

The Analysis of Female Characters in Shakespeare's Work; Contrast between the Submissive and the Wicked

Authors : Jeong Hwa Ryong

Abstract : Numerous characters appear in the works of England's most prominent play writer, William Shakespeare. Most of the time, his male protagonists possess various and complex characteristics throughout the storyline of his work, making it interesting for the readers to analyze their actions in many different aspects. However, some critics argue that unlike male characters, Shakespeare's female characters are rather more flat and one-sided, pointing out that they are either the extreme version of good or evil. Especially, it is a significant topic to discuss in the modern days, considering the fact that gender stereotype is now a sensitive issue. Starting from such argument, it is important to address their purpose of being in the play and suggest their meaning to the modern readers of today. In this context, this paper analyzes several female characters of Shakespeare's work by closely examining their actions and lines. The characters analyzed are Ophelia from Hamlet, Cordelia from King Lear, Katherine from The Taming of the Shrew, Goneril from King Lear and Lady Macbeth from Macbeth. Nevertheless, some female protagonists of Shakespeare's work do not fall in to this category and exceed the limitations of others. Therefore this paper proposes alternative characters such as Juliet from Romeo and Juliet and Portia from The Merchant of Venice that are rather more complex and difficult to include in just one category. By doing so, this paper critically analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of many female characters in Shakespeare's play.

Keywords : female characters, gender stereotype, William Shakespeare

Conference Title : ICELLL 2017 : International Conference on English Language, Literature and Linguistics

Conference Location : London, United Kingdom

Conference Dates : January 19-20, 2017