Catholic works. Christina debuts as a model in "The Girlhood of Mary Virgin" (1849), Dante Gabriel's first professional painting, created for the 1849 Free Exhibition and purchased by the Dowager Marchioness of Bath (Surtees 10-11). This also appears to be Dante Gabriel's first religiously inspired painting, and it cannot be seen as unmeaningful that his devout mother and sister are the models. Part of the reason for Dante Gabriel's frequent use of Christina as model in the Art Catholic paintings was undoubtedly financial, as the young painter could not afford professional models. Yet she does not pose for his even earlier literally inspired works, when Dante Gabriel was even less likely to be able to pay a model. Christina is a frequent model during the next few years and then her face disappears, eclipsed by that of Lizzie Siddal as erotic faith replaces religious faith for

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28Doughty suggests that that the influence may actually have gone in the opposite direction, with Christina inserting the incident after Lizzie's death (303). However, there is no evidence for this supposition, and no other critics or biographers follow such an inverted chronology.

29For a fascinating exploration of this idea, see Gail Lynn Goldberg's article "Dante Gabriel Rossetti's 'Revising Hand': His Illustrations for Christina Rossetti's Poems."
Dante Gabriel. But for a time Christina’s influence is clearly seen in her brother’s works as the bright light of her living, direct faith in God ignites Dante Gabriel’s weaker faith to a brief moment of illumination.
CHAPTER 4

FAITH IN ALTERITY

The constellation of desires that fall under the rubric of faith provide the central ground of the discourse between The Double and The Other. For The Other is, in its primal formation, constituted as Deity—the primary focus of The Double’s repudiation of singularity while The Other, in turn, renounces the thematics of multiplicity underlying The Double. Deity is classically the ultimate form of Le Grand Autre and, indeed, the strategy of The Other predominates in this realm. “Faith,” however, goes far beyond the bounds of conventional religion, its full meaning encompassing many forms of “belief, ... confidence, reliance, trust (in the ability, goodness, etc. of a person; in the efficacy or worth of a thing; or in the truth of a statement or doctrine)” (OED s.v. “faith”). Although early usage of the word “faith” (at least within the Christian era) was confined to references to religious objects, which is “still the prevalent application, and often colours the wider use,” the crisis of faith in the Victorian era was one of many moments when the circle of references was widened. This tension between exclusivity and “wider use” opened up the aporia through which the strategy of The Double entered the cultural narrative, the form of the discourse changing from the transcendental signification of The Other to the human-based dialogue of The Double as “the spiritual apprehension of divine
truths, or of realities beyond the reach of sensible experience or logical proof ceased to be “exclusively confined to Christian use” (OED s.v. “faith”).

As the locus of faith moved from God to man, the focus of the Victorian search for completion was transferred from The Other to The Double. The desire of the faithful became subject to displacements, focusing on \textit{objets petit a} mediated through the lenses of art, literature, and eros. Progress, the family, even science became alternate objects of faith. The Pre-Raphaelites—simultaneously rebels against the perceived hypocrisy of Victorian religiosity and preservers of a moment of transcendent reality before Raphael—followed a trajectory of alterity from religious asceticism to mediated aestheticism and finally on to a mythology of eroticized faith (a path provokingly parallel to the historical manifestations of alterity through classical Ideal/Deity, Romantic artist, and erotically charged epipsyche). For the Rossettis, in particular, direct religious faith in God was joined—and occasionally supplanted—by aesthetic faith, as art and literature became mediators for direct Faith; and then by erotic faith, as belief became mediated through the beloved. Although Christina and Dante Gabriel Rossetti employed many strategies of both The Other and The Double in their attempts to resolve their individual crises of faith, these three approaches (asceticism, aestheticism, and eroticism) predominate, with brother and sister tracing the movement in opposite directions. Their trajectories of faith manifested two of the possible responses to the nineteenth-century loss of God: Christina’s passage toward the strategy of The Other as she reasserted her faith in deity as an act of will; and Dante Gabriel’s movement toward the strategy of The Double, replacing deity with humanity. Georgina Battiscombe succinctly captures the differences between Dante Gabriel’s and Christina’s faiths:
Frances Rossetti and her daughters embraced Tractarianism, or Anglo-Catholicism as it was later to be called, with all the fervour of converts. At fourteen William had turned agnostic; but for a brief time Dante Gabriel seems to have been attracted to this new type of religion. . . . For Christina this form of religion came to be, quite simply and without question, the most important thing in her life. (30)

Christina's ever-strengthening faith dictated a reversed trajectory from Dante Gabriel's as she moved from an adolescent state of desire where she focused on The human Double of potential mates to her final renunciation of the world and embrace of a living, direct faith in The divine Other. Dante Gabriel's is the more typical Victorian pattern as "his art strives to develop satisfactory means of access other than faith to the spiritual" (McGowan 46). He begins in an Art Catholic mode of devotion and austerity; experimenting with medievalism and Dantean aesthetic mediations; before passing finally to the erotic faith in voluptuous women of his later years. It should be noted that, even in his Art Catholic

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1 David Riede's observations on this point echo my own:

Rossetti's artistic development over the years is fascinating in the way it shows the dilemma of any mid-nineteenth-century artist who seeks spiritual values for his art, but cannot find them in the traditional source, Christianity. His Art-Catholicism shows the temptation, which became increasingly powerful toward the end of the century, to embrace Christianity, particularly Catholicism, for the sake of its aesthetic tradition, and his growth beyond Art-Catholicism illustrates the inadequacy of adopting a set of beliefs for the sake of a ready-made symbolism and a set of associations. His obsession with more secular symbols for spiritual values reveals the dilemma of the skeptical artist who still seeks some meaning beyond material appearances, and the particular symbols he relies upon—portraits, doubles, epiypsches—suggest both the increasingly necessary inward gaze of the artist, and the need to find images capable of externalizing inner states. In short, Rossetti's early career epitomizes the transition of the art from faith to skepticism as it illustrates the groping of the young artist toward a modern, symbolist art adapted to express not religious truths, but the psychological need for and perception of some spiritual value. (Limits 51-2)
mode, Dante Gabriel’s emphasis was on the “Art,” not on the “Catholic” or, as John P. McGowan explains: “Rossetti accepts the traditional Christian notion that man confronts a created world which contains within it certain universal meanings. . . Rossetti’s problem is that he cannot get the world to speak to him” (45). Although such an eminent authority as William Butler Yeats once claimed that Dante Gabriel was a “devout Christian” (189) and Helen Rossetti Angeli, William Michael’s descendent, maintained more temperately that “[b]y heredity he was a Roman Catholic and, would, no doubt, have been a happier man if circumstances had brought him within the Church: Catholicism influenced his vision of man’s destiny and coloured his language and his art” (159), the preponderance of the evidence indicates that Dante Gabriel’s religious faith, if any, was aesthetically and familially motivated, a brief flicker ignited by the stronger faith of his mother and sisters. He was, in David Sonstroem’s terms, “rather alter-Christian than anti-Christian. Although he rejected the institution of Christianity, many of its forms and promises still appealed to him” (28).

These movements can be traced in the long-term editorial revisions practiced by the Rossettis: Christina’s work upon poems such as “Maude Clare” and Dante Gabriel’s pre-publication preparation of his Poems of 1870 where the most extensive and “most important of Rossetti’s revisions were designed to eliminate any impression of religious faith in his book” (Riede, “Erasing” 50). Christina’s movement from romanticism to asceticism is manifested in her revisions of “Maude Clare.” The 41-stanza manuscript version penned in 1857-58 (Crump I:244) was shorn of nearly 30 stanzas by the time of its
1862 appearance in *Goblin Market and Other Poems* (Harrison, *CR in Context* 4). In the process, Christina repositioned the object of desire in the poem from a lost Doubled human lover to a belief in a legalistic and moralistic system of Other-based religious strictures. "Maude Clare" (l. 44) narrates the appearance of a woman at the wedding of her faithless lover. In manuscript, the jilted Maude Clare is the woman who leaves/has been left by her lover, The Double become Other. The two opening stanzas of the balladic poem use accretion to underline the status of The Double, with repeated images of mated pigeons and larks as well as a description of the wedding as between two friends of Maude Clare: "a prosperous friend of mine" (the landed bride, Lady Nell) and "a false false love of mine" (Lord Thomas) (lines 12, 16). While Maude Clare and Lord Thomas had been Doubles since they were "boy and girl" (155) playing together, Maude Clare is now The Other of the newly Doubled bride and bridegroom. She does not follow her lost Double, the faithless lover, to the Church; rather, "She followed his new love to the Church" (25), the new love who has become her replacement, making Maude Clare The Other to her former Double. Lord Thomas, too, rejects The Double's metonymy of physical touch ("he dared not touch her hand") with Maude Clare even as he accepts it with Nell ("When bride and bridegroom left the Church, / Arm in arm they went"). Strategies of voice reinforce the division between Maude Clare and the Doubled bride and bridegroom, who speak in whispers and "woful voice" (stanzas 15 and 16) while the bridegroom "faltered" (138) in his response to Maude Clare. In contrast, although Maude

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2 The manuscript version is not commonly known; indeed, even in Crump's *variorum edition* the poem can only be pieced together by combining the text and the end notes. For the convenience of the reader, therefore, I include a transcription in an appendix to this chapter.
Clare begins in the silence of The Other ("Never a word said pale Maude Clare"), when she confronts the bridal pair she uses a "steady" and "ringing voice" to claim the power belied by her landless status even as Christina and Dante Gabriel claimed power in the voices with which they symbolically displaced their father.

In this manuscript version, the reasons motivating Lord Thomas's change of heart are clear: "For Maude Clare for all she was so fair / Had never an inch of land" while Nell, the "prosperous friend" has "purchased him with gold." The change of heart prompts the change in status, so Maude Clare returns the symbols of their Doubleness to Lord Thomas: "my half of the golden chain," "my half of the faded leaves." To Nell she gives Thomas's "fickle heart," which has clearly been deflowered ("'Tho', were it fruit, the bloom were gone, / Or, were it flowers, the dew" [35-36]) In the manuscript, Nell responds with legal indignation, claiming it was Maude's duty to "have spoken before the priest/ Had made our ties so strong," and putting the entire matter in terms of "rights" under Church law.

All this is missing in the truncated published version. Its enforced conciseness changes the romantic ballad to an angry, petulant outburst. In the published version, Maude Clare appears in the very first stanza "with lofty step and mien," a proud and angry queen. The background and by-play of Maude Clare with Lord Thomas are omitted, and we see only the public spectacle in which Maude Clare is The intrusive Other. No repetition or accretion bolster Maude Clare's claim to her former Double; her position is simply that of an outworn substitute supplanted by Nell. Maude Clare intrudes into the wedding ceremony, virtually breaking in on the speech of the bridegroom's mother to thrust her gifts into the public eye. In the manuscript, Maude Clare patiently stands by as
“The guests went out guest after guest / Until the last was gone,” waiting for privacy when “Lord Thomas and young Nell/And Maude were left.”³ The published version retains Maude Clare’s Pontius-Pilate-like line, “I wash my hands thereof” (40), but omits the following lines that link Nell’s purchase of Lord Thomas to Judas’s 30 pieces of silver. And Nell’s final claim changes its basis from the rights of Church law invoked in the manuscript to the rights of love in the published version, positioning her as Lord Thomas’s true Double:

For he’s my lord for better and worse,

And him I love, Maude Clare. . .

I’ll love him till he loves me best,

Me best of all, Maude Clare. (43-48)

In contrast to Christina’s de-eroticising revisions of “Maude Clare” which uses strategies of asceticism to reposition the poem from The Double to The Other, Dante Gabriel practiced a sort of reverse asceticism that significantly enlarged the devotional poem “Mater Pulchrae Delectionis” from his early “Songs of the Art Catholic” to create “Ave,” a relatively sophisticated and skeptical interrogatory on matters of faith.⁴ “Mater”

³ Note that even the line break Doubles Nell with Lord Thomas, while reinforcing Maude’s Otherness from her Lord.

⁴Critical discussions of the revisions to “Mater Pulchrae Delectionis”/”Ave” and the rest of the 1870 edition of Poems commonly refer to the work David Riede has done in Dante Gabriel and the Limits of Victorian Vision, “Erasing the Art-Catholic: Rossetti’s Poems, 1870,” and, most recently, in Dante Gabriel Rossetti Revisited. Other contributors to the discussion include Sharon Smulders, in “A Breach of Faith: D. G. Rossetti’s ‘Ave,’ Art-Catholicism, and Poems, 1870”; D. M. R. Bentley, in “Rossetti’s ‘Ave’ and Related Pictures”; and Antony H. Harrison, in Christina Rossetti in Context. The discussion above draws from all of these works in ways that are cited as appropriate; however, the highly intertextual nature of this particular critical conversation sometimes makes it difficult to disentangle attributions.
seems to be a true devotional poem, with Deity as the subject of man’s desire, suggesting that, despite his notorious religious skepticism, Dante Gabriel “was sometimes visited by twinges of genuine Catholic belief” (Fairchild 396) and that his “concern with the Catholic tradition was, for a time at least, sincere rather than ‘posed’” (Bentley, “Ave” 35). The trinitarian structure of the original three-stanza version of “Mater Pulchrae Delectatio” (661-662) emphasizes the absolute alterity of The Other as deity, referring to both the patriarchal Father-Son-Holy Ghost trinity of traditional religion and to a new “woman-Trinity” with Mary as “a daughter born to God,/Mother of Christ from stall to Rood / And wife unto the Holy Ghost.” The trinitarian structure is further underlined by the triplets closing the first and last verse paragraphs in contrast to the couplets predominating throughout the rest of the poem (Smulders 67). This structure is obliterated in “Ave’s” seven unequal verse paragraphs (including the original opening stanza and drastically revised versions of the other two stanzas), as Dante Gabriel aestheticizes the work of his now faded moment of direct religious faith.

In crafting “Ave” from “Mater,” Rossetti transmuted the original poem’s protestation of religious faith to a viewpoint where religion is just one of many subjects appropriate for art., claiming (in a footnote to “Ave” that he later deleted) that “Art still identifies herself with all faiths for her own purposes” (Family Letters, 2:714-715). By 1865, in fact, Dante Gabriel was concerned to “make certain that he could not be regarded as an adherent of Christian faith” and “wrote to the fervently Christian James Smetham to inform him not only that he was not a believer, but that even discussion of Christianity was ‘painful’ to him” (Riede, “Erasing” 51). To reinforce this change, Dante Gabriel added to “Ave” five intermediary stanzas written as a series of questions whose
mode of doubt and skepticism contrasts with the declarations of faith that remain in the stanzas salvaged from "Mater." The original stanzas ring with exclamations of Mariolatry.

Mother of the fair delight, . . .

Yea, even thou, who reignest now
Where the Angels are they that bow,—
Thou, hardly to be looked upon
By saints whose steps tread thro' the Sun . . .

I think that at the furthest top
My love just sees thee standing up
Where the light of the Throne is bright

(lines 1, 20-23, 29-31)

In contrast, the revised stanzas are predominately interrogatories calling into question Mary's awareness of her place in the redemptive schema. The Mater who had "The peace of nineteen hundred years . . . within thee and without thee" is subject to the poet's inquisitions: "Mind'st thou...?" and "knew'st thou of the end...?" Here, "[t]he language of faith is couched in the syntax of uncertainty" (Smulders 71) where the questioning mode "foster[s] a tension between the subject and its treatment . . . through the medium of interrogation" (Smulders 64). In the striking central verse paragraph the questions posed

5 Both sentences of the first verse paragraph and three of the five sentences in the final verse paragraphs are punctuated with exclamation points; a single question mark is found in the final paragraph. In contrast, the five intermediate verse paragraphs contain a total of ten questions marks and only four exclamation points.
elsewhere are answered with a hesitant negative, “Nay, but I think…” (49), further emphasizing the negativity and uncertainty. This central paragraph is the capstone of the new stanzas which form an “interpolated narrative [that] attempts to reconcile the dialectic between humanity and mystery . . . by relating the Virgin’s probable experience on earth” (Smulders 67). In the new stanzas Mary’s position as the “woman trinity” closely related to The divine Other is overshadowed by the experiences of her earthly life as The human Double. In the very center stanza of the poem we find, not a declarative of faith in God, but a defiantly human description of Mary’s childhood of “Work and play, / Things common to the course of day” with only a “whisper” of the divine things to come. The accretion of details about Mary and Jesus’s daily life on earth emphasizes The Double rather than The Other as “the arcana of the self assume[s] priority over more orthodox sacred mysteries (Smulders 69). These additions echo the opening stanza’s stress on Mary as Mediatress, the one who was “once . . . sister sisterlike,” a Double to humankind who can bridge the gap “between earth and Heaven and between the human and the Divine” (Bentley, “Ave” 22).

In fact, much of Dante Gabriel’s pre-publication editing of his Poems of 1870 was designed primarily “to replace suggestions of Christian faith and medieval asceticism with an emphasis on the aesthetic worship of beauty and on passion,” as David Riede has shown (DGR Revisited 89ff). Poems were grouped to emphasize their aesthetic content, and individual works were rewritten “to eliminate traces of Art Catholicism from the

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6 This concept interestingly foreshadows Dante Gabriel’s later focus on the beloved epipsyché. Mary the “woman trinity” functions somewhat as a Double to the traditional Holy Trinity, forming an oppositely gendered complementarity.
book" (ibid. 89). Each of the three sections of the volume ("Poems," "Songs and Sonnets: Towards a Work to Be Called 'The House of Life'," and "Sonnets for Pictures, and Other Sonnets") builds to a climax that aestheticizes their meanings. For example, the section labeled "Poems" closes with translations that underline Dante Gabriel's immersion in the best in art and literature; a point further emphasized by his decision to conclude the entire work with a section of poems accentuating his privileged status as a master of two arts: a poet-painter who could speak with authority in both aesthetic realms. The potentially religious "Ave" and "The Blessed Damozel" were juxtaposed to erotic works such as "Love's Nocturn," "Troy Town," and "The Burden of Nineveh," which "establishes the perspective of historical relativism through which all faiths—including both Christianity and paganism—are called into question" (Riede, DGR Revisited 93). Even the minimal religious content found in poems such as "A Last Confession" was eliminated or deprecated wherever possible. For example, in the original version of "A Last Confession," the speaker gifts his adopted daughter/mistress with "A little image of great Jesus Christ," even while he hesitates to tell "her all the wonders of Faith" for fear that she "Might ill be taught that God and Truth were sure." The revised version included in the Poems of 1870 replaces the religiosity with eroticism, changing the gift to "A little image of a flying Love/Made of our coloured glass-ware" which, when she affixes it above her bed, cuts her hand, so that the speaker is "the first to make [her] bleed." The tales he tells her, too, metamorphose from Bible stories to "What I knew . . . /of Venus and of Cupid,—

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7 "A Last Confession" is explicated at some length in the previous chapter.
strange old tales”—no stranger, however, than the erotic relationship so oddly fashioned from an ascetic and aesthetic faith (46-47).

In the editing of “Maude Clare,” we can trace Christina’s progress from erotic to ascetic faith as she supports the ritualistic claims of The Other over the romantic rights of The human Double. On the other hand, Dante Gabriel’s reverse ascetic editing of the Poems of 1870, especially his work on “Ave” and “A Last Confession,” distances, aestheticizes, and finally eroticizes his faith. These movements recapitulate in microcosm the trajectories of faith followed by the Rossettis, which can be explored in their literary and artistic careers at large, as the brother and sister pursue the object of desire in paths that mirror one another as they pass through ascetic, aesthetic, and erotic forms of faith.

**Religious Faith: Ascesis in Alterity**

“Ascesis (the impulse to ascesis) is directed toward the other: turn back, look at me, see what you have made of me.”

--Roland Barthes, A Lover’s Discourse

“Lord, wilt Thou turn and look upon me then”

--Christina Rossetti, Poetical Works 228

The concept of asceticism provides a surprisingly suggestive model for the trajectory of desire followed by the Rossettis between an unmediated religious faith and the various artistic and erotic mediations of that faith that they practiced. While asceticism may seem an irredeemably alien heuristic to use in interpreting the materialistic Victorian culture and even odder as a model for the Pre-Raphaelites who were known for the abundant fullness of their images, theorists such as Geoffrey Harpham, Michel Foucault, Sigmund Freud (in Beyond the Pleasure Principle), and Michel
de Certeau have broadened the concept of asceticism commonly associated with early Christian mystics to include what Harpham terms an “ascetic imperative” which refers “not only to a particular set of beliefs and practices that erupted into high visibility during the early Christian era, but also to certain features of our own culture, features that have survived the loss of the ideological and theological structure within which they emerged” (Harpham xi). In just such a way did an ascetic imperative operate within Victorian culture’s struggles with the loss of Christian “ideological and theological structure[s].” In fact, in the realm of faith, asceticism brings into focus an important cluster of strategies practiced by both Dante Gabriel and Christina, for asceticism is not a single nexus but a constellation of discursive practices and policies aimed at transcending the self and attaining the absolute alterity of The Other through processes of negation, narrative, and restriction. In fact, the ascetic imperative relates closely to the definition in Chapter 2 of The Other as “the absent made present through opposition, language, and desire.”

Within this definition, asceticism links primarily to the strategy of The Other, as their desire to substitute The Other for the one of oneself and in the logic of imitability that pervades both systems. As the quotation from Barthes suggests, the ascetic’s call to The Other is that of a lover who has made him or herself over in the image of the beloved, much as faithful members of the Church, the Bride of Christ, remake themselves in the image of Christ the Bridegroom and as Christina attempted, though she mourned that “I cannot unself myself for ever and ever” (Face of the Deep 47). Asceticism also relates to the strategy of The Other “in its [asceticism’s] capacity to structure oppositions without collapsing them, to raise issues without settling them” (Harpham xii)—the move to deconstruct habits of hierarchical oppositions that was outlined in Chapter 2 as a solution
to the postmodernist dis-ease with The Double which would allow the reintegration of The Other into contemporary culture. This movement is also related to the maternal logic of figure, particularly metaphor, which “suspends the system of binary oppositions on which contradiction is based... but without reducing these oppositions to the same” (Barbara Johnson 110). Finally, the language of The Other and of asceticism intersect in their figural nature, in the way both employ tropes that “operate in the mode of negation: they admit the world of discourse, but deny it as their own. Literary language is ascetic in that it tends to repress the world, inclining towards what Roland Barthes calls a ‘Utopia of language,’ a self-sufficient universe of discourse” (Harpham ??). Once again, we are talking about the move beyond binarism that allows these strategies of alterity to perform “the ascetic task of the management of desire” (Harpham 231), i.e., to manipulate the complex tensions within the multiple constellations of desire.

**AbSENCE MADE PRESENt:**
**THE TROPES OF LOSS, TEXT, AND RENUNCIATION**

Like other strategies of alterity, asceticism proliferates in proximity to a loss. But whereas the strategies of The Double and The Other studied to this point respond to a loss

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8Barbara Johnson’s quotation is also cited and discussed within the framework of my theoretical paradigm. For a fuller treatment, see Chapter 2 above.

