

Women as 'real men'

Sociology, Women



Throughout the selected stories in Giovanni Boccaccio's *The Decameron* many themes are brought to a reader's attention. These themes help relate and compare the tales to one another in more ways than one. In the tale, Day two Story nine it raises a certain question on how a man may look at his wife, and the standards his wife may have to uphold. In comparison Day Five Story Ten, the question raised is a question of loyalty of a wife to her husband, which in turn, compare with the standards a wife may have to uphold for the husband.

In both of these stories women are seen in the end as tough characters that take these actions from their husbands without any question; they are the real men in the tales. The tale Day Two Story Nine is about a man Bernabo whom is married to Zinevra, a very trustworthy wife. Bernabo and his friend Ambrugiolo while away get into a conversation about how easy it is to cheat on their wives while they are away, because in the end Ambrugiolo's thought is that they do the same thing. Bernabo disagrees he looks at his wife as very trustworthily and Zinevra would never do such a thing.

Because of a bet the two men end up making, Amrugiolo undeservingly wins the bet, or so Bernabo is led to believe. Bernabo orders a servant to murder Zinevra because of this misleading sin she been framed of committing. She pleads to the servant for her life and runs away to begin a new life as a man. Zinevra made a new life for herself after she was framed and moved on. But one day in the market she ran into her husband, Bernabo after much talking they realized who each other were. In the end, Zinevra gets revenge on Ambrugiolo and he is killed.

Zinevra was in control of her decision to either go back to her husband Bernabo after he did not trust her word and ordered her to be killed, or not. She ends up goes back to her husband and in a way is a hero. Bernabo did not trust the loyalty of their marriage and was quick to judge Zinevra, but in the end the two lived happily ever after. Day Five Story 10 is another story with the loyalty of a husband and a wife. The story is about a man Guaitieri marrying a beautiful peasant, Griselda. Quick to marry, Guaitieri does not know if Griselda is truly a loyal companion and tests her through dramatic and horrific tricks.

Including lying to Griselda about killing both their daughter and son, and Griselda does not question it and agrees with his actions. Guaitieri does not know what will break his wife because he believes this woman could not be so loyal. Therefore he pretends to divorce the peasant, and tells Griselda that he is getting remarried. He wants her to not only attend the wedding, but also clean and decorate the house for the event. Griselda agrees yet again, and in the end Guaitieri is convinced that she is just as loyal as she acts and tells her the whole truth of the matter.

Their children were never killed, and the woman he was about to marry was their daughter. The loyal Griselda takes back Guaitieri and they live happily ever after. While reading these stories, which were written in a time not like today, a reader may be taken back. With the Bernabo and Zinevra story, a reader may question why Bernabo was so quick to judge what he thought was a trustworthy and loyal wife. But as we see in the selected tales women are viewed almost as a prize or object not as a companion or a real person.

We see that in Guaitieri and Griselda's story as well Guaitieri tests Griselda over and over and would not believe that she really was a loyal as she was coming off to be. Readers would take this story and see Griselda as almost an abused women, husbands do not treat their wives this way this time in age. In contradiction back in the day Griselda was seen as such a loyal women and wife because of her reactions to Guaitieri's terrible lies. In both tales, the women over come their challenges and are viewed as harder and tougher people then the men.