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"'REMEMBER JENNY': REPRESENTATION OF *THE* FALLEN WOMAN THROUGH MALE GAZE IN DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI'S 'JENNY'"[1]

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Abstract

Dante Gabriel Rossetti started working on his poem "Jenny" almost a decade earlier than his painting, Found. Although both of his works are about the issue of the fallen woman, "Jenny" particularly stands out as it reflects the poet's conflicting attitude towards the issue of the fallen woman which sympathises and condemns the fallen woman at the same time and unravels the male hypocrisy that was prevalent during the Victorian Age. Caught in the middle between a wish to represent the condition of the fallen woman and fearful of Victorian outcries of censorship, Rossetti reduced Jenny to an object of pure speculation with her silence and inaction. Subjecting Jenny to the speculations of the male gaze and authorial power throughout the poem, Rossetti shows that his poetic persona is not actually that different from the conventional representatives of patriarchy. Hence, the aim of this study is to discuss the problematic stance of Rossetti's poetic persona, who, despite the fact that he continuously emphasises his disinterest in sensual delights and expects praise in return, is yet typically reflective of Victorian patriarchal hypocrisy with his relentless comparisons initially between himself and Jenny and then his cousin Nell and Jenny.

Keywords: *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, "Jenny," Found, fallen woman, male gaze.*

"'JENNY'İ HATIRLA': DANTE GABRİEL ROSSETİ'NİN 'JENNY'SİNDE ERİL BAKIŞ AÇISINDAN DÜŞMÜŞ KADININ TEMSİLİ"

Öz

Dante Gabriel Rossetti "Jenny" adlı şiirinin üzerinde çalışmaya Found (Bulundu) adlı resminden neredeyse on yıl kadar önce başlamıştır. Her ne kadar şairin her iki eseri de düşmüş kadın konusu üzerine olsa da özellikle "Jenny," şairin düşmüş kadına sempati duyan ve aynı zamanda yargılayan çelişkili tutumunu ortaya çıkardığı ve

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Viktorya Çağı'nda etkin olan erkek ikiyüzlülüğünü gösterdiği için dikkat çeker. Düşmüş kadının durumunu yansıtma arzusuyla Viktoryen sansür çığlıklarının arasında kalmış olan Rossetti bu durumun sonucunda Jenny'i sessizliği ve hareketsizliğiyle safi bir spekülasyon nesnesine indirgemiştir. Şiir boyunca Jenny'i eril bakış açısı ve yazarsal gücün spekülasyonlarına maruz bırakan Rossetti, şiirinin konuşmacısının ataerkil düzenin geleneksel temsilcilerinden pek de farklı olmadığını gösterir. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışmanın amacı şehvetli hazlara karşı ilgisiz olduğunun ısrarla altını çizmesine ve bu sebepten ötürü sürekli övgü beklemesine rağmen, önce kendisi ile Jenny ve sonra kuzeni Nell ile Jenny arasında sonu gelmeyen karşılaştırmalarıyla, Rossetti'nin konuşmacısının problematik tutumunun aslında Viktoryen ataerkil ikiyüzlülüğün nasıl da tipik bir temsili olduğunu tartışmaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, "Jenny," Found, düşmüş kadın, eril bakış.*

Introduction

Dante Gabriel Rossetti started working on his poem "Jenny" (ca. 1847-48; first version 1848, last version 1869) almost a decade earlier than the composition of his sister Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market* (1862) and his own portrayal of the condition of the fallen woman on canvas in his unfinished painting *Found* (1854-1881) (Nochlin 140). When the poem was published for the first time in *Poems* in 1870, it became a sensation at once. Apart from the fact that its publication prompted critics like John Ruskin and Robert Buchanan to attack Rossetti on the grounds that his poems belong to the "fleshly school of poetry," the first manuscript of *Poems* raised even more sensation due to the fact that the poems in this collection were retrieved from Rossetti's dead wife's grave. Returning home to discover his wife dead from an overdose of laudanum in 1862, Rossetti was so guilt-ridden his artistic endeavors and affairs had pushed Siddal to suicide (De Vane 472) that he buried his poems with his wife in Highgate Cemetery in London. Buried, "reportedly in Siddal's red hair" (Gray), the manuscript containing some of Rossetti's most well-known poems, such as "The Blessed Damozel" and "Jenny," was retrieved in 1869 upon Rossetti's request (Sheets 333).