9The correlation of loss and asceticism is frequently noted in the literature of asceticism. To cite just one particularly provocative example, Michel de Certeau, in _Heterologies: Discourse of The Other_, claims that “The mysticism of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries proliferated in proximity to a loss. It is a historical trope for that loss. It renders the absence that multiplies the productions of desire readable. At the dawn of modernity, an end and a beginning—a departure—are thus marked. The literature of mysticism provides a path for those who ‘ask the way to get lost. No one knows.’ It teaches ‘how not to return’” (80). This particular chronology coordinates with Kristeva’s designation of the 13th to the 15th centuries as the time for the transition from Symbol to Sign (discussed above in Chapter 2, p. 23). In addition, although de Certeau has pushed the
of faith, asceticism is a mode of faith that responds to a loss of status. In the case of the Rossettis, where both types of loss were active, the conjunction was particularly poignant. Living in a society that had, as a whole, lost its capacity for unquestioning faith, the Rossettis themselves were outsiders, Italians in England and, in the case of Frances Lavinia, an outsider to the relatively comfortable socioeconomic status she had enjoyed in her youth. In fact, Christina’s asceticism may be at least partially ascribed to her marginalization as a woman.\textsuperscript{10} If we borrow from Michel de Certeau’s analysis of the eruption of mystical asceticism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, we see that it was found primarily in “regions or social categories which were in socio-economic recession, disadvantaged by change, marginalized by progress, or destroyed by war. The memory of past abundance survived in these conditions of impoverishment, but once the doors of social responsibility were closed, ambitions were redirected toward the open spaces of utopia, dream, and writing” (84). In addition to the economic and social loss, these early mystics “were experiencing, in their shattered Christendom, another fundamental decline: that of the institutions of meaning. They were experiencing the disintegration of a sacred world” similar to the loss of God experienced by the Victorians (de Certeau 86). All of these forms of loss were sharply operative for Christina Rossetti. As a woman in a world of men, ever more defined as a spinster following the downward

\textsuperscript{10} Along this line, Jerome Bump notes that Christina’s “ascetic ‘morbidities’ were amplified . . . by what we might call the melancholy of the woman’s lot in Victorian England” (“CR and the PRB” 343).
econimic path of her parents, Christina found herself increasingly trapped in a rhetoric of loss while Dante Gabriel’s art offered economic and social as well as emotional progress.

Christina’s response to her entrapment in loss was to embrace it and to make absence present through the complex strategy of askesis. Askesis, the practice of self-discipline through “an exercise of oneself in the activity of thought” (Foucault, II: 9), is one way the faithful can respond to the impossibility of incorporation with the object of their desire, an incorporation logically foredoomed by the absolute alterity of deity. Askesis shifts the emphasis from the outcome to the struggle itself, privileging the struggle over the resolution, defining a quest for a goal that cannot and must not be reached, a quest with a sharp caveat: ‘seek but do not find’ (Harpham 43). The stasis of death—the principle “beyond the pleasure principle” as Freud put it—became Christina’s goal and “If I might only love my God and die”11 her motto as she struggled to find a way of dealing with a life where “All weareth, all wasteth” (Face 37). As a Christian, she saw her life as a struggle to rid herself of the multiplicity of worldly Doubles in favor of the singularity of The one Other. Her desire was supported by the Tractarian doctrine of Soul Sleep, which held that, between the Particular Judgment at the individual’s death and the General Judgment at world’s end, the individual soul entered a state of restful sleep,

Sleeping at last, the trouble & tumult over,

Sleeping at last, the struggle & horror past,

(II: 339)

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11 G. B. Tennyson characterizes this typically Rossettian phrase as another way of expressing the “Christian formulation of a perennial yearning, the desire to rid oneself of the world that is always too much with us in order to enjoy the promised oneness with God that comes at death” (“Love God and Die” 353).
as Christina described it in her final lyric, “Sleeping at Last.” Paradoxically, though, her religion forbade her from embracing death deliberately, deferring her moment of union with Christ the Bridegroom.

The oft-noted morbidity of Christina’s life and poetry can be interpreted as an acceptance and embrace of loss, a long movement toward the ultimate ascasis found in the stasis of Tractarian Soul Sleep as well as in the death principle of Freud’s late work on Thanatos. In Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Freud identifies a manifestation of desire which reconciles the twin pursuits of death and desire: he redefines the pleasure principle to state that the human mind tends to avoid unpleasure and pursue pleasure by keeping the level of mental “excitation” as low as possible. Carried to an extreme, this would mean that absolute pleasure is to be found in the absolute absence of excitation; i.e., in the total stasis of death. The concept of Thanatos is reinforced by the idea of the repetition compulsion, which also motivates a return to an earlier stage of being which is, ultimately, a state of inorganic being—again, death. The standard psychoanalytic view sees asceticism as a perversion; however, if death and the beyond of the pleasure principle is, as Freud claims, “intrinsic” to humanity, the stasis of death becomes normalized. Christina’s quest for stasis, her perception of a diminution of excitement as a positive pleasure is manifested in the preoccupation with death in her poetry and in her systematic retreat from the world in her life, her ongoing quest to quiet the passionate girl within who had once ripped open her own arm with scissors and to turn her into the ascetic whose poems echo the archetypal boast of a medieval monk: “I am deader than you” (Harpham 26). Christina pursued this state of sleeping death in an enormous number of poems, from the early “Dream-Land” (1849; printed in The Germ, 1850) where the
protagonist “left the rosy morn, . . . left the fields of corn” for a state of “Rest, rest, a perfect rest . . . Rest, rest, for everymore” (I:27) to her final lyric, “Sleeping at Last” (1893-94). The doctrine of Soul Sleep makes death a state where the faithful one who is “Half dead” (as Christina entitled an 1892 poem) can reach a kind of assimilation with The Deity as Other, where Christ is “my Life” and the “oil and wine” of The Last Rites and final Holy Communion “keep me Thine; Me ever Thine, and Thee for ever mine” (II:321). The play of rhyme and capitalization in the pronouns (me/Thee, mine/Thine) metaphorically condenses at least the signifiers of God and Christian into a kind of linguistic oneness.

In the ascetic’s pursuit of Thanatos we see that the ascetic “ideal of immobility and death, far from being a denial of desire, forms a meditation on and enactment of desire, complicating and prolonging it by proposing deferred gratifications” (Harpham 45-46). In fact, for Christina, death in Christ prolongs the moment of the desired union with The Other eternally, such that “It is not death, O Christ, to die for Thee” (Face 210). Rather, death is a moment of everlasting desire, where “Darkness of death makes Thy dear lovers see/ Thyself Who Wast and Art and Art to Be” (Face 210). If the ascetic were to reach the goal too quickly, to immediately “seek and find,” the quest would be ended and desire compelled to seek another object. Further, as Harpham suggests, volatile desire is problematic for the ascetic in that its talent for apparently unlimited displacements subverts the ascetic’s project of coherent self-definition and “pictorial self-definition.” The self defined by reference to The Other must define that Other unitarily: “The desiring self is a provisional self, attached to and defined by objects it could abandon at any time” (Harpham 51). Only if desire is firmly anchored in the internalized absolute of “God within our soul” can the ascetic project of coherent self-definition be achieved. Thus we
have Christina’s privileging of God The Other over her potential Doubles, the Saints, as “Thyself, more lovely than the lovely band / Of saints” (Face 210). The Double's fixation on multiple objects petit a allows a floating desire and an infinite capacity for displacement. However, asceticism also serves the purposes of The Double by simultaneously preserving and repressing desire. In fact, the

brodest description of the project of asceticism is that it recognizes and manages drive or impulse, commonly called desire, by harnessing and directing resistance. . . . Asceticism's structuring of resistance to desire is what prevents the desiring self from moving directly to the object of desire and instead requires the self to perform work to achieve and/or justify the desire—work which, in the case of the artist, produces not the disfigured self of the ascetic mystic but the work of art, the poem or the painting as well as the self. (Harpham 61-2)

Thus, the poet-Christian united with God in death need not give up her song, knowing that it is not “silence of a silent land/Which speaks Thy praise so all may understand . . . Nor [is] silence silence, and I therefore sing/A very humble hopeful quiet psalm” (Face of the Deep 210).

For Christina and Dante Gabriel, practices of ascesis “harnessed and directed their resistance,” allowing them to deal with the oppositions between faith and desire by replacing opposition with resistance. As the "cultural" element in culture, the aspect which requires self-control and denial of what Augustine called "nature and nature's appetites" (Harpham xii) in favor of culture's aesthetic dictums, asceticism paradoxically allowed Dante Gabriel to replace unmediated religious faith with mediated artistic,
literary, and finally, erotic objects of desire. At the same time, the aesthetic aspects of asceticism supplied Christina with a means to sublimate through resistance her erotic desire for a human Double into a religious desire for salvation—without completely annihilating human love. Her resistance allowed her to “suspend two apparently antagonistic terms . . . in a relationship of interdependence so that both opposition and relation are maintained” (Harpham xvi), as in the Monna Innominata’s cry that “I could not love you loved I not God more.” Christina reverses the usual order of sublimation outlined by Lacan in which the subject’s initiation into the sexual order is a compensation for loss of The Other, but it is clear that she is sublimating her desire for human love in heavenly love: “Rossetti’s heaven and hell are always conceptualized in terms of personal love relations” (McGann 139). Her correlation of God with Love can become cloyingly insistent, as in “Christmastide,” when she uses “Love” and variations on the word twelve times in twelve short lines beginning with four instances in the ten words of the first two lines: “Love came down at Christmas, / Love all lovely, Love Divine” (II:215). Christina rejects the domestication of desire implied by sexuality even as she rejects the human lovers who do not take enough. As Rosenblum claims, “she has given up everything because nothing in this world is ‘enough’” (36), her desire being directed toward The Other who will take her all: “What shall we not give Thee?” (Face of the Deep 19).

Christina conducted this ascetic struggle in both her life and her work much as the early Christian ascetics simultaneously denigrated the body through self-torture and

12 See Chapter 2 above for a fuller explication of this concept.
deprivation while privileging the body as the ground upon which the struggle against self
must be waged. While attempting to erase the self, asceticism focuses on the self as
capable of being molded into a multitude of forms which will then become imitable,
rendering the self “structured, knowable, and valuable” (Harpham xiv; emphasis mine).
This is the double bind of asceticism—denying/punishing the flesh also privileges/affirms
the flesh and its importance—but Harpham proposes a double move of affirmation and
denial that reframes the question, re-contextualizing the concept in terms of a Deriddean
“de-negation” that undoes a concept even as it is being put forward. Christina employs
this concept in her oft-quoted poem “The Lowest Room” (I: 200) where she asks God to
“Give me the lowest place” even as she claims that she does not “dare/Ask for that lowest
place,” simultaneously speaking and denying speech. Or, again, the lowest place
becomes not not-high in *Called to be Saints* when she characterizes the lowest place:
“Ah, Lord, how steep and high/That lowest place whereon a saint shall sit!” The move is
even more complicated in “Sit down in the lowest room” (II: 259) where Christina prays
that God not only “give me grace / To take the lowest place” but that He make is such that
she not even “desire” to go higher...“Unless it be Thy Will” (emphasis mine), moving
the responsibility for desire from the self to The Other so that desire becomes truly the
Lacanian desire of The Other. The concluding lines change the verb “desire” in the
above-quoted line into a noun personifying the poet-speaker herself, as she admonishes
“desire” to “Sit low” else it “aims awry.”

This manipulation of desire shows how, for poets, their corpus—simultaneously
text and body—provides a free space within which the ascetic project can suspend the
opposition between Double and Other. Since the ascetic’s goal is perfect union with God,
this move of turning the body into a text, the better to imitate the Word made flesh, is entirely appropriate. The physicality of the text, its textuality, "erases the distinction between inner and outer by serving simultaneously as an external record of inner thoughts and as an internalized eye of social judgement" (Harpham 14). Writing out one's inner subjectivity makes the self Other and constitutes "an ascesis, a deadening, a purging of materiality and mutability that anticipates the release of the soul from the body at death" (Harpham 14). The ascetic's desire for death becomes the artist's desire for the text, the desire for the end, for the resolution of narrative which in life is, at the end of the circle, death. Theoreticians of hagiography note that a saint becomes a saint only through narrative, in the process of the biography which brings them to life in textuality, transforming the self into a narrative so that it may be preserved and remembered. It could be argued that Dante Gabriel practiced just such an act of hagiography on his erotic Doubles, especially Lizzie Siddal and Janey Morris, particularly in "The Portrait" (169) where he boasts that "all who would look on her must come to me." Language becomes a means of subjection (what Foucault calls the "mode d'assujettissement") which removes the subject from the world, producing what has been called "the tonality of death in life" (Harpham 41). Dante Gabriel removes, not himself, but his Double, from the world, making his Double a work of art, a text and a vision where the body became art, removed from the world and imbued with "the tonality of death in life."

Perhaps the most commonplace aspect of asceticism is its strategy of renunciation, restriction, starkness. This aspect of negativity in asceticism leads some theorists to claim that it is at the base of all culture as the subtractive agent in culture, the impulse which adjures the overblown and the kitsch in favor of the control and structure that makes a
work of art, a life, even a person "cultured." The ascetic project attempts to negate the self through deprivation which again turns the body into a text since the negative, as linguists have often noted, exists only in language, not in nature. The negative "stands, therefore, as a token of the purely linguistic, and, of course, as the essence of asceticism in all its forms" (Harpham 17). Similarly, Christina notes, in *Letter and Spirit*, that the Anglo-Catholic creed she espoused in her life and her art "was not a creed of joy or freedom, but one of restriction and suppression, an accumulation of negatives," writing that "The First Commandment, being itself framed upon a Negative, invites us to study negatives in our search for perfection" (qtd. in Jones 201). Then, too, many of Christina's exhortations to the faithful, especially in her later works published under the auspices of the Society for the Preservation of Christian Knowledge (SPCK), are deeply embedded with negatives, as in the following complex passage from *The Face of the Deep*:

since many truths admit of being vividly set forth by help of negatives, even unfaithfulness viewed as a sort of negation need not altogether strike us dumb... If we cannot acquire faithfulness at once, let us patiently, humbly, anxiously, unlearn faithfulness. Till we can affirm truth, at least let us deny error. (64)

So, too, her rejection of the world is resolutely framed in the negative in "Where neither rust nor moth doth corrupt" (1893) where Christina desires to be "Unsnared, unscared by world or flesh or devil,/ Not careful here to hoard, not here to revel;/... Not with the sparrow building here a house" (II:182).

The subtractive impulse is manifested also in Christina's preference for plan and simple words, for the ascetics believe that "language resembled the self in that words had
simple, plain, essential meanings which were often lost or obscured in a confusion of multivocality and alternate possibilities" (Harpham 3). Critics often view Christina as “an ascetic aesthete” (Harrison, CR in Context 16) and describe her poetry as engendered in the tension between asceticism and aestheticism, so that “[a]like in the love poems and in the religious poems, there is a certain asceticism, passion itself speaking a chastened language, the language, generally, of sorrowful but absolute renunciation” (Symons 138). Christina’s passion for conciseness led Dolores Rosenblum to note that although the spartanly written religious poems can seem “self-indulgent in their aesthetic impoverishment,” this conciseness is more than “literary destitution,” it is a strategy of renunciation that posits absence and loss as renunciatory goals in line with Tractarian aesthetics and the Tractarian concept of “reserve” (34). One of the poetic birthrights that Christina renounces as part of her aesthetic program was the artistic right to originality, specifically original language. Christina’s later religious poems were most often based on and echoes of Scripture. Her progression into depersonalized language, into readings and meditations on Scripture can be seen as the end of her ascetic quest, the point at which she gives into “the temptation simply to collapse into mere citation of Scripture, easing the alienation of humanity by forgetting it, so that Scripture accomplishes no work in the human world, yielding no profit” (Harpham 73). However, Christina’s entire corpus is, in fact, redolent with citations, primarily from Scripture, but also from “Plato . . . Saint Augustine, Dante, Petrarch, Herbert, Crashaw, Maturin, Coleridge, Keats, Tennyson, and the troubadour traditions (Harrison, CR in Context 10). These allusions, rich with the interpretive traditions of decades if not centuries, allowed Christina to generate an incredible density of meaning within a sparse language. It can hardly be said of these
poems that they "accomplish no work." Rather, her "aesthetic of renunciation" allowed her to create "a self by abdicating the self," fashioning a distinctive self manifested in a text which mirrored the "wisdom of the ages" while remaining immediately identifiable as "Christina Rossetti" (Rosenblum 35) while participating in the ascetic's "only proper reading . . . in which the historical and the archetypal, the literal and metaphorical, are suspended in mutual resistance" (Harpham 73).

Christina's penchant for renunciation as a strategy of empowerment is evidenced in poems such as her oft-quoted "The Lowest Place" (I: 187) in which the poetic speaker not only asks for the lowest place, she demands it twice, once in the first line of each stanza. Further, she uses the imperative to direct that, "if for me/That lowest place too high," God should create an even lower one explicitly for her use! The very excessiveness of her humility aligns her with the highest possible position, with the extremes meeting in a productive tension of opposites. Her ascetic "plenitude of renunciation" functions within the nonphilosophy of an ascetic linguistics based explicitly on the negative. As Heidegger has pointed out, renunciation "always cancels itself by turning out to be an affirmation" (Harpham 18) as Christina's denial of pride of place with regard to the highest place turns out to be an affirmation of pride of place with regard to the lowest place. She is, as the ascetic Basil was, "striv[ing] eagerly... to be the last of all" (Harpham 28).

The subtractive impulse is also visible in Dante Gabriel's Art Catholic poems and paintings, which present his most prolonged and obvious body of ascetically influenced work. His early religious paintings—such as Ecce Ancilla Domini, Mary Nazarene, The Passover of the Holy Family: Gathering the Bitter Herbs, and, to a lesser extent, The Girlhood of Mary Virgin—are striking for the simplicity and clarity of their execution in
contrast to the voluptuous abundance of his non-religious paintings. Nor can the simplicity be attributed to the limitations of a journeyman artist: *The Salutation of Beatrice* and other Dantean works painted at about the same time are full of sensuously detailed hair, clothing, and background figures, while other religious works painted throughout the 1850s (Nicoll 66) exhibit similar restrictions in the number of elements, breadth of palette, and detail of execution. To focus on a particularly characteristic detail, it is noticeable that Dante Gabriel consistently pictures the Virgin's hair with a relatively few vertical lines and minimal variation in palette. In *Ecce Ancilla Domini*, Mary's hair falls almost entirely in straight lines of a nearly uniform auburn color. The hair texture and color are slightly more complex in *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*; on the other hand, Mary's hair is hidden under a simple cloth in *Mary Nazarene*. By comparison, the locks of *Lady Lilith* or any of Dante Gabriel's later erotic females are textured in elaborately detailed curves and their color is a complex mixture of auburn with golden highlights and deeper shadows. In fact, *Ecce Ancilla Domini!* (whose starkness Dante Gabriel later castigated as "the blessed white daub" and "the blessed white eyesore") presents a startlingly pale tonality, with a palette almost entirely restricted to shades of white, with accents in Marian blues and earthy browns. The effect of clarity is further heightened by the "transparency of watercolor" used here and in other Marian

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13 It is interesting to note that Christina served as Dante Gabriel's model for Mary in both *Ecce* and *Girlhood*, while Lizzie modeled for the Virgin in a later *Annunciation*, thus conflating sororital and spousal Double within a frame of faith and forecasting Dante Gabriel's later transfer of allegiance from *The Other* as deity to *The Double* of life and literature.

14 See, for example, *Ruth and Boaz*, 1855. An 1861 *Annunciation*, however, is done in a style more in line with his later sensuous approach, reflecting the more intense loss of faith he had undergone by this time.
paintings “to convey the atmosphere of shimmering light” that Rossetti favored in his verbal and visual treatments of Marian materials (Bentley, “Ave” 27).

_Ecce Ancilla Domini!_ is notable also for the diminished number of elements in the painting. Mary’s nightgown and bedclothes in _Ecce_ are, in fact, famous for their meagerness, to the point that William Michael felt compelled to apologize for their absence as “an arrangement which may be justified in consideration of the hot climate.” However, Dante Gabriel’s _Annunciation_ of 1861, depicting the same scene with Lizzie as model for the Virgin, is elaborately detailed. A more religiously astute reader than William Michael might realize that the reduction of elements is not an occasion for apology; rather, it is part of an ascetic strategy such that the “loss of detail in the _Annunciation_ signifies gain” (Doan 482) as the symbolic elements foreshadowing Christ’s birth are replaced by the transcendent reality of His conception. Even the elements that do exist in the Marian paintings are simplified; see, for example, _Mary Nazarene_, where the material of Mary’s dress appears stiff and unyielding despite the rolled-up sleeves and full-length pose of a woman at work. And, although _The Girlhood of Mary Virgin_, when contrasted to _Ecce Ancilla Domini!,_ appears to have an “almost disconcerting number of objects” (Doan 471), it lacks the obsessive patterning of surfaces that characterizes Dante Gabriel’s non-religious paintings. Further, the elements in _Girlhood_ serve the narrative function characteristic of the ascetic impulse: we must “read” the oil lamp as an emblem of wisdom, St. Anne’s green mantle as signifying divine love, the stack of books as reminding us of the three theological virtues (Faith, Hope, and Charity) and three of the four cardinal virtues (Justice being missing) (Doan). Then, too, virtually all are _symbols_ pointing to a transcendent reality beyond the surface, positing the necessary connection
between symbol and symbolized characteristic of The Other. In contrast, the surface decoration and patterning of Dante Gabriel’s non-religious paintings are more often signs, suggesting The Double’s grammar of arbitrary connections between signifier and signified, and drawing upon “the eerie symbolism that pervaded Rossetti’s poems from the mid 1850s onward,” replacing the traditional Christian mythos (Riede, “Erasing” 59).

In their general composition, the Marian paintings are resolutely vertical,\(^\text{15}\) almost as though the artist had deliberately restricted himself to a single angle, eschewing all unnecessary angles. The composition of Ecce and Girlhood are also striking for the lack of a central figure, with Mary and the angel Gabriel—protagonists of the tale told by the two paintings—visually and symbolically marginalized even as the ascetic seeks to shift the center of attention from him or herself to the absent Christ. In Ecce, Mary cowers against the wall to the right, while Gabriel’s robe nearly brushes the left margin, and the two figures are dressed almost identically (Munich 99) in white robes that fade into the background, as they are Doubles against The Other of the not-yet-born Christ. Similarly, Girlhood positions Mary and Gabriel at the margins, with Mary seated to the right and Gabriel standing to the left\(^\text{16}\). In both paintings, however, Mary and Gabriel seem to stare towards the emptied center, at elements symbolizing the always-and-not-yet present Christ: in Ecce, at the stalk of lilies which point phallically at Mary’s womb; and, in

\(^{15}\) Jan Marsh calls Ecce “a strange picture, tall and narrow and very pale” (*Pre-Raphaelite Women* 32) and compares it to Edward Burne-Jones’s *Annunciation* of 1879. Despite their common design of “tall narrow shape and a composition based on two vertical figures” (42) of Mary and the Angel, the two paintings are startlingly different in execution. Burne-Jones’s sumptuous detailing of architecture, plant life, and draperies highlights by contrast the asceticism of Rossetti’s painting.

\(^{16}\) Although the Virgin is at the physical center of *Mary Nazarene*, her bent posture and rapt attention to her work shift the emotional center of the painting to the left—to a position shared by the Christ-symbolizing lily and the dove of the Holy Ghost.
*Girlhood,* at the incomplete series of books backed by the cross-shaped, ivy-covered trellis prefiguring the crucifixion.

Interestingly, marginalization and the female figure are also at issue in a series of little-known illustrations Christina drew in the margins of her copy of *The Christian Year,* John Keble’s collection of Tractarian devotional poetry structured according to the Book of Common Prayer. D’Amico postulates that Christina began the drawings in the late 1840s (about the same time as Dante Gabriel’s Art Catholic period, roughly 1847-1850). The childlike simplicity of her primitive drawings, in no way discordant with the ascetic impulse, chimes with Dante Gabriel’s 1850 *Ecce Ancilla Domini* as well. But where *Ecce* and Dante Gabriel’s other Marian paintings marginalize the figure of the female whom one would expect at the center of the narrative, Christina’s drawings center on female figures where no women are specifically mentioned in the text being illustrated. In “Fourth Sunday in Advent,” for example, Keble’s poetry is written in the first person, logically suggesting a masculine speaker. But Christina reads the text subjectively, recasting the single male speaker as a trinity of women, reflecting her ongoing preoccupation with trinitarian forms as well as her own feminine self-image. Trinities and quartets of women also take over center stage in Christina’s illustrations for “Advent Sunday,” “Ash Wednesday,” “Fourth Sunday in Lent,” and “Fifth Sunday After Epiphany,” marginalizing speakers who are implicitly or explicitly masculine in the subject texts. And, in the illustration for “Septuagesima Sunday,” Christina uses her own favorite trope

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17 These illustrations were brought to light by Diane D’Amico in “Christina Rossetti’s *Christian Year:* Comfort for ‘the weary heart’” where she reproduces seven of Christina’s illustrations.
of a woman hastening uphill, presumably to the Holy Bridegroom, to illustrate the following, only loosely related lines from Keble:

The Saviour lends the light and heat

That crowns His holy hill;

The saints, like stars, around His seat

Perform their courses still.

