

The Pursuit of the Ideal and the Reality of the Art-Object: Intertextuality, Antilogike, and Self-awareness in the Works of D. G. Rossetti.

İdeal Arayışı ve Sanat-Nesnesinin Gerçekliği; D. G. Rossetti'nin Eserlerinde Metinlerarasılık, Antilogike, ve Öz Farkındalık.

Anna ASIATIDOU*

Abstract

D.G. Rossetti's works reveal how the poet, as an aestheticist through his pursuit of the ideal, frees the concept of reality from pre-given limitations. He mainly creates an open field of renegotiation, even introducing an alternative understanding of real and authentic. In his famous poems "The Blessed Damozel" and "The Burden of Nineveh," Rossetti applies intertextuality and signifies the potential of dialectic poetry. His focus on aesthetic qualities and the subversion of the subject matter assures interpretative ambiguity. This kind of ambiguity rather than confusion achieves poetic self-awareness and omens future perceptions of reality, which can be composed by an object, as an artistic process, or the artistic object itself. This article recognizes the links of ancient (Platonic) philosophy on Aesthetics and Reality with contemporary opinions in Philosophical Realism. However, it mainly focuses on two distinctive works of the Victorian poet as a contemplating station of how an artistic object, freed from any responsibility except its consistency on its aesthetic qualities, can signify dialectic (higher state of cognition) processes affording reality.

Keywords: D.G. Rossetti, Reality, Intertextuality, Antilogike, Object

Öz

D. G. Rossetti'nin eserleri ideal arayışında bir estetsiyen olarak şairin, gerçeklik kavramını önceden belirlenmiş sınırlamalarından nasıl özgür bıraktığını ortaya koymaktadır. Çoğunlukla tekrar müzakere için açık bir alan oluşturmaktadır. Ünlü şiirleri "The Blessed Damozel" ve "The Burden of Nineveh,"da Rossetti, metinlerarasılığı uygular ve diyalektik şiirin potansiyelini gösterir. Estetiğin kalitesine odaklanması ve ana fikrin yıkılması, yorumlayıcı belirsizliği temin eder. Bu şekilde bir belirsizlik, karışıklıktan daha ziyade şiirsel öz farkındalığı sağlar. Ayrıca sanatsal bir süreç veya sanatsal nesnenin kendisi olarak bir nesneden oluşabilen gerçekliğin gelecekteki algılarını işaret eder. Bu çalışma, antik (platonik) felsefenin estetik ve gerçeklik ile felsefi gerçekçilikte çağdaş düşüncelere olan ilişkilerini ortaya koymaktadır. Asıl olarak, Viktorya dönemi şairin ayırt edici iki eserine, sanatsal bir nesnenin nasıl çalıştığına dair bir durak olarak odaklanmaktadır. Aynı zamanda, estetiğin kalitesi üzerindeki tutarlılığından ziyade herhangi bir sorumluluktan bağımsızlaşır, gerçekliği sağlayan diyalektik, yüksek biliş durumu, süreçleri gösterebilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: D. G. Rossetti, Gerçeklik, Metinlerarasılık, Antilogike, Nesne

Introduction

Familiarization with the Platonic Philosophy on beauty and the divine leads inevitably to exploring the nature of reality. Based on famous Platonic works as *Republic*, *Symposium*, and *Phaedrus*, reality is synonymous with the ideal, beautiful, and divine. Reality can be approached through the dialectic processes (*Republic*, Plato, VII. 533c-e) of antilogike (Plato, *Phaedrus*, 261a7) and self-knowledge (Plato, *Phaedrus*, 229 e, *Republic*, VII. 518b-c, *Symposium*, 35). Although self-knowledge is a self-explanatory term, antilogike is explained in "Socrates Psychagogos" as "the art of giving contradictory arguments" (Moore, 2012, p. 15). Comprehensively it can find its definition on the understanding/acceptance of conflicting ideas on the same matter as equally real. In literature, during the Victorian period mainly, because of the massive impact of the Aesthetic Movement, the pursuit of beauty leads to poetic experimentations, which enlightened new perceptions of reality. Significantly, many of D.G. Rossetti's works reveal how the poet, as an aestheticist through his pursuit of the ideal, frees the concept of reality from pre-given limitations. He mainly creates an open field of renegotiation, even introducing an alternative understanding of real and authentic.

* Öğr. Gör., Hasan Kalyoncu Üniversitesi, Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu, asiatidouanna@gmail.com

In his famous poems "The Blessed Damozel" and "The Burden of Nineveh," Rossetti applies intertextuality and signifies the potential of dialectic poetry. His focus on aesthetic qualities and the subversion of the subject matter assures interpretative ambiguity. This kind of ambiguity rather than confusion achieves poetic self-awareness and omens future perceptions of reality, which can be composed by an object, as an artistic process, or the artistic object itself. From the standpoint of twenty-first-century research, we are already familiar with the latest philosophical orientation on Speculative Realism, Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO)¹, which values and equalizes the reality of an object with a human being (Harman, 2018, p. 9). Based on OOO, anything can be perceived as an object that means a human or non-human, a materialized thing, a myth, or a natural phenomenon (p. 12). This article recognizes the links of ancient (Platonic) philosophy on Aesthetics and Reality with contemporary opinions in Philosophical Realism. However, it mainly focuses on two distinctive works of the Victorian poet as a contemplating station of how an artistic object, freed from any responsibility except its consistency on its aesthetic qualities, can signify dialectic (higher state of cognition) processes affording reality.

