

All s well that ends well essay

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Midsummer Night's Dream, Twelfth Night and The Tempest), Shakespeare also wrote the so-called "problem plays"—Measure for Measure, Tortuous and Caressed and All's Well That Ends Well, which are very likely to be neglected by most people. Here choose All's Well That Ends Well (hereinafter refers to "the plan") as an object of study to discover why it is called "problem play"? Also created by the master of English literature William Shakespeare, why does it remain to be an unpopular and little-performed play? And why does it remain controversial of its classification as a comedy or tragedy? All's Well That Ends Well tells the story of love between different social classes. Helena, the main character, is the orphaned daughter of the physician Gerard De Narrow, who served the family of the Countess of Reclusion. After the death of her father, Helena is adopted by the Countess of Reclusion. She falls in love with Bertram, the Countess' son, but keeps her feelings to herself. But by the opportunity of curing the King with the prescription of her father, Helena got the privilege of choosing her husband at her own will.

Unquestionably, she chooses her beloved Bertram, but is rejected mercilessly due to her menial identity. Helena spares no effort to pursue her love. With the sympathy and assistance of the widow and the widow's daughter Diana, whom Bertram really admires and loves, Helena plays a "bed-trick" with Bertram to be pregnant with his child and gets the family ring. Finally, Bertram professes his love for Helena and accepts her to be his wife. After carefully reading of the script of the play and watched the video clip of the drama, I think the following three points could be the reasons that made this play not so famous as other plays of Shakespeare.

First of all, the general tone of All's Well That Ends Well is dark and cynical. It is often described as a “dark comedy” or “problem play”, distinguished from the earlier and more cheerful comedies by its unpleasant characters and a sophisticated bitterness toward human relations. Take Helena for example, she suffers through most of the play in order to be with the man of her dream. To marry Bertram, she begs the widow and her daughter for their help. She gains their sympathy and assistance but mainly through money.

She plays the “bed-trick” for being pregnant with the child of Bertram. She also cheats for the ring of Bertram family. She tries all her pains in order to achieve the goals. Although Helena has achieved her goal of being the wife of Bertram, yet this is possibly not a positive way to pursue love but a bad example for attaining the goal by hook or by crook. To achieve the things we want through dirty mind games is not a virtue that we should pass on.

Furthermore, the protagonist of the play All's Well That Ends Well is a female character, and what's more, she endeavors to achieve what she has been dreaming at the cost of her virginity, which was a challenge to the conventional and conservative ideas in the 16th to 17th century about gender and sexuality-? women were the accessories to men. By featuring a female protagonist who plays a traditionally masculine role in her pursuit of a man, the play reverses the typical gender roles we find in Western literature, especially in fairy tales.

In the play, female sexuality is under constant scrutiny. As a result, it is prudential to be performed in public. Last but not least, the ending of the play is somewhat disappointing. The well-drawn characters and credible

social background of the play lead us to expect a more plausible denouement. Also, with a title like All's Well That Ends Well, we expect an ending that the prince and the princess lived happily ever after. But that's not exactly what happens. Even though the title of the play All's Well That Ends Well is used twice by Helena, referring to the conventionally happy ending of romantic comedy, yet the fortune of Helena is quite clear to all, which cannot be as happy as she expects. In the play, Bertram spends most of his time trying to get rid of the woman whom he was forced to marry.

However, when in the end Helena shows up pregnant with Bertram baby and the family ring, and asks for Bertram acceptance, the poor guy discovers that he was tricked and has no way to make a change. Unexpectedly, his attitude to the marriage with Helena changes dramatically that he promises to love the woman he once looked down upon “ ever ever dearly”. Fittingly, the King's remark, in the plays last-but-one line, is ambiguous: “ All yet seems well” is as far as he can go.

The play does provide an apparently happy ending, but the sudden change of Bertram attitude seems ridicule and hasty, which is not so coherent with the whole plot. Do they really “ end well”? At least I don't think so since their love is not mutual but from one side only. In my point of view, that is also why some critics consider it to be a “ problem play’ t cannot be clearly classified as a tragedy or a comedy but can be regarded as a dark comedy. There is no denying that the play All's Well That Ends Well do exist some defects that make it a “ problem play’, whereas there are also some aspects of the story, which I am deeply impressed. We can infer from the play that

the social status is deemed to be a crucial condition when choosing spouse in Shakespearean era. In the play, a poor orphaned girl dreams about marrying a rich nobleman who thinks she is too menial to marry him.

In many Shakespearean comedies, it is usually regarded as an impossible arrangement that marrying someone who is of different social class. In the play we're told over and over again that Helena is beautiful, bright and well-behaved girl. As a literary heroine, such a girl should be worthy of a happy marriage and worthy of our respect. In such logic, the play challenges the status quo and reminds us of what it is that defines a person's worth. In addition, it is also worthwhile mentioning that Helena's actions toward Bertram upset the dominant patriarchal order, which is a revolution of feminism. Feminist analysis, and its consequent concerns with the themes of gender and sexuality, has provided the dominant model of contemporary critical interest in the play.

Helena's active pursuit of Bertram has posed a symbolic threat to patriarchy, which somehow influences the re-establishment of traditional social hierarchies. Although many critics argue for the attribute of *All's Well That Ends Well*, it still figures prominently as a comedy in many recent critical assessments. Perhaps it is better to be characterized as a “non-comic comedy”. Nonetheless, a play is a form of literature written for theatrical performance in order to entertain the spectator from all walks of life.

As for the spectators, watching plays is a way of entertainment to relax themselves from their heavy workload.