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English 2332

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Date

Comparisons

Examining English literature over the centuries produces interesting comparisons of cultural thought. Different eras understandably produce differing genres of self-expression; these enable contemporary readers to better understand the thought process of the average individual from past times. Specifically, when using a **feminist lens**, it becomes obvious **how much modern culture has changed due to the influence of both Shakespeare's *King Lear* and the anonymous English poem "The Wife's Lament."**

To begin with Shakespeare, his treatment of the character of Cordelia in the play *King Lear* shows a unique view of femininity. She is an independent, free thinking woman of her time period who operates on her own value system. She openly declares her emotions and owns them, much like the average contemporary woman. This is seen in Act 1, before her father exiles her to France, when she states: "Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave My heart into my mouth. I love your majesty According to my bond, no more nor less" (ll. 91-93).

Looking at the anonymous poem "The Wife's Lament," Ann Stanford's contemporary translation of the original Old English, shows a female willingly discussing her emotional reactions to her absent husband. Stanford's version details for the reader a balanced view of the female's situation, despite the numerous translations which exist showing otherwise. For example, in the sixth stanza, the unnamed character states: "May that young man be sad-minded

always / hard his heart's thought while he must wear / a blithe bearing with care in the breast / a
crowd of sorrows. May on himself depend / all his world's joy" (ll. 42-46)

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