



Feminist Criticism: Female Characters in Shakespeare's Plays Othello and Hamlet

By Sara Ekici

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Seminar paper from the year 2009 in the subject English Language and Literature Studies - Literature, grade: 2,0, University of Kassel (Fachbereich für Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaften), course: Shakespeare, language: English, abstract: Female characters play an important role for the dramatic run of events in Shakespeare's plays. Just as in reality, women of Shakespeare's dramas have been bound to rules and conventions of the patriarchal Elizabethan era. Therefore, it was very common back in Elizabethan England to compel woman into marriages in order to receive power, legacy, dowry or land in exchange. Even though the Queen herself was an unmarried woman, the roles of woman in society were extremely restricted. Single women have been the property of their fathers and handed over to their future husbands through marriage. In Elizabethan time, women were considered as the weaker sex and dangerous, because their sexuality was supposedly mystic and therefore feared by men. Women of that era were supposed to represent virtues like obedience, silence, sexual chastity, piety, humility, constancy, and patience. All these virtues, of course, have their meaning in relationship to men. The role allocation in Elizabethan society was strictly regulated; men were the breadwinners and woman had to be obedient housewives and mothers. However, within this deprived, tight and organized scope, women have been represented in most diverse ways in Shakespearean Drama. The construction of female characters in Shakespeare's plays reflects the Elizabethan image of woman in general. For all that, Shakespeare supports the English Renaissance stereotypes of genders, their roles and responsibilities in society, he also puts their representations into question, challenges, and also revises them.

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Feminist Criticism: Female Characters in Shakespeare's Plays Othello and Hamlet By Sara Ekici Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #2515104 in eBooks
- Published on: 2009-11-04
- Released on: 2009-11-04
- Format: Kindle eBook



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