

Feminist Writings
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The Goblin Market - Part 1

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So, hi and welcome to this N P T E L course entitled Feminist Writings. We will begin with the new text today, Goblin Market by Christina Rossetti.

Now, it is one of the very, it is an interesting poem because initially it was thought as a fairy tale, as a children's fiction then it was read as some kind of a modern fable. But increasingly with the (0:34) of feminism and with the, you know the whole idea, the whole rise of the feminist literature scholarship.

Goblin Market has been, you know it has been read as a very serious poem about female agency, consumption, special relation to consumerism, special relation to mercantile invasion or the whole idea of the male merchants and how is the female body negotiated with that mercantile male, mercantile space.

So, it is a poem where lots of, you know ideas of commodification, consumption, go hand in hand and it is very interesting to read it to a certain markers, such as Marxism and Freudian psychoanalysis because, you know the sexual imagery in the poem is very, very evident, is foregrounded.

The whole idea of getting sexually consumed by, you know the fruit from the goblin market which is obviously very metaphorical and symbolic in quality.

So you know it could be read like I said it could be read as a poem about warning, a poem of virtue mocking, a poem about you know modern fable, a poem about sexual consumption, poem about female agencies, etc.

So it offers a series of readings. It is one of the very complex works of literature which open up to several readings, sometimes different readings but simultaneously co-inhabiting the hermeneutic plane.

Now, what we will do in this session today, we are going to read an essay on Goblin Market by someone called Dinah Roe.

So this is from the British Library website where, it is a very helpful introduction to the poem, in terms of what the poem does thematically, in terms of the formal techniques of the poem and how it offers new kinds of reading to feminist scholarship today.

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Discovering Literature: Romanticism & Victorians

An introduction to 'Goblin Market'

- Article created by: [Dinah Roe](#)
- Theme: [Victorian poetry](#) [[romanticism-and-victorians/themes/victorian-poetry](#)]
- Published: 15 May 2014

In 'Goblin Market', Christina Rossetti experiments with language, form and imagery to create a world of temptation and mystery. Dr Dinah Roe considers Rossetti's influences and the different ways in which the poem has been illustrated and interpreted since its publication.

Summary

Set in a fairytale world and exploring themes of temptation, sacrifice and salvation, 'Goblin Market' [[works/goblin-market](#)], tells the story of an encounter between sisters Laura and Lizzie and evil goblin merchants. Laura exchanges a lock of her golden hair for the chance to taste the

Now, I am just going to read out the essay which contains very helpful summary and then we will talk about how that,

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Summary

Set in a fairytale world and exploring themes of temptation, sacrifice and salvation, '[Goblin Market](#) [[works/goblin-market/](#)]' tells the story of a fraught encounter between sisters Laura and Lizzie and evil goblin merchants. When Laura exchanges a lock of her golden hair for the chance to taste the goblins' enchanted 'fruit forbidden', she deteriorates until she is 'knocking at Death's door'. Her sister Lizzie offers to pay the goblins 'a silver penny' for more of their wares, which she hopes will act as an antidote to Laura's malady. The goblins violently attack Lizzie, smearing their fruits 'against her mouth' in a vain attempt 'to make her eat'. After the goblins are 'worn out by her resistance', Lizzie returns home, and Laura kisses the juices from her sister's face and is restored.

Second edition of *Goblin Market* by Christina Rossetti, with original covers



you know opens up to other possible readings.

And then of course we move into poem and we have certain select the sections. So, the very brief summary of the poem is this and this should be on your screen now.

Set in a fairytale world and exploring themes of temptation, sacrifice and salvation, *Goblin Market* tells the story of a fraught encounter between sisters Laura and Lizzie and evil goblin merchants.

So again though the idea of these male merchants and how the idea of masculine, mercantile space, the bazaar or the market corrupts the idyllic female space. So one can do a very interesting spatial study of *Goblin Market* as well.

So, how the permanence and purity of the idyllic world is destroyed and invaded by the impermanence and temporality of this mercantile male world.

When Laura exchanges a lock of her golden hair for the chance to taste the goblins' enchanted fruit forbidden she deteriorates until she is knocking at Death's door.

So the whole idea of exchanging, of you know purchasing the Goblins' fruit with not currency but a lock of her hair can be seen, read very, very symbolically as form of sexualization of consumption, as a form of prostitution perhaps, while selling the lock of her

hair becomes in a way selling off the sexual self in response, in the hope of getting the commodity from the market.

So it becomes very interesting exchange, the female sexuality being exchanged for male commodity. And then she deteriorates when Laura exchanges the lock of her golden hair for the touch of the other flavor of forbidden fruit.

She deteriorates (())(4:04), biologically until she is knocking at Death's doors. She is almost dead and from there she recovers. Her sister Lizzie offers to pay the goblins a silver penny for more of their wares, which she hopes will act as an antidote to Laura's malady.

The goblins violently attack Lizzie smearing the fruits against her mouth in a vain attempt to make her eat. After the goblins are worn out by her resistance, Lizzie returns home, and Laura kisses the juices from her sister's face and is restored.

So you know even a very superficial summary of the poem would reveal to us a very sexualized nature of metaphors in this poem. So you know we can read this as examples of sexual invasion, sexual violence.

And it is interesting how the erotic economy in the poem and the financial economy, the capitalist economy in the poem, they are interestingly mapped on to each other in a very complex way.

So, we see that Lizzie, Laura's sister, after she sees Laura getting more and more consumed by, you know the goblins' fruit. Lizzie goes to the market with the penny, the silver penny which she pays in order to buy an antidote for, you know Laura's disease.

And of course, the fact that she enters the market with the penny means that she is coming with an equal exchange system. So she is not going to sell her sexuality for commodity. She is just going to pay for it using a penny.

