

Public Abstract

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Title: Tools of a Trade: Guilt as a Rhetorical Device in Conduct Literature

Guilt as a rhetorical device is an aspect of rhetoric that is infrequently studied. However, it has been used effectively, as in the case of conduct literature, to motivate people to adhere to socio-cultural rules. This research helps to create awareness of a lack of research into an important aspect of the field.

Current research, when available, was studied and read closely in order to establish where the research is currently. Close readings were applied to conduct literature, from the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries in order to understand the application of guilt in socially important rhetoric.

During the research comparisons between conduct literature written for men and for women were conducted. From these comparisons it appears that guilt as a rhetorical device has been more frequently used to influence women than men.

Understanding guilt as a rhetorical device can open up new ideas on the social conduct that we still adhere to today. Social conduct today can largely be placed at the feet of the conduct that has been passed down from generation to generation.