

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of Study

In this thesis, I analyse *As You Like It*, a comedy by William Shakespeare, a renowned English playwright and poet whose works are considered to be the greatest works in history of English literature (“William Shakespeare”). He was also an official playwright to King James I, the King of England at that time. Shakespeare also made such an important contribution to the world of literature as he had

. . . an influence on a large number of writers in succeeding centuries, including Herman Melville, Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy, and William Faulkner. Shakespearean quotations appear throughout Dickens' writings and many of Dickens' titles are drawn from Shakespeare. Melville frequently used Shakespearean devices, including formal stage directions and extended soliloquies, in *Moby Dick*. . . (“Shakespeare’s Influence”)

Shakespeare also made an important contribution to the English language because he coined many English words and phrases. Shakespeare invented over

1700 of our common words by changing nouns into verbs, changing verbs into adjectives, connecting words never before used together, adding prefixes and suffixes, and devising words wholly original. Some examples of words coined by Shakespeare are accused, birthplace, courtship, countless, torture, laughable (Mabillard). Examples of phrases that Shakespeare coined are “All of a sudden, For ever and a day, Good riddance, Hot-blooded, In the twinkling of an eye, Love is blind” (“Phrases Coined by William Shakespeare”).

As You Like It is one of Shakespeare’s greatest comedies. The female protagonist, Rosalind, has a double role, as Rosalind herself and as a young man named Ganymede. Other comedies by Shakespeare include *Much Ado About Nothing* (1623), *The Winter’s Tale* (1623), *Merchant of Venice* (1600). I have chosen this play because I am interested in the unique portrayal of Rosalind. *As You Like It* remains one of the most frequently performed comedies. It is stated in a website article in *Hudson Shakespeare Company* that “Considered one of Shakespeare's mature comedies, *As You Like It*, has remained extremely popular with modern audiences and is one of the most frequently produced works” (“As You Like It”).

When reading *As You Like It*, I found that the most prominent aspect is the portrayal of the female character, Rosalind. The definition of character and characterization are: “Character - representation of a person, place, or thing performing traditionally human activities or functions in a work of fiction. . . . Characterization - The choices an author makes to reveal a character’s personality, such as appearance, actions, dialogue, and motivations” (“Literary analysis: Using Element of Literature”). While characteristic is “a special quality or trait that

makes a person, thing, or group different from others” (“characteristic”). I have chosen to analyse the portrayal of the female protagonist as the subject of my thesis, as Barton, an American-English scholar and Shakespearean critic, argues that “Rosalind is extraordinarily important in *As You Like It*, as central and dominating figure in her fashion . . .” (“Rosalind (Ganymede) in *As You Like It*”).

In analysing the portrayal of the female protagonist, I use formalism approach because all the information that I need to analyse this subject can be found in the play. Formalist Criticism is an approach which regards literature as a unique form of human knowledge that needs to be examined on its own terms. All the elements necessary for understanding the work are contained within the work itself, which means all the elements can be found within the text. A primary goal for formalist critics is to determine how such elements work together with the text’s content to shape its effects upon readers (“Critical Approaches to Literature”).

Statement of the Problem

The problems I am going to discuss are:

1. How is the female protagonist portrayed in the play?
2. What is the purpose of the author in portraying such a character?

Purpose of the Study

The purposes of the study are:

1. To show how the female protagonist is portrayed
2. To show the purpose of the author in portraying such a character

Method of research

I am using library research for my thesis. First, I read the play. After reading the play, I search and collect a number of references from books and internet websites to support my analysis. Lastly, I draw a conclusion.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into three parts, preceded by the Acknowledgments, the Abstract and the Table of Contents. Chapter One is the Introduction, which consists of the Background of the Study, the Statement of the Problem, the Purpose of the Study, the Method of Research and the Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two is The Analysis of the Portrayal of the Female Protagonist in William Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. Chapter Three is the Conclusion. The thesis ends with Bibliography and Appendices, which contain the Synopsis of Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and the Biography of William Shakespeare.