And that disturbs the entire male female binary in the marketplace, that disturbs entire idea of agency in the marketplace and we saw, we see even in summary that tells us how Laura, how

Lizzie gets attacked by all the goblin, you know who attack her violently and they try to stuff some food into her mouth without her buying it.

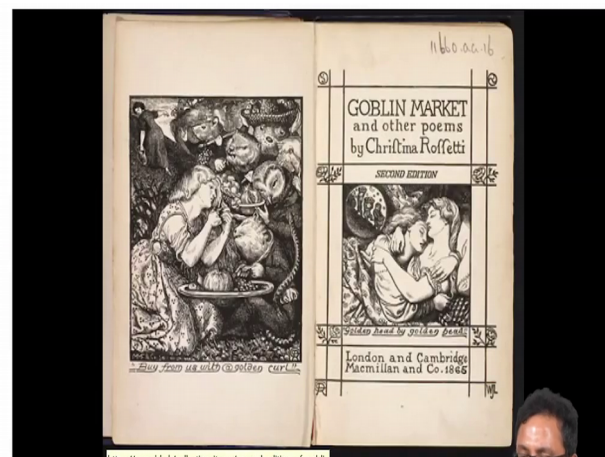
And then in the end, I mean she keeps resisting that invasion, she keeps resisting that violent attack on her and then they get worn out by her resistance and disappear, the market disappears. And Lizzie returns home.

And Laura kisses the juices from her sister's face and is restored. So again very sexual, Laura, you know, the (06:05) of hugging with each other and then you know Laura kissing, you know taking the juices from her sister's mouth and in the process restoring her back to health and normalcy, right.

So it is a very complex poem and as I have said already, it can be read in many different ways. But it becomes very important, very powerful text about feminism and feminist literature, something you are studying in this particular course.

Ok now with that

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[https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/second-edition-of-goblin-market-by-christina-rossetti-with-original-covers-shellite#view=181fromother=181mgSelectedId=\(\[C0C03E8-68A143CF-88D5-55104B15C7A9\]\)](https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/second-edition-of-goblin-market-by-christina-rossetti-with-original-covers-shellite#view=181fromother=181mgSelectedId=([C0C03E8-68A143CF-88D5-55104B15C7A9]))
Second edition of 'Goblin Market and other Poems with Daniel

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very superficial summary we have some images of the goblin from the Goblin Market as you can see the images on the screen. If you take a look at the images you will find that where Laura and Lizzie they are obviously very white, pure beautiful women.

The goblins are very beastly in character. They are very beastly in the way they look. So this very anthropocentric quality of the poem gets highlighted with the goblins being, the evilness of the goblins being equated with the beastliness whereas with Laura and Lizzie the purity or their principled humanity is equated with their whiteness, the white beauty, the white female beauty that they embody.

Ok so this is obviously you

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Second edition of Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market and other Poems* with Dante Rossetti's frontispiece and title page designs, 1865.

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Form and genre

On first reading 'Goblin Market', eminent Victorian critic John R.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti's sketches and page designs which we see on the screen at the moment. Now interestingly as I mentioned the reception to this poem, change in varied, quite dramatically

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Second edition of Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market and other Poems* with Dante Gabriel Rossetti's frontispiece and title page designs, 1865.

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Form and genre

On first reading 'Goblin Market', eminent Victorian critic John Ruskin declared that Rossetti's 'irregular measures' were the 'calamity of modern poetry' and that she 'should exercise herself in the severest commonplace of metre until she can write as the public like'.^[1] Ruskin's tin-eared critique unwittingly identifies one of 'Goblin Market's' greatest strengths: its experimental form. A poem whose compelling narrative is animated by a surprising lyric energy, it never conforms to a set rhyme scheme or metrical pattern. For instance, the goblin merchants' cries in the opening lines tempt not through lavish verbal description but through



across generations so when it was first published, it received pretty bad reviews.

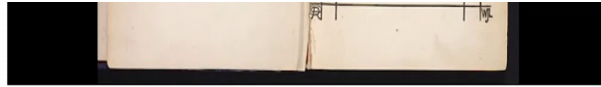
And then of course it was read as a children's fiction. It was read as modern fable. It was read as some kind of, you know cautionary tale, you know female behavior, the ideal female behavior, etc.

Then of course with the, with the rise of feminism as systematic scholarship, this poem has duly, you know it has got what it deserves in terms of being a very powerful feminist text. And that is something that we are focusing on this particular session. Now as you can see the reception as I mentioned, the reviews of the poem very dramatically.

So, John Ruskin, when he first read the poem, so it says on screen over here, on first reading of *Goblin Market* the eminent Victorian critic John Ruskin declared Rossetti's irregular measures were the calamity in modern poetry and that she should exercise herself in the severest commonplace of metre until she can write as the public like.

Now this whole idea of metrically irregular has become a part of performance strategy of subversion in *Goblin's Market*

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Second edition of Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market and other Poems* with Dante Gabriel Rossetti's frontispiece and title page designs, 1865.

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*Apples and quinces,
Lemons and oranges,
Plump unpeck'd cherries,*



because you know it is not, there is no metrical consistency in the poem. And that is obviously something that John Ruskin, you know does not like about the poem. And he is obviously criticizing using these heavy metaphors.

So he says quite clearly that until Christina Rossetti picks up the skill to be consistent metrically she should not write for the public. So the public wants metrical clarity, metrical consistency and until she has clarity and consistency in the use of a meter she should abstain from writing.

That is something that is obviously very harsh criticism but what is interesting to know is how this poem has subsequently become, has got a cult following and now is one of the most respectable poems of feminist literature, one of the reasons why we are having this particular course.

But the fact is, even metrically, even formally it is quite subversive in quality. So the formal subversive quality of the poem becomes interesting, and apart from being thematically subversive, even the rhythm, metrical rhythm, metrical clarity, the metrical consistency is deliberately interrupted in the poem over and over again.

