

THE GOLDEN BIRD AS THE CAPITALIST ALLEGORY: CLASS, ALIENATION AND THE PEDAGOGY OF A FAIRY TALE

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Abstract

This paper proposes a critical Marxist interpretation of the fairy tale about the The Golden Bird as written by the brothers Grimm, based on the premise that the fairy tale serves as an allegory of smart socio-economic sort which prefigures the logic of industrial capitalism. And while the story was drawn from a pre-capitalist oral tradition, the symbolism within the story is unlocked and revealed to contain a prescient condemnation of incipient class relationships and exploitative labor relations, of systemic alienation. Through a reading of the text which is interpolated with Marxist theoretical constructs - base and superstructure, class struggle, commodity fetishism and the four forms of alienation, the golden bird and apples are read as capital, the distant kings as alienated bourgeoisie, obsessed with accumulation, and the dangerous adventure of the sons of the gardener as proletarian experience of forced labour and ideological interpellation. At the center of this reading is the figure of the wise fox who is being invoked as subject of critical pedagogy and emergent class consciousness, and as the key to maneuvering a way through and overturning the system of oppression. Contextualizing the tale in the historical context of the Grimm 19th century Germany and in intertextual communication with basic texts in political economics and literary naturalism, this analysis reveals the way in which the folk tale goes beyond its moral surface level. The tale's autobiographical enduring pedagogical value is the concluding assertion in this study whose intellectual overcoming of allegorical chains partakes in the vital pedagogy of cultivating critical media literacy and is the key part of a study that concludes with the assertion that deciphering the tale's allegorical chains is a pivotal act of understanding to counteract and critically engage with the perennial machinations of capital and exploitation.

Introduction

The Grimm brothers were from Germany and they published the fairy tale “The Golden Bird” in their collection. They were aware of the reality that literature can serve for different purposes in the society. They incorporate different moral values in the nations. This particular story serves as a different point of view to look at capitalism and the class-hierarchies. Ruling-class is present from the historic times and they have the people who work for them. Though capitalism was not present at the time when this story was written or came into oral tradition but the class-differences and their roles were clear. The men in power continued to exploit working-class. The Grimm brothers were present when the modern capitalism came into existence. The story depicts the working-class but more powerful in the form of contractors. They have duty to perform. They are obligated to the rulers in different ways. This is necessary to aware the people through literature that there are various hurdles in the way of working-class. This is obvious that a man learns in a fun way better than forcefully. The choice of studying this fairy tale through Marxist lens fulfills this necessity. The workers are forced to work sometimes in toxic environments. They are not taken care. Proletariats only have to work for themselves and their family. Authors have the sense to write for purpose, they design the characters and the story, in the same story, to portray different

scenarios and alternative outcomes. This story uses the characters for more than one portrayal. The study discusses the sons of the gardener as the labor while the gardener as the proletariat, working under the ruler, and the bourgeoisie, for the characters of sons. It justifies the qualities of both the classes. Ruling-class also depicts somewhere as bourgeoisie. The confrontations on the way are also of various significances. This study is basically a capitalist commentary on the fairytale. This is the need of the hour because nowadays, the children are very much into the stories especially online and the people with resources are often those who are literate. When the men of words study the stories in this way, they would be able to teach their children so that the humanity should prevail.

Significance of the Study:

Literary Studies: It makes a contribution to literary studies on the topic of fairy-tales, by employing a rigorous political-economic reading of the classic fairytale, paraving away from conventional moralistic/psychological readings of this classic text.

Marxist Criticism: This one shows the versatility and continual application of Marxist theory for the analysis of pre-capitalist narratives, and it demonstrates the ability of folk structures to move sophisticated ideas about power and labor.

Cultural Pedagogy: Despite this time where narratives are mostly consumed in digital media, this research highlights the importance of critical media literacy. It offers a more model for educators and parents in breaking stories down that are ordinarily considered to be simple using a child, which can foster a form of early consciousness of social justice, class inequality, and ethics of labor.

Contemporary Relevance: In connecting the feudal dynamics of the tale to modern-day capacitor problems such as workplace alienation, manufacturer gig economy, and the inordinate power of company big wigs the study interlinks the historical literary tradition and current-day anxieties arguing for the usefulness of classical literature in comprehending ongoing social struggles.