The Relation between Intertextuality, Ideology, Artistic Self-Awareness and Reality

A simplified schema on how intertextuality leads to a new understanding of reality summarizes an initial recognition of a poet's level and self-reflection. It follows a potential subversion of the subject matter mainly because of a reoriented focus on aesthetic criteria than ideological ones. The flexible, self-critical, and autonomous quality of the aesthetic inevitably leads to ambiguity. Finally, the acceptance and contemplation of an ambiguous state achieve poetic self-awareness and revelation/discovery of alternative aspects of reality. Rossetti's incorporation of intertextuality accompanies a degree of ambiguity and difficulty in understanding. However, it is also understandable that intertextuality doesn't apply in matters of interpretation without a significant degree of the poet's self-reflection. Claus Uhlig in "Literature as Textual Palingenesis" exposes the relation between intertextuality and self-reflection by claiming that since Romanticism, "the aging of poetic forms and genres constantly increases their self-consciousness as knowledge of their own historicity. Through this progressive self-reflection, whose sphere is intertextuality, literature is, in the end, transformed into meta literature, mere references to its own history" (1985, p. 503).

Primarily, it is essential to observe a lurking difference between self-reflection and self-awareness. Self-reflection is a relatively simple look at the constituted elements of the poet's choice and the poem's matter. Self-reflection is the first stage of self-awareness, which is a deeper state of understanding that the poet and the poem achieve during the forming and the scholastic contemplation on the final form of the artistic object. Uhlig's ideas aspire to a double-layer self-reflection, which results in self-awareness when a poet applies intertextuality. Initially, he refers to a "self-consciousness of the poetic forms and genres," which mainly recognizes the effect of applied intertextuality as the shaping of a self-aware product, in this case, a poetic form or genre. Additionally, he notifies poets' ideological aspect to mingle their new creations with references and allusions from past works. Although it reveals the poet's self-reflection consisted partly of ideological motives, it is still a mixing process into something new. In this way, intertextuality increases the possibility of a transformation (of the artist and the artistic work), which will be less ideological and more artistic, thus self-aware. On the second layer of understanding, the works permeated by intertextuality are "literature in the end transformed into meta literature," and they afford "knowledge of their own historicity." In other words, although in a degree self-reflective, the artistic object is perceived as autonomous and self-conscious since it can be transformed and

¹ In the text, the abbreviated form of will be used for Object-Oriented Ontology.

valued by itself. Despite that the term historicity was probably selected by Uhlig to signify ideology, it still maintains the art object as a type of independence from its creator and their (un)conscious motives. Moreover, by using "its own history," it expands the perceptive field of history, beyond the stereotypical perception as a history of ideologies, to a history of pure aesthetic choices and qualities. Contemplating this double layer self-reflection, which results in self-awareness of the artist and the artistic object, we realize a similar aspiration of new aspects of reality.

The relation of intertextuality with ideology and history that Uhlig locates in literary works created concerning past works is specified and expanded by Antony Harrison in his "Dante Rossetti: Parody and Ideology" through the example of Pre-Raphaelite poets. According to Harrison, Pre-Raphaelites, as a "self-appointed" continuation of the Romantics, demonstrated in their works "an extraordinary degree of historical consciousness" (1989, p. 746). However, focused on Rossetti's poetry, Harrison notifies that "many of his poems are deliberate intertexts, works which manipulate palimpsests parodically in order both to resist the social actuality which obsessed his contemporaries and to open up new "tracks" for future writers" (p. 746). Harrison mainly underlines that intertextuality, used mainly by Rossetti, takes an alternative, if not opposed, stand towards any past ideological formation and reproduction. For Rossetti, intertextuality is an autonomous ideology, a gateway from what Terry Eagleton in his "The Ideology of the Aesthetic" names "modes of feeling, valuing, perceiving and believing which have some relation to maintenance and reproduction of social power" (1990, p.15).

Rossetti's poems "The Blessed Damozel" and "The Burden of Nineveh" are prolific examples of his poetic vision. In these poems, Rossetti, by applying intertextuality, serves his interest in the ideal and the truth through achieving both artistic self-awareness and textual aesthetics. In both poems, there are allusions to past literary works that obstruct the text's interpretative flow. Because of these allusions, the subject matter is degraded compared to the poet's emphasized self-consciousness and the overpowering aesthetic qualities of the text. The analysis of the two poems explains how the production of an aesthetic creation with a similar interest in the poet's self-definition and openness to any reality embraces a sense of uncertainty inevitably. This state of uncertainty towards any fixed and limited perception of reality stimulates the individual images to further explore reality as beautiful/ideal. In Rossetti's poems, uncertainty acts more as an element of a dialectic process than a trace of the poet's disorientation. The disorienting and ideologically unfixed subject matter and the destabilized interest from the subject matter to the aesthetic issues are a repeated pattern applied by a self-aware poet in both poems.

