Christina Rossetti, Sarah Grand, and the Expression of Sexual Liminality in Nineteenth Century Literature

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ABSTRACT

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This study defines sexual liminality as a transient, threshold moment in which textual characters explore not only their sexual desires, but also their gender identities. During the nineteenth century, social critics reveal that sexuality and gender play a vital role in laws, social practices, and family structure. Thus, when authors such as Christina Rossetti and Sarah Grand produce characters that embark upon introspective journeys of their sexualities against the background of social expectation, one clearly identifies the influence of life upon art. Rossetti's Prince in The Prince's Progress and Grand's Angelica in The Heavenly Twins enter into the realm of sexual liminality and personal illumination, and they leave as altered characters. The notion of sexual liminality travels into modern literature as well, as one may observe in Norah Vincent's gender study, Self-Made Man. As a cross-dresser, Vincent finds herself within the realm of sexual liminality.

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A dream's charm is that you are transported into another world; no, you are not transported, you are already in the other world. The scene is that of the other world. There is no transition: you wake up in the dream in the other world, on the other side; there is no passport, no visa but this extreme familiarity with extreme strangeness.--

Helene Cixous, Three Steps, 79-80

The Theory of Sexual Liminality

Virginia Woolf concludes her novel, The Years (1939), with a scene of social unification, individual serenity, and a moment of liminality. Woolf's characters, scattered and separated, much like her tangible literary images, have meandered together again for Delia's party. They lose track of time in Delia's home, and upon looking out a window, they find the reflections of themselves in the window glass and pieces of their environment touched by the sun's light. At this moment they experience a communal liminality, in which they see themselves and each other as they never have before. Sara looks at "the smeared plates, and the empty wine glasses; the petals and the bread crumbs" (Woolf 432). Such objects that normally would appear as the scattered, dingy remains of a party actually look "prosaic but unreal; cadaverous but brilliant" (432) as the sunlight bathes them. Then, Sara glances at the window, faced not with the outside view as much as the reflection of the members of the party, held in a timeless expression, as in a photograph: "The group in the window, the men in the black-and-white evening dress, the women in their crimsons, golds, and silvers, wore a statuesque look for a moment, as if they were carved in stone. Their dresses fell in stiff sculptured folds" (433). Drenched in the light of this moment, these characters appear as immortal as the sun, sporadically owning an air of magnitude. "Then they moved" (433), as people tend to do. In the span of this novel, Woolf creates a provocative juxtaposition, allowing her characters to enter into a threshold of lucid

reflection upon their lives.

Helene Cixous's theoretical reflections on the function of the dream are instructive here. The threshold state that produces such moments of liminality allows people to explore, introspectively, the scope of their personal desires. Cixous describes the biblical story of Jacob's dream ladder, an experience that occurs when Isaac sends Jacob away for deceiving their family. Cixous identifies Jacob's dream as an event made possible because of Jacob's physical travel, a necessary travel from his familiar homeland. She then reminds the reader that in order for him/her to enter into a realm of liminality, of self-discovery, he/she must "Go toward foreign lands, toward the foreigner in ourselves. Traveling in the unconscious, that inner foreign country, foreign home, country of lost countries" (69-70). Cixous speaks of this necessary detachment from oneself to find the foreigner in oneself. However, many nineteenth century texts, and others that follow their schemes, portray liminality as an intimate illumination of one's known, expressed selves entwined with one's unexpressed, yet also very known, selves. The state of liminality requires a physical and spiritual space, which allows the character to visualize him/herself as a transparency in a previously-unknown environment. Therefore, while the self for whom they search is not foreign, the environment into which they travel is. This is not only a very conscious process, but it is one charged with illuminated epiphany and an aura of positive motivation. Woolf captures an example of such liminality in her work, which alters her characters' perceptions of themselves and of their everyday environments. Woolf's final scene in the The Years provides the reader with a concise and very visual example of liminality, as her characters envision themselves and each other as gilded statues, bearing aesthetic, communal value. While Woolf exquisitely captures a liminal moment, she does not reveal an explicitly

sexual liminality. Sexual liminality within texts offers the reader a similar illuminated, epiphanal introspection; but through such introspection, characters also have a lucid view of their restrictive societies, and their desires—as well as a clear understanding of their gender identities—rise to the surface of the text. As these characters realize the desires of society, their own desires emerge in juxtaposition with those social desires they spurn. In order to see sexual liminality in its most provocative and socially-telling state, one must look into the female-authored literature of the nineteenth century, particularly that of authors Christina Rossetti and Sarah Grand.

Christina Rossetti is possibly the most misunderstood female author of the nineteenth century. The concrete facts surrounding her authorship may point to a pedantic and morally obsessive personality. Indeed, Rossetti's children's poetry is accessible in form and style, and her empathy for wayward youth reflects her virtuous nature. However, if one peruses Rossetti's longer poems (even a selection of her shorter ones), one will find a trove of sexual exploration compromised by social barricades. Her ability to forge sexual exploration, social commentary, and enchanting natural images sets her apart from many poets of her time. Rossetti spent countless hours at Highgate Penitentiary, a home for young prostitutes who sought refuge and/or forgiveness for their sins, educating and reforming adolescents. As Jan Marsh expresses, "Indirectly, she recognized a certain relation between herself and the Highgate penitents, such as did not preclude her from understanding their 'inner consciousness' even if she did not share their actual experience of sin" (227). Rossetti led a quiet life, refusing to marry two men, one of whom was a brief associate of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, because they did not share her High Anglican Christianity. She wrote *Goblin Market*, her most analyzed poem, during the same year that she assisted at Highgate, and one may assume that Highgate became her muse for the poem.

To make this assumption, however, one must acknowledge that *Goblin Market* is not a children's poem—although it does employ an accessible, sing-songy rhyme scheme—but that it is a complex entity, lined with layers of sociological and sexually-charged meaning. Indeed, *Goblin Market*, with its sexual images and erotic implications, and its focus on sexual/social desire, aptly prepares Rossetti's readers for *The Prince's Progress*.

While the public reception of *Goblin Market* in the nineteenth century and today stands to prove it as the most radical, socially-rebellious poem to escape Rossetti's fingertips, *The Prince's Progress* is also subtle and yet socially rebellious in ways that *Goblin Market* is not. The widespread public misconceptions of *The Prince's Progress* and the flood of critical attention to *Goblin Market* contribute to *GM*'s canonization and *PP*'s continual neglect. The Prince's character is complex, yet approachable, and his journey is physically and intellectually exerting. However, the purpose of his journey and the lessons he learns on his journey are gravely misconstrued.

While Rossetti is deemed a social introvert, and a meek, pious citizen, Sarah Grand is famous for her women's activism in the nineteenth century, and for her daring female characters in her novels. Despite their dissimilar personalities and their interest in different genres, these authors set a new socio-sexual standard in their thematic and character selections. While Rossetti writes in poetic form and is twenty-four years Grand's senior, many facets of Rossetti's Prince and Grand's central character, Angelica, strongly suggest an inspirational relationship between Rossetti's work and Grand's socially-reformative ideals. Grand actively seeks to alter the misconceptions in male/female, public/private relationships**,** offering complex, yet provocative characters in her prose, and offering outright social criticism in her articles and interviews. In

"The New Aspect of the Woman Question" (1894), Grand candidly discusses the nineteenth-century volley between women's opinions about their rights and social standing, and men's enforcement of age-old laws and traditions regarding such rights. She also briefly describes the definition of the New Woman, who is "a little above [man], and he never even thought of looking up to where she has been sitting apart in silent contemplation all these years, thinking and thinking, until at last she solved the problem...and prescribed the remedy" (Nelson 142). Part of the problem, Grand expresses, lies in the male sex, but not because they are domineering or overtly masculine; in fact, she says, they "grow ever more effeminate...where is the chivalry, the truth, the affection, the earnest purpose, the plain living, high thinking, and noble self-sacrifice that make a man?"(145). Her rhetoric pours the foundation for future thinkers, such as Luce Irigaray, to explore the relationships between sexes. Men, and people in general, who emit such qualities as truth, affection, high thinking, and self-sacrifice, are creatures worthy of admiration. By setting forth such ideals, Grand obviously does not advocate an attack on the male sex, but an earnest pleading for the female sex to put away their combative weapons, which mimic the men's weapons: to cease in playing the "Shrieking Sisterhood" that responds to the "Bawling Brotherhood" (141). In other words, she hopes that women will allow their unique attributes to speak for themselves and to stop using defensive, reactionary ways. Indeed, the "Shrieking Sisterhood" will not succeed in their efforts. Grand, however, estimates a hopeful future for females who choose not to mirror the phallus. But where in the nineteenth century turmoil of over-populated, under-educated, female society, can a woman find her uniqueness? Sexual liminality creates such a space, and interestingly enough, at the conclusion of her article, Grand states:

> The Bawling Brotherhood have been seeing reflections of themselves lately [in the Shrieking Sisterhood]...Mirrors may be either a distorting or a flattering medium, but women do not care to see life any longer in a glass darkly. *Let there be light*. We suffer in the first *shock* of it. We shriek in horror at what we discover when it is turned on that which was hidden away in dark corners; but the first principle of good housekeeping is to have *no dark corners*, and as we recover ourselves we go to work with a will to sweep them out. (my italics 146)

Grand is asking for the ingredient of light to assist in the process of revealing the New Woman, who relies upon her intellectual and instinctual skill to better society and the future of women. As we will see, in *The Heavenly Twins*, Angelica experiences an exhilarating, revealing dream, in which an illuminating orb envelopes her, and she feels the shock of seeing her environment in such a bright light. However, despite the initially blinding light, she quickly adjusts and begins her attempts to eradicate the social fallacies of gender discrimination as a result of her new-found visibilities.

Grand implants the image of children in the nursery into this article, as well as into one of her interviews, indicating the need for sexual equality to begin at youth and continue through adulthood. When the New Woman was perched in her position above men, she noticed other women as well, "awaking from their long apathy, and, as they awoke, like healthy hungry children unable to articulate, they began to whimper for they knew not what" (142). They do not know what they want because they had never had it; they only knew that they were missing

something deep inside. Although these women did not know what they wanted at first, they grow to know what they want from an extreme exposure to that which they did not want.

In her continuing study of gender relations in the nineteenth century, Grand begins to provide specific solutions to the fallacies evident within such relations. In an 1896 interview with Sarah A. Tooley, Grand suggests that women who seek extreme forms of activism violate everything that is true to their characters. Many nineteenth century men argue that if women were to gain rights, they would neglect their families and homes (their Sphere); however, Grand insists that women remain in nurseries to instruct children, specifically males, from infancy that sexual equality is vital to the success of the social world. She laments, "It has been the custom in the past to encourage a boy to regard his little sister as, 'only a girl,' and it is a small wonder that he ends by assuming that women are his inferiors" (165). She is asking for a change from this customary instillation. Indeed, "The nursery is the proper place to teach the equality of the sexes, and a system of co-education would greatly help in this direction" (165). This statement suggests not only that Grand believes that one may receive gender training, or that the society one inhabits molds one's sensitivity to/respect for others; but also that people must begin their training at an early age, while their ears are most receptive to proper instruction. One certainly finds evidence of Grand's theory in *The Heavenly Twins*, as Angelica and Diavolo, the twins who not only experience the nursery together but adolescence as well, find the utmost respect for each other, even when society's respect for either of them is nowhere on the horizon. Also, during those impressionable years, Diavolo discovers that his sister is much more adept than he for questioning and attacking the tenets of Victorian society.

Christina Rossetti and Sarah Grand not only employ the liminal state as a literary

expression, both in poetry and in prose, but they also reveal it in a vein that exposes human sexuality, erasing socially-placed boundaries of gender and sexual desire; and they do so in a time when socio-sexual boundary lines were drawn with a sinister hand. Thus, society, particularly nineteenth-century society, with its stark lines, generously provides the space for sexual liminality to flourish—*between* male and female, between upper and lower class—and these authors simply and eloquently respond to such a space.

Authors from many literary periods produce characters and events that work together to formulate representations of the state of sexual desire and gender equality, to some degree, and social critics respond to such attempts. Society places androgynes on the equator of the gender identities spectrum, while quietly and quickly herding other sexes to their respective, proper poles. In *This Sex Which Is Not One*, Luce Irigaray defines the "multiplicity of female desire" as a desire understood only "as shards, violated remnants of a violated sexuality" because it is reflected by the dominant masculine subject (30). Irigaray believes that if the female were to reveal her desire in its fullest potential, she would lose "the uniqueness of her pleasure" in "such a race for power" with the masculine (30). Her potential for pleasure, consequently, will *never* blossom because it relinquishes its own pleasure potential in order to obtain a victory over masculine power, which in turn transforms it into a *replica* of masculine desire. Certainly, many Victorian texts written by Victorian women reveal a dominant, masculine character that holds a provocative power over the feminine character(s) in the text. If the feminine characters seek their own power, they fight for it against the grain of the masculine power, thus canceling out any option of acquiring their "own" active, feminine power: it is simply a carbon copy of, or a direct response to, the initial force of masculine power. But what if the milieu were altered? What if

uninhibited feminine and masculine desires met, intertwined, and together worked toward healthy expressions and manifestations of sexuality? What if this space provided a wondrous illumination into the lives and passions of others, so that all people, though different, could admire the desires of others around them?

