

Feminist Writings
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The Goblin Market - Part 3

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So hello and welcome to N P T E L course entitled Feminist Writings. So, we were looking at Cristina Rossetti's poem The Goblin Market.

So we have, already have two lectures on the poem, one introductory lecture, one we will start looking at the text. So let us continue with text today.

So the point where we stopped in the last lecture we saw how one of the two sisters, Laura, she partakes this forbidden fruit of the Goblin men and the Goblin men obviously described in great complex terms of being half human, half animals.

And the fruits and commodities which they bring in the market, their mark is a menace, they are uncanny in quality, they are unhomely in quality, they come from different parts of the world.

And we talked about how this point can be read as the caution against unregulated, unprincipled capitalism, a caution against contaminated consumption, etc.

And how the consumption becomes sexualized in quality, how the consumption becomes economic in quality and this whole idea of mapping the financial economy and the erotic economy on to each other is something which we saw in the poem already, when especially in a very, symbolic scene where Laura tells the marker, the merchant men that she does not have any penny.

She does not have any money to buy the, the commodity and they tell her, she can just partake of the fruit by parting with the hair, parting with the lock of her hair.

So parting of lock of her golden hair has become, becomes a market of surrender of her sexuality, of control over her sexuality in exchange of a certain commodity, right.

And that exchange becomes quite complex in quality, the exchange between the commodity and the erotic entity. That is something which we see in the poem throughout.

Now we also saw at the end, last bit where we study the poem how, when she turns back home, the whole idea of turning back towards home is associated with loss of her sense of ownership on the knowledge around her.

She does not quite know whether it is day or night. So she loses sense of spatial temporal knowledge, or spatial temporal recognition. So the spatial temporal derecognition of day and night is accompanied by going back towards home.

Now this point we begin with that session where what happens when she goes back home and she is admonished by her sister, more wise sister Lizzie. And this is what happens. We read the poem now.

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Then flung the emptied rinds away
But gather'd up one kernel stone,
And knew not was it night or day
As she turn'd home alone.

Lizzie met her at the gate
Full of wise upbraidings:
“Dear, you should not stay so late,
Twilight is not good for maidens;
Should not loiter in the glen
In the haunts of goblin men.
Do you not remember Jeanie,
How she met them in the moonlight,
Took their gifts both choice and many,
Ate their fruits and wore their flowers
Pluck'd from bowers
Where summer ripens at all hours?
But ever in the noonlight



Lizzie met her at the gate

Full of wise upbraidings:

So wise reprimand.

“Dear, you should not stay so late,

Twilight is not good for maidens;

Should not loiter in the glen

In the haunts of goblin men.

Do you not remember Jeanie,

How she met them in the moonlight,

Took their gifts both choice and many,

Ate their fruits and wore their flowers

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Lizzie met her at the gate
Full of wise upbraidings:
“Dear, you should not stay so late,
Twilight is not good for maidens;
Should not loiter in the glen
In the haunts of goblin men.
Do you not remember Jeanie,
How she met them in the moonlight,
Took their gifts both choice and many,
Ate their fruits and wore their flowers
Pluck’d from bowers
Where summer ripens at all hours?
But ever in the noonlight
She pined and pined away;
Sought them by night and day,
Found them no more, but dwindled and grew grey;
Then fell with the first snow.



Pluck’d from bowers

Where summer ripens at all hours?

But ever in the moonlight

She pined and pined away;

She sought them by night and day,

Found them no more, but dwindled and grew grey;

Then fell with the first snow,

While to this day no grass will grow

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In the haunts of goblin men.
Do you not remember Jeanie,
How she met them in the moonlight,
Took their gifts both choice and many,
Ate their fruits and wore their flowers
Pluck’d from bowers
Where summer ripens at all hours?
But ever in the noonlight
She pined and pined away;
Sought them by night and day,
Found them no more, but dwindled and grew grey;
Then fell with the first snow,
While to this day no grass will grow
Where she lies low:
I planted daisies there a year ago
That never blow.
You should not loiter so.”
“Nay, hush,” said Laura:



Where she lies low:

This is very interesting example of seemingly unimportant character Jeanie who comes then and who is introduced in this narrative economy, this narrative design as a conveyor of a certain kind of message, as a marker of certain kind of message.