And this deliberate interruption of metrical consistency, something we should take into account while looking at the poem as a subversive text. Now, you know this particular essay

tells quite clearly that Ruskin's tin eared critique unwittingly identifies one of Goblin Market's greatest strengths and that is its experimental form.

A poem whose compelling narrative is animated by surprisingly lyric energy and never conforms to a set rhythm scheme, set rhyme scheme or metrical pattern. For instance, the goblin merchants' cries in the opening lines tempt not through lavish verbal description but through forms. So, if you take a look at the lines which are described over here

“

Apples and quinces,
Lemons and oranges,

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Form and genre

On first reading 'Goblin Market', eminent Victorian critic John Ruskin declared that Rossetti's *[people/christina-rossetti]* 'irregular measures' were the 'calamity of modern poetry' and that she 'should exercise herself in the severest commonplace of metre until she can write as the public like'.^[1] Ruskin's tin eared critique unwittingly identifies one of 'Goblin Market's' greatest strengths: its experimental form. A poem whose compelling narrative is animated by a surprising lyric energy, it never conforms to a set rhyme scheme or metrical pattern. For instance, the goblin merchants' cries in the opening lines tempt not through lavish verbal description, but through form.

*Apples and quinces,
Lemons and oranges,
Plump ungeck'd cherries,
Melons and raspberries,
Bloom-down-cheek'd peaches,
Swart-headed mulberries,
Wild free-born cranberries,
Crab-apples, dewberries,
Pine-apples, blackberries,
Apricots, strawberries;—*

The sing-song rhythm of alternating dactylic and trochaic feet mimics the sound of street vendors hawking their wares, while the rhyme scheme eschews traditional corresponding rhyme words in favour of the incantatory repetition of 'berries' and a seductive sibilance that



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Pine-apples, blackberries,
Apricots, strawberries;—

So you know it comes with hard-hitting words. So it does not really have magnificent descriptions of

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declared that Rossetti's *['people/christina-rossetti']* 'irregular measures' were the 'calamity of modern poetry' and that she 'should exercise herself in the severest commonplace of metre until she can write as the public like'.^[1] Ruskin's tin-eared critique unwittingly identifies one of 'Goblin Market's' greatest strengths: its experimental form. A poem whose compelling narrative is animated by a surprising lyric energy, it never conforms to a set rhyme scheme or metrical pattern. For instance, the goblin merchants' cries in the opening lines tempt not through lavish verbal description, but through form.

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fruits and where they came from, but it gives you a, almost (10:51) list of different commodities, of different fruits which are offered in the market, and the hard-hitting quality of the words over here, that gives you a sense of the hard commodity which is available in the market, the hard commodity which is available for consumption and it is one of the very interesting things in modernist and post-modernist literature and that is this very interesting correspondence between form and content.

But it is content over here. It is one of hard-hitting commodity creation or hard hitting commodification and even formally we have the form which lends itself to the content in a way.

You know instead of lyric energy and such a lyric flavor which dilute the crudeness of the commodity, which will dilute the hardcore quality of the commodity, we have hard-hitting words which come at you, which are thrown at you in terms of breathless of different objects.

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Swart-headed mulberries,
Wild free-born cranberries,
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So the sing-song rhythm of alternating dactylic and trochaic feet mimics the sound of street vendors hawking their wares, while the rhyme scheme eschews traditional corresponding rhyme words in favor of the incantatory repetition of berries and a seductive sibilance that hints at the fruit's dark properties.

Now what, this is very interesting observation, what this is telling us is essentially that this kind of a description of the poem where we have the words coming in, you know driven at us, you know almost hurled at us interestingly.

And that is very proximate, and that is very, very authentic in terms of representing vendors crying out the wares, vendors selling the wares, screaming out the names.

So you know, that is very common sight in different parts of the world where vendors, especially vendors who sell on the streets, you know wares on the streets, they walk down lanes, they walk down streets screaming out what they have, screaming out the commodities they are carrying in terms of making those more appealing, in terms of making those more sensational in quality.

And that sensational quality of the commodity is interesting because the goblin market is essentially a bazaar and we have, you know if we take a look at the different fruits which were described in this passage, if I, a lot of these fruits come from different parts of the world, not just from Britain.

They have fruits from Australia, fruits from different parts of Africa, Asia and whole bazaar becomes an metonymic creation of an empire in a way. So we have different fruits coming from different parts of the world which is symptomatic of the economic, the quality of the economy in Britain, the quality of the bazaar in Britain.

So British bazaar does not quite have only British commodities any more. It has, it has opened up to different commodities from different parts of the world. And that idea of outlandish commodities, the idea of foreign commodity or foreign body which is inhabiting the bazaar space makes it exotic as well as slightly dangerous.

So it is whole idea of a dangerous commodity, a dark commodity. So you know, this particular essay talks about the incantatory reputation of berries and the seductive sibilance that hints at the dark properties so there is a menacing quality of these commodities as well. That is not quite known.

So these commodities cannot really be quantified, you know clinically or perfectly. So you have different kinds of fruits coming and some very exotic, you know some familiar, some not so familiar and this is a very interesting space study that one might do in the bazaar, because of bazaar being a space which is an interesting combination of familiarity and unfamiliarity.

So what happens with the creation of a bazaar is a process or drama of defamiliarization. Well, space you did not know, whether that is the field or open space gets converted into stalls, into different kinds of objects which is not quite known to you.

So the whole idea of converting the familiar into the unfamiliar is the process of defamiliarization. And that is something that is dramatically done with the arrival of the bazaar.

So the whole poem can be seen as act of defamiliarization where known virtues, known movements, known recognitions, known mechanisms of manners, etc. get defamiliarized with the arrival of different objects from different parts of the world.

And against that we have continuously, essentially idyllic Britain, an idyllic pastoral Britain which is also feminized, you know very problematically. Ok.

So what is essentially a shopping list is transformed by the musical qualities of Rossetti's technique anticipating Walter Pater's Aesthetic creed that all art constantly aspires towards the condition of music.