(qtd. in D’Amico, 39)

In all of these ways, Christina uses the raw material of Keble’s poetry to serve her own purposes, transforming the masculine speaker into a female who might well be Christina herself.\(^{18}\) In fact, the drawing foreshadows her own “Septuagesima” poem, first published in 1885 (II: 415), more accurately than it illustrates Keble’s. Both works explicate the Septuagesima collect taken from Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians, translated in the King James version as “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain” (1 Cor 9:24). But whereas Keble emphasizes the place of the Saviour, the saints, and the landscape, Christina’s poem focuses on the one runner:

One step more, and the race is ended; . . .

One toil more, and a long rest follows

At set of sun. (II: 219)

\(^{18}\) D’Amico notes that the only lines that Christina marked in her copy of Keble’s *Christian Year* were those that “could all be spoken by Rossetti herself,” citing in particular her marking of self-referential lines of penitence in “Fourth Sunday after Easter” while avoiding lines in the same poem that pertain not only to women, but specifically to the mother of a young child (40).
The simplicity and self-focus of these drawings, like that of her religious poetry, do not signify artistic weakness. Rather, their almost Byzantine stylization reveals an inexhaustible exfoliation of poetic language . . . [that] is in no way an attenuation, for in the process of transformation Rossetti is able to shift from a vision of the female self as passive and helpless, fading away like the vanity of vanities, forever deserted, untouched, unknown, to a vision of a self whose ‘female’ weaknesses are strengths and who can convert ‘masculine’ evasion—a turning away and a passing by—into a direct, intimate, and reciprocal imaginative relation: “Thou Face to face with me, and Eye to eye.” (Rosenblum 155-156)

AESTHETIC FAITH

While Christina resolutely pursued unity with God The Other through an ascetic “exfoliation” of her life and language, Dante Gabriel searched for a personal myth that would replace his fading moment of religious faith. For Dante Gabriel’s brush with orthodox religious belief was just that: a fading moment inspired by the more sincere belief of his mother and sisters, a contention supported, as David Riede notes, by the evident “ease with which he dropped his Art-Catholic stance” (Limits 53). Dante Gabriel’s faith became mediated through aesthetic objects of painting and poetry as he Doubled and redoubled the objects of his desire, and his work began to focus on “literary transmutations concerned more with esthetic and moral preoccupations than with religious or ritual ones” (Levi-Strauss 209). In 1853, Dante Gabriel took his leave of
orthodox religion in “The Church-Porches” (198), a pair of sonnets addressed to his sincerely, consistently religious sisters.

In the first of the doubled sonnets, addressed to Maria, the speaker and his sister are entering the church, “shak[ing] off the dust” of the profane world, “lest it defile the stones” in the church. But even as he is entering the sacred portal, the speaker is re-creating religious faith into an aesthetic faith, making the consecrated building into a metonymical “canvas” as he points out the many ways that the sacred air of the church is invoked through artistic means: the “inscriptured” stones on the floor, the paintings of the saints “Whom painters paint for visible orisons,/And to whom sculptors pray in stone and bronze.” His emphasis on these art works and on the music of the church-bells, a “carven church door,” and the “faces of crowned angels all about” redirects the focus of the “Silence . . . and deep prayer” from religious to aesthetic modes of belief. By the beginning of the second sonnet, addressed to Christina, the poet is ready to quit the church precincts and return to his assigned work in the “real,” aesthetic world. The sonnet begins immediately with the poet’s admonition to his sister to “arise: We have no more to sing/Or say.” Though he acknowledges that it may be “an irksome thing” to leave the comfort of orthodox religion, he makes it clear that their true “prayer” lies outside, closing with “It is so bidden, sister, let us go” (198).

This aestheticization of religion is further underscored in the ironic “Burden of Nineveh” (55-58). In this poem, a chance sight of “A wingèd beast from Nineveh” in the British Museum leads the poet to meditate on the transience of all civilizations and their gods. Whether they be from Nineveh or London, only the artistic museum piece — “The mummy of a buried faith”—survives the ravages of time that bury the “vows,” the “rites,”
the “prayers preferr’d” in a “dead disbowelled mystery” of a faith long lost. Only the aesthetic aspects of the beast survive to live again in London, attesting an artistic faith whose endurance puts the religious to shame:

Lo thou! could all thy priests have shown
Such proof to make thy godhead known?
From their dead Past thou liv’st alone;
And still thy shadow is thine own.

Even as of yore in Nineveh. (56)

Nor is this decay of faith unique to Nineveh, as the poem makes clear: “Greece, Egypt, Rome,—did any god / Before whose feet men knelt unshod / Deem that in this unblest abode” (56) the relics of faith should huddle together, all alike in their attestation to the museum’s glorification of Art. Even Christianity is not exempt, as the poet quotes from the Biblical story of Satan offering Christ “all the kingdoms at a glance” as just one of a series of bygone tales. The poem ends, then, with the poet’s fancy that at some far time when “Man’s age is hoary among men” the civilization of that time will capture “the wingèd beast from Nineveh” for their own exhibition, grouping evidence of London’s Christianity and Nineveh’s forgotten faith together as “relics” fit only for a museum.

The personal, aestheticized mythology that Dante Gabriel came to substitute for a more orthodox religious faith took on many variations as it drew its mythemes from the discourses of Dante and medievalism as well as other literary and artistic sources. Christina, too, employed a personalized mythology; although her mythemes were drawn primarily from the Bible, she blended these Scriptural sources with elements from fairy tales, Dante and the Italian troubadour tradition, and gothic tales to create her own
reading and writing of The Word. Mythology, in the sense I am borrowing here from Claude Levi-Strauss, is related to asceticism in that it is a way of dealing with opposition. But whereas asceticism seeks to maintain contradictions in a unified structure which prevents their collapse, "the purpose of myth is to provide a logical model capable of overcoming a contradiction" (Levi-Strauss 226). The Other-based economy of asceticism supernaturalizes the natural in an effort to achieve unity with The Other. Myth, on the other hand, naturalizes the supernatural, "explaining" the world through a process of that creates a series of Doubles until a pair is found that can mediate the conflict:

mythical thought always progresses from the awareness of oppositions toward their resolution . . . . two opposite terms with no intermediary always tend to be replaced by two equivalent terms which admit a third one as a mediator . . . where each term generates the next by a double process of opposition and correlation. (Levi-Strauss 221)

Within this Doubling process, the "function of repetition is to render the structure of the myth apparent, a 'slated' structure, which comes to the surface, so to speak, through the process of repetition" (226). In fact, as Levi-Strauss notes, "some myths seem to be entirely devoted to the task of exhausting all the possible solutions to the problem of bridging the gap between two and one" (223). Even as asceticism seeks paradoxically to create the one by maintaining the two in tension, myth seeks to retain duality even while resolving opposition into unity: "Since [the] mediating function occupies a position halfway between two polar terms, [it] must retain something of that duality—namely an ambiguous and emotional character" (223).
Many of these aestheticizing strategies of The Double are operational in “Hand and Soul,” a short prose tale that Dante Gabriel published in the first edition of The Germ. “Hand and Soul” is the story of Chiaro dell’ Erma, a young Florentine painter who lived before Raphael. A true pre-Raphaelite in both chronology and philosophy, Chiaro “endeavoured from early boyhood towards the imitation of any objects offered in nature,” his whole artistic faith focused on an “extreme longing after a visible embodiment of his thoughts” (Germ I: 23). Even as the young Dante Gabriel presented himself to Ford Madox Brown as a worshipful student only to decide quickly that he surpassed his master, Chiaro journeys to Pisa to seek out the painter Giunta, only to discover “I am the master of this man” (24). Chiaro becomes successful, first in “life” (for “he was well-favoured . . . and, seeing his face in front, there was a glory upon it, as upon the face of one who feels a light round his hair” 24) and then in art. Chiaro pursues success in art first for “the race of fame” (25) but soon discovers that it leaves him unsatiated, “his life . . . still in its first painful desire” (26). Then he decides that the “worship and service” he had felt for art was a false faith: “he became aware that much of that reverence which he had mistaken for faith had been no more than the worship of beauty” (26). He moves then to a cold, didactic religious faith:

From that moment Chiaro set a watch on his soul, and put his hand to no other works but only to such as had for their end the presentation of some moral greatness that should impress the beholder; and, in doing this, he did not choose for his medium the action and passion of human life, but cold symbolism and abstract impersonation. (26)
As might be expected, this “cold symbolism” attracts critical fame but no public acclaim; nor does it satisfy his own longings. Finally he has a revelation after watching a fight break out on a church porch—a fight so vicious that “there was so much blood cast up the walls on a sudden, that it ran in long streams down Chiaro’s painting,” an abstraction of Peace that hung there. Chiaro reviews his life and all the approaches he has devoted to the Levi-Straussian “task of exhausting all the possible solutions to the problem of bridging the gap between two and one,” between art and faith: “Fame failed me: faith failed me: and now this also . . . shall pass from me” (29). At this point Chiaro has his vision of the mediation that will rule his—and Dante Gabriel’s—artistic life henceforth. His soul appears to him in the form of a woman who tells him that henceforth he should paint only his own soul, in her image: “Chiaro, servant of God, take now thine Art unto thee, and paint me thus, as I am. . . . Do this; so shall thy soul stand before thee always, and perplex thee no more” (31).

Critics have long taken the story as an confession of true artistic faith, based on William Sharp’s assertion that Dante Gabriel called it his “artistic confessio fidei” (297).

As an 'artistic confessio fidei' the point of the work is quite clear: genius resides in the soul of the artist, and its direct and faithful transcription is the artist's sole duty. As commentators have long pointed out, it seems to forecast Rossetti's own future career, painting female heads to express his own inmost feelings, and transcribing the phases of his soul in the just phases of his verse. (Riede, Revisited 13)

The link between art and life was further picked up and underlined by Dante Gabriel’s primary biographer, Oswald Doughty, who claimed that “Gabriel's uneasy suspicion that
his religious attitude was chiefly aesthetic and emotional had found expression in *Hand and Soul*, in Chiaro's discovery 'that much of the reverence which he had mistaken for faith, had been no more than the worship of beauty.'" (135). The language of these and other critics implicitly emphasizes the myth of aesthetic faith at work here. "Hand and Soul," as an "artistic confessio fidei," emphasizes his worship of beauty and encourages him to paint his own soul. It operates through the mythic strategy of The Double, using repetition to overcome contradiction by positing a series of oppositions until one pair is obtained that can be mediated. Not only does this strategy of repetition apply to Chiaro's many stages (fame, artistic worship, didactic religion, and fidelity to his own soul), but it pertains as well to the very structure of the story. As John Pfordresher shows, "Hand and Soul" employs at least four "story forms"—a present day framing tale, a biography of a truly pre-Raphaelite artist, a didactic narrative, and an epiphany story (105ff)—so that Dante Gabriel's own quest through a series of opposition is documented within the tale.

"Hand and Soul" also employs the Levi-Straussian strategy of drawing its mythemes from diverse sources in its attempt to create a unified whole. Despite William Michael Rossetti's disingenuous claim that "Hand and Soul" was written in a single December night to meet a *Germ* deadline (*Works* 679),19 the tale shows evidence that Dante Gabriel drew upon a large variety of sources in composing his "artistic confession of faith." The epigraph quotes Bonaggiunta Urbiciani, one of Dante Gabriel's "early Italians," recast to emphasize emotion rather than intellect and to see the soul as "the

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19 John Pfordresher presents evidence to dispute this tale of inspirational composition, demonstrating that the actual composition covered some months in the fall and winter of 1849 (104).
heart’s conscience” rather than in a strict religious sense (Riede, Limits 36). The stratagem of the present-day framing tale goes back at least to Canterbury Tales and, possibly, to their inspiration in Boccaccio’s Decameron, while its “motif of the forgotten picture” draws on the gothic tradition as practiced by experts of The Double such as E.T.A. Hoffmann and Edgar Allan Poe (Pfördrescher 106). Pfördrescher also demonstrates ways in which Chiaro’s life is based upon sources including romantic adventure magazine tales, sixteenth-century biographies of Renaissance painters, and, most importantly, Dante’s Vita Nuova (109ff): “Twin figures dominate the . . . visions of the Vita; one is Beatrice, the other a young man, the allegorical embodiment of love. Both are aspects of Dante’s self. It is here that Rossetti found the earliest, and perhaps for him the most influential version of the double” (122). The combination of these and other sources in the vision of a feminine anima or beloved epipsyche that was to be the culminating figure of his personal mythology allowed Dante Gabriel to create “a well-nigh perfect condensation of the three cultural traditions he cared most about: the medieval, the Dantean pre-Renaissance, and the Gothic Romantic” (Pfördrescher 126).

That “Hand and Soul” concludes within the myth of androgyne that enshrines the epipsyche is irrefutable. Dante Gabriel’s image of his soul as a woman reflects “the conventional medieval beauty [which] had become his own ideal” (Soenstrom 19):

A woman was present in his room, clad to the hands and feet with a green and grey raiment, fashioned to that time. It seemed that the first thoughts he had ever known were given him as at first from her eyes, and he knew her hair to be the golden veil through which he beheld his dreams. Though her hands were joined, her face was not lifted, but set forward; and
though the gaze was austere, yet her mouth was supreme in gentleness.

(Germ 29)

This is the image of the epipsyche that will come to haunt Dante Gabriel’s own paintings: the hair like a veil, the prayerful positioning of the hands, the face “set forward” with an “austere” gaze. She is a part of him; “as much with him as his breath” (29), her “speech seemed within him and his own” (30). She is indeed “the fair woman, that was his soul” (31). Later, Dante Gabriel (as well as Chiaro) will paint her, and the immensity of her proportions, the oft-noted sturdy neck and oversized hands, attest to her androgyny.

These strategies of The Double became familiar to the Rossettis, particularly to Dante Gabriel, and, indeed, to all the Aesthetics who followed him, from William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones on, who “received sanction for their synthesizing double vision from earlier mythographers (Munich 94). As Adrienne Munich has noted, this obsession—particularly as applied to oppositions of gender—was central to the Aesthetic platform, as they sought to “make those basic dualities problematic, exposing them as somewhat arbitrary polar extremes which cannot always be forced apart but sometimes merge and become indistinguishable” (90), creating, in the process, a new mythology of the androgynous which would have serious repercussions on issues of gender on the whole and of sexualness in particular.20 Dante Gabriel applies the strategy Munich calls “revisionist typology” (87) to traditionally sacred mythemes to create “The Woodspurge” (205), a poem which David Riede claims “embodies in a peculiarly pure form one kind of poetry that may result from the loss of faith in the visionary” (Limits 57), while Andrew

20 Issues pertaining to the role of the Female will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.
Lang posits it as the place where “Rossetti renounces his Art-Catholicism . . . and indicates the new direction in which his floral imagery and cup symbolism will develop” (87). As we have seen, in his Art Catholic works, Dante Gabriel used simple, everyday items as religious symbols; for example, the stack of labeled books that symbolize the cardinal virtues in *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*. One common symbol in Dante Gabriel’s Art Catholic works is the triune lily, which plays a prominent part in both *Girlhood* and *Ecce Ancilla Domini!* where it stands for the Holy Trinity, the lily’s incomplete third point signaling that Christ is not yet born. In “The Woodspurge,” Dante Gabriel focuses on the symbolically related “three cups in one” of the humble woodspurge. But in this poem, Dante Gabriel suggests “the religious allusion only to deny it” (Christ 46); he simultaneously “hint[s] at spiritual symbolism and . . . empt[ies] his imagery of symbolic meaning” (Riede, *Revisited* 72). After detailing the speaker’s lonely walk through nature, he spies the flowering woodspurge, from which he draws the anticlimactic lesson that

> From perfect grief there need not be
> Wisdom or even memory;
> One thing learned remains to me,—
> The woodspurge has a cup of three.

No epiphany comes from this triune flower, as it did from the lily of Dante Gabriel’s Marian paintings; the speaker learns only the bare botanical fact of the woodspurge’s three-part structure. The world has lost its “divinely invested meaning” for both poetic speaker and poet; only “personal resonance” and a personal mythology of grief remain (Riede, *Revisited* 72).
While Dante Gabriel's "Woodspurge" strives to remove the religious elements from his aesthetic faith, Christina's "Goblin Market" (II: 11-26) combines and conflates aesthetic with ascetic strategies to bridge the opposition between The Double and The Other. In "Goblin Market" Christina promotes the ascetic management of desire as well as her didactic purposes through aesthetic means such as fairy tales and incantatory language. In the process she draws on Biblical chronicles as well, especially the stories of Eve in the Garden and Christ on the Cross, retelling the alpha and omega of the salvation narrative in what Leighton has called "a feminized myth of Christian redemption" (119). The revisionist mythology of "Goblin Market" echoes Florence Nightingale's musings in Cassandra that "[t]he next Christ will perhaps be a female Christ" (53). 21 The Victorian myth of the "angel in the house," while it contributed in many to the debasement of women, also bolstered the belief of Nightingale, Rosetti, and many other men and women of the Victorian era in the moral and redemptive powers of women. In "Goblin Market," Christina "subverts Christian allegory in order to allow women to participate equally in the positive roles of Christian mythology: they are not limited to being Eve figures, but an achieve new dignity as Mary/Martha figures and may even go so far as to become Christ figures" as Lizzie does (Casey 75).

The fairy tale surface of "Goblin Market" allows Christina to unfold her moral tale in a manner consistent with the Tractarian concept of reserve which requires the simultaneous concealment and revelation of a text's religious message. Like the metaphoric strategy of The Other, Tractarian reserve requires an audience able to read

21 It is perhaps significant that Christina had wished to follow Florence Nightingale to serve as a nurse in the Crimea, but was not allowed to go.
beyond the surface, an audience knowledgeable enough to decipher the symbolic content and courageous enough to make the leap from the multiplicity of human languages to the singularity of the Word of The Divine Other. Metaphor and reserve hide sacred meanings from unsanctified eyes at the same time that they tempt the unconverted hearer to embrace these deeper meanings, an eminently suitable approach if, as D. M. R. Bentley hypothesizes, Christina wrote “Goblin Market” to be read aloud to the fallen women and Anglican sisters with whom she worked at Highgate Hill and elsewhere (“Meretricious” 57-81). The success of Christina’s use of these strategies in “Goblin Market” was attested to by Alexander MacMillan, her publisher, who described to Dante Gabriel an untutored audience’s reaction to the poem: “I took the liberty of reading the Goblin Market aloud to a number of people belonging to a small working-man’s society here. They seemed at first to wonder whether I was making fun of them; by degrees they got as still as death, and when I finished there was a tremendous burst of applause” (qtd. in Packer 7).

Laura’s eating of the forbidden fruit draws heavily on Eve’s tale as told by Milton: a telling that emphasizes the intellectual rewards of the fruit as much if not more heavily than the sensual rewards (Gilbert and Gubar 567-8). Significantly, “Goblin Market” opens with the incantatory language of the goblin cry, a compendium of “unnatural fruits” which begins with apples, the traditional means of temptation in fairy tales such as “Snow White” as well as the fruit of the tree of knowledge in Eden. Like Milton’s Eve, Laura is clearly tempted more by intellectual than by sensual delights: while she constantly yearns to “Look,” “Listen,” and speak to the goblins, she neither desires nor indulges in any tactile contact with them—only with their fruits, their artistic produce, the fruits of their knowledge. Laura never touches or is touched by the goblins. Although one might
assume that some contact occurred when the “precious golden lock” was exchanged, the poem does not depict this moment: it jumps immediately from Laura’s conceivably auto-erotic self-touch while clipping the lock and dropping a tear to her passionate sucking of the goblin fruit fresh from “that unknown orchard”—the Garden of Eden which humanity knows no more (lines 126-135). It is Lizzie the saviour who is touched by the goblins as they “Held her hands and squeezed their fruits/ Against her mouth to make her eat” (406-7). And what would they make her eat? Goblin fruits, symbols of art, signs of human language. For it is debased language—both verbal and visual; the linguistic accretiveness of The Double that Connor calls “verbal promiscuity” (444); in short, the pride of human knowledge to which the goblins would tempt the sisters.

While Laura falls under the spell of the goblin language, she falls prey to the lure of de-negation and to the negativity which exists only in language. Once she has ingested the goblin fruit Laura begins to cast her speech in negatives, justifying her loitering by saying that “The dew [has] not fall’n, the wind [is] not chill;/ Listening ever, but not catching/The customary cry” (228-231). When she cannot hear it, she mourns that she must buy “no more such dainty fruit,” “no more such succous pasture find” (257-258). All her attempts result in negativity: “She never spied the goblin men” and, when she attempts to grow her cherished kernel-stone, looking for a shoot “there came none; / It never saw the sun,/ It never felt the trickling moisture run” (274, 285-287). The negativity creeps into Laura’s actions as she “no more swept the house” and “would not eat,” “could not hear” until Lizzie too is infected and, finding she “could not bear” her sister’s pain, she “weighed no more/ Better and worse” but went off to find the goblin men (293-323). It is interesting to note that both sisters are infected by the goblins’ negative, unnatural
language. As Jerome McGann notes, within the poem, “neither sister is morally superior
to the other. Although Laura alone succumbs to the temptation of goblin fruit, neither
Lizzie nor the narrator offers a negative judgment of her” (253)

Lizzie’s redemption of Laura manifests the ascetic’s aesthetic project of turning the
body into a sanctified work of art, a text that can be both read and tasted. When Lizzie
stands against the assault of the goblins, laughing in her heart

. . . . to feel the drip

Of juice that syrpped all her face,

And lodged in dimples of her chin,

And streaked her neck which quaked like curd

(433-436)

she is performing a stunning number of nurturing and redemptive actions simultaneously.
As the language testifies, she is preparing a feast for Laura which will nourish her ailing
sister as a good housewife nurses her child; saving the errant sinner, as Christ redeems
mankind in the Eucharistic feast; and welcoming back the repentant prodigal. But Lizzie
is also the ascetic artist who uses her body as a canvas, allowing the goblins to “paint” her
with their seasonless fruits, making herself over into an image of Christ the saviour as well
as of Mary, the vessel by which Christ entered the world. When Lizzie stands against the
goblins, the Marian images of the passage have much in common with those of Dante
Gabriel’s Ecce: the colors of white, gold and blue, the predominance of the lily:

White and golden Lizzie stood,

Like a lily in a flood,—

Like a rock of blue-veined stone (408-10)
At the same time that she allows the goblins to “paint” her, Lizzie refuses to ingest the goblin fruit or to participate in their bacchanalia of language: “Lizzie uttered not a word; / Would not open lip from lip/ Lest they should cram a mouthful in” (430-432; emphasis mine). Lizzie’s refusal of language employs an ascetic strategy for retaining innocence. “Innocence,” as Harpham explains, “is the capacity to learn nothing; it is not the ability to conquer doubt, which belongs to faith, but the ability—really an inability—not to doubt at all. It is a static and present-tense condition incompatible with the dynamic exchange of information that comprises linguistic intercourse” (49). Lizzie retains her “innocence”—in both the erotic and the linguistic sense—by refusing intercourse—in both the erotic and the linguistic sense. Laura eagerly sucks in the fruit of the tree of knowledge offered by the goblin and participates in their linguistics of negation; Lizzie controls access to all orifices, painting herself (or being painted) in the image of a victim who retains her innocence and learns nothing from her encounter. Unlike Laura, Lizzie has never doubted; her condition has remained “present-tense” and resistant to an exchange of information with the goblins.