In the nineteenth century, the search for pleasure, power, and equality for the sexes is thoroughly examined and discussed in literature and public forums. Fictional works touch upon the notion of sexual liminality among their commentaries on male/female relationships, while social critics and theorists attempt to define sexual liminality among similar commentaries. It is during this time that Rossetti and Grand produce their predominantly sexually-liminal texts that dare to explore such questions at length and in great detail. However, texts, such as Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre, serve as microcosms of Rossetti's and Grand's work, focusing, in brief textual flashes, on the possibility of sexual liminality. Likewise, the social commentary and exploration of authors, such as John Ruskin and Ralph Waldo Emerson provide strong opinions on gender roles and ample insight into the personal and social conflicts that Rossetti and Grand address in their poetry and prose. Their attempts to answer questions of gender, sexuality, and social guidelines reveal their socio-sexual views, and it is to such views that Rossetti and Grand respond.

Sexual Liminality in the Nineteenth Century

One must pay particular attention to nineteenth-century texts, searching for the scattered representations of individual sexual desire in order to capture the authors' stances on sexuality against the surface of social expectations. Even in *Jane Eyre*, a Victorian novel steeped in masculine power and desire, Charlotte Bronte provides a peek at Jane's solitary, uninhibited,

feminine desire, without the restraints of the dominant masculine power looming in the corners of the feminine character's mind. Through the progression of Chapter Nineteen, Jane and Rochester experience an affable intimacy upon Mason's arrival and upon Rochester's reaction to his arrival. Jane expresses her desire to gain Rochester's trust and friendship in the face of his inexplicable worries. After acquiescing to his every request on this particular evening, Jane retires to her bedroom and falls asleep to the sounds of Rochester's cheerful voice. However, while Chapter Nineteen closes to the tone of Rochester's voice reverberating in Jane's ears, Chapter Twenty opens to Jane's immersion in the moon's light and her transitory, yet unadulterated, dominant female desire for its gaze upon her:

> I had forgotten to draw my curtain, which I usually did; and also to let down my window blind. The consequence was, that when the moon, which was full and bright (for the night was fine), came in her course to that space in the sky opposite my casement, and looked in at me through the unveiled panes, her glorious gaze roused me. Awakening in the dead of night, I opened my eyes on her disk–silver-white and crystal-clear. It was beautiful, but too solemn: I half rose, and stretched my arm to draw the curtain. (232)

Not only does this feminized moon's gaze "rouse" Jane, but she inspires Jane to reciprocate the gaze. Jane looks upon the moon's full "disk," which is simultaneously "silver-white" and "crystal-clear": thus, while Jane finds the vibrant hue of the moon intoxicating, she also finds it a little too exposed, too overwhelming. Therefore, she rises to close off its light from her body. For this brief moment, Bronte creates a space for uninterrupted, individual female desire, swathed

in an illumination juxtaposed with darkness, both in the space between asleep and awake and in the space between the inner and outer worlds. In this moment of such juxtapositions, Jane enters into the realm of sexual liminality. She is roused at the light, personifying the moon as a feminine onlooker. She is also attracted to this luminous admirer, yet her emotions are mixed at this point in the text. Bronte manifests this emotional state in Jane's physical actions, as she "half"rises, lingering between lying and standing. To maintain a consistency in Jane's character at this time in the prose, Bronte insists that this fully-exposed, feminized moon is too "solemn," too pitiful for Jane: after all, she wouldn't dare expose herself in this way to Rochester in Chapter Twenty. In this brief moment, we see sexual liminality in a very brief, yet provocative level, as Bronte reveals Jane's dance with her own desires in a deeply intimate, personal—and in this case—physical illumination.

Sexual liminality, thus, permits a personal moment of reflection and physical and/or spiritual "illumination;" Cixous would call such illumination a journey into the unknown, but I consider it an evaluation of the culminated knowns. Authors know the deep desires with which they adorn their characters, they are familiar with social expectations, and they most often create characters that live their textual lives on the line of these two knowns. However, in a moment of sexual liminality, they cross the line and push aside the social expectations: this is when they journey. They journey into the very known land of our desires, regardless of their labels Masculine or Feminine. They scratch the labels off and they bathe themselves in the uninhibited light of our individual, often sexual, desires, as do Sara and Jane in the sunlight and moonlight.

Such illumination is addressed within many Victorian texts, but many authors and theorists touch upon the notion of illumination vis-à-vis physical and spiritual desires. John

Ruskin, for example, known for his Pre-Raphaelite affiliations and his efforts to elicit social reform, expresses his thoughts on spiritual illumination in his otherwise irreconcilable, derisive *Sesame and Lilies* (1865). Ruskin emphasizes the relativity of learning word origins as he explicates Milton's "Lycidas," focusing primarily on two words in the poem: "blind mouths" (qtd. in Ruskin 68). Ruskin explains that Milton is a poet who writes deliberately, not one who meets the quota of the line or stanza, and that "those two monosyllables express the precisely accurate contraries of right character in the two great offices of the Church—those of bishop and pastor. A 'bishop' means 'a person who sees.' A 'pastor' means 'a person who feeds" (69). Therefore, Ruskin believes that Milton is referring to bishops who refuse to truly see their flocks in order to guide them honestly, and to pastors who become mouths rather than those who supply mouths with spiritual and emotional supplement. His final point is this: "Nearly all the evils in the Church have arisen from bishops desiring *power* more than *light*. They want authority, not outlook" (his emphases 69). Ruskin defines illumination as a spiritual outlook with which to guide society, and sexually liminal beings gain this illumination in order to guide others to love their neighbors as themselves, and not to judge them for refining their own sexual personae. Sexual liminality is an ephemeral realm, which provides a natural form of holistic growth. This growth allows a transcendental spirituality to evolve, or a spirituality that hinges on the intuition. Thus, spiritual inspiration is a vital component of sexual liminality. Indeed, if one were to peruse Western religious texts for indications of divine outlook, one will continuously find the ingredient of light:

> Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness
> instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone
> who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the

> light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God. (*NIV Bible, John 3:19-21)*

Western culture has become accustomed to identifying spiritual illumination with salvation, but some do not consider "living by the truth" a vessel by which to come into illumination. One may experience illumination by living through his/her personal truths, by embracing one's spiritual and sexual liminality. This passage explains where the light comes from, but where in this world does it reside?

Perhaps Ralph Waldo Emerson expresses most lucidly Victorian manifestations of spiritual/physical illumination in his essay, "Self-Reliance." He writes, "A man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within, more than the lustre of the firmament of bards and sages. Yet he dismisses without notice his thought, because it is his" (15). Emerson notes that the required illumination comes from *within* a human, and yet despite its powerful blend of spiritual, intellectual, and sexual impulses, one so often insists upon ignoring it, for fear that it may simultaneously illuminate fallacies within social restraints; or even worse, it may have such lustre that society shuns the person permanently. Society, however, does not shun people for their illuminations and thoughts, but for acting upon such introspective impulses. The textual societies that surround Rossetti's Prince and Grand's Angelica do not shun them because they experience personal and social epiphanies, but because they manifest their illuminations into physical journeys of desire and exploration. No matter the outcome, however, Emerson captures the very crux of self-doubt and social apprehension that so often

accompanies epiphany's illumination.

To an extent, textual characters reflect their desires externally, reflexively. What makes them sexually liminal creatures is the juxtaposition between their constructed desires and their social restraints, which attempt to subdue those desires. To identify a character's entrance into the realm of sexual liminality most accurately and honestly, the reader must first identify, within his/her own personality and desires, the culmination of what is labeled masculine and feminine. The question of feminine and masculine "originality" has been the subject of extensive theoretical discourse. Monique Wittig, for example, draws definitive lines between the male and the female. In fact, she does not recognize the lesbian as a woman, for a lesbian does not reinforce the clear dichotomy of functions between man and woman. For Wittig, male and female are both social constructions, as are feminine and masculine compulsions. Judith Butler argues, however, that Wittig's concept of a fictitious sex presupposes the notion of an original placement of the feminine and masculine. In Butler's words, the "accusation [that] assumes that the feminine belongs to women, [is] an assumption surely suspect" (123). Indeed femininity and masculinity are themselves constructions, assumptions that allow the mind to reconcile the emotional woman who cooks, cleans, and sews with the logical man who works, hunts, and fixes things. This linear assumption slices a line between man and woman, femininity and masculinity. However, if one were to entertain a spherical relationship involving woman and man, a sphere within which all sexes exist, and all possible physical and psychological attributes that belong to all sexes, one could abandon the exclusive binary and acknowledge that all living beings infinitely own masculinity, femininity, androgyny, and the promise of a healthy relationship with all other sexes within this sphere. This sphere is a realm that unites all human beings, leaving no room for

disavowal or accusation, as all human beings contain all attributes. Irigaray may find Descartes's wonder upon this circle, Whitman may find his multitudes, and all people may find their potential for sexual liminality.

Many social critics and reformers of the nineteenth century express their concerns regarding the Woman's Sphere and women's rights, for as the population of women grew, and the economy and ruling decisions waned, the lingering question of what to do with all of these women to whom we have granted no rights began to surge as high as the tides. Ruskin cloaks his prejudice between statements such as this: "We are foolish, and without excuse foolish, in speaking of the 'superiority' of one sex to the other" (144). But on the contrary, Ruskin maps out his conception of the pathway which men and women should travel in life, and it is here where the reader finds his theoretical fallacies. In his characterization of the male/female social roles, he defines man's power as "active, progressive, defensive. He is eminently the doer, the creator, the discoverer, the defender. His intellect is for speculation and invention; his energy for adventure, for war, and for conquest, whenever war is just, whenever conquest necessary" (145). He continues to outline the female's power, if any power is left over from the inventing, defending, and conquering that the men so kindly handle, as "for rule, not for battle; and her intellect is not for invention or creation, but for sweet ordering, arrangement and decision. She sees the qualities of things, their claims, and their places. Her great function is praise" (145). In his outline of the proper functions of the sexes, Ruskin's rhetoric offers a faux power to females, a veil that looks like power to delicately shroud their enormous mass of oppressed sexualities. His argument almost sounds appealing; after all, he discusses woman's "intellect," her ability to discern the "quality of things," and her sweet decision-making skills. But look more closely.

What is she arranging and deciding? In which "things" does she see quality? Men go to war and work actively, but where is the woman's work? Ah, yes, her work is to praise the man for his. After all, "woman's true place and power" is in her home, her Sphere (147). Ruskin kindly grants the woman full power within her house, but only the kind of power that allows her to passively support her active husband. His language even alters significantly between his discussion of man's strengths of character and woman's. For example, the man is *the* doer, *the* creator, *the* discoverer, *the* defender. His words indicate not just that man's skills are active and vital, but that man is the only sex that can accomplish such tasks. Here, Ruskin is explicit and specific in outlining man's social role. However, his expression of the woman's character strengths could not sound more vague. First of all, she doesn't *do* anything: she sees. And what does she see? She sees the quality, places, and claims of *things*. Perhaps Ruskin is a little hesitant to assign woman a role. Nonetheless, the hazy veil of discourse (qualities, claims, things) that envelopes Ruskin's insistence that the female sex should have more power appears very similar to the hazy, yet transparent veil that covers his definition of woman's assigned physicality and sexuality.

Ruskin claims to conceive that women have full reign over the house, and that they should even have physical and educational stimulation, but only to the extent that she may greater use her intellectual and physical strength to aid her husband. It is the male's duty, in fact, to "mold her physical frame, and then, as the strength she gains will permit you, to fill and temper her mind with all knowledge and thoughts which tend to confirm…and refine its natural tact of love" (151). Again, the reader recognizes that the male remains the active sex, as the woman only passively receives her physical exercise through his regulations. Ruskin not only

limits the woman's growth to that which the man grants her, but he also restricts her ability to use her growth for her own purposes, as she must use her faux power to provide her man with more love.

Finally, and most significantly, Ruskin draws one dark and final line in the sand in regard to women's rights. He absolutely reproaches her for any desires to share theological beliefs with the world. In fact, as spiritual beliefs go, Ruskin insists that females have none. He states, "There is one dangerous science for women,--one which they must indeed beware how they profanely touch,--that of theology" (154). Thus, not only does Ruskin feel that women have no spiritual calling from God, but that they also commit blasphemy by vainly attempting theological feats. He speaks briefly, yet adamantly, upon this topic, accosting women who "are modest enough to doubt their powers, and pause at the threshold of sciences…demonstrable and sure, [yet] plunge headlong, and without one thought of incompetency, into that science in which the greatest men have trembled, and the wisest erred"(154). However, Ruskin maintains that all women "dare to turn the household gods of Christianity into ugly idols of their own,--spiritual dolls for them to dress according to their caprice, and from which their husbands must turn away in grieved contempt, lest they should be shrieked at for breaking them" (154-155). As one who knocks a fellow man down and then criticizes him for lying upon the ground, Ruskin bashes women who create false idols, or spiritual dolls to dress. However, have women been given space in which to perform any other tasks aside from dress-making and doll-clothing?

As Ruskin suggests that women will "shriek" at their husbands for refuting their "false" idols, one might consider Sarah Grand's theory of the "Shrieking Sisterhood" as a counter response to the male-driven domination over the female sex. Her concept of the sisters who rely

upon reflex anger at their oppression as mere mirrors of their male oppressors will surface shortly in this study, as she suggests alternative methods for addressing not only the Woman Question, but the faults of the male answers to such a social conundrum.