So it is the musicality about this description which is again the sing-song quality is very, very authentically, you know proximate to the whole idea of merchants going on the street and selling the wares by drawing attention to the names, or screaming of the names.

So drawing on the conventions offered variety of a variety of literary genres including the gothic, fantasy,

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*Swart-headed mulberries,
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Crab-apples, dewberries,
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The sing-song rhythm of alternating dactylic and trochaic feet mimics the sound of street vendors hawking their wares, while the rhyme scheme eschews traditional corresponding rhyme words in favour of the incantatory repetition of 'berries' and a seductive sibilance that hints at the fruits' dark properties. What is essentially a shopping list is transformed by the musical qualities of Rossetti's technique, anticipating Walter Pater's Aesthetic creed that 'all art constantly aspires towards the condition of music'.^[2] Drawing on the conventions of a variety of literary genres including the gothic, fantasy, biblical, children's literature and fable, Rossetti creates a disorienting fairytale atmosphere that is simultaneously seductive and alienating.

***Goblin Market* illustrated by Arthur Rackham**



biblical, children's literature and fable, Rossetti creates a disorienting fairytale atmosphere that is simultaneously seductive and alienating.

So this is a very interesting and very potent description of the bazaar. That it can be seductive, it is supposed to seduce you with these commodities, it is supposed to really draw you with these wares, outlandish commodities but at the same time it is also alienating because it is not really homely.

And I will come back to the point of homely and unhomely over here. And I will connect that with the idea of Freud and the unhomely which is the uncanny.

So bazaar also carries a sense of the uncanny, a sense of something you do not quite know, sense of something which is outside the home. So the bazaar is literally and geographically outside the home. So you cannot have bazaar inside the home.

So bazaar is a made-up ad hoc public space. And the ad hoc constructed quality of the bazaar is something which is interesting because it is constructed let us say over night, over a period of time, temporarily and at the end of the bazaar it just goes back, it disappears.

The entire ontology of the bazaar is premised on temporality, is premised on ad hoc production, on ad hoc manufacturing of spaces. Well and that is something which we have to keep in mind.

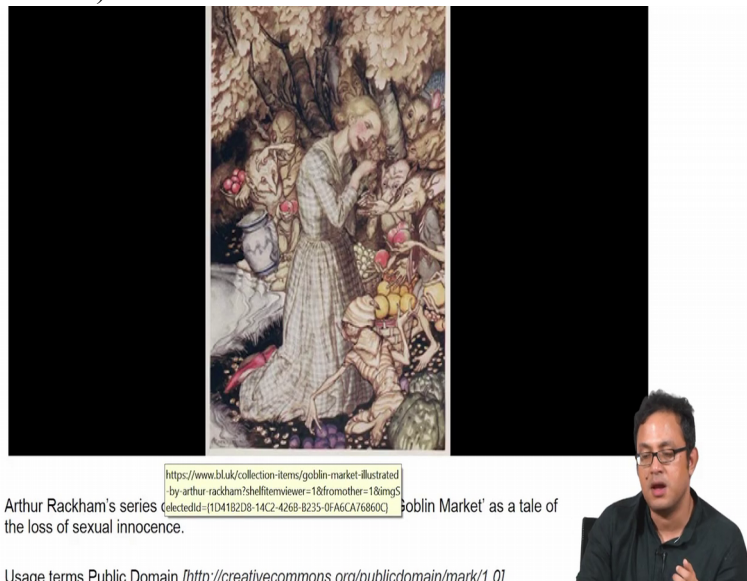
So it draws on a series of conventions including biblical conventions, gothic conventions, very prominent gothic quality about goblin's market, children's literature, fable, moral fable and in the process it creates a very, I would say, a very post-modern landscape of you know of, you know seductive and alienating metaphor, seductive and alienating attribute.

So, there is constant cohabitation, constant merge of opposites, there is constant entanglement of opposites, intentions gives this this poem a sense of metrical energy, a sense of you know, ontological energy and that mixture of opposites, mixture of different things again is very, very symptomatic of the bazaar space.

Because bazaar is the space of mixture, bazaar is a space of you know hybridity so different things coming together are sold simultaneously in the bazaar, right. So the bazaar becomes not just space for need classification, it becomes a space for; you know a production of hybridity among other things.

That is something which is constantly described

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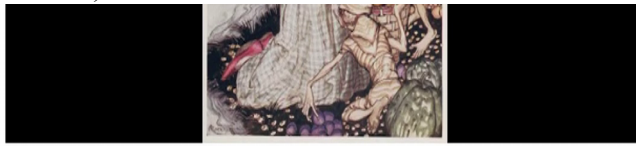
in this particular poem and that hybridity could be seductive, that hybridity could be alienating, that hybridity could also be dangerous because you do not quite know what you are consuming, it is beyond your cognitive radar, something which is different.

So again we have a series of illustrations that are accompanied at this particular, you know essay and this is Arthur Rackham's series of illustrations, 1933 interpreting Goblin Market as tale of loss of sexual innocence.

So again one may read the poem as loss of sexual innocence, loss of, you know sexual virginity as a (())(18:28). So two sisters. they represent, at the beginning at the poem, they embody a sense of idyllic, ideal pure sexuality which gets corrupted with the arrival of the great male, masculinist marketplace which becomes, as I have mentioned a very interesting entanglement of erotic economy and financial economy.

So, let us take a look at the context of the poem, so what happens in the poem, how this poem emerge and

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Arthur Rackham's series of illustrations from 1933 interpreting 'Goblin Market' as a tale of the loss of sexual innocence.

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Context

Rossetti wrote this poem in 1859 while volunteering at the St Mary Magdalene Penitentiary for 'fallen women' in Highgate. Dedicated to the reform and rehabilitation of prostitutes, this Anglo-Catholic institution was remarkable in the period for its conviction that women who had transgressed sexually could be redeemed. Biographers and critics have argued that the themes of temptation, sexual exchange and sisterly redemption in this poem are influenced by its poet's experience working as an 'Associate Sister' at Highgate.