So Lizzie tells Laura quite clearly that you do not remember Jeanie, what happened to her when she consumed this goblin, you know, the fruits of goblin men and you know she used to haunt around, she used to partake of the fruits and then what happened to her, is an example of biological death, you know and this biological death is also marker of certain kind of consumption.

So she got consumed by consuming the goblin fruit. So, what you consume consumes you back is what is the message in this particular poem. So act of consumption becomes quite loaded away. It becomes quite symbolic in quality, in the context of the goblin men and also if you take a look again, the space of the goblin men, they are, you know

Should not loiter in the glen
In the haunts of goblin men.

So that is where the goblin men haunt. So there is almost a prey metaphor, there is almost a invasion metaphor which we have seen already, but also a metaphor of haunting animals, animals which are haunting the wild landscapes, they will hunt you down if you are not careful.

And then the character Jeanie as I mentioned is important because it is seemingly unimportant but despite being seemingly unimportant, is actually conveying the certain kind of message.

Do you not remember Jeanie,
How she met them in the moonlight,
Took their gifts both choice and many,
Ate their fruits and wore their flowers
Pluck'd from bowers

This is the world of flowers, plucked from bowers and this is the interesting bit, where bowers come from a place where summer ripens at all hours. So summer ripens at all hours, so it is always summer, as endless summer. Hence idea of endless summer, permanent summer, have some sense of perversion to it.

So it is almost a perverted sense of fertility, a perverted sense of abundance which does not follow the cyclicity of seasons, so the seasons cyclicity, the natural order of seasons, so summer, winter, autumn etc. that does not come at all. So this is a summer, this is a place where summer ripens at all hours.

So there is degree of pathological quality or unnatural quality about this process of ripening, right, so it is again and that can be connected to modern concerns today about contaminated production, practices where something, certain kind of fruits, certain kinds of vegetables are produced through very inorganic methods, at very artificial methods.

The artificial, inorganic quality about the, you know dangerous fertilizer, about the dangerous modes of production can then become a menace for the consumer. So there are many things the poem can also read as caveat to the consumer, as a caveat against contaminated consumption, or the contamination which comes out of consumption.

Right so, it has been very clearly mentioned over here, this point you know these are flowers, the fruits which grow at places where summer ripens at all hours; they grow all the time, there is always summer over there.

And that begins, that makes it perverse in quality, that makes it corrupt in quality, and that you know if consume it then you consume the corruption that brings, that produces decadence in your body biologically as well as it is essentially, and then this is what happens to Jeannie.

Jeannie who cares in this narrative as a warning story, as a caveat narrative, as a caveat figure, something which, figure that appeals, which tells you what not to do, right.

She pined and pined away;
Sought them by night and day,

So she went and looked for the goblin men in search of an antidote presumably, but she could not find them because they have disappeared, right. Found them no more.

And this is an interesting bit in the poem because this is where I mentioned when I said that the market, the production of the market as a space has an adhoc quality about it. The market comes and goes, in contrast to the home which is more permanent in quality, and that idea of not being a home, it is also part of the uncanny package in the market.

The market comes, generated out of uncanny metonymic quality into the space ingredient into oblivion, dissolves away to some extent. So it is idea of dissolution of the market, it is idea of the disappearance of the goblin man is part of the menace quality that they carry with them.

So found them no more but dwindled and grew grey;
Then fell with the first snow,
While to this day no grass will grow

So this idea of being perfectly dead, this idea of being absolutely annihilated by consuming the goblin fruit is something which is described over here.

So, you know Jeannie died in a place, Jeannie is buried in the place where to this day no grass will grow. There is no regeneration of grass. So there is an absolute closure, clinical closure accompanying Jeannie's death.

where she lies low
I planted daisies there a year ago

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Took their gifts both choice and many,
Ate their fruits and wore their flowers
Pluck'd from bowers
Where summer ripens at all hours?
But ever in the noonlight
She pined and pined away;
Sought them by night and day,
Found them no more, but dwindled and grew grey;
Then fell with the first snow,
While to this day no grass will grow
Where she lies low:
I planted daisies there a year ago
That never blow.
You should not loiter so."
"Nay, hush," said Laura:
"Nay, hush, my sister:
I ate and ate my fill,

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That never blow.