The structure of Ruskin's narrative argument itself even epitomizes his phallocentric conceptions of gender positions in society. "Of King's Treasures," which precedes "Of Queen's Gardens" in his *Sesame and Lilies* collection, delineates his instructions for men to seek to benefit others in the world and attain certain titles to offer aid to others, not to simply possess a title. He criticizes the captain who "wants to be made captain that he may be *called* captain" and he pleads with man to become more selfless altogether (43). He scorns man for despising Nature (94). He criticizes the "French revolutionists [who] made stables of the cathedrals of France," and those who choose modern industrial advances over the natural beauty of the landscapes (94). However, within his criticisms of males, Ruskin speaks to the active persona, the ability to incite social change, which he has granted exclusively to the male sex. He summarily invites man to better utilize the Treasures which he has been given (by whom?), not to share them or surrender them by any means. While the male sex may fondle their Treasures, Ruskin grants the female sex Gardens, which not only keep females in one place (unless the female dares to uproot her Garden), but also keep her attention at bay while the world of politics, religion, education, and art revolves outside of her reach. Her flowers may grow or die, which creates the illusion that she is needed in her Garden in order to sustain life—but what if her flowers die, in comparison to her energy, her soul, her life's spiritual and sexual purpose?

As such phallocentric discussions ebb and flow during this time period, female authors find such topics pertinent enough to explore in their writings. They also find the inspiration to

voice, both in poetry and prose, their spiritual, sexual, and social concerns for the nineteenth century female. In the midst of those who wish to assign females a garden, a husband, and children to look after, Christina Rossetti and Sarah Grand pick up their pens and illuminate the pathway to satisfaction for all sexes, beckoning others to follow them on their liminal journeys.

The Prince's Progress

In both Christina Rossetti's *The Prince's Progress* and Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins*, the Prince and Angelica not only find their individual sexualities, but they also discover their unique social ambitions. By placing these characters next to each other in a theoretical exploration of sexual liminality, the reader will find that both Angelica and the Prince face a particular obstacle that inhibits their budding desires. Both characters enter the realm of sexual liminality, in which they travel introspectively, fortifying their unique sexualities, and are in turn bathed in illumination. They also concentrate purely upon themselves, while simultaneously filtering through the world's options that they know they do not want. Finally, and most significantly, these characters return to the worlds from which they left, more secure in their sexualities, yet more embittered by their clarification of social expectation.

Goblin Market, with its fruit-filled, sexually intense scenes, may seem Christina Rossetti's most daring piece, but its imagery only opens the door to the thematic purpose of *The Prince's Progress*. By creating an enchanting liminal journey for a male character who takes on the largely effeminate role (for the nineteenth century) of solitude, self-exploration, and alienation from social tradition and standardization, Rossetti inspires female authors after her to analyze society from new angles. Indeed, this poem is the reflection of Rossetti's poetic progress.

The Prince's Progress creates its own psychological agenda. Its characters, plot

construction, and recurring symbols beg for further insights from scholars, especially the psyche of the Prince himself. The poem opens as the Prince makes excuses for why he has not embarked upon his journey to find his betrothed bride. He finally states that he is waiting until the moon is full before he will travel. Embarking upon his journey, however, the Prince searches for every interesting experience he can, encountering a lusty milkmaid, an alchemist, a stream in which to bathe and express his desires, and three women who rescue him from a flood. His actions prove that he wishes to unmask the world in his own way, rather than in a way that corresponds with social conventions or traditions. Although he reaches his bride, only to find her deceased, the Prince does not exhibit any signs of regret for having spent his time in search of personal satisfaction. Delores Rosenblum, argues, "What the poem seems to be about is, again, the threshold state: the prince lingering in the moment...the princess lingering between life and death" (140). Although Rosenblum suggests that the Prince enters into a liminal realm in *The Prince's Progress*, she associates this liminal state with inactivity as she sums up the poem by saying, "Time, that is, passes eventlessly" (140). She elaborates no further than this statement. She also allocates liminality primarily to the Princess, who does linger between life and death, but the Prince lingers throughout the entire poem between his own desires and social expectations. What Rosenblum also fails to see is that time does not pass "eventlessly," but that the Prince is using time to aid him in his self-discovery. He has his own metaphorical dream ladder, and as Cixous suggests, it offers him a bridge into his own spirit, thus keeping him from the burdensome thoughts of society and his betrothed wife. The Prince is exploring the known, yet unexplored, facets of his personality and desires, as he physically travels throughout the land, and I argue that his willfulness to achieve this personal goal outweighs any goals that tradition/society has set for

him, including his betrothal to the princess.

Not only does Cixous encourage an exploration of the self, but psychologist Sandra Lipsitz Bem argues against the "privileged status of the two-and-only-two categories of sex/gender/desire" (Bem 1). In her essay, "Dismantling Gender Polarization and Compulsory Heterosexulaity: Should We Turn the Volume Down or Up?," she reaches for an admittedly utopian society, which would propagate multiple gender categories and enable all humans to explore and celebrate themselves, along with the differences of others. Bem springboards from Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, yet she identifies Butler's philosophies as "nifty little reversals" of sexuality. For example, Butler defines all gender as drag1, which Bem interprets as a reversal of the myth of female/feminine and male/masculine identities. However, upon studying Butler's text, the reader will find that Butler does not argue for a binary sexual reversal, but a reversal of *assumptions* regarding sexual identity. Butler also warns against "the effort to identify the enemy as singular in form [as it] is a reverse-discourse that uncritically mimics the strategy of the oppressor instead of offering a different set of terms" (13). It is my observation that Bem actually extends Butler's conversation in order to reveal an ideal, but specific and very plausible, "different set of terms."

Upon revealing her terms, Bem acknowledges that culture and society are not nearly prepared for her recommended revolution; nonetheless, she offers scientific evidence that specific groups of people are emerging within our society whether we are ready for them or not: people

1This interpretation comes from Bem's discussion of Judith Butler in the aforementioned essay. I printed this off of Academic Search Premier, and the pagination is different from her journal article's pagination; it is on my page three of eight.

comfortable with their multifaceted sexualities. In her discussion of Anne Fausto-Sterling2, Bem reflects upon her depiction of Emma, a hermaphrodite who was originally described by urologist Hugh Young in a 1937 book entitled *Genital Abnormalities, Hermaphroditism, and Related Adrenal Diseases*. Young classified Hermaphrodites in the same category as people with diseases prevalent in the adrenal glands, and it is this societal classification to which Bem responds and scorns in her essay. Bem highlights Emma's life by explaining that she "had both a penis-size clitoris and a vagina, which made it possible for her/him to have "normal" sex with both men and women" (5). Pop culture exposes many hermaphrodites as distortions of "true" gender, and as unstable, suicidal, desperate individuals who seek "corrective" surgery. However, in this case, Emma experienced unique sexual encounters with both men and women, and although she married a man, she continued having sex with women, as it gave her/him more pleasure. When Young asked Emma if she were interested in "corrective" surgery to replace her/his biologically female reproductive organs with male organs, she/he replied with conviction:

> "Would you have to remove that vagina? I don't know about that because that's my meal ticket. If you did that, I would have to quit my husband and go to work, so I think I'll keep it and stay as I am. My husband supports me well, and even though I don't have any sexual pleasure with him, I do have lots with my girlfriends." (qtd. in Bem 5)

2Fausto-Sterling is a developmental geneticist who wrote *Myths of Gender: Biological Theories about Women and Men* (1985), and the article entitled, "The Five Sexes: Why Male and Female Are Not Enough" (1993). Bem refers to this article when she discusses Emma, the hermaphrodite, in her text.

Although Emma referred to her/his husband as a means of employment (i.e. "quit[ting]" her husband as opposed to finding a job) and not as a contributor to her/his sentimental or sexual jouissance, she/he constructed a new lens through which to view hermaphrodites: as stable, rational, whole, and even content human beings, who, like others, desire fulfillment on sexual, social, financial, and spiritual levels.

This expressed, Bem constructs her own lens through which to view sexuality as a whole. She offers the concept of replacing surgical procedures that "intervene in the management of intersexual patients" with acknowledgment of "multiple sexualities" (6) [on my computer screen, this word is underlined in red, as intersexual is not even deemed a word]. Bem hopes that society can someday celebrate the various forms of sexual identity, rather than run away frightened or pointing the misguided finger of judgment at people who inhabit different biological organs and diverse sexual desires. However, in this informative argument, Bem bypasses any illustrations of scientific history regarding the nature of men (or people with male reproductive organs) with desires that differ from the societal norm. In my analysis of *The Prince's Progress*, I argue that the Prince, although three obstacles present themselves as he is en route to his bride, employs a somewhat Freudian/ "Bemian" psychological determinism, or a motivation to explore his desires, that deviates from the social "norm." I also argue that his actions are representative of his sexually-liminal desire to enjoy himself in his own way, to view life through his own lens and experience it with his own body, outside of social status or moral obligation.

While most of the few writers who have written about *The Prince's Progress* have linked the poem itself to religion, morals, and the life of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, I suggest that the text not only allows the Prince's character to deviate from his "marriage mission," but it also allows him to

deviate from meanings associated with religion, morals, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. In short, I argue that the text allow the Prince to invite the reader to see beyond these connections. The text presents readers with an individual, desiring character immersed in an exploratory realm of sexual liminality.

In her essay, "Pilgrimage and Postponement: Christina Rossetti's *The Prince's Progress*," Mary Arsenau paints a portrait of a forlorn and misguided prince who faces temptation and reacts out of moral weakness. When the Prince embarks upon his journey and is faced with the "wave-haired milkmaid," she allows him to drink some of her milk, and then demands her fee (Rossetti 58). However, when the prince offers to pay her in two different ways, she rejects both offers. In response, the Prince tells her to set her own fee, and she replies, "'You may give the full moon to me;/ Or else sit under this apple-tree/ Here for one idle day by my side'" (80-82). The prince almost leaves, but then decides to stay with the milkmaid under her chosen tree "For courtesy's sake" (87). However, Arsenau describes this decision and defends the prince with subtlety by saying, "Clearly the prince is forgetting his primary purpose here" (283). This statement indicates that Arsenau presumes to know the prince's "primary purpose," and that his purpose is to reach his bride-to-be. Arsenau presents this Prince as virtuous yet forgetful. If the Prince's primary purpose were truly to reach his bride-to-be, however, he would have never created space for his lazy day with the milkmaid, courtesy or no. He allows this day to take place, and he does so consciously and without his princess in mind. Rossetti does not refer to the princess once during this rendezvous. Not considering the Prince's consciousness in this event, Arsenau continues to defend the Prince to society throughout her essay.

Not only does Arnsenau make the traditional and tiring mistake of comparing Rossetti's

poem to *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *The Divine Comedy*, but she also compares the Prince's journey to that of Red Cross Knight in *The Faerie Queene.* Red Cross Knight encountered Archimago, just as the prince encountered the elderly alchemist. However, Arsenau states,

> The Prince shows a telling aversion to considering anything beyond surface appearance when he accepts the alchemist's invitation to work on his elixir: the Prince has very little evidence upon which to judge the alchemist, yet he unhesitatingly considers the elixir a more pressing concern than his quest to claim his bride. (285)

If the prince were on a "quest to claim his bride," then his actions may have seemed faulty. However, the elixir *is* "a more pressing concern" than his bride is, because, for one reason, he knows more about the elixir than he does about his bride! This Prince has never met the bride to whom he is betrothed, his journey *is* in fact interesting, and now he has access to an elixir, which he thinks could possibly provide him with eternal life. Of course he is enjoying himself.

Finally, as she reaches the conclusion of her argument, Arsenau describes the Prince's tragic character flaw as his "failure to read physical signs and events symbolically and spiritually" throughout his travels (292). She attributes this interpretation at least partly to the actions of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, as he had delayed his engagement to Elizabeth Siddal, and she believes this poem could have been Christina Rossetti's response to her brother's matrimonial delay. However, Arsenau's *critical* flaw may lie in the realm of psychological interpretation, as she fails to read the psychological signs/events that inhabit and encircle the Prince as he progresses in his personal journey. In fact, the Prince embarks upon a very deliberate and liminal journey into the land of his desires, regarding not the voices of society, but the voices of his own soul as it

traverses into illumination. Let us look at the progression of the poem for such signs and events.

We know from Arsenau's interpretation that the Prince embarks on a journey in which he encounters a milkmaid and a man with an elixir. However, before the Prince embarks on his journey, a voice appears to prompt him to do so. Before this voice presents itself, Rossetti offers her first description of the Prince, saying, "The strong Prince sat, / Taking his ease on cushion and mat" (lines 13-14). Not only is the Prince physically/emotionally strong, but he also enjoys himself in his world of leisure, without the influence of a wife. However, at this moment, he experiences a brief, initial social illumination, as he has now heard a voice, and he refers to it as the "true voice of [his] doom" (19). This Prince is simultaneously acknowledging that he hears this voice in his mind, while he is conscious of the fact that it relates to evil in some sense. This voice presents itself as what I call the voice of societal expectations, which creates a sporadic internal psychological conflict within the Prince throughout the poem, leading him to follow his own desires and find his own voice.

The Prince responds to his voice, claiming that he has been waiting for the moon "at full" (17), and now that it is, he is ready to travel. This response allows the reader to see that this Prince is not guided by love, or even lust, for his bride, but by the phases and enlightenment provided by the celestial moon. Even before 1866, when *The Prince's Progress* was published, scientists had linked the moon to more concrete alterations in the earth's atmosphere. Rossetti incorporates such knowledge into this poem with the simple reference to the moon, allowing the reader to notice its power, mysticism, and illumination of the natural landscapes and, most importantly, the Prince himself. Rossetti's incorporation of the moon's power over the Prince reflects the intricacy and magnitude of the self-exploration in sexual liminality. The power of the moon is also but one more

example of the author emphasizing a character's personal illumination vis-à-vis literal, physical illumination.