Advertisement for a house for 'fallen women' from the Morning Post



it is interesting to draw uncertain biographical details while reading the poem specially in Rossetti's own experience with the prostitutes, rehabilitation of prostitutes is something that...interested in emotionally and that obviously lends itself into the, in this particular poem.

So Rossetti wrote this poem in 1859 while volunteering at the Saint Mary Magdalene Penitentiary for fallen women at Highgate. Dedicated to the reform, and rehabilitation of prostitutes this Anglo-Catholic institution was remarkable in the period for its conviction that women who have transgressed sexually could be redeemed.

So you know it is an interesting institution that is named over here. Since it has taken a very blunt, moral stand on prostitution, it had, it offered a possibility of redemption. It offered the possibility of rehabilitation.

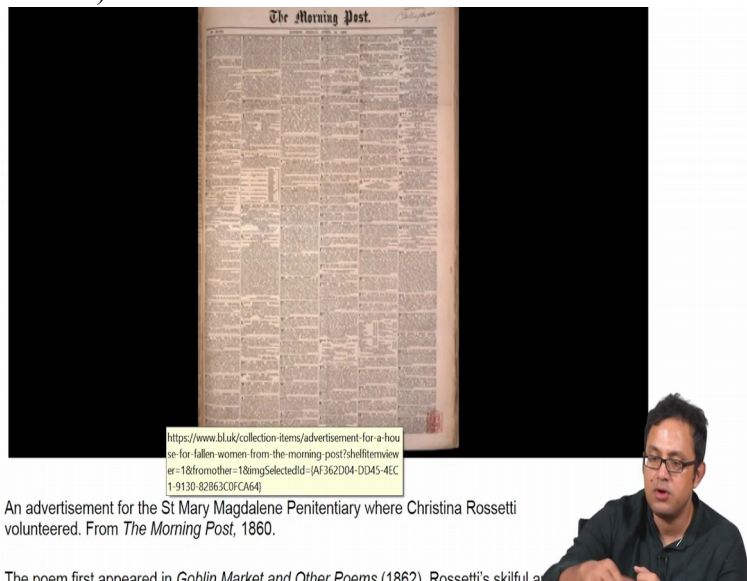
So you can reintegrate these people, the civil society to different kinds of practices, economic practices, moral practices, etc. And as we know that Rossetti was actively involved in this institution (())(20:01) as well as culturally.

So biographers and critics have argued that themes of temptation, sexual exchange and sisters or redemption in this poem are influenced by the poet's experience working as Associate Sister at Highgate.

Rossetti seemed to draw on her experience as an Associate Sister Highgate. So as an informant in Highgate Prison, Highgate Penitentiary which is also an inspiration for, you know reintegrating with these woman- into the normative folds of the society.

Now so again we have

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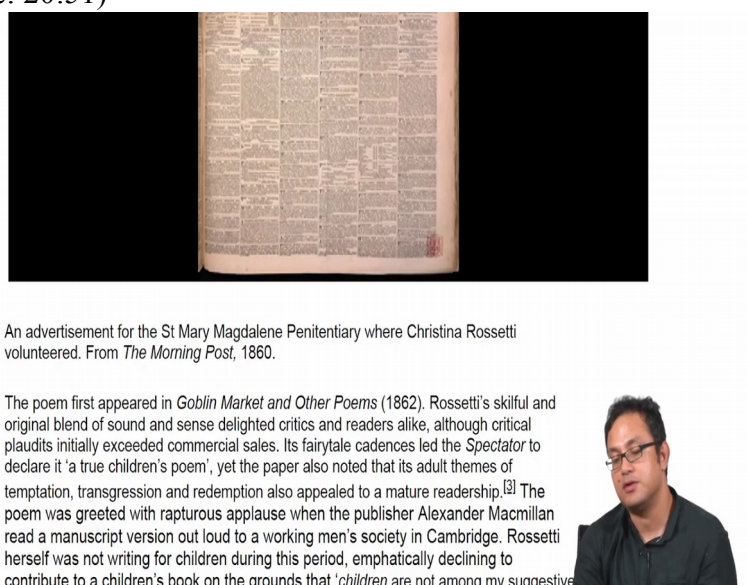
<https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/advertisement-for-a-house-for-fallen-women-from-the-morning-post?shelfitemview=1&fromother=1&imgSelectedId=AF362D04-DD45-4EC1-9130-82863C0FCA64>

An advertisement for the St Mary Magdalene Penitentiary where Christina Rossetti volunteered. From *The Morning Post*, 1860.

The poem first appeared in *Goblin Market and Other Poems* (1862). Rossetti's skilful a

a Morning Post advertisement for this particular institution, and this is from 1860 which should be on your screen. And this poem was first published in *Goblin Market and Other Poems* collection,

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An advertisement for the St Mary Magdalene Penitentiary where Christina Rossetti volunteered. From *The Morning Post*, 1860.

The poem first appeared in *Goblin Market and Other Poems* (1862). Rossetti's skilful and original blend of sound and sense delighted critics and readers alike, although critical plaudits initially exceeded commercial sales. Its fairytale cadences led the *Spectator* to declare it 'a true children's poem', yet the paper also noted that its adult themes of temptation, transgression and redemption also appealed to a mature readership.^[3] The poem was greeted with rapturous applause when the publisher Alexander Macmillan read a manuscript version out loud to a working men's society in Cambridge. Rossetti herself was not writing for children during this period, emphatically declining to contribute to a children's book on the grounds that 'children are not among my suggestive

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So it is very interesting combination of children's fairytale things as well as adult things as such as, you know sexual transgressing, sexual corruption and redemption, and that two themes, the two tensions, the two trends keeps mixing and the, and the poem giving a very interesting color.