Regardless of its macabre history, the topics that were raised in Rossetti's collection made *Poems* quite popular among the reading public. "Jenny" was particularly alluring in its representation of male hypocrisy that was prevalent during the Victorian Age and Rossetti's

conflicting attitude towards the issue of the fallen woman which sympathises and condemns the fallen woman at the same time. Caught in the middle between a wish to represent the condition of the fallen woman and troubled by Victorian outcries of censorship, Rossetti in his poem reduced Jenny, the prostitute that was hired by Rossetti's young speaker in the poem, to an object of pure speculation with her silence and inaction as a result. Subjecting Jenny to the speculations of the male gaze and authorial power throughout the poem, Rossetti shows that his poetic persona is not actually that different from the conventional representatives of patriarchy. Hence, the aim of this study is to discuss the problematic stance of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's poetic persona, who, despite continuously underlining the fact that he is not after sensual delights and expects praise in return, is yet typically reflective of Victorian patriarchal hypocrisy with the comparisons he draws initially between himself and Jenny and then his cousin Nell and Jenny.

The Great Social Evil and the Case of the Fallen Women

Deemed as the "great social evil" by Victorian authorities, prostitution was a common practice among orphans and the underprivileged women in Victorian England. According to Payne:

> Most nineteenth century prostitutes were orphans or young women who resorted to prostitution to augment their meager incomes as laundresses, seamstresses, or factory workers. Many of these young women viewed their stint as prostitutes as a transient stage in their lives. Often by age twenty-five or six they would marry and move on with their lives.

According to police reports, in 1857, "there were about 8,600 prostitutes in London" while other estimates consider the number as closer to 80,000 (Donohoe 9). Since prostitutes were regarded as merchandise for Victorian men to be bought and sold, Haymarket had a dual purpose back in the day, basically serving as a "market for the buying and selling of agricultural goods by day, [. . .] [and] a notorious venue for solicitation by prostitutes at night" (Danahay 389). Because of the widespread fear of this great social evil, several acts were passed during the Victorian Age to specifically protect the military men from venereal diseases, such as the Contagious Diseases Acts of 1864, 1866, and 1869, at the expense of humiliating the women that were involved with prostitution even more (Hughes 39). The Acts forced women suspected of prostitution to mandatory

medical examination, thus re-enforcing the sexual double standards which failed "to require any self-restraint on the part of men while depriving women of basic civil liberties" (Adams 133). The Acts which "dealt with the symptoms rather than the disease of prostitution" in Brown's words, failed to see that "there will be prostitution as long as [. . .] there are economically disadvantaged women who are made dependent upon men" (80, 88). Due to public outburst, which was strengthened by the emergent feminist movement, the Acts were finally revoked in 1886 (Hughes 39).

Victimising socio-economically deprived women as such, morally, too, prostitution was considered as a criminal activity for women only, while men, who participated in the action, were considered as blameless:

> Prostitution remained legal under these acts, however, and was criminalized for only the women, the prostitute was 'an object of class guilt as well as fear, a powerful symbol of sexual and economic exploitation under industrial capitalism' and that the acts reflect '[a] view of the social underclass as degraded and powerless, yet potentially threatening and disloyal.' (Meyer 93)

The double standard and hypocrisy that surrounded sexuality assigned sexual desire only to the male and on the one hand "left the passive female to suffer and be still," while on the other hand Victorian men "desired prostitutes even as they denounced them" (Donohoe 9, 2). Dante Gabriel Rossetti himself

> belonged to this group of men fantasizing over prostitutes and was infamous for hiring them to be his models for his art and poetry. Along with a group of friends, Dante Rossetti obsessed with his models and felt he was saving them by hiring them for other tasks than sex (although it was not excluded completely). His group of Pre-Raphaelites believed in the myth and ignored the dark gritty truth of prostitution as many Victorian men chose to do as well, while his sister Christina Rossetti felt very differently about prostitution, as did the rest of Victorian women. (Silvis)