"The Blessed Damozel" is a poetic reflection of the poet's dialectic effort to approach the beauty/ideal through intertextuality, self-reflection, and the coexistence of multiple perspectives. In this poem, eroticism/physicality and spirituality are mixed artistically through an intricate net of images, symbolism, and allusions to other texts, resulting in the poem's self-reflection and self-evaluation (devaluation). From the reader's first contact with the poem's title, the reader experiences an epiphany of mystery based on an unconscious effect of sensuality blended with spirituality. Initially, the word "Damozel," as Greenblatt notifies, is a "poetic version of "damsel," [which signifies] a young unmarried lady" (2012, p. 1472). This archaic version of the word "maiden" appears to be revived in Romantic poetry and Victorian poetry to dress the poetic diction and tone with the mystery of medievalism. Coleridge's reference to "a damsel with a dulcimer / In a vision once I saw" in his poem "Kubla Khan" and Abrams' reference to the medieval world as a source for inspiration for the Pre-Raphaelites (2000, p. 1573) support a common Romantic and Victorian poetic tendency to "medievalism." The reference to the word "damsel" in the romantic poem of Coleridge is a

sign of Rossetti's use of intertextuality. He also admits that his poem is related to the poem "The Raven" of the Romantic American poet Edgar Allan Poe. Rossetti claims, "I saw that Poe had done the utmost it was possible to do with the grief of the lover on earth, and so I determined to reverse the conditions, and give utterance to the yearning of the loved one in heaven" (Rossetti qt in Abrams, p. 1574). Apart from an allusion to the medieval atmosphere and other works, the word "Damozel" defines the inoperative sexuality of a young woman. The utterance of a word which means a young unmarried woman creates unconscious associations about her physicality and playing with the notions of purity and desire creates an atmosphere of sensuality. The adjective "Blessed" that accompanies the "Damozel"-as a condition connected with God and refers to divine qualities and grace-aspires to a sense of spirituality.

Rossetti's continuous blending of sensuality and spirituality appears in "The Blessed Damozel" as a convention, which is enforced by the effect of Rossetti's individualized reference to other texts, and it enforces the effect of the poem's aestheticism under the tone of a parodied subject matter. Initially, the poem's subject matter is the yearning of a deceased young woman in heaven to reunite with her earthly bounded lover. Interpretatively, the poem consists of three parts. The first part, from stanza one to twelve, concerns detailed descriptions of the young woman. From the thirteenth stanza to twenty-two, the young woman's vision of her heavenly reunion with her lover occurs. The third part includes the last two stanzas of the poem in which the young woman realizes the impossibility of her desire's fulfillment since her lover is still alive. The poem appears to move on a repeated inspiration, consummation, and remission (back to reality/present condition). In this sense, "The Blessed Damozel" reflects how the poet perceives the process of his artistic creation and how he perceives his artistic creation to reality, under the condition of a stereotypical concept of time.

The poem describes the damozel's external appearance in the first and second stanzas. It introduces the reader to aesthetically elaborated images of intense sensuality by blending religious symbols with textual allusions. The young girl—the new bride of God, leaning from His Kingdom—wears a modest white robe adorned only with Virgin Mary's white rose—a symbol both of purity and death—and holds three lilies. The reference to the three lilies is a connotation not only of physical but of spiritual purity too. According to the Christian belief, three are God's number symbolizing the triple divine hypostasis of Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit; lilies are flowers traditionally connected to the Virgin Mary. According to the Christian belief during the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary, the moment of Jesus's conception is when the angel offers Her to smell the lily (Gospel of Luke 1, 26). In the first two stanzas, the image of the damozel echoes Keats's address of "Thou still unravished bride of quietness" from the "Ode on a Grecian Urn." Rossetti seems to borrow the aesthetic effect of Keats's bride. However, in matters of interpretation, Rossetti's bride under her spiritualization as a religious figure of modesty and simplicity is different. Especially compared to Keats's pagan bride of exaggerated floral ornamenting. Preservation of the aesthetic effect and differentiation on the interpretation can be noticed similarly in Rossetti's "gold bar of heaven," which echoes Coleridge's description of the ghost ship appearing under the light of the sun in his poem "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." Coleridge's poem incorporates the sunlight in the earthly world in contrast with Rossetti's gold bar, which refers to the heavenly Kingdom of God as a bright space distant from the earthly world.

