

The existence and scope of power in females in an assortment of
Shakespeare's plays.

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A Thesis Submitted to the Department of English and Humanities in partial fulfillment of
The requirements for the degree of
B. A in English

Department of English and Humanities

BRAC University
December 2022

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Acknowledgement

I would like to celebrate this thesis and my strong will to keep going despite many obstacles that life threw at me throughout the years of my degree completion journey. I sincerely thank my thesis supervisor and most loved teacher, Miss Rukhsana Rahim Chowdhury for being patient with me and for providing me with guidance with utmost care and dedication. I could not have been able to complete my thesis without her expertise and assistance. And also, if anyone ever made me want to attend my literature classes, that would forever be Ms. Rukhsana because of her deeply rooted passion that she has in her eyes always reflecting when she teaches us. That is the kind of teacher and idol I think all literature students should come across in order to feel the light of literature within their hearts. I wholeheartedly want to thank my two beautiful and lovely sisters, boyfriend - Esham, and dearest best friend - Arifa who always supported me and gave me the all the motivation I needed from time to time as I messed up. Every day and every nigh whenever I wanted coffee, one mug after another, my sisters – Narmin and Nourhan were there. Above all, I am grateful to my mother who taught me everything that I have learnt to be able to come this far. Without her utmost care, support, love, patience and teachings I would probably not even hold this dream in my heart. The extreme hard work my mother has done for the last 24 years to bring me to where I stand today, and her passion for making sure I am never alone in life are what kept me going. I am extremely grateful to my Allah (SWT) for giving me the strength and blessing to be able to make it this far.

Abstract

Shakespeare's vagueness piqued my interest, and when I understood how differently female and male authority functions, I felt driven to write my original opinions on the topic. I have selected *Portia*, *Emilia*, *Paulina*, *Desdemona*, *Juliet*, *Helen* and *Rosalind* as my Shakespearean plays' female characters for my thesis. I was researching the chosen figures and making an effort to comprehend respective identities inside this framework of the ideals prevalent in *Shakespeare's* day, that are also reflected in *Shakespeare's* persona in his writings. My work concentrates on women's components. Despite the fact that females continue to be the story's driving force and finish the production of the overall piece, female characters' significance is often undervalued in literary works. My thesis would examine the very essence and scope of power in females in an assortment of *Shakespeare's* works, considering the interpretation of both female and power. The portrayal of female characters equally validates and questions the formation of gender. Gender would be described inside the dissertation as gendered stereotyping regarding specific ways of speaking, reasoning and acting that are believed suited to the male or female gender. Main components of my argument include language, and action. Finally, I would want to conclude my argument by pointing out how female gender is concurrently built in the plays. I'll make the point that the formation of gender affects male characters as well. Despite the fact that this structure disproportionately affects women, males may also become victims as a result of it.

Keywords: Power, Male, Female, Men, Women, Gender, Norms, Sexual identity, Patriarchy, Patriarchal society.

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Chapter 1

Introduction:

In my opinion, women are not superior or inferior to males in any way, shape, or form. They are not more in touch with their surroundings or their instincts. In cases when clear distinctions exist, I contend of course those are the very result of ingrained norms of society and culture. Feminine and masculine categories seem artificial to me and just serve to further complicate interactions between people. These are the gender impacts, in my view, of process of socialization.

A personal stance that places a high value on writing is the root of my as well as numerous people's feminist point of view to literary evaluation since we both all believe that literature is very important. The essence of this way of looking at life carries with it a tremendous amount of both cultural and ideological power. Literature serves as a gateway creativity, providing the potential

area upon what notions for social transformation might be planted. New understandings of works that are at the heart of our society may emerge as a result of the adoption of feminist literary criticism. By gaining a deeper comprehension of fictional representations of women, feminist literary analysts get an important responsibility to fulfill in shaping the way women are perceived in this world. This in no way indicates that I see *Shakespeare's* productions or analysis regarding them as representations of actual women who lived in the 16th or 21st centuries. The works aren't history; they're plays. What makes these works noteworthy is the way in which they investigate the reasons for and the repercussions of certain behaviors. The works do not always go beyond the social standards and intellectual limitations of *Shakespeare's* time period.

The fact that we deal with cliched forms of misogyny that existed during his era would not come as a shock. By analyzing such dramas and the parts played by their female characters, we might perhaps get a deeper understanding of the origins, repercussions, and potential challenges posed by patriarchal sexism.

Shakespeare's influence is felt all around the globe, which is why I've opted to write on his female characters. The identity *Shakespeare*, certain phrases within his works, and the identities of certain figures are all well-known even to those who haven't read or explored his works. He is considered essential reading and is included in compulsory subjects. His writings continue to be relevant today due to the lessons they can teach us about patriarchal society and sexism, both during his time and now. As an Asian woman of 24 years of age with some level of socioeconomic and academical advantages, I have strived to grasp the perspective through which I read the characters.

One of the most divisive Baroque figures is *William Shakespeare*. Individuals and his detractors have a variety of paradoxical and divergent opinions concerning him. There are many unsolved issues surrounding *Shakespeare*, who is enveloped in ambiguity and doubt, which serve as

impulses for his interpretation. As a result, it is hardly unexpected that infinite numbers of individuals attempt to delve further into *Shakespeare* writings, which bear the stamp of Shakespearean obscurity and provide a response to those subsequent queries. Diverging and moving in opposing paths are perspectives regarding *Shakespeare's* temperament as well as approaches to the analysis of his writings.

Shakespeare's vagueness piqued my interest, and when I understood how differently female and male authority functions, I felt driven to write my original opinions on the topic. I have selected *Portia, Emilia, Paulina, Desdemona, Juliet, Helen* and *Rosalind* as my Shakespearean plays' female characters for my thesis. I was researching the chosen figures and making an effort to comprehend respective identities inside this framework of the ideals prevalent in *Shakespeare's* day, that are also reflected in *Shakespeare's* persona in his writings. My work concentrates on women's components. Despite the fact that females continue to be the story's driving force and finish the production of the overall piece, female characters' significance is often undervalued in literary works.

My thesis would examine the very essence and scope of power in females in an assortment of *Shakespeare's* works, considering the interpretation of both female and power. The portrayal of female characters equally validates and questions the formation of gender. Gender would be described inside the dissertation as gendered stereotyping regarding specific ways of speaking, reasoning and acting that are believed suited to the male or female gender. Main components of my argument include language, and action.

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Despite the fact that this structure disproportionately affects women, males may also become victims as a result of it.

I believe that social and cultural upbringing have a role in the development of such inequalities. Feminist and masculinist ideologies are, in my opinion, unnecessary difficulties in human interactions. The results of such imprinting are what I refer to as "gender."

I would say that conflicting representations of the feminine gender are created concurrently all across the dramas. And that the formation of sexual identities also applies to masculine figures. Males may become casualties as well, despite the fact how this structure seems to have a greater detrimental impact on females more than males. The argument shows that gender is indeed a synthetic, socially defined concept and also that the sexual identity of the individual wielding power has an impact somewhat on intensity of such a force. I conclude by arguing that the assertion, which is among the goals of this dissertation, is critical to comprehending how gender bias functions in literary works in order to change why or how it functions in actual situations.

The fabrication of context, reality of the situation, foresight, sexist narrative, and imagery are all topics I explore in my chapter, titled as "Power of language," together with feminine language and masculine deception. I want to explicitly state the strength of women figures or personas in *Power of Action*, women who decide to participate in political discussions or events or stand up when it comes to relationships and love. Finally, I examine how the formation of a societal norm of sexuality works through my analysis of *Power of Sexuality*; where being a woman is generally, but not always, associated with willingness while being controlled is associated with humiliation.

Chapter 2

Feminism:

Shakespeare's gender disparity has previously been the subject of a lot of feminist criticism. The majority of feminists believe that female power prevails, especially in *Shakespeare's* plays, and that form has an impact on gender authority. As a result, the magnitude of the female role is inversely proportional to female power. I contend that there are other factors involved. Analyze gatherings of female characters who seem to have control, and where did it come from, if they have it or not, why they have it, how they use it and discuss what the importance of all these variables are for any independent inquiry of sexual identity's power, actually agreeing with *Foucault's* concepts that power is an open revolutionary instead of a perpetual feature in the palm of specific people.

Humanity has unfairly split opportunity to status, influence, and expression across so many years and most civilizations based on biological sex. Men now make up the majority in most cases. They have controlled not just the planet's activity but also history, morality, and religions. Women didn't determine at one certain time that things needed to shift. But that is what took place. Feminist movement, especially in the past few decades, has sought to restore equilibrium by exposing and dismantling oppressive structures. Feminist criticism, up until the mid- to late-1980s, concentrated primarily on female characters and female authors, analyzing male supremacy impacts within and beyond a writing for whom the relevance had fallen asleep due to a purposeful and particular lack of attention or because of a text's inherent power dynamics (the ongoing silencing of women) or due to incapacitated, collective, and societal incompetence - having the same results. The inclination toward focusing on women has shifted in recent years. Her "tide of individual

aggravation at the seeming incapacity of female critics to split with the norms of orthodoxy," as *Lisa Jardine* put it in 1989, had faded.

