

TOOLS OF A TRADE:
GUILT AS A RHETORICAL DEVICE IN CONDUCT LITERATURE

Margaret A. McDermott

Dr. Donna Strickland, Thesis Supervisor

ABSTRACT

Guilt as a rhetorical device is an aspect of the study of rhetoric that is largely ignored by the academic community. It has been used effectively, as in the case of conduct literature, for a number of years and continues as a popular motivator today.

This paper explores modern day theories of guilt as a motivator in order to enable understanding of this device. However, in order to demonstrate the lasting effects of guilt as a social motivator the primary source for this paper is conduct literature. It is through the analysis of the conduct literature and the rhetorical devices used therein, both for women and for men, that guilt becomes an apparent motivator.