As the Prince leaves, he hears yet more voices reminding him, "Life is short" and "Love is sweet" (39-42). The Prince attends to these messages, but not in the way most readers may think, as he goes "forth in the joy of his strength; / Strong of limb if of purpose weak, / Starting at length" (46-48). The Prince's purpose is "weak" according to societal standards, as he embarks on a journey to find himself rather than his bride. He is joyous in his strength, which means that he is relishing in his *own* physique rather than occupying his mind with thoughts of a beautiful or loving bride. He also starts "at length," which indicates not only that he is psychologically stunted by these voices, but also that he is eager to take his time and enjoy himself throughout his journey.

It is these thoughts of himself and his quest for satisfaction that lead him to fully absorb the sexual appeal of the milkmaid, "rosy and white; / The Prince, who had journeyed at least a mile, / Grew athirst at the sight" (58-60). This milkmaid inhabits colors of both red and white, the same colors that the Prince's voices use to describe the Prince's awaiting bride (31-36). The Prince may very well associate these colors with his bride, one to whom he should be attracted according to royal society, and is therefore instantly lust-filled over this milkmaid. However, these colors also connote an alluring blend of both innocence and passionate desire. The Prince makes a conscious decision to stop, meet this milkmaid, and ask for some milk. The Prince gulps down her "new milk" in an erotic frenzy that mimics a new sexual experience (63). However, in this experience, it is the female who empowers the male, and the Prince is just as aware of this as the milkmaid. He realizes at the start that she holds the social/sexual power, as he must ask her for a

drink. She allows him to drink her fresh milk, and then her eyes begin to "glitter and gleam," as she basks in her own power (69). She then demands her fee, and the Prince, rather than attempting to denounce her power, further acknowledges her hold over him by asking her to set her own fee for the milk. 3 The milkmaid responds by offering him the choice of giving her the "full moon," which would allow her to embody the source of his liminal illumination, or, she offers as an alternative: "Sit under this apple-tree / Here for one idle day my side; / After that I'll let you go free" (80-83). Not only does this reply further magnify the milkmaid's power, as she offers to "free" him after one day, but it also reminds the reader of the moon's presence in this poem. The moon represents its own power and mysticism, but it also represents the Prince's true motivation behind departing on his quest.

With this in mind, the reader experiences no surprise when the Prince offers his motivation for remaining one day with the milkmaid. He feels "For courtesy's sake he could not lack / To redeem his own royal pledge" (87-88), and besides, he is attracted to her power. Society's expectations have followed this Prince throughout his life, and now he is beginning to use its standards for his personal benefit. In other words, imperial culture emphasizes the importance of a "royal pledge," such as the pledge that the Prince (or more likely, the King) offered to the princess he is to marry. However, now that the Prince is en route to his socially determined bride, he makes a less permanent pledge to someone to whom he is attracted. Indeed, he reverts to the concept of the "royal pledge" as the excuse to keep her with him, if only for one night. If the

3He does attempt to pay her in his own way by offering her gold and velvet, but the intrinsic value of such items reflects that he urges to please this milkmaid, especially considering the uneven exchange value of a "morning draught" (l.61) of milk in comparison with gold and velvet.

Prince keeps offering these small, enjoyable pledges, he will never have to fulfill his larger, society-gratifying pledge of marrying someone he does not know!

This possibility is terminated, however, when the watchman lark begins to sing and awakens the Prince. The Prince hears the voices in his mind again, and they convince him to rise and resume his journey. However, now that the Prince has experienced a night of his own personal pleasure, he has a foundation against which he may compare his previous life of social appeasement. The text reveals a change within the Prince's world by altering the physical world around him. The grass begins to diminish, along with all plant life, and the Prince ultimately finds himself surrounded by an obtrusive wasteland; "A lifeless land, a loveless land," just as society provides a life devoid of love to young royalty by offering them no choices in their connubial bonds (133). The Prince presses through this land, which allows him to observe it carefully as "A land of neither life nor death, / Where no man buildeth or fashioneth .../ In the stagnant air" (139-144). This stanza compares the barren land to the context of social "norms." To function successfully in mainstream society, one must at least appear to be normal. To do this, one must live in this wasteland between life and death, and never give in to urges to construct something of one's own. When I say that one must live between life and death, I mean "life" in the sense that one follows the path that pleases him/her without fearing societal shun, as did Emma in Bem's reference; and I mean "death" in both its physical and spiritual senses. Therefore, the Prince truly envisions his potential for sexual fulfillment and, for the first time, the society in which he has mechanically functioned throughout his life. He sees that no human around him has built or created his/her own identity in this environment of societal rights and wrongs, because society has not created an inviting milieu for him to do so. Bem outlines the concept of such stagnant social

conditions as she describes social control over intersexuals. She states, "Society mandates the control of intersexual bodies because they blur and bridge the great divide" (Bem 6). The Prince, now that he has dared to follow his own unique path (waiting for the full moon, loitering with the milkmaid), has ironically altered the compositions of the stagnant societal path on which he had previously been unaware of traveling, and as he travels toward his emerging desires, he journeys well outside the grasp of social mandates.

As the Prince travels his path, he listens more to his own desires, and less to the voice of society. He no longer considers his honor, or the "proper" decisions, but he focuses on his vision for himself, and, eventually, to his realization of the need for social change. This dim path provides the Prince with a road that winds, of course, "Towards the right," but although this course keeps the Prince going in the "right" direction, he still spies a light from a cave in the distance (165). Even when the societal lens disfigures this ray of light so that it appears "Like a red-hot eye from a grave," the Prince's curiosity and fatigue, combined with the reader's previous knowledge of the Prince's attraction to the color red (the milkmaid's rosy combined with her white), lead him to the cave, where he finds the old alchemist creating his Elixir of Life (170). He asks the Prince to help him by working the bellows, and he tells the Prince that he may stop "When the steam curls rosy and free" (209). The Prince is not only intrigued by this concoction, but also by the promise of the rosy hue with which he is fascinated. Also, the environment of the cave, a symbol of both Plato's teachings and the yonis itself, allows the Prince to feel at ease and intrigued. Consequently, when the old man dies, he casts aside "The bellows plied thro' the tedious trial, / Ma[kes] sure that his host had died, / And fill[s] a phial" (250-252). He leaves the cave to sleep outside and thinks of his bride for the first time since he originally commenced his journey. He tells himself "This draught

of Life when my Bride is won / We'll drink together" (257-258). This is the only reference to the Princess throughout the course of the Prince's journey. Rossetti allows him to think of his bride as he lies down to sleep, but he nonetheless lies down to sleep instead of pushing on to find her. His actions reveal his psychological determinism to rest and experience satisfaction. However, he then awakens to hear his voices again, waging a battle within his mind.

The voices insist that the Prince resume his journey. When the Prince does so, however, he takes with him the Elixir of Life and his new (likely subconscious) knowledge of self gratification versus societal gratification, and he realizes that his physical surroundings have again changed. He knows that he shall "See the grim land no more. / A flowering country stretched before" (284-285). The text reveals, in the next five stanzas, the specific battles between individual freedom and societal confinement. The Prince travels "By willow courses," which indicate that he is near a body of water. He notices "What a nest the kingfisher hath, / Mark[s] the fields green to aftermath, /[and] Mark[s] where the red-brown field-mouse ran," unleashing, for the first time in his journey, his appreciation for the nature of his surroundings (289-292). The Prince is more determined than before to relish in his own personal progress, his acknowledgement of his personal development, and this becomes more evident as the stanza continues. He "Loiter[s] awhile for a deep-stream bath, / [and] Yawn[s] for a fellow-man," which simultaneously reveals his goal to enjoy this journey as he loiters immersed in nature, and his desire for companionship (293-4).

However, as he looks "Up on the hills [and sees] not a soul in view," he longs "For a second maiden, at least, / To bear the flagon, and taste it too, / And flavour the feast" (295-300). These lines reflect a more humanized, desirous Prince than the society-oriented Prince the reader

discerned from the beginning of the poem. Not only has the Prince overcome his burden of the voices in his mind, as they will no longer return, but he has also begun to respond to his own intellectual and spiritual desires. When he drank from the milkmaid's flagon earlier in the poem, he never considered the fact that she drank none of the milk as he hoarded his draught. Now, however, that the Prince has grown comfortable enough in his individual personality to express a desire for gender equality, separate from that with which society offered him, he has begun to truly desire enjoyment for other people. He realizes that the milkmaid may always bear the flagon as part of her societal role, but he sees no reason why she should not enjoy its contents as equally as he does.

The Prince revels in these newly-discovered desires for a new type of society, as the reader can see from the last two stanzas, in which nature is revered and men and women can offer valuable intellectual intercourse and "flavour" the same feast. He lags and swerves as he walks, allowing his mind to become filled with his own voice, his own desires (301). He enters his "threshold state," as one who "leav[es] home by passing through 'the door' in the depths of [him]self," when, suddenly, it happens (Cixous 70). The waters in the stream begin to rise, and "the deep river [sweeps] its bankside bare" (304). With no choice but to struggle in its currents, the Prince "must swim for his life" (312). The only voice in his mind now is one that asks, "Which way?—which way?—his eyes gr[ow] dim / With the dizzying whirl—which way to swim? (313-314). As these floods come crashing around the Prince to interrupt his dream-like state in his dream-like land, and to force him onto a path other than his own, one envisions them as the floods of society. The reader can clearly see their power as the Prince thrashes about their waves while "the thunderous downshoot deafen[s] him;/ [and] Half he choke[s] in the lashing spray" (315-

316). He wonders which way to go—as if a "correct" way exists. Even if he goes right or left, he will still suffer from thunderous downshoots and lashing sprays. The Prince cannot save himself from this gushing societal pressure—he must *be* saved. Three females pull the Prince from the surging flood, and tend to him. Two of them wipe the "foul ooze" from him and rub his hands, but one "Prop[s] his head that drooped awry: / Till his eyes oped, and at unaware / They met eye to eye" (338-342). The reader may consider this instance as a recognition of sweet salvation, but the following line reveals something more. The text describes the woman's face as "A moon face in a shadowy place," which whisks the reader back to the genesis of the Prince's journey, back to his search for self-enlightenment under the moon's guidance (343). Thus, this woman is now the source of self-reflection and illumination for the Prince, and her face embodies the physical and emotional power of the moon. The Prince's journey of sexual desire reaches a climax at this moment of physical "salvation," as these women become moon goddesses in a sense, nurturing him and reminding him of his freshly-explored sexuality; and just in time also, as he was nearly consumed by the flood of socialization.

The poem continues, and the Prince reveals his curiosity and his courtesy as he sleepily yet diligently makes his way to his bride, noticing the scenery along the way and hoping that his bride will be awake when he arrives. However, he arrives too late, as she had passed away while (supposedly) longing for his arrival. The Prince is met with her funeral procession, and a servant informs him of what he has missed by lingering for so long. Rossetti, however, includes no reply from the Prince, but the textual clues suggest that he weeps at the death of the princess, since the servant implores, "But wherefore should you weep today / That she is dead?" (533-534). The Prince, in the course of his journey, never wished any harm upon his bride. Finally, the reader is

left with the same red and white images from the course of the Prince's journey as the servant informs him that the roses he brings "are too red: / Let be these [white] poppies, not for you / Cut down and spread" (538-540). The servant expresses bitter emotions as she acknowledges the Prince, and the poem ends with this bitter sorrow.

Although this poem ends in such a way, let us return to the Prince's climactic moment of self-actualization, the moment that the entirety of the poem builds up to, the moment that allows the Prince to envision a society of active females and males, who experience feelings of wonder for each other. As he awakens in the arms of the moon goddesses to realize the powers that saved him, the Prince acknowledges his moon goddess, and he hears "Overhead bird whistles to bird, / And round about plays a gamesome herd: / 'Safe with us'—some take up the word" (349-351). While internalizing that he cannot solely rely on himself for contentment, he also realizes that nature is on his side when it comes to seeking his identity. These few lines represent the contrast between nature and culture, along with the Prince's "royal pledges" as acts of obedience to culture. Just as Bem expresses in her study of gender polarization, "A cultural need to maintain clear distinctions between the sexes" operates with the same need for cultural control over class organization (6). The Prince struggles to overcome cultural pressures, and his mental state wobbles as a result. He hears voices that constantly haunt him, and when he gives in to those voices he finds that the princess is dead. If he had never been obedient enough to go to the castle, he would never have discovered that she died waiting for him. However, society leads him there anyway, and as expected, criticizes his too-red flowers. Rossetti subtly indicates society's contempt for those who embrace their multi-faceted sexualities, labeling them too sexual, too selfish—their flowers are *too* red.

The Heavenly Twins

Perhaps women are bolder because they have suffered more from these sex matters than men. Most of them write with loathing of the subject–I certainly do–but are impelled to it by the hope of remedying the evils which exist
—Madame Sarah Grand "The Woman's Question," Interview 1896

As Luce Irigaray reveals in her essay, "Sexual Difference," men and women need to "return to what is for Descartes the first passion: wonder" (171). Men and women must always meet "as though for the first time since they cannot stand in for one another...the one is irreducible to the other" (171). Irigaray identifies the fallacy in heterosexual relationships as a barrier that man and woman place between themselves, and Sarah Grand weaves this fallacy throughout her fiction in order to exhume socio-sexual equality and human discourse of compassion, desire, and ambition.

