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Love and the Effects of the Other World

Cassidy Leventhal's article, "Finding Avalon: The Place and Meaning of the Otherworld in Marie de Frances's *Lanval*" examines the nature and meaning of the other world that is presented in *Lanval* through Lanval's mysterious lover who is other worldly in beauty and the mystic of her warning or face her disappearance from his life is likened to fairies presented in other texts who pressure odd conditions upon mortals without logic. Cassidy Leventhal examines the fantastical otherworld that is presented through Lanval's lover and compares it to another examiner, Anne Wilson, who takes a psychoanalytical approach to the text. The approach to this text is to understand the meaning presented through Lanval's mysterious lover and the introduction of her realm Avalon that Lanval goes with his lover to at the end without anything else being known of his fate, shall be analyzed to ascertain the effects it plays upon his status as a knight and on the work of *Lanval* as a whole.

Cassidy Leventhal's article first discusses the meaning of Avalon, the beautiful island that both lovers leave for at the end of the work and how this realm remains "the utopic 'no place' accessed only through rejection of and by the real" (Leventhal, 193), so it can be argued that Avalon and by extension the ending of *Lanval* is a story involving the Otherworld as the afterlife of knights. With the ending involving a trial that accused Lanval of slander against the queen it is possible that Lanval lost the trial and the appearance of his lover was moment of Lanval's execution with the solution and salvation coming right at his moment of need as a wish

fulfillment to live or be saved. The fact that the king and the others “had looked at [Lanval’s lover] and praised her beauty greatly” (*Lanval*, 81) might suggest that she has the appearance of an angelic figure that is a part of afterlife and how “He went with her to Avalon, so the Bretons tell us, to very beautiful island. Thither the young man was borne and no one has heard any more about him” (*Lanval*, 81), the mystical nature of Avalon and how no one heard of Lanval after this point strongly suggest towards Leventhal’s theory of Lanval’s transfer to an outside world from Earth. Leventhal states this theory through her own observations, “*Lanval* reveals the primary of the Otherworld in Lanval’s quest for meaning *within* reality. Avalon then becomes not a form of escape but a deeper and more fundamental reality, which Lanval achieves only through his quest on earth” (Leventhal, 194). Leventhal uses her own observations of the text and Wilson’s psychoanalytical analysis of *Lanval* as stating that Lanval completes this quest as he is brought into an angelic world than a world of punishment as he was free of sin as he was innocent of the crimes the queen claimed out of lies. His quest was arguably his ability to maintain his status as a knight by remaining honorable and chivalric which is rewarded in his death.

Leventhal states that *Lanval* is an investigation of the meaning of “Avalon” in relation to real life on Earth and what that may be in forms of concepts in the human mind either conscious or unconscious. Leventhal launches into this idea with the observation that, “This approach to Lanval’s unconscious allows a focus on the part the concept ‘Otherworld’ plays in the construct [of] ‘quest for/creation of meaning.’ Lanval then becomes a case study in certain universal notions about the place and meaning of “Avalon” to Earth” (Leventhal, 194). This means that *Lanval* may function as some statement on Arthurian reality as Lanval abandons the chivalric elements of that reality to join another one that properly reflects the “Otherworld” or

the world outside the text, the world as we know it today as the ending declines to reveal the fate of Lanval and his lover in Avalon. Through the explanation given by Leventhal's textual analysis, Avalon appears to symbolize some sort of knightly version of Christianity's heaven or the Norse Viking's idea of Valhalla, or as an elaborate call to the modernity of the current world as opposed to the world Lanval existed presented by the author. Overall, this argument presented by Leventhal with support by Wilson boasts a strong and noteworthy idea not presented easily in *Lanval's* text.

Works Cited

“The Lais of Marie de France”. *Lanval*, translated by Burgess and Busby, Penguin Classics, 1999, pp. 81.

Leventhal, Cassidy. “Finding Avalon: The Place and Meaning of the Otherworld in Marie De France’s *Lanval*.” *Neophilologus*, vol. 98, no. 2, 2014, pp. 193–204.