

Feminism and Shakespeare's Female Protagonists: A Review Article on Shakespeare's Selected Tragedies.

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Abstract:

Shakespeare's portrayal of women, especially the interpretation and performance of his female roles, has become subjects of scholarly inquiry. Shakespeare's heroines come in many shapes and sizes and all of Shakespeare's plays. Shakespeare's female characters show considerable brilliance, vitality, and a strong feeling of personal independence among the gallery of female characters. Several critics have argued that Shakespeare was a defender of women's rights and an innovator who deviated radically from his contemporaries and prior dramatists' flat, conventional portrayals of women. As a counterargument, some scholars point out that even Shakespeare's most positive portrayals of female characters have flaws. It has been said that this shows that Shakespeare was not immune to the profoundly ingrained misogynistic inclinations in the culture of his time and place. All of William Shakespeare's works were influenced by the Elizabethan age in which he lived. In the Elizabethan age, women were less powerful than males. "Women are to be seen, not heard" was a common saying. Shakespeare's portrayal of women in his plays has been examined in this article, which shows how the portrayal of women and the time of Shakespeare are implicitly presented in his famous selected tragedies.

Keywords: Shakespeare's tragedy, women portrayal, women in Shakespeare's tragedy, interpretation of female roles

Introduction:

Records from the past show that women's place in society was exceedingly precarious. Throughout history, women have had a lowly position and have been oppressed. Everyone practiced it, rich or poor because it was a natural phenomenon. When composing his plays, Shakespeare, the greatest playwright ever, took great care to capture the nuances of the human condition. Shakespeare's plays, particularly Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, King Lear, Antony and Cleopatra, and Romeo and Juliet, reflect a good attitude toward female characters. According to Virginia Woolf, Shakespeare is the author whose writings are straightforward and free of any personal vices to depict the female characters in his plays. Through Shakespeare's fantastic ability to represent human behavior, he depicts the position of women in a patriarchal society and the complexity of his female character's personalities, which transcend time and Shakespearean topics.

Literature Review

Pragati Das, 2012, in her article "Shakespeare's Representation of Women in his Tragedies", has discussed that scholars are studying Shakespeare's portrayal of women and how they are viewed and acted. Shakespeare's heroines come in a variety of guises. Shakespeare's female characters are full of wit, vitality, and a strong sense of self-determination. Some scholars saw Shakespeare as a champion of women and an innovator who broke away from his contemporaries and predecessors' flat, stereotypical female characters. Others argue that even Shakespeare's most admired female characters have flaws. They argue that this shows Shakespeare had misogynistic inclinations deeply ingrained in his country's and era's culture. William Shakespeare lived in the Elizabethan era and based his works on that society. During the Elizabethan era, women were regarded as weaker than males. "Women are to be seen, not heard," they said. This article explored Shakespeare's portrayal of women in his tragedies, revealing his views on women and their responsibilities in society.

Methodology: qualitative approach, observation

Author: Pragati Das,

Article Name "Shakespeare's Representation of Women in his Tragedies"

Ankita Gupta and Dr S.K Tiwari, 2017, have analyzed in their article "Shakespeare's women's characters as a mirror of society" that Shakespeare is unquestionably the most important poet and playwright in the planet's history. Many individuals have studied his writings, and his plays have been adapted for film and stage productions. Each of his plays is confronted with the bleakness of human nature. Shakespeare had strong sentiments regarding women and their place in society, as seen by the portrayals of women in his plays. Women are not the protagonists in his plays, yet they play a significant role. The female characters in Shakespeare's plays show the effects of society and time. Female power, autonomy, and acknowledgement were scarce during Shakespeare's day. Their standing depended on their father or husband's rank. They were supposed to be passive participants. Such notable characters as Beatrice, Cleopatra, Rosalind, Hermione, Lady Macbeth, Helena, Hermia, etc., were all formed under these conditions. Shakespeare's most memorable

characters serve as a window into his time. In other words, the primary goal of this thesis was to show how his female characters reflect and reflect on the times in which they were written.

Methodology: Qualitative, thematic analysis

Author: Ankita Gupta and Dr S.K Tiwari,

Article Name: Shakespeare's women's characters as a mirror of society

Afaf, Ahmed & Hasan, Al-Saidi & Associate, & Al-Saidi, Afaf, 2017, "Power and Monarchy : Shakespeare's Portrayal of Women in Macbeth and Hamlet" say that William Shakespeare began writing and performing his plays in the late 1500s. Her Majesty Elizabeth Tudor reigned from 1558 until her death on March 23, 1603. As a result, two of the essential characters in 16th and 17th century English history lived nearby. They interacted a lot in court. They walked around London. Shakespeare's group played for the Queen. What impact did Shakespeare's closeness to the monarch have on his work? In numerous of Shakespeare's plays, female protagonists wield authority. His female protagonists succeed in his comedies. However, these plays do not discuss women in royal families. Gender issues were a huge societal issue in Shakespeare's period, so expect to see them. Public and political writers cannot ignore societal challenges. Shakespeare's Hamlet and Macbeth refer to the dangers of women participating in sovereign politics. Shakespeare's plays dramatize real-life political concerns of Elizabeth Tudor's reign through Gertrude's marriage to Hamlet's uncle and Lady Macbeth's unbridled ambition. Character and topic both reveal fear. Concerns about state stability are addressed in the plays' milieu by strengthening the patriarchal structure, and the characters' fears are mirrored in their actions. In both Hamlet and Macbeth, Shakespeare raises the issue of female authority, albeit not expressly for Elizabethan royalty.