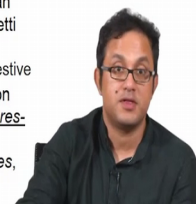
The poem was greeted with rapturous applause when the publisher Alexander Macmillan read the manuscript version out loud to a working men's society in Cambridge. Now, interestingly the working men, the working class men who read the poem responded very positively

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to the poem at Cambridge.

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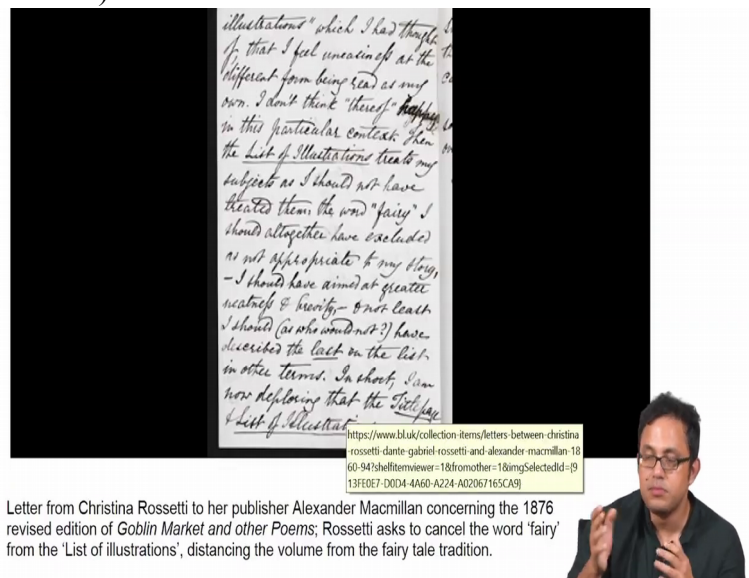
So, this is a very interesting piece of information that we know, Lewis Carroll the mathematician who wrote this Alice in Wonderland stories was profoundly influenced by this poem apparently.

And Rossetti returned the compliment in 1874 writing a book of children's stories entitled Speaking Likenesses which she hoped to imitate Carroll's success in booming children's market.

So children's market, children's fiction market was a booming market, it was booming industry at that point of time. And both Rossetti and Carroll wanted to tap into the market, the trends into the market as it were.

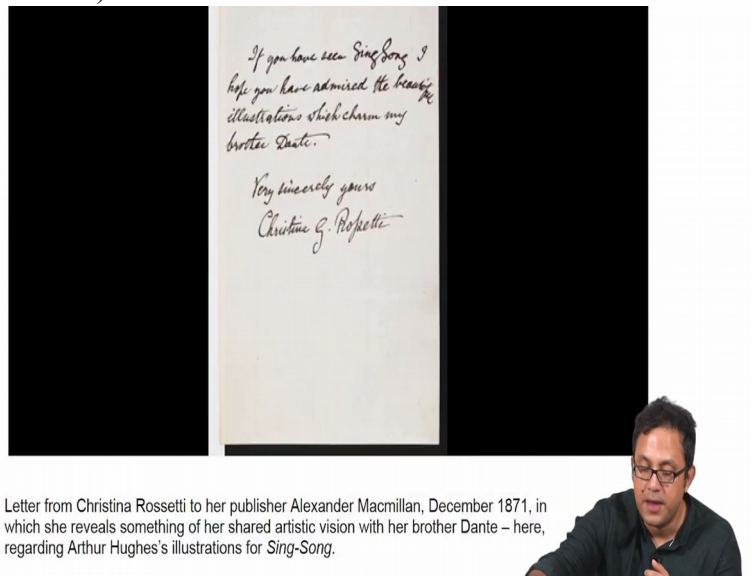
But it is interesting to see how

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this poem has been read in various ways as children's fiction, moral fables as well as adult literature.

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Ok. We have some letters from the poem which are interesting.

Now let us look

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An introduction to 'Goblin Market' - The British Library

Interpretations

Initially received as a moral allegory about the dangers of giving in to temptation, the poem was recast by feminist classic *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) as a parable of female resistance and solidarity. By contrast, in 1973 *Playboy Magazine* presented the poem as unambiguously pornographic; the text was accompanied by a Kinuko Craft illustration of the goblin attack on Lizzie that left little to the imagination. 'Goblin Market' continues to appeal to a popular audience; it has been set to music many times and adapted as a play by Polly Pen and Peggy Harmon in New York (1986) and Nick Hedges in London (1995).

The 20th-century revival of interest in the poem opened the floodgates for Feminist, Marxist, Freudian, Queer Theory and New Historicist critiques which variously interpreted the poem as a warning about the dangers of a free-market economy, a protest against hazardous practices in 19th-century food-adulteration, a Christian tale of sacrifice and salvation, a parable of lesbian empowerment, a fable about anorexia, an expression of incestuous yearning and a tribute to the delicious oral and aural pleasures of poetry itself. 'Goblin Market' has continued to thrive in the academic marketplace. The poem continues to attract critical interpretations and artistic adaptations as colourful and diverse as the goblin merchants' wares, challenging Christina Rossetti's surely disingenuous claim that she 'did not mean anything profound by this fairytale'.^[6]

Footnotes

at some of the interpretations of the poem. So as I mentioned there are several interpretations of the poem can open itself onto, initially received as a moral allegory about the dangers of giving in to the temptation; the poem is recast by feminist classic *The Madwoman in the Attic*, 1979, one of the canonical books in feminist scholarship as a parable of female resistance and solidarity.

By contrast in 1973, Playboy magazine presented the poem as unambiguously pornographic. The text was accompanied by Kinuko Craft illustration of the goblin attack on Lizzie that left little to the imagination. So we have very different kinds of receptions of the poem.

So the Playboy magazine is obviously completely in conformity with sexualization, into commodification of human sexuality that describe the poem as pornographic poem and it was very, very explicit in its description of the poem.