Shakespeare scrutiny seems to have become "completely unsatisfactory as a final judgment," apart from its singular focus on the female characters throughout the dramas and its resentment to the misogynistic perceptions the plays integrate. Much of the feminist research has recently been performed on the broader, greater perspective of *Shakespeare's* works.

Literary analysis that arises from the viewpoint of feminism, feminist theory, and/or feminist politics, like Marxist literary condemnation before it, had also recognized the necessity of bringing into the forefront of the socioeconomic, sociocultural, and political sense of both construction and consumption. Feminist literary analysts have opened the door to innovative ways of analyzing the works of female authors and protagonists, while also considering the temporal, artistic, socioeconomic, and geopolitical contexts that shape the perspectives of both writers and readers alike.

Shakespeare is regarded to be a feminist in his time when this was not even a widely used term or concept by certain feminist scholars, such as *Juliet Dusinberre*, who also saw the time wherein he created those dramas in the context of emerging female rights. The inclination of feminist critics to view *Shakespeare* almost like his actions exclusively promote and advance feminist principles would greatly result in the dismay others like *Linda Bamber*. The premise of her book - *Comic Women, Tragic Man* is that *Shakespeare*, who is sometimes regarded as the only author who appears to overcome the boundaries of gendered concepts, always wrote using his gender's viewpoint. According to this viewpoint, everything that reflects the Self must be masculine, whereas the Other, that contradicts the Self, is feminine. *Shakespeare's* dramas and character types are used to illustrate the author's point. She demonstrates how in tragic situation, the Other

discredits or would seem to deceive the Self; in humor, the Other eludes the socioeconomic power structures ruled by representations of the male Self; and in love story, the Other comes in different forms, choosing to leave the Self desolate when she is disappeared and astonish him with contentment when she reappears. Some people see his figures as a support of culture. *Shakespeare's* use of standardized gender ideas in multiple styles and forms of art, according to certain feminists, varies.

Feminist critics differentiate individuals who strive for social inclusion and people who strive for a distinct heritage, existing time, and even languages. I would agree with the first with the exception of times when I'm really irritated by news affairs. These notions should be altered from within that make people stereotyping others based on their genders. *Kate Millett's Sexual Politics*, which was first released in America in 1970, is still regarded to be among the most boldly important feminist writings because of its revolutionary analysis of how patriarchy dominates literary protocol, the necessity of resisting ideologies' efforts to regulate perspective, and the claim that textual sexism is a contributing factor to overall female oppression. My personal knowledge of the relationships seen between production of gender in literary works and everyday lives has been aided by this.

The transformation from the Imagination (oneness with mom) to the Representational Sequence (a complete collapse of the mother-child relationship that was forced by the dad) is how *Lacan* describes children's learning and their insinuation of their position in the world. A persistent sensation of bereavement is a part of this transitional phase. For women in particular, consciousness is viewed as a loss experience. the onself is missing. According to *Julia Kristeva*, "woman" is not a biological sex but rather a social entity. This is far more in line with how I personally see how gender functions in *Shakespearean* works. According to *Kristeva*, women

simply have a greater claim to this counterrevolutionary discourse since they were the first to recognize its potential and use.

During the time of late 1970s, people saw a renewed interest in French literary studies, a potent but confusing blend of psychoanalytic theory, reconstruction, and languages. Feminist critics in France, such as *Helene Cixous*, *Luce Irigaray*, and *Julia Kristeva*, have leaned heavily on the postmodernism ideas of *Jacques Derrida* and the postmodern Freudianism of *Lacan*. Metaphorical Sequence (a fragmentation of the mother-child relationship that is forced by the father) refers to the process by which children move from their imagination world to the actual world. An irrevocable void created from the privation is part of this transitional period. For many people, especially women, coming into one's own is associated with a feeling of loss; the self is absent. Both *Irigaray* and *Cixous*, in their conceptions within the Revolutionary feminine, advocate for a new kind of female voice and discourse that is both radical and socially unpredictable. Unexpectedly, they are linked to traditional conceptions of parenting and nurturing because of their emphasis on female sexuality and physicality as the source of all existence. Their stance is similar to always opposing a male administration, which both seeks to avoid defining women and perpetually casts them in the position of the other. My analyses of idealized depictions of women and female sexuality and the internalization of patriarchal tendencies by female characters have been especially important to this reversal of sexist preconceptions into positive traits and the issues it poses for feminist critique. Feminism and Marxism share a rich and ongoing discourse despite not officially uniting. They share an interest in politics and social revolution outside the realm of literary theory. Writer, literature, viewer, chronology, philosophy, and the interpretations of reality presented by one to the other are all highly moderated, involved in a constantly shifting conflict. It's no secret that the majority of prominent Marxist literary critics have indeed been males, and

that many of them have been hesitant to completely embrace feminism. One of the most influential Marxist-feminist commentators are British scholars like Cora Kaplan, who investigates the relationship between philosophy and psychoanalysis, and Michele Barrett, who examines philosophy as the center of gender construction. Marxism's emphasis on the availability of literary tools has been immensely helpful to feminists. *A Room of One's Own* & *Three Guineas*, by Virginia Woolf, have been called Marxist feminist works due to various their emphasis on the need of financial stability to the creative process, something that Judith Shakespeare can't possibly hope to achieve.

Both Marxism and feminism see literary works and art as windows into the world, allowing individuals to better understand their place in history. The pieces they analyze and the rationale behind their analyses are regarded as having a profound impact on the manner people live their lives and, on the ways, whereby a life may be lived alternatively.

Capitalist society's regular intellectual exploitation of women is compounded by sexual politics. An additional ideological dimension, it creates certain standards of genders and afterwards exploits these preconceptions as instruments of yet more socioeconomic and political domination, such by attempting to prohibit women from financial gain and insisting on depreciating female experience in comparison to males. Feminist Marxist analysis can assist to make the case that *Shakespeare's* gender formation and manipulations are contradictory and frequently subconsciously aimed with regard to a diplomatic agenda, repression of the power in female figures. Literary fiction along with ideologies have more than just a reflective connection. A cast's capacity for holding up a reflection to reality is regulated by a wide variety of elements. This is crucial for feminists who are actively

connecting the events depicted in these works to real-world occurrences, either from the 16th century or the present day. Marxist and feminist critique are synergistic as they both have sociopolitical origins and a notion that bringing attention to the problem of discrimination of all types in literature and condemnation will help bring about its eventual elimination.

Feminist-Marxists recognize how sexual identity is constructed by ideology, which would in exchange be significantly influenced by gender. In actuality, women who belong to a sociologically powerful class, whose concerns are therefore purportedly reflected in and by conventional thinking and entrenched society, find themselves in a completely distinct position versus their male counterparts. *Shakespeare's* sexist narrative and symbolism that permeate all of his plays thereby demonstrate the supremacy of a patriarchal civilization and establish background for the existence of female characters. This concurrently creates conflicting notions about the legitimacy of female authority. Even if the environment wherein they function is portrayed as essentially patriarchal, female characters are depicted as productive and forceful. I specifically addressed this in *Power of action* and *Power of language*, among other places. Certain feminist critics, like *Kathleen Mccluskie*, contend that this kind of bigotry is crucial in the creation of the works' different unique male demographic.

Numerous feminists claim that the current vocabulary and grammatical style of language favor males and needs to be altered to suit the female voice. Feminist theory and languages are contemporary concepts, yet women have long protested about the accessibility to and utilization of speech differs from male ones. To 17th century women like Dorothy Osborne and Margaret Cavendish, the exaggerated, classically-influenced fashion of these men equivalents were topics of ridicule. Feminists continue to debate the distinction among male and female linguistic choice presently. The much more significant discussion concerns revolve around two separate ideologies:

recognizing the limits of words whilst striving to reform and enhance it, and attempting to show or demonstrate the presence of a female-specific dialect. All streams of feminist critique regard discourse as a patriarchal instrument in its present form and usage.

Chapter 3

Power of language:

I've chosen to study a playwright who is generally regarded as a polished artist of the English language given the significance, I place on the ways that speech and beliefs influence behavior, public views of their own and everyone else, and one's outlook on life, if it is on onstage or off. My interpretation of feminist literary criticism examines how language affect women and how women affect language.

Language indeed is a power source. When female characters lack fair opportunities to speech and the authority it confers, they are less free to behave, articulate oneself, protect themselves, and make an impact on their surroundings. But many people believe that *Shakespeare's* female characters are strong and clever orators. The issue is that certain assumptions of women and language influence both the environment in which the characters communicate as well as the actual act of conversing. Depending on how the speaker's as well as listener's genders are constructed culturally, language may convey a variety of messages and truths. The clearly intentional alteration of female's interpretation through male protagonists, the recurring and comedic usage of sexual innuendo and lewd, as well as the complicity of female characters in the misogynous possible consequences of these kind of language - all serve to highlight the fundamental sexism of the worlds of plays. To be distinctive, the assumption that voicelessness can be equivocated with sexual purity, modesty, holiness is employed just to restrict female voices. The sexualization of

language has an opposing side. Alternative value structures are devised inside this language used by female characters. Individuals achieve by employing their extraordinary sense of humor, which then in rom coms is frequently the most significant motivator in the drama, by speaking openly and choosing to ignore the opinions of their integrity or fidelity, through predicting and swearing, by playing the well-known, if despised, part of the tease, and also by adopting the vocabulary of men to be their own. Women's stories are constantly revealed to already have upset the predominate rationality, particularly if this does not correspond to a fully-fledged social constructionist feminine, even if quietness eventually triumphs more often than not.