Methodology: qualitative, Theoretical analysis (Theory of patriarchy)

Author Name: Afaf, Ahmed & Hasan, Al-Saidi & Associate, & Al-Saidi, Afaf

Article Name: "Power and Monarchy : Shakespeare's Portrayal of Women in Macbeth and Hamlet"

According to Mr. B. N. Hiragana 2018, in his article "Role of women in Shakespeare's Tragedies: A character study of Gertrude from Hamlet and Lady Macbeth from Macbeth", World play has been significantly influenced by the work of William Shakespeare, a late 16th and early 17th-century dramatist and poet. He is the most talked-about author in Western history, both for his life and work. He produced 154 sonnets, two epic narrative poems, and 38 plays. In the years following Shakespeare's death in 1623, two of Shakespeare's on-stage collaborators wrote the earliest works of critical critique. Shakespeare's writings have been studied, understood, and revered for more than a millennium. A Shakespearean play is just an expression of the author's philosophy. His plays focus on the dynamics between men and women. This well-known playwright has nearly nine tragedies to his credit, showing women in a less than favorable light. The two women previously mentioned are held culpable for the deaths of Hamlet and Macbeth, respectively, in Shakespeare's tragedies Hamlet and Macbeth. They are the villains in their own story, as are Lady Macbeth and Gertrude.

Research methodology: qualitative, comparative analysis

Author: Mr. B. N. Hiragana

Article Name: "Role of women in Shakespeare's Tragedies: A character study of Gertrude from Hamlet and Lady Macbeth from Macbeth"

In 2021, Shasta Ashraf and Sabrina Khan published their article "Feminism in Shakespearean Literature: Role of Women in Shakespeare's Play". In that article, they compare and contrast women in Shakespeare's plays. Although compared from a feminist perspective, this is not a fully feminist reading of Shakespeare. An examination of the social circumstances and heroic activities of the male characters and their impact on the lives of their female counterparts. The physical and psychological deceit and their feelings typically identify the man and woman characters' relationships. Morally corrupt males let their egos and attitudes influence their decisions, attacking spiritually and destroying virtuous women who are compelled to become political victims. This research also analyses Shakespeare's portrayal of women as strong, independent, and not inferior to patriarchal male behavior and nature. He liked dressing up as both men and women to mask the gender gap. This concludes that Shakespeare was a writer who recognized feminism in his works long before feminism became a concept in Europe.

Methodology: qualitative, theoretical explanation (feminist approach)

Author Name: Shasta Ashraf and Sabrina Khan

Article Name: Feminism in Shakespearean Literature: Role of Women in Shakespeare's Play

Mat Hilda Samuelsson, 2020, in her article "Shakespeare's Representation of Women A Feminist Reading of Shakespeare's", says that a complex drama about retribution, lunacy, and complicated relationships, Hamlet (1609) by William Shakespeare is one of Shakespeare's best. Ophelia and Gertrude are the article's focus, which examines their significance in the play. The essay demonstrates how Shakespeare represents women in Hamlet through an examination of Ophelia and Gertrude. In addition, a feminist reading of the play examines how contemporary patriarchal culture affects Ophelia and Gertrude's actions and behavior and how it affects the choices of the male characters. Ophelia and Gertrude's characters are dissected to understand Shakespeare's depictions of them in the play. Deconstructing them permits characters to exhibit contradictory features, such as rationality and irrationality, or sanity and madness. Since each character's behavior and actions have an underlying meaning, it is vital to examine the play from multiple angles to understand its complex and intricate plot. As a result, in addition to dissecting the plot, the study focuses on the characters' motivations and actions to better understand how Ophelia and Gertrude are portrayed in the play and how their actions affect the other characters.

Methodology: qualitative, theoretical approach: character deconstruction

Author Name: Mat Hilda Samuelsson

Article Name: Shakespeare's Representation of Women A Feminist Reading of Shakespeare's

Andronicus Kelly Surge, 2017, in his article "Masking Femininity: Women and Power in Shakespeare's Macbeth, As You Like It, and Titus Andronicus", says that Many of Shakespeare's female characters aspired to authority, but it was not as easy as it was for men. Women did not gain leadership jobs as quickly as men; they had to seek them out. In Shakespeare's works, characters like Lady Macbeth, Rosalind, and Tamara show a woman's power to influence her own and others' lives. How does gender affect power? How do women command in Shakespeare? These are some of the questions this post will address. Because feminist philosophy did not exist in Shakespeare's writing, he did not write his plays to be viewed as such.

Methodology: qualitative, feministic approach with Foucault theory of power

Author Name: Andronicus Kelly Surge

Article Name: Masking Femininity: Women and Power in Shakespeare's Macbeth, As You Like It, and Titus Andronicus

Gap in the existing literature:

In most of the articles, critics and writers have discussed the representation of women in the Shakespeare era. However, no study has been conducted on how Shakespeare presented the women's dark gold-digging aspiration and the comparative inferiority of women in different tragedies. In this article, first, the approach of women's gold-digging attitude will be discussed.