But the more complex and more subtle and the more, perhaps the more balanced (24:08) on the poem was offered by feminist classic, *The Madwoman in the Attic* which presented upon as a parable of female resistance, of female solidarity and a generation of female agency against the attack by male merchants.

So we have, how this poem gets co-opted by different vehicles, by different institutions, by different forms of readership is an interesting, you know reading in itself.

Goblin Market continues to appeal to popular audience. It has been set to music many times and adapted as a play by Poly Pen, Peggy Harmon in New York. It is in 1986 and Nick Hedges in London 1995. So it also has lent itself to musicals and musical, you know performances.

The 20th century revival of interest in the poem opened the floodgates of feminists, Marxists, Freudian, Queer Theory and New Historicist critiques which variously interpreted the poem as the warning again about the dangers of free market economy, a protest against hazardous practices of 19th century, food adulteration, Christian tale of sacrifice and salvation, parable of lesbian empowerment, a fable about anorexia, an expression of incestuous yearning and a tribute to the delicious oral and, oral and aural pleasures of poetry itself.

So you find how the poem has been, has opened itself to different kinds of interpretations and some of these are very interesting because there is one interpretation, there is one reading, one school of scholarship which talks about also one warning about nineteenth century food adulteration and the whole idea of the market opening up, the economy opening up and then we bring in, from all kinds, all parts of (25:47), in terms of making a sensation.

What happens to quality control, what happens to controlling the hygiene of the food that they are consuming?

So the food, the poem becomes then more of fable against unhygienic consumption, a moral fable about corrupted consumption, about contaminated consumption so the whole idea of contamination and not so hygiene becomes very important in the poem.

Also interestingly it can also be read, as the essay suggests as a fabled about anorexia which is again a very, very current concern among people today, especially people who occupy the public space, the glamour industry etc. anorexia being this idea, this fear of food in a way, the fear of putting on weight when you consume food.

So you know there is lot of throwing up metaphors in this poem, there is lot of consumption metaphors in the poem which go wrong, consumption going wrong, consumption becoming, an act of being consumed so interestingly consuming food or consuming goblin market becomes an act of self consumption. It begins to consume itself, or the healthy self that you have in you.

So goblin market has continued to thrive in the economic marketplace is a nice fun which is being played over here. The economic marketplace being the intellectual industry, the scholastic industry which then becomes important site what goblin market has continued to rise, continued to have a great brand value, continued to have a lasting premium value.

The poem continues to attract a critical interpretation, artistic adaptations as colorful and diverse as goblin merchants' wares, challenging Christina Rossetti's disingenuous claim that she did not mean anything profound by this fairy tale.

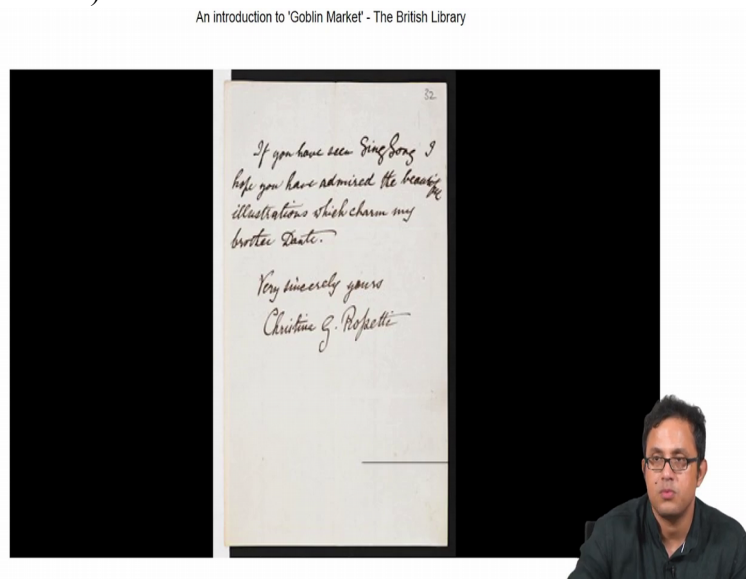
Now in literature we have this interesting idea of intentional fallacy. The intentional fallacy is obviously, when you read a particular text and you are making the error in terms of drawing too much on the writer's intention what writer may have meant, what the writer may have intended about the poem, which becomes secondary.

So if you take a look at Christina Rossetti's own declaration about the poem where she says quite clearly that she does not mean any profound in the poem, which obviously gives a like a different interpretative openings the poem has offered over the years.

So as we just saw the poem can be read as the poem about you know moral consumption, Marxist reading, about free market economy, the dangers of free market economy, that something which we saw, which we see even in Bram Stoker's Dracula, then about adulterated food qualities, adulteration in food, anorexia, about Queer Theories, about thespian relationship. So all these different kinds of, excuse me, different kinds of reading are available, are offered by the poem.

So that obviously gives a light to Rossetti's own claim that she does not mean anything profound in the poem. Now with this very short summary in mind

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what is interesting for us today and we begin with the poem in the next class is to take a look at the female agency in the poem.

And what do you mean by agency? Agency in this particular course may be defined as an ability of self to articulate a possibility of change, right. That is the working definition. Agency that we go ahead with it in this course, the ability of the self to articulate the possibility of change.

Now there may or may not be change, you know. There may be a failed attempt, Ok, there may be unsuccessful attempt, there may be an incomplete attempt but the agency becomes a possibility of attempting it, you know possibility of creating, possibilities as it were.

Now interestingly when we see the poem we find that the market, the Goblin Market (()) (29:32) being read obviously as a metaphor of consumerism, of this, the grand narrative of mercantile economy.

So all these questions that come without reading, without sort of description in the market, is that what happens to the female agency, what happens to the female consumption? So how is the female consumed by the market? Right.