Raised together, Dante and Christina as siblings had different views regarding prostitution due to their different educational backgrounds. Obviously influenced by the Victorian gender roles

allotted to them, the siblings had different moral bearings within the same household:

> The girls [. . .] absorbed any knowledge they could from their brothers whom did go to school at King's College School. The Rossettis' mother was deeply religious and taught her children to be as well, but it was only Christina and Maria who fell in their mother's beliefs. Christina especially seemed to "have taken the Christian doctrines in a very literal way, while her brother Dante Gabriel Rossetti was "deeply irreligious," (Emberson 249). [. . .] This religious difference is what led them to feel different about prostitution as shown in their poetry. (Silvis)

Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Christina Rossetti's individual views regarding the issue of fallen women are visible in his "Jenny" and her *Goblin Market* in which Christina Rossetti related the experience of the fallen woman from a more egalitarian perspective based upon her volunteer work at St Mary Magdalene Penitentiary at Highgate for the redemption of fallen women (Bentley 181). There, witnessing the socio-economic issues that pushed women into prostitution, Christina Rossetti voiced the plea of the fallen women despite her brother's suggestions that she should not write about them for she had not experienced a similar fate herself. Rossetti defended her poems on the grounds that "as a poet she ha[d] every right to represent others' experience, however 'unpleasant' such experience may be" (Burlinson 35).

Hence, rather than singling out the fallen women as the guilty party, through her poems Christina Rossetti puts the blame equally on men, when it comes to the issue of the corruption of women. By the time Christina Rossetti started working on *Goblin Market*, she was already aware of the romanticised outlook presented in her brother's poem, "Jenny," on the issue of the fallen woman. Relying on her own observations, which she experienced at the Highgate Penitentiary, Christina realised that for women salvation is possible only through other women rather than men. Accordingly, forewarning Laura to be mindful of Jenny, Christina set a different course for her heroine in *Goblin Market*. Unlike Jenny, whose expectations relied on the very same men who have victimized her to save her, Laura was saved by sisterhood. Thus, while Christina enables salvation for her reformed heroine through sisterhood,

Dante's representation of Jenny remains strictly under the control of the male gaze and authority in "Jenny."

"Jenny," *Found* and the Male Gaze

Dante Gabriel Rossetti's "Jenny" is a dramatic monologue of a young scholar who begins the poem by depicting a beautiful woman lying on his knees. Described in a sensual light, Jenny is identified as an easy woman whose idle presence enables the speaker to paint an image of her in words detail by detail. While the positioning of her head below the speaker's at once indicates "her subordinate position" (Byecroft), Rossetti's employment of dramatic monologue to speculate about Jenny's thoughts introduces an inequality which "particularly suits a poem about the imbalances of sexual power" (Harris 203) that transforms Jenny into an artistic object of speculation as soon as the speaker starts speaking:

> Lazy laughing languid Jenny,
> Fond of a kiss and fond of a guinea,
> [. . .]
> Fair Jenny mine, [. . .] whose hair
> Is countless gold incomparable [.]
> [. . .]
> Poor shameful Jenny, full of grace
> Thus with your head upon my knee;—
> Whose person or whose purse may be
> The lodestar of your reverie? (Rossetti 133)

Thus, the opening lines of the poem emphasise Jenny's fondness of sensual and monetary delights at once, as well as robbing her of agency through the speaker's dramatic monologue and her uninterrupted sleep. Placing "guinea" right after "Jenny" at the end of the following line, Rossetti's speaker "locates her within an economic system in which people are not easily distinguishable from their monetary value" (Brown 81). However, as if her physical objectification were not enough, the speaker also aims to penetrate Jenny's mind to reveal her ideas throughout the poem as the final lines indicate.