When the goblins finish with Lizzie and abandon her, she makes her way back to Laura, her “inward laughter” (463), as well as her resistance, intact. At this point in the fairy tale, Christina employs the Double-based concept of “dual utility,” a fairy tale motif which underlies the climactic salvation of Laura by Lizzie. Dual utility, “the fact that objects can be put to different uses and have different, often contradictory effects,” underlies Christina’s exploration in “Goblin Market” of “the idea of the ritualizing reenactment of experience through alternation and repetition” (Connor 443). Laura’s oral ingestion of goblin fruit, her attempt to assimilate the unassimilable language and art of
The Other, led to death, a death in life. Laura’s second ingestion of goblin fruit, mediated aesthetically through the canvas of her sister’s body, leads to the religiously rewarding “soul’s sleep” that precedes the initiation into heaven. Lizzie’s exhortation to “Eat me, drink me, love me; Laura make much of me” carries overtones both of the Eucharist and of Genesis (“make much of me”), two acts of creation in direct opposition to the goblins’ negativity. The sensual overtones of the first line, which have troubled many critics, fall into place within the context of “a sacramental vision of reality such as Lizzie’s [which] involves not a rejection but an elevation of sensuality—its dedication to a higher purpose” (Bentley 80). When Laura ingests goblin fruit from Lizzie and falls into her “soul’s sleep,” she awakes laughing, even as Lizzie laughed while withstanding her temptation, and as the Israelites, leaving the “captivity of Zion” in Psalm 126, were laughing and “like them that dream” (McGillis 211-12). Like the Israelites, the sisters have passed through exile and have come to the familial haven of domesticity as “wives / with children of their own” (544-545)—the Victorian version of the Promised Land.

**EROTIC FAITH**

To some extent, erotic faith brings us back full circle to Barthes’s description of asceis as “directed toward the other: turn back, look at me, see what you have made of me” and Christina’s cry, “Lord, will Thou turn and look upon me then” quoted in the earlier discussion of ascesis. But erotic faith changes the object of the desiring cry from The external Other of deity to The internalized Double of the romantic partner. As many critics have noted, human love came to take the place once occupied by religion: “When old habits of thought and old modes of belief broke down under the new intellectual
pressures of the nineteenth century, a great burden of responsibility fell on human love” (Rees 124). For some Victorians (including the Rossettis), this new apportionment of responsibility was dealt with through the vehicle of erotic faith, which Robert Polhemus defines as

an emotional conviction, ultimately religious in nature, that meaning, value, hope, and even transcendence can be found through . . . erotically focused love . . . . 'erotic' not in its narrow sexual connotation but to indicate broadly libidinous desire and a passionate, sometimes romantic, relationship with, affection for, or attachment to another person. . . . . [W]ith the spread of secularism since the eighteenth century, erotic faith, diverse and informal though it may be, has given to some a center and sometimes a solace that were traditionally offered by organized religion and God. (1)

Polhemus continues with a persuasive list of the ways that aesthetics has “sought to fuse religious and erotic desires,” claiming that art was

to erotic faith what Bibles, churches, and chapels were to Christianity: the ways, means, and sites for the propagation of faith. . . . Think of some of the main purposes and functions of religion: to honor creation and the mystery of being; to make people feel the worth of their own souls; to reconcile them to their lives and offer an alternative to the pain of daily existence; to justify, rationalize, or sublimate power relations; to exalt by holding out the promise of salvation; to lift people out of themselves, free the spirit, and move them to ecstasy; to transmute and control aggression
and violent drives; to sublimate sexuality and idealize gender identity. Some have come to believe that passionate love can do such things; others scoff. . . . Love was once a goddess, a god, or, more precisely, several gods and goddesses, and in the nineteenth century it came again to have the force of deity. (4-5)

Although Rees and Polhemus correctly locate the most blatant aporia in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the movement from ascesis to erotics is, in fact, virtually as long as the history of Western thought, as it moved from religious belief in The Other to erotic faith in The Double. In the critical and philosophical literature, Plato's Symposium and Foucault's Use of Pleasure, two texts that fall under the rubrics of both asceticism and erotics, bracket a tradition that turns an ethics of pleasure into a morality of renunciation by distinguishing between love that satisfies desire and love that feeds the soul. Plato moves from the lover's behavior to his essence, i.e., from body to soul, but without discarding the body; Foucault sees the Aristophanic myth of the Symposium as presupposing equality and therefore democratizing desire—moves appropriated by Christina and Dante Gabriel in their poems of parted lovers picturing heavenly reunion (e.g., Monna Innominata and The Blessed Damozel). Plato and Foucault exemplify in large the same creative path that can be seen in the Rossettis, path that traverses the boundaries between the erotics/aesthetics of The beloved Double, based on accretion and metonymic supplementation, and the ascetics of The divine Other, predicated on reduction and metaphoric substitution. Flowers delineates these twin paths succinctly:

While Dante Gabriel was moving from the stark image of the thin-faced virgin (modeled after Christina) in white on a white bed to the massive
fleshly shoulders, undulating necks, and blood-red lips of his richly clad Venuses, Christina was chiseling her spare verse as a kind of model of the way a woman might shape her life in obedient service to her Lord. In a sense, she stayed in the ascetic virgin's room of Dante Gabriel's painting, her poetry growing toward more control and conciseness even as his painting moved toward more elaboration and lusciousness. (160)

Thus, while the main thrust of the Victorian movement was to displace Faith's object of desire from the Divine Other to the Human Double, Christina—resolutely, idiosyncratically, and with conscious intention—made the diametrically opposed move. Dante Gabriel and the other Victorians substituted the faith in beauty that was ultimately to lead to aestheticism and the Decadents for traditional religious and literary forms of faith, while Christina "returned with fierce determination to the no longer functional religious and amatory ideals of her literary fathers, especially those of Dante... Wandering between two worlds, she pursues an archaic, no longer functional set of ideals, to which she is, nonetheless, wholly committed" (Harrison 163). Christina plays out her reversal of the typical Victorian trajectory most strikingly in the neglected22 sonnet sequence "Monna Innominata" (II: 86-93), which moves from erotic to religious faith subverting at least three masculine paradigms of desire based on absence. While the Pre-Raphaelites in general were fascinated by Dante's "transposition of erotic passion to a

\[\text{\textsuperscript{22}}\text{Few critics have dealt with this sonnet sequence in any depth. The most extensive treatments are found in Betty S. Flowers, "The Kingly Self"; Margaret Homans, "Syllables of Velvet: Dickinson, Rossetti, and the Rhetorics of Sexuality"; Antony H. Harrison, Christina Rossetti in Context; Joan Rees, The Poetry of Dante Gabriel Rossetti: Modes of Self-Expression; and William Whitla, "Questioning the Covenant: Christina Rossetti's Sonnet Sequence 'Monna Innominata'."}\]
spiritual object and condition," Christina saw this transposition as the central movement in Dantean literature, a move whereby "the lost love of earth is found again as one higher, lovelier and better loved in paradise" (Christina qtd. in Harrison 146). The sonnet sequence overtly draws on this Dantean/Petrarchan/Troubadour tradition of a male singing the charms of his silent, absent mistress, a tradition which, as Margaret Homans notes, joins with its nineteenth-century successor, the lyric of romantic desire, to construct "speaking subjectivity as masculine and [equate] femininity with silence and with the object of desire" (570). In Christina's sequence, however, the woman is neither silent nor absent; rather, this "monna innominata" (unnamed woman) usurps the male privileges of speech, poetry, and desire, speaking her desire before repudiating it. She takes the central convention of love sonnets—making the relationship eternal by turning it into art as "a moment's monument" (to borrow Dante Gabriel's definition of the sonnet)—and subverts it by evoking poetry only to renounce it.

This renunciatory process is also reminiscent of Abelard's ascesis, which tames passion by turning it into discourse. Heloise pours out her passion to Abelard in a letter which begins, "To her all, after Christ, his all in Christ" (Moncrieff 75), and craves connection with him on any terms, admitting that religious conversion springs more from a desire to please Abelard than to please God:

But in the whole period of my life (God wot) I have ever feared to offend
thee rather than God, I seek to please thee more than him ....For a long

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23 The Letters of Abelard and Heloise, translated from the Latin by C. K. Scott Moncrieff. Although this version is derided by contemporary scholars for the excesses of its language, it is the translation which most clearly captures the passion and cruelty of the exchange between Heloise and Abelard, and its poetic language renders it most closely aligned to Christina's poetical usages.
time thou, like so many others, hast been deceived by my simulation, so as
to mistake hypocrisy for religion; and thus, strongly commending thyself to
our prayers, what I expect from thee thou demandest from me. Do not, I
beseech thee, presume so highly of me, nor cease by praying to assist me.
Do not deem me healed, nor withdraw the grace of thy medicine. Do not
believe me to be not in want, nor delay to succour my necessity. Do not
think this strength, lest I fall before thou hold up the falling. (Moncrieff 82)

Abelard responds to this heartfelt outpouring of desire by dissecting the whole of her letter
into four topics which he subjects to a Jesuitical reasoning process whereby her need is
transformed into the basis of rules of conduct for an entire convent (Moncrieff, Abelard's
Fifth and Seventh Letters, 85-106 and 129-175).

Christina subverts both the Petrarchan and Abelardian traditions by taking up the
position of the speaking, desiring subject only to move beyond it, renouncing the
discourse and desire of erotic faith in favor of the meditation and asceticism of religious
faith. As Betty S. Flowers notes, Christina's move from the silence of the Troubadour
ladies to the renunciatory silence at the end of the poem generates fourteen sonnets, so
that “the movement toward silence is itself a form of rebellion against silence” (173). In
this way, the “Monna Innominata” doubles not only with her human lover, but also with
Dante, her literary forefather, and with Laura, Petrarch's beloved, from whom Christina
claimed descent (Marsh, Christina Rossetti 212) engaging in “a form of what Barthes
termed ‘double-directed’ discourse” (Harrison 151), thereby renegotiating her position
within the poetic tradition as well as within the religious and gendered traditions. The
“Monna Innominata” initiates an “intertextual dialogue... between the persona of the poem
and the personae of Dante's and Petrarch's poems, an interchange quite distinct from the attribution of a source, or influence, or analogy" (Whitla 101); rather, both poetesses (Christina and the monna) are involved in doubled levels of dialogue with the traditions and with their lovers. The “male beloved” becomes the “lurking absence at the center of the text, but an absence that is elaborated, refined, and embroidered upon.” as he becomes the object of her art (Whitla 112). The battle between named and unnamed lady, artist and art object, speaker and spoken begins in the introductory prose passage where Christina claims that the silent beauties “have come down to us resplendent with charms, but (at least to my apprehension) scant of attractiveness.” The dichotomy is between woman as the object of the poet’s passion and woman as the subject speaking her own passion. The silent beauty, object of the poet’s passion, is traditionally extolled for her charms, presented in fragmented terms: her eyes, her lips, even her hair, but never her being as such. But Christina, in the guise of the monna innominata, rejects this position of silence and dismemberment, claiming instead her right of speech and desire—a position that is, perhaps, less “charming” but more “attractive.”

“Monna Innominata” is a sonnet of sonnets (or, to borrow Antony Harrison’s term, a “macrosonnet”) in which each sonnet plays the part of a single line in a traditional Petrarchan sonnet. The choice of the traditional Petrarchan form reinforces Christina’s commitment to traditional forms and faiths, as does her use of epitaphs from Dante and Petrarch to introduce each of her sonnets. At the same time, however, she reshapes the form, expanding it from fourteen lines to fourteen sonnets, to accommodate the typically
recursive female plot of desire rather than the linear, goal-directed male version. 24 Although her overt symbology is metaphorical, Christina's portrayal of the monna and her lover is consistently metonymical, aligning them in an almost physical spatial relationship. In the first four sonnets (parallel to the first quartet of the traditional Petrarchan form), the monna innominata 25 strives for a metonymical Doubling with her lover, but fails in her attempts to establish contiguousities in terms of space (sonnet 1), time (sonnet 2), states of consciousness (3), and the cyclical moods of love (4). 26 These differences foreshadow the eventual sundering of the two human lovers by the imposition of the Divine Lover. But in this first quartet of the macrosonnet, the monna innominata vests her faith in her human Double, yearning towards him, at once calling him and distancing him. Her opening

24 In this other-directed poem, Christina relies heavily on metaphors as she attempts to metamorphize not just "simply a thematics of desire, but the rhetorical structure that embodies the plot of desire" (Homans 571). Homans argues for a correlation between metaphor and masculine, suggesting that sonnets typically pairing "a thematics of the male pursuit of an unavailable female object with a rhetoric heavily reliant on metaphor" (Homans 571). I would suggest that the use of metaphor in the traditional sonnet form draws not so much from its masculine writer but from his attempted incorporation of his female Other.

25 As Joan Rees explains, "Monna" can be used as a contraction of "madonna," "my lady," or "madam"; while "innominata" means "nameless" or "the unnamed one" (152-153). Although Rees sees this choice of terminology primarily in terms of harmony of sound ("madonna innominata" having a more pleasing transposition of sounds than the synonymous "donna (or donna) innominata"), Christina's choice is meaningful also in its coalescence of a religious term for a virgin, an aristocratic term for a high-born lady, and a colloquialism for a fallen woman. In addition, the use of the term "Monna" underscores the connection between lady love and muse (Whitla 88)—significant because of the close affiliation between muse and deity, an identification further strengthened by the reference in the Inferno II. 52ff, to an "unnamed lady" who is the Virgin Mary (whose name is unspoken in Hell) (Whitla 102).

26 Harrison sees the macrosonnet as being grouped into thematic units, with the first quatrain focusing on "the desire for fulfillment of erotic passion"; the second on "the role of God in the speaker's secular love relationship"; the first triplet renouncing earthly fulfillment in favor of heavenly reunion, while the second reasserts the speaker's desire for reunion at the same time that it reinforces the theme of renunciation and resignation (153-154).
plaint echoes the heartfelt outpourings of Heloise for Abelard, another woman taking up the position of speaker to cry after an absent male lover:

Come back to me, who wait and watch for you:—

Or come not yet, for it is over then,

And long it is before you come again,

So far between my pleasures are and few.

(sonnet I, lines 1-4)

Here (as in “In an Artist’s Studio”) Christina usurps the position of power, aligning herself with the masculine roles of vision and speech. Even as she defines herself in the traditionally female attitude of one who must passively wait for the arrival of the male, she also dictates his movements (in the imperative “Come back to me,” “Or come not yet”), substituting a seemingly genuine desire for presence in place of the Petrarchan love lyric’s typical “male pursuit of an unavailable female object” (Homans 571). In the Petrarcan tradition, the absence of the lady motivates the need for song and ignites desire—a tradition of absence also followed by Abelard, who was at least partially attracted to Heloise by her “delight in the knowledge of letters” which would make it “possible for us to reach one another’s presence by written intermediaries, and to express many things more boldly in writing than in speech”; and who found that the “separation of our bodies was the greatest possible coupling of our minds” (Moncrieff 12, 14). Heloise adopted the viewpoint of her lover, confessing that “There were two things... in thee especially, wherewith thou couldst at once captivate the heart of any woman; namely the arts of making songs and of singing them” (Moncrieff 58). Christina, however, “speaks from the
point of view of a lady who painfully and sincerely wishes the lover to be present, and who indeed identifies ‘song’ not with the lover’s absence, but with his presence” (Homans 575): “where now are the songs I sang / When life was sweet because you called them sweet?” (sonnet I). In addition to reversing the traditions of the silent, passive female and the correlation of absence with song, the monna innominata also makes her lover the object of her gaze (“watch for you”), subverting the patriarchal tradition of “specular metaphors [which] speak for that sexuality whose story is constructed as a story of looking”—in particular, as a male looking at a female (Homans 572). Whereas “In an Artist’s Studio” paired Christina with Dante Gabriel as his sibling Double, the monna innominata arrays herself parallel to her also-innominate lover, the troubadour who fetishizes the woman in his sonnets. The monna innominata attempts to negate distance by making him her “world of all the men/This wide world holds”; if he is the “wide world,” then they are necessarily touching no matter where in the world they are. But, despite the monna’s desperate, yearning efforts to position her lover as her Double, their metonymical connection is stretched to the breaking (“the pang of parting”) by his physical absence.

In the second sonnet, the connection stretches even further. The monna innominata attempts to connect with her lover within her mind, overcoming their distance in space by hearkening back to their first meeting; an effort that is, however, doomed by her lack of foresight: “I wish I could remember, that first day,/First hour, first moment of your meeting me.” The prototypical troubadour, possessor of the masculine gaze, the artist who “sees” all, would never have allowed such a crucial moment in the linear plot of desire to pass him by, but would have immortalized the moment in song; the monna,
however, let the moment “unrecorded ... slip away,/ So blind was I to see and to foresee.”

Despite her attempts to usurp the masculine position of speaking, desiring, subject, the monna innominata finds herself unable to master the specular aspects of the role. By the end of the second sonnet, she has changed her focus from sight and song to the more typically female sense of touch—“If only now I could recall that touch”—but her stance between the masculine and feminine modes has left her master (or mistress) of neither. At this very point, the singularity of The Other invades the posited duality of The Double, as the monna innominata first casts herself as a “one,” not part of a “two,” mourning the irrecoverability of a moment lost both to time and to memory: “Did one but know!”

The monna innominata extends her desperate attempts to connect with the absent lover to the realms of dreams (sonnet 3) and memory (sonnet 4), but chooses the unfortunate device of the one that, while appearing to make two separate beings into a Doubled entity, reasserts their individuality as opposite terms in a metaphor. Dreamland seems to offer a privileged space where the monna innominata can “hold [her lover] full in sight,” pinioning him in her gaze, but she dreams only to wake and find that “only in a dream we are at one,/ Thus only in a dream we give and take/ That faith that maketh rich who take or give.” This line marks the entrance of religious faith into the scheme, as “the entire courtly ethic collides with the biblical ethic,” pitting the courtly belief in the power of love to create a new life (vita nuova) against the contention in Ecclesiastes that “there be nothing new under the sun” (Whitla 119-120). Drawing on the Petrarchan and Abelardian traditions that found fulfillment in a merger of religious and erotic faith, the monna innominata expects to find the same; however, for her, sleep and faith lead, surprisingly, to death: “To die were surely sweeter than to live” (sonnet 3), for the dictates
of religion will allow the Madonna in the House to find fulfillment only in the next world—a stasis ironically echoed in the rhyme scheme of this sonnet, the only one in the macrosonnet's first quatrain to follow rigidly the standard Petrarchan pattern (abba abba cde cde). But the monna innominata seems to turn from this thwarted stasis and, in the movement of sonnet 4 (echoed in its highly irregular rhyme scheme of abab acca def dfe—the only completely irregular octave in the poem, as Whitla notes), obtains a brief moment of fulfillment, as she attempts to organize their pattern of loving into a dialogic cycle, where their love waxes and wanes like the moon of the first stanza:

I loved you first: but afterwards your love
Outsoaring mine, sang such a loftier song
As drowned the friendly cooings of my dove.
Which owes the other most? my love was long,
And yours one moment seemed to wax more strong;

In this moment of mutual cyclicity, the monna innominata seems able to forget that their cycles are asynchronous, and focuses rather on the conjunction of the two in "the love that makes us one": "For one is both and both are one in love."

Immediately, however, the opening quatrain of the macrosonnet closes and the turn from human Double to divine Other begins with the first use of the word "God": "you who are to me / More than myself myself, God be with you" (sonnet 5). In this opening couplet of the second quatrain, "God" is used as a mere convention, an expansion of the careless "Good-bye," ironically foreshadowing the parting to come when God will be metonymically and contiguously "with" the monna rather than "with" her lover. Throughout the second quatrain of the macrosonnet (sonnets 5 through 8), the
focus moves from the metonymical connection of the Double poets/lovers to the various metaphorical equations possible between the human Doubles and the divine Other. The word “love” is repeated no less than nine times in sonnet 6, moving restlessly back and forth between “two kinds of love and finally the love which includes both of them,” although the distinctions between the various connotations is “conveyed with the utmost economy and simplicity of statement by the organisation of individual lines and the placing of key words” (Rees 159). The allusions in this section become denser and more reliant upon Biblical language than that of the troubadour tradition (Harrison 180). The emphasis moves to the metaphorical; in sonnet 5 the lover is her “heart's heart” whom she loves “as Jordan at his flood,” since the monna is Eve to his Adam, “the helpmeet made for man.” In her annotated edition of Christina's poems, Rebecca Crump notes that Christina changed this final line from “woman first made for man” in the manuscript to “woman is the helpmeet made for man” in the published version—i.e., a change from Lilith, the “woman first made for man” who was frighteningly Other to Adam, to Eve, the “helpmeet made for man” who was Adam's Double (II: 372). At the first mention of God, then, woman changes from man's Double to his Other, and Biblical metaphors begin to invade the poetry. In sonnet 6, the monna innominata compares herself to Lot's wife and Christ's “sorriest” sheep before explicitly equating her feelings for her human and divine lovers in the sonnet's final couplet:

I cannot love you if I love not Him,

I cannot love Him if I love not you.

Violently yoking together her divine lover and her human lover, the monna innominata re-situates herself on the side of alterity. In the next sonnet, however, the monna
innominata returns for the last time to a confidence in the “happy equal[ity]” of human love “in the flowering land / Of love, that knows not a dividing sea,” where love is contiguous and undivided in the Double. She then returns to a love that results in death, as did Esther’s when, saying “I, if I perish, perish” she took up the position of the inanimate object of the gaze “to take / Her husband thro’ his eyes at unaware,” betraying human love to obtain divine Love, moving “my love to Love,” even as the monna innominata sends up a prayer she hopes will be granted “for love’s sake by Love.” With this sonnet, the monna makes the final turn from The human Double to The divine Other; a turn signaled by her invocation of God (“Dio”) for the first time in an epigraph—“Come dicesse a Dio: D’altro non calme” (As if he were to say to God, “I care for nought else”). From this point at the end of the macrosonnet’s octet, human love may be mourned or transformed, but it is never again posited as a possibility—at least, not in this world.

The first tercet of the macrosonnet’s sestet is the plaint of one “Faithless and hopeless turning to the wall” (9.8) while “Time files, hope flags, life plies a wearied wing” (10.1). The monna innominata’s language evokes that of Heloise in her cries to Abelard. Like Heloise, the monna innominata transforms her lover from her Double to an “honoured excellence” (9.3); this is particularly striking in sonnet nine, where The human Double is confusingly posited as one who has gone before her in the service of God while she, “Myself [is] unworthy of the happier call” (9.4). It is hard to see how a faithless human lover can be said to be following a “happier call” except as an almost blind casting of the love story in Abelardian mode, where Abelard renounces his earthly love for Heloise and urges her to follow him into religious life. But the monna innominata’s lover clearly has taken up not the religious life but another bride. The Abelardian influence is
even heavier in sonnet 11, where the monna innominata seems to sees her future fame
resting on that of her lover, as Heloise did when she wrote to Abelard, beseeching him to
write her, saying that

When in time past thou soughtest me out for temporal pleasures, thou
visitedst me with endless letters, and by frequent song didst set thy Heloise
on the lips of all men. With me every public place, each house resounded.
How more rightly shouldst thou excite me now towards God, whom thou
excitedst then to desire. (Moncrieff 61)

Christina, however, actually reverses that position with the clever use of negatives and
syntactic reversals. It is not that she will be remembered by the world as his love (the
typical fate of the monna innominata in troubadour poetry), but that “Many in aftentimes
will say of you / ‘He loved her’” (11.1-2). Only in the realm of The Other does her fame
rest on her love of him: “I charge you at the Judgement make it plain / My love of you
was life and not a breath.”

In the final tercet of the macrosonnet, even the bemoaning of earthly love is past,
as the monna “commends” her love to “that nobler grace, / That readier wit than mine,
that sweeter face” (sonnet 12) that belongs to his bride. But one last moment of Doubling
occurs in this sonnet, as the lover’s joy is seen as also belonging to the monna innominata:

Yea, since your riches make me rich, conceive

I too am crowned, while bridal crowns I weave, . . .

For if I did not love you, it might be

That I should grudge you some one dear delight;
But since the heart is yours that was mine own,
Your pleasure is my pleasure, right my right,
Your honorable freedom makes me free,
And you companioned I am not alone.