Research Question

How is the act of The Golden Bird by the Grimm Brothers (fairy tales), which is written as an allegorical narrative for criticizing the dynamics of exploiting class, alienation of worker, and nestling of the accumulated capital as in the feudal structure, relevant to the understanding of modern capitalist societies?

Research Objectives

1. To do a close textual analysis of "The Golden Bird" in order to identify and interpret symbols, characters, and plot points as allegories as class structures (bourgeoisie, proletariat), means of production, capitalist exploitation
2. To investigate relations which exist between the characters (the King, the gardener, his sons, the fox) using Marxist conditions such as alienation, surplus value, class struggle.
3. To contextualize the fairy tale's critique during the historical background of the time period of the Grimm Brothers and the beginning of modern capitalism.
4. To contemplate the tale's relevance in the present, as an educational device for revealing the permanence of class difference and the alienation of workers in the modern industrial and post-industrial world.

Research Methodology:

This study uses qualitative research design with critical interpretive analysis as the focus. The methodology of it is as follows:

Textual Analysis: Close reading of the primary text, "The Golden Bird," attention is paid to narrative construction, characters archetypes, symbolic imagery, important dialogues. This kind of analysis is deductive, based on the proven Marxist theoretical framework.

Critical Literary Analysis: It is the fairy tale which is elessed is treated as coherent literary artifact whose constructed elements (plot, conflict resolution) are systematically decoded revealing underlying socio-economic comment.

Contextual Analysis: The story is revealed in the historical and biographical background of the Grimm Brothers in 19th century Germany (early industrialization, changing social system, etc.) to grasp its possible status as a reflexive criticism. Thematic Synthesis: Results from the textual analysis are compiled as over-arching themes that stem from the theoretical framework, e.g. "Allegories of Capital", "The Alienated Worker's Journey" or "Mentorship as Class Consciousness".

Intertextual Dialogue: The analysis is supported and enriched through interaction with foundation class Marxists (Marx, Engels) and other elements of literary work depicting class struggle (e.g., Sinclair, Zola, Steinbeck), as illustrated in the literature review. This sets the story's position in a greater tradition of social rebuke.

Theoretical Framework:

This research is based on Marxist literary criticism and political economy. The most common theory lens include:

Base and Superstructure: The tale is seen as being part of the superstructure, reflecting and critiquing the economic base (class relations and modes of production) of the time as well as anticipating the dynamics of capitalism in the future.

Class Struggle and Exploitation: The interaction between the kings (bourgeoisie) and the family of the gardener (proletariat) observed is presented through an analysis of class struggles as the ruling class uses the power throughout society to compel labour for its own accumulation of symbolic capital (the golden bird/apples).

Alienation: The journeys and tribulations of the sons, especially their distractions and obligations, are understood as forms of Marxian alienation - from the product of their labor, from the labor process, from their fellow workers and from their human potential.

Symbolic Capital and Commodity Fetishism: The golden bird and apples are not just magic things but things of capital and commodified desire and desire is what drives the whole economic logic of the story.

Ideology and False Consciousness: The edicts of the kings and the supposedly magical diversions (such as the comfortable inn) are ideological apparatus that ensure submissiveness and obfuscate the reality of the exploitative social relations.

Thesis Statement

This paper argues that the "The golden bird" of the Grimm brothers, while ostensibly a pre-capitalist folk tale, nevertheless works within a sophisticated allegorical framework to critique certain basic exploitative and alienating problems of class-based societies. Through the symbolic narrative, in which the golden bird and the apples symbolise capital, the kings symbolise the bourgeoisie while the sons of the gardener embody the proletariat, the tale throws light on the process by which the ruling class manages to extract labour from workers, mandating obedience, and preventing class solidarity. Ultimately, the story argues the need for a critical class consciousness that implies liberation from exploitation involves mentorship, solidarity and a rejection for the distractions and false senses of comfort in the capitalist system.

Literature Review

The bourgeoisie are so much into their business and selfish enough that they want their product only for them. The bourgeoisie want to gather as much as they can. They look toward the other's businesses, of the fellow-capitalists, to own these. They are very selfish that they don't think of the others. All the capitalists are of the same nature; only the proletariats are used by them to reach their high materialistic goals. Whenever they have the chance to exploit them, they do. The behavior with the working-class is not on the basis of humanity but depends on the profit or loss as stated, *"It was not the business of any one to see that he was a man; no, the business of every one was to see that he did his work (Sinclair, 1906/2003, p. 76)*. This waters in them the tree of cruelty. The bourgeoisie do harm the proletariats deliberately to have all the materials with them as, *"The bourgeoisie has resolved personal worth into exchange value, and in place of the numberless indefeasible chartered freedoms, has set up that single, unconscionable freedom — Free Trade. In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation." (Marx & Engels, 1848/2002, p. 220)* Materials, to them, are the happiness, security, independence, luxuries, and respect in the society. This gives them pleasure of life as suggested, *the point of view of the shopkeeper, for whom everything has its price, who lives for profit and comfort, and who has abolished every qualitative distinction in life, transforming it into a matter of quantity, of exchange, of social respectability and secure possession.*" (Marx, 1867/1976, p. 163) The capitalists are strict in their policies. Their actions affect not only the person on work, but his family is targeted indirectly as remarked by Hochschild (1997), *"In the 'third shift,' parents managed the emotional fallout of long work hours on children, feeling guilt and strain over missed dinners, school events, and bedtime stories. The family paid the price for corporate efficiency, not in wages, but in stolen time and fractured intimacy."* They suffer very much physically and mentally. The working-class is not free of the harm from the industrialists. Ignoring the orders of the bourgeoisie is equivalent to the death of them as Engels (1845) states, *"Here ends all freedom in law and in fact. The operative must be in the mill at half-past five in the morning; if he comes a couple of minutes too late, he is fined... The despotic bell calls him from his bed, his breakfast, his dinner."*. The proletariats are forced to go against their will and so are alienated from their own self and their family, due to the work situations as Marx opined, *"Labour is external to the worker, i.e., it does not belong to his essential being; that in his work, therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself."* (Marx, 1844/1988, p. 74) On the contrary, the proletariats are forced to act according to the desires of the contractor under which they work directly and the capitalist indirectly. Proletariats are too forced to be alienated from the society, from the fellow workers, from the self of their self, and from the product they are producing that they dedicate themselves and their loved-ones to the work as (Engels, 1845/2009) stated that *the laborers do not exclusively endure. Conversely, the entire families endure because they are dependent on the laborer from their domicile who bears the obligation to procure sustenance.* The proletariats long to have a sight of their beloveds. Men in industrial society, even proletariats, have no personal or humanity-based affections. They respond only in reciprocity as stated, *We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages*" (Smith, 1776/1976, p. 26-27). If they have something in return from the other, then they value it but otherwise not. Even fellow-workers don't believe each other. They know that all men are in need

of something from all the others as suggested by Sinclair (1906) that *the men who did the work were held to a pace that made careful work impossible, and were forced to use dangerous shortcuts, and to hide their mistakes*. Proletariats know that if a man is weaker than them he can be of no use for them, but on the other hand they treat him bad due to the fear that he can deceive them and he might be the bourgeoisie in disguise. So, they avail the chance of harming the capitalist-class where they can as stated, *"They were all possessed by a dream of revenge, a longing for the ruin of the mines. 'It's the pumps we must smash!' cried Maheu. 'Let the water come in and flood the whole lot, since they refuse to give us fair wages!'... 'Yes, yes, drown the beasts! No more Voreux! Let's have our turn, we've had enough of being torn to pieces underground! (Zola, 1885/2004, p. 347)* The proletariats must think and consider the nature of the job before giving joining. This is obvious that not all the jobs are for everyone but this is also the fact that when man feels the necessity of doing anything for survival, he sees nothing in front of him as suggested, *'I'll do any work I can get,' he said. 'I got to. You see that culvert out there? I built that. I worked like a dog for twelve hours a day. I saved a little money and then I got sick. And when I got well, the supervisor said he didn't have me on the list no more. He didn't know me. Nobody knew me.'* (Steinbeck, 1939/2006, p. 388) He steps ahead to do what is needed to do. Man keeps himself upright and ready for the worst. Survival is the key to live in the world especially when capitalists are around. But this is also the fact that sometimes, the working-class work so tirelessly that they get what they wanted to get. Sometimes they set them free from the cruel capitalists.

The man who has crossed the same path already becomes very much witty and aware of what can be the possibilities in the way of the one who is pursuing or about to pass from that path as remarked, *In the second stage, in which the reality of oppression has already been transformed, this pedagogy ceases to belong to the oppressed and becomes a pedagogy of all people in the process of permanent liberation (Freire, 1970/2018, p. 54)*. Adaptation according to the environment is the necessity of survival. The novelty of every situation takes time to shape man's vision because man has to adapt to different environments to perform his best and this takes time and certain decisions in this time period are taken not according to the demand of the situation, this is stated, *"Novelty emerges only with difficulty, manifested by resistance, against a background provided by expectation."* (Kuhn, 1996, p. 64) When a man is the only breadwinner, he takes every step very carefully.

A dedicated man is loved by almost all the men around him because of his clarity of mind. People work to protect him like the father of the sons in the story *"The Golden Bird"* as remarked by (James, 1963) that *his men, those former slaves, fought for him with a ferocity born of the knowledge that he was their brain and their shield. They protected his person not out of servility, but because they understood him to be the embodiment of their collective will to be free*. Men with purpose are witty and know how to act and when to act. Though they also show some human errors, but still they are considered worthy as something is better than nothing. Man with foresightedness and clear intent cares for those who are around him. He values the council of others. Though in capitalist setting, it is good to revisit what others said, but ignoring it can also be very shocking; this is what is kept in the mind of a man with responsibility.

Technical education is very important for being respected by fellow-workers and the owners of the means of production. A skilled man has his worth in the industry and outside it because he is comparatively independent in himself that if one company rejects him then the other is open for him. Marx (1867) wrote, *"An artificer, who performs one after another the various fractional operations in the production of a finished article, must at one time change his place, at another*

his tools. The transition from one operation to another interrupts the flow of his labour, and creates, so to say, gaps in his working day. ... The worker who performs the same simple operation for a lifetime converts his body into the automatic, one-sided implement of that operation." Every step of the work is important to learn so that the task can be completed without that much error. The people who are seen enjoying their lives have already achieved what they wanted materialistically, so they must not be the source of distraction for those who are still going through the pathway.

Man wants respect. As soon as a man is respected and loved, he offers his services. This is the point to be understood by the capitalists that they have to adopt a polite way because this all takes a turn to damage capitalists as opined, *It can be hidden only in complete silence and perfect passivity, but its disclosure can almost never be achieved as a wilful purpose. It is implicit in speech and action, and thus respect and love, which urge us to forgive, are the only reactions that do not merely re-act but act anew and unexpectedly upon what was done.*" (Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 193) People show that they care for the fellow-humans, but they restrain them from doing what is good for themselves.

Physical appearance is a big deal in the industrial society. People don't believe the man in the unpleasant appearances as remarked by Bourdieu (1984) that *the body is a living memory pad. The principles of the habitus—the way one walks, talks, stands, dresses—are embodied, turned into permanent dispositions, a way of being. The 'unpleasant' appearance is one that fails to conform to the legitimate bodily hexis of the dominant class. In the industrial office or sales floor, this failure is read not as a difference of culture, but as a lack of moral worth and credibility.* Garments have been of great importance from the past. Appearances create an impression on especially more powerful people. As in the capitalist world, the appearances and the attire are worth a fortune as writes, *Garments were the first visible sign of this new dependency. They marked the division between the one who could command the labor to make fine cloth and the one who wore only coarse skins.*" (Beckert, 2014, p. xv)

People from the same class have almost the same mindset; all the classes trust on the class they belong to. Men with resources are perceived that they may be of some use for the bourgeoisie or the men with power for them. The demands of man keep on increasing with the increase of wealth and resources. A wealthy man has more desires than the one with less resources. The capitalist-class is aware of their class as well if they see it with the bird-eye view because they are also humans with senses. Furthermore, good and bad are like white and black, i.e., highly distinguishable. Chances of betterment are always there. So, a man, even a bourgeoisie, especially the one who has seen the scarcity of materials or has been the target of fellow-industrialists, helps the proletariats to gain more rather than the bourgeoisie. He knows that the materials in the hands of the bourgeoisie bring the destruction of social fabric. So, they council and train the working-class to have economy in their hands. They give them the tips and tricks to do that. Class-solidarity is the key to minimize the confrontations with sorrows.

Textual Analysis

This is a narrative study. The bird and all the other wonders in the story are the symbolic representation of the rulers' demands and, somewhere, of the capital or investment that is not easily attained by the proletariats. Dollar generates another dollar. The bird taking the golden apple shows this attraction and how capital forms the foundation for more money, as the king discovers that "every night a golden apple was missing from [the] tree" (Grimm & Grimm, 1812/2002, p. 1). The word "certain king" is used deliberately to show that the bourgeoisie are the kings of the modern

world. They order the proletariats, and, just like kings, the bourgeoisie are the few who have a number of subjects acting upon their orders. The kings also show the hierarchy of capitalists: the first king has the least money, and the next one has more than the prior, and this goes on. The anger of the king is due to the reason that he also wants to have the golden apples and the golden bird, as he commands the gardener's sons to "bring him the bird" (Grimm & Grimm, 1812/2002, p. 2). The more the exposure to the luxuries of the capitalist class, the more they want these for themselves. The bourgeoisie remain always in pursuit of what they do not have and use weaker people for their purposes.

The proletariats have no power to ignore the orders they receive. They always look towards the bourgeoisie to act in life, as seen when the gardener tells his sons that "we cannot let the golden apples be stolen" and they must watch (Grimm & Grimm, 1812/2002, p. 1). The bourgeoisie have wealth which the working-class do not. The gardeners, or all the workers under a ruling class, have little except their residence; the bread and butter to put something on the table for their family is not paid to them except when the bourgeoisie are pleased with them. This depends on the bourgeoisie's mental situation. Proletariats have to put themselves in danger to have a livable life. Then the industrialists set their business in one state—the modern capital trend, though it is an old trend—but globalization caused them to grow their businesses by accompanying or investing in other foreign companies. The demand of having that golden bird is its depiction, as one king desires the bird itself, another its golden cage, and a third the golden horse (Grimm & Grimm, 1812/2002, p. 3-4). This causes them to have a share in what the international company earns. The capitalists, when not connected directly with their businesses, get nothing from them, as hard-work is key to success; this is a lesson for the bourgeoisie that they gain nothing much at the end. Capitalists use the working-class for their material purposes, but when they put their ores in it directly, they get the results as shown by the fox. The satisfaction of the fox at the end demonstrates this. This is the rule of the markets that no one is trustworthy. Capitalists, in the markets are there to make profits rather than serving humanity.

The bourgeoisie assign the proletariats tasks that are really difficult, which puts their hard-work to the test. They themselves know that the job is full of difficulties, and they provide nothing to the working-class for their help. They are given only enough to survive the difficulties of life rather than to upgrade their lifestyle. In capitalist society, the proletariats have to face distractions while working. The deception through the smart house is also seen as the green forests that make the proletariats dream, represented by the "inn where there was great revelry" (Grimm & Grimm, 1812/2002, p. 2). If they start to love the life of luxury, the bourgeoisie see that as a hindrance in their work. The men, when working, want to spend their time after work, but when they see the bourgeoisie enjoying their lives, this is also of great importance: the way the bourgeoisie enjoy the perks of life is so intoxicating that a proletarian can forget about his goal, as the eldest son does when he thinks, "I have time enough, I will go to the inn and enjoy myself" (Grimm & Grimm, 1812/2002, p. 2). He is in the loop of working for the bourgeoisie to get something to put on the table. It is natural that a man wants luxury for his life. So, in industrialization, this is the dilemma of the working-class: rest pushes them back also. They cannot even rest when they want to. They cannot have a meal when they want to because it causes their loss too. Mental fatigue is worst than physical illness. One cannot remain alienated from himself throughout his life. It is not in his nature. He wants independence and has right to live freely.