Wondering whether she is thinking about a person or money, in the following lines the speaker's comparison between Jenny and himself extends into a marked difference between his and her worlds:

> This room of yours, my Jenny, looks
> A change from mine so full of books,

> Whose serried ranks hold fast, forsooth,
> So many captive hours of youth,—
> The hours they thieve from day and night
> To make one's cherished work come right,
> And leave it wrong for all their theft,
> Even as to-night my work has left:
> Until I vowed that since my brain
> And eyes of dancing seemed so fain,
> My feet should have some dancing too:—
> And thus it was I met with you. (Rossetti 133)

The speaker identifies himself as someone well-read and expresses how he ran into Jenny solely because of his artist's block. Interestingly once the speaker meets Jenny, his block is lifted as Jenny transforms into an alluring object of artistic creativity for him to re-present:

> Why, Jenny, as I watch you there,—
> For all your wealth of loosened hair,
> Your silk ungirdled and unlac'd
> And warm sweets open to the waist,
> All golden in the lamplight's gleam [. . .]. (Rossetti 134)

Painted in sensual terms, like the Pre-Raphaelite paintings of the Brotherhood, the poem, in Delightly's words, "examines the relationship between the artist and his work and probes the connection between the man, his sense of self and his art." The speaker of Rosseti's poem, like the voyeuristic speaker of Browning's "My Last Duchess," turns Jenny's presence to an idealised portrait of feminine beauty. In this regard, according to Starzyk, Rossetti's

> Jenny is the Duchess's kindred. Of markedly different social and economic status than the recipient through marriage of a nine-hundred-year-old name, Jenny nevertheless undergoes the same transformative aestheticization the Duchess endures with some of the same obsessive consequences for Rossetti's speaker. (1)

Dante Gabriel Rossetti's artistic portrayal has to do with his dual identity as a poet-painter as well which transforms the male speaker's artistic representation into a "voyeuristic process of objectification," as Jenny adopts an entirely passive role (Byecroft) not only in terms of her economic commodification (Brown 81) but also, as a representative of "objectification of women in art" (Steels

332). In this sense, due to Rossetti's dual identity as a painter-poet, "Jenny" would later stimulate Rossetti to start working on his unfinished painting, *Found*, which is inspired by another one of his notorious Muses; Fanny Cornforth.

Before getting married to Elizabeth Siddal in 1860, (who posed for several painters of the Brotherhood not to exclude Rossetti himself), Rossetti had met a London prostitute named Fanny Cornforth in 1859 (Nochlin 148). Rossetti captured Cornforth's beauty in several of his paintings including *Found*. Not surprisingly, Cornforth later on became Rossetti's mistress and when Rossetti

> married Elizabeth Siddal, Fanny was left destitute and forced into an alternate marriage out of financial necessity. Rossetti's exploitation of a prostitute, whom he also used to model male sexual and economic exploitation in *Found*, displays a paradox between participation and awareness present also for the scholar in "Jenny." (Donohoe 4)

Although Rossetti started working on his poem in 1848 and on his painting 8 years later, "Jenny" and *Found* both, "[t]hrough the male gaze, [. . .] question masculine dominance and the economic exchange of women" (Donohoe 1). In the poem a young scholar watches the fallen woman sleep, while in the painting a rural man finds his former lover, now a fallen woman, in London. In both works men are dominant. However, while the prostitute in *Found* reacts to her discovery by raising her hands up and dwindling herself, Jenny remains silent and inactive throughout the poem. Recalling Langer's statement that in art "[t]here are no happy marriages [. . .] [but] only successful rape" (86), Rossetti's painting and poem equally examine the power relations between the artist and his model while the artist transforms a subject into an object of art during his aestheticisation process, while the object of his gaze remains utterly powerless.

Claiming that there are three steps to aestheticising an idol, Starzyk suggests that

> [s]ilencing a potentially threatening voice is the first step. The second is a consequence of the first: the idol must be rendered inanimate and thus an object. The third step discloses the ultimate reason for silencing and thus rendering inanimate the idol: to appropriate the object to self and in the process resuscitate the object by solipsistically assuming the "idol's empery"

> [. . .]. What is broken by the self is reconstituted as objective correlative of self. (3)

