

Name

Name of the professor/instructor

Name of the Class

Date

“I’m sure you believe
your rank entitles you to my love.
Love is worthless if it’s not mutual.
A poor but loyal man is worth more—
if he also possesses good sense and virtue—
and his love brings greater joy
than the love of a prince or a king
who has no loyalty in him.
Anyone who aims higher in love
than his own wealth entitles him to
will be frightened by every little thing that occurs.”

The Lais of Marie De France, Equitan.

1. Why does the woman suggest that Equitan’s rank entitles him to her love? Up to what extent does she feel intimidated and afraid of getting in trouble if she does not comply with his desires?
2. What was she interested in accomplishing by suggesting that a man’s love would bring more joy if he possessed “good sense and virtue” than the “love of a prince or a king?”
3. When she says that “will be frightened by every little thing that occurs”, is she also suggesting that she is in a vulnerable position as a woman due to her socioeconomic level?

When reading *The Lais* I found it fascinating how Marie De France could masterly use ethical appeals to situations we usually find socially and ethically unacceptable and combined them with an emotional appeal such as “love” in order to justify the ethical ones so that we could find some sort of reasoning to the unconventional. The dismantling of common and socially accepted ways of love between a man and a woman was clearly present in this story.

In Equitan’s story—especially the excerpt that I chose for my analysis—the woman urges him to think about friendship and loyalty toward her husband who is also Equitan’s best friend and the most loyal of his knights. I was struck by the way she presents her argument because she is trying to persuade Equitan to consider carefully if it is real love what he is feeling or it has to do with his entitlement and his high socioeconomic level. In other words, she wants to know if he loves her for who she is, given she does not belong to the same high position Equitan does belong. It seems that love is confused with physical attraction and it also used as an excuse to suffice sexual needs. I also see how she is empowered enough to say to Equitan that she preferred loving a man who holds good values to loving a prince or a king who was using his position to get what he wanted. However, at the same time, by acknowledging Equitan’s rank, she is putting herself in a vulnerable position as a woman.

I would argue that love is equated to sexual desire and physical attraction in this particular excerpt which is also accompanied with fear and gender inequality. The woman is afraid of what might or might not happen. She is urging him to think of the many disadvantages that loving her would bring to her,

specifically. It seems that the only ethical appeal she uses to try to convince him is his loyalty toward his friend, however, she also knows that if something happens between them she will be more affected than him. This position of power he holds, gives him the entitlement to want the love of a woman who is already married.

She is in a very complicated situation because she would lose either way she chooses. On one hand, if she refuses to be with him, he can take revenge and try to ruin her life because he is powerful. On the other hand, if she accepts to be his lover, she is betraying her husband and their friendship. I wonder if the story would be different by having a woman and a man holding the same social and economic positions of power or if it is a gender issue that has the tendency to be perpetuated in many scenarios.

Questioning ethical and moral appeals does not prevent the woman from feeling vulnerable because there is also some sort of coercion given the work relation her husband and Equitan have as well as her commitment as a wife who “belongs” to her husband. As I mentioned before, I take some issue up to what extent there is a combination of desire, power abuse, gender inequality, and lack of respect from Equitan whose high position makes him feel in his own right to ask a woman to be his lover in the name of “love.”

Works Cited Page

Please, include all the scholarly and popular sources you used to support your argument.

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