

Literary analysis

Literature



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September 11, Literary Analysis: ical Poetry and Medieval Lyrics Two poems that use fruits as themes and are categorized under classical poetry are “Peach Tree Soft and Tender” and “Plums are Falling” (The Norton Anthology of World Literature: Beginnings to 1650, 3rd edition). In the first poem, the peach tree was the focal point where the process of ripening of the peach fruit symbolize the deepening of the relationship between the bride and the groom’s family. The meaning was deduced from the evolving process: “How your blossoms grow! ... (to) plump, the ripening fruit... (and eventually) its leaves spread thick and full” (The Norton Anthology of World Literature: Beginnings to 1650, 3rd edition: Peach Tree Soft and Tender lines 2, 4, 6). The subject matter, the peach tree, is also used as the central theme which symbolized the evolving life of woman, from the time she became a bride, until she is assimilated to the family of the groom; as if, synonymous with an unlocking of a door (Nagatani). The second poem, “Plums are Falling”, plums allegedly symbolize a woman who chooses a groom from a set of suitors (Carter). The fruit is depicted as ripe, since the action verb, falling, represents maturity and appropriate age to be picked (or wed). Likewise, as emphasized, women were noted to have far more numbers than men in those days, and as such, they had the prerogative to select from many. Fruits were used and depicted in classical poetry as objects of productiveness and bounty, as described through positive traits and characteristics: soft, tender, plump, ripe, and being desired.

In the medieval lyrics, “Strawberry Picking”, written by Alexander the Wild, as he was noted to have memories of his childhood, the fruit was mentioned in the third and fourth stanzas from a total of seven. When boys were noted to be lured to strawberries, they were allegedly being forewarned of the

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danger of encountering snakes in the forest, where these fruits abound. As such, the fruit was used in the medieval lyrics as a symbol of deception: a lure for danger (Sweester and Sullivan). Despite its inviting sweetness, and the boy's remembrance of the incident of strawberries picking, as a form of play, the focal point of the poem was the warning that these boys should be cognizant that they are exposed to evident death from snakes which could be hidden within tall grasses in the forest. Much like the apple in the Garden of Eden, where Eve was apparently deceived by the serpent to try and taste the inviting fruit, the strawberries could be representing a bait for young children to be, likewise, bitten by snakes in the forest.

Comparing the depiction of fruits from the classical poems with the medieval lyrics, it could be deduced that there are similarities and disparities. For one, there were similarities in terms of acknowledging these fruits are inviting, due to their natural sweetness, ripeness and good taste. Likewise, these fruits similarly symbolize women, who have been known to have the distinct ability and appeal to lure men. In contrast, while the fruits were illustrated in a more positive and optimistic manner in the classical poems, the strawberries were given a negative connotation in the medieval lyrics, as a potential source of danger and even death. In addition, the fruits were the focal points of the classical poems, as evidenced from the repetition of the title in the first lines of each stanza – signifying relevance and emphasis (Gao). This is contrasted with the mention of the strawberries in the medieval lyrics, where the fruit was observed to be stated in the third and fourth stanzas only.

Works Cited

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