Identified as silence, objectification and suppression, these three steps likewise bring to mind Sheets's ideas on aestheticisation and pornography. Drawing parallels between the two, Sheets argues that in art women "are present only to be silenced, objectified, treated as screens on which a man projects his fantasies" (318). Not surprisingly then, throughout the poem Jenny is seen in deep sleep. While Rossetti's speaker objectifies her by painting her as an object of desire in words, she is rendered helpless due to her unconscious state. Finally, Jenny emerges as the ultimate art-piece of the speaker, who initially had difficulty in finding inspiration. In this regard, the relationship between the speaker and Jenny reminds one of the affiliation between Rossetti and his models who posed for his paintings. Silvis sums this up as follows:

> "Jenny" is but a mere reflection of what he [Rossetti] himself felt over his models/prostitutes. Rossetti felt that he was saving them from being used for sex by using them as models for his paintings and therefore felt they should be grateful to him for saving them from their undesirable jobs.

Rossetti's artistic dilemma is visible through the active role adopted by the speaker which directly contrasts with the passive role granted to Jenny. While the speaker is actively analysing Jenny in an attempt to penetrate her thoughts and sympathise with her, Jenny is reduced to a form of currency this time through the commodification of her body. The treatment of female body as a form of currency that has been evoked earlier in the poem through the speaker's constant associations of Jenny's golden hair with gold extends to her long-lost chastity as follows:

> Jenny, you know the city now,
> A child can tell the tale there, how
> Some things which are not yet enroll'd
> In market-lists are bought and sold
> Even till the early Sunday light,
> When Saturday night is market-night
> Everywhere, be it dry or wet,
> And market-night in the Haymarket.
> Our learned London children know,
> Poor Jenny, all your pride and woe;
> Have seen your lifted silken skirt

> Advertise dainties through the dirt;
> Have seen your coach-wheels splash rebuke
> On virtue; and have learned your look
> When, wealth and health slipped past, you stare
> Along the streets alone [. . .]. (Rossetti 136)

Taking into consideration the huge numbers of women associated with prostitution, the usurpation of female body as merchandise was not an unfamiliar sight in Victorian England. Dominated by ideas rising materialism, it is hardly surprising that female body, with its conventionally inferior position, was treated as a commodity by Victorian men. Besides, "male sexual urge is thought of as active, aggressive, and spontaneous whilst female sexuality, [. . .] defined in relation to the male, [. . .] is understood as weak, passive and responsive" (Nead 26). In this sense, while men fill in the role of active customers desiring instant gratification of their needs, women were reduced to the role of passive victims who had nothing to offer to these men except for their bodies. The hypocrisy surrounding the "double standard amongst men and women, in which 'sexual desire was regarded in the man as normal and unavoidable but was seen in the woman as deviant and pathological'" condemns Jenny for her lack of morals and simultaneously reduces her to an easily dismissible "thing" in the eyes of the society (Nead 26).

Arguing that "binary opposites can be gendered" Hélène Cixous once wrote that "the question of sexual difference is dealt with by coupling it with the opposition: activity/passivity" (Bentham). Thus, associating activity as a male quality, passivity is deemed as a female characteristic. For Bentham, Rossetti's sleeping beauty represents an ideal figure to apply

> Cixous' "activity/passivity" dichotomy, as she raises issues of consumption, not to mention that of the ever-present male gaze. In feminist theory, the male gaze is described as asymmetrical, in the sense that there is not even distribution of power amongst men and women. If we apply this description to Rossetti's "Jenny," it is difficult to dispute it. Since Jenny is asleep, she is unable to return the gaze of the unnamed male, which not only leaves her vulnerable in a physical sense, but also in the way in which we perceive her. As readers, we only see things from the male perspective because Jenny is not conscious to give us her own.

Thus, filling in for Jenny's words, Rossetti's speaker tries, rather unsuccessfully, to penetrate Jenny's thoughts by "enact[ing] the classical bourgeois reduction of woman to sign, [and] textualizing the female body within male discourse" (Slinn 317). Harris remarks that to this attempt, the speaker "names her [Jenny] twenty-six times, as if to touch linguistically a figure who has already eluded him" (204). Nonetheless, his attempts are futile for Jenny's sleep provides the reader with "a bizarre type of resistance to the male gaze, in which she cannot be defined because she cannot be known or understood, especially while asleep" (Bentham). Ironically then, her inactive state, which eludes definition, "thwart[s] the speaker's attempt to objectify and stabilize his apperception of her" (Anderson 144).

