

# Father-Daughter Relationships in Selected Plays of Shakespeare

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## **Declaration**

It is hereby declared that,

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing the degree at BRAC University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through complete and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material that has been accepted or submitted for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all primary sources of help.

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## **Abstract**

This thesis aims to examine the relationship between fathers and daughters as portrayed in the selected plays of Shakespeare. It is observed that the plays *King Lear* and *Othello* present a complex and challenging aspect of this bond, whereas the play *Hamlet* portrays a traditional father-daughter relationship where Ophelia is the epitome of the “good woman” who obeys the patriarchal authority of her father and brother.

The first part of my thesis will examine Elizabethan society to see the extent to which it adhered to patriarchal traditions. The second part of the study will investigate the relationship between fathers and daughters in the selected plays to see whether these women are celebrated by Elizabethan society or regarded in a negative light.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

This thesis will investigate the relationship between fathers and their daughters in some plays by Shakespeare. According to psychological criticism, a literary work primarily represents the author's mental state and personality features. According to Kemp (2010), the traditional roles for women in Shakespeare's time were mother, sister, or daughter. Women's responsibilities were closely tied to those of the home and family. Their duties included maintaining the home's proper order, giving birth, and raising the kids. Everything in the Elizabethan era belonged to men, including property, ancestry, authority, and, most significantly, the ability to control women. In the Renaissance, women's duties were thought of differently than today. In the time of Shakespeare, women were expected to be dutiful and obedient to the male family members; in the instance of a daughter who had no father, even her brothers were to be obeyed. John Knox (1994) accurately described the situation: "Woman in her utmost perfection was meant to serve and obey man." In addition, as Kemp (2010) notes in her book *Women in the Age of Shakespeare*, women were considered inferior.

Given that Shakespeare lived in an era when all actors were males and serious theatre was traditionally centered on the activities of men, it is not unexpected that most of the characters in Shakespeare's plays are men. Shakespeare assigned a range of fascinating female characters to his young male actors. There are many kinds of parent-child relationships, many of which involve fathers and daughters. The father-daughter relationship stands out in the drama due to the lack of female characters. Shakespeare's dramatic daughters are typically young adults transitioning from their childhood homes, where they were shielded, to adulthood. Tension increases as daughters leave their homes in the plays in quest of romance, adventure, and independence.

## 1.1 The Contextual Background

Women have always held powerful positions throughout history, regardless of how society saw them. The Elizabethan era is regarded as a period of the English Renaissance. The Elizabethan era brought new hope for the women of that time. A female monarchy and the quickly advancing globalization broadened women's horizons and gave them some scope to put their thoughts into shape. Although Elizabethan culture did not treat women with the freedom we are provided now, significant advancements were made at that time. Even a statute allowing men and women to be married without their parent's permission was passed in 1604.

Queen Elizabeth, I ruled throughout the Elizabethan period, sometimes known as the "Golden Age," during which the society saw several developmental changes. In that society, it was typical that the men would be the breadwinners while the female would be homemakers and mothers. Motherhood is considered a blessing for women of all eras. A woman typically gave birth to a child every two years, but families were not usually significant due to the high rate of infant and child mortality. Offspring were regarded as a godsend. Therefore, having children was a great honour for women, and Tudor ladies were quite proud of this.

As Roberts (37) underlines "Life for women in Elizabethan England was not easy". They used to perform activities like cooking, cleaning, getting pregnant, and maintaining to offer more than adequate means of support. Furthermore, Pragati Das (2012) declares that during the era it was said that "women were to be seen, and not heard." Although there is definitely room for debate, women used to be seen as the inferior sex. According to society, a woman always needs a guardian; if one is unmarried, then her father, brother, or male relative



would be the custodian, and for a married woman, her husband is the ultimate guardian and caregiver.

In general, men provided for women. A woman depended on her father during her early years, who supported and safeguarded her. When she reached adulthood, that duty would be transferred to a husband, who assumed a comparable financial function. In other cases, being a spinster was unheard of; neighbours were even "thought to be witches by their neighbours" (Alchin, 2017). A woman who did not want to get married had no choice but to join the nuns' sisterhood. A wealthy woman may join a convent to avoid judgment and accusations if she wants to remain single. It was allowed to convert to a nunnery lifestyle since it was viewed as a different kind of marriage—a marriage to God. After entering a nunnery, she obtained a male protector, which was intended to look after her. On the night of her wedding, a woman's "maidenhood" was seen to be highly significant. Regardless of the theological ramifications of premarital sex, it was shameful for both the woman and her father to be "dishonoured" before she married a man. As was previously said, a father's responsibility to his daughter included both managing her wealth and preserving her honour. If she was "besmirched" before marriage, her father was held responsible, and the crime was associated with incest.

The Puritans and daughters of the nobility were the only groups encouraging girls to attend formal schools. For those with access to education, the majority of the subjects were geared toward promoting chastity and learning domestic skills. Only a few girls were admitted to grammar schools as early as the middle of the 1500s but were not permitted to work. Nevertheless, interestingly, women were the biggest fans of books and leisure reading. In the Elizabethan era, over 80% of all books were bought for and read by women because it was thought to be emasculating for males to read anything other than books on law or medicine.

The restrictions that governed what women could and could not do in Elizabethan England were highly patriarchal. Women were not permitted to enroll in schools or universities, preventing them from pursuing legal or medical careers. Women were not formally admitted into the majority of the guilds that taught skilled professionals like goldsmiths and carpenters. Even the less reputed acting industry was off-limits to women. Only those trades that could be learned and done at home, such as hat-making and brewing, were legally open to women. Moreover, women were not allowed to vote, and while they may inherit land from their father or spouse, they were not allowed to buy their own property. Women were subject to strong social expectations in addition to these legal limitations, which did not hold men to the same standards. Women were prohibited from taking part in any type of political activity. Women might be beