

How is conflict in
relationships
presented in les
grands seigneurs and
medusa



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

How is conflict in relationships presented in *Les Grands Seigneurs* and one other poem from your collection? (*Medusa*) To start with, both poems explore the conflicts in a love relationship between women and men. They are both written from a women's perspective and display a conflict over the levels of power in relationships.

In *Les Grands Seigneurs*, we are invited to speculate on the musings of the narrator as she looks back to the past: a time when men were her 'castellated towers' and she controlled them. In *Medusa*, the feelings of 'a suspicion, a doubt, a jealousy' present in the narrator's mind show that she feels ownership of her husband and doesn't want him to come under someone else's control.

However, *Medusa* presents a sharp bitterness at the prospect of losing control over the man, whereas *Les Grands Seigneurs* narrates nostalgically for the first three stanzas about how men used to be in the woman's control. In *Medusa*, there is more of a sense of immediacy in the narrator to confront the issue – 'Are you terrified?' followed by 'Be terrified' (the transition of question to command across these stanzas conveys the sense of a threat against the man's actions).

Meanwhile, the narrator of *Les Grands Seigneurs* seems happier blocking out her feelings of present resentment by fantasising about the past, given the first three stanzas are spent in muse with excessive lists of men's previous values to her – the anaphora of 'men were' channels the list throughout – and it is only in the fourth and final stanza that she confronts the present, though it is no more a confrontation than it is a call of despair at the fact that

the power levels have now been reserved and it is she that is powerless now, she is man's 'bit of fluff' like men once were her 'hurdy-gurdy monkey men'.

Therefore, the line of conflict and the bitterness behind it is more bold, and ominously decisive in Medusa. However, Medusa's narration turns to the same level of powerlessness and feeble despair as in *Les Grands Seigneurs* towards the end. After the intimidating lists of animals and creatures whose life the narrator killed by simply looking at them in the eye, turning 'buzzing bee's into 'pebble's, 'ginger cat's to 'house brick's and so on, the poet signifies the conflict between this narrator and her previous lover in that while this woman can control almost all of nature's creatures, she cannot control him.

This metaphor of having the power of the wicked and fearful gorgon, Medusa, from ancient myth, makes the contrasting idea of not being able to control the man in her relationship all the more striking (and even saddening) as she turns to hopeless despair and desperation in the form of rhetorical questions in the final two lines: 'Wasn't I beautiful? Wasn't I fragrant and young.