As Marilyn Bonnell expresses, "A primary concern over which Grand was at odds with the critical establishment was the concern over gender" (138). Grand's concern becomes blatantly obvious during one particular climactic moment in *The Heavenly Twins* that transports the reader into a nineteenth-century analysis of female desire within the social framework of propriety and expectation. As Grand exposes the uneven distribution of wonder on the Tenor's part in her novel, she simultaneously exemplifies that wonder belongs in the realm of sexual difference. She constructs a relationship in which the male "wonders" at the female for her mere physical appearance and the presumed male for his intellect and charm. The Tenor feels a sense of wonder for Angelica, but it based only upon her physical appearance, as he knows nothing of her personality. A simple moment of eye contact with her sets the Tenor off kilter. He is in the midst of a solo when, "She looked up as if in surprise, their eyes met, and with a shock the Tenor

awoke from his lethargy, faltered a moment, and then stopped" (374). Angelica's eyes amaze the Tenor, and while the reader may identify his reactions to her eyes as a sense of wonder, the text emphasizes that it is merely her physicality that provokes his response. In the meantime, Angelica is curious about the Tenor's personality, so, revealing her own psychological determinism, she disguises herself as a boy in order for them to engage in a relationship free from society's insistence upon and reinforcement of a gender difference. It is with this "boy" that the Tenor feels an uplifting, holistic sense of wonder.

During her personal exploration of her own desires against the background of social barriers, Angelica enters the realm of sexual liminality. She is quite aware of her desires, and the reader can discern her internal sexual liminality from the onset of the novel. In fact, immediately after introducing Angelica's name in the novel, Grand assembles a dinner party, after which an enthusiastic Angelica and Diavolo, her male twin, enter the room, climb upon each end of the table, and unabashedly crawl to its centerpiece, upsetting each place setting. Angelica boldly grabs, not a vase, not a flower, but a mirror, and shrieks her first words in the text: "It *is!*"(9), and she proceeds to "thump[] the flat mirror which was part of the table decorations triumphantly" (9). She does so because she is proving to her brother that the centerpiece indeed contained a mirror: "It's a looking-glass, mamma. Diavolo said it was water" (10). From the novel's onset at her young age, not only does the reader see that Angelica is daring, manipulative, and persistent, but also that Angelica is well aware of the concept of the looking glass and its social implications. The image of the mirror also reinforces Grand's creation of twins, one male, one female, who mirror each other in biological traits, yet come far from mirroring each other in capricious behavior, social intelligence, and physical skill. Grand also emphasizes Angelica's dominion over

her twin brother, as Angelica reaches her goal triumphantly, unscathed, while Diavolo, who has an equal opportunity to reach the centerpiece from his end of the table, falls short of his goal and also injures himself (almost fatally) in the process by accidentally stabbing his femoral artery with his penknife.

The reader's next encounter with Angelica proves that she has mental agility to match her physical agility. After hearing a tale of a thief who died with stolen green apples in his pockets, Diavolo ponders, "How did he get the apples? Off the tree or out of the storeroom?"(26) Without hesitation, Angelica retorts, "They wouldn't have green apples in the storeroom...they're not nice" (26). She is well aware that no one would waste either the time or the energy to store green, sour apples when they could just as easily pluck sweet red or yellow apples to store. Angelica's body and brain both prove more agile than her brother's, and one may assume that her bold wardrobe choices ensue after her contemplation of the potential social influences she could impart as a "man." But what social barriers prevent her from influencing others as a female? When does Angelica realize that her opportunity to influence others is narrower than her brother's, who has less ability and social need to influence, since he is a male who may freely seek an education, employment, and entertainment?

First, Angelica and Edith learn that Menteith, Edith's husband, fathered a syphilitic child, thus deducing that Menteith carried the disease to Edith as well. Not only does Angelica behold the emotional agony that one man inflicted upon the child, the child's mother, and Edith, but she must also witness the deteriorating physical repercussions of the disease upon Edith. After returning from a visit with mother and child, Edith retires to her room and Angelica is about to "break the spell of silence boldly in her energetic way, when suddenly, and apparently overhead,

a heavy bell tolled once" (293). Here, for the first time, Angelica is silenced...and by none other than the dominating emblem of Time. Too weary to try again, Angelica retires for the evening. However, now that she comprehends the widespread damage afflicted upon women around her, Angelica begins to dream, to explore her known selves for more signs of damage. In this dream, Angelica experiences her sexually liminal illumination.

The Dream

One must keep in mind that it is not until Angelica experiences the "excitement...and occupations...of that day" that she dreams when she falls asleep (293). In her eventful day she finds out that Menteith infected her dear friend with a venereal disease, and this experience soils Angelica's opinion of humanity and enrages her spirit, pointing to her naïveté of social disorder prior to this eye-opening peek at the diseased world of carnal deception. Now, however, she is an active participant in a dream world of illuminated fluidity, void of time and spatial boundaries. A man appears in this dream, yet his countenance is indiscernible, "because she [knows] that when she [sees] him fully face to face he [will] be hers" (293). Suddenly, Angelica's mind has experienced such "excitement and occupations" in her conscious existence, allowing her dreams to contain new occupations as well. Angelica is now active, and she desires to possess a man. Why, however, does she want this particular man, especially considering her previous enlightenment concerning Menteith's offensive lifestyle?

In her dream, the two of them are "the centre of a great light which formed a sphere about them" (293). Although Angelica and the unknown man are two different people, this sphere encompasses them both. As already seen in Rossetti, the spherical light between two people not only brings them closer to each other, but in turn reveals the potential social influence that two

illuminated souls may share. Likewise, the light bathes them both, along with bathing "heaven and hell, and earth and sky, and night and day, and life and death"—all entities that could never normally co-exist (293). Angelica realizes that this concept is logically possible in her dream, but "there is no word of human speech to express" how it is possible (293). The words may not exist, but readers can decipher and connect meanings by using the referents that exists in our languages. All concepts seem to never touch each other, unless through one, thin atmospheric moment that quickly passes, virtually unnoticed. All are contained in this sphere of illumination in which both Angelica and her lover bask. Angelica bathes herself in this light, her own section of light within this sphere, until she reaches the brink of restlessness. Then she seeks only her lover, and the reader learns her motivation for reaching him: "she [knows] that if their two lights could be added in equal parts to each other and mingled into one, their combined effulgence would make a pathway to heaven" (294). Angelica seeks a creative force, in this case, one part man, one part woman, to attain a harmonious life for all sexes. However, the more force Angelica asserts to reach her lover, the more he evades her grasp; finally, she is overwhelmed with the sense of struggle and is "obliged to desist" (294). Upon her acquiescence, her lover approaches, becomes a clearly-visible creature, and kisses her, seemingly proving that one must only wait for change rather than attempting to enforce its fruition.

The reader cannot ignore Angelica's internal discourse. First, before ever seeing him clearly, she calls him both her lover and her object (294), thus planting the connotations of her power over him, as well as her desire for him, in the reader's mind. Secondly, even after her lover eases up to her and embraces her, she proclaims, at the end of a surreal string of choppy thoughts that remind the reader she is, indeed, in a liminal dream, "He is *mine!*" (294) Her partner of light

has arrived, and her illumination has allowed her to envision her sexually liminal potential: her desire to not simply continue to wear the clothes of her choice, but more significantly to ensure that all women and men learn to look beyond clothing and mannerisms and appreciate the human, desirous, and diverse qualities that all sexes possess.

Angelica is immediately prompted to voice her desires, as "men from the earth" begin to protest her seemingly rapid acquisition of knowledge regarding the sexes, saying she is "beginning to know too much" (294). She does not heed their criticisms, however, and continues to communicate with her lover physically through kiss, because, as she says: "this is the only thing the great man-boy-booby understands at present!"(294) With this retort, Angelica not only announces the man's minute capacity to comprehend, but she also undermines the very core of the screaming men's protests. Angelica makes it known that she "knew too much" about the sexes long before embarking upon her liminal dream exploration, her alert, yet physically latent ephemeral moment between asleep and awake.

While repeatedly kissing her lover, Angelica realizes that he transforms with each kiss, becoming a variety of powerful or religious heroes, gods, and knights. These males/gods were each known for their physical, spiritual, or intellectual strength, which either contributed to their immense popularity or their bitter downfall. Samson, Abraham, and Lot, all men depicted in the Bible, were known for their strength, leadership, and courage. Even Lot, who engaged in incestuous acts with his two daughters, only did so because his daughters, under the impression that the proliferation of the human race depended upon them, persuaded him to drink to the point of intoxication. Antony and Caesar, both essential in transforming the Roman Empire, were famous for their political savvy, although Antony was also known for his lethal attraction to

Cleopatra. Pan, Achilles, Hercules, and Jove, all gods of unique personality traits, were all applauded for their strength, vitality, and fertility. Lancelot, Arthur, Percival, Galahad, and Gawaine, all Arthurian knights, were legendary for their bravery and integrity. Henry VIII, Richelieu, and Robespierre were notorious for their cruelty and political cunning. Luther and the Popes were remembered for their obsessive devoutness and adherence to their understanding of God's instructions. This man with whom Angelica is embracing embodies each of these qualities—the strength, the nobility, the bravery, the cruelty, and the piety—along with the sweet popularity of David the Psalmist, the attractiveness of Absalom, and the self-sacrifice of St. Paul. Angelica, evidently pleased with each rendering of her lover, continues to kiss each man whom she sees upon his face, until she realizes that he never transformed into Solomon. Although Solomon was wise beyond measure in his day, he was also a man of 1000+ wives, who not only built shrines for their false idols, but also participated in the worship of such idols. Angelica does not react to the fact that her lover is not Solomon, but she does react to the women around her who have Solomon. Angelica sees that, now, hundreds of women begin to protest her actions with her lover. These women divide Solomon among them, and they scoff at her for vowing to either take a whole man "or none at all"(294). They tell her, "You are no true woman! A woman is satisfied with very little, and silently submits" (294). Angelica feels, however, that Solomon is less of a man for being so willing to divide himself, and that any woman who claims satisfaction with one portion of her lover is depraved.

After the women's scoffing does not sway Angelica's exploration of her sexual liminality, bishops appear and attempt to intimidate Angelica; but to no avail. They say, shout, whisper, and bluster, using as many elocutionary techniques as they may to convince Angelica that she must

remain in her assigned social seat (294). They "speak in the name of the Lord," but Angelica knows that "anybody could do that…but it wouldn't prove that they have the Lord's permission to use his name" (294-5). Here, with one rebuttal, Grand incorporates her finest viewpoint on women and theology, creatively combating critics such as John Ruskin who rail against the thought of a woman standing in the pulpit. Angelica's character asks readers, at this moment, to discern whether the Lord truly wishes for one sex to use his name over another, as surely as she asks if the Lord wishes for one person to use his name over another. After the bishops inform Angelica that they, as men, are informed of God, that his spirit flows through them, she retorts, "Yes, but it was taken from you again for your sins, and confided to us; and wherever a virtuous woman is, there is the spirit of God, and the will of God, and there only!" (295)

Grand herself warns against women mirroring the shouts of men, but she certainly speaks through Angelica when Angelica's shouts overpower those of the bishops; therefore if woman can organize a Shrieking Sisterhood that shrieks louder than the Bawling Brotherhood, then she has the ability to shock man into (at least a brief period of) quiet. Indeed, the bishops shrink back a bit, confer with each other, and "lower[] their tone considerably," asking "But you will allow, I suppose, that we have done some good in the world?" (295). Taken aback by Angelica's audacity, these bishops now seek her approval, meekly suggesting that they long to know exactly where they went wrong. Glad to assist, Angelica attributes their theological downfall to "vice" (295). While Grand does not elaborate on the particular variety of vice, one considers the vice of immoral sexual behavior as that with which Angelica is now familiar, and of which she speaks.

As Ruskin outlined his interpretation of the responsibilities of male and female, Grand offers, through Angelica, her concept of male and female social roles. Angelica claims, "Men are

the muscle, the hard working material of the nation; women are the soul and the spirit, the directing intelligence" (295). So how does this definition of male/female roles differ from Ruskin's? Grand is specific in her insights, and the primary cleft between her argument and those such as Ruskin's is the action that women possess in this situation. Not only does woman truly possess the soul and spirit that Ruskin falsely grants them, but she also owns an active, "directing intelligence." Just as the moon goddesses offer a directing intelligence to the Prince to save his life, Angelica, in this transient moment of liminality, recognizes that no reason exists as to why the female should not release her active spirit in order to think upon and act upon society around her.