(sonnet 12; emphasis mine)

As in “In the Artist’s Studio” again, and as in the Abelardian tradition where Heloise is subsumed in Abelard’s fame as she moves from Double to Other, the unnamed but speaking woman in this poem remains The Double of the lover in a spiritual sense even after their physical separation. The new bride, it should be noted, is separated and minimized as “some one dear delight”—only a single delight among (one presumes) many, and a delight placed in the position of The Other as a “one.”

In the final two sonnets, the monna innominata commends her lover, not to his bride, but to God, that they may meet again in another world. For herself and this world, all is loss and pain, as she is “Helpless to help, and impotent to do” (13.11-12); “therefore [she] commend[s] you back to Him” (13.13) firmly situating her lover, too, in the realm of The Other, a world that she herself enters in silence in the final sonnet. The conclusion of the metasonnet is as plaintive a song as has ever been penned for lost love:

Youth gone, and beauty gone if ever there

Dwelt beauty in so poor a face as this;
Youth gone and beauty, what remains of bliss?
I will not bind fresh roses in my hair,
To shame a cheek at best but little fair,—
Leave youth his roses, who can bear a thorn,—
I will not seek for blossoms anywhere,
    Except such common flowers as blow with corn.
Youth gone and beauty gone, what doth remain?
The longing of a heart pent up forlorn,
    A silent heart whose silence loves and longs;
The silence of a heart which sang its songs
While youth and beauty made a summer morn,
Silence of love that cannot sing again.

(sonnet 14)

Here the monna innominata has resigned not only youth, love, and beauty, but even the song that had hitherto defined her. She begins proudly claiming equal status with her troubadour lover, but ends in “silence”—not, it should be noticed, the silence of Perpetual Adoration before the Face of God, but a silence of despair, or a “heart which sang its songs,” “of love that cannot sing again.”

Dante Gabriel breaks the silence with his dramatization of the speech of lovers before the Face of God in “The Blessed Damozel” (3-5) that “exaltation of human love at the expense of divine love” (Burch 5) which is the most famous and sustained work in what Cervo calls his “Poetry of the Secular Madonna” (27). The four principal versions of “The Blessed Damozel” now extant,27 together with the painting of the same name,

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27The 20-stanza Morgan manuscript, dated 1847 but probably written in 1852; the 1850 version which appeared in The Germ, adding six stanzas and omitting one; the 1856 rendition from The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine which removes four of the six added stanzas; and the “official” version first published in the 1870 Poems, which changes the position of stanza xi and which survived with only minor changes down to the final text of Poems 1881. Paull Franklin Baum analyzes and reproduces the four versions in Dante Gabriel Rossetti: The Blessed Damozel: The Unpublished Manuscript Texts and Collation (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press,
chronicle Dante Gabriel’s trajectory “from the stark image of the thin-faced virgin . . . to the massive fleshly shoulders . . . of his richly clad Venuses” previously mentioned (Flowers 160), from the reductive, metaphoric approach of The Other to the accretive, metonymic strategy of The Double. The multiplicity of The Double is evident in the numerous dualities embedded in the very structure of the paired painting and poem entitled “The Blessed Damozel.” The diptych painting features two separate panels: the main picture of the damozel in heaven above and the predella showing the lover below surrounded by shadowy pairs of lovers. Even the infamous “gold bar” is doubly represented: the damozel actually leans on a painted bar while the heavenly and earthly panels are separated by a portion of the frame that juts across horizontally, bearing the painting’s title. Similarly, the poem is structured around a series of dualities: the unevenly alternating monologues of the damozel and the parenthetical lover; the unrhymed tetrameter and rhymed trimeter lines in a basically iambic rhythm; and the oscillation of regularity in the meter. As Joseph F. Vogel has pointed out, the damozel’s lines, originating from the (presumed) order and stability of heaven, generally preserve the tetrameter/trimeter couplets syntactically as well as with regard to punctuation. On the other hand, the parenthetical lover’s speeches are syntactically disordered and disrupted by line breaks, dashes, ellipses, and enjambment until no two lines form a completed couplet (92ff).

While most of the editing on the four versions was designed to perform what Jerome McGann characterizes “as a transvaluation of the ‘Christian idea of . . . Divine

1937). Unless otherwise noted, the lines quoted in this discussion are taken from the final 1881 edition as reprinted by Baum.
Love' through a replacement of 'Love as agape with love as Eros’” (qtd. in Bentley 33-34), fusing erotic and religious desires, it is worth noting the Catholic and Marian quality of stanza eighteen, the only stanza which remained unaltered in all versions (Baum xxi).

‘We two,’ she said, ‘will seek the groves
Where the lady Mary is,
With her five handmaidens, whose names
Are five sweet symphonies,
Cecily, Gertrude, Magdalen,
Margaret and Rosalys. (5)

Critics have focused on the musicality of the five handmaidens’ names to the exclusion of their histories. Although the references cannot be identified conclusively, models familiar to Dante Gabriel exist which fall suggestively within an identifiable grouping of aesthetic, erotic, and thanatopic traditions. “Cecily” is most likely a dactylic28 variant for St. Cecilia, the patroness of music depicted by Dante Gabriel in an 1856-57 painting. According to one legend, St. Cecilia was visited nightly by an angel enamored of her music until St. Cecilia’s husband discovered them; the angel then granted them both martyrdom. According to another version of the legend, the Romans made a number of attempts to put St. Cecilia to death for the crime of burying Christian martyrs; when they finally beheaded her, she did not die immediately, but lingered for three days. Gertrude, mother of Hamlet, connived at her husband’s death, married his brother, and provoked Hamlet’s immortal

28 Vogel notes that four of the five names are dactylic and that the lines following this “catalogue” of names were emended to include additional dactylic words, which are rare elsewhere in the poem (106-107).
comment, “Frailty, thy name is woman.” (Note also St. Gertrude of Helfta, who wrote erotic mystical prayers, based on her own experiences, which became popular medieval hymns.) Mary Magdalene, who gave her name to the very concept of the unrepentant woman or “Magdalene,” was also one of the three women who discovered Christ’s empty tomb and was the first person to see the Risen Christ. “Margaret” may refer to the woman in the Faustus legend (more commonly known by the German diminutive of Margaret, or Gretchen) who is often taken as a symbol of the eternal feminine. Seduced by Faust, Gretchen reappears as a spirit of penitence and greets Faust’s eventual salvation with joyful song—an apt type of the Blessed Damozel. Dante Gabriel was familiar with the Faustus legend from the age of six (Sonstroem 107; Nicoll 30), painting two versions of the story: “Gretchen and Mephistopheles in the Church” (ca. 1848) and “Faust and Margaret in the Prison” (ca. 1856). The name Margaret also applies to a number of saints; perhaps the earliest was a shepherdess who spurned the advances of a powerful man and survived several attempts by the authorities to kill her. She was also one of the voices who spoke to Joan of Arc. No representative with the exact name of “Rosalys” has been identified, although a St. Rosalia exists. A mystic who repented of her early vanity and sensuality, she retired to a cave where she lived and died in seclusion; her body was found only centuries later. Rosalia also suggests Rosalys, the heroine of a poem by William Bell Scott. Scott claimed (and some critics agree) that his Rosalys, a prostitute who watched the children play, at least partially inspired Dante Gabriel’s Jenny. In all cases, the models for Mary’s handmaidens can be taken as foreshadowings of the aesthetic and Poesque “death of a beautiful woman” with which Dante Gabriel became obsessed and which
underlay his emotional conviction that transcendence is available through love and motivated his reliance on erotic faith as a centering belief.

The fusion of erotic with religious desire is furthered by the combining and conflating of heavenly with earthly symbols throughout the poem. In the opening stanza, the “Blessed” Damozel seems almost an avatar of Mary, the “Blessed” virgin, bearing the virgin’s lilies in her hand and wearing a crown of seven stars that “recall[s] the starry crown of the Queen of Heaven in Revelation 12.1” (Bentley, “Ave” 38) as well as the Seven Joys and Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin (Sonenstrom 22). In the second stanza, the damozel wears “a white rose of Mary’s gift”: typically a sensual symbol of erotic love, the rose here bears a mixed meaning in its designation as white for the service of Mary Virgin in contrast to the typical use of white roses to symbolize dead love. The issue is further complicated by the introduction of natural symbols: her eyes are “deeper than the depth / Of waters stilled at even” and her hair is “yellow like ripe corn”—an ancient fertility symbol. Even the “five handmaidens” of “lady Mary” end with the confusingly named Rosalys, i.e., Rose+Lily, sensuality plus purity (Vogel 106). The deliberate combination of natural and supernatural, sacred and profane images reflects Dante Gabriel’s ongoing program to aestheticize and eroticize all aspects of faith, taking his inspiration from sources that include Dante’s descriptions of Beatrice (who, like the Damozel, had been ten years in heaven at the time of Dante’s address to her) and the Book of Revelation, which also mixes visual and non-visual imagery in a description of “extraterrestrial phenomena . . . mingling . . . simple, directly descriptive imagery with the indirect, suggestive, or symbolic use of natural details” (Baum xxxix).
For it is Dante Gabriel’s unconscious but nonetheless consistent goal to create in his paintings and poems nothing less than the bible and churches for the “theology of love and beauty” of which he “is both priest and infidel” (Rees 105, 99). At about the same time that Dante Gabriel first wrote “The Blessed Damozel” for The Germ, he and the other members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood drew up a List of Immortals in which Jesus Christ, although given first place, was but one of a group of approximately sixty luminaries including Joan of Arc, Hogarth, Cervantes, Leigh Hunt, and Washington. This list, the Brothers declared, “constitute[d] the whole of [their] Creed” (Dobbs 54). With such a belief, it is not difficult to see how Dante Gabriel would usurp conventional Christian iconography for his own aesthetic and erotic purposes. In The Blessed Damozel, the apparatus of medieval Catholicism is employed to force

the reader-spectator to relinquish the demand for a fixed point of view from which to perceive the external world and [ask] him to accept (by the willing suspension of disbelief that is the artistic equivalent of an act of faith) a medieval-Catholic awareness in which Heaven and Earth are simultaneously knowable, spirit and flesh are identified, and so on. (Bentley, “Ave” 36)

In this truly Pre-Raphaelite universe, heaven and earth need not be split, but love and erotic faith can span the two, creating a continuum of consciousness between the damozel and her parenthetical lover. Much like “Sister Helen,” another Rossetti ballad,29

29 The metrical pattern of “The Blessed Damozel” consists of alternating four- and five-beat lines riming abcbdb which Baum identifies as an extension of the ballad stanza (xxvii). “Sister Helen” has an alternating rhyme pattern and is similarly reliant on the mystical number seven, being composed of seven-line stanzas. Both poems are primarily iambic.
“The Blessed Damozel” employs a divided voice reflecting the epipsychean epistemology in which each half supplements the deficiencies of the alternate self. In both cases, the male voice presents the empirical facts (observations of the physical world, revisions of chronology, and rectification of interpretation) while the female voice (like the embodied soul in “Hand and Soul”) provides the spiritual or psychic exposition. But whereas the epipsychean pairing of brother and sister in “Sister Helen” is disrupted by the broken bonds of Sister Helen’s erotic faith in Keith of Ewern, resulting in death and damnation, the blessed damozel and her parenthetical lover remain true to their mutual erotic faith, believing in their ultimate reunion until the last stanza. And even in that last stanza, when the damozel, despairing, “laid her face between her hands,/And wept,” the structure and punctuation enact the completion of their epipsychean Double. Two half-line declarations by the lover (“I saw her smile”; “I heard her tears”) frame a description of the damsel’s despair at the very point when the lover’s speeches assert that the barrier between them has been broken with his sensual apprehension of her smiles and tears. While on one level the crossing over of their emotional apprehensions provides evidence of their union, the damozel’s despairing at just this crucial point may be symptomatic of Dante Gabriel’s obsessive fear that the metaphorical “bar of heaven” will divide the damozel and her lover (as well as his epipsyche and himself) from one another as well as separating both from God, “barring” them from full salvation on account of their incomplete achievement of transcendence, their reluctance to move from eros to agape. But Dante Gabriel’s treatment of the bar moves it into the metonymyical, emphasizing the all-too-apparent physical proximity of the Damozel’s warming bosom to the bar and, in the painting, transforms it completely into the realm of physical experience.
For, ultimately, Dante Gabriel’s belief is focused on the female as beloved epipsyche. Onto her he projects that ideal union of faith—ascetic, aesthetic, and erotic—that defines the Pre-Raphaelite heaven. His belief in The Other as deity is momentary and attenuated, at best, while his erotic faith in The epipsychean Double becomes the guiding light of his life and work. Even for Christina, devout Christian though she struggled to be, romanticized versions of faith in the aesthetic and the erotic invade the realm of ascetic religious belief. In works as diverse as “Monna Innominata” and The Face of the Deep, she must fight to remove the lure of The romantic Double from the ground of The religious Other. For both Dante Gabriel and Christina, the face of God is repeatedly occluded by the voice and face of the female, that most vexed nexus of The Double and The Other that infiltrates all our constellations of desire.
Chapter 5

(EN)GENDERED (RE)VISIONS: FEMALE ALTERITY

I always expect too much. I was always expecting my mother.

John Lennon, qtd. in Karl Miller, Doubles (438)

The idea of the female forms a particularly vexed nexus within the constellations of desire. From the time of Lilith and Eve, Woman has been implicated in the strategies of both The Other and The Double to the extent that many theorists and philosophers suggest that alterity is woman. As the work of Elisabeth Bronfen demonstrates, the figure of the female "serves two diametrically opposed moments—extreme confirmation and extreme destabilization of the self" (11). The maternal body as origin is the metaphor for unity, the site of remembered oneness, of "wholeness and stability" and yet the mother is also the paradigmatic Other, the one from whom the child must separate to enter the semantic order. Conversely, as feminists such as Chodorow and Irigaray argue, infants, very young children, and (at least potentially) daughters appear to perceive themselves as relatively undifferentiated and continuous, as Doubles to their mothers and sisters (in the most general sense of those relationships). Similarly, the female as sexual being—ironically, the very position that makes motherhood possible—is both the terrifying seductress and the
beloved epipsycye; the one whose sexuality both repels and attracts, destroys and completes; in Irigaray’s terms, the sex which is not “one.” The female’s genitals, at once the site of sexual difference and of creation, have become the “privileged trope for lack, castration and split and by metonymic association, . . . a trope for decay, disease and fatality” (Bronfen 11) even as her womb has become the “privileged trope” for wholeness, unity, and life.

As Julia Kristeva has observed, the mother is paradigmatically “the addressee of every demand,” at once the source of all plenitude and of all lack, of originary jouissance and of the original manque (“Revolution” 101). She is, for most of us as for John Lennon, the “too much” that we are always expecting. Within Western European society, mothers are expected to respond to the “every demand” of child and man-child, bearing the primary responsibility for nature and nurture in the radically asymmetrical domestic economy outlined by Nancy Chodorow, wherein “men are socially and psychically reproduced by women, but women are reproduced (or not) largely by themselves” (36). Conversely, at least in the Victorian era, women were expected to refrain from engagement in the marketplace—a restraint which not only made them economically marginalized and dependent upon men, but which might also sully the very purity the restraint endeavors to preserve. As Elizabeth Campbell points out, if, within a capitalistic market economy, the Carlylean dictate that “To work is to pray” holds true, then

the woman at home was in fact relegated to a purgatorial place of unredeemed sin. . . . [such that] within this Victorian configuration, every woman was a “fallen woman” according to the hidden assumptions of the
age. By contrast middle-class men, through their socially sanctified work, were living in a state of secular grace (396).

Thus, the Victorian maxim that “motherhood and mercantilism do not mix” (Campbell 403) acts to reinforce radically the alterity of women, exiling them to a potentially unsanctified M-Otherhood.

These expectations are not directed only towards women who are biologically mothers; rather, they are extended to all women in cognizance of the “always obvious fact that [they] are from the mother half of humanity” (Snitow 35); thus, The female Other is always bound up in the figure of The M-Other. Not only are these expectations applied to virtually all women but they are also generally held by all who were mothered—by women as well as by men—although the form may differ between the genders, as sexual differentiation engenders revisions of our visions of The M-Other. For women, the mother can provide a role model—in the Victorian era, virtually the only respectable “pattern”—and a path towards empowerment. But the fearful pressures of the “angel in the house” archetype could also lead to despair and to abjection, where the Kristevan “Woman” who is always “M-Other” combines the amorphous boundaries of the Bataillean Mother composed of the “terrifyingly ancient . . . nonlogical difference of matter” with the “unthinkable, unsayable transcendence of the other” as the site of heterology (Taylor 161-167). For too many Victorian women, failure to meet the unrealistic expectations of Motherhood engendered alternate paths of M-Otherhood in the roles of the fallen woman or the abjectified spinster. Victorian men responded to the success or failure of women to achieve Motherhood with the “Madonna or Whore” dichotomy, engendering their
peculiar visions of the *femme fatale* or eroticized feminine epipsyche. Within their own beings, however, the vision of women, of The female Other, often brought forth the figure called the anima, a creature peculiar to the masculine psyche and embodying all that is feminine within it. She too has unaccountable knowledge of hidden truths, but primarily, as her name implies, she is man's image of his own resources of spirit; not the mother, but that within the male which gives the mother-image its often dangerous power, born anew in every male child (Keppler 203).

For Dante Gabriel and Christina Rossetti, expectations of the woman as M-Other both converged and diverged. As we have seen in the previous chapters, they necessarily shared the same familial heritage and followed not dissimilar paths in regard to the family throughout their lives. In matters of faith, they started from the same background, although they soon diverged to follow reversed trajectories. But in the constellation of desires based on gender, the oppositely gendered Rossetti siblings moved from necessarily opposing inheritances into radically divergent paths. Dante Gabriel's attention was almost obsessively fixed upon The romantic Double, primarily in the forms of the beloved epipsyche and of the femme fatale. For Christina, the roles of mother and child, and of religious and distantly romantic lover took first place.

**MOTHER AND CHILD, SELF AND M-OTHER:**

**(re)VISIONS OF THE MATERNAL**

A devout woman, devoted to her mother as well as to God; a lifelong spinster and, apparently, an affectionate but distant aunt; a woman overtly subservient to the decrees of
the masculine head of the household but frequently ready to challenge those decrees; and
a brilliant, professional poetess who professed to know nothing of business while astutely
negotiating copyright with her publisher—Christina, in both her life and her work,
presents an attitude toward the female which is, at best, ambivalent and which frequently
even posits the female as alterior to the speaker. Such ambiguity underlies her statement,
in a letter to Dante Gabriel, that “Here is a great discovery ‘Women are not Men’, and you
must not expect me to possess a tithe of your capabilities, though I humbly—or proudly—
lay claim to family likeness” (March/April 1870, qtd. in Marsh, CR 390). Although
Christina’s conscious belief undoubtedly followed the claims made in “A Helpmeet for
Him” (II: 169) that “Woman was made for man’s delight,” she is ruthless in her contempt
for Victorian women who followed men and “sang of love.” In “A Triad” (I: 29), she
describes the fallen woman, the wife, and the spinster—the three most typical roles for
Victorian woman as helpmeet to man:

One shamed herself in love; one temperately

Grew gross in soulless love, a sluggish wife;

One famished died for love.

Each “one” is cast as The Other in a role Christina disdains to follow. Ironically, “two of
three / Took death for love and won him after strife,” their erotically focused paths leading
to what looks like the same conclusion as Christina’s religious asceticism—death, the
ultimate end of all desire, sacred or profane. Yet Christina rejects all notion that these
helpmeets gained the prize, claiming that “All [were] on the threshold, yet all short of
life,” both an earthly life of fulfillment and the reward of eternal life hereafter. Similarly,
in “The Lowest Room” (I: 200-207), Christina contrasts two sisters who follow opposite
paths, accepting and resisting the role of “helpmeet to man.” One sister, serene and content with her lot, follows a traditional woman’s path of young love, marriage, and motherhood; like heroines of troubadour tales in the introduction to “Monna Innominata,” she seems “resplendent with charms, but (at least to [our] apprehension), scant of attractiveness” (II: 86). Our interest lies with the speaker of the poem, a heroine both bold and discontent; stirred by Homeric tales of heroism, she feels it would be “better then a slave or wife / Than fritter now blank night away” (lines 69-70). A woman’s lot holds little attraction for her, as she yearns after heroic deeds and spends her time with her book. This speaker—who seems wonderfully like Christina herself—envies her sister one thing: that she comes first. At the same time, the speaker castigates herself for vanity, setting herself one goal: “Not to be first: how hard to learn / That lifelong lesson of the past” (lines 265-266). The sisters seem Doubles of one another, metonymically connected in kinship, yet differing in their goals and personalities: avatars of one another, each showing the other “the path not taken.” The two sisters can be taken to “symbolize the lonely woman artist and the loving wife and mother of the Victorian period. By regarding these two roles as irreconcilable alternatives, the speaker (and perhaps Rossetti herself) finds, it is ‘My lot in life, to live alone / In mine own world of interests, / Much felt but little shown’ (262-264)” (Hickok 201). It is perhaps significant that Dante Gabriel consistently opposed publication of “The Lowest Room,” calling it “that vile trashy poem . . . only fit for one room viz, the bog” and claiming that it carried the taint of Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s “falsetto masculinity” as evidenced in poems such as Aurora Leigh (Marsh, CR 430, 184).

Much of Christina’s ambiguous attitude toward woman can be traced in her writings about the Virgin Mary and Eve, the first woman and Mother of all. Interestingly,
the equivocal figure of Eve appears much more frequently than does the figure of the Virgin Mary, who would seem to present a type of a the wholly venerable woman, especially for such a devout poet as Christina. In fact, as her brother William Michael wrote, she was “firmly opposed to anything savouring of Mariolatry” (qtd. in D’Amico, “Feminine Triptych” 183). But her attitude toward the erring Eve was curiously sympathetic. Whereas Dante Gabriel most often used Eve in a traditional sense as a figure for temptation, 1 Christina focuses on Eve’s very human regrets after the temptation and the expulsion from Eden. In the eponymous verse “Eve” (I: 156-158), the heroine is shown mourning by the dead body of her son, Abel. The first half of the poem is presented in Eve’s own voice, and she uses the gift of speech to blame, not to exculpate, herself. Eve freely admits that she “chose the tree of death” over the Tree of Life and even wishes that “Adam, my brother” had “said me nay” that she alone could have borne the sin and punishment, a female Christ figure:

I might have pined away;
I, but none other;
God might have let thee stay
Safe in our garden,
By putting me away
Beyond all pardon. (lines 20-25)

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1 In the Oxford Union murals, Dante Gabriel recalls Eve in his presentation of Guenevere with arms extended in an apple tree, obscuring the Holy Grail from Launcelot’s site by “interposing the apple, symbolic of sin.” The Orchard Pit also recalls the convergence of woman and apple tree in a figure of temptation. However, he does redeem Eve in his proposed poem The Harrowing of Hell, which William claimed would have treated the subject “from the point of view of love-passion” (Sonstroem 158, 159, 27).
In the second half of the poem, Christina presents the response of the natural world to Eve's mourning, having "Each piteous beast /. . . For[g]et his joys / And set aside his feast" to join in her lamentation (lines 41-44). Significantly, all the animals of the world Double with Eve, save only the serpent, the one who has made her Other, and whose response is to grin "an evil grin and thrust / His tongue out with its fork" in a gesture at once suggestively phallic and childish (69-70). In other writings, Christina maintains this sympathetic tone, although she castigates Eve as foolishly curious (Letter and Spirit 18; Face of the Deep 520). But almost always, Eve is the mother of all men, the "Fair first mother" in An Afterthought (III: 242-243), and the "sad mother / Of all who must live" in Eve (lines 26-27), who would eventually stand among the saints before the throne of God at the Last Judgment (Face of the Deep). Even in her late religious meditations, Christina is concerned to excuse Eve, with a convoluted commentary in Letter and Spirit that pictures Eve that first and typical woman, as indulging quite innocently sundry refined tastes and aspirations, a castle-building spirit (if so it may be called), a feminine boldness and directness of aim combined with a no less feminine guessiness as to means. Her very virtues may have opened the door to temptation. . . . Eve may not have argued [with Adam] at all: she offered Adam a share of her own good fortune, and having hold of her husband's heart, turned it in her hand as the rivers of water. Eve preferred various prospects to God's Will: Adam seems to have preferred one person to God. (17-18)
Significantly, Eve's transgression is presented in terms of multiplicity, preferring "various prospects" to the One Divine Will, while Adam's sin lies in preferring his Double to the Divine Other. Throughout her poetry, Christina seems to attempt to atone for both sins, always placing both the Divine Will and the Divine Other first in her thoughts.

