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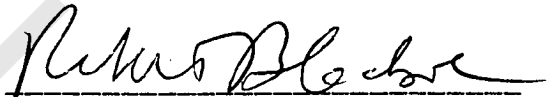
CHRISTINA ROSSETTI'S GOBLIN MARKET:

A FEMINIST PRESPECTIVE

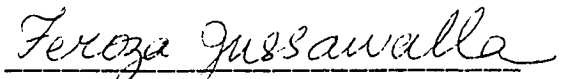
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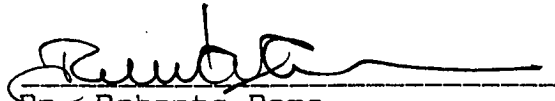
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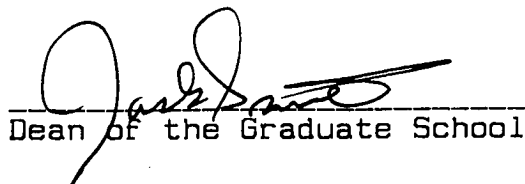
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PREVIEW

This work is dedicated to Dr. Mimi R. Gladstein for  
personifying feminism in the real world and  
to Jerry Gonzales for his  
total belief in me.

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI'S GOBLIN MARKET:

A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

by

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Christina Rossetti's Goblin Market: A  
Feminist Perspective

Feminist critics have taken the term ad hominem quite literally as it is applied to the study of literary history. Traditionally the audience for literature written by both sexes has been seen as male-dominated and has been examined by men for men. As Dolores Rosenblum notes in her important study, Christina Rossetti: The Poetry of Endurance, feminist critics do not seek to replace this tradition; they seek to supplement it by adding the term ad feminam, as both author and reader, to literary criticism (vii).<sup>1</sup>

Ad feminam deliberation attempts to investigate the possible "relationship between gender and genre, between sexuality and textuality" and to determine if there is a female literary tradition (Endurance vii). If there is a distinctive female tradition, questions arise concerning the origin of the "literary differences" that distinguish it from the male literary tradition (Endurance vii). It is within this burgeoning and as yet uncoded framework of ad feminam criticism that Christina Rossetti is gaining attention.



Christina Rossetti is commonly known as a poet of the Pre-Raphaelite school and as the sister of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Criticism written of her brother's works may or may not include information about Christina, but rarely is the fact that she was related to Dante omitted in criticism on Christina's works. Within the last twenty years some feminist critics have attempted to re-examine Rossetti's works not only as excellent works in themselves, but as important feminist poetry of the nineteenth century.

Feminist critics, while in agreement that Christina Rossetti and her works, particularly the poem Goblin Market, deserve and demand additional scholarship, are not in agreement concerning the analysis of her contributions. Early feminists derived meaning from exploring stereotypes presented in literature as well as in the domains of literary history and criticism, usually recorded by males. The next progression for feminist critics was a school based on themes and metaphors used in women's writings, which assumes a rather stereotypical manner in defining women's writings. Elaine Showalter is credited with recognizing the needed correlation between "women's literature and social history" (Leder ix). Recently, linguistic analysis coupled with psychoanalytic

theory has been applied to Rossetti's works, as is the case in Dolores Rosenblum's article "The Inward Pose" (Leder x).

Perhaps the earliest and most often quoted critic to recognize the sisterhood aspect of Christina Rossetti's work, more specifically sisterhood in Goblin Market, is Winston Weathers. His 1965 article, "Christina Rossetti: The Sisterhood of Self," credits the poet with "sketch[ing] allegorically the struggle for psychological integration" (81) long before Freud's psychoanalytic theory. Rossetti, like other Victorian artists, was aware of the self, but, unlike those other artists, she presents a cognizance of "the fragmented self," often presenting contradictory aspects of the personality through the vehicle of sister imagery (81-82).

The temptation to relate Rossetti's poetry of the fragmented self to her life is one Weathers cannot circumvent. Her poetry, as "the expression of interior experience" is, according to Weathers, "not surprising" since "[h]er whole psychological life is one of withdrawal" (81). The sister poems, Goblin Market, "A Triad," "The Queen of Hearts," and "Sister Maude" for example, present those "psychological truths" as she saw them in herself (82). Weathers