You should not loiter so.”

So you know after giving this warning narrative, so this is very interestingly embedded narrative, it is a narrative embedded within a bigger narrative, a narrative of warning. So you know

I planted daisies there a year ago

So this is the place where I planted daisies but there was no regeneration which occurred there, they never blow. So daisies never came to bloom, daisies never saw the light.

You should not loiter so.

“Nay, hush,” said Laura:

“Nay, hush, my sister:

I ate and ate my fill,

So this is Laura being subversive, this is Laura you know gloating in her consumption, gloating as far as she consumed the goblin fruit and of course we have a sense of fall, sense of decadence, (08:39) immediately after.

I ate and ate my fill,

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Goblin Market by Christina Rossetti | Poetry Foundation

Yet my mouth waters still;
To-morrow night I will
Buy more;" and kiss'd her:
"Have done with sorrow;
I'll bring you plums to-morrow
Fresh on their mother twigs,
Cherries worth getting;
You cannot think what figs
My teeth have met in,
What melons icy-cold
Piled on a dish of gold
Too huge for me to hold,
What peaches with a velvet nap,
Pellucid grapes without one seed:
Odorous indeed must be the mead
Whereon they grow, and pure the wave they drink
With lilies at the brink.



Yet my mouth waters still;

To-morrow night I will

Buy more;"

So there is a degree of intoxication about this consumption, there is a degree of addiction about this consumption, there is degree of pathological quality about this consumption that she says I ate and ate my fill, but tomorrow I am going to go back again and eat more, and consume more.

and kiss'd her:

"Have done with sorrow;

I'll bring you plums to-morrow

Fresh on their mother twigs,

Cherries worth getting;

You cannot think what figs

My teeth have met in,

What melons icy-cold

Piled on a dish of gold

Too huge for me to hold,

What peaches with a velvet nap,

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icy my mouth waxes sun,
To-morrow night I will
Buy more;" and kiss'd her:
"Have done with sorrow;
I'll bring you plums to-morrow
Fresh on their mother twigs,
Cherries worth getting;
You cannot think what figs
My teeth have met in,
What melons icy-cold
Piled on a dish of gold
Too huge for me to hold,
What peaches with a velvet nap,
Pellucid grapes without one seed:
Odorous indeed must be the mead
Whereon they grow, and pure the wave they drink
With lilies at the brink,
And sugar-sweet their sap."



Pellucid grapes without one seed:
Odorous indeed must be the mead
Whereon they grow, and pure the wave they drink
With lilies at the brink,
And sugar-sweet their sap."

So she is completely intoxicated and seduced by the flavor, the taste of these fruits. She gives the narrative to the sister Lizzie and she says you have no idea, you cannot imagine the taste and flavor of the fruits that I have consumed.

She talks about the plums she will bring tomorrow, she says the cherries worth getting, you know, the fig that her teeth have met in. And she talks about the icy-cold melons piled over a dish of gold too huge for me to hold.

So this is the ornate quality, this ostentatious quality about these fruits is something which gives them a pathological, you know quality or make them a markers of menace, right. Because these are not natural organic fruits.

So there is a degree of inorganic, unnatural quality about these fruits which made them pathological, which made them a menace to consume. By the moment Laura is completely consumed by consumption.

She is completely intoxicated by consumption. And she gives a narrative, she dishes out a narrative to her sister and tells her that this is what I am partaking, this is what I have partook. And this is what I will be partaking it tomorrow and I will bring you back some fruits as well.

And then she says

Odorous indeed must be the mead

Whereon they grow

So the mead, the place where they grow must be very, very beautifully smelly, fragrant in quality, and you know because apart from that how else will you explain the wonderful quality, the wonderful taste, the wonderful flavors they carry?

and pure the wave they drink

With lilies at the brink,

And sugar-sweet their sap.

So this idea of saturated with sweetness, saturated with fertility, saturated with abundance, it is precisely what gives this poem this particular, you know the commodities that she partakes a pathological quality, a contaminated quality.

So the contamination becomes part of the fertility, part of the, you know inorganic and artificial fertility of these commodity, right. So that is part of the menace that this poem conveys. Ok

And then we are given the description of the intimacy

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laid on a dish of gold
Too huge for me to hold,
What peaches with a velvet nap,
Pellucid grapes without one seed:
Odorous indeed must be the mead
Whereon they grow, and pure the wave they drink
With lilies at the brink,
And sugar-sweet their sap.”

Golden head by golden head,
Like two pigeons in one nest
Folded in each other's wings,
They lay down in their curtain'd bed:
Like two blossoms on one stem,
Like two flakes of new-fall'n snow,
Like two wands of ivory
Tipp'd with gold for awful kings.
Moon and stars gaz'd in at them,
Wind sang to them lullabv.



of sisters which I said, you know I already mentioned that it is very interesting kind of intimacy because it gives a sense of kinship, a sense of biological kinship but it is also an erotic quality about this intimacy as well which we will see as described in the poem.

Golden head by golden head,
Like two pigeons in one nest
Folded in each other's wings,
They lay down in their curtain'd bed:
Like two blossoms on one stem,
Like two flakes of new-fall'n snow,
Like two wands of ivory
Tipp'd with gold for awful kings.

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Pellucid grapes without one seed:
Odorous indeed must be the mead
Whereon they grow, and pure the wave they drink
With lilies at the brink,
And sugar-sweet their sap.”

Golden head by golden head,
Like two pigeons in one nest
Folded in each other's wings,
They lay down in their curtain'd bed:
Like two blossoms on one stem,
Like two flakes of new-fall'n snow,
Like two wands of ivory
Tipp'd with gold for awful kings.
Moon and stars gaz'd in at them,
Wind sang to them lullaby,
Lumbering owls forbore to fly,
Not a bat flapp'd to and fro



Moon and stars gaz'd in at them,
Wind sang to them lullaby,
Lumbering owls forbore to fly,

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Whereon they grow, and pure the wave they drink
With lilies at the brink,
And sugar-sweet their sap.”

Golden head by golden head,
Like two pigeons in one nest
Folded in each other's wings,
They lay down in their curtain'd bed:
Like two blossoms on one stem,
Like two flakes of new-fall'n snow,
Like two wands of ivory
Tipp'd with gold for awful kings.
Moon and stars gaz'd in at them,
Wind sang to them lullaby,
Lumbering owls forbore to fly,
Not a bat flapp'd to and fro
Round their rest:
Cheek to cheek and breast to breast
Lock'd together in one nest.



Not a bat flapp'd to and fro
Round their rest:
Cheek to cheek and breast to breast
Lock'd together in one nest.

So a lot of bird metaphors come in this description in this particular intimacy. So they lie together, they, symbol of tranquility, sense of tranquility, scene of absolute intimacy but you know the sort of natural metaphors which are used convey this intimacy.

Like two blossoms on one stem,
Like two flakes of new-fall'n snow,
Like two wands of ivory
Tipp'd with gold for awful kings.

So it is very interesting combination of natural metaphors like snow and you know blossom and blossoms on the stem, and we have ivory as well, two wands of ivory tipped with golds for awful kings.

So ivory was a very common colonial merchandise, very common colonial commodity which often became a metaphor of greed, metaphor of lust, metaphor of colonial exploitations, etc. so that also enters the description, the descriptive economy this particular point of time and that makes them complicated as well.

So,

Moon and stars gaz'd in at them,
Wind sang to them lullaby,
So winds sing the lullaby, the moon and stars gazing at them
It is all natural at the moment
Lumbering owls forbore to fly,
Not a bat flapp'd to and fro
Round their rest:
Cheek to cheek and breast to breast
Lock'd together in one nest.

So there are two birds which are so huddled together in absolute intimacy in one nest. So again this becomes a very interesting construction of a perfect home, a perfectly protective home where Laura and Lizzie find themselves nested at this point of time.

Early in the morning

When the first cock crow'd his warning,

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Lumbering owls forbore to fly,
Not a bat flapp'd to and fro
Round their rest:
Cheek to cheek and breast to breast
Lock'd together in one nest.

