

COMPARISON OF FEMALE IMAGE IN THE PLAYS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE AND IN BELARUSIAN LITERATURE

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The position of a women in society remains a topical issue nowadays. The way a woman is portrayed in literature may subconsciously form positive or negative attitude of the reader to the problem, show the position of a woman in society and predetermine the attitude of people to gender rights especially among the rising generation. The object of the research is Shakespeare's plays and works of Belarusian writers. The subject of the research is the image the authors created in their works. The aim is to prove that female characters in most Shakespeare's comedies were not helpless victims but powerful characters and compare it with the works of Belarusian authors.

Key words: female image; Renaissance; dignity of women; secret love; feminis approach; gender equality strategy.

William Shakespeare was an English playwright, poet, actor of the Renaissance. In world history, he is undoubtedly the most famous and significant playwright who had a huge impact on the development of all theatrical art. The stage works of Shakespeare still do not leave the theater stage all over the world today.

As for Belarusian writers, the number of works of that period devoted to women is very scant. Writers of that period wrote mainly on themes connected with state affairs, Bible and religion. The life of a peasant woman wasn't in the forefront in literary characterization, as writers were more concerned with weighty matters of state or Godly matters.

However, the Charter of 1588 - one of the most important legal documents in Belarusian history - protected the dignity of Belarusian women under the law.

One of the first traces of feminism we found in the works of the 19th century writers. The most renowned of them was Eliza Orzeszkowa, who wrote in Belarusian and had Belarusian roots. Early novels "Pan Graba" and "Marta" were written on the themes of social emancipation and struggle of women for their human dignity.

Since Shakespeare wrote a large number of works during his entire life, there was a lot of material for analysis. If we take all of Shakespeare's plays as a whole, it turns out that his female images are in no way inferior to male ones in their diversity and content. He shows with his truthful, artistic images that a woman, in her mind, talent, willpower, in all the richness of her spiritual life, is in no way inferior to a man.

Among the heroines, one type dominates - passionately and invariably in love. Shakespeare's women are especially charming, devoted in love, steadfast in life's struggles, subtle in feelings and witty in conversation. In a number of plays, Shakespeare depicts women as superior to men - their husbands or lovers. The most positive image of Portia from *The Merchant of Venice*, who, disguised herself as a lawyer and delivered a speech in court to save her husband's life, which was definitely prohibited for women at that times.

Shakespeare was where to get models for many of his heroines. The plays where he's writing about young women in love may indeed have been influenced by what his daughters were up to, or what he was afraid they were up to.

The mothers in his plays may have been a reaction of what was going on in his life. Perhaps he was influenced by the relationship which he might have had with his own mother.

The woman of Shakespeare's comedies is the personification of pure poetry. This being is moral, extremely simple, direct, alien to higher intellectual life and general questions. All the forces of her nature are focused on the desire to love and be happy in an equally bright and lasting feeling of her beloved.

At the same time, in matters relating to personal and family life, Shakespeare holds the idea of the equivalence of women and men and the right of children to freely decide their own destiny. These are very bold and advanced views for an era when the bulk of society considered the wife a servant and slave of her husband, and sons and daughters were obliged to blindly and unquestioningly obey their parents in everything.

In his plays we can notice that there are two female characters which are most often repeated. One is filled with a dreamy undercurrent of lyricism. A woman loves timidly, secretly, submissively. She patiently waits, when, finally, fate itself will reveal her love, - and still bowing her head shyly, with a flushed face, overflowing with happiness, she responds to the long-awaited hugs. This is Viola "Twelfth Night". The other type is stronger in spirit and more passionate in heart and the poet has more of them, he mainly assigns the task of justifying love with sacrifices and bringing essence and humanity into the false and cruel world of people.

Shakespeare never creates heroes from his heroines. They often have to change into men's clothes, but women's hearts continue to tremble in them and women's hearts continue to beat. Naive, spontaneous, openly and faithfully loving, always ready to ignite with the noble flame of passion, the heroines of Shakespeare's comedies, undoubtedly the most beautiful creations of Renaissance poetry. But this is not just poetry. Bringing light and happiness into the fate of an individual, a woman fulfills in Shakespeare both a great humane and social significance. She - herself truthful and sincere - is a born

enemy of any falsehood, of everything unnatural. She is the defender of feelings and life against deliberate seclusion and pure science, restores the rights of nature and the harmonious development of the human soul, destroying frivolous pedantry.

First traces of feminism in Belarusian literature definitely appeared later than in Europe, due to slower development at that time. In spite of that fact, Belarusian history since early ages has had a place for powerful women. Among them are Anastasia Slutskaya, Emilia Plater, Salomea Regina Rusetskaya and Larisa Geniush.

We studied some of the works, made an analysis of historical aspect, and found the linguistic means the author used to create an image of a self-reliant and powerful woman. We came to the conclusion that a comedy is a very easy genre for a reader. In that kind of plays it's easier to understand female characters. They are vivid, romantic and full of charm, peculiar only for a woman. The author breathed new life in the manner a woman can be portrayed and woman's behavior became more open and even a feministic note could be traced in the works

The results of the research show that differences in feminist approach of English and Belarusian writers of that time and differences of historical background have predetermined different gender equality strategy in two countries. Belarusian pro-feminist approach focuses primarily on family policies, while the west promotes individuality and women's rights in social, political, and economic spheres. Belarus continues to emphasize family values and maternity for women which has its own impact on our literature and culture on the whole.

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