Elizabeth D. Harvey confronts everybody to keep in mind that each one of the characters were composed by a male. She also asks us to question if there is essentially a discrepancy among a feminine voice formed by a female as appeared differently in relation to a male writer or not. The writer's sex unavoidably influences the character of his (therefore in instance, the writer's) observations regarding women and their psyche, according to *Lisa Jardine*.

Shakespeare was indeed a man, hence none of the figures discussed in this section are using words that "actual women" would use. The objective, however, would be this. The figures in a work of fiction are not actual persons, nor could they be if they were written by another writer, male or female. The greater cultural gendered construct and the modification of interpretation as per sexuality are more significant than the writer's sexuality. This is obviously impacted by the writer's sexual identity; however, the story's development allows us to investigate all the problems with gender norms that it raises.

Humor, insinuations, and allusions play with parallels to female sexual adultery while using societal preconceptions of gender to affect spontaneous responses to female characters. The underexplored method of doing this creates a supporting shadow of ladies who are neither unique

person or rather one certain female sexuality oriented. Women are very commonly forced to concur with these statements due to a variety of factors, including their repeated absence from the scene, their unwillingness to confront them since doing so would be further than the scope of even Shakespearean extremism, and/or the fact that such statements commonly appear in humorous verses that put them in immediate communication with the viewing public.

Extremely concerning is really the plays' sexist humor. Not laughing would seem rude; if we protest, our personal cultural attitudes come into play. A desire for strong women without considering the kind and scope of their power might be seen as supporting the formation of gender.

Women's faithfulness is a common target of sexist comments in male-male and male-female conversation. The stereotype of women's moral corruption is propagated often. Similar views are powerful elements at play that show that specific preconceptions regarding women remain firmly established and impact both the female characters as well as the content of the dramas, but this does not imply that they constitute the only variables at effect or even that the production directly supports such statements. Particularly masculine figures will utilize sexual references to overpower the replies of any female characters they talk with. Women are put in such an awkward position if a male even hints at anything sexual. Should she fight back physically, woman has shown herself to be a chastise, so if she reacts courteously, her decency will be put to the test. When a gender bias enters into the dialogue, neither party is on an equal playing field.

But there are some moments when the female characters learn to stand out by representing themselves in fresh and exciting manners. *Emilia* from *Othello* and *Paulina* from *The Winter's Tale* are only two examples of strong female characters that are able to perceive and speak the truth. The ethical discourse of a woman is often demonstrated to be associated with the unanticipated.

Gendered preconceptions of how a female character should act are often incorporated into fiction. To the nurse in *Romeo and Juliet*, the line in which her late husband predicts that *Juliet* would bend backward as she ages (Act 1 Scene 3) that is, descend within her appropriate feminine position of sexual subordination, has a visionary and appealing depth. The nurse has become so steeped in gender norms that she has trouble conceptualizing how *Juliet* deviates from the conventional. The words Mercutio gives to Queen Mab is a blatant display of sexism (Act 1 Scene 4). To the contrary, *Juliet's* unconventionality shines through much more strongly in the choice of words. It's indeed she, not he, that equates *Romeo* to something like a flower and also who waits endlessly for the night when they could make love. During Act 3, Scene 5, *Juliet's* vocabulary splits in a way that evokes the insanity and subversiveness of the traditional masculine styles of writing. Actually, *Juliet's* response is quite reasonable, so it grants her credibility since she reveals the truth, even if (or maybe especially since) no one else on stage really grasps her message.

The connection among chastity, morality, and reticence inhibits many of the most articulate females. *Portia* realizes that in the absence of a masculine masquerade, she needs to depend on men's perceptions of her quietness because a virgin has no language but thinking. *Portia*, who is blonde, gorgeous, and wealthy, is limited in her speech till she decides to wear a male appearance. As a woman, *Portia* is susceptible to interpretations by males and constrained under her deceased father's wishes. She could only display her vocal abilities like Balthasar, effectively protecting Antonio and influencing the whole courtroom using her statements. In far horrific conditions, Cordelia is unable to force statements she doesn't really sense onto the lips, and her initial, sincere stillness now becomes last quietness of her demise. If *Lavinia's* tongue had dropped out sooner, it is probable that no one might have realized. She acquires a voice only in time to demonstrate that

she had one to forfeit, and then when Titus declares, he comprehends her signals, we are unable to refute him. The cause of *Lavinia's* demise is his view of what would be best for her.

Men's continual references to women create the appearance of nonexistent female societies. This goes beyond the production of theatrical masses. Certain women, such as the prostitutes of *Shakespeare's Measure for Measure*, have little or no agents to speak for them. These ladies are male characters' perceptions of the actions and words of a certain feminine type. While it may appear as women could not be dismissed, it is increasingly evident that their existence in men's vocabulary demonstrates their irrelevance in reality. However, not only males use offensive language towards women; female characters also engage in sexism. And Volumnia, the populace's chosen Redeemer of Rome, compared herself to a squawking hen. *Rosalind* or *Ganymede* highlights the flaws of women for *Orlando*. *Portia's* realization how she hates the prince of Neapolitan gets transformed into a comedy about female promiscuity (Merchant, Act 1. Scene 2). The deficiencies of men's morality are attributed to the flaws of women's faithfulness by women who are also victims of stereotyped categorization by someone else. Unquestionably, there exists a risk that the ideas of a single problematic male character who comments negatively about women would be misconstrued as representative of the whole cast. However, although if one guy's speech is different from the general, it is frequently a strong - Leontes or reliable - Enobarbus man talking.

What makes it possible that *Othello* decides to murder *Desdemona* based just on tenuous yet nefarious proof which *Iago* gives? What makes it possible to condemn the holy *Desdemona* of infidelity? *Desdemona's* playful exchanges alongside *Iago* upon her arrival in Cyprus conceal overall gravity of her remarks. Its catastrophe of the drama is rooted in the story's acquaintance with views about women which *Iago* practices on her, *Othello's* unconscious sexism has been deeply embedded that *Iago* only needs whispering poisonous thoughts in the head. Language is far

more impactful than deeds therefore in play, as female's sex plus *Othello's* race as a whole determine the framework of the exposition, while words turn into a loaded gun. The drama, that starts with *Roderigo* trying to hush *Iago* and concludes by *Lodovico* leaving to tell the nation about the terrible occurrences, centers on the impact of words. *Desdemona's* devotion is sparked by *Othello's* tales, as well as a disturbance of yells awakens *Brabanado* with the announcement of something like the departure. *Desdemona* obtains the trip towards Cyprus using her arguments before the proceedings *Iago* causes the catastrophe with enticing falsehoods. *Iago's* ultimate quietness combined with *Emilia's* delayed truth-telling serve as the final judgment of the devastating power that lies in language.

Iago and *Emilia* demonstrate the most nuanced awareness of sexism as well as the biggest influence upon that story's events with their words. *Emilia* understands how the gender double standard works, though she is unable to step out timely. She doesn't realize everything her husband has committed till after her mistress was already killed. Additionally, *Iago* demonstrates, right from the get-go, the acute awareness of the severity of sexism as well as an uncanny knack for knowing when to plant hints about it. He seems to be well aware that a guy's wife would be the weakest link in his defense against an invasion. *Iago's* destruction of *Othello* is puzzling, and there are several possible explanations put out, such as his jealousy over *Cassio's* rise, his desire over *Desdemona*, and his belief that *Othello* had also forcibly sodomized him. *Iago* presents each scenario with the same enthusiasm and predatory air of carelessness, suggesting that he's aware of the potential for deception and misinterpretation in sexual practices. It's not so much the motivation behind why he forces his maestro to kill that's intriguing, but rather the means by which he does it.

This patriarchal structure is still responsible for propagating the harmful misconceptions about women and girls that led to *Desdemona's* death.

After the actual identity is revealed, *Iago's* principles are rejected and mocked by everyone, and also the drama never encourages them.

It's simple to believe that a negative view of women is indeed the sole manifestation of sexism. However, an overinflated sense of self-importance has similar consequences to misogyny and results in the same tragic outcome throughout this drama. Male's admiration for *Desdemona*, such as *Cassio's*, might come out as flattering, but it really proves her purity and highlights the gravity of the crime done to her. *Desdemona's* immaculate morality, however, is ruined because of the unreasonable standards that have been placed upon her.

Purity in paradise and sluttiness on earth are opposite but related poles. The assumption of her normal feminine imperfection causes a contradiction against what was allegedly believed of *Desdemona*, the model of introverted feminine goodness. This highlights the clear difference seen between shy girl and her blatant immorality in her love for *Othello*.

It's clear that every sentence in this drama has the weight of representing every woman. The legitimacy of female sex hangs in the balance as *Emilia* attempts to preserve her mistress' honor.