Discussion:

Women are frequently alluded to as weak in Hamlet. When Laertes weeps over Ophelia's grave, he declares, "When these are gone,/The woman will be out" (Shakespeare 5.7.187-88). As a result, when his crying stops, he will no longer be a lady. In this scene, Laertes acts as a feminine man because sobbing and being emotional are considered feminine traits (Millett 26). Social constructions, such as modern patriarchy assert that it is not male to be emotional. Emotions and fragility are considered feminine. However, feelings are not always associated with gender. At birth, it determines whether a person is a lady and feminine or a man and masculine. However, according to Butler's performativity, one's qualities are determined by social constructs rather than gender. As a result, a man can evolve and become more feminine than manly. Laertes' male reaction to Ophelia's death would be mourning, not weeping. As a result, Laertes explains that when he stops crying, the feminine characteristics within him will vanish. Many guys in the play act out their emotions, even though it is considered feminine to be crazy.

Because of his father's death, Hamlet seeks vengeance, and Claudius murders Hamlet's father for personal gain. "Frailty, thy name is woman," Hamlet says, implying that Gertrude is weak for marrying Claudius (Shakespeare 1.2.146). Her gender, according to Hamlet, is one of the reasons for her weakness. He is also engaged with her for sullyng with his father's image. The memory of the former King will fade as she remarries. Her sole acceptable role is that of a bereaved widow. There should not be a decision for her to make that remarriage is in doubt because she should honor her deceased husband while still considering him. Gertrude's role is fluid and nuanced. Because the drama is told from a male perspective, she is first a wife, then a mother, and never a Queen. Initially, the spotlight is on her betrayal and remarriage. As a result, she was first the King's wife and then his brother's wife. However, when Hamlet goes insane, her character becomes a mother. She must reason with her son and care for him in some way. Gertrude deviates from the usual nurturing mother position. She does not abdicate her throne to aid Hamlet in his vengeance, as a mother could. Instead, she strives to focus on what is best for the state and does not allow her emotions to dictate her actions.

Nonetheless, as Hamlet's mother, she shields him from himself. Gertrude accuses Hamlet of being insane when he tries to persuade his mother about what Claudius has done (and mistakenly murders Polonius). Hamlet's insanity legitimizes his charges against Claudius and the murder of Polonius. So, Gertrude dismisses his charges for his protection, although knowing the truth. Gertrude's personality must be disassembled in order to be understood. She appears to be stereotypically feminine on the surface: weak, docile, and reliant. She marries her brother-in-law because she needs a King by her side to remain Queen.

However, the play depicts a strong, intellectual lady who plays the part of an emotional and vulnerable woman for the benefit of the state. Gertrude's character can be explained as illogical yet reasonable, feminine yet masculine by deconstructing her (Bennett and Royle 216). However, it is debatable if she is emotional and feminine or if she plays like a submissive woman in order to gain everyone's trust while avoiding drawing attention or suspicion to herself. She may become more untrustworthy if she expresses her authentic voice and individuality. As a result, if the insane guys had total power, she would not have been able to attempt to escape the ensuing catastrophe. However, Hamlet's deeds caused turmoil, but Gertrude attempted to prevent it and predicted the catastrophe that resulted from his acts. Ophelia is presented as a reliant woman partially ruled by her father and brother. Laertes orders Ophelia to stay away from Hamlet in her first actual appearance. She is a lady who is only there for him for a short time, and she should be more realistic about it.

He also explains Ophelia's natural behavior, saying that "it fits your wisdom so far to believe it" (Shakespeare 1.3.25). As a result, because Ophelia is a woman, she cannot detect Hamlet's deception. She is too naive to comprehend his true intentions toward her. Laertes is correct in advising her to avoid him. In the end, Hamlet abandons her because she is unchaste and dirty. Furthermore, Polonius bans Ophelia from seeing Hamlet. Polonius explains everything to her as

if she were a child. "Marry me, and I will teach you." Consider yourself a baby. You have taken these tenders for actual pay" (Shakespeare 1.3.105-6). Ophelia is perplexed because she trusts Hamlet's adoration but must consider her brother's and father's advice. Polonius claims that Ophelia is not important enough for Hamlet to desire to claim her. Also, according to Polonius, Hamlet "springs to catch woodcocks" (Shakespeare 1.3.115), which indicates he sets a trap for Ophelia with hollow vows (Shakespeare 205). In addition, Polonius informs the King of Hamlet's writings and behavior toward his daughter. "I have a daughter – have while she is mine- Who in her duty and obedience, mark, Hath given me this," Polonius adds (Shakespeare 2.2.106-8). He is concerned with preventing Ophelia from being naive and her and their family's image. Ophelia cannot be intimate with a prince, especially an unmarried woman. On the one hand, Laertes and Polonius have power over Ophelia's decisions, yet they also try to keep her from making significant blunders.

On the other hand, Shakespeare develops female characters in *Macbeth* who embrace and reject this ideal. Lady Macbeth, Lady Macduff, and the Strange Sisters are all female characters in this play, with three distinct types of female characters. There is a wide range of differences among them. By reading their dialogues and hearing what other characters say about them, the audience learns about the portrayal of women in Shakespeare's plays. When it came to creating strong female characters in Shakespeare's plays, he relied on various dramatic devices, including the setting, dialogue, asides, and other people's opinions. There is much binary animosity between Lady Macbeth and Lady Macduff. When it comes to the weird sisters, they have been given the moniker "things to be afraid of." Macbeth's depiction of female characters can be seen through these women's eyes.