Thrown in together with this stranger who denies him sensual and intellectual gratification, the speaker then starts "to speculate about her past, her humanity, and her shame:

> For sometimes, were the truth confess'd,
> You're thankful for a little rest,—
> Glad from the crush to rest within,
> From the heart-sickness and the din
> Where envy's voice at virtue's pitch
> Mocks you because your gown is rich;
> And from the pale girl's dumb rebuke,
> Whose ill-clad grace and toil-worn look
> Proclaim the strength that keeps her weak,
> [. . .]
> And from the wise unchildish elf,
> To schoolmate lesser than himself
> Pointing you out, what thing you are:—
> Yes, from the daily jeer and jar,
> From shame and shame's outbraving too,
> Is rest not sometimes sweet to you?—
> But most from the hatefulness of man
> Who spares not to end what he began,
> Whose acts are ill and his speech ill,
> Who, having used you at his will,
> Thrusts you aside, as when I dine
> I serve the dishes and the wine. (Rossetti 134-5)

Through this discourse, the speaker continues his unsuccessful attempts to establish linguistic dominance over Jenny instead of the sexual gratification that has been denied to him. Yet, as Payne indicates, "for all his eloquence, he [the speaker] can only speculate."

Through her indifferent sleep, "'Jenny' offers us a woman who defies this need for definition and categories, proving that the gaze, powerful as it may seem, is often rendered useless" (Bentham). The poem reads:

> Why, Jenny, you're asleep at last!—
> Asleep, poor Jenny, hard and fast,—
> So young and soft and tired; so fair,
> With chin thus nestled in your hair,
> Mouth quiet, eyelids almost blue
> As if some sky of dreams shone through!
> Just as another woman sleeps! (Rossetti 137)

Despite his ironic expression of surprise at the fact Jenny sleeps just like any other women, the speaker is exasperated due to Jenny's enigmatic existence which eludes definition. Paradoxically, sleep provides Jenny with an unwavering self-defense:

> Traditionally, sleep is regarded as the most passive of actions, and understandably so. For example, in her analysis of the fairytale, Hélène Cixous writes the following, regarding the sleeping woman: "The beauties are sleeping, waiting for princes to come and awaken them, in their beds, in their glass coffins, in their childhood forests, as if dead. Beautiful, but passive; therefore desirable; from them emanates all mystery" (66). In "Jenny," her passivity, in fact, generates her power over the speaker. She is, indeed, a mystery to him and remains so [. . .]. (Bentham)

Jenny defies categories not only because she is a prostitute, who does not conform to the norms of the "angel in the house," but also because she does not fulfill her sexual duties as a fallen woman either. The services she offers seems rather limited as she acts only as a muse to inspire the struggling artist to create a new art-piece which is stressed by the fact that the speaker compares Jenny to an unreadable book throughout the poem. According to Lackey, the scholar "has discovered in Jenny a new kind of inspiration - a human text which he can ponder more deeply than he can any of the books" (430). In contrast to the speaker's associations of Jenny with flowers, particularly lilies and roses on numerous occasions, to strengthen her innoncent and sensual aspects respectively, the scholar identifies himself as an intellectual by associating books and the act of reading only with himself. Emphasising Jenny's graceful and shameful aspects

through flower symbolism as such, Rossetti evokes the book metaphor in the poem as follows:

> You know not what a book you seem,
> Half-read by lightning in a dream!
> [. . .]
> But while my thought runs on like this
> With wasteful whims more than enough,
> I wonder what you're thinking of.
>
> If of myself you think at all,
> What is the thought?—conjectural
> On sorry matters best unsolved?—
> Or inly is each grace revolved
> To fit me with a lure?—or (sad
> To think!) perhaps you're merely glad
> That I'm not drunk or ruffianly
> And let you rest upon my knee. (Rossetti 134)

Despite the speaker's relentless efforts to penetrate her mind, Jenny is once again guarded by sleep and apathy. In this sense, representing rationality (book) and sensuality (flower) respectively, the speaker cannot help but underline "the inherent goodness or innocence of sensuality, and the cruelty of the civilized or intellectual" (Rodgers 157, 160), while Jenny proves to be "as impenetrable as his other books" (Sheets 328).

