

Idea of wedding in the merchants tale

Linguistics, English



The merchant's tale resembles the fabliau genre, a brief comic narrated ironically. The tale's main theme is marriage and its value. It characterizes January (Old and has white hair) who marries May (young and elegant), Placebo and Justinus (advisers) and Damien (lover). January invites his advisers to offer counsel on his intention to marry, Justinus is against it because he believes women are unfaithful while Placebo supports his idea of marrying a young woman.

January goes ahead and weds May; during the wedding an attendee Damien becomes infatuated with May. He is upset that such a beautiful young woman married an old fellow. As they returned to their home, January apologized in advance for the sexual exploits he would act on her. After the customary four days, May joins January at the banquet table and it is at this point that he notices Damien's absence and is informed he is ill. He sends May to visit him on his behalf, during the visit, Damien hands a letter to May declaring his love for her and in return she reciprocates by writing to him about her love towards him. However, January's happiness does not last for long as he loses his eyesight, this results to him relying on May for assistance, something that Damien is not happy about. May signals to Damien to January's secret garden. She displayed a lusty appetite for fruits and led January to the garden where she asked him to bend over and let her stand on his back as she climbed a tree to get pear. She climbed up where she met Damien and they had sex. Suddenly, January's eyesight was restored and saw May and Damien having sex and he was filled with rage. May convinced January that his sight was weak and the brightness affected his sight such that he saw certain things strangely. She jumped from the tree and January

embraced her.

According to the merchant, the theme of marriage can be described from two fronts in this tale: marriage as a state of holy matrimony, a means to secure an heir, he demonstrates a wife who has good qualities and how they support each other during instances of need. However, he also reflects his bitterness towards marriage as he is unhappy and has only been married for two months. Due to May's infidelity, the reader may conclude that January is a foolish husband, May, a slut and Damien a betrayer.

Works cited

Patterson L., Geoffrey Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales: A casebook, (2007)
Pp. 115-116.