Lady Macbeth is the name of Macbeth's wife. Numerous allusions are made to her beauty throughout the play. She appears to adhere to societal norms outwardly, yet her inner self is always engaged. She is ambitious, deceptive, remorseful, and brutal in her approach. Lady Macbeth is willing to go to any lengths to achieve her goal of becoming King. As the dominant and more aggressive persona behind Macbeth's evil activities, she can play the respectable wife and the calm, well-behaved female in front of others. She is dishonest for this reason. She becomes a vicious and cunning character when she is not with Macbeth.

Lady Macbeth's discourse reveals distinct elements of her nature. "Lady Macbeth: Fill me from the crown to the toe top-full of direst cruelty. (Act 1 Sc. 5 Ln 41)" Her hunger and power drive her to be brutal. These are strong statements, implying that she would wish to be filled with cruelty merely to be Queen. She is also quite fast to think. She knows what she wants, and she probably knows Macbeth better than he knows himself, so she knows how to 'guard' him.

"Lady Macbeth: Your hand, your tongue; look like the innocent

Flower, but be the serpent under." (Act 1 Sc. 5 Ln 63-64)

She is also incredibly manipulative, as she dares him to be a "man" rather than a "coward" by convincing him to kill Duncan.

"Lady Macbeth: And live a coward in thine own esteem When you durst do it, then you were a man. (Act 1 Sc. 7 Ln 43, 49)" Outwardly, she conforms to social expectations, and she takes her own advice to Macbeth: "Look like the innocent flower, /But be the serpent under". When Duncan pays a visit, he and Lady Macbeth exchange numerous compliments and flattery, but Lady Macbeth's charm conceals a nefarious purpose.

Shakespeare creates characters in response to what others say about them. When Lady Macbeth falls asleep at the end of the play, her waiting lady and the doctor discuss her. "Gentlewoman: I am certain she has said something she should not have. Heaven is aware of what she has learned. (Act 5 Section 1 Line 40-1)" When the physician observes Lady Macbeth sleepwalking, he is taken aback and responds,

"Doctor: Foul whisperings are abroad; unnatural deeds

Do breed unnatural troubles; infected minds

To their deaf pillows will discharge their secrets.

More needs she the divine than the physician.

God, God, forgive us all. Look after her;

Remove from her the means of all annoyance,

And still, keep eyes upon her. So, good night,

My mind she has mated, and amazed my sight.

I think, but dare not speak. (Act 5 Sc. 1 Ln 61-9)"

This is a great way to flesh out her character because it shows her speaking out of the blue while the doctor and lady study her. According to the doctor, unsettling rumors are spreading, and an anxious mind will not be able to sleep peacefully. He says she needs a priest's help rather than a doctor's since her mind is failing. They are probably responsible for the killings of Duncan, his wife, Lady Macduff, and Banquo. Because of his belief in the existence of this phenomenon, he appears to be frightened, but he does not dare speak about it. It gives the impression that Lady Macbeth is remorseful and not as evil as she appears.

The setting serves to emphasize Lady Macbeth's false demeanor. In her own family, she is the one who takes the initiative and goes against the grain of what is expected of her. She maintains impeccable social decorum in public places like banquet halls and other places where people may be present. In this situation, she is seen to have two distinct personalities.

Thane Macduff's wife is Lady Macduff. Because she is a "good" wife and mother, she is expected to act by social norms. She is a loving mother who takes excellent care of her children. She is the kind of woman who relies on her

husband's loyalty and protection when he is away on business in England because she feels vulnerable without him. Lady Macduff is a stoic character.

Lady Macduff's speech reveals how uneasy she is in the absence of her spouse. When Macduff fled to England, she believes it was because he was insane, afraid, and lacked love for his family.

"Lady Macduff: Wisdom? To leave his wife, to leave his babes,

His mansion and his titles in a place

From whence himself does fly? He loves us, not

He wants the natural touch, for the poor wren

The most diminutive of birds will fight,

Her young ones in her nest, against the owl.

All is the fear, and nothing is the love;

All little is the wisdom, where the flight

So runs against all reasons. (Act 4 Sc. 2 Ln 6-14)"

In these lines, Macduff has no regard for his relatives. Because of her recent marital dissolution, there is much imagery of birds protecting their young. She is portrayed as a weak and modest woman in the narrative. In Shakespeare's portrayal of her, she obeys her husband while still relying on him. The audience only sees Lady Macduff in her room. Because she accomplishes everything in there, she never ventures outside of it. Her closed room indicates her lack of knowledge of the outside world or that she is unable to leave it. Lady Macduff's portrayal in Shakespeare's play is a "trapped" mother who is focused on her family's needs.

The Weird Sisters lend credence to commonly held assumptions about the lives of Elizabethan women in their forties and fifties. Because of their advanced age and extensive knowledge, they have found themselves in a bad situation. Evil spirits and demons have long been connected with these characters. They are often referred to as "ugly old hags," which the audience is warned of during the performance. You should never put your trust in them because they like tampering with people's lives. As the terrible guys in the drama, their entire personas are portrayed as bleak. Powerful and terrifying images fill the odd sister's discourse. In preparation for their meeting with Macbeth, they chant as they go around the cauldron, adding the repulsive ingredients one by one.

"Third Witch: Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf,

Witches' mummy, maw and gulf

Of the ravine salt-sea shark,

Root of hemlock, dogged i'th'dark;

Liver of a blaspheming Jew,

Gall of goat, and slips of yew,

Slivered in the moon's eclipse;

Nose of Turk, and Tartar's lips,

Finger of a birth-strangled babe,

Ditch-delivered by a drab,

Make the gruel thick and slab.

Add thereto a tiger's Chadron

For th'ingredience of our cauldron. (Act 4 Sc. 1 Ln 22- 34)"

There is nothing enjoyable about any of the chemicals listed. The depiction of them as monstrous beasts is accompanied by ominous imagery. They are shown as heinous villains who have no qualms about interfering with the lives of others and wreaking destruction. Riddles are a standard method of communication for the weird sisters. They are difficult to decipher and can be construed in any way the narrator wishes.

"Third Apparition: Be bloody, be bold, and resolute; laugh to scorn

The power of man, for none of woman born

Shall harm Macbeth. (Act 4 Sc. 1 Ln 78-80)"

After hearing this, Macbeth thinks of himself as invincible. Macduff, born via cesarean section, will damage because he was not born naturally. He does not recognize it. Shakespeare portrays the sisters as cunning, deceitful hogs acting. In this drama, the weird sisters are mentioned numerous times. Banquo warns that the odd sisters' prophecies may lead to harm if their first forecast of Macbeth becoming Thane of Cawdor comes true.

"Banquo: That trusted home, Might yet enkindle you unto the crown,

Besides the Thane of Cawdor. But 'tis strange,

And often, to win us to our harm,

The instruments of darkness tell us truths;

Win us with honest trifles, to betray's

In deepest consequence. –

Cousins, a word, I pray to you. (Act 1 Sc. 3 Ln 119-126)"

Because the other characters do not believe they are trustworthy, he does not believe them either. Shakespeare does an excellent job with them in this regard. Grey areas are the usual haunts of the odd sisters. Shakespeare used this theatrical style to give the Strange Sisters their dark, confusing personas. There is always thunder, lightning, or rain accompanying

their meetings on a heath or in a secluded spot. There are no indoor activities when raining, drizzly, and dark out. The planet is depicted as untamed, natural, and uncivilized in this context.

Women are shown as the lesser sex in *Macbeth*, and if they do have any power, it is malevolent and not to be trusted. Some of the female characters support the standards of how a woman should be and act, while others, such as Lady Macbeth, defy them. However, Lady Macbeth is 'punished' for questioning the values by going insane in the end. Shakespeare employs dramatic tactics such as discussion between characters, dialogue between characters about them, and setting. The three different female characters vividly show how women lived in Macbeth's and Elizabethan eras.

The women in *King Lear* are depicted as either virtuous or malevolent. The traditional role of a woman was to be meek and subservient. Shakespeare's portrayal of the daughters in *King Lear* powerfully subverts standard gender stereotypes. Goneril and Regan, on the other hand, are not conventional Shakespearean females and display uncommon traits of power-hungriness and emasculation. Controlling their husbands and father is a priority for many women. Nowhere is property deformity as horrifying as it is in women (4.2.59-60). Is it possible that Shakespeare implies that strong women are damaged in their minds and therefore evil despite their physical appearance? After viewing Goneril and Regan's failures, Shakespeare suggests that women who are given authority abuse it and hence fail. The same can be said for women in positions of authority or those who aspire to be in such positions. As Shakespeare points out, there is anarchy when women are in charge.

It may be said that Shakespeare's work is fundamentally a form of feminist writing when we read it. Women were expected to be subservient and obedient to men in the Jacobean age, which Shakespeare was writing. Even though Shakespeare worked during the Renaissance, he did not reflect the Renaissance view of women. 'Adam was not fooled, but the woman became a transgressor because of her seduction,' the Bible adds. The Renaissance viewed women as seductively culpable for man's transgression (1 Timothy 2:12-14). Instead, Shakespeare opted not to emphasize women in his plays to portray them as either dangerous or innocent because of their sexual prowess. Shakespeare wanted the audience to focus on the characters' actions rather than their gender.

"*King Lear*" shows that Shakespeare wanted his audience to assess characters based on their behavior, not their gender. 'Which of you will we claim loves us the most?' their father, King Lear, asks of the three primary female characters in '*King Lear*,' General, Reagan, and Cordelie, in the play's outset, in exchange for land and money. Shakespeare's audience witnesses the three daughters in all their complexity during this 'love test.' It is through General and Regan's exaggerated flattery in their speeches, 'I am formed of that self-mettle as my sister/And prize me at her worth,' that Shakespeare's audience is shown General and Reagan's self-interest and underlines Lear's moral blindness as a result of his arrogance. In Lear's case, this moral blindness and hubris are accentuated by Cordelia's declaration of love for him. Cordelia's response to Lear's request to "speak" her love for Lear is "nothing." Shakespeare encourages his audience to criticize his portrayal of Cordelia with this one-word response of 'nothing.' Cordelia's actions can be interpreted in two ways by the viewer. First, Cordelia is honest in her love for Lear even though she does not employ hyperbolic language like her sisters, 'I cannot heave My heart into my tongue'. Cordelia's comments are more potent than those of her sister, as stated by Terence H. Hawkes, because "she seizes the fact that the true sense of love implies something impossible to conceive." Alternatively, Shakespeare shows Cordelia as a woman who challenges the patriarchy in society and the Chain of Being by stating "nothing" at the end of the play. Since women are obligated to submit to males by the laws of nature, Cordelia's refusal to satisfy her father could be seen as a rebellion against patriarchy. In the Jacobean age, women could only object by saying "nothing," therefore, Cordelia might use the art of silence to speak out against her father.

This drama depicts the patriarchal world view that seems scared of women and what they symbolize,' Weston wrote in his play review. Lear curses General to be infertile: 'into her womb impart sterility'. Femininity's value was determined by producing children in the Jacobean period when women were marginalized and had no place in society's public arena. G. Wilson Knight asserts that "by cursing General, Lear curses himself" because of this. If General is cursed to be childless, her sexuality will become one of pleasure rather than reproductive function, rendering her impossible to control by the patriarchy. Shakespeare's portrayal of King Lear's illogical response to being challenged by women is only one example of how a patriarchal worldview is scared of women and what they symbolize. When Cordelia refuses to comply with Lear's demands, she ceases to exist. Once upon a time, we held her in high esteem, / but now her value has fallen. The use of third-person pronouns establishes a sense of separation and liberation for Cordelia. When France recognizes Cordelia's actual character – "she is herself a dowry" – she emphasizes her refusal to bend to patriarchy, ensuring "Cordelia establishes herself as a model of sensible virtue." The women in *King Lear* have thus far been shown as manipulative, forceful, and independent by Shakespeare.

When analyzing Shakespeare's portrayal of women in *King Lear*, the play's lack of a single prominent female character must be considered. King Lear's wife and the mother of his three children, General, Reagan, and Cordelia. The lack of a mother character in the play may underline the strained connection between King Lear and his daughters. In Jacobean England, a mother's primary responsibilities were to bear and raise children and tend to the home. "women are primarily responsible for the rearing and bearing of children," says Copula Kahn. All of King Lear's family relationships are destroyed by the absence of a mother for both Lear and Gloucester. According to Bond, there has been no one to tell kids that life is rife with power struggles and legalized violence. Edmund and Edgar, the two brothers, and the three sisters have had no one to teach them right from wrong. The lack of a mother in Shakespeare's play promotes the patriarchy of the time, emphasizing how anarchy is inevitable if women do not submit to their gender duties. Sarah Don

caster explains that a character's "unnatural behavior" is shown by "animal imagery," Sarah Don caster explains. Therefore, Shakespeare suggests that Lear feels unnatural in his subordinate role to his daughters by making him use animal imagery, such as "detested kite" and "serpent-like."

Here in "King Lear," we are presented with a scenario where all of the women in the play are depicted as "dowry" items that can be traded for power and land in exchange for them. When it comes to their wives' new acquired power, Shakespeare portrays the husbands as passive observers rather than active participants. Shakespeare's portrayal of women thus far shows them as powerful women who fear a patriarchal society. It can be said that Shakespeare's work is fundamentally a form of feminist writing when we read it. Women were expected to be subservient and obedient to men in the Jacobean age, which Shakespeare was writing. Even though Shakespeare worked during the Renaissance, he did not reflect the Renaissance view of women. 'Adam was not fooled, but the woman became a transgressor because of her seduction,' the Bible adds. The Renaissance viewed women as seductively culpable for man's transgression. Instead, Shakespeare opted not to emphasize women in his plays to portray them as either dangerous or innocent because of their sexual prowess. Shakespeare wanted the audience to focus on the characters' actions rather than on their gender.

"King Lear" shows that Shakespeare wanted his audience to assess characters based on their behavior, not their gender. 'Which of you will we claim loves us the most?' their father, King Lear, asks of the three primary female characters in 'King Lear,' General, Reagan, and Cordelior, in the play's outset, in exchange for land and money. Shakespeare's audience witnesses the three daughters in all their complexity during this 'love test.' It is through General and Regan's exaggerated flattery in their speeches, 'I am formed of that self-mettle as my sister/And prize me at her worth,' that Shakespeare's audience is shown General and Regan's self-interest and underlines Lear's moral blindness as a result of his arrogance. In Lear's case, this moral blindness and hubris are accentuated by Cornelia's declaration of love for him. Cornelia's response to Lear's request to "speak" her love for Lear is "nothing." Shakespeare encourages his audience to criticize his portrayal of Cordelior with this one-word response of 'nothing.' Cornelia's actions can be interpreted in two ways by the viewer. First, Cordelior is honest in her love for Lear even though she does not employ hyperbolic language like her sisters, 'I cannot heave My heart into my tongue'. Cornelia's comments are more potent than those of her sister, as stated by Terence H. Hawkes, because "she seizes the fact that the true sense of love implies something impossible to conceive." Alternatively, Shakespeare shows Cordelior as a woman who challenges the patriarchy in society and the Chain of Being by stating "nothing" at the end of the play. Since women are obligated to submit to males by the laws of nature, Cornelia's refusal to satisfy her father could be seen as a rebellion against patriarchy. In the Jacobean age, women could only object by saying "nothing," therefore, Cordelior might use the art of silence to speak out against her father.

This drama depicts the patriarchal world view that seems scared of women and what they symbolize,' Weston wrote in his play review. Lear curses General to be infertile: 'into her womb impart sterility'. Femininity's value was determined by producing children in the Jacobean period when women were marginalized and had no place in society's public arena. G. Wilson Knight asserts that "by cursing General, Lear curses himself" because of this. If General is cursed to be childless, her sexuality will become one of pleasure rather than reproductive function, rendering her impossible to control by the patriarchy. Shakespeare's portrayal of King Lear's illogical response to being challenged by women is only one example of how a patriarchal worldview is scared of women and what they symbolize. When Cordelior refuses to comply with Lear's demands, she ceases to exist. Once upon a time, we held her in high esteem, / but now her value has fallen. The use of third-person pronouns establishes a sense of separation and liberation for Cordelior. When France recognizes Cornelia's actual character – "she is herself a dowry" – she emphasizes her refusal to bend to patriarchy, ensuring "Cordelior establishes herself as a model of sensible virtue." The women in King Lear have thus far been shown as manipulative, forceful, and independent by Shakespeare.

When analyzing Shakespeare's portrayal of women in King Lear, we must consider the play's lack of a single prominent female character. King Lear's wife and the mother of his three children, General, Reagan, and Cordelior. The lack of a mother character in the play may underline the strained connection between King Lear and his daughters. In Jacobean England, a mother's primary responsibilities were to bear and raise children and tend to the home. "women are primarily responsible for the rearing and bearing of children," says Copula Kahn. All of King Lear's family relationships are destroyed by the absence of a mother for both Lear and Gloucester. According to Bond, there has been no one to tell kids that life is rife with power struggles and legalized violence. Edmund and Edgar, the two brothers, and the three sisters have had no one to teach them right from wrong. The lack of a mother in Shakespeare's play promotes the patriarchy of the time, emphasizing how anarchy is inevitable if women do not submit to their gender duties. Sarah Don caster explains that a character's "unnatural behavior" is shown by "animal imagery," Sarah Don caster explains. Therefore, Shakespeare suggests that Lear feels unnatural in his subordinate role to his daughters by making him use animal imagery, such as "detested kite" and "serpent-like."

Here in "King Lear," we are presented with a scenario where all of the women in the play are depicted as "dowry" items that can be traded for power and land in exchange for them. When it comes to their wives' new acquired power, Shakespeare portrays the husbands as passive observers rather than active participants. Shakespeare's portrayal of women thus far shows them as powerful women who fear a patriarchal society. In Shakespeare's Othello, Shakespeare's day's social and political views are explored richly and entertainingly. Othello, a black army commander, married Desdemona, the white daughter of a powerful politician, in an era of prejudice and sexism; their relationship was difficult to maintain. The three women in the play, Desdemona, Emilia, and Bianca, reflect the traditional expectations of

Elizabethan society for women. The ladies in Shakespeare's Elizabethan world conform to the social and gender norms prevalent.

In Shakespeare's *Othello*, women are portrayed as men's property. Othello is accused of stealing and "drugging" Brabantio's daughter by the Duke of Venice and the Venetian state in the play's first act. Desdemona can accompany Othello to Cyprus for the military expedition thanks to the Senate's support. "To his conveyance, I will assign my wife," Othello says to Iago when speaking to the Duke about entrusting Iago with the care of his wife. Even though it is not the most famous statement, this one emphasizes that Othello's wife, Desdemona, is a possession that must be secured and carried. This is like Desdemona's life before she married her first husband. She was her father's daughter, and now she is Othello's wife, and both are subject to his will. This was common practice in Shakespeare's period when women were viewed as the weaker sex and were to be guarded by their husbands for their safety. The first senator also stated, "Adieu, brave Moor; use Desdemona well," which shows that the phrase "look after" is replaced by "use." This remark can also describe the Venetian ideal of a woman, who is expected to kneel to her husbands and use them at will. After the Turkish fleet was destroyed, Othello and the military officers returned to shore in scene 3 of the play in the third act. After greeting Desdemona and returning to the castle, Othello says, "Let me have speech with you, my dear love; the purchase made is the fruit to ensue." As a support for the role of women after marriage, what Othello has said appears to be highly romantic and of love words throughout Shakespeare's period, like this. Like the first senator said, the wife is bought by the husband as property and is expected to fulfil the husband's wants for the privilege of being married, as expressed by words like "use" and "purchase."

Shakespeare's *Othello* also features a passive portrayal of women, shown as sex objects and passive characters. Guys use derogatory language toward women, but women do not respond in kind. Iago uses numerous instances of sexist language in the play, and we see this right from the start. After meeting with the Duke and Senate, Iago and Roderigo are the only ones left on stage to discuss battle tactics against the Turks who have invaded. Iago discusses his relationship and love-sickness, which will influence men's appetites, with Roderigo. "I would drown myself for the love of a guinea-hen," he says of his connection with Emilia. He also labels her a prostitute and makes other disparaging comments later in the play because he thinks she is not fulfilling him. When Desdemona's handkerchief falls to the ground, Emilia picks it up and says, "I nothing but to please his fantasy," before meeting up with Iago in Act 3, Scene 3. She is depicted as a meek, obedient servant of Iago who is only concerned with pleasing him. Emilia's attempts to please Iago are futile, as Iago silences her at the end of the play after voicing her ideas and revealing the truth about his schemes. During Iago's soliloquy in Act 2, Scene 1, Line 280, the character discusses retribution against Othello and the ruin of Michael Cassio. While hunting for vengeance, he suspects both Othello and Cassio of having slept with his wife. Iago, in his soliloquy, characterizes Desdemona as a loving Moor and declares his love for her only to carry on with his vengeance. "And nothing can or shall satisfy my soul until I am evened with him, wife for wife," he declares. Iago thinks he and Othello will be on an equal footing if they sleep with Desdemona. Iago's treatment of Emilia and Desdemona as mere objects is automatically disrespectful to their feelings.

As a result, Shakespeare portrays women as victims of society who are either compelled to fulfill the societal norms of the ideal woman or suffer a sad fate for violating this system. Emilia and Iago's marriage and Desdemona, the play's ideal wife, demonstrate this. To say goodnight, Othello begs for Desdemona to wait in bed while Desdemona and Emilia converse about their love for Othello and their differing views on marriage and commitment. In Act IV, Scene 3, Desdemona sings "Song of Willow," a lament for a lady's lost love, and she and Emilia discuss marriage. It was initially a ballad about a man who died because of love's cruelty, but Shakespeare changed the victim to a woman to fit Desdemona's character. As a female victim of a male-dominated culture, this song uses an authoritative voice to emphasize her innocence. In this, Desdemona's impending death is foreshadowed by Othello's harshness. She said, "Nobody; I," to Emilia's final question as she lay dying. Farewell." Because punishing Othello would only lead to more penalties for Desdemona, she assumes responsibility for her death rather than accuse her spouse. Emilia and Desdemona talk about marriage as they sing. Emilia, the most potent common sense speaker, advocates for marriage equality, equal rights for women, and a focus on spouses as the source of problems. After Othello screams and yells at Desdemona for the handkerchief's disappearance in Act 3 Scene 4, Emilia addresses Desdemona and makes some observations about males. She says, "This shows a man, not a year or two." She also says, "They eat us hungrily, and when we are full, they belch us." Through Emilia's eyes, Shakespeare portrays women as victims of society. Emilia's right to speak out about men's rights when they "throw restraint upon us or say they strike us" and "slack their duties," as Iago does to her. In the context of Emilia's analogy, men utilize women as food because they perceive them to be sexualized, weak, and inferior to males. "Their wives have sense like them, they see and smell," she says, stating that women and men share comparable feelings, interests, and affection.

In addition, a wide range of female critics has criticized Desdemona and the play's portrayal of her from a feminist standpoint. In Shakespeare's time, women were viewed as "biologically weak and socially inferior" by other critics, according to the New York Times. As a result, they must rely on males and must not ignore or violate their orders. According to feminism, Desdemona and Emilia are solid and resolute female characters, yet they are both constrained by the male-dominated society. This is women's defining knowledge; private, domestic and sexual, which must be hidden from public view out of respect for modesty. This is Lisa Jardine in 1987. Desdemona became a tragic hero because she was subject to society's oppression as a young, independent, strong, and determined woman. She was killed as a result of her actions. Because of this, she was resolved to marry Othello, a Moor, in an age when racism and prejudice toward

blacks were every days. As a result, she disobeys her mother and her father, who at the time acted as the sole authority figure for their daughters. "So that dear lord, if I am left behind, A moth of peace and I go to war, the rites for which I love him are bereft me," Desdemona replies to her father after Brabantio has given up his argument in Act 1 Scene 3. Her final remark emphasizes the significance of her company: "By his dear absence." Let us go with him, please," I said. This last line is critical because it demonstrates a resolute and unyielding character trait and a willingness to act without being asked. For Lisa Jardine, a critical essayist and author, "In the Elizabethan era, the domineering wife brought shame and humiliation upon her husband." Desdemona is the opposite of the norm. According to Neeley in 1984, another author, "the focus of Othello is love, which drives Desdemona but is tempered by her wisdom and reality." Neeley's quotations highlight Desdemona's role as a powerful female character in the book. While speaking to her father in the same act and scene, when Desdemona states, "so much I challenge, I profess, due to the Moor my lord," she gives a speech that is critical to her sense of self-determination and strength. She persuaded her father without retaliation showing her intelligence as a female in a country where women are often oppressed. As a strong woman who is finally forced to acknowledge her gender and place as a subordinate, Desdemona now "serves" Othello instead of serving her father. She dared to deny her father, but not the audacity to renounce serving her spouse. She believes she is less intelligent and capable than a man than a woman. Therefore she implores Iago to help her solve her difficulties. It is said that she looks to a male for support in her misery. Implying that she does not expect to comprehend for herself, but that a guy can explain it." "whore," "strumpet," and other derogatory terms are hurled at her as she is the target of the play in a male-dominated culture. As a spouse, Othello fails to fulfill his duties and assaults her in public, leading to Desdemona's death due to his jealousy.

The numerous facets of a woman's social role in Shakespeare's Othello are addressed in great detail. Through Emilia and Desdemona's characters, we see how even an aristocratic woman like Desdemona can fall victim to social pressures. Our understanding of society and the treatment of women in Shakespearean times can be gleaned through Emilia. However, even though many reviewers and readers see Desdemona as an intelligent and strong woman, she is constrained by stereotypes and that she is female.

Conclusion:

Female characters in William Shakespeare's plays have become a focus of academic research. There are a variety of Shakespeare's heroines in all of his plays. Shakespeare's female characters stand out for their intelligence, vigor, and strong sense of self-determination among the cast of female characters. Criticism has suggested that Shakespeare was an advocate for women's rights and an innovator who departed significantly from his contemporaries and preceding dramatists' flat, traditional representations of female characters. According to some academics, even Shakespeare's most flattering portrayals of female characters have their share of problems. According to some critics, it proves he was not immune to the profoundly established misogynistic proclivities of his time and place. His compositions were all influenced by the Elizabethan period in which he was born and raised. In Elizabethan England, women were portrayed as having less clout and authority than men. It was general wisdom that women were to be seen, not heard, during that period.

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