Since among *Desdemona* or *Hermione*, no one has tricked her husband, it follows that the women are, in fact, secure. The fact that a strong female character like *Emilia* or a reasonable male character like Antigonus might consider generalizing from the experience of one lady to the plight of the whole female gender is striking, but not unprecedented in a *Shakespeare* drama. Like everything else concerning him, the frankness with which *Iago* views such aberrations is endearing. With exception of *Roderigo's* view of her blessed condition, or *Cassio's* adolescent

glorification of the celestial *Desdemona*, *Iago* appears straightforward. *Desdemona*'s desire for sex is something *Iago* can tolerate, with the exception of Brabantio or even *Othello*. He then utilizes this knowledge to make a scandalous claim about her compulsiveness, exhibiting an apparently honest but ultimately questionable attitude toward sex relations and discrediting each admirable quality *Cassio* sees within *Desdemona*.

The play's emotional weight comes from witnessing an ordinary lady make a fool of herself by acting no further pure than a regular being would, leaving herself open to the greatest severe indications of sexual guilt. Both *Desdemona* as well as *Othello* contribute to their respective destruction with the words that choose to defend themselves with. *Othello* takes great care to ensure the court that his wedding would not interfere with his duties by emphasizing that he wants *Desdemona* to go with him for Cyprus because of her brains and therefore not her physicality. He's rather more reticent compared to her about discussing their sexual relationship. *Desdemona*, in contrast, is not shy about declaring her love for *Othello*; she does so by using wording that is bold.

Iago's capacity to persuade another person of the authenticity of his opinions is more important than his own confidence in the validity of those views. One may easily take *Desdemona*'s statements out of context. She *Cassio*'s bride takes on the role of an annoying wife as she argues her point regarding *Cassio* before her husband. In an act *Iago* makes this allegation upon *Emilia* as well as all females. Because that's what ladies accomplish, and *Desdemona* does not require any tips about how to complain effectively. *Iago* is able to easily deal with the circumstances such that the further *Desdemona* begs, the more deteriorating it seems since he knows that this is the way she is designed to continue and also the fact that this is her tendency to really doing way more than required.

The last source of protection for *Iago* is silence. Words are what got him here, but now he has no use of them. His skillful use of trappings has established a suspicious culture. The drama provides a powerful reaction to these kind of manipulations by making it evident that both language and deeds are being perverted to make falsehoods feel real. Nonetheless, the severity of sexist connotations is matched by the simplicity that the female characters' language and conduct may be misinterpreted by the reader.

The strength of sexism conveyed within and via words may provide light on the internal dynamics of not just prejudices based on gender, but also the production of sexism.

Chapter 4

Power of Action:

Female characters have the chance to act due to social upheaval, male rulers' incompetence and recklessness, and their partners. This analysis aims at the effectiveness of action in two segments: warfare and romance. *Juliet* in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Helen* in *All's Well That Ends Well* both stay in charge of respective marriages. Husbands and male lovers and equivalents of such figures are exceptionally submissive or deviate from their assigned gender norms. Since submissive males are crucial to creating an environment in which women could be aggressively demanding, I'll be talking about *Helen* and *Juliet's* decision of partners in this section. Extra insightfully than considering the fact that within two of the dramas, this activity adopts the shape of wedding, the issue of how deeply *Bertram* and *Romeo* were sufferers of gender norms of conduct unites these dramas. Traditional male dominance over female sexuality is a fundamental premise of patriarchal society that *Juliet* and *Helen* oppose. These women utilize the authority to get the partner they desire and to decide how to give away their chastity.

Throughout the beginning of *All's Well*, *Helen* is aware of the gender stereotype, which prevents her from enjoying the very same degree of freedom and obligation as a male. However, the story's opening scene represents the only time this obstacle would ever be presented in its entirety. *Helen* defends her entitlement to sexual liberation while yet adhering to the traditional responsibilities of mother and wife.

Absolute independence would only be established by *Juliet* because of her aggressiveness. Although her conduct seems to be the least extreme of all, it is in reality the most difficult. This only goes as far as killing oneself and marrying *Romeo*. However, *Juliet* was remarkable in her capacity to be unconstrained by Veronese custom and in her conceptual independence from common thinking patterns.

Typically, female characters don't engage in combat or think that they are the dominant one in a romantic relationship. The idea that being a woman equates with softness and being a man equates with action is refuted by these female figures. This special character distinguishes our view from that of the present. Since they were extraordinary, exceptions established the norm. Now, they show that women are capable of performing tasks that were previously considered to be extraordinary. Action generally involves solitude for these people, who've been forced to deny their families or experience family rejection and without political supporters and supportive friends. Their seclusion both fortifies their determination and reduces their influence.

While it's clear that inside the plays, female figures might possess the capacity of action without inevitably changing the existing paradigm, the dramas can not quite meticulously regulate their fundamental importance. The plays highlight the fact that *Helen* should pursue *Bertram*, and also that *Juliet* was correct to not wed Paris. However, their aggressiveness serves to supplant male

dominance rather than to challenge it. According to Charles Frey, these deviations to the gloomy male dominance norm are heroic instances.

There is however a perspective that is more upbeat. These remarkable ladies show that actions shouldn't be constrained by societal norms of acceptable behavior for both genders. There are also some masculine exceptions: *Romeo* and *Bertram* really are not conventional males and they do not act in ways that are desired by their communities. When men and women who don't follow gender norms interact, it becomes unnecessary to define appropriate behavior across traditional genders.

Oftentimes, righteousness is associated with women, despite the fact that whenever the state is in disarray, there is even more to blame besides just one gender, regardless of how the activities of that gender have pushed the restrictions of gender. The majority of such female characters' accomplishments are fleeting, and their dominance falls back to male domination. Such figures provide a tremendous challenge to the gender stereotypes that have been assigned to them, yet they do not represent the actual reality of everyday female power or perspective.

The background of these individuals' activities is not impartial, but rather a major factor. Even the most aggressive woman cannot transcend the gender-based norms of suitable behavior for male and female that are embedded in every culture. According to prevalent social values, the identical act to confront or choose a sexual choice is evaluated in different way for male and female characters. The vulnerability of men affords female characters with chance to perform with extraordinary boldness. The establishment of this area indicates that gender is indeed a social construction that is unsuitable for the persons of both genders that it impacts. Simply obtaining power does not guarantee the full impact for women in societies where women are seen as essentially hijacked men's authority, especially the authority of conduct. Due to the fact that power may only be realized in circumstances, the manner in which its owner is seen impacts the power

they wield. As women, they are exposed to the emotions of males and their own preconceived notions of gender and authority in a patriarchal society where they are a numerical minority.

Women's personalities often demonstrate their authority in relationships involving weak men, and this has a significant impact on how strong that control is. Due to the highly patriarchal environment where such women operate, it's not really unexpected that their interactions with men destroys rather than enhancing the impact of their acts. Despite their claims of physical strength, women fighters must obviously be less powerful than males in identical situations if they are mocked even by members from their own group. Women are also affected by their failure to persuade men to take them seriously.

How might one do, sir, to lose it to her own liking?

(All's Well That Ends Well, Act 1, Scene 1)

We can see the dynamics of gender at play in the divergent responses of male and female characters in *All's Well That Ends Well* to the issue of sexual obligation and decision, as well as the capacity to influence that decision. *Helen* does not retain her virginity in the traditional sense. Moreover, she feels that being chaste has become more of a punishment than a blessing, and just like *Juliet*, she would want to fully consummate her relationship. As *Bertram* is a very hesitant partner and no guy would seek *Helen* for her chastity, she must keep pursuing him in order to achieve any authority.

In a culture where concepts of purity influence attitudes of women, the key issue of a woman shedding her chastity according to her own desires is alarming. The exchange between *Helen* and *Paroles* in Act I Scene 1 is indeed deceptive as no one forces *Helen* to defend herself against an unwelcome encounter.

This drama tackles not the unconscious guarding of female virginity, but rather the deliberate quest of female honor, which comprises of childbearing and matrimony. The description of the conventional scenario provided by Paroles is direct: a woman cannot win. Men would rule the world. This principle does not apply to this play. *Helen* obtains all she desires, but *Bertram* lost his independence. However, this circumstance does not reflect a larger historical narrative in which women enjoyed this level of freedom. Very much more typical is Lafeu's daughter, a dark lady with no speech to convey her wish or refusal to accept *Bertram*. *Helen* does have the option to select an obviously worthless and reluctant spouse, along with the ability to force her marriage to him.

This implies power and maintains the notion that regardless of how poorly men act, women should stay consistent. This reasoning entraps equally men and women, which intensifies the situation.

Helen presents arguments on both sides of sexuality vs chastity debate. Typically, as was the case with *Diana* and *Bertram*, the lady attempts to maintain her chastity whilst male urges her to bed with him. *Helen* argues during her dialogue with Paroles for the loss of female virginity and the entitlement to physical pleasure. By emphasizing the certainty of mothering and pregnancy for women who are sexually active, Paroles is significantly more conservative than *Helen*, detracting from the rebellious tone of her statements. *Helen's* words, if followed beyond the limitations of marriage, could represent a significant challenge to patriarchal authority. However, it is limited by her wedding and pregnancy. *Helen's* capacity to mislead, scheme, and orchestrate her conquest of *Bertram* offers us a dual sense of power, not simply because it is impossible, also because, as *Lisa Jardine* explains, in the Renaissance imagination, intercourse and conception went hand in hand.