The burning of midnight oil and hardships are fantasized in a romantic and gothic way in the story: if proletariats want to live their life peacefully at the end, then they must choose the pathway that

seems not good for them. This is necessary to achieve something better. Greater sacrifices are required for greater purposes. A very important point is discussed in the story, highlighting that a journey is necessary to reach somewhere and all great things take time. Before reaching the destination, on the way, the proletariat has to pass through different distractions. Only those men hit the target who do not follow the distractions. Man can only know about the reality of something when he steps into it. If a man stands outside the river, he cannot understand and feel the depth of the river manually. So, to live peacefully, it is established in the story indirectly that to achieve something, proletariats have to be on their own way.

The way is told by the mentors. This is a very important point pointed out in the story: the intent of a man to whom he is teaching. It is necessary to listen to the one who has been on the way already. A wise man, and the man who wants to be aware of the hurdles and be at the destination, listens to his senior. Otherwise, man cannot get what he wants. A good teacher has some qualities that he understands the difficulties and hesitations of the workers at new place. He teaches them every time they make some mistakes. This gives the working-class confidence that they are not alone in the room full of new people and new place. The fox provides this critical pedagogy, warning the youngest son to avoid the inn and instructing him precisely: "do not sit down, and do not drink anything... go straight to the castle" (Grimm & Grimm, 1812/2002, p. 2).

Things suit where they belong, and any disruption in the symmetry causes problems, so the proletariats need only to do what they are assigned to do. This is the drawback of industrialization in a symbolic way: the working-class is not allowed to have creativity in their work. The bourgeoisie gave the proletariats targets so intriguing and luring that they are indirectly forced to do overtime and hectic jobs. Proletariats are for them just workers, irrespective of the company in which they work. The bourgeoisie's way is told to the third son of the gardener: that he should shake hands only with those from whom there is a hope of some advantage. Industrialists also meet with people with impure intent. They want only the material benefit from them, by telling them they care for them very much. This is symbolized when the fox warns the son not to buy the golden cage for the bird, for "it will go badly with you" if he disobeys (Grimm & Grimm, 1812/2002, p. 3), illustrating how the system punishes those who seek the wrong kind of surplus or luxury.

Strictness can conquer but its sustainability depends on love and affection, which is created through mans good intention. But, a good man is helped by a good man. He has the sense of repaying his good act. Only a painful man understands the pain of other man in pain. It is indirectly pointed out in the story by Grimms brother that class-solidarity is necessary to confront cruel bourgeoisie. It is the only solution of freeing the whole class from the inhuman behavior of the capitalists. The fox's final request—for the son to "shoot me dead and cut off my head and paws" (Grimm & Grimm, 1812/2002, p. 5)—and its subsequent transformation into a human and brother-in-law, symbolizes the ultimate integration of critical knowledge and solidarity into the fabric of a liberated community.

Conclusion

This work has proven that "The Golden Bird" is much more than a simple story of magical quests. Through a persistent Marxist reading, it becomes possible to view the story as a powerful allegory for the exploiting mechanism in class society. The greedy lust for the golden objects by the kings resembles the lust for accumulation by the capitalist while the dangerous and distraction-filled journey of the gardener's sons vividly depicts the proletarian experience of both alienation and coercion and the constant risk of being consumed by the system they serve. The guiding fox symbolizes the vital, and often repressed, voice of mentorship, class solidarity; that, the power to

navigate, overcome systemic-oppression. The resolution of the tale, which rewards hard work, obedience to sound advice, and ethical action, does not espouse a revolution and survival of the fittest on an individual meritocratic basis but may indicate a form of individual meritocratic survival within the system. However, the analysis of this paper goes beyond this as it uses the symbols of this tale to make a case for a group consciousness. Ultimately, "The Golden Bird" remains relevant and powerful as it contains a universal human dilemma, the struggle between those who possess the means of magic to do and make the world, and those whose hard work enables the world to be enchanted. By critical un-packaging of this dynamic, the study affirms literature as a key site for making sense of, questioning and imagining alternatives to the hierarchies through which we live our lives.

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