The one area in which Christina's attitude toward the female would be expected to be unambiguous is her "customary exaltation of motherhood" (Harrison, Sage Discourse 103) yet even here, in Christina's attitude toward her devout, patient mother, one can perceive elements of ambivalence, as though Frances set up a pattern that Christina could not—or would not—follow. As Jan Marsh and Christina's other biographers have demonstrated, Christina had a "lifelong devotion to her mother which almost amounted to worship" (CR 48), leading her explicit comparison of the maternal to the divine: "Mothers—or shall I use large words? and way the Maternal Type is to me one of the dear and beautiful things which on earth help towards realising that Archetype which is beyond all conception dear and beautiful" as an emblem of divine love "patient, forgiving, all-outlasting" (1875 letter to Caroline Gemmer, qtd. in Marsh, CR 436). Christina's first poem, penned in 1842 at age eleven, was "To my Mother on her Birthday"; nearly 35 years later, at age 45, Christina was still casting herself as her mother's "least / Last Valentine" in a Valentine's poem written to Frances Lavinia (III: 314, 11-12).\(^2\) Throughout her life, Christina was still motivated by the desire to please her mother, as is attested to by the 1880 note she wrote to her niece Olive Rossetti, claiming that "almost if not quite

\(^2\) This poem, prompted by Frances Lavinia's comment that she had never received a valentine (Marsh 437), was followed by annual valentines verses from Christina to her mother, in a series running through at least 1886 (III: 314-318), with a poem that ends "My pleasure and my treasure O blessed Mother mine" (III: 318, 8).
[the] brightest point is that it [your poetic talent] kindles a light of pleasure in your Mother’s eyes” (Marsh, CR 33). From Christina’s birth until her mother’s death, they shared their lives, living in the same home, rarely separated even for vacations and visits. An 1877 chalk sketch by Dante Gabriel visually presents them as one another’s Doubles: two women in parallel profile, both with small chins, bowed lips, and prominent eyes; their hair drawn back smoothly, while the white cloth draped over Mamma’s head contrasts with Christina’s darker hair to render her almost a shadow of her mother. More objective portraits and photographs (such as those by Charles Dodgson), too, present Mamma and Christina as Doubles. When viewing Rossetti family photographs, one is struck by the frequency with which Christina and Frances are connected by the metonymy of touch and by crossing gazes, appearing in these pictures as the physical embodiment of Irigeray’s concept of women’s Doubleness as two lips touching. And yet, for all her closeness to her mother, Christina rejects the typical female roles of wife and mother modeled for her by her mother, pursuing instead a poetic career totally alterior to her mother’s pattern.

Much of the ambiguity springs from the fact that we are working with both The Other and The Double. Christina’s relationship to the prescribed Victorian role of the Mother is as much a relationship to The Other as is her relationship to God—significantly, religious devotion is the one pattern her mother presents that Christina does follow. Victorian motherhood, however, is a role Christina cannot—or will not—assume. In her poetry about mothers and their children, Christina’s true Double is found not in the role of the M-Other, but in that of the baby who is the subject of and actor in her children’s verses. Various critics have suggested that Sing-Song’s superscription as “Rhymes
Dedicated Without Permission to the Baby Who Suggested Them” refers to Charles Cayley’s infant nephew, to William Michael’s son, or even to the children Christina would never have; but in a very real sense they are Christina’s croonings to the infant self within, to the “least Last Valentine” of the family that she still felt herself to be, who still yearned to be the youngest child “cradled at the breast while the older children played, with [a] sense of utter security” (Marsh, CR 3).3 The adult Christina’s position is much like that of the title character in “Maggie A Lady” (I: 140-141). In this poem, the low-born girl who marries a lord comes to long for a life with her childhood love, Philip, of whose apparent death she learned immediately prior to accepting a new life as wife to the local lord. She does not wish to live with Philip as husband and wife, but rather says she “wishes myself a child with you” (line 148). In other words, she desires to retreat not just in terms of locale and class, but also in terms of time, to regress to a moment when she and Philip were, not Other by reason of class and gender, but Doubled in a magical childhood. The ambiguity of Maggie’s phrasing—“myself a child with you” slips easily into “myself with child by you”; i.e., pregnant—further enhances the by-play, conflating her own remembered childhood with that of a conjectured future babe, even as Christina’s superb linguistic play enacts her own emotional doubling with the Baby who suggests her rhymes.

An ambiguity about an adulthood—even a motherhood—that includes a husband, is apparent throughout Christina’s opus. As Dorothy Mermin says when discussing the

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3 My own belief in Christina’s inner child as the addressee of her nursery rhymes was strengthened but not engendered by Jan Marsh’s comments on the subject in her 1994 biography of Christina (pp. 379ff).
matriarchal world of mothers and children without fathers and husbands depicted at the
der end of “Goblin Market,”

The story thus completed is clear and simple in its essential structure: two
girls live alone; they encounter goblin men; they have children. Except for
the word "wives," which legitimizes the children, there is no mention of
any men but the goblins, who are explicitly male. The children are
apparently all girls and are exhorted to keep the female circle closed and
complete. . . . Many of Rossetti’s poems and stories suggest that the fantasy
of such a world might well attract her. . . . Relationships between mothers
and babies and between women, usually sisters, are central to her poems
and stories, whereas men are generally peripheral or absent; often the
relationship is the darker side of the sisterly coin, competitiveness and
envy, but even then it is a source of dramatic excitement and energy.

Marriage is seldom depicted as wholly desirable. (113-4)

Even Laura’s apparently erotically charged exhortation to Lizzie to “Eat me, drink me,
love me; Make much of me” acquires new relevance when read within the context of a
mother nursing her young. Christina’s ambiguity towards marriage and the creation of a
“complete” family is reflected in Sing-Song as well, where mothers are frequently invoked
without parallel reference to fathers and are almost always more intensely involved with
the child than the fathers are. Further, one of the few poems in Sing-Song which depicts a
decidedly non-reciprocal relationship deals with the marriage bond. In “If I were a
Queen” (II: 26), the apparent symmetry and repetitiousness of syntax is belied by the
disparity of semantics: Whereas the girl Queen would bestow kingship by waiting on her
childish mate, the boy King apparently “queens” the girl by fiat, simply marrying her. The world posited at the end of “Goblin Market” allows the creation of a more balanced, interdependent, Double-based economy that does away with the hierarchy and opposition of “If I were a Queen.”

The language of nursery rhymes and fantasy, like the language of religious devotion, offers access to a uniquely feminine sphere of language and belief. Although men, too, may draw upon this association of the religious and the fantastic with the mother/woman—as Dante Gabriel did when he revised “My Sister's Sleep” to reassign the religious and mythical feelings originally attributed to the speaker to the mother—the association provides women a peculiarly potent approach to the semiotic. Fantasy's specialized language allows women poets “to speak in a double voice of assent and dissent—with integrity” (Campbell 401). Structured as an answer to the demands of the child, the chora-like speech of fantasy and nursery rhymes permits alterity and allows the transmission of potentially subversive values to its audience. As Campbell notes, the terms traditionally used to describe Christina's poetry, such as “‘delicate,’ ‘dependent,’ ‘obscure,’ ‘inward,’ and ‘involute’ [are] all terms, significantly, that could apply to the undifferentiated space of the chora, as well as to the speaking subject's desire to return to the womb,” the preeminent “woman's sphere” (398). As a daughter, Christina retained access to pre-symbolic language, in line with Margaret Homans's contention that

The daughter therefore speaks two language at once. Along with symbolic language, she retains the literal or presymbolic language that the son represses at the time of his renunciation of his mother. Just as there is for
the daughter no oedipal crisis, her entry into the symbolic order is only a
gradual shift of emphasis. (13)

The language of the pre-symbolic chora and of The Double—especially as
embodied in word play, arbitrary connections between symbol and sign, repetition, and
reciprocity—pervades Sing-Song. The earliest poems concern the earliest relationship,
focusing on the intense reciprocity of the mother-child dyad. Following the brief opening
lyric with its carefully balanced “Angels at the foot, / And Angels at the head” of the
baby’s crib, Christina moves to a double-quatrain which is equally carefully balanced,
both emotionally and physically:

Love me,—for 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. (II: 19)

The first quatrain uses repetition to establish the reciprocity and universality (high, low,
“as may be) of the love between mother and child, building a mutual relationship which is
strengthened both by repetition with a difference and extension in the second verse. Note
that the command to “Love me” in the first line is given a casual relation with the
following phrase, indicated by the conjunction for (“for I love you”) but that the ‘wo
clauses are equated in the final line, where a dash conjoins them. The mother-child dyad
here is one of The Double, with the physical metonymy of “Mother's arms under you, / Her eyes above you.” The metonymy is important for, if we assume that Christina is both the remembered child and the postulated mother, the physical closeness would be, in fact, the closeness of two beings in one skin.

The first line also introduces one of the standard tropes of Sing-Song—antimetabole (the inverted repetition of words, usually with a morphological change)—a trope which seems particularly appropriate to the strategy of The Double since it consists essentially of doubling with a difference, reinforcing the twinned nature of the two he.'ves of The Double. Antimetabole occurs again in the shortest lyric in Sing-Song: "Motherless baby and babyless mother, / Bring them together to love one another" (II: 50). As Roderick McGillis notes, in this verse

The second line overcomes the first in that the negative "less" gives way to the positive "to" (together, to love). Opposites come together in this rhyme, opposites that are not, in fact, so opposite to begin with. The disturbing fact of death, the uncertainty of life—these are defeated by the stronger sense of continuity: the continuing mystery of mother love, of human relationships, and of a language strong enough to communicate these mysteries. (229)

The death so subtly evoked in this brief lyric is, in fact, a striking keynote throughout Sing-Song, appearing in more than 16 of the approximately 120 verses. Its invasion seems somewhat odd in a volume of children's poetry—even one written in an age where infant mortality was commonplace—but, as Christina’s own special theme, it seems appropriate, especially when we consider Campbell’s claim that Christina’s poetry is typically
“concerned with things eternal, for the temporal world is the scene of woman’s defeat” (398).

Antimetabole is but one of the forms of word play based on repetition which appears throughout Sing-Song. The repetition in the childish verses is, of course, related to the strategy of The Double, which favors repetition and accretion, which here seeks to insure security of relationship. Repetition is also a favorite element in the teaching of young children—whether it be of arithmetic facts (“1 and 1 are 2— / That’s for me and you,” II: 29), religious virtues (“Hope is like a harebell,” II: 22), or the months of the year (“January cold desolate,” II: 30-31). Other teaching verses, such as “A city plum is not a plum” (II: 21) and “A pin has a head, but has no hair” (II: 32), operate within a child’s realm where the connections between word and thing are violently arbitrary, set up by the adults who function in ways that are as mysterious to children as the arbitrary connection between signifier and signified in the sign. Even the meter of the poems in Sing-Song is peculiar to the rhythms of the maternal chora. Consider, for example:

My baby has a mottled fist,

My baby has a neck in creases;

My baby kisses and is kissed,

For he’s the very thing for kisses. (II: 24)

Although the meter is perfectly regular iambic tetrameter with an additional syllable at the end of the second and fourth lines, the quatrain breaks from the pejorative aspects of “sing-song” and realizes its utter appropriateness to its subject only when spoken with the slight lisp and lengthening of the first syllable of very common in maternal speech. Similar applications of maternal speech patterns enhance the power of other verses in
Sing-Song such as "Kookoorookoo! Kookoorookoo!" (II: 20), "Baby cry—" (II: 20), "What are heavy? sea-sand and sorrow" (II: 26), "A white hen sitting" (II: 39), and "I know a baby, such a baby,—" (II: 50).

**Radical Maternal (re)Visionings**

...one of the tenderest of divine promises takes (so to say) the feminine form: "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you" (Is. 66.13) (Rossetti, *Seek & Find* 30-32)

Ironically, Christina’s “customary exaltation of motherhood” (Harrison, *Sage Discourse* 103), virtually conflating the maternal and the divine, engenders a further anomaly in her revision of the female role: an ambivalent political stance from which she could support woman’s total subservience to man (“She by natural constitution is adapted not to assert herself, but to be subordinate,” [Seek and Find 30]) while simultaneously maintaining a radical claim for female suffrage and even the inauguration of female members of Parliament. As her letter to suffragist Augusta Webster shows, Christina’s affirmation of female suffrage is based upon the claims of women as mothers:

If female rights are sure to be overborne for lack of female voting influence, then I confess I feel disposed to shoot ahead of my instructresses, and to assert that female M.P.’s are only right and reasonable. Also I take exception to the exclusion of married women from the suffrage,—for who so apt as Mothers—all previous arguments allowed for the moment—to protect the interests of themselves and of their offspring? I do think if
anything ever does sweep away the barrier of sex, and make the female not
a giantess or a heroine but at once and full grown a hero and giant, it is
that mighty maternal love which makes little birds and little beasts as well
as little women matches for very big adversaries. (qtd. in Bell 111-112)

Christina achieves this virtually protofeminist stance through a brilliant series of
maneuvers involving repeated appeals to strategies of The Other, comprising a complex
mixture of Victorian female submissiveness and subversive feminism. Although I am not
suggesting that Christina made a conscious, politically motivated decision to follow these
moves, the trajectory can be traced in her life and works, as she aligns her position as
The female Other with that of The Other as deity; finds (or creates) The sisterly Double in
her affiliation with devout sisterhoods and in poems such as “Goblin Market,” and, finally
approaches the boundaries of a radical political Otherness by lauding the mother who is

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4 Critics have begun to explore the ways in which Christina’s paired devotions to religion
and motherhood lend themselves to a radical redefinition of the female role in society. See, for
example, Antony Harrison’s article on “Christina Rossetti and the Sage Discourse of Feminist High
Anglicanism” in which he claims that her work “undercuts the domestic ideology of middle and
upper-class Victorians, and functions to subvert . . . the patriarchal values that governed Victorian
England” (89). In “Heroic Sisterhood,” Dorothy Mermin calls “Goblin Market” “a fantasy of
feminine freedom, heroism, and self-sufficiency and a celebration of sisterly and maternal love . . . .
a dream or vision of the Pre-Raphaelite world from a woman's point of view” (108). Virginia
Sickert subtitled her article on Christina’s children’s poetry “A Maternal Challenge to the Patriarchal
Family,” claiming that “Rossetti transforms common themes and genres, to the point of critiquing the
very ideology she is supposed to be upholding” (385). Elizabeth Campbell characterizes “Goblin
Market” as a “covert protest against male authority while giving (or appearing to give) her overt
consent to patriarchy” (“Of Mothers and Merchants,” 397). Christina’s potential feminism is a
continuing subtext in Jan Marsh’s 1994 biography, as she documents Christina’s long-term
involvement in various forms of “sisterhoods” and the more radical interpretations of her poetry.
See also Thais Morgan, “Victorian Sage Discourse and the Feminine: An Introduction.”

5 In fact, in all fairness it must be noted that, ten years after the letter quoted above,
Christina signed a notorious women’s petition organized by the novelist Mary (Mrs. Humphrey)
Ward in opposition to female suffrage (cf. Marsh, CR 466, 554).
Other to her, thereby promoting and ennobling the position of women in general while retaining her own asceticized, self-abnegating position as a Kristevan abject.

In the first step, Christina’s position as The female Other naturalizes her alignment with The Other as deity, especially in the Victorian culture where women were seen as the “angels in the house,” preserving a safe haven of morality and religion. As Harrison explains, Christina’s radical aspects emerge

   in part from Rossetti’s significantly *partial* acceptance of the ideology of the “woman's sphere.” (Most often in her work, Rossetti elides any discussion of husbands and marriage as a necessary institutional prelude to the production of children.) But her radicalism also results from a literal acceptance of a basic premise of the domestic ideology: that men are inevitably seduced and sullied by involvement with "the world." Although Rossetti acknowledges that women are men's helpmates (the "weaker vessels" appointed to assist "the strong"), it becomes clear in this letter [to Webster] and throughout her secular poetry that "goblin" men will prove difficult, if not impossible, to redeem, participating as they do in the "loathsome and foul" world controlled by Satan. (Harrison, “Sage Discourse” 103-104)

Although Christina’s acceptance of the “angel in the house” concept is, as Harrison says, “significantly partial,” her acceptance of woman’s role as keeper of the faith is wholehearted and lifelong. Woman as The Other of man becomes Woman as implicated in The Other as deity. In *Seek and Find*, she goes so far as to parallel the feminine and the divine as Others to masculine norms and patterns of behavior, implying the spiritual
superiority of the feminine and an ultimate, equality of the sexes in The Other world (Harrison 92).

In many points the feminine lot copies very closely the voluntarily assumed position of our Lord and Pattern. Woman must obey: and Christ "learned obedience" (Gen. 3. 16; Heb. 5.8) . . . one final consolation yet remains to careful and troubled hearts: in Christ there is neither male nor female, for we are all one. (Seek & Find 30-32)

Christina here firmly implants herself on the side of The Other as deity, even to the point of showing how the “feminine lot” is more directly related to Jesus’s “voluntarily assumed” position. She further usurps the authority of a masculine clergy in the publication of her original, personal devotions in Annus Domini and other books. This is implicitly acknowledged in the preface to Annus Domini written by her friend Rev. Burrows who notes that the prayers are “only to be used as supplementary to other devotions.” Rev. Burrows’s caveat is intended as “a warning against independent witness” and Christina’s hubris in “tacitly laying claim—in all due humility—to a genre traditionally the preserve of the priesthood” (Marsh, CR 415-6). Christina’s move could be interpreted as religious feminism, in daring to present herself as a religious guide, though she is a member of neither the clergy nor the patriarchy.

Christina doubles her commitment to and involvement with The Other as both female and deity by choosing to enact her religious beliefs within a female religious circle composed not only of her mother and her sister, but of the religious sisters and fallen women at Highgate Penitentiary, where she worked on and off for many years. Here, as part of a predominantly female devotional community with impeccable moral credentials,
Christina could speak to her “sisters in Christ” from an unimpeachably upright position, advocating a female work ethic and a female voice. Thus, Christina’s view of women as Other than men, Other than the world, and Other with God gave her the ability “to launch a quietly comprehensive attack on the entire network of patriarchal values which even the most stringent social critics of her day normally accept without question” (Harrison, “Sage Discourse” 89). In poems such as “Goblin Market,” which show a sister entering and rejecting the masculine world and rescuing her sister (in Christ as well as in family) from that tainted world, Christina presents the radical assertion that “a woman can be strong, bold, and clever, Christ-like in active self-sacrifice as well as in silent endurance, and that sisters and daughters can live happy lives together” (Mermin 117).

Finally, by basing her protofeminist stance on the value of women as mothers, Christina is able to maintain her own personal position as Other even from the community of women and others. If, as she does in her letter to Webster, Christina claims the vote for married women and for mothers, she still excludes herself, thereby accomplishing several things. First, since she claims nothing for herself, Christina maintains a position of objectivity which enhances the strength of her argument. Second, she further enhances her exaltation of motherhood in general and of her own mother in particular, by claiming special privileges for them. Finally, Christina is able to maintain her lifelong quest for asceticism and self-abnegation through assertion, as she “takes exception” and demands female suffrage for the woman who may become “not a giantess or a heroine but at once and full grown a hero and giant,” eschewing gender diminutions in language that echoes
her children's story of a girl named, significantly, "Hero." For herself, however, she asks nothing, claims nothing. She remains self-abnegating, the abject of desires which are (at least ostensibly) not objects of her personal desire.

The entire project allowed Christina "to break out of the confining Victorian idealization of the 'feminine' as determined solely by domesticity (wifehood and motherhood)" (Morgan 6) without relinquishing her claims to "The Lowest Place." As Jan Marsh's 1994 "literary biography" details, Christina was involved throughout her life with a variety of religious and literary sisterhoods that specifically promoted both political and authorial spheres for women. As early as 1851, Christina contributed to The Bouquets from Marleybone Gardens, a sort of female Germ which, if it was partially designed for "discreet display" of feminine accomplishments, was also a showcase for the decidedly non-feminine attribute of authorship (Marsh, CR 132). Throughout much of her life, Christina corresponded and exchanged visits with Anna Howitt, Barbara Smith, Bessie Parkes, and other members of the emerging Victorian women's movement. In fact, even the Anglican sisterhoods with which Christina worked could be seen as protofeminist,

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6 In the February, 1866, issue of Isa Craig's magazine The Argosy, Christina published "Hero," a fairy tale "fantasy of female transformation that articulated all the ambition and aspiration that was desired by and denied to women" (Marsh, CR 162). Hero is a fifteen-year-old girl who, feeling insufficiently admired by the men in her life (father and sweetheart), voices a wish to the Fairy Queen that she will be "the supreme object of admiration." In fairy tale fashion, her wish is granted all too literally and she becomes such things as a beautiful diamond, an operatic diva's voice, and similarly inanimate objects of admiration. When she tires of adulation, she is instantly transported back to home and family, marries her sweetheart, and lives happily ever after, later telling her story to her children in a scene reminiscent of the ending of "Goblin Market." The significance of this tale lies in the audacity of a Victorian girl voicing—and achieving—desires of achievement that were culturally ascribed as proper only for males. Although the moral of the story claims that true contentment lies only in renunciation, Hero is not punished for her transgressions (as Jan Marsh points out, CR 163). Further, Hero passes these aspirations on to her children, both male and female.
providing a safely religious sphere of feminine authority and liberation. As one woman involved in an Anglican sisterhood commented, “It was a wonderful thing at that period to be young among young comrades. . . . It was an era of religion and faith, and at the same time of intellectual challenge. We read, discussed, debated and experimented and felt that all life lay before us to be changed and moulded by our vision and desire” (qtd. in Harrison, “Sage Discourse” 96). The repeated emphasis on a “we” with the power of controlling one’s own destiny; the apparent control which Christina retained over her comings and goings, her modes of service to the Anglican sisterhood; the absence of involvement on the part of the masculine Warden at the Highgate Penitentiary, where every day supervision was under the control of a nondictatorial Lady Principal (Christina was once even asked to assume the position) and unpaid volunteers (Marsh, CR 219): these all point to the retention of a plurality of authority, force, and desire in a structure of multiplicity displacing individual, patriarchal mastery in what Barbara Johnson would call “a feminization of authority” (85). And, in her poetry as in her life (in works such as “Goblin Market,” “A Triad,” “The Iniquity of the Fathers Upon the Children,” and even “Prince’s Progress” and “Monna Innominata”), Christina carried out this “feminization of authority” by using religious language and personal devotion, coupled with self-abjection, to outline “within the conventional language of such passages that clearly accepts the patriarchally ordained position of women, a deliberate subtext of resistance to cultural determinations” (Harrison, “Sage Discourse” 94). At least in “subtext,” Christina was willing to extend her “resistance to cultural determinations” to one of the lowliest figures of Victorian womanhood: the fallen woman.
THE M-OTHERHOOD OF FALLEN WOMEN

For Christina and, to a lesser extent, Dante Gabriel, the child and the mother-child relationship are so sacred that they redeem even the fallen woman. Few, if any, of the fallen women in either Dante Gabriel’s or Christina’s poems are “vicious,” particularly in the Victorian sense of having taken up prostitution as a way of life; rather, these works depict women who have been seduced and abandoned, often left with a love-child. In some measure, these little ones recompense their mothers for lost honor and lost love, as does the baby in Christina’s “Light Love” (I: 136-138):

She strained his baby in her arms,

His baby to her heart:

“Even let it go, the love that harms:

We twain shall never part;

Mine own, his own, how dear thou art.”