Helen fights for the freedom for the individuals to remain separate, yet her actions compel them to be connected. She desires the ability for blowing up the man which she achieves over *Bertram* by convincing him to get her impregnated.

Helen appears less unusual than she actually is due to the environment wherein she develops her abilities and the manner during which she discusses them. Lafeu's remarks on her interactions with the King had an identical impact.

Lafeu uses clichés when he asks the king to send *Helen* a love note and implies that she is a (associated with sex) renegade because she is a woman. Having left *Helen* with the King, Lafeu offers the position of Pandar for him. His lighthearted assumption that any woman who want to meet the King must be involved in sexual exchanges is true, given that *Helen* is utilizing her therapeutic properties to find a spouse. Thus, her remarkable choice to follow *Bertram* might be seen as the conventional behavior of a woman who engages in sexual activity. Such assumptions construct a standard narrative on the sexual identity and power of women, which is a recurrent theme in all of the plays analyzed in this thesis.

Though Lafeu acknowledges *Helen's* perseverance, he emphasizes that her ethical purity is regarded to be directly proportional to her chastity. Throughout this play, men's reactions to and interpretations of feminine dominance are vital once again. *Helen* actively contributes to the propagation of misogynistic notions. She informs the King that the cost of failure will be considerably more devastating for her than for him. She doesn't have anything to lose except her prestige, which would be, of course, everything she has, and she reassures the king that, if she goes badly to heal him, she would be labeled a strumpet or even worse.

This would be nonsensical; if *Helen* fails to heal the King, her chastity would play no part in it. However, the harshest punishment she can imagine to herself as a woman is the unwarranted criticism she describes. A female's loss of credibility would be terrible. When *Helen* offers Diana a wedding dowry in return for her cooperation with the bed plot, she knows that Diana will require it if she ever marries a man whose image has been tarnished. *Helen* contributes to the perpetuation of mindsets that unfairly blame women for sexual offenses they did not engage in. *Helen* views this as unavoidable and reasonable, despite her exceptional ability to pick her own spouse.

Consequently, the extreme intensity of her sexual pleasure claim is mitigated. *Helen* does not advocate for uncontrolled female sexuality. Her ambition to blow up a guy is rooted in conventional views of women, particularly herself, with the honorable goal of acquiring a spouse and a lawful child. At the beginning of the play, she does not appear to want conception, but by the conclusion of the play, she is pregnant. *Helen's* words and actions are not similar. If the double importance of *Helen's* contribution to the formation of the feminine gender is disregarded, the magnitude and nature of her authority may be overstated. Her deeds would both be virtuous and sexually deceitful, as she deceives *Bertram* in a sleeping trick while acting within the parameters of her marriage and consequently with honor. *Helen's* power derives from her father, and the King allows her to assist him since he remembered and regarded her father well, and he would have sought for his assistance if he were still present. *Helen's* restorative abilities are genetic, which shows that her society does not see them as entirely her own. Lisa Jardine points out that all of *Helen's* healing abilities are used for orthodox purposes, and that while her pious divinities, warrior effectiveness applauds and includes the accomplishment of women, it is eventually discovered wanting when compared to the characteristics of satisfied womanhood, wedding and child - bearing. Jardine is right; *Helen* is constrained by her societal duty to take decisive action.

After *Helen* makes her claim about the freedom her recovery has given her, she does so with full knowledge that her sexuality will be given as much consideration as her chastity. She is hesitant to pick *Bertram* right away. Both the theatrical suspense and *Helen's* claims of modesty are undermined by this development. *Bertram's* dismissal of *Helen* is an example of the difficulties that arise when a woman's deeds are motivated by the sexual reluctance of a man. *Bertram's* ability to refuse *Helen* without upsetting the King would have given *Helen* little leverage in convincing him to accept her.

She is powerful because she has the King's favor and because *Bertram's* refusal is a direct insult to the King. The King's pride is at risk, and that matters something beyond *Helen* to him. *Helen* tries to make her timidity more remarkable than her boldness, also when *Bertram* does accept her, but she actually succeeds in doing the opposite when she says she dares not take him.

According to the King, *Bertram* should pick *Helen* before the other way around. *Helen* may now legally claim *Bertram* as her own because she picked him.

Neither can nor does *Helen* want a woman to take over traditionally male roles. She is obviously trying to win over a scoffing lover, but she is doing solely because she sees no other option. She feels more comfortable playing the gender norms of a submissive female and an assertive male. She has internalized patriarchal constructs of both sexual and gender interactions, believing that they should be carried in accordance with the conventional constraints even when *Bertram's* apathy compels her to behave outside them. *Bertram* is presented as unlikeable, especially in his contempt at the prospect of marrying the impoverished daughter of a doctor, to maintain the drama of the situation. *Helen's* dedication to her real love despite his abuse is shown by her willingness to go to such lengths, and her boldness is justified by the fact that she would never have done so under other circumstances. After they are wedded, *Helen* is so devoted to *Bertram*

that she rationalizes his leaving her. *Helen* appears very much more complacent than she really is, standing in line for the plot to resolve itself, when in fact it is only through her words and deeds that *Bertram* will be obtained, even if it is only through the interference of the King (that also, of course, she started though her inborn abilities of rejuvenation) that she actually is able to be wedded with him whatsoever.

Helen may be an orphaned, but she has a clear role to play in her growing family. But in order to stand by her chosen spouse, she had to give up her biological family and integrate into her husband's extended family. *Juliet* and *Helen* both gain a great deal of strength and maturity by learning to abandon their families in their current forms.

Overconfident women have shattered the female society. *Helen's* first reaction to learning that the Countess is her mother is astonishment, overlaid with incestuous thoughts. The Countess describes her eventual daughter in law *Helen* in derogatory terms, calling her "gross" and highlighting *Helen's* immorality and willfulness. *Helen* has to pay off the widow and Diana to get their assistance. They aren't acting in a friendly manner by conspiring to pull off the bed trick.

Images of misogyny degrade women's status whether or not they are married. Although no woman in the play is seen to be disloyal, the myths around the play suggests that female characters will inevitably engage in immoral activities. Due of their single status, they are seen as perhaps chaste to be attacked and hated once gained, or as prostitutes to be loathed for no good reason at all. No matter how progressive *Helen's* views on sexual gratification or the Countess' power may be, both sexes continue to use derogatory language, especially when it comes to sexual unfaithfulness, when referring to and discussing other women. Any new acquaintances Lavatch may have after being married, the Countess tells him, will be cheating on

him. Lavatch additionally undermines ideas of female sexual independence by depicting a comedic counter universe in which men are participants of a cuckold organization and share the burden of physically gratifying their spouses between themselves. Even if these remarks are comical, they mask the reality that women are oppressed and dominated by the sexist institutions depicted in these plays because of long-held beliefs. This upside-down view of married lives serves to legitimize discrimination. Both *Helen* and the Countess defy this sexist norm.

They have integrity and consistency. There shouldn't be any doubt that females in general adhere to this guideline, particularly given the absence of any other female characters. Once again, we see the parallel confirmation and denial of the concept of female adultery thanks to the formation of several, conflicting layers of gender.

When males assume they have always had the dominant position in a physical interaction, the bed trick serves as a reminder that they might be fooled. This simultaneously undermines and affirms patriarchal beliefs: women can and do exert great influence, but that influence is based on sexual dishonesty. The bed trick exemplifies a kind of power that compounds the gap between men and women. *Helen* resorts to any and all possible measures, and because she is wedded to *Bertram*, her acts hardly seem to reflect any kind of feminine physical treachery. The viewer is just as aware as *Bertram* is the evil guy in this scenario. *Helen's* plan is to become pregnant legally, turning the normally aggressive male into a helpless victim of clever scheming. It's easy to see the issues this approach creates, though: if a male were to mislead a woman in this manner, it would be the same as assault or rape for that matter.

That *Bertram* is supposed to like *Helen* is a plot point that receives less significant attention. It's a part he doesn't want to play, but he's been thrown into that one. Many analysts are eager to defend *Bertram's* decision to turn down *Helen* by providing plausible explanations for his

actions, rather than asking why he ought to desire her merely since she desires him. Putting the two together like this is a passionate romance and masculine gender concept. *Helen's* yearning for a lawful pregnancy and marriage is not androgynous not dangerous to patriarchal society, and she tries to hide the pushiness of her activities both during the moment when she selects *Bertram* over the King and in later religious masquerade. *Bertram*, the heroine's ideal partner, is put under pressure by the play's framework to reciprocate the heroine's feelings. His shortcomings in this job contribute, at least partially to the ending's disappointment. The play alludes to a broader value framework in which the hero's love interest is secondary to the heroine.

Social practices on what constitutes a man or a woman might color how an audience receives a bed trick, either positively or negatively. It's easy to overlook the way that women's boldness reinforces the patriarchal oppression long-held conviction in the sexual treachery of women when we assign meaningful result to actions and revolt against the patriarchal culture. The pleasure shown by *John C. Bean* is a good illustration of this. He considers *Helen* to be *Shakespeare's* greatest sexual heroine and the pinnacle of his study of women. He highlights *Helen's* sensual power while also commenting on the frightening bed-tricks. Possibly motivated by *Helen's* Act I conversation with Paroles about her entitlement to sexual authority, he fails to see the paradox that *Bertram* does not desire her and that he doesn't care if he beds with *Helen* or *Diana*. Although the bed trick may help *Helen* get what she wants, the experience is rather tame.