In stanzas one to twelve, there is a continuous blending of spirituality with sensuality through the damozel's physical description based on religious and cosmological symbols and the speaker's self-reflective perception of his beloved. Throughout these stanzas, the speaker aspires to sensuality based on the damozel's hair, which, apart from a symbol of beauty and

sexuality, is used as an aesthetic form of spiritual beauty. Specifically, in line 6, "And the stars in her hair were seven," the speaker notices the damozel's beauty through the use of exaggeration as he gathers on the young girl's hair seven celestial bodies. According to the Christian religion, God created the whole world in seven days; thus, seven is a number that represents spiritual power. Rossetti's philosophical thought that man in his afterlife unites with the other parts of the Cosmic order is reflected in the image of the damozel's hair blending with seven universal elements. In this respect, damozel's beauty is a manifestation of cosmic beauty. The vividly colored, thick, and dense hair in the second stanza symbolizes beauty and sexuality. The speaker's persistence on the damsel's external-detailed description enforces the sense of a young lover who is missing his beloved physically even more than emotionally. In stanza four, the parenthetical thoughts and visions of the lover consist of the damozel's leaning over him and the sensual falling of her hair on his face, creating the atmosphere of an erotic tête-à-tête. The concrete sensual thoughts of the lover come in contrast with the vague terms that the speaker uses in a kind of cosmological description in the following two stanzas. The damozel's placement at "God's house," which is over the "sheer depth" where the "Space begun" and "So high, / She scarce could see the sun," withdraws the reader from the sensual/spiritual impact of the previous stanzas and entices them through the aesthetic impact of a cosmological image. The poet's universal redefinitions appear interpretively disorienting. They are more abstract than the scientific ones and lost into the flood, the ether, the void, and a series of mixed metaphors (Harrison, 1989, p. 750). In the seventh stanza, the "newly met" lovers who surround the damozel and the image of the souls "mounting up to God" are a return to a spiritualized sensual effect. The references to "deathless love's acclaims" and "Their heart-remembered names" in the seventh stanza are reminders of the Platonic philosophy about love as a means to immortality and an equation to ideal/beauty/divine. These references also function as allusions to the Platonic philosophy about the truth/knowledge as a pre-existed condition that man ventures to remember. In stanza eight, the warmth emitted from the damozel's body— "Until her bosom must have made/The bar she leaned on warm"—enforces the sense of an image of sensuality again. The damozel's leaning reveals a state of nostalgia and desire, and the warmth that her deceased body radiates connotes physical contact enriched with implied sexual hints. The reader's interest reorients from spiritual philosophizing about the immortality of the souls and love to the damozel's physical (sexual) condition, which includes her warm bosom.

Such a reorientation reflects the poet's almost ironic style adopted to utter his indifference in supporting any ideology, especially one of a stabilized perception of love/beauty/ divine/ideal. Any of the poet's unconscious endeavors to express his inspiration or ideology poetically are canceled right after their utterance before their contemplation as an authoritative stable perception. The speaker experiences an illusion of the essence of love and its manifestations, mixing his state of being with the damozel's. Additionally, he unconsciously makes the damozel the object of his longing and a projection of himself. In stanza nine, the lines "From the fixed place of heaven she saw/Time like a pulse shake fierce/Through all the worlds" create a sense that the ideal condition of heaven through the measure of time is distant. Under this condition, heaven contrasts the reality of earthly life perceived through a chronological understanding. The lines "And now she spoke as when / the stars sang in their spheres" from the ninth stanza, as well as the lines "She spoke through the still weather /Her voice was like the voice the stars / Had when they sang together" in the tenth stanza, incorporate scientific allusions. According to the Pythagoreans, as the stars move, they produce a musical harmony. The music produced by the stars cannot be heard by human beings on earth because "it is a constant background sound in our ears from birth" (Ferber, 1999, p. 131). In Rossetti's poem, such a fact strengthens the distance that divides the damozel in heaven from her lover on earth and poetically attributes to a sense of silence.

According to Spector, not only the lover's distance between heaven and earth but also the conditions of the lovers' state of unity in heaven are "a compressed and enclosing space, a timeless moment (often designated "Love's Hour"), darkness, stillness, and silence" (1971, p. 444). The eleventh stanza consists of lines that emulate the aesthetic effect of Keats' famous poems. The earthly lover hears his beloved's voice through the song of a bird, echoing the happy song of Keats' nightingale in his homonymous poem "Ode to a Nightingale." In Keats' poem, the speaker is incapable of understanding the source of cheerfulness in the nightingale's song; similarly, in Rossetti's poem, the damozel's soul can't reach her earthbound lover. The twelfth stanza appears as an interim part that connects the speaker's thought and vision of the damozel with the damozel's vision of her heavenly union with her beloved. Through the use of religious words (heaven, Lord, prayer), the pursued union is reversed, turning from the damozel's effort to reach her beloved on earth into a union of the two loving souls in heaven.