(lines 36-40)

Even as the father takes his leave, the baby seems a Double recompensing the lost love in a way dramatically different from “the love that harms.” In this case, the mother accepts the inassimilability of the father as Other, choosing instead to incorporate within the baby who is doubled as both “mine own” and “his own”—twice as precious as the heartless sire and linked to the mother in an inseparable bond. Mother and baby become a

7 Although “Jenny” is clearly a “professional” prostitute and the woman in “Found” may very well be one also, neither is presented as “vicious” in any reasonable sense of the word. Critics usually conceive of the two women as “temporary, socially mobile” prostitutes (Harris 209 n17). See the discussions of “Jenny” and “Found” below.
“twain,” a set of two who “shall never part,” never dis-incorporate. Such, at least is the hope of the mother and the poet, despite their inevitable knowledge that babies do, indeed, grow up, and dis-incorporate, i.e., become The Other, to their mothers.

Similarly, in “Cousin Kate” (l. 31-32) the poem’s speaker has succumbed to the lord’s blandishments while her Cousin Kate held out for marriage. The speaker condemns Kate for her rupture of The cousinly Double that should have existed between the two women (“If he had fooled not me but you, / If you stood where I stand, . . . / I would have spit into his face / And not have taken his hand” [lines 35-40]). In addition, she taunts Kate, foregrounding the one, all-important way in which her situation exceeds Kate’s: the speaker has a child.

Yet I’ve a gift you have not got,
And seem not like to get:
For all your clothes and wedding-ring
I’ve little doubt you fret.

My fair-haired son, my shame, my pride,
Cling closer, closer yet:
Your father would give lands for one
To wear his coronet.

(lines 41-48)

Essentially, cousin Kate has sold her body for The Other’s property, her “clothes and wedding-ring,” but has forfeited The precious Double of a son. In some measures, the poetic speaker is playing the childish Freudian power game of fort-da, rolling the ball (here, the lord) away from her in her acknowledgment that she has lost him to Kate, but
then drawing the ball/lord back with the "string" of a son for whom his father "would give
lands." In a landed aristocracy, the land is metonymy for the wealth, the prize in the
whole marriage game being played by Kate and her unnamed cousin.

In "Cousin Kate" and "Light Love," the child is virtually a prize given the fallen
woman as a reward for her fall, as is also the case in "The Iniquity of the Fathers Upon the
Children" (I: 164-178) where, once again, the foster-mother who rears the child sees her
as a prize, saying "everything she had / Came of my Lady's bounty" (lines 72-73; "my
Lady" being the natural mother). The poem can be read as "a bold challenge to the double
standard of sexual morality and hypocrisy" (Marsh, CR 330) in its indictment of the absent
father as instigator of the moral transgression. "Why did he set his snare / To catch at
unaware / My Mother's foolish youth" (lines 524-526) asks Margaret (the illegitimate child
and poetic speaker). Born "Under the Rose" (Christina's original title for the poem),
Margaret first meets her natural mother, a Lady, when her foster mother (her natural
mother's nurse) dies; although never a word is spoken between them, Margaret
immediately apprehends the secret truth: "But my Mother, Mother, Mother, / I know her
from all other" (7-8). Her mother is differentiated from all The [O]ther; i.e., from her
father, significantly identified only as an uncapitalized "he" in contrast to "Mother," and
"My Lady at the Hall," who bears "the oldest name / In all the neighbourhood" (59-62).
In one sense, these lines transmute the Lacanian nom du père into a Kristevan nom du
mère, claiming the traditional rights of fatherhood (naming, inheritance of lands) for
motherhood. But the proper name of the Mother is never given; in this sense the "oldest
name" she bears is that of "Mother" which is, indeed, the oldest name any can bear, and
the possessor of the oldest of rights: the indisputable bodily claim to the child (in contrast,
the father’s claim to the child lies only in manmade laws). The child’s knowledge of the
Mother is complete and immediate: “I know her from all other”; knowledge of the father
is deemed irrelevant: “I do not guess his name” (4).

These concerns of name are important, for they signal my Lady Mother’s attempt
to revise the gender-based disposition of patriarchal prerogatives. Not only does my Lady
Mother bear the oldest name and hold the purse strings (“my Lady’s purse / Is always open
to such” claims the sexton’s wife when she finds the orphaned Margaret, 157-58), but she
also usurps the Adamic privilege of naming, for it is she who first calls the child into being
with her given name, and in a context which links naming with the equally masculine
privilege of the gaze. The first use of the speaker’s given name comes in the lines the Lady
Mother speaks when calling the child back to life from the deathlike trance into which she
retreated following her nurse’s death: “Margaret, / Won’t you even look at me,” she says
(218-219). The Lady Mother, who once gave birth to Margaret in the way natural to The
female Other, now attempts to give Margaret a new life within the masculine strategy of
The Double, with the power of the gaze as well as of the arbitrary nom du père. Margaret
rouses from her trance, following her mother’s lead in the usurpation of the gaze which
turns its object into an art object, focusing on hair, cheek, and eye in tones more
reminiscent of Dante Gabriel than of Christina:

I turned and stared at her:

Her cheek showed hollow-pale;

Her hair like mine was fair,

A wonderful fall of hair

That screened her like a veil;
But her height was statelier,
Her eyes had depth more deep (228-234)

The Lady Mother responds in kind, adding the metonymy of touch with a gesture that Margaret returns in the following stanza:

   While I stared, my Lady took
   My hand in her spare hand
   Jewelled and soft and grand,
   And looked with a long long look
   Of hunger in my face;
   . . . I laid one hand upon
   Hers with a timid touch,
   Scarce thinking what I did (238-264)

In fact, my Lady Mother’s preference for the masculine strategy of The Double predates the poem, for we learn that when Margaret was “a little maid,” she lived “somewhere by the sea” where “[m]en spoke a foreign tongue” (82-85), as my Lady Mother attempted to use a foreign culture as a safe hiding place for her daughter, in keeping with The Double’s promise that foreign cultures provide a safe hiding place for women. Further, in the first part of the poem, the Mother is doubled into Margaret’s foster-mother, the nurse, the “One who my Mother nursed / Took me from the first” (18-19). Locked in a semiotic chora with her absent mother and her foster mother, Margaret is deemed proud by the village boys and girls because “I found so little to say” (35), she who has no part in the semantics of the father, whether foreign or domestic. As final evidence for my Lady Mother’s usurpation of the masculine position, we have the odd matter of the
ring. On her deathbed, the nurse gives Margaret a ring “Of gold wrought curiously / A ring which she had worn / Since the day that I was born” (134-136). A ring of identity, it allows my Lady Mother to cement her instinctive recognition of Margaret, and to tell her a little of her story:

     She noticed once my ring
     And made me tell its history: . . .
     She said she should infer
     The ring had been my father’s first,
     Then my mother’s, given for me
     To the nurse who nursed
     My mother in her misery,
     That so quite certainly
     Some one might know me, who . . .

(322-331; final ellipse Rosetti’s)

Virtually a wedding ring, the gold band conflates the three women who have worn it—my Lady Mother, the nurse, and Margaret—into Doubled brides of one another as well as of the unnamed father who first gave it to my Lady Mother. But the Doubling here will admit of no triad; before my Lady Mother can enter into the relationship, the nurse must die, as Margaret marks in words that both echo and foreshadow the lines with which she recognizes my Lady Mother. Of her nurse, Margaret says:

     . . . the one friend whom I knew
     Was dead, I knew no other. (169-170)
Of her mother, Margaret says:

But my Mother, Mother, Mother,
I know her from all other

But I guess under the rose, . . .
I guess not who he was
Flawed honour like a glass
And made my life forlorn,
But my Mother, Mother, Mother,
Oh, I know her from all other. (7-8; 378-382)

The second triple invocation signals the turning point in the poem, when Margaret changes from the loving child of nurse and my Lady Mother to her mother’s accuser, judge—and adult Double. But as an adult Double of the same gender, as her mother’s daughter, Margaret is fated to become The D-Otter, The Other of her mother, following the normal trajectory of a child’s maturation away from the parent. At this point, hatred enters the equation for the first time (my Lady Mother “makes me keep my room . . . So I hate when people come,” 348-350), and sexual knowledge as well, as Margaret’s actions begin to echo those of her mother’s youth, as she contrives “To get out in the grounds / For a whiff of wholesome air, / Under the rose you know” (355-357; emphasis mine). This moment, when the daughter detaches from the mother, exemplifies the Kristevan moment when “the subject, finding his identity in the symbolic, separates from his fusion with the mother, confines his jouissance to the genital, and transfers semiotic motility on to the symbolic order” (“Revolution” 101). Despite the daughter’s knowledge of whither such an
approach led her mother, she must engage in a form of Nietzschean creative forgetting which allows her to separate from her mother, from what went before. In the context of this “creative forgetting,” all valences change. Where before my Lady Mother was described as “lofty” (65), she now becomes “condescending” (396), and the previously loving description of Margaret as “Almost my Lady’s child” becomes a refrain for suspicion and resentment. The Pre-Raphaelite “wonderful fall of hair” that called Margaret back to life becomes the emblem of her desire to tell my Lady’s secret and see “Her glorious hair defiled / And ashes on her cheek” (405-6). Negatives invade the lines (“To do, no more, no less: Never to speak,” 414) as Margaret plots to follow her mother’s lead by remaining *femme sole* (“I may not mean to wed,” 452), all the while sobbing at her dream of father and mother “all proud of one another, / Named by one common name” (462-463). Following Christina’s unfailing prescription for peace, Margaret comes

To wish that I were dead,

No faces more to see,

No more words to be said,

My Mother safe at last

Disburdened of her child. (495-499)

Lacking a happy family where name and lands are controlled by the father following the standard dictates of the patriarchy, Margaret yearns for death and to free her mother of the burden of herself. Margaret vows never to marry, but “To accept my lot unmixed,” disdaining to accept marriage offers that would let her fill the emptiness of her absent patronymic: “I’ll not blot out my shame / With any man’s good name” (536-537).
But, for all her hatred and resentment of my Lady Mother, Margaret blames neither her mother nor her foster-mother, but her father who, as author of her pains, becomes for the first time her capital-F Father, “almost” cursed even to the Father in Heaven:

I love my dear old Nurse
Who loved me without gains;
I love my mistress even,
Friend, Mother, what you will:
But I could almost curse
My Father for his pains;
And sometimes at my prayer
Kneeling in sight of Heaven
I almost curse him still. (515-523)

The entrance of the Father has cut across the bonds of the primal dyad of mother and child. What Kristeva would call the “immemorial” nature of this violence, attested to here in the juxtaposition of heavenly and earthly fathers, only shows that “the subject is always already divided and the mother always already absent,” as the language of the curse effects “the founding division” that establishes “the subject object division” (Taylor 162-3).

This indictment of the father, made explicit in an “almost curse” that echoes the implicit accusation of the presence of a love child in “The Iniquity of The Father” and other poems, may account for the relative absence of children in Dante Gabriel’s works, particularly in his most famous and sustained works on the theme of the fallen woman: the poems “Jenny” and “Found” and the eternally unfinished painting of the same name. It is
worth noting also that “The Iniquity of the Fathers” occasioned Christina’s famous claim for the right of “pure women” to look into the book which the scholar-john of Dante Gabriel’s “Jenny” would deny them. In reply to Dante Gabriel’s complaint that the subject matter of “The Iniquity of the Fathers” was inappropriate for women, Christina wrote to him, in a letter dated March 13, 1865:

I yet incline to include within female range such an attempt as this . . . where the field is occupied by a single female figure whose internal portrait is set forth in her own words. Moreover, the sketch only gives the girl’s own deductions, feelings, semi-resolutions; granted such premises as hers, and right or wrong it seems to me she might easily arrive at such conclusion: and whilst it may truly be argued that unless white could be black and Heaven Hell my experience (thank God) precludes me from hers, I yet don’t see why “the Poet mind” should be less able to construct her from its own inner consciousness than a hundred other unknown quantities. (qtd. in Marsh, CR 330-1)

Ironically, Dante Gabriel later used similar rhetoric to justify the approach and subject matter of “Jenny” against Robert Buchanan’s accusations in “The Fleshly School of Poetry.” In “The Stealthy School of Criticism,” Rossetti wrote of “Jenny” that he had never failed

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8 Although “The Iniquity of the Fathers” is, syntactically, the most logical shortened form of the title (being formed from the first words and main clause of the full title), its evident “fingerprinting” at the male of the engendering pair seems to have discomfited Dante Gabriel, who thought the title should have been “Upon the Children,” displacing the focus (and the guilt) (letter from DGR to CGR dated 3 December 1874).
to foresee impending charges of recklessness and aggressiveness, or to perceive that [some readers might] . . . hold that the thought in it had better have dispensed with the situation which serves it for framework. Nor did I omit to consider how far a treatment from without might here be possible. But the motive powers of art reverse the requirement of science, and demand first of all an inner standing-point. The heart of such a mystery as this must be plucked from the very world in which it beats or bleeds; and the beauty and pity, the self-questionings and all-questionings which it brings with it can come with full force only from the mouth of one alive to its whole appeal, such as the speaker put forward in the poem,—that is, of a young and thoughtful man of the world. (Works, 619)

What Christina justifies as created from the inner consciousness of the Poet mind, Dante Gabriel rationalizes as the demands of art for an inner standing-point. The difference between their explanations is one of (en)gendered (re)vision: while Christina is careful to distance her own inner consciousness from that of the poem, Dante Gabriel leaves himself open to accusations of identity with the “young and thoughtful man of the world” who speaks the poem. A Victorian woman could not dare be identified with a prostitute; a Victorian man could dare to be identified with her customers—although, in Dante Gabriel’s case, at least, the dare had disastrous results in his later life. But both Rossettis are engaged in similar projects of recuperating the fallen woman. Where Christina’s my Lady Mother and her illegitimate daughter attempt to erase the presence of men and to usurp their patriarchal powers, Dante Gabriel’s young and thoughtful man of the world—caught in the double bind of enjoying and eschewing his masculine privileges—attempts
to Double the prostitute with his own privileged consciousness. Most critics have seen this doubling process as carried out through the lamentable tactic of erasing and usurping her consciousness; it is, however, possible to read Jenny's loss of consciousness as a form of empowerment. On at least some levels, the character Jenny chooses to sleep and it is her sleep that sets the terms of the exchange; also, although her choice most probably lowers her price, she still collects the shower of golden coins at the end.

The dramatic monologue/interior monologue form9 which Dante Gabriel employs in "Jenny" (36-43) increases both the power of the poem and the danger of identification between speaker and poet. "Jenny" functions as a sort of inverse Blessed Damozel (Sonstroem 34): where "The Blessed Damozel" focused on the female beloved's thoughts with echoes of the male lover's musings, in "Jenny" we hear only the male lover's meditations and his representations of the female's thoughts. The 34 verse paragraphs of "Jenny," written primarily in tetrameter couplets, provide, as Vogel has noted (63-63), an ideal form for Dante Gabriel's undertaking. The precision of the couplets (often used as though they were heroic couplets in terms of balancing and particularity of meaning) identifies the speaker as a rational, intelligent man (i.e., "a young and thoughtful man of the world"), while the tetrameter line—shortened from the typical Victorian "marching" rhythm of the pentameter—lends a speed appropriate to the "raciness" of the subject

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9 A long-running critical debate circles around whether "Jenny" is an interior monologue (Daniel A. Harris), a "dialogue of the mind with itself" (Jules Paul Seigel), a soliloquy (Robert Buchanan, "The Fleshly School of Poetry: Mr. D. G. Rossetti"), a dramatic monologue (Lise Rodgers), or a "dramatic reflective poem" (Ronnalie Roper Howard). For the purposes of this paper, these finely drawn distinctions do not matter; what is important is that the speaker is speaking to himself, his only auditor being unconscious—with all the freedom, egocentricity, narcissism, and sincerity implied by his situation.
matter. The precision of the couplet form is subverted further by the use of verse paragraphs rather than more formal stanzas—an alteration appropriate to the internal, reflective nature of the discourse. On the other hand, the overall dramatic monologue form increases the identification between speaker and auditor. It is important to note that, in a dramatic monologue such as "Jenny," we hear only the speaker's voice and therefore have only his words by which to judge all questions. His thoughts are all we know of Jenny and so, in a very literal sense, the speaker is Jenny, for us. He has come to couple with the prostitute sexually, but, barred from both physical and verbal communication by her exhausted sleep, the speaker engages in a long night of tentative mental doubling as he contemplates her life and her world. The interior monologue form of the poem frees the speaker to "create his world—indeed his auditor—at will [in a fit of] narcissistic self-indulgence" (Harris 199). The form that this narcissistic self-indulgence (and self-creation) takes is that of "an acutely unresolved monologue that articulates the conditions that have brought about this double bind," and that "speaks, almost interminably, of the silence surrounding its desires" (Bristow 117). In speaking of the silence that surrounds his desires, Dante Gabriel is borrowing from the same tradition that later animates Christina’s "Monna Innaminata," which culminates in a silence that cannot sing again. But, although the silence here begins as a silence of desire repressed for external considerations, rather than from the Monna Innaminata’s internal sense of duty and devotion to the ascetic project, by the end of "Jenny," the repression is as much inner as it is outer, as the speaker has thoroughly coupled himself mentally with the physically unavailable Jenny, making her—in most important ways—his Doubled self, his desired (if not beloved) epipsyché. The issue of possession—that she is his (and, perhaps, he is hers)—is subtly signaled with
the epigraph from "The Merry Wives of Windsor" for what Mistress Quickly's lines respond to is William Page's declension of the genitive case plural as "horum, harum, horum." Mistress Quickly has conflated the plural possessive case (i.e., the genitive case plural) with the genital case of the whore which is possessed by a plurality of men.\footnote{This line of thought was suggested by Joseph Bristow's musings on the epigraph to "Jenny" in ""What if to her all this was said?" Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the silencing of 'Jenny'," p. 96.} The speaker further underlines the idea of possession with his own reiterated use of the genitive case singular, as he refers at seven separate times throughout the poem to Jenny as "my," "mine," or "my love." This repetition of possession may be read as an erasure of Jenny's own being and consciousness, or it may be seen subversively as a "cultural criticism of depersonation" (Harris 198) that reinstates her claims to selfhood. For Dante Gabriel's "Jenny" (and its erstwhile companion painting "Found") is one of the few exceptions to the rule in Victorian art and literature which dictated that "the woman was generally shown alone bearing the brunt of their shared sexual transgressions" (Casteras 132).\footnote{"Found" is generally read as depicting a male come up from the country who discovers his childhood country sweetheart has become a city prostitute. To my knowledge, critics have been unanimous in assuming that the woman's fall occurred after she came to the city. However, there is no compelling reason not to locate her fall in the country, with her country suitor, and to see that fall as the occasion for her move to the city and the ultimate source of her shame.} The concept of identity and mutual possession (i.e., of Doubling) between the female prostitute and her client is also associated with the mid-Victorian feminization of poetry in general and of Pre-Raphaelite poetry in particular. As Bristow notes:

The Pre-Raphaelites, even if comprising a very diverse group of men, in particular presented an image that was, by varying degrees, altogether too
bohemian, flamboyant, and emotional for a society that took increasing
notice of the kinds of athletic masculinity propounded by the Christian
Socialists.

It is fair to say that Victorian poetry by middle-class men underwent,
more than any other literary genre of its time, a process of feminization. . .
. Mermin observes that for most Victorian periodical reviewers poetry was
implicitly a kind of “woman’s work”. . . . Browning found Rossetti’s
“scented” poems, with their “obsolete forms” and “archaic accentuations”,
sic] wholly disagreeable. “I hate the effeminacy of his school”, [sic] he
complained in the year that Poems was published. (102-3)

Despite the metaphors in the poem, “Jenny” is located primarily in the
metonymical strategies of The Double. The poem opens with a striking, alliterative litany
of adjectives (“Lazy, laughing, languid Jenny”) supplemented by descriptions (“fond of a
kiss, and fond of a guinea”) which place Jenny in the dualistic economy of sex and money
within which the speaker will (unsuccessfully) attempt to fix her throughout the poem.
Jenny’s metonymical relationship with the speaker begins here, too, with the physical
metonymy of touch: “Whose head upon my knee to-night / Rests for a while.” The
speaker stresses his relative physical position with Jenny throughout the poem, reiterating
five times that she is resting on his knee and twice discussing the touch of the shower of
golden coins (which he substitutes for the sexual coin he has not spent) in her golden hair.
Remarkably little action will occur throughout the remainder of the poem; rather, the
accretive strategy of The Double will dictate a repetition and piling up of metaphors and
metonymies that Double the speaker with the sleeping prostitute. For it is no secret that
Dante Gabriel considered himself, in some senses, a whore, as he wrote to Ford Madox Brown in 1873:

I have often said that to be an artist is just the same thing as to be a whore, as far as dependence on the whims and fancies of individuals is concerned.

*(Letters 1175)*

Although this particular letter was prompted by the strictures of his patron Frederick Leyland, Dante Gabriel seems to have felt this strong identification with the archetypal marketer of the self throughout his career, prompting him to many comments about the purity or lack thereof in his paintings, which he sold for “filthy lucre.” Perhaps this impulse animated his desire to present in poetry, which he typically figured as less touched by marketplace concerns, his feeling of “fraternity” with the figure of the prostitute.

In fact, three tropes dominate and govern the movement of the poem: the identifications of Jenny with flowers, with money, and with books (or other sorts of texts). Although the bases of the comparisons are metaphorical in each case, Dante Gabriel’s handling of the tropes—through repetition, accretion of descriptive detail, and stress on metonymical aspects of physical contiguity—betray his struggle to make *The female Other* his Double. At five different points throughout the poem, Jenny is identified as a flower (and once contrasted to the “fair tree” of cousin Nell’s progeny in a related botanical figure). In the opening verse paragraph she is at once a “Fresh flower, scarce touched” and a “Poor flower left town since yesterday”; six verse paragraphs later, she is possessed of a “lazy lily hand” that, oddly enough, calls forth images of the lilies of the field and, later, of dead lilies that contrast with “roses left in May.” The image of the fair tree which
may need the aid of Jenny’s children intervenes before we come to the climactic penultimate invocation of the floral metaphor “Like a rose shut in a book” (40), which brings together two of the three governing tropes in a single potent image. A similar conflation occurs in the final use of the floral image, when the metonymy of “Yesterday’s rose” (42) that now droops forlorn on Jenny’s bosom is juxtaposed with the pier-glass that bears the text written by the diamond rings of her customers. Like her mirror, Jenny may be seen as “a reflection of other people’s desires, a blank page on which a series of men can write their narratives of her significance” (Michie, Flesh 61)—a “writing” exercise in which Dante Gabriel’s poetic speaker participates at length. In each floral image, we accumulate additional descriptive detail and, often, find metonymical touches of contiguity added to the image. Similarly, Dante Gabriel’s poetic speaker identifies Jenny with money at five points throughout the poem: her hair “Is countless gold incomparable” (36); a purse is the “ludestar of [her] reverie” (36); her lily hand is condemned by the rich rings in which “it had been dress’d” (37); her sleep confers “New magic on the magic purse” of her rich dreams (42); and, finally, we come full circle to the first golden image when, at the closing, Jenny is pictured as a Danae rising with Zeus’s gold in her hair (43). Significantly, each of these images metaphorizes not Jenny herself, but some particular aspect or fetishized portion of her anatomy (hair, hand, reverie or dreams) in a figure which draws metaphor toward metonymy.