Bertram's treatment towards *Diana* in the last scene is indicative of the extreme reversal of norms on the relationship between behavior and its effects. *Bertram* is unable to discredit *Diana* as a testimony or establish that she is a typical gambler, lending credibility to *Helen's* claims. This appears to be conclusive evidence that women have the upper hand when it comes to

finding emotional fulfillment. It's a partial triumph for the concept of absolute authority, nonetheless. Because the hero, no matter how repulsive, is doomed to coupledness almost as surely as the heroine is doomed to submissive inactivity in marital relationship. *Helen* has achieved both of her goals, but she is now restricted to playing the role society expects of her. She has no desire to go outside of these responsibilities, but *Bertram* is powerless to stop her.

O sweet Juliet,

*Thy beauty hath made me effeminate,
And in my temper softened valour's steel.*

(Romeo and Juliet, Act 3, Scene 1)

Romeo does not address *Juliet* while he speaks this sentence; in fact, he is by himself on stage. He employs the apostrophe, a figure of speech in which the person speaking refers to an absent person or object. Even further feminization of *Juliet* is unnecessary. The girl in question is female. But *Romeo* is terrified that he is becoming feminine and does not wish for this to occur to him. This is a wordplay on the word "temper," which may refer to either *Juliet's* mellow and affectionate personality or the heating and cooling used to toughen metal. Unfortunately for *Romeo*, *Juliet's* fury has done the opposite of strengthening his resolve. Assuming he means it, why does he say it? For the simple reason that *Mercutio* has just accused him for failing to halt the battle he is fighting with *Tybalt*, during which *Mercutio* has also just suffered a mortal wound. *Romeo* tried to intervene since *Mercutio* was a companion and *Tybalt* was a relative of his wife, and he did not want any of the pair to be wounded. *Romeo* believes that the conflict could have been avoided if he had acted more masculine. While he could not ignore *Mercutio's* rebuke, "Why did you come between us?", It is nonsense, but it would drive him to murder *Tybalt*, which he'll come to regret.

Nobody among *Romeo* or *Juliet* can live up to the expectations placed on them by Veronese tradition or the conflict seen between *Capulet* and Montague families. *Romeo's* tragic downfall may be traced back to his inability to reconcile his idealized self with his assigned job as a Veronese dueler. Even as the distance between *Juliet's* parental allegiance and absolutely adore for *Romeo* shatters her relationships with her family, it sets her free from conforming to conventional norms of behavior and thinking. As the story progresses, *Juliet*, a normally humble daughter, takes charge of her own fate. An even greater threat to the patriarchal system is posed by her realization that she possesses the power to choose her own spouse and her desire to affect her decision. She and *Helen* are both dangers to patriarchy, but their influence is limited by the reality that they are married and sexually active.

The mere realization by *Helen* and *Juliet* that they hold some control over their futures is astonishing, considering that it would be unimaginable for the modern audience or Shakespeare to condone total sexual liberation either for the adolescent men or women. *Romeo's* absence from the play's opening aggression, which occurs while he is in the moon over Rosaline, is symbolic of his distancing from the societal norm of conflict at the time. Except for Benvolio and *Romeo*, all of the other young men in the play are violent, yet *Juliet* falls in love with the stereotypically passionate young people instead. *Romeo's* gushy feelings for Rosaline aren't real; he grows up because of his love for *Juliet*, but he keeps being dragged back to catastrophe because of the childish antics of his adolescence. To him, women wield an all-consuming passion that renders males helpless, whimpering saps. This is the attitude he displays in the friar's chamber a while later. Romantic tragedy hero *Romeo* fits the mold of the tragic hero who suffers a heartbreaking loss. Contrary to popular belief, *Juliet* is not a harsh mistress. She does not gain power over *Romeo*

by abstaining but by giving him sexual favors, and her love for him does not rest on feigned apathy since their brief encounter and initial desire were unforced.

When she first approaches *Romeo*, *Juliet* asks him the simple question of whether or not he loves her, and his response is frighteningly direct. However, she is mindful of the cultural norms about female's speech and is concerned that *Romeo* would misjudge her for surrendering too soon. The impact *Juliet* had on *Romeo* demonstrates that she deviated from orthodoxy. It hasn't occurred to his pals that he may be experiencing love's full impact for the very first time, but rather that he may have been healed of it.

The cruel irony is that *Romeo*, for a split second, acts as if this love is punishing him, while in fact it is freeing him to be the man he was always meant to be. But while *Romeo* is off enjoying the city of Verona with his pals, *Juliet* is waiting patiently in her garden for the nurse to reappear. There are no female prison guards in Verona. But, as *Romeo* takes part in the battle himself, he realizes that *Juliet* has had a demeaning impact on him. *Romeo* means the submissiveness charge as a warning toward his own timidity, but it instead shows that he can't be held accountable for his acts. It's his responsibility, not *Juliet's*, and it's also the society's because being a man means turning to violence. Similarly, to how neither *Troilus* nor *Antony* is rendered impotent by their love for their respective partners, *Juliet* is not to blame when *Romeo's* lack of ability to behave like a man is exposed. He uses her as an apology for failing to adhere to the anticipated rules of manly behavior, which are made clear in the adolescents' posing at the beginning of the play. This play depicts a terrible collision between two competing constructions of male sexuality: the aggressive combatant and the melting lover.

It's impossible for *Romeo* to do either. This is the foundation for *Juliet's* extraordinary behavior. Right from the start of *Romeo and Juliet*, it's made obvious that *Juliet* lives in a culture where

women are supposed to be utterly obedient to males and where any respect for a woman's aggressive sexual identity would be seen as a serious breach.

The "phallic violence" of the conflict, according to *Coppelia Kahn's* analysis of the play, bonds the men to respective dads and provides protection from women. According to *Kahn*, the play depicts the tension between two conceptions of masculinity: one in which men are violent protectors of their dads and another in which they cut ties with their fathers and form a sexual partnership with a woman. Although the genuine patriarch, the Duke, is against the hatred, and *Capulet* opens his home to his opponent's son without hesitation, *Richard Levin* argues that the young men are responsible for keeping the conflict alive. *Levin* utilizes this to argue that the dispute is not a reflection of patriarchal systems. Both interpretations might be correct. It's true that males in Verona are expected to be violent, but it's unclear whether or not the animosity has anything to do with the men's paternal lineage. The elder generation does not approve of the aggression of the youth, as *Levin* correctly points out. Nonetheless, the drama does portray the quarrel as intrinsic to a male-dominated society. *Kahn* does not claim this is the norm in patriarchal societies; rather, he claims it is an extreme manifestation of the norms of aggressive masculinity and submissive femininity. The conflict symbolizes fiercely sexist aggression, and *Romeo* is forced to choose between two extremes: he may either be quiet and presumably feminine in his love for *Juliet*, or he can act violently, which would have fatal consequences. *Kirby Farrell* argues that everyone, including outward opponents of patriarchy, has secret patriarchal ideals. However, such is not the case here. *Juliet* moves more and further away from traditional male norms. Both of them end up dead because of *Romeo's* extreme internalization of sexism.

Ultimately, it is *Romeo's* adoption of gender stereotypes rather than *Juliet's* resistance of them that leads to the tragic death. As a result, *Romeo's* capacity for violence outweighs *Juliet's* capacity for alternative action.

The opening scene establishes the atmosphere for the whole play with its frequent and violent depictions of rapes and women. Youthful bloods' extravagant sword fighting and competition is often shown via the lens of the effects on women. Even if they are only audible gasps, they reveal an unshakeable belief in the female gender's inherent fragility. This culture's groups have a strong bias towards female members because they see brutality as the only acceptable way to demonstrate masculinity. It's true that the youths' physical aggression is aimed at other young males, but the verbal attacks in which they participate clearly target women. One of the most effective ways to intimidate another man is to make explicit your plans for his ladies after you've had your way with him. It's a danger to ownership, with women's sexual organs on the receiving end and men's on the offensive. Women are only mentioned in passing and only as metaphors, since their actual presence would be superfluous. When hostilities break out, males are the first to go down. Later, however, the danger of male ownership is directed not at *Romeo* and *Juliet* but at the ladies of society, including Lady *Capulet* and the nurse. If women are metaphorically there, they cannot respond. It will be too late for their pleadings to be heard once this discussion becomes action. Similar to how *Juliet* became Capulet's possession in the play, fictional women are seen as a man's possession.

Whereas the males of Veronese are known for being aggressive toward both sexes, *Juliet's* assertiveness is directed on her own wedding. Male and female protagonists operate in distinct domains. Unfortunately, *Romeo* has his desire to act and live in the romantic world, which, in the gendered perspective of Verona, borders on arrogance that is appropriate in moments of romance

but not during war. *Romeo* believes he must abandon his feminine ways since they are at odds with the standards of his societal structure. *Romeo*, rather than examine the pointlessness of the quarrel, chooses to transform into a man of aggressive action, only to discover that he cannot maintain this position, anyway.