Early in the morning
When the first cock crow'd his warning,
Neat like bees, as sweet and busy,
Laura rose with Lizzie:
Fetch'd in honey, milk'd the cows,
Air'd and set to rights the house,
Kneaded cakes of whitest wheat,
Cakes for dainty mouths to eat,
Next churn'd butter, whipp'd up cream,
Fed their poultry, sat and sew'd;

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Neat like bees, as sweet and busy,
Laura rose with Lizzie:
Fetch'd in honey, milk'd the cows,
Air'd and set to rights the house,
Kneaded cakes of whitest wheat,
Cakes for dainty mouths to eat,
Next churn'd butter, whipp'd up cream,
Fed their poultry, sat and sew'd;

So if you take a look at these activities, they are very domestic idyllic activities, fetching honey, milking the cows, you know, kneading the cakes with wheat, churning butter, whipping up cream, feeding the poultry, and then sewing and sitting together.

So a very domestic, quote unquote a stereotypical female activity in the household, domestic female idyllic activity that she is partaking in, you know churning butter or fetching the milk from the cows, collecting honey, sitting and sewing together, etc.

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Talk'd as modest maidens should:
Lizzie with an open heart,
Laura in an absent dream,
One content, one sick in part;
One warbling for the mere bright day's delight,
One longing for the night.

At length slow evening came:
They went with pitchers to the reedy brook;
Lizzie most placid in her look,
Laura most like a leaping flame.
They drew the gurgling water from its deep;
Lizzie pluck'd purple and rich golden flags,
Then turning homeward said: "The sunset flushes
Those furthest loftiest crags;
Come, Laura, not another maiden lags.
No wilful squirrel lags



And we have continuation of this idyllic, you know desirable female behavior.

Talk'd as modest maidens should:

Lizzie with an open heart,
Laura in an absent dream,

So this is beginning of the contamination, this is the beginning of the replication of contamination as well.

Laura in an absent dream,
One content, one sick in part;
One warbling for the mere bright day's delight,
One longing for the night.

Right, so we have a clear bifurcation over here. So what is interesting is how at the beginning seemingly the two poem, the two sisters come together, huddle together, they become one, they sleep together in a very peaceful, intimate way at the beginning but with the following day we have a sense of difference between them.

So they all start the day together, both of them, they carry out similar activities, fetching honey, collecting butter, collecting milk you know, churning butter, sitting and sewing etc.

But at the end, by the time this stanza ends we know that Lizzie operates with an open heart because she is completely clear and clean and you know pure still whereas Laura in an absent dream.

So Laura is half taken and half consumed by an absent dream, the dream of going back to the goblins and partaking that seductive fruit, that forbidden fruit

One content, and one sick in part;

So this pathological quality comes in. So there is lot of medical metaphors which will come in as we examine we read the poem,

One content, one sick in part;

One warbling for the mere bright day's delight,

One longing for the night.

So right, so one is indulging in the happiness of the day and one is longing for the night, right. So night time is the time when she will go back to goblins, where she would probably partake all the fruits one more time.

And night of course is a symbol of darkness, evil and lack of knowledge which makes them more menacing in quality. So night becomes a metaphor or marker of menace in the poem.

And next we have the description of slow evening.

At length the slow evening came:

They went with pitchers back to the reedy brook;

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*One coming, one sick in pain,
One warbling for the mere bright day's delight,
One longing for the night.*

*At length slow evening came:
They went with pitchers to the reedy brook;
Lizzie most placid in her look,
Laura most like a leaping flame.
They drew the gurgling water from its deep;
Lizzie pluck'd purple and rich golden flags,
Then turning homeward said: "The sunset flushes
Those furthest loftiest crags;
Come, Laura, not another maiden lags.
No wilful squirrel wags,
The beasts and birds are fast asleep."
But Laura loiter'd still among the rushes
And said the bank was steep.*

And said the hour was early still



Lizzie most placid in her look,
Laura most like a leaping flame.
They drew the gurgling water from its deep;
Lizzie pluck'd purple and rich golden flags,
Then turning homeward said: "The sunset flushes
Those furthest loftiest crags;
Come, Laura, not another maiden lags.
No wilful squirrel wags,
The beasts and birds are fast asleep."
But Laura loiter'd still among the rushes
And said the bank was steep.