As Helena Michie notes, the progress of the poem “Jenny” is based upon the speaker’s separation of Jenny from other women, “Not to liberate her from cliché, but to capture her in his own personal idiom,” making her his Double linguistically (Flesh 59-61). This progression underlies the poem’s most striking tropical figure, focusing on the
interweaving of textuality and sexuality as Jenny becomes a book read by the speaker (a student and a reader who, significantly, never identifies himself as a writer). This is a brilliant move, as Harris points out, since it involves the reader in the speaker’s situation:

Because the scholarly protagonist compares Jenny to a book . . . , Rossetti likens the reader’s act of reading the poem "Jenny" to the protagonist's figurative "reading" of Jenny the auditor. The doubling here implicates the reader in the same dilemmas that beset the protagonist. (201)

The first identification of Jenny with books comes about through opposition, as the speaker contrasts Jenny’s room to his own: “This room of yours, my Jenny, looks / A change from mine so full of books, / Whose serried ranks hold fast, forsooth, / So many captive hours of youth” (36). But if the books hold the speaker captive, beckoning him on with the work of reading and interpreting them, so, too, does Jenny, who is, at this point, equally unread. As a prostitute, Jenny partakes of the Victorian mythology in which “the prostitute became the most uninterpretable—and, by virtue of that, repeatedly interpreted—emblem of sexual desire.” The “traces of . . . competing explanations” offered for the emblem of the prostitute inform Dante Gabriel’s poem and may be one of the reasons “why the silent speaker veers so wildly from loving to loathing what Jenny seems to represent” (Bristow 111). The speaker begins to be able to “half-read” Jenny, “by lightning in a dream” as he first acknowledges their potential linkages, noting that he used to lead “a careless life” in “rooms like this.” Here, in the fourth verse paragraph, he even dares to proffer her thoughts the same (or even more) respect as his own: “But while my thought runs on like this / With wasteful whims more than enough, / I wonder what you’re thinking of.” He undermines his potential respect, however, by inserting himself into the
center of her thoughts: "If of myself you think at all, / What is the thought?" (36-37). The metaphorical linkage of Jenny with texts returns when the speaker envisions her early, innocent days, "which seem to be / Much older than any history / That is written in any book" (38), a time when Jenny was aligned with country grasses and unaware of city dangers. This leads into musings on Jenny’s current over-familiarity with the city and its denizens before, once again, the speaker dares to link his thoughts with hers, asking "Suppose I were to think aloud,— / What if to her all this were said?" (39). But again, the Doubling is quickly forestalled, as the speaker likens Jenny’s brain to "a volume seldom read / [Which] Being opened halfway shuts again," unable to follow such complex masculine thoughts (39).

Thus, by the middle of the poem, the projected union seems to have failed. In the markedly brief 21st verse paragraph (40), the speaker sees no alternative to failure:

If but a woman’s heart might see
Such erring heart unerringly
For once! But that can never be.

But Dante Gabriel uses the paragraph’s brevity to make it a pivot rather than a conclusion. The textual and floral imagery merge, as Jenny becomes "a rose shut in a book / In which pure women may not look" (40). The woman whose sight “can never be” becomes the pure woman in the following verse paragraph, and it is only her failure that becomes inevitable. As the speaker looks at Jenny, it is the pure woman—not the prostitute—who fades from his view, and he realizes that he is truly, if immorally, Doubled with Jenny, as she becomes "A cipher of man’s changeless sum / Of lust" (41). In this perverse union, the epipsycche is the sum, not of man’s goals and aspirations, but of his vices. The
Doubling has its value: as a cipher, Jenny may be the “infinitely repeating zero that increases other integral values,” the values of the “integral self” of the male. The following lines continue to pile up meaning on this figure, expanding it into the hideously absurd idea of a fossilized toad as the Lust at the heart of the world—a figure so grotesque that it breaks the reverie and, symbolically, the night. Morning dawns outside the windows as the speaker’s identification with Jenny begins to dawn on him. Despite final attempts at distancing himself from Jenny—dismissing his reverie as “last night’s frolic” and paying her off with a Zeus-like shower of gold in her Danaean hair—the speaker cannot evade the responsibility he has realized with his nocturnal musings. In the end, he realizes that he “mock[s] [her] to the last” because he is “Ashamed of my own shame” and owns the power of his mental doubling with her:

Well, of such thoughts so much I know:

In my life, as in hers, they show,

By a far gleam which I may near,

A dark path I can strive to clear. (43)

This Tennysonian “far gleam” comes to the speaker only after his long night of meditation, bringing the faintest of hopes for both lives.

By the time he writes “Jenny,” Dante Gabriel has moved to a radical extreme from his Art Catholic Marian poems and paintings, situating a prostitute at the center of his work and postulating her as his possible Double. Yet the echoes of the earlier works remain, in his parodying of the “Hail Mary” (“Poor shameful Jenny, full of grace,” 36), his echo of the biblical “Behold the lilies of the field, / They toil not neither do they spin” (the Bible here demoted to “the ancient text” without hint of sanctity, 38), and in his evocation
of Renaissance paintings of the Virgin ("Fair shines the gilded aureole / In which our highest painters place / Some living woman's simple face," 40). The invocation of these sacred mythemes within the degraded context of a midnight assignation calls into play "the mimetic process (evolved by men) [which] conceals an ideology of male domination that conspires with organized religion to negate women while pretending to idealize them" (Harris 207). But Dante Gabriel's invocation of the sacred also foreshadows his future career, painting endless variations of the femme fatale. "Jenny" is only the first in this series, presenting the dark side of Dante Gabriel's vision of union with the beloved epipsyche, as it brings him to the realization that he is as much a part of the prostitution as Jenny is, her Double in both pleasure and guilt. But—at least within his personal mythology—this erotic Doubling has further potential, as the beloved epipsyche, his muse, shares her maternal creative powers with him, engendering cross-gendered powers of (artistic) procreation.

**The Beloved Epipsyche:**

**TheErotically, Thanatopically (en)Gendered Image**

Rossetti wrote to Jane Morris about the possibility of her sitting for him...

"I have been conceiving a great desire to paint you as Fortune and have the design clearly in my head now, having long been knocking it about there."

Strange location, "I have been conceiving a great desire": him the agent, the mother, of his own desires? (Lewis Johnson 157)
While at first glance the idea of the artist as “mother of his own desires” may appear a “strange locution,” artistic creation has long been described as a type of birth “where, in a mythic reversal of biology, man is a maker and woman made” (Bronfenbrenner 112). Within Dante Gabriel’s implementation of the strategy of The Double, the artist joins with his beloved to “author,” to “conceive” his own desires in the autoerotic project of the “self-created” artist, manifested in an image which is often erotic in ways that the image of the fallen woman or prostitute, strangely enough, is not. As early as the prose tale “Hand and Soul,” Dante Gabriel depicts the woman who is his soul “giving him back the image of his own dreams,” while in “A Parable of Love,” a drawing made only slightly later, “a lover is guiding the hand of his lady as she paints her own portrait” (Sonstroem 39). In both cases, the lady is figured as the image of the artist’s desires—the “soul within a soul” or epipsyche—that embodies the artist’s deepest desires. If, then, the artist conceives the idea for a poem or painting of a woman whom he writes (or draws) into being, while she in turn manifests his deepest desires and gives them back to him, then the artist has, indeed, conceived and mothered his own desires. Dante Gabriel’s image of the beloved epipsyche unites the mother and the whore in the creation of image through a maternal act “performed” outside marriage (and performed for pay). Like his namesake Dante, he sees this image of the female epipsyche “with unsurpassed clarity and... because his mind [is] mapped by the idea of creation and possessed by a passion for truth he [sees] it not as an end but a way,” employing it to usurp the feminine powers of creation (Gray 45). It is a conception and a giving birth to a work of art—a painting, a poem, or a woman—which, in turn, gives birth to the artist. As Walter Benjamin explains, the entire process is dialectic, calling upon the creative powers of both genders as it moves in two
directions, “the creation [giving] birth once again to the creator. Not in his feminine mode, in which his creation was conceived, but rather in his masculine element. . . . [H]e is the masculine first-born of the art work, which he once conceived” (qtd in Bronfen 125). Further, since the artist is not an artist until he has created an artwork, the entire cycle produces an autoerotic image of the “self-created artist,” related to the Jungian idea of the anima, the mother within that both frightens and empowers the male psyche.

This self-created being—merging masculine artist and feminine anima within—emerges on Dante Gabriel’s canvases in the image of femme fatale as giantess: a powerful woman whose size apes masculine physical prowess, and who, in the words of “The Song of the Bower” (207), possesses “Large lovely arms and a neck like a tower”—a neck so columnar and powerful as to be phallic. This giantess who dominates Dante Gabriel’s imagination and fills the frames of his late paintings did not issue forth full grown from his imagination like Athena from the forehead of Zeus, but rather developed throughout his career. In his early works such as “The Wedding of St. George and Princess Sabra” (1857) and two versions of “Hamlet and Ophelia” (1854-58 and 1866), the masculine figure is noticeably larger than is the delicate female figure, his size emphasized by the rounded planes of face and hair in contrast to the delicately angular lines of the woman’s profile. These relatively early pictures (such as the Oxford murals and Magdalene at the House of Simon) frame a wide angle, crowded with others, possible substitutes, Doubles or Others. Even the early Marian pictures (“Ecce Ancilla Domini!” and The Girlhood of Mary Virgin), which have only a few central figures, give us "windows" that expand the frame outward. As Dante Gabriel pulls in his focus to the self and Double only, so too he pulls in the angle of his lens, focusing only on the woman who is his Double in his pictures of women
where the "langour, melancholy, and claustrophobia of the scenes" reflect his own life and personality (Nicoll 148). This woman (whose situation is often drawn from Dante Gabriel's ur-myths of Dante, Greece, and Rome) is related to Kristeva's archaic mother, the "terrifyingly ancient" mater from which the "speaking subject" is formed and from whom he must be forever separated as a condition for entrance into the semantic order (Powers of Horror 13). It is perhaps the terror of this mater and of separation from her that motivates Dante Gabriel's increasing retreat from poetic words about women to single-figure paintings of them—an effort to return to the pre-linguistic semantic chora. Beginning approximately with "Bocca Baciata" (1859), the powerful man and the delicate woman, the speaking subject and the ancient mater, are chiasmically merged in Dante Gabriel's fantasies to create the erotic giantesses of his later work, culminating in works such as "Proserpine."

Proserpine (1877) unites the elements of the femme fatale and the erotic epipsyche (such as giantism, phallic neck, and creational hands) in a creation myth that focuses on a silent woman divided and doubled between two worlds. In Roman mythology, Proserpine (counterpart to the Greek Persephone) is both the Queen of the Underworld, reigning over death's regions, and the goddess of spring and the returning crops. Daughter of the earth goddess Demeter (Ceres in the Roman myths), abducted by Hades when the wonder of a narcissus enticed her away from her friends, Proserpine was fated to live her life torn and doubled between the two worlds. When she returned to the living world in the spring, Persephone brought new life; but since her husband Hades is also Plouton, god of the fertile ground which springs up from beneath the earth, she is indeed Doubled as a lifegiver in both realms. It is ironic that a story of rape (perpetrated by Hades on
Persephone) should culminate in a tale of Doubled and redoubled life. Also known in Greek mythology as “the maiden whose name may not be spoken,” Proserpine speaks very little in the myth; rather, her silence enables the debates of Demeter, Hades, and Zeus which decide her fate and that of the world, much as the silence of the sleeping “Jenny” frees the poetic speaker “to create both his world and his auditor in his own narcissistic image” (Harris 199), and as Janey Morris’s notorious “brooding silences” enabled Dante Gabriel to recreate the image of a woman in terms that are faithful to his own internal nature more than they are true to nature in the terms invoked by the original Pre-Raphaelite creed. Contraditorily, Dante Gabriel gives her voice in “Proserpina,” the sonnet he wrote in Italian and attached to the painting, but the voice he gives her echoes his own sentiments of doubleness and division: “Afar from mine own self I seem, and wing / Strange ways in thought, and listen for a sign” (253).

Dante Gabriel paints this silent/speaking woman in tones of green and brown, simultaneously denoting the green of new life in the spring and the brown of the earth which both enables the spring rebirth and covers over the buried dead. Her massive neck, further elongated by the neckline of her dress, which has been pulled down in the back, partakes of the sinuous, self-repeating curve that characterizes hair, dress, hands, and background in this painting. A similarly curving vine—a cross between a grapevine (sacred to Dionysus as lord of both death and rebirth) and ivy (a clinging, feminine symbol of memory, immortality, and, in the cult of Dionysus, of fertility and sensuality)—invades the background, completing the circle begun by the woman’s hair and shoulders. The visual center of the painting—midway between her brooding eyes above and the pomegranate clutched in her hand below—focuses on red, beestung lips. Closed, they
allow her neither to speak a word nor to taste the pomegranate which is ripe to the point of bursting its skin. The pomegranate, too, bears a double meaning—symbol of fertility and perfection, sacred to Demeter, it is, in some versions of the myth (including the one noted by Dante Gabriel himself in a letter to Frederick Leyland) the fruit of which Proserpine fatally ate in Hades “and so excluded herself from permanent return to earth” (qtd. in Faxon 191).

As Nina Auerbach has noted, Proserpine would be “a virtual still life of woman with fruit were it not for the serpentine grasp of wrist with hand, then fruit with hand, that creates a gyre along which we move up to the face and hair” (48). These grasping, moving, creational hands—echoing and foreshadowing the creational powers of the painter’s hand that holds the brush, the writer’s hand that wields the pen—appear in painting after painting of Dante Gabriel’s beloved epipsyche. Clapsed hands echo kissing lips to bind the lovers in Love’s Greeting (1861) and the similar Roman de la Rose (1864). Frequently, the woman’s hands groom and play with her luxuriant, sensuous hair (The Beloved, 1865-66; Lady Lilith, 1868; Fazio’s Mistress, 1863) or twine in jewelry that is likely a lover’s gift (Helen of Troy, 1863; Monna Vanna, 1866; Aurea Caterina, 1868)—hair and jewelry being natural and artificial emblems of the erotically beloved. The hands of the Venus Verticordia (1864-68), one of Dante Gabriel’s few nudes, support an arrow self-reflexively pointed at the naked breast (and, presumably, the heart beating beneath it) and Eve’s apple, on both surmounted by butterflies (as Psyche, the Greek name, symbol of the soul that does not die and closely aligned with Cupid, god of love). Even when still, the hands are prominently displayed in a forward plane (as in La Pia de’ Tolomei, 1868-81). Hands occupy crucial positions in even the very early Art Catholic
paintings: the hands of Mary, St. Anne, St. Joseph, and the small angel provide the only suggestion of movement in *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin* (1848-49), while Archangel Gabriel’s hands—holding a rather phallic lily and gesturing to Mary to “fear not”—occupy the center of “Ecce Ancilla Domini!” (1850). Beyond even these symbolic resonances, Dante Gabriel’s fetishization of hands may spring from his life experience: photographs of Christina repeatedly show her in positions that foreground her hands, their prominence further enhanced by the camera’s trick of enlarging objects in accordance with the plane they occupy in three-dimensional space. Christina’s prominent hands appear as far back as a sepia-toned infant photograph (now in the collection of the Harry Ransom Humanities Center), perhaps inscribing this mannerism in Dante Gabriel’s earliest conscious (or perhaps unconscious) memories.

Moving, gesturing hands are also at the geometric center of *How They Met Themselves* (1860), an eerie drawing created by Dante Gabriel during his honeymoon with Lizzie Siddall. Explicitly cast in the doppelgänger mode, it shows a pair of lovers meeting their Doubles in a dark wood—an action supposed to foreshadow coming death. Their hands joined, the Doubles are limned in white, invoking the halos that surround dead saints (here, presumably, beatified by their love). In contradistinction to the doubly joined hands of the Doubles, the fainting lady’s hands are outstretched in supplication to and a warding off of the apparitions. She and her living lover are marked by signs of division: though his left hand supports his fainting lady, the male lover draws his sword with his right hand in a move which, while it may be meant to ward off the threatening Doubles, appears more threatening to his lady, since it intersects her thigh above the knee in a placement which is both violent and phallic. The gazes of the two pairs of lovers act
to redouble them such that they are connected to and divided from both their lovers and their gendered Doubles. The light halos and shadowed faces of the Doubles conjoin them in distinction to the bright faces and dark backgrounds surrounding the living lovers as both pairs direct their intersecting gazes towards the center of the picture. But man stares at man in apparent equality, while the female doppelgänger gazes with concerns at her female opposite who, face angled toward the sky, casts her eyelids down to angle their gaze at her similarly gendered Double. Their gazes are essentially self-creating, focused each on the Double by gender rather than the Double in love. They are, like the subject of "Body’s Beauty" (100), "subtly of herself contemplative." This concern with and confusion of gazes appears throughout Dante Gabriel’s work in ways suggestive not only of his obsession with the beloved epipsycbe but also of his wavering between his two worlds of art: poetry and painting. In The House of Life, when he asks, “What word can answer to thy word,—what gaze” (XXVI, 83), the speaker is exploring his beloved’s eyes for meaning, opposing words and gazes in an implicit war, only to discover his own reflected image and thoughts in the beloved’s supposedly oracular face (Sonstroem 128-9). Similarly, redeemer and destroyer are conflated in the same woman in The Orchard Pit (607-609), where he describes a lady in a tree having “Life’s eyes . . . gleaming from her forehead fair, / And from her breasts the ravishing eyes of Death.” Again, in the 1875 pencil drawing The Sphinx, or The Question, three men climb to the Sphinx, supposed source of all answers, only to meet with silence and aversion, as “her lips are shut and her gaze is fixed beyond them” (Sonstroem 180). The figure of the Sphinx makes explicit the conflation of art work and woman in Dante Gabriel’s oeuvre, and her averted gaze reflects, if not an answer to seekers’ questions, then Dante Gabriel’s own feelings. If, as
theorists have posited, we gaze at The Other, then Dante Gabriel’s paintings of giantesses as his own Double place him as the object of the gaze and The Other of the viewer. Further, because the painting is his child, an extension of his selfhood and his artistic progeny, these paintings also place the artist himself on display—as Dante Gabriel was notoriously loathe to do. The ambiguity of the challenging or averted gazes of Dante Gabriel’s powerful epipsyches, then, mirror his own equivocally simultaneous desire for praise and aversion to exhibiting his paintings.

These issues are powerfully addressed in two poems entitled “The Portrait”: a twelve-stanza narrative monologue (169-170) and the tenth sonnet of the completed “House of Life” sequence (78). In both, the situation is that of a painter displaying his creation of his beloved epipsyché in a portrait, and the issues are treated in related manners. The Doubling implicit in the speaker’s possessive portraiture is inscribed in his description of her painted image “[a]s though mine image in the glass / Should tarry when I am gone.” Within the painting, he depicts her in “a covert place” known only to him, one where you might find “your own footsteps meeting you”; a situation which may or may not be the same as that of their actual meeting in the wood, “One with the other all alone.” The first suggests a narcissistic conceit where both halves of The Double spring from a single self, while the second situation, citing “One with the other” is more expressive of a unity created from two separate selves. Reflective, reflexive symbols such as eyes, mirrors, and the portrait itself abound throughout the poem, all serving to connect the beloved epipsyche and the painter/poet into one Doubled self and resonating with Dante Gabriel’s lifelong quest to “paint his own soul in portraits of women,” verbally and visually (Riede, Limits of Victorian Vision 38). Like Dante Gabriel’s obsessive sketching of
Elizabeth Siddall, these endless Doubles suggest “a curious symbiosis of passion and shared identity” (Casteras qtd. in Ainsworth 14). Even the prosody reflects the doubling, in its numerologically significant coupling of quartet (abab) and quintet (ccddc) in a nine-line stanza that can be read as a merger of the feminine number four with the masculine number five in a whole which equals the squaring (i.e., to the doubled power) of three, mystical number of wholeness and the triune unity of deity. This suggestion of parity between deity and beloved reappears at several moments in the two poems. The sonnet opens with an invocation to the “Lord of all compassionate control,” immediately identified with the apostrophe “O Love!”, and further aligns both the lost beloved and the finished portrait with Christ in the line “Lo! it is done,” echoing Christ’s final words on the Cross, according to the Gospel of St. John: “It is finished.” In the monologue, the painter speaker explicitly equates the image which is his beloved Double’s metaphoric tomb with the Holy Sepulcher that held Christ’s body. The identification, like that in “The Blessed Damozel,” verges on the blasphemous when, having gone through death and “the new birth” to heaven, his soul stands “rapt and awed,” not before the beatific vision, but within her soul, where it “knows the silence there for God.”

Although the referent of the poems’ title would logically point to the beloved as the thematic subject of the poem, the speaker/painter is the subject of the action, the “internal focalisor of the picture, who guides the spectator’s view of the depicted object” (Bronfen 5). “This is her picture as she was,” begins the monologist with a verbal gesture at the reification of his gaze in paint, quickly codifying his possessive sign by claiming the power of animation (or re-animation) for his gaze: “I gaze until she seems to stir, —/ . . . And yet the earth is over her.” Even before her death he affirms his right of life and death
over the beloved as, in both poems, he “shrined” her yet living face in a manner more suitable to a dead saint than to a living beloved. His belated affirmation of love motivates a possessive movement; while the words “Still vibrated [between them] with Love’s warm wings” he felt that he “must make them all my own,” pinioning the life-force of love and of the beloved into the fixity of a portrait he creates “In the sick burthen of my love,” amid the “feigned” shadows of “mystic trees”—thus virtually killing his beloved into art. If, as Bronfen argues, “signification can be understood as implying an absent body or causing the signified body’s absence” (6), then this conjunction in “The Portrait” makes the body a text and the text, a body. This textualization tames alterity by re-presencing absence, recuperating the threat of alterity by controlling the re-presentation of the beloved.12 The speaker’s monomaniac possession and control of his “beloved” Double is made horrifyingly apparent in the final line of the sonnet, where his boast of love’s gift delicately hints at the possibility that the concept of “killing into art” has here been made literal: “Let all men note / That in all years . . . / They that would look on her must come to me.”

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12 The concept of controlled re-presentation suggests an interesting correlation between Dante Gabriel’s life and work. In general, Dante Gabriel’s thanatopic paintings of women focus on Lizzie, the most obvious example being “Beata Beatrix,” where she is depicted in a deathlike trance before being rapt to heaven. On the other hand, in the paintings of enormous, physically powerful epipsyches, Janey is the model (physically or psychically; her “body double” Alexa Wilding sometimes stands in for Janey). One might deduce that this is Dante Gabriel’s way of dealing with his guilt: controlling the re-presentation of Lizzie as a dead woman exiled to death’s realm of The Other, while Janey is his physical as well as spiritual Double.
The beloved and thanatopic aspects of the epipsyche, the power and horror of the mother and the erotic seductress, the myriad aspects of the female Double and Other: all are invoked and conflated in these final lines:

By day she woos me, soft, exceeding fair:

But all night as the moon so changeth she;

Loathsome and foul with hideous leprosy

And subtle serpents gliding in her hair.

By day she woos me to the outer air,

Ripe fruits, sweet flowers, and full satiety:

But thro' the night, a beast she grins at me,

A very monster void of love and prayer.

Although the “she” of this poem, Christina’s “The World” (l: 76-77) has traditionally been read as a metaphor for the corrupting influence of the world upon the devout Christian, the imagery is strikingly similar to that of the negative aspects of the woman as The Double that pervades so many of Dante Gabriel’s poems and paintings. In this sonnet, Christina presents a vision of the female that she and Dante Gabriel, in their darkest moments, hold in common: the demon woman, corrupted by the world, who holds The Double within herself. The horned beast “is satanically masculine, yet fair and feminine in gender, almost as if foulness were defined by male desires in a female body” (Marsh, CR 155). The moral duplicity of this “she” is enacted in her outward guise, changing from beautiful woman in the day to a devil at night. But another moral duplicity is at work here as well, as Christina perhaps suggests and as Dante Gabriel would almost
certainly agree; that is, the moral duplicity of traditional representations of the world “conflating the image of the ‘foul’ seductress with her male counterpart from Christian tradition, Satan” (Harrison 90). For both siblings, although in different ways, these images “expose the materialism, hedonism, and false amatory ideologies” (Harrison 90) that construct and perpetuate degraded envisionings of the female. As this chapter has shown, for both siblings—again in very different ways—the revisioning of these gendered constructions of Woman is a priority.
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Bristow, Joseph. “‘What if all this to her was said?’ Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Silencing of ‘Jenny.’” Essays and Studies 46 (1991): 96-117.


Unless otherwise stated, all references to Christina's poems are from this edition.


