
Status Of A Woman In The Play Measure For Measure

ABSTRACT

Measure for Measure play by William Shakespeare believed to have written in 1603 or 1604 . The play's first recorded performance occurred in 1604. Shakespeare's representation of women is his genius. Mostly uses strong female characters in his novel. In personality the women in his plays may vary. Women characters in his play are mostly underestimated. His wit is however portrayed through them. Measure for Measure is set in Vienna. A city in which women in that period were objectified as sexual objects. Women in Vienna were effectively portrayed in terms of their sexuality and their relationship to men, which enabled the rulers to control them. The chastity of a woman defined her. She was expected to be pure till the night of her marriage. Also she had to get along with her dowry when given in marriage. The status of a woman was measured by her chastity. Considered as the weaker section she also had the need to be protected. Clearly seen when Duke Vincentio comes for the rescue of Isabella. Not only this but a woman's fate is decided by the patriarchy.

Actual Paper

Being strong women and having their own view points do they really have the need to be protected? Women having her own mind has been not given the status she deserves throughout the play Measure for Measure " Isabella is seen having strong personality from the very beginning she wants to become a nun. A decision taken and maintained throughout the play. She very well knows what is right and what is wrong. This can be clearly seen when she keeps her stand in front of her Angelo stating "For which I would not plead, but that I must, For which I must not plead, but that I am" She is well aware of the wrong done by his brother Claudio and knows she shouldn't plead for his forgiveness yet of the love of her brother does. So what happens next is the questionable incident.

Angelo having all authority and power wants Isabella to give upon her chastity and only then will be free his brother. Isn't it an irony that he wants to commit the same sin for which he has put Claudio in prison. She is objectified as a means of gaining sexual pleasure. Claudio at first wants Isabella to give into Angelo so that he is free, is this what she deserves? Claudio can be seen as using her as a device to free himself. However her clear Standpoint and courage shown to be consistent on her decision makes Claudio change his mind. Isabella's "no" has been a strong standpoint she maintained throughout the play. In the end of the play when the Duke proposes her for marriage her answer is "silence". The silence she maintained in the end is again remarkable as it can be interpreted as a "No" to his question. There can be a possibility that she wants to get into "nummery " the desire she has from the very beginning. Yet it's a questionable "silence" as it can be also seen as a unwanted yes that she will have to say because of the power and authority of Duke Vincentio. The whole idea as to why Duke Vincentio saved Isabella from Angelo when disguised as a friar can be because of his own desire to get Isabella. Duke Vincentio is seen to be doing good for Isabella, helping her throughout however the status he has for a woman is very contradicting. On the other hand he was Mariana as a prey to to save Isabella.

A woman is made to give up on her chastity to save the chastity of another how does that can even be called a help. Instead he could just use his authority and exercise his powers and save Isabella and Mariana both. Mariana on the other hand is a woman rejected by the Angelo just because she lost her dowry in a shipwreck. So in this case she has been objectified as a means of gaining wealth. Duke Vincentio orders Lucio to marry the woman who has begotten his child. He immediately answers that she is a "whore". That means he can use her as a means of gaining the pleasure he wants but cannot give the woman the honor and dignity she deserves. So to put altogether the status a woman has can be put up in one "patriarchy". The only question that remains unresolved is how can Isabella being a woman plan with friar allow Mariana to give into Angelo. Did she not think for once that it is wrong for her to make another woman do what she herself cannot imagine being put through. The measure of status given to a woman by men is clearly understood but the status of a woman for another woman is questionable.

APPENDIX

Over the years the text gained popularity and some of the film adaptations are. The 2015 film *M4M: Measure for Measure* re-contextualizes Isabella's character changing her gender from female to male. In the 2006 version, the play is set in modern-day British Army.