

ANOTHER NOTE ON “GOBLIN MARKET”

Jan Marsh

Many and various are the contributing ingredients of Christina Rossetti’s “Goblin Market,” and the process initiated by B. Ifor Evans in 1933 (“The Sources of Christina Rossetti’s ‘Goblin Market’”) will no doubt continue indefinitely.¹

My latest addition to the list comes from Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s *Early Italian Poets* (1861), the collection of translations on which he worked intermittently from 1846. As such, they were no doubt familiar to his sister, but it is also worth noting that in 1858 Dante Rossetti put in a concentrated burst of activity on the book while staying in Derbyshire, with the aim of finally securing a publisher. Over the next few months he had his texts set in type for circulation and easier amendment; Christina Rossetti may well have seen them in this form around the time she began work on *Goblin Market*, which was completed in April 1859.

The significant works in the collection are “On a Fine Day” and “On a Wet Day,” Dante Rossetti’s rendering of two catches by Franco Sacchetti, which are songs in dialogue, spoken by a group of country girls. The connections to “Goblin Market” are mainly verbal, but the folkloric aspect of Christina’s poem is also comparable to Sacchetti’s pastoral mode.

“On a Fine Day” is about forsaking daily tasks in favour of a ramble (or rather a run) to the river, and begins:

“Be stirring, girls! we ought to have a run:
Look, did you ever see so fine a day?
Fling spindles right away.

Immediately, the tone is comparable to that of “Goblin Market,” with its echoes of “Look” (in lines 54 and 352) and “Fling ... away” (in line 137: “flung the emptied rinds away”). The action is then described in a simpler form of the ‘iterated jingle’ that characterises the later poem:

So, one by one,
They caught hands, catch who can,
Then singing, singing to the river they ran,