

## "GOBLIN MARKET" AND THE PRE-RAPHAELITE BROTHERHOOD

"Goblin Market" is Christina Rossetti's most familiar long poem; she placed it first in her first published volume, Goblin Market and Other Poems (1862).<sup>1</sup> In 1875, when she reissued her poetry in what she called "my collected 'Poems,'" <sup>2</sup> "Goblin Market" retained its premier position. Even that indefatigable re-arranger of his brother's and sister's poems, William Michael Rossetti, left "Goblin Market" first in his standard edition of her Poetical Works (1904). Critics have concurred with this judgment; much has been written about the poem. Its sources have been explored, the biographical significance of its narrative disputed, its psychological implications and its levels of meaning -- from the religious to the grotesque -- debated.<sup>3</sup> It is now time to suggest that "Goblin Market" -- whatever its sources and implications -- speaks most clearly of that whole uniquely Victorian fabric, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. One of the first Pre-Raphaelite poems to attract widespread attention -- exemplifying the creed of originality, sincerity, truth to nature, and vivid detail and color -- it is about that very Brotherhood.

The names of the characters were not unknown to the Brotherhood. Petrarch's beloved was familiar to every one with even a superficial knowledge of things Italian, and the Brotherhood pretended, indeed originated from, an enthusiasm for the Campo Santo frescoes and Italian painting before Raphael. All the Rossettis were brought up on the Italian poets, whom they translated and wrote books about. Christina was to say in her introductory note to "Monna Innominata": "Laura, celebrated by a great bard, alike paid the exceptional penalty of exceptional honour and [has] come down to us resplendent with charms, but (at least, to my apprehension) scant attractiveness."<sup>4</sup> This judgment on Laura may partly explain the prudent role assigned to her in "Goblin Market." Alliteratively joined with her, "Like two blossoms on one stem," (p. 3) is Lizzie, whose name cannot fail to suggest Lizzie Siddal, the favorite model of Gabriel's studio -- the "One face [that] looks out from all his canvases" (p. 330), as Christina wrote three years before "Goblin Market." Laura and Lizzie have each a "golden head" (p. 3) and Laura a "gleaming neck / Like a rush imbedded swan" (p. 2). They are petite versions of the typical donna of Renaissance sonnet series as well as miniature Pre-Raphaelite models like Elizabeth Siddal in real life.

Jeanie, who is twice "remembered" in the poem, is not an actual character since she has already died from the poison of dallying with the fruit of goblin men.<sup>5</sup> Her name, however, was certainly familiar to Christina. Dante Gabriel had been at work on a poem about a prostitute called Jenny since 1848. He revised it carefully in 1858, keeping always the same name and title even after meeting Jane Burden