So the whole idea of the female consumer being consumed that is something that the poem you know flags up in foreground quite dramatically. So we have, for instance Laura who is the fallen woman in the poem goes and, you know exchanges, some sort of exchanges, there is the exchange between the commodity and her own sexuality.

So she gives a part of her sexuality by symbolically giving a lock of hair with the hope or the expectation of getting some commodity out of the market. That becomes interesting strange and that also commodifies Laura as well.

So the whole aspiration for commodity is then itself commodified, right. So the aspiration gets commodified. That is one of the things which the marketplace does in this poem.

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It commodifies effect. It commodifies emotions.

Now contrast that to Lizzie's more sensible and more judicious, more pragmatic and more subversive idea of going to the market with the actual penny, not a metaphorical, sexual object, not metaphorical extension of self but the actual penny which will let enter the exchange mechanism in a very objective way.

Now that obviously, the woman with the penny, the woman with money, the woman with agency, the symbolic agency that completely decimates or unsettles to a great extent the mechanism of the market, market (())(31:14) is essentially male, essentially masculinist in quality. And that masculinist quality of the poem, the marketplace is undercut by Lizzie's refusal to consume anything without the penny.

Now the refusal to consume anything without paying for it also becomes the resistance against commodification, right. So you do not get commodified because you are, the commodity and the currency are external to you, right. They are not internal to you. You do not consume it. So the act of consuming the commodity consumes you and then turns you into commodity.

With Lizzie it is different because Lizzie goes to the marketplace with a clear difference, with the clear externalization between herself, her biological self and the currency with which she should purchase the commodity.

Right, so she holds penny in the hand. So there is outside of her, in a way, it does not become part of the body, it does not become part of the self so that idea of externalizing the currency for commodification becomes very, very interesting.

And that becomes the protective mechanism, you know against self-commodification. Right so the fact that she does not get commodified is because of the penny that she is holding in her hand. So that is something which is interestingly palpable in the poem.

Now also interesting is something which I may have mentioned already is how the body of the goblins, they are non-human in quality. So there is a reptilian quality about the goblins. There is a, you know, rat-like quality about the goblins, in the discussions of the goblins, the physiognomy features are definitely not human.

So there is a sense that they come from the outside, they are not very familiar. So they are outsiders, you know, they are dangerous outsiders. They are outsiders who come and consume the purity of British idyllic landscape.

So the violence on the body of the women can be very quickly read metaphorically as a violence on purity, violence on cultural purity, violence on cultural hygiene etc. So sense of hygiene becomes very, very important in the poem.

So hygiene as biological hygiene, hygiene as bodily hygiene, but also hygiene as moral and cultural hygiene. So the goblin market comes and you know the creation of the goblin market undercuts the moral hygiene, biological hygiene in idyllic England.

So we have lot of falling sick quite medically but same time it also become, it also contaminates the economy, it also contaminates the general idea of exchange in the landscape.

Perhaps it becomes very hardcore commodifying economy which is one of the dangers of an open liberal marketplace which is one of the readings of the poem.

From Marxian perspective it is a cautionary tale against open capitalism or unregulated capitalism. Now, interestingly this idea is fear of unregulated capitalism, something which we see, even in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, because the very *Dracula*, the novel very quickly we find out, it is not so much about a vampire coming and sucking other people's blood is also about the rich other, rich outsider who comes and buys the thing, who is unprincipled capitalist, unregulated capitalist.

That needs to be tamed, controlled otherwise you just cannot buy entity of England, right. So the whole idea of having a hematological network, of you know biters and suckers, you know, you bite people and in the process make them vampires, that also becomes in a way the bite of unregulated capitalism.

So *Dracula* becomes an embodiment of, very male embodiment of the perfect outsider. Of there have been a lot of readings about *Dracula* being anti-Semitic text, how the figure of the count, the figure of the vampire. There is very interesting parable of the figure of the Jew in, and the fear of the Jew in 19th century England. So that becomes very much interesting reading as well.

We are seeing similar here as well in terms of the goblins looking like non-humans, looking like definitely not Europeans and in contrast to the idyllic, pure European white quality of Lizzie and Laura, that contrast becomes quite biological specific, cultural in quality.

So you know this is a short summary, an introduction to the poem, the *Goblin Market* and we will obviously start with the main text. But also this session has given an idea of the directions we will take while reading the poem and hopefully, you know, you know by now, this is a very, very important poem.

It is one of the most complex poems that we will might study feminist readings, feminist scholarship, because it is a symbol of female agency, female emancipation, female resistance and also female vulnerability, the vulnerability of the women, the vulnerability of the body of the women with the arrival of the rave male market and how this resistance operate inside the market.

So when Lizzie for instance enters the market it is only then that she is able to resist and able to subvert the entire invasion of the marketplace because the marketplace becomes the place, you know which has this very male objects of seduction, invasion, you know fascination, adhering etc. And only when Lizzie enters the marketplace can she resist it.

So the arrival of the woman inside the marketplace becomes very symbolic arrival. See there are two women in this particular poem. There are actually 3 women. The other one mentioned is who again is a transgressive tale, or tale about transgression which is, which functions as a cautionary narrative in the poem.

But the two sisters in the poem become the primary protagonists. They enter the market. One of them enters the market and then trades the commodity for sexuality and that commodifies her, that dehumanizes her.

So the death, death-like quality that you know that Laura suffers as an example of dehumanization or vilification, extreme vilification, extreme dehumanization and that is being redeemed in the end by Lizzie of course who enters the market with the proper penny, a literal, you know embodiment of currency exchange or commodity exchange which then establishes the order back in marketplace.

So this is the summary of the poem that we will keep in mind and in terms of drawing on as we read the poem. And next class we start looking at the poem and we start the text reading it line by line and then connecting it in the broader concerns that we touched upon really today.

So I will see you in the next class, we continue with text. We will start the poem per say, read line by line and see how it connects with the concerns we discussed today. Thank you for your attention.