Unfair Gender Roles Placed on Medieval Women
By
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In Medieval literature like the epics *Beowulf*, *The Táin*, and the lais of Marie de France, there are examples of women who are considered "evil" by the society which was producing these works.

A princess, Modthryth, who murders men for ogling her; a woman, Derdriu, who, as an infant, is prophesied to cause death in her kingdom; and a wife whose lies prompt her to abandon her child: These women are all branded as "bad" or "evil" because of their actions. This is very ironic considering that many similar actions went unpunished in these stories, except that a man rather than a woman performed them.

The Knight’s Wife from the Lai *Le Fresne* shows the desperation of women at the time, these women who had to carefully guard the small amount of dignity the patriarchy offered them.

The patriarchal culture that surrounded the writing of these pieces of literature showcases the unfair constraints that were placed on women and how women who were simply doing their best to have their own agency and respect in this period were demonized for not being blindly submissive to their prescribed gender roles.

Modthryth shows that the society that women of her time were forced to be a part of, which considered them inferiors, would demean them for wanting to protect themselves.

Derdriu is the perfect example of how women are made into monsters for just trying to assert their own agency over their lives.