However, just at this climactic epiphany, Angelica is interrupted. Phallocentric refutation escalates, and the Pope of Rome comes forth to exclaim, "HOME IS THE WOMAN'S SPHERE!" (295) The men, the women, and the bishops who formerly protested do not carry the phallocentric, religious clout of the Pope. With the doctrines of the Church by his side, and his loud insistence, the Pope hopes to intimidate Angelica. However, she "coolly" inspects him and asks, "Who are you?" (295). She sarcastically, laughingly asks him, "And what do *you* know about the Woman's Sphere?," thus reminding readers that no amount of social stature a man may attain will equip him with knowledge of the woman's experience inside "the sphere" into which he forced her (296). In fact, the higher the man climbs up the social ladder, the more excuses are available, either by social or religious standards, so that he may only further oppress the rights of woman. Finally, after hearing one more man use God's name to justify his ignorance, Angelica slams the door of this illuminated Sphere upon the Pope of Rome. As the Pope and the archbishops of Canterbury and York, along with a few nameless cardinals, begin to

argue amongst themselves, Angelica, apathetic to their argument, grows irritated with the clamor: "'Don't make such a noise,' she shriek[s] through the keyhole…'We're revising the moral laws'" (295). Her shrieks, consistent with Grand's concept of the Shrieking Sisterhood, paired with the thought of rewritten moral code, send the men into a panic. As they have insulted Angelica with their retorts, they fear for their future of their institutions with which they may intimidate the world into submissiveness. Angelica, at her wit's end, attacks the men with "vulgar vernacular," which is, as Grand points out in order to excuse her, "the best weapon, she understood, to level at cant" (295). To match their religious hypocrisy, Angelica shouts numerous obscenities, which, as they only lie within the subtext, not only insult the men's theological positions, but most significantly, reflect the person revising the *moral* laws. Undoubtedly, the Pope and friends fear the expulsion of their dominant façade. Angelica's language, however, only directs her thoughts to Diavolo, her male counterpart of mischief, just as she had done directly before her dream. Rather than pining for a lover, Angelica knows that her brother would enjoy the adventurous shouting and transforming of the moral laws. She knows her brother better than anyone else, and this knowledge seeps into her conception of the rightful relationship of the sexes. In her relationship with Diavolo, there lives mutual comfort and support, even at the cost of the rest of the world's satisfaction. They had spontaneity, understanding, and a desire to live in each other's presence. However, as she cannot wish him into her dream, she moves on toward her objective.

Overwhelmed by the undertaking of the sphere, Angelica seeks help. Unable to remember the names of any saints, she calls forth the assistance of contemporary writers Ouida and Rhoda Broughton. This quick moment has a two-fold effect upon the reader. First, we

question the entire notion of the "saint," now knowing that Angelica cannot think of the name of any, either meaning that no saints, at least up to this point, have not been pious enough to be memorable, or that no true form of the saint exists. Secondly, we witness Angelica's closest intimations of the "saint:" the minds of authors Rhoda Broughton and Ouida, both far from sainthood, but famous for their explications of disease, despair, and the intricacy of female predicaments during the nineteenth century. With these women by her side, Angelica confidently resumes her work. However, she peeks through the keyhole of the Woman's Sphere, only to find that "the pope [is] listening [, and therefore, she squirts] water into his ear" (296). In this act resembling a painful baptism of sorts, Angelica forcefully completes a distorted phallic simulation, projecting water through the Sphere's opening, penetrating the male, and inflicting pain and temporary impairment upon him. When the pope reprimands her, Angelica responds with, "Always abusive, old candles and vestments" (296). Here, she refers to the phallocentric masquerade of religious practices vis-à-vis tradition. The Church is filled with the material appearance of holy illumination, with its phallic candles in abundance, only illuminating the parameters of the physical room, and its vestments, which cloak the sins of those wearing them, allowing them to look appealing and reverent to society. These items come to symbolize the essence of spirituality to society, and Grand criticizes this notion of material referents for a spiritual journey. The Archbishop of York, thinking that Angelica means to lead him to more candles and vestments, scurries off in search of them, indicating the clerical reliance upon these objects as well.

However, just as the Archbishop flees, "a powerful voice" penetrates her ears, saying, "To the pure all things are pure" (296). She realizes that beloved St. Paul spoke these words, and

she happily welcomes him to the Sphere, hoping for his visionary talents and faith in the Spirit to enhance the transformation of the Sphere. Grand's depiction of St. Paul's voice ensures the reader that any powerful voice which seeks to utilize its power for the betterment of human relations is welcomed in the Sphere. His provocative delivery of Titus 1:15 invigorates Angelica, assuring her that her endeavors not only are well-intentioned, but that they will prove fruitful because her motivations for refiguring the sphere surrounding the male and female are based upon pious intentions. The reader is then reminded of the sexual liminality in this dream, as the dream seems to assume a fast-forward, spinning tone. A cardinal attempts to remind Angelica of the "sacred duties of wife and mother," and she cuts him off, insisting that he leave her to her business, while simultaneously implying that her business, at least not in her preference, is *not* wifehood and motherhood (296). Meanwhile, the Archbishop and the Pope instantly begin to argue with each other about who was at fault for this reformation of the sphere. Their disagreement escalates, but they stumble upon common ground when they agree that Angelica's behavior is "UNWOMANLY!" (296). Upon their agreement, they part ways, to continue to share their common ground until someone is bold enough to break new ground. With this simple metaphor, Grand epitomizes the core of phallocentric reinforcement of the male/female binary, and then she quickly shifts to Angelica in the midst of other women, revealing the flawed relationship between females as well. Angelica professes her desire to "come and teach [them their] duty" (296). As her transitory lover changed faces to embody several personalities, Angelica pronounces that she is a combination of heroic women as well. She immediately clarifies that she is not Esther, who is known for her beauty, but that she is Judith, Jael, Vashti, and Godiva—women who disobediently yet courageously acted for the rights of their helpless

people. She exclaims, "I am all the heroic women of all the ages rolled into one, not for the shedding of blood, but for the saving of suffering" (296). At this moment, the lights of all these brave women fall down upon her, but she sees that their "combined effulgence" does no good, as the women she is attempting to save are numb, confused, "looking askance at her" (296). Angelica persists, however, in utilizing this liminal moment of lucidity, in which all of the fallacies of society are plain to her. She plans to "save [them] in spite of [them]selves," without their comprehension (296). However, Grand emphasizes that this is not possible, for all of society must be *aware* of the need for change as well as possess a desire to bring it in to fruition. Otherwise, work such as Angelica's is ineffectual. She illuminates this fact by crowding men, women, and children all "like loathsome maggots together," quickly revealing to Angelica that she must know the inner workings of men, women, and children better in order to achieve success in transforming social expectation (296). Angelica notes that "All this filth will breed a pestilence," similar to that which Menteith has extended to Edith (296). Her dream has created a thematic circle in itself, directing her back to the burdensome thoughts upon her mind when she fell asleep. Angelica's final liminal thought is this: "I shouldn't be surprised if that pestilence were ME!" (296) One may interpret this epiphany as an indication of Angelica's resignation of spherical work. However, if Grand has adequately presented Angelica's resolute spirit, one will notice that Angelica is repulsed at the thought of such pestilence, and that this realization is her own call to self-action against the spread of social epidemics. Only she must find a different route to social change, as the work of the entire Woman's Sphere has proven too burdensome. Her duties included working inside the Sphere, but she did not expect to have to ward off the malefactors (or the *male-factors*) outside the Sphere as well. However, she does not have time to

consider this during this dream, as, "Just at that moment the light went out, someone uttered a cry, and Angelica awoke. The room was flooded with moonlight" (296). Angelica's threshold moment of spiritual illumination has ceased, but with the cry, the room is filled with physical illumination from none other than the moon. Although her dream is over, the directing illumination of the moon leads her to the realization that Edith is dying, her syphilitic condition rapidly worsening. It also leads her to embody the sexual liminality of her dream, as the reader soon sees. Angelica's pseudo-actions in her dream serve as a microcosm of her true actions in the remaining text. Her dream itself becomes the illumination she needs to evaluate her position in the scheme of society, and to consciously explore and reveal her sexual liminality to others

As she rushes out of Edith's room, Angelica paces, and recalls her dream, and the cardinal's comment to her, regarding wifely and motherly duties. She talks to herself, addressing the cardinal who was in her dream, "Wait until you're a wife and mother yourself, and then perhaps you'll be able to give an opinion…What you're afraid of is that there won't be slaves enough in the world to make money for you: or poor enough to bear witness to your Christian charity!" (298) These thoughts reign in Angelica's mind until her concern for Edith takes over her spirit, and she rushes to see her condition. She finds a withered Edith, and her mother by her side, patting Edith's hand "in a helpless, piteous sort of way," thus resembling the maggots of Angelica's dream (299). Her misery and rage overcome her during these moments of witnessing such suffering, leading her to accomplish her first action as a sexually liminal character, against those who oppress and inflict pain upon pure women. Hiding behind a curtain, Angelica notices Menteith enter the library. After the bishop asks Menteith to leave, Angelica springs "from her hiding place…, seizing the heave quarto Bible from the table, [flinging] it at him with all her

might full in his face" (301). This blow not only makes contact with Menteith's face, but it breaks his nose. Grand does not elaborate on this scene; therefore, the reader does not see the ensuing reactions. However, she emphasizes the magnitude of the action itself, without concern for the immediate social response to Angelica's outburst.

In the next chapter, Grand presents the bishop's reaction to Angelica's behavior, but she does so to reflect primarily upon the bishop's response to Angelica's dream. Initially, the bishop reprimands her for "grievously [injuring] a fellow creature" (302). However, Angelica responds with an "Oh, 'fellow' if you like, and 'creature' too," thus reminding the bishop of the gravity of Menteith's actions (302). Her comment concludes the bishop's lecture regarding Menteith; however, he then attempts to scold her for throwing the Bible at Menteith. Angelica, again, dismisses his words to say that the Bible's weight and its contents made it the most appropriate object to throw at a social reprobate. She calls the act "poetical justice," and the bishop is stilled (302). He remains in the room, quiet and patient. Angelica, after a few silent moments with her thoughts, informs the bishop of the problems with the Woman's Sphere, as seen in her dream. The bishop, although amazed with the intellectual depth of her dream, tells her she speaks "nonsense" when she tells him that man is to blame for woman's misery within the Sphere. She calmly replies, "Well, it may sound so to you at present…but there is a small idea in my mind which won't be nonsense when it grows up," indicating that she intends to act upon the epiphanies of her sexually liminal illumination (303). It is not until she meets the new Tenor of Morningquest that her infant of an idea becomes a full-grown plan.

The Masquerade

One night, bored, and with a desire to "see the market-place by moonlight," Angelica

adorns herself with her suit of clothes, which she had ordered from London, and left her house(456). She wanders the city, bathing herself in the physical illumination of the infamous moonlight, and revealing the physical manifestation of her sexually liminal desires. On this fateful evening, the Tenor, wandering the same streets, bumps into Angelica. From this point on, Angelica is "the Boy," and her visits with the Tenor become increasingly frequent and sexually enticing.

On this particular night, the Tenor and the Boy engage in conversation about the origin of the name Morningquest, deducing that the rivers Morn and Quest contributed to its title. The names themselves allude to the illumination of a prospective day, and the quest of self-exploration, thus reinforcing the theory of sexual liminality within these moments between these two "males." The boy expresses his love for the city's romantic qualities, "especially by moonlight," thus further exemplifying the significance of the moon's illumination in this journey as well (379). Right away, the Tenor notices the Boy's delicate physical characteristics: "his hands and feet were too small. He had dark eyebrows, peculiarly light luxuriant hair, and, as a natural accompaniment, a skin of extreme fairness and delicacy. In fact, he was too fair for his age, it made him look effeminate" (379-380). Despite his notice of these traits, the Tenor is curious about the Boy's life. He satisfies his curiosity but a few weeks later.

As the Tenor has already seen Angelica at service, and has become increasingly attracted to her, his next vision of Angelica after seeing the Boy and learning that she is "his sister," is of interest to the reader. Knowing that they are "siblings," the Tenor is all-the-more attracted to Angelica, as he feels "that a new interest ha[s] been added to her attractions" (384). Apparently, the Boy's appearance and personality are attractive enough to enhance the Tenor's attraction to

his sister. Indeed, as the Boy and the Tenor become more comfortable around each other, the Tenor increases his vulnerability around the Boy. One night, the Tenor goes "out for a stroll, leaving the windows of his sitting room closed but not fastened, and the lamp turned down. On his return he [is] surprised to find the window wide open and the room lit up" (397). Not only does Angelica seek to illuminate her Sphere, but, in her personal exploration, she seeks illuminate the lives of others, particularly the life of this man who believes in her new sexuality.

Rather than being angry with the Boy for entering his house secretively, the Tenor serves as the Boy's musical audience, and later labors in his garden to grow fresh fruits and vegetables for the Boy to enjoy. In fact, the Tenor does so much to satisfy the Boy that the Boy openly relishes in his new-found relationship. He says to the Tenor, on more than one occasion, "I am sure you love me…Your life was not worth living until I came, and you could not live without me now" (400). Their already-tantalizing relationship has now escalated so that the Tenor has accepted the subservient, self-sacrificing role that Ruskin and so many others delineate for females in the nineteenth century. The Boy has also assumed the role of one who takes from the self-sacrificing, reminding the other of how much he needs him. The Boy intentionally quotes an excerpt from Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* to strengthen his insistence that the Tenor continue to cater to his needs. He says, "All love is sweet/ Given or returned" (qtd. in Grand 400). However, he omits the remainder of Shelley's expression, which reveals more about this relationship than perhaps the Boy wanted to share with the Tenor:

> All love is sweet,
>
> Given or returned. Common as light is love,
>
> And its familiar voice wearies not ever.

They who inspire it most are fortunate,

As I am now; but those who feel it most

Are happier still. (Shelley II.v.39-44)

These implicit but unquoted lines explain the Boy's self-confidence and his insistence that the Tenor is satisfied, even though he may not act as if he is. He congratulates himself for "inspiring" the love that they share, but he is also aware that the Tenor "feels it most," or loves him more. The most aesthetically and theoretically intriguing part of this excerpt is that which refers to the illumination of love: "common as light is love." Indeed, this sexually liminal exploration is not only illuminated by the moonlight by which the Boy continuously travels, but also by the love that these two share. This implication proves that characters who experience an epiphanal, sexually liminal experience of illumination will continue to seek out illumination throughout their sexually liminal explorations, as Angelica proves with her actions already.