So in the evening they went to collect water from a brook and then when they finished collecting water, Lizzie the more wise sister asked them to go back quickly because she says no another maiden is around and this is not a safe place to be.

But again we have sense of Laura loitering and these words are very important in the poem, loitering, lingering, a sense of liminality is there in these words.

So she is about to enter, she is about to cross the threshold and about to enter the forbidden territory, she is about to enter perhaps a dangerous territory, a menacing territory and the idea of entering the menacing space becomes important quality.

But Laura loiter'd still among the rushes

And said the bank was steep.

And said the hour was early still

The dew not fall'n, the wind not chill;

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I men turning nomewara said: I ne sunset rushes

Those furthest loftiest crags;
Come, Laura, not another maiden lags.
No wilful squirrel wags,
The beasts and birds are fast asleep."
But Laura loiter'd still among the rushes
And said the bank was steep.

And said the hour was early still
The dew not fall'n, the wind not chill;
Listening ever, but not catching
The customary cry,
"Come buy, come buy,"
With its iterated jingle
Of sugar-baited words:
Not for all her watching
Once discerning even one goblin
Racing, whisking, tumbling, hobbling;
Let alone the herds



Listening ever, but not catching

The customary cry,

"Come buy, come buy,"

So that seductive cry comes back to her, in her brain, cruise back to her brain because that has consumed her very, even erotically

With its iterated jingle

So again the word jingle is important because as I have mentioned already this is probably an allegory of critique of the emerging industry of advertisement.

And the deceptive quality of advertisement, deceptive quality of jingles where, you know things are said but not meant and you know in the process of packaging things where the words, what is actually conveyed is, you know dangerous commodities which are sold and exoticized and sensationalized and that idea of jingle becomes important here as well.

Of sugar-baited words:

Again deceptive, seductive in quality you know and treacherous in quality

Sugar-baited words

Not for all her watching

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But Laura forget a sun among the bushes
And said the bank was steep.

And said the hour was early still
The dew not fall'n, the wind not chill;
Listening ever, but not catching
The customary cry,
"Come buy, come buy,"
With its iterated jingle
Of sugar-baited words:
Not for all her watching
Once discerning even one goblin
Racing, whisking, tumbling, hobbling;
Let alone the herds
That used to tramp along the glen,
In groups or single,
Of brisk fruit-merchant men.

Till Lizzie urged. "O Laura, come:



Once discerning even one goblin

Racing, whisking, tumbling, hobbling;

Let alone the herds

That used to tramp along the glen,

In groups or single,

Of brisk fruit-merchant men.

So again if you look at the verbs over here, racing, whisking, tumbling, hobbling very, very animal-like verbs, very animal-like movements, not human in quality, you know in groups or single, of brisk fruit-merchant men.

Brisk, again the word brisk is important, swift, quick and there is a

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sense of again, deceptiveness about it, the treacherous quality about it, something which will outsmart you, something which is not homely in quality, something which is not domestic or reliable in quality, menacing in quality, right

So this is the point where we will stop this lecture today. I will continue with the next lecture, continue with the text in the next lecture but it is important for us to understand how the landscape, even the idyllic landscape is getting defamiliarized

It is getting deterritorialized with the arrival of the goblin men and that deterritorialization, psychological deterritorialization as well because Laura who is very idyllic woman becomes metaphor of purity, cultural purity, hygiene etc and that becomes almost seduced you know by the arrival of men who are brisk in quality, deceptive in quality.

They use sugar-coated words to sensationalize things and in the process sell dangerous things which, you know produces the idea of menace, produces economy of menace for the naive and the innocent consumer around.

Right so again we look at the way in which the economic industry, the economic metaphors and the erotic metaphors combine with each other in the poem in a very interesting way. And

that is something which we will continue unpacking as we move on and read the text in the following lectures.

By this point we will stop this poem and we will move on, you know as I mentioned in the following lectures with the subsequent stanzas. Thank you for your attention.