The second "unofficial" part of the poem elevates the lover's union to a spiritualized union of man with the divine/God. The narrative plot of the lover's heavenly reunion bases on religious symbols and allusions to other texts. The damozel envisions her union with her now-deceased lover and likens their heavenly reunited experience "To the deep wells of light" as they rebaptism their love to a "bathe there in God's sight." The damozel envisions her lover dead because this is the only way for them to taste love together, standing in front of God's light and laying down the shadow of the "living mystic tree." The tree identifies as the tree of knowledge, which, paired with the Dove (symbol of the Holy Spirit, the third Divine manifestation to humanity), symbolizes the absolute Wisdom and Love the lovers can experience through their merging with God. Interpretively, according to the damozel, the matter of knowledge becomes the lover's pursuing goal after their loving union as she declares that "I myself will teach to him/... And find some knowledge at each pause Or some new thing to know." However, after some stanzas, the damozel's perplexes by her desire for a re-experience of their love on earth. By stating, "Only to live as once on earth / With Love" echoes Keats' instigation of enjoying "ourselves hereafter by having what we call happiness on Earth repeated in a finer tone" (Keats, 1990, p. 365), revealing one more time a subversion of the subject matter in favor of aestheticizing.

Similarly, the "overtly literal" presentation of the heavenly court, which refers to the historical records of the medieval courts of love in France (Harrison, 1989, p. 750), clearly acts as an inspirational source for the spiritualization of the poet's image while it obscures the clarification of the poem's narrative form. In general, intertextuality and symbolism in the second part of the poem strengthen its aesthetic effect. However, the destabilized subject matter and the consumption of texts for aesthetic pleasure limit the text's function as self-affirmative and interpretatively unified. Initially, the poet appears to explore the boundaries of his artistic creation, which means he appears to explore the function of his text in a given context of knowledge through pre-texts / pre-perceptions about reality. Yet, in parallel, he demonstrates uncertainty towards this limited pre-given context both as a referential point of his self-replacement and an interpreting reference to his new artistic creation. Such uncertainty results in spared self-referential images of the ideal/ the divine/the beautiful and subverts any attempt of an uttered, unified, and fixed perception of them.

The third and concluding part of the poem, consisting of the last two stanzas, also creates a sense of withdrawal from the initial desire. Sadly, the damozel realizes that her visualized heavenly union with her lover cannot occur since her lover is still alive on earth. At the end of the twenty-third stanza, her smile is a hint of optimism for a far-off but possibly fulfilled desire. However, the general atmosphere in the penultimate stanza removes the two active lovers from the busy heavenly setting of being surrounding by Angels, the Virgin

Mary, and God. It is more of an esoteric culmination of the damozel's desire, consummation/experience of the ideal, and restoration of the original anxiety. The limitation of her lover within the confines of earth leaves the damozel with limited experience of earthly love, which, as Spector claims, especially regarding earthly love in Rossetti's poetry, provokes the limitation of self in "subjective isolation" (1971, p. 433). The last stanza of the poem is the epitome of interpretative confusion. It identifies the speaker with the earthly lover's voice/thought and the reversed emotional effect of the damozel's desperate crying that contradicts her cheery smile in the previous stanza. The speaker's indecision about the damozel's emotional situation is almost ironic, especially under her isolation in secluded heaven. The reader is finally left with uncertainty whether the damozel desires to experience once again her earthly love or to experience, through the heavenly union with her lover, the ideal condition of love and an afterlife knowledge/experience of the perfect/ beautiful/ divine. In the last stanza, the speaker/lover can see and hear the damozel's lamentation as a sign of acknowledgment of her removal from her illusion and the withdrawal of his imagination. Disorienting but self-conscious, Rossetti's poem ends as dialogical work. The speaker, the lover, and the damozel are distinct narrators who become the poet's artistic alternative perceptions of love and the ideal. They all manifest overall man's desire to escape the normal and the expected and flee beyond limits venturing a connection with God, the ultimate beauty, and the truth. As Spector points out, "Love is not generated by regard for another person, but by the universal desire to heal the wound of existence" (1971, p. 438). The poem demonstrates indecision in terms of its subject matter enforced by its references to other texts and replacing their pre-given knowledge by the poet's artistic perceptions of Heaven, the Angels, God, and the Cosmic order general. The art of previous texts merges with Rossetti's self-referential text and creates a dialogic effect of spiritual and sensual images. The spiritualizing of sensual desires and the sensualizing of religious conceptions puzzles the reader. Also, such a narrative form complicates textual contemplation. According to Harrison, the poet's self-conscious re-adjustments of past works and ideologies obscures the poem's plot to the degree that it appears as self-mocking (1989, p. 751). However, as an artistic creation with a complicated subject matter, the whole poem entices through the effect of its stabilized aestheticism and its sense of an open field where nothing is certain and impossible.

Extreme elements of intertextuality, self-reflection, and ambiguity also exist in Rossetti's well-known poem "The Burden of Nineveh." Following the tradition of poetic inspiration from a visit to a museum of art and antiquities, Rossetti's speaker meditates upon the ancient relics during his visit to the British Museum. The first ten stanzas of the poem focus on the speaker's escape into past historical periods and cultures. Until the end of the poem, the following ten stanzas concern the speaker's contemplation upon a specific piece of art and his realizations about the relationship of history, culture, and art. Poet intends to explore the relationship between history, culture, and art, reflecting his adoption of pre-given ideologies and traditions about the connection of social concepts as history, culture, and art. On the other hand, he opens the field of their renegotiation by approaching and contemplating them from an aesthetic point of view and inevitably towards an alternative aspect of their reality. The speaker's intention to escape through past historical periods reflects the poet's need to distance himself from the contemporary and regenerate and experience the glory of past periods through stable and pure values like an aesthetic object and artwork.

