

"if only we listened to reason; instead we are susceptible to other voices": char...



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In both 'Tis Pity' and 'The Wife of Bath' many characters abandon reason, and tend to replace reason with their own desires, making them, in T. S. Eliot's words "Monsters of egotism". Fundamentally, in 'Tis Pity', when characters do not listen to reason, it ends in death, as shown through Annabella, Giovanni and Hippolita. Contrastingly, in Chaucer's poem, when the Wife and the Knight do not listen to reason, they are not punished, since the Wife and the Knight result in living harmoniously with their counterparts. Within both texts, characters abandon reason and replace them with lust and power.

Clearly, in 'Tis Pity' through Giovanni and Hippolita, and in 'The Wife of Bath' through the Wife and the Knight, they listen to their own voices of lust, and do not listen to reason. Giovanni is motivated by his lust for his sister Annabella: "Of thy immortal beauty hath untuned all harmony both of my rest and life". The lust he has for his sister immediately suggests that he has abandoned reason for one of the Seven Deadly Sins - likening him to in Hay's words Marlowe's "a young 'Dr Faustus'". This comparison is made more vivid through the Friar's hellish imagery, "Discovered first the nearest way to hell, And filled the world with devilish atheism". Moreover, when Giovanni listens to his own voice of lust, he commits himself to false logic. The "petulant sub-byronic boy (Antoin Artaud) makes the classic philosophical mistake in arguing that "since in like causes are effects alike". Likewise, Giovanni, similarly to the Wife blames his lust and love for Annabella on his fate: "I'll swear my fate's my God". Correspondingly, the Wife also commits to a false logic by blaming her fates on the stars: "I am Venerien in feeling, and my heart is Marcien". Chaucer's emphasis on "<https://assignbuster.com/if-only-we-listened-to-reason-instead-we-are-susceptible-to-other-voices-character-analysis-of-the-canterbury-tales-and-tis-a-pity-shes-a-whore/>

feeling" and "heart" on a woman's behalf could be considered in the 14th century to be revolutionary. However, Giovanni's ignorance in not listening to reason results in his death, as he is stabbed by the banditti, who were believed to inhabit the road between Rome and Naples: "O I bleed fast... let me enjoy this grace, freely view my Annabella's face". The full rhyme within "grace" and "face" does create a sense of pathos on Giovanni's behalf - which fits in to Peter Malin's description of him as an "existential hero" who "does not let anyone judge his love". Similarly, Hippolita does not listen to reason, and rather is driven by her selfish lust. Her lust drives her to send her husband, Richardetto on a dangerous voyage: "To undertake a voyage to Leghorn", which in the 17th century was believed to be a journey resulting in death. Moreover, Hippolita who is labelled by Peter Malin to epitomises "the underlying reservoir of snobbery in the play" seeks to kill Soranzo: "I would wish it two hours to send him to his last sleep". Indeed, there is a sense of irony since despite Hippolita's monstrous personality she is of noble birth, "My birth was nobler, and by much more free" - which is surprising since she speaks in lower class prose.

Likewise, Alisoun in Chaucer's poem also disregards reason, and listens to her own voices of lust. She bluntly described herself as a "lusty oon" and does not matter if "they were short, or longe, or blak or whit". The anaphora of "or" and contrasts created between "longe" and "short" and "blak" and "whit" highlights that the Wife is aroused by anyone. The lust of the Wife allows her to dominate her husbands in the bedroom, as she crudely comments, "how pitously a night I made hem swinke" and laughs at their sexual inabilities "unethe they statut mighte holde". Undoubtedly, the <https://assignbuster.com/if-only-we-listened-to-reason-instead-we-are-susceptible-to-other-voices-character-analysis-of-the-canterbury-tales-and-tis-a-pity-shes-a-whore/>

Wife's lusty nature fulfils beliefs about women's sexuality in the 15th century, "The Wife is unable to see that her tactics simply reinforce medieval ideas of woman as cruel, emotional and sexually voracious" (J. K. Tasiuloas). Similarly, in Chaucer's tale, the Knight also ignores reason, and listens to his own voices of lust as he rapes a young maiden, "By verray force he rafte her maidenhead". Hence, in this this sense, there is a gender swap as women during the medieval age were considered lusty in nature. However, in both the prologue and the tale, when Alisoun and the "lusty bachelor" (Lorber) do not listen to reason, in contrast to 'Tis Pity', it does not result in death. Alisoun finds equality in her marriage with Jankyn, "hadden never debaat". Likewise, the Knight in the tale, typically to an Arthurian tale lives happily ever after once the Loothly lady turns beautiful, "And she obeyed him in every thing".

Moreover, characters in 'Tis Pity' and in 'The Wife of Bath' also ignore reason, to replace with their own selfish motives of gaining power. The Wife dominates over her husbands sexually, emotionally and financially. Due to the husbands loving her "fro God above" she is able to control them as emphasised through her commanding tone in "I governed hem so well, after my law" and uses the idiom about 'eating out the palm of your hand' in "had hem hooly in her hand". Furthermore, the Wife dominates her husbands financially, as observed by Mark William who claims, "The Wife reduces humans sex and marriage to business transactions." This is shown through when Wife says "To bringe me gaye things fro the faire" and "They had me yeven hir lond and hir treasure." In complete contrast, when the Wife is

married to Jankyn, she is dominated herself as she is beaten "For that I rent
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out of his book a leef, That of the strook myne ere wax al deef" and gives over her money, " And to him yaf I al thee lond and fee that ever was me yeven therbifoore". Thus, as observed by Margaret Halissy who claims that " perhaps emboldened by his new financial power, Jankyn sees himself as a traditional dominant husband" - which would fit in more to medieval beliefs on marriage.

Similarly, Soranzo and Giovanni both abandon reason to attempt to gain power over Annabella. Giovanni as a " pale-school boy" (Terry Grimley) requires authority over Annabella or he delves into madness, " How does this new perplex me, I have a world of business in my head". This madness is epitomised by his murder of Annabella as he enters with her " heart upon a dagger". The reference to " heart" is symbolic of Giovanni wanting to control Annabella's own feelings. The ' heart upon the dagger' has brought many different interpretations from critics with Dereck Roper viewing it as " a sadistic version of the sexual act", Mark Stavig as " the ultimate depravity of a man approaching madness" and most accurately put by Rowland Wymer " he thinks he possesses Annabella, but in fact he is left in a world of his own". Likewise, Soranzo is also doesn't listen to reason as he attempts to possess Annabella, and soon enough, similarly to Giovanni, descends into madness and monstrosity: " Come, whore, tell me your lover, or by truth I'll hew thy flesh to shreds".