While the Boy engages in these dominant/submissive exchanges with the Tenor, the Boy maintains his pride for his effeminate qualities. At a later date, when the Boy asks the Tenor why he has never inquired of his name, the Tenor apologetically asks his name. When the Boy replies, "Claude," the Tenor playfully responds, "it is Maude, you mean; delicate, dainty, white-fingered Maude" (402). Rather than feeling insulted, the Boy finds much amusement in the Tenor's observations. Reveling in his femininity and stimulating the Tenor's interest, the Boy smirks and grabs his violin. In a moment of determined passion, the Boy pronounces, "I'll make you respect these delicate fingers of mine…I'll make you quiver" (403). This masqueraded homoerotic scene, piled with phallic images of fingers and musical instruments, along with overt flirtation, pulls the reader into a form of double-consciousness. The reader is well aware that the

Boy is Angelica, but for this moment, due to the dominating tone she takes, the powerful musical talent she possesses, paired with the intense attraction that the Tenor feels for this Boy, the sexual mechanisms at work toss gender about so that it is essentially unrecognizable.

Grand elaborates on this gender-play by magnifying the Tenor's "deep drawn sigh of satisfaction" after the Boy's climactic performance (403). The Tenor appropriately compares the Boy's genius to that of the creature from yet another Shelley work, "The Witch of Atlas," who was "A sexless thing…, and in its growth/ It seemed to have developed no defect/ Of either sex, yet all the grace of both" (403). Complimenting the Boy's perfection and beauty, the Tenor hopes to appeal to the Boy's "sexless" features. This identification, however, is not quite the recognition Angelica hopes for to remind her of her purpose. She refines the Tenor's definition by stating that "the attributes of both minds, masculine and feminine, perfectly united in one person of either sex" compose a true genius (403). Although the Tenor realizes that his definition does not suit the Boy, he is not deterred in his fascination with the Boy. In fact, it only fuels his willingness to serve the Boy's needs.

Now that the Boy has independently entered the Tenor's home without his knowledge, the Tenor decides to leave his home completely unlocked. Yet the Boy, now that he is welcome to enter the Tenor's "Sphere" at his leisure, relinquishes his desire to force an entrance (409). Although he must no longer force his way in, the Boy still preserves his dominating aura. He delivers an ultimatum to the Tenor: if he will not leave "the window open so that he could come in his own way whenever he chose, he should not come at all" (410). Therefore, the Tenor acquiescently leaves the window open. Grand discusses one occasion when the Boy attempts to enter the house, yet finding the window locked, he leaves and vows "never to return" (410).

After missing the Boy, the Tenor, "for the sake of peace and quietness" (410), leaves the window open and the lights on. The Boy's resolve and the Tenor's passivity not only exemplify the dominant and submissive roles they assume, but they also collaborate with the image of the illuminated, yonic home to invoke heterosexual, male-dominated sex. Even further, the Boy reveals his attraction, not to the Tenor's personality or overall appearance, but to his supple mouth. He labels it a "Rossitti-Burne-Jones-Dante's-Dream-and-Blessed-Damosel4 kind of mouth, with full firm lips. I should think you're the sort of fellow that women would like to kiss" (412). The Boy concurrently loses himself in the Tenor's effeminate mouth, with its Pre-Raphaelite charm, and remembers his female desire to kiss the Tenor. The Tenor has no opportunity to respond to such comments, as the Boy, suddenly aware of his Angelica-esque desire, rushes out through the accustomed window.

As the Boy and the Tenor have hinted at their sexual standards and desires, they become increasingly comfortable in discussing sexuality. Learning that the Boy maneuvers a boat to the close in which the Tenor lives, the Tenor feels obliged to board the boat on several occasions. On the first outing, the topic of personal utopias surfaces in the conversation. The Tenor probingly suggests that the Boy's utopia would be flawed "without an Eve" (423). The Boy disagrees with the Tenor, however, saying that he despises the "impertinent intrusion of *sex* into everything…I'll have no sex in my paradise" (423). Here, the reader must assume that the Boy refers to the physical act of sex in these statements, as he earlier defined genius as being *very*

4The Blessed Damosel reference suggests that the Tenor embodies the persona and desires of the Blessed Damosel herself, including her extreme beauty, her heavenly position, and her obsessive desire to possess her earthly lover. Angelica not only exposes these qualities in the Tenor, but she additionally reveals her desires for him to possess her, as she so clearly possesses him, not so that she may love him, but so that they may inspire earth to foster a respect for and fascination with each sex.

sexed, speaking of gendered attributes. However, his ensuing thoughts contradict his renunciation of the sexual act, as he gazes upon the Tenor in the midst of his oaring.

At this moment, the Tenor "rouse[s] himself, and [gets] out the oars" (424). Rather than using them, however, he only teases the Boy with them, "resting on them with a far-away look in his dreamy eyes" (424). Noticing this, the Boy continues to examine the Tenor's aroused physique: "He [is] bareheaded, and the moon play[s] upon his yellow hair, making it shine; a detail which [does] not escape the Boy, whose pleasure in the Tenor's beauty never tire[s]" (424). At this moonlit moment, the Tenor becomes more dominant in his behavior. He not only actively rouses himself, but he also takes the phallic oars in his hands. Thus, at this moment, he is drenched in the moonlight, a quality that the Boy can relate with, and the Boy finds that the Tenor is irresistible in the liminal moonlight. This moment also creates an aura of sexually-liminal anticipation, as the reader wonders if the Tenor will set the oars into motion, which would physically create spherical motion, thus encompassing the Tenor and the Boy, and allowing them to move about in their illuminated sphere. Finally, the Tenor, who never has an opportunity to speak after such an interlude, breaks the silence with conversation, commenting on the Boy's poetic talents, which he had earlier been displaying by reciting verse.

These private, moonlit rendezvous soon become irresistible to the Boy and the Tenor, as they feel free to discuss and share in ways that they are too confined to do within the Tenor's home (his confined, feminized Sphere). The Tenor shares his bittersweet life story with the Boy on the boat, and they serenade each other as well. In the midst of a flirtatious moment, the Boy falls helplessly into the water, unable to save himself, and the Tenor must take the action to save him. Upon pulling him from the river, the Tenor labors through the dark forest, back to his home,

with the limp body in his arms. When he reaches his home, the Tenor wastes no time, "not even in lighting a lamp, though the room [is] dark" (444-445). Although the Boy is no longer submersed in the water, he is still in the darkness, unable to insist upon illumination. The Tenor holds the Boy with "grief and tenderness," awaiting his return to consciousness (445). However, it is not until a few moments later, when the Tenor lights the fire, that he sees Angelica. In shock, the same shock that Grand discusses later, in which: "We shriek in horror at what we discover when [the light] is turned on that which was hidden away in dark corners," the Tenor finds himself cursing the Boy and then cursing himself for instinctively calling Angelica "the Boy." However, as Grand emphasizes, the Tenor nurses Angelica with brandy and soon realizes "it was only a change of idea really, the Boy was a girl, that was all" (446). Immediately, "the stimulant revive[s] the girl," but Grand leaves it for the reader to judge whether the stimulant was the brandy or simply the interplay between Angelica's and the Tenor's thoughts, which would have revealed to her his acceptance of her exposed gender (447).

After realizing her disguise is missing, Angelica offers her insightful, unforgettable verbalized motivations behind her "masquerade." As Irigaray defines the "wonder" that should exist between male and female, Angelica asserts that the only way in which to unearth such wonder is to examine the wonder that exists between those of the same sex. She, being a woman, has already experienced a female to female wonder between herself and Edith, Ideala, Evadne, and so many other women of her time, although she never felt a lateral connection to these women. Indeed, she always ended up feeling pity for them. She has even been fortunate enough to have lived a life of heterosexual wonder between herself and her twin brother, but she realizes that this wonder is innate and widely extinct throughout the rest of society. Not only has

she never seen another *wonder-full* male/female relationship, but she has never seen a genuine, self-sacrificing relationship of wonder between two males. The Tenor, although completely unaware, uniquely fulfilled her exploration in all of these facets, with his ability to emit socially-defined feminine and masculine characteristics, and her ability to embody an elusive, fluid sexuality—a socially hermaphroditic sexuality.

She outlines the conflict between her desires and social expectation, and during these moments, she seems to be speaking for Rossetti's Prince as well as herself. She states, "I found a big groove waiting for me when I grew up, and in that I was expected to live whether it suited me or not. It did not suit me. It was deep and narrow, and gave me no room to move" (450). The Prince and Angelica have no outlet for their desires, except for that which leads them far from the reaches of society, and allows them to learn and hope and live. She goes on to explain her boredom and the apathy of all those around her regarding her boredom, saying:

> Their indifference to my aspirations, and the way they took
> it for granted that I had everything I ought to want, and
> could therefore be happy if I chose, exasperated me. To be
> bored seems a slight thing, but a world of suffering is
> contained in the experience. (453)

This statement speaks to the elite society to which Angelica and the Prince belong, that decrees, if one has material possessions, one should live contentedly no matter what society does to stifle one by stripping one of happiness, sexual fulfillment, or simple choice. Her allusion to suffering thematically ties the reader to her dream, in which she intends to save the suffering sex. One realizes that Angelica does not merely seek to save weak, diseased women, but that Angelica

herself is included in the mass which she strives to pull from their currently hopeless Sphere. Thus, it is no great wonder that the Prince and the Boy are constructions designed to thwart elitist social expectations.

Angelica elaborates on her disgust for elite society by explaining to the Tenor her lack of apprehension regarding social punishment for her actions. She is well aware that "what would be an unpardonable offence if committed by another woman *less highly placed than myself* (my emphasis here) is merely an amusing eccentricity in me, so—for *my* benefit (Grand's emphasis)—conveniently snobbish is society" (454). While tripping society mid-fallacy by exposing its prejudiced favoritism, she also exploits society for her own purpose, as any privileged individual is allowed to do. Grand relies upon the conception of the social upper/lower class binary to reveal her character's stimulus. She exposes it, however, only briefly, and with the purpose of discouraging it. At any rate, Angelica's manipulation of society's hypocrisy is only an afterthought of her primary desire for social freedom and simultaneous reform.

As I indicated earlier, Angelica is overcome by her desire to "see the market-place by moonlight" (456). She explains to the awestruck Tenor that once she assumed her character, her actions "came naturally; and the freedom from restraint, I mean the restraint of our tight uncomfortable clothing, was delicious. I tell you I was a genuine boy" (456). She explains that she embodied Diavolo, thus mirroring his actions. However, while she may have been a "genuine boy," she kept all of the uninhibited, spontaneous, strong-willed qualities that made her undoubtedly Angelica. It is my postulation that if the Tenor were to have met Angelica at service during his affair with the Boy, he would have known immediately that they were one and the same…unless, that is, Angelica were to have truly masked herself by altering her stimulating

personality.

Although she captivates the Tenor with her story, he burns with one question for her that he may no longer hold at bay. He asks if she loves him, and with a stammering response, she tells him no, and that she has "enjoyed the benefit of free intercourse with [his] masculine mind undiluted by [his] masculine prejudices and proclivities with regard to [her] sex" (458). Saddening the Tenor, she honestly informs him that she loves that which he represents and that only. However, Angelica falters in her judgment of the Tenor, and the text reveals this explicitly. She assumes, "Had you known that I was a woman—even you—the pleasure of your companionship would have been spoilt for me, so unwholesomely is the imagination of a man affected by ideas of sex" (458). What Angelica does not realize is that the Tenor has had ideas of sex, with the body of Angelica and both the body and spirit of the Boy, all along. As patient as the Tenor has been with her ruse, he reaches his breaking point when she admits that she is married. He becomes angry, distant, empty in tone, and utterly disheartened. Nonetheless, he dejectedly forgives her, and helps her braid her hair for her return home, a final action that desperately clings to the hope of wonder and compassion between the sexes.

As he prepares to escort Angelica home, the Tenor forebodingly notices, "The light is not certain," unaware of just how accurate his statement is (462). Neither he nor Angelica can know at this point if her cross-dressing experiment will afford society any positive alteration of assumptions regarding gender. His final words to Angelica are meant to reassure her, as he says, "You will do some good in the world—you will be a good woman yet, I know—I know you will" (462). Again, the Tenor is completely unaware of the good she has already done, as a woman who has dared to assess the damage of the world without the Sphere.

Just as the Prince loses the Princess to death, so too does Angelica lose the Tenor to death. Although one could never compare the death of the Princess, to whom the Prince had no passionate ties, to the death of the Tenor, to whom Angelica did, one can compare the conclusion of their sexually liminal journeys. Since the Prince never knew the lady to whom he was betrothed, he does not mourn for her the way that Angelica mourns for the Tenor. On a visit to his grave, Angelica becomes so lost in thought that she wanders off onto an iron bridge, and she does not hear her Aunt Fulda approaching. Lady Fulda alarms Angelica and the reader in more than one way when she exclaims, "Angelica! How can you stand so near the edge in this *uncertain light*? I really thought you would lose your balance and fall in" (my emphasis 519). Here, Angelica mournfully relinquishes her desire for action. She "just want[s] to drift," at least for the time being (524). The conclusion, not of the lives of loved ones, but of the ability to sustain a lucid state of sexual liminality produces a crestfallen, forlorn, and indifferent haze over the personalities of the Prince and Angelica. Lady Fulda is correct in thinking that Angelica may have lost her balance, as Angelica *did* lose her balance. She lost it the moment that the uncertain light flooded in upon her relationship with the Tenor, pulling them apart, and extracting the wonder between them.

Interpreting the History of Sexual Limality: From the Seventeenth Century to the Nineteenth Century

While Angelica's "masquerading" days have concluded, she leaves the reader analyzing the nature of her endeavors. Was Angelica's masquerade a step in the right direction to influencing a world of sexual liminality? Was her masquerade so very different from the way we live today? Was what we have defined as a masquerade truly a masquerade? How do her

actions influence the way we think about sexuality? For starters, what has been termed as Angelica's masquerade is simply a full image of her sexual liminality within an altered milieu. Her affectations did not change; only her environment changed, along with her understanding of the social constitution of masculine and feminine desires. As Grand clearly intended, Angelica's thoughts and expressions encircling her exploration of the sphere outside of the Woman's Sphere adhere to our minds, and manifest themselves in our daily lives. For instance, the moments in which Angelica fully expresses her motivations to the Tenor, during the climactic revelation of her gender, glow within the reader's mind, illuminating a referent *already there*. As Angelica reveals masculine flaws, she states, "The fault is in your training; you are all of you educated deliberately to think of women chiefly as the opposite sex" (458). Angelica outwardly embodies her feminine, masculine, and genuinely human desires for social equality by presenting herself as a man, which provides the reader with feelings of awe and amusement, but most importantly, her character exposes the nineteenth century's socio-sexual boundary lines. Are those boundary lines different from those in the seventeenth century, when Donne wrote his metaphysical moon poems to his wife, depicting images of the sphere? Are they different from this twenty-first century, when new authors explore sexuality? One philosopher/historian delves into the history of sexual desires, prohibitions, and expressions, elucidating the past to further elucidate the future. Michel Foucault traces the historical passages of sexual identification, beginning primarily with the seventeenth century's naming of sex itself, and the Catholic pastoral and sacrament of penance, complete with confession manuals. He states, the "theme for transforming sex into discourse had been devised long before in an ascetic and monastic setting. The seventeenth century made it into a rule for everyone" (20). Therefore, he hypothesizes, "The

forbidding of certain words, the decency of expressions, all the censorings of vocabulary, might well have been only secondary devices compared to that great subjugation: ways of rendering it morally acceptable and technically useful" (21). Here, Foucault examines the very limits of discourse, even in the most explicit, scientifically useful sense. The notion of creating or encouraging a discourse—since discourse, as we know it, does not cover our theoretical parameters—that limits the liberty of sexuality, reverts to the essence of Angelica's feelings in her dream, when she knew that the light encompassing her and her lover was luminous enough to encompass all people in wonder, yet there was "no word of human speech to express" the possibility (293). The reader will also notice that she did not search for the means to create a discourse for such a union, but she focused on ways to execute the union itself, even if it were two people at a time.

While the seventeenth century implemented space in which to utilize and encase a sexual discourse, the eighteenth century sought to regulate population and social order. As Foucault states, "Sex was not something one simply judged; it was a thing one administered" (24). But how can one *administer* something as personal as sex?—by "regulating sex through useful and public discourses" (25). Once society saw population rates as an economic determinant, it began to analyze population variables: "birthrate, age of marriage, the legitimate and illegitimate births, the precocity and frequency of sexual relations, the ways of making them fertile or sterile, the effects of unmarried life or of the prohibitions, the impact of contraceptive practices" (25-26). Countries did not simply want a quantitative power, but a qualitative force of moral, decent families to represent them. All of these regulatory measures, according to Foucault, created a domino effect of restriction of public sexuality, until secondary schools took all possible

measures to keep discourses of sex out of their walls. This is not to say that sex in any discourse was prohibited; no, in some cases children learned of the science of sex, but of that alone. Above all else, the sexualities of children were sufficiently stifled in the eighteenth century. In this way, children learn, not that sex is a taboo subject, but that power relations are at play between them and adults.

With its regulatory procedures for sexual discourse, along with its implementation of pedagogical standards regarding sexuality, the eighteenth century provided a solid stepping stone into the nineteenth century. As a branch of economic power relations, the medical profession gains immense prosperity during this century, diagnosing the notion of sex itself as a disorder of some sort. While news of "nervous disorders" surfaced, so did the theory of psychological "excess" and so on (30). The concept of sexual crimes was formed, thus greatly strengthening the impulse to discuss sex, no matter how quietly and ashamedly it was discussed. As Foucault questions why we "show, ostentatiously, that sex is something we hide, to say it is something we silence," Rossetti and Grand busy themselves in showing characters who refuse to accept society's claim of silence (9). For this reason, and many others, the Prince and Angelica stand apart from other textual characters, such as Jane Eyre, who experience a minute interval of sexual liminality, and quietly resume compliant lifestyles within the realm of social normalcy.

Although Rossetti and Grand do not allow the Prince and Angelica to live out their lives in harmonious sexual liminality, they do devote the majority of their texts to the progression of their illuminations and concurrent actions, thus imparting the significance of the concept to the reader. Nonetheless, the reader wonders why these authors do not inspire readers with neatly-packaged conclusions of social bliss, a world in which all people accept the androgynes within

themselves and others. My interpretation is that Rossetti and Grand seek to vivify an unrelenting desire within readers to advance in the direction of sexual liminality (or at least the concepts behind that which I have termed sexual liminality) by pulling their characters away from their lives of intellectual and physical satisfaction and forcing them back into the muck we know as society.

Sexual Liminality Today

Ann Heilmann contrasts Angelica's life with her brother Diavolo's by writing, "His life opens up, hers contracts to the constricted space of a conventionally corseted evening dress" (159); therefore, Angelica's true masquerade appears as that of a woman bound by corsets and well-trained men. Judith Butler perhaps speaks most vividly about the feminine masquerade as she states:

> Femininity becomes a mask that dominates/resolves a masculine identification, for a masculine identification would, within the presumed heterosexual matrix of desire, produce a desire for a female object, the Phallus; hence, the donning of femininity as mask may reveal a refusal of a female homosexuality and, at the same time, the hyperbolic incorporation of that female Other who is refused—an odd form of preserving and protecting that love within the circle of the melancholic and negative narcissism that results from the psychic inculcation of compulsory heterosexuality. (53)

In other words, the female who dons her mask of exaggerated femininity not only disavows any link to homosexuality, but she simultaneously unites herself with her disavowed lesbian via

compulsory heterosexuality. One's masquerade, therefore, will always turn upon itself to reveal truth inside one's sexuality. Here, Butler paints an interesting spherical unification of masculine and feminine, as well as a lucid premise behind masquerade itself. While Angelica does not blatantly refuse heterosexuality or homosexuality of any sex, she does masquerade herself as both female and male, living in a constant state of sexual liminality and sexual investigation. Thus, Angelica's first mask, her socially-recognized feminine mask, creates such an inner (and as the reader sees, even an outer) turmoil that can only be resolved by exploring the socially-recognized masculine realm of mannerisms, expressions, and desires.

In 2004, journalist Norah Vincent applied glue and dyed-black lamb's wool to her face, concealed her breasts within a sports bra, and spent eighteen months "masquerading" as a man. She joined a bowling league, went to strip clubs, and occasionally entertained women. As a lesbian, Vincent felt somewhat prepared to identify with other men as Ned (her pseudonym). However, she initially felt compelled to forfeit her experiment due to the difficulty of achieving the masculine persona. As the book progresses, Vincent finds herself conducting more of a self-exploration as opposed to her intended male exploration. Shortly after joining her bowling league, Vincent feels herself

> saying and doing he same things that young men do as teens when they're trying to sort out their place in the ranks. Like them, I was trying to fit in, be inconspicuous, keep from being found out. And so I imitated the modeled behaviors that said 'Accept me. I'm okay. I'm one of the guys. (Vincent 39)

Grand painted this transition as being a little easier for Angelica, who had a prime referent for "masculine" mannerisms: her brother, whom she observed her whole life. One commonality, among others, between Angelica and Vincent, is their social outlook on male personalities. In her book, Vincent states, "Making friends with them as a man let me into their world as a free agent and taught me to see and appreciate the beauty of male friendships from the inside out" (46). This statement undeniably echoes Angelica's statement to the Tenor after her sex was unveiled: the statement expressing that she enjoyed the benefit of free intercourse with his masculine mind undiluted by his masculine prejudices and proclivities with regard to her sex (Grand 458). In this way, Vincent's sentiments about becoming a "man" reflect Grand's motivations for presenting a cross-dressed female to her readers.

Although Vincent and Angelica's character compare in this way, their experience and their social outlook post-cross-dressing drastically diverge. Vincent experiences her masculinity in a primarily public setting, which allows for male-to-male conversations on various subjects. She hears the experiences of several different men on her bowling league, and, in turn, she constantly finds herself marveling at the camaraderie and decency that abounds within their environment. She describes one instance in detail, in which one man was bowling extremely well and all the other men yielded mid-game to watch and cheer him: "It was a beautiful moment, totally still and reverent, a bunch of guys paying their respects to the superior athleticism of another guy" (47). Her response to the cheering is as follows: "It was almost mystical, that telepathic intimacy and the communal joy that succeeded it, crystalline in its perfection…we couldn't express it in words, but we knew what we'd just shared" (47). This metaphysical realization of the male wonder within the bowling alley floods over Vincent. And, notably, in this

moment of wonder among human beings, just as Angelica and the Prince encounter in their sexually liminal quests, no discourse exists to express the occurrence.

As vital as this moment is to the validity of sexual liminality, another fundamental difference between Angelica and Vincent lies in Vincent's enthusiastic analysis of her experiment, as opposed to Angelica's bittersweet breakdown. In a recent interview, Vincent reflects upon her learning experience as a man:

> Living as a man taught me a lot about the things that I enjoy most about being a woman in the world, things I consider to be the privileges of womanhood—the emotional freedom, the range of expression, the sexual and social power we can exercise over men. Returning to my life as a woman was about reclaiming those privileges and taking greater satisfaction in them…I don't miss anything about being Ned. The social advantages I discovered in manhood—the swagger, the self-confidence, the entitlement—I've learned to incorporate into my life as a woman. Everything else I was happy to discard. (n.pag.)

Not only has Vincent gained a confidence in her own amalgam of femininity and masculinity, but she has also eagerly returned to her female "privileges," or at least her interpretation of privileges among females, with a stronger appreciation for them than she had before. Her attitude in this evaluation of her emotional progress is striking, as she openly relishes in mirroring her masculine nuances within her femininity, simply because she can claim them as *her* nuances. Her swagger, her self-confidence, and her entitlement, though society gleaned them as a man's, were

essentially hers. Despite the fact that what brought these mannerisms to the surface of her actions was her cross-dressing, she still produced them herself. Every mannerism that she adopted in order to appear masculine in a vein to suit society, which did not suit her sexuality, she tossed. Just as Angelica told the Tenor that she was "a genuine boy" (456), so too did Vincent find the genuine boy within herself.

As a result of her claim to hold a "power over men," the reader may interpret her sexual analysis as a reinforcement of the male/female binary. However, it is nonetheless a reflection of her satisfaction with her sexuality, and particularly of the feminine qualities within it, which drastically contrasts with the attitudes of most nineteenth century writers, including Rossetti and Grand. While they expose the fallacies within society, along with the desire for a relationship of respect and wonder among all sexes, Rossetti and Grand also focus upon the work involved within sexual liminality, and the immanence of illumination's transience. Perhaps they speak more realistically about the likelihood of society bending to accommodate and appreciate sexually-unique beings (both in the physical and social sense), but Vincent's twenty-first century study does something that these nineteenth-century writers do not—it unmasks the author's own sexual prejudices. After revealing her sexuality to her bowling buddies, Vincent writes, in surprise:

> My supposedly subversive lifestyle didn't matter to them, or at least it didn't appear to, and this was the part I hadn't expected at all, or given them credit for in the beginning. I'd pegged them unfairly as potential thugs, and now they were showing me up as the judgmental one. (58)

Although Vincent's hypothesis that these men would reject her proves faulty, it nonetheless allows her to possess her own humility. She also, however, sees a change in the men's actions, as they continue their bowling nights until the season ends. They confide in her, almost seeking her approval and advice about their lives, telling her, in not so many words, that they appreciate what she has reflexively shown them about themselves. Telling Vincent about incidents at their homes and workplaces, the men reveal their respect for various sexual orientations and lifestyles, and Vincent notes:

> They made me feel welcome in their midst, and so doing, they made me feel like a bit of a shithead, like an arrogant prick know-it-all. In a sense, they made me the subject of my own report. They bowled with irony after all. They made me look ridiculous to myself and they made me laugh about it. And for that I will always be grateful to them, because anybody who does that for you is a true and great friend. (61)

Vincent, unlike Grand and Rossetti, identifies the fault of the experiment, the misconception in searching for misconception. This paradox, however, does not mark the journey of sexual liminality a hopeless one; in fact, it only reinforces its necessity. The true exploration of oneself and others will not only lead to an illumination of desires, a yearning for the spherical relationship among all sexes, and a journey in which to activate such relationships, but it will also reveal the vigor behind one's journey. The progression, if one must call it a progression, from the seventeenth century to the twenty-first century reveals authors such as these, all unique in their desires, all unique in their portrayals of sexuality, but all strikingly common in their

motivations and sexually liminal journeys.

> *Go out of the house to see the moon, and 't is mere tinsel; it will not please as when its light shines upon your necessary journey.*
>
> –*Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nature, 341.*

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