In the first stanza, the speaker has just viewed the "Dead Greece Vouchsafes," viz. the marbles from the Athenian temple of Parthenon, and as he is about to leave, his gaze falls into the newly arrived statue of "A winged beast from Nineveh." In the first line of the stanza, the use of the possessive pronoun "our," referring to the museum, states the speaker's intention to meditate on ideological concepts as that of nation and culture. This impression enforcing by

the use of "Her Art," referring to the art of Greece. Thus, from the initial stanza of the poem, there is a sensible perception of "us" concerning the "others." A perception of Englishness through the English interrelations with other cultures. However, the image of London, as "dirt and din," indicates that the speaker is still in contact with the reality of daily life despite the historical illusion which will follow in the remaining stanzas and merely subverts the perception of Englishness as a superior property against other nations/cultures. The initial reference to different nations/cultures mainly enforces a sense of distance between the speaker's "English" contemporaneity and his meditative illusion of the past of other countries/cultures that follows in the poem. Generally, in the first stanza, the speaker uses references to different cultures/nations (English, Greek, or Assyrian) to approach the real object of his interest, their art. These references evoke a difference in the artifact's meaning concerning its original place and a museum (an institution of another culture). As an inspiring means of new perceptions and an unlimited meditative source of thinking, the speaker's view on art is supported by the lines "Her Art forever in fresh wise/From hour to hour rejoicing me." In the last line of the first stanza, the reference to the origins of the arrived statue "borrows" the sense of grandeur that old and great cities of antiquity like the Mesopotamian city of Nineveh heightens the value of the poem as an erudite and historically conscious creation.

In the second stanza, the speaker starts to uncoil his imaginative thought, encountering the sculpture of Nineveh. The speaker's description of the "winged beast" as a hybrid mythological creature, like Minotaur, is a visualization of art's perception as a carrier of chronologically distant beliefs, philosophies, and ideologies. The statue's naming as "The mummy of a buried faith" and "The very corpse of Nineveh" also supports such a perception. Among the speaker's perceptions of the statue as a historical reference, there are also some aestheticized images of it like "Its wings (which) stood for the light to bathe, --/ Such fossil cerements as might swathe." These lines allude to the image of the lover's heavenly union in "The Blessed Damozel": "To the deep wells of light; / As unto a stream we will step down, / And bathe there in God's light" (lines 76-78). Apart from the common aesthetic effect served in both poems, the attribution of similar images to the Minotaur of Nineveh provides a blending of Christian spiritual terms (i.e., light is God's symbol of truth and knowledge) and archeological terms. This blending enforces a standard view of religious beliefs as parodic parts of the past. However, this kind of mental perception contrasts with the permanence of the art object that allows the speaker to observe and meditate. Although art objects spring from a continuum scheme's belief system, its materialization becomes self-sufficient in any context, beyond/above any ideology/belief.

Paradoxically, the third, fourth, and fifth stanzas support the art form's supremacy and independence from any (un)conscious ideological function by describing the statue's glorious past imagined by the speaker. The statue maintains its isolation and separation from its new place through the etherealized images of its glorious religious function. The bull from Nineveh becomes for the speaker an object of wonder expressed by a series of questions and the statue's characterization as a "strange image." Concerning the effects of the artifact's contextual change, Harrison notifies that in the third stanza of the poem, Rossetti "parodies Keats' appropriating a Romantic text which also concerns itself with the transcontextualization of an artifact from an ancient civilization and the hermeneutical problems that result" (1989, p. 756). He also underlines the poetic technique "of asking questions of the artifact and answering them in a way that only proliferates questions" (p. 756) that Rossetti "borrows" from Keats. Liveliness and plenty of action through rush-wrapping, singing maidens, vows, rites, and prayers guarantee the sculpture's relation with a different world. The references to the good days of the sculpture include the general revival of the city

Nineveh where the "warriors woke," "cymbals clashed," and "the chariots shook." The artifact appears, "O'er which time passed," as part of a distant religion and culture. After the consolidation of the sacred bull's disconnection from the present reality, the speaker's meditation, in the next stanza, appears to work for the general autonomy of the art object. Removed from its origin and relocated in the contemporary "London stones," the sculptured-creature is attributed with a kind of power to speak for itself since, from this point, the speaker addresses his questions directly to it. The Bull-god's impact springs from his durability through time, autonomy from the death of his past culture, and his independence from his context.