According to *Marianne Novy*, the play shows a strong sense of gender divisions, and as a result, *Romeo* and *Juliet* desire a different universe centered on their love, where they may both be active without being impacted by the polarization of sexes.

She's right because equating manhood with aggression and softness with fragility ruins them. The killing of *Tybalt* emphasizes the seriousness of verbal assaults for both genders throughout the play.

While *Romeo* has just learned that conventional depictions of love and masculinity are false — *Juliet* can love him back, and he may love his opponents — he is dragged back into the position of the young fighter. Physical violence always has deadly results. *Romeo* can't just keep daydreaming about *Juliet* now. Like the ladies in the play, he is limited in his thinking and actions by the boundaries imposed by traditional gender norms. He blames *Juliet* for his friend's death, which he believes he contributed to. He needs to become a warrior.

Moreover, according to *Valerie Traub*, the drama demonstrates the difficulties of situating divine love beyond this prevailing paradigm of toxic masculinity.

According to *Traub*, the play shows how the men's irrational dread of submissiveness, which they attribute to women or sexual love for women but which is actually the result of flaws in the male psychic economy, undermines the abnormally fluid comprehension of gender that even the

lovers. This is correct; *Romeo's* inability to fully commit to the Veronese notion of manhood as violence is shown by his dread of nonconformity. In the opening moments of Act 1 and Act 3, Benvolio and *Romeo* would both be viewed as feeble by their companions for trying to put a stop to the battle, yet the play eventually proves them to be strong. However, the play supports their attempts to promote peace, reflecting *Escalus'* own beliefs. The prince's power backs the conciliators, since the aggressive ones are labeled as inhumane by the prince himself. The two ladies are portrayed as advocates for calmness and contemplation at this moment. Mature people, the rules, discipline, and women's voices are currently on the very same side. In later scenes, *Capulet* demonstrates a level of maturity and discretion in dealing with his enemy's son that stands in stark contrast to *Tybalt's* impulsive eagerness to confront *Romeo*.

It would seem that *Juliet* has at least one reliable female supporter in the nurse. She represents the image of the lady who spends her whole life caring for her family. *Coppelia Kahn* observes that the nurse symbolizes the weight of custom that is bearing down on *Juliet*.

Juliet is reminded by the nurse that, for women, life generally boils down to sexual activity and raising children, and that this is a reflection of the nurse's own natural womanhood. Both *Juliet's* mother and the nurse object to her daughter standing up for herself. When the ladies first appear on screen united, they are preoccupied with family planning, pregnancy, and wedding. In addition to the nurse's rephrasing of the delights of matrimony, *Capulet's* previous realization that early maternity is not a gift challenges conventional view. Afterwards, Mercutio had an encounter with the nurse that exemplifies the stereotypical views of a young man concerning women.

The nurse is lower than *Mercutio* in status and sex, so he believes he may use whatever filthy language he likes while addressing her. When everything else failed, she could always rely on

male defenders. It is clear from her response to *Capulet* that she has no defenses against physical violence.

The initial scene's rich symbolism and the innocence of the young adults guarantee that women will feel the full impact of any effort to enforce traditional gender roles.

Considering the circumstances surrounding Tybalt's death, it's unlikely that *Capulet* will continue to be open-minded about *Juliet's* wedding. When people are feeling angry or sad, they tend to become rigid in their beliefs. With death on the horizon, anger seems to be the only option for survival. As things unravel, *Capulet* goes to his child with a far more pessimistic outlook than previously. Since he has so much riding on the success of the existing arrangement, it is crucial that she and other female family members do their designated responsibilities. Not only is *Juliet* already married to *Romeo* when she hears the news that she will soon be married to Paris, but her deep-seated devotion to her family also puts her in an unfortunate spot.

Juliet displays strong opposition to conventional views, but her defiance of authoritative parenting releases the full fury of a man whose power has indeed been questioned by the people who he most hopes to submit entirely.

Due to their physical and financial dependency on Lady Capulet, the nurse and Lady *Capulet* are cut off from *Juliet*. The nurse suggests *Juliet* give in. Lady *Capulet* acts in a strict and composed manner that is completely insensitive to the additional possibilities that have become available to her daughter. She portrays the character of the bawd nurse that *Capulet* herself dispatched. If *Juliet* wants to keep her new persona as a sophisticated young lady, she must accept the nurse and her advice to forget *Romeo* and wed Paris. The nurse's realistic commitment to the only structure she is familiar with and completely reliant upon causes a rift in her relationship with

Juliet, whose developing independence allows her to find dignity in defying the status quo. Lady Capulet's distaste of the realization that she has become old sufficient to have a child who is exactly the same age that she was once she wedded and gave birth to *Juliet* gives the conflict between *Juliet* and her mother an extra intensity. *Juliet* is both isolated and freed as a result of her breakup with the nurse, Capulet's rage, Lady Capulet's support of him, as well as the nurse's consent. She initially refuses the nurse because she doesn't comprehend the extent of her commitment and love for *Romeo*, and she is largely denied herself for betraying her family, particularly going against *Capulet's* intentions. She matures via the experiences of being rejected and being rejected by those closest to her. *Romeo*, on the other hand, gives in to *Capulet's* terror, and the need that a man battle for his honor.

With the exception of the mysterious *Rosaline*, there is no another young girl inside the play who is like *Juliet*. Because we only have the nurse's, her mother's, *Capulet's*, and *Paris'* conventions to judge *Juliet's* behavior to, this separation helps her actions appear less severe, and the play gradually dissuades us from sympathizing with these viewpoints. *Juliet* runs the danger of being judged for being sincere, but this problem is elegantly avoided by her passing and subsequent societal redefinition as a model of morality. There aren't any negative contrasts to be made when comparing her to other young ladies. *Rosaline* serves as the bare minimum of a counterbalance, demonstrating the inadequacy of the harshness through that people just assume women would handle their men. Consequently, *Juliet's* audacity isn't at all frightening. Being an independent person, throughout the play, she surpasses all other *adults* in terms of maturation. Regrettably, neither her companions nor her seniors are able to see the new potential she represents.

Finding real love, *Juliet* rejects an arranged wedding, breaking with social norms. *Romeo's* failure to meet those standards demonstrates how uncomfortable and fake they were, yet there is

no sign that he has any other options. *Romeo* has fewer options than *Juliet* amid Verona's recognized boundaries for male and female roles as he lacks her ability to look past those. *Juliet* comes to the realization that what is required of her as a woman is inappropriate for herself. *Romeo* is mistaken when he claims that his devotion for *Juliet* has turned him wimpy, and the crowd is on her side in seeing further than the boundaries of what is considered appropriate feminine behavior. Before the youthful bloods' boasting started bleeding and forced everybody back into their stereotyped positions, *Capulet* too was on the point of adopting a liberal attitude toward his child, significantly more than his lady. Following a short period of catastrophic involvement in the conflict, *Romeo* succumbs to sentimentality, drawing numerous reprimands from Friar Laurence that are exclusively focused on the issue of his masculinity and his weepy emotions. A youngster who defies the expected behavioral norms makes the nurse and friar uneasy. *Romeo* is not a conventional man, and even during this difficulty, he is unable to continuously act in a proper manner. In such extraordinary cases, the friar is of no service. Inside this false belief that it would mend the divide amongst their families, he advises that the couple get married. When *Juliet* most requires his assistance, the friar is only capable of thinking of one option in his anxiety, which is to conceal *Juliet* with a group of nuns. However, regardless it being the only alternative available, the religious sanctuary for the outsider lady is not a good substitute. *Juliet's* situation is completely different from *Hermione's* in *Hero* in *Much Ado* or *The Winter's Tale About Nothing*. By seeking refuge, the drama cannot be saved from calamity. Instead, going to the grave is the only way out. Both the nurse and the friar are unsuccessful, it seems. Much like the rest of his culture, he finds it difficult to deal with a powerful young lady who has no traditional position in the social order and someone as young as *Romeo* who resists to fit into the prescribed shape. For the both lovers, the traditional expectations of gender norms

are powerful, but *Romeo* lacked *Juliet's* will to fight against them. From even *Romeo*, *Juliet* is isolated alone in this. When *Juliet* is all alone herself prior to actually taking the poison, she puts herself into a rage that, given the terrifying visions of her relatives assaulting her in the grave, could be thought to delay her choice. Instead, she swallows the potion just as her terror is at its peak.

The closing couplet that destiny uses to cleanly cage *Juliet* doesn't even suggest at the real difficulty that her actions have presented to Verona. Although it is sometimes assumed that the elder generation is too responsible for the terrible fatalities in this play, the young violent individuals' carelessness and limited views are also responsible.

The adolescent male's gangs' statements and actions intensify the hostility already present between the two houses.

The tragic event of *Romeo* and *Juliet* is a result of the incompetence of both young and elderly people. First off, *Juliet* has a wise and caring father in Capulet. He responds to Paris' push to marry *Juliet* by arguing for the value of her free will and acceptance. This is wonderful. He could manage to rule with good intentions. As when the play goes on, he loses this privilege as the younger population, both genders, challenge his power. The play's male characters experience the most gendered external expectations. *Romeo* is under pressure to pick up weapons, while *Capulet* is pressured to impose his patriarchal selection of a spouse for *Juliet*. They both sadly succumb to these demands, which has terrible repercussions for both the male and female characters. *Juliet* on her own demonstrates a different way to behave and thrive.