As the speaker, rather ineffectively, continues to enter Jenny's mind, he introduces yet another dichotomy this time between Jenny and his chaste cousin Nell. Jenny and Nell correspondingly stand for fallen/unfallen women:

> My cousin Nell is fond of fun,
> And fond of dress, and change, and praise,
> So mere a woman in her ways:
> And if her sweet eyes rich in youth
> Are like her lips that tell the truth,
> My cousin Nell is fond of love.
> And she's the girl I'm proudest of.
> Who does not prize her, guard her well?
> The love of change, in cousin Nell,
> Shall find the best and hold it dear:
> [. . .]
> Of the same lump (as it is said)
> For honour and dishonour made,

Two sister vessels. Here is one.

It makes a goblin of the sun.

So pure,—so fall'n! How dare to think
Of the first common kindred link? (Rossetti 137-8)

Considered as "sister vessels" by the speaker, the angel in the house is thus contrasted with the fallen woman. Together with the ongoing Madonna/whore; lily/rose; Madonna/Magdalene; sacred vs profane love dichotomies, the comparison between Jenny and Nell mark morality as the central issue in the poem. Directly contrasting the two figures with each other, Rossetti's speaker has difficulty in believing how these two dissimilar characters could be of the same lump. However, as the last line indicates, "Jenny's prostitution seems not the result of moral weakness or sinfulness on her part, but the result of arbitrary socio-economic circumstances" and pure chance (Brown 83-4). Unlike Christina Rossetti who emphasises the sisters' sameness in *Goblin Market*, Dante Gabriel Rossetti stresses his cousin Nell's and Jenny's difference all along. With her virtue and honour intact, Nell cannot be anything like Jenny in his eyes. However, as pointed out earlier in the poem, Nell is actually not that different from Jenny with her superficial fondness for dresses and praise. Moreover, Nell's implied keenness to get married recalls William Morris's statement in a letter which hypothesised that "as long as women are compelled to marry for a livelihood real marriage is a rare exception and prostitution or a kind of legalized rape the rule" (qtd. in Donohoe 5). Therefore, from the standpoint of a patriarchal society, Jenny is not that different from Nell, who will be used as a pawn of masculine interest in the Victorian society.

Conclusion

Although Rossetti's speaker, continuously underlines the fact that he is not after sensual delights, for which he expects praise in return, and "associates the lily with Jenny at various points in the poem; [. . .] a flower associated with the Virgin Mary" in order to emphasise Jenny's innocence, he cannot yet escape the social condemnations of his time (Keefe). Seemingly introduced as a thoughtful young man, the scholar's initial attitude towards Jenny reveals sympathy and compassion, as he tries to understand the probable reasons behind her fall from grace. However, his musings prove to be rather reductive and essentialist in the end, with his

frequent suggestions that she should have known better. His patronizing and condescending demenour is specifically visible in the final lines of the poem where he casually places golden coins in Jenny's golden hair. Thus, giving her "money for sexual services not performed, his 'golden coins' substitute for the ejaculation he does not have" (Harris 205). The speaker as a result emerges as a shallow man whose disdainful charity and superficial concern for the fallen woman meets conventional sexual and monetary expectations as well as meeting the requirements of artist/model relationship in which the artist has to pay his model for his unrestricted and uncensored male gaze. Despite his musings to understand and sympathise with Jenny, Rossetti's speaker remains strictly bound by the moral expectations of his time. In this regard, Rossetti's poetic persona is typically reflective of Victorian patriarchal hypocrisy with his persistent comparisons initially between himself and Jenny and later his cousin Nell and Jenny. While the spaker's gaze ruthlessly judges the fallen woman whom he cannot help but has to despise and yet is utterly mesmerised by at the same time, as a source of artistic inspiration; Jenny, entirely oblivious to his attempts to penetrate her mind, evades being defined by the male gaze and thus in a way beats the artist at his own game.

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