In the middle of the poem, the following five stanzas compose a series of aestheticized images that spring from Rossetti's spiritualized historical and textual allusions. Historical facts like the Assyrian King Sardanapalus and the commencement of the French Revolution connect with Religious references to "Lord" (God), his prophet Jonah, and the "prayer." Valuable references of religious and historical texts assimilated by Rossetti to his poem demonstrate a high historical and social consciousness level. The text's historical and social consciousness is detectable by the poet's possible intention to incline from the ideologies that this type of canonical text usually carries. Simultaneously, the blending of historical, social, and religious references serving the matter of the new text results in the perception of the poem as self-referential. Interpretatively, the poem's interrelations of historical and religious references presuppose high levels of intellectuality. Despite the in-depth historical knowledge acquired, the interrelations of the different facts lead to uncertain conclusions about the poem's subject matter. Indicatively, only in the sixth stanza, the speaker leaves the shadow of the "godhead" suspended over three different references. There is a reference to the "fifteen days of flame" described by Archibald Alison in his socio-historical book written in 1842 about the French Revolution. There is also reference to the prophet Jonah's holy mission to protect the city of Nineveh from the wrath of God, based on the Bible. Finally, there is a reference on Sardanapalus, the Assyrian King known for spending his life in self-indulgence and as a decadent figure in Romantic literature and art. The recontextualization and production of a new meaning on prior intellectually challenging references lead to disorientation and uncertain subject matter. However, the allusions to intellectual history and religious knowledge create the speaker's aesthetic vision of the past grandeur of Nineveh and the sculpture's adoration.

The following stanzas repeat the same allusive pattern. The sculpture overshadows the historical figures of the Assyrian king Sennacherib and queen Semiramis succeeding her husband, king Nimrod to the throne of Assyria till the Christianizing of the Ninevites (people of Nineveh). The aestheticism of this cultural retrospection isolates sculpture into the rooms of the British Museum. The speaker's withdrawal from his imaginative vision of the past culture accompanies the sculpture's relocation into the present and its uncertain function as a serving part of an ideological state apparatus like the museum. The perception of the museum as ideological state apparatus is a part of Louis Althusser's theory in his "Ideology and ideological state apparatuses" about the function of social institutions as means of reproduction and preservation of the dominant political ideology (1971, p. 33). Although Althusser's theory belongs to the modern period, much of Rossetti's poetry reveals a link between Victorian aestheticism and the twentieth-century philosophy and literary criticism, especially about the value of a literary dialogic discourse against the ideological state apparatuses' action. Much of the endings in Rossetti's poems, as well as both of the analyzed poems in this paper, appear to be non-authoritative and dialogic and as "Forms of hidden polemic located in dialogue" (Morris, 2003, p. 103) present an alternative discourse towards the dominant ideology of the poet's age.

The sculpture shares the museum's lodgings with exhibits from "Rome, -Babylon and Nineveh," probably under their common perception as decadent cultures. The characterization of the museum as an "unblest abode" is a sign of the sculpture's de-spiritualization. The mix-cultured room of the museum signifies the transformation of the bull-god from a religious, cultural, and historical symbol to an art object free from the obligation to represent a specific cultural and religious meaning. From this point, in stanza ten, the speaker wonders about the statue's meaning in the museum, a culturally mixed place. As an alien element into the museum, the statue lies bare from any ideological interrelations. In this way, the speaker introduces his poetic philosophizing on art's meaning. When the ideologically impregnated objects—"The consecrated metals / And ivory tablets underground, /Winged teraphim and creatures crowned"—are exposed to different conditions (with the passing of time, thoughts and ideas change), they "Fell into dust immediately." In stanza thirteen, the repeated references to Prophet Jonah and God incorporate spirituality to support the aestheticizing of the ancient images of Nineveh. Allusive images such as "The day that Jonah bore abroad / To Nineveh the voice of God," and "all the pomp," which is "beneath" God's look, enforce line's spiritualizing by the presence of a God existing above all. The blending of ancient beliefs, such as paganism, and contemporary beliefs, such as Christianity, supports the perpetual quality of the artifact. It establishes it as independent from the value of the social changes. Stanza fifteen begins with the speaker addressing the statue as a "Delicate harlot," which possibly originates from the poet's historical knowledge about the Nineveties' adoration of Ishtar, the goddess of love, sex even prostitution. Basically, from the eleventh stanza to the fifteenth stanza, the poem's initial pattern of spiritualized and historically conscious images that constitute the aesthetic effect of the poem is repeated.

In the following five stanzas (sixteenth to the twentieth stanza), the speaker interrupts his direct address as soon as he considers that his thought "woke," meditating on the statue's past and present meaning. As soon as he relocates, the main narrator, the speaker, conscious of the contemplating perspectives and the questions that the statue can provoke, returns to reality. His present perception of the statue is of a "forlorn" god and a "dumb soul of Nineveh," viz. an isolated art which, although it has a substance/value (soul), it lacks the power of speech (dumb), and thus, it cannot represent any ideology. The statue, freed from any historical, cultural, and religious associations and obligations, becomes a form of wonder timeless and deculturate, which carries its value beyond its history. As an artifact, the Bull-god can "Bear afar," becoming a part of different cultures. Far from being only a cultural representation, the Bull-god surpasses the boundaries of historical, religious, and social distinctions, standing in "some tribe of the Australian plough" or becoming "a relic now of London, not of Nineveh." As a timeless form, it aspires to the "pride" and the "praise" of lost cultures and beliefs, and as an eternal witness of any time and space (like God), the Bull-god becomes the source of unlimited imagination.