But *Juliet* surpasses *Romeo* in more ways than one. She finally perceives her strength as mental liberation rather than physical aggression. *Juliet* exceeds the limitations of both Veronese notions

of femininity and of the tomb in her unwillingness to be constrained by the traditional boundaries gender sets on her emotions, speech, and acts.

The strength shown by female characters in all of these plays shows that it either is that a particular character is assigned the incorrect gender or indicates that the responsibilities designated to that gender are incorrect. Men and women are, unsurprisingly, interconnected throughout all the plays. Females who are strong comparatively weaker men to get authority, but they are also reliant on other male figures to maintain to exercise it. Nobody can be strong by themselves; strength, like speech, is street with two ways. Women are constrained by the creation of femininity and masculinity, but they may assume that the fault lies in their gender.

Juliet and *Helen* really realize they have had the ability to act when their love for a man inspires them. The reversal of conventional gender norms has highlighted the necessity to alter such responsibilities, not to switch the genders assigned to them. The appropriation of stereotypically masculine duties has not resolved much. Instead, it has prompted another question that how should they really proceed.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

This paper attempts to dissect gender in a selection of Shakespeare's works. Nevertheless, my title 'The existence and scope of female power in an assortment of Shakespeare's plays, considering the meaning of female and of genders power straightaway. I do not think there is such a thing as female-specific power, exactly like I do not agree that purple would be the color for females and green would be the color for males. Obviously, there are both males and females. But socially manufactured notions of female and male 'essence' generate the realm of sexual

labels: female and male, which exists in various forms in various play contexts. I have maintained throughout the whole thesis that gender is the gendered categorization of specific approaches to thinking, talking, and acting that are considered proper for the male or female genders. This is an incorrect projection of pretended uniformity, in my perspective. My goal was to spark a conversation not just about the definition of dominance, but also about the definition of gender. I did so by presenting the relevant points: is female power real; what exactly is it; and also, what does its presence or complete absence and existence prove? My argument is that women having power in all of these plays differs from males having power because the play worlds see women as feminine and men as masculine. Because of these constructed identities, some behaviors are considered proper or inappropriate for men and women. Additionally, the creation of sexual identity is questioned in these plays. Where they demonstrate that the exclusion of female, or even femininity is inaccurate, they suggest that power might exist regardless of the gender norms. Conversely, there are additionally situations when they portray the exact reverse: gender as instinct. At some of these points, I've asserted that the plays have not outgrown the mainstream opinion of the period and culture in which they were written, but have alternatively portrayed an idealized or reviled fabrication of the feminine as fundamentally feminine.

In the world of plays, just as languages, acts, and relationships are gendered, so is dominance and power or authority. Its effectiveness is strongly impacted by societal assumptions about the sexual identity of its owner. This setting and these obligations are exclusive for women. I have investigated them in two specific aspects: language, and action. Throughout the plays studied in this paper, there are two sorts of female power: power exerted by women as well as the authority of being a woman. In an impartial way, neither is female. However, it is so inside the play

environments. Power is a reversible mechanism. It is dependent onto a reaction. It comprises mostly of self-knowledge and communication in connections between groups of individuals, individuals, institutions, and nations. Within those plays, both parties' conceptions of gender confuse these interactions. This is also heightened by the fact that both female and male personalities may conspire in the formation of genders that bring women significant challenges. Sexism is a formidable threat, and often the female characters depicted have internalized the patriarchal beliefs of their civilizations to the point that they participate in the gender stereotyping mechanism that restricts them. The cultures represented within those plays see the female gender as possessing both capabilities and weaknesses. It is not just the allocation of vulnerability - sexual predation, shrewishness, and bodily meekness - that has a substantial influence on these individuals, but also the allocation of power - sublime sexuality, humor, and toughness. Language is both a source of power and a channel of threat for female heroines. Witty female characters inhabit a society where sexist language and ideas are prevalent. Through profanity and allusion, a deep mistrust and anticipation of female adultery penetrates the dramatic settings, producing an image of women as the unavoidable source of adultery and as weasels with evil mouths. Both men and women criticize women; both are complicit in the formation of gender. These statements are effective because they are humorous. However, these are not jokes.

Women are murdered by language that exploits sexist assumptions about gender. *Desdemona* is killed by both *Iago's* falsehoods and *Othello's* hands.

This is feasible due to the fact that her statements might be misunderstood and mishandled to offer alleged proof of her sexual adultery, which has already been assumed given her gender. *Emilia* and *Paulina* communicate the truth that none of the other figures realize, *Juliet* distorts

the conventional analogies and perceives *Romeo* like a rose. Women are affected by, contributors to, and opponents of language as a form of patriarchal interaction. These figures eloquently convey the difficulties and possibilities of language for women.

Male concealment both highlights and rejects the presence of a fundamentally feminine essence. It does not grant power but allows the possibility for female characters to encounter a distinct set of gender norms of their deeds or manners, however only within the framework of passionate love, where a restoration to normalcy is assured in the joyful ending of marriage. Portia's innate brilliance and confidence would have been constrained by the walls of Belmont and the terms of her father's contract if it were not for the breaches she has temporarily acquired. They also let her to demonstrate that her affection for *Bassanio* is greater than his for *Antonio*, although by putting her masculine personality versus her feminine self. The inclusion of the adolescent actor in the original production differentiates historical and modern versions of the parts. Likewise, gender is portrayed as stable and flexible. Fragile men need powerful women. Male weakness promotes additional and romantic difficulties inside the play societies. Women have always had the ability to rectify the situation. Female characters have the ability to wage war and command armies. But they cannot influence the responses of the soldiers they battle for and alongside. It is uncommon for women to bear weapons. As they are not liable for the surrounding world in which conflict has erupted, they find it difficult to protect even their own families.

Because *Helen* is a romantic lead, she deserves to be pursued. Although this bold idea is restricted to the acceptable domain of motherhood, she is keen to enjoy losing her chastity. With Bertram's consent, Helen was able to compel him into marrying her, thanks to the healing abilities *Helen* inherited from her father. But by employing sex as a ruse, she may disrupt his sexual schemes. *Bertram* is ultimately forced to give in; he must, albeit reluctantly, admit the

roles of both father and husband. *Juliet* does not possess Verona's ideals. She doesn't want to argue with her parents or her father. After she refuses to give in to Capulet's pleas that she wed Paris, she is upset. Her actions only went as far as to wed *Romeo* and commit suicide. However, she has access to her own thoughts. She is aware that the assumptions the nurse, her family, the priest, and Verona had of what it meant to be a man or a woman were incorrect. She is unable to avoid the effects of the sexism and violence that permeate her culture, yet she never feels obliged to support it. Both Capulet and Romeo were significantly more limited by gender expectations than *Juliet* as they accept them. *Romeo* discovers that he cannot be the hero who is love and craves romance or the person of action he longs to be. Due to the passing of a family member, *Capulet* begins to doubt his ability to be a free and loving father and begins to resemble a patriarchal dictator. He stiffly says, "This alteration has direct repercussions for his lady and the nurse, who rely upon me for their existence." Despite the fact that she has to also choose to end her life, *Juliet* later found dignity in the identity of her love story.

Paradoxical representations of "woman" and women are concurrently built in all these plays. Women are shown as having power and acting with authority. But stereotypes of the female or the feminine gender have an impact on how powerful one's language, actions, and sexual expression are. Inside a patriarchal setting, intelligent women speak out using a very loaded technique that simultaneously serves as a platform for sexism. Women who keep their words to themselves are as prone to misunderstanding. Words have power. Similarly important is the fact that women state the obvious or the reality, which disproves false allegations. The idea of female sexuality is particularly complex, requiring a delicate balance between being a virgin and being labeled as a slut or a whore.

But there is also celebration of love and passion. Men and women reach some degree of equality in all categories, which allows their love profundity, regardless of whether the relationship is just temporary or forever. Consequently, female characters are typically portrayed as strong in the framework of romance, within which they also are doomed to either ecstatic tranquility or an innocent mortality.

The various and different forms of power of female examined throughout this dissertation lead to two connected results: first, is that the gender of the person having the control determines the magnitude of that authority, and secondly, that gender is a societal concept with distinctive consequences for female figures. The gender concept includes the features given to females, including both their virtues and flaws.

The urge to discover strong women and to support their leadership has the potential to contribute to the formation of genders. During my dissertation, a feminist perspective has provided me the instruments to work toward realism while acknowledging my own involvement in what I see. I have sometimes struggled with feminist critique just as much as did with patriarchal ideas. Feminism, being at the finest, exposes the flaws in cultural appropriation, whether it comes from patriarchy or other philosophies, such as its own. They may not always manage to avoid it. However, I unquestionably support the continued inclusion of feminist researches in Shakespeare evaluation since the concerns raised here are integral to both male's and female's real-life experiences (since gendered stereotype impacts both groups). I have improved my understanding of the 20th century in addition to the 16th century, along with the relationship among the play settings and actuality, through looking at how women are portrayed as having power and femininity in Shakespeare's plays. This relationship is clear: by understanding how sexism functions in literary works, we might well be able to alter how it functions in everyday lives.

Work Cited: