

Marxism

According to Marxist theory, human culture is determined by economic systems and material realities, as opposed to outside forces or individual circumstance. One can use this lense to interpret *Goblin Market* by Christina Rossetti which was written in the Victorian era. During this era, it is to be noted that many Victorians were unable to purchase fresh fruit. In addition, these types of fruits do not come from one geographic region, but from different parts of the world, which could imply higher prices. This makes the fruit a commodity, desired by the citizens, although specifically the women in the poem. The commodification of the fruit creates desire, even after the desire has been fulfilled. Rossetti uses the marketplace to expose consumerism, commodification, and the self-perpetuation of the system.

The merchant class goblins hold the power over anyone who is to buy fruit from them. They are businessmen in a capitalist society. The goblins call out, "Come buy our orchard fruits...All ripe together in summer weather...Sweet to tongue and sound to eye; Come buy, come buy." They know but do not share aloud that once the fruit is tasted, the cravings for the fruit will be continuous, and ultimately lead to one's death. They prey on the poor, working class. Because the fruits are so commoditized, the goblins will only accept gold in exchange for the fruit. Laura desires the fruit but states, "'Good folk, I have no coin; To take were to purloin: I have no copper in my purse, I have no silver either, And all my gold is on the furze.'" Although she has no money, the goblins settle instead for her golden hair. They state, "You have much gold upon your head," They answer'd all together: "Buy from us with a golden curl." Laura then cuts off a lock of her hair. Through this, Laura has commodified herself by using part of her body as payment for a material good. The goblins exploited her, using her gender and class against her.

Once Laura has eaten the fruit, she can no longer hear the goblins call out for buyers. The poem shares, “Laura turn’d cold as stone, To find her sister heard that cry alone, That goblin cry, “Come buy our fruits, come buy.” Then Laura exposes her thoughts, “Must she then buy no more such dainty fruit?” She succumbed to her desires, and although they were fulfilled, the want increases. This exposes the idea that what one has is never enough. Through eating the fruit, the poem begins to describe Laura’s physical deterioration. It begins with, “sunk eyes and faded mouth” then “Seem’d knocking at Death’s door.” Laura’s sister, Lizzie, cannot take seeing her sister in such a condition, and decides something must be done. She seeks out the goblins to buy fruit for her sister. Through this moment in the poem, one can see that the system is self-perpetual because Lizzie does not seek outside of the goblin marketplace for a cure for Laura.

Through the Marxist criticism, a reader can identify the work as a product of the socioeconomic conditions of the time and place in which the piece was written. The marketplace in *The Goblin Market* is used to expose consumerism, commodification, and the self-perpetuation of the system. In addition, the reader can expose the idea that people are never satisfied with what they have. There will always be a desire for more.