In parallelism of the ancient statue with the poem, both artistic forms appear to be self-referential. The poet employs in the poem intertextuality, which provokes questions, just like the statue when located amid its history. But this employed intertextuality supports the new text's value in terms of meaning and aesthetics, such as the effect from the statue's imaginative relocation to its original culture. The poem recontextualizes specific historical references through their aestheticism in the same way it alters the statue from a symbol of origin to autonomous. The statue's history defines its value for the museum room; however, the statue, as an artistic form exposed to a crowd, inspires multiple imaginative allusions to its culture, creating a new history/text/perception of it. The statue's gaze, flanks, crown, eye-brown, and feet comprise the image/beginning of the speaker's inspired imagination, which leaves all the questions in the past and present unanswered. The poem closes with a

perplexing question, referring to the imaginary allusion of the speaker to the ancient city of Nineveh and results in uncertainty and parody since its form, as a poet's and culture's text and art, respectively, questions and negotiates the authority that bore it. The poet appears to ignore and surpass any of the conditions that created it (other texts, its history) to capture it isolated and approach the inner effect of its beauty. The speaker's possible identification with the artifact is expressed in the parenthetical comment of (I said), in which speaker and artifact equate in the utterance of an inner voice. The poem's most affirmative expression of its subjective perception produces ambiguity (who is talking? the speaker or the artifact?) and disconnection, which focuses on the poem's textual and artistic phenomenology rather than the interpretation of its subject matter. "The Burden of Nineveh," as a text, is an aesthetic synthesis consisted of an interior rhythmical monologue in smooth verse, virtually musical, intertextual. It is an art object recontextualized in the limits of parody, self-parody, and self-reflection. The poet's involvement in a dialectic process results in a new reality, a new artistic self-conscious work, and a self-conscious artist who places aesthetics above any other consideration. Promoting textual inaccessibility, uncertainty, and inconclusiveness, Rossetti demonstrates art's supremacy over any other consideration. Significantly he releases art's perception not as a means of the pursuit of truth but as the truth itself / ideal/ beauty in its dialogic form.

Conclusion

The analysis of Rossetti's nineteenth-century poems is an act of aesthetic contemplation with an understanding of reality's nature and a kind of synopsis of the scientific, mainly literary, and philosophical approaches to naming reality. Both poems that compose this article are samples of the nineteenth-century perceptions of the beautiful, the ideal, and the real. A couple of decades ago, literary critics identified these perceptions as the aesthetic expressions of the poet's inspired moments of an esoteric reality—a division of esoteric and external reality springs from the anxiety that characterizes nineteenth-century poetry. Nineteenth-century poetry looked forward to re-experiencing the reality of a Platonic intellectual perfection under the pressure of the aesthetic movement's perception of the aesthetic as free and intuitive expression. In an expansion of this thought, contemporary literary theories recognized that the polarized perceptions of beauty/truth require a contemplation on the existence of a psychic reality that produces art.

Both in the pursuit of truth through thinking (Platonic perception) and the intuitive free expression (aesthetic movement's perception) emerges the realization that the artist's free inspiration expresses beauty/truth based on his individualized unpredictable combinations to pursue perfection. Although the psychic reality is a twentieth-century terminology in literary theory and history, it is also the answer to the problematizing about art's relation with reality.

The acceptance of a psychic reality mainly involves understanding the artistic, individual expressions of the aesthetic concerning the artist's self-consciousness, contemplation on his art, and his surrounding environment. The perception of reality as a psychic condition explains art/poetry as a psychoanalytic process, which, more than reflecting the artist's inner condition, captures the diversity of his psychic condition through his aesthetic expressions. In other words, the art object demonstrates the shaping of different, even contrasting perceptions of the artistic self towards its art and its environment.

Rossetti's path to artistic self-awareness enriches the poetic forms with multiple allusions, recontextualizations, mixtures of the spiritual with the physical, and expanded interpretations. His poetry enforces a perception of reality beyond the anxiety between pursuing a pure autonomous expression and an intended and finding condition. In the most recent philosophical theorizing on consciousness and reality, there is no need for distinctive

reality labels as internal, external, or psychic. For the twentieth-first century Speculative Realism, the artist is an "I" as much as the poem. Both the artist and the artistic work can be treated as objects and thus are autonomous and equally valued; moreover, both are realities independently of their interrelations.

The exploration of the selected poems in this article depicts the questions that occurred by the correlation of aesthetic with reality, mainly a transformation process from poetic anxiety to awareness. A recent and alternative analysis of both "The Blessed Damozel" and "The Burden of Nineveh" recognizes an aesthetic act in itself equally as a dialectic act that longs for its ideal identification and self-understanding. Mainly, it reveals how an autonomous and dialectic act/art scrolls up to the realization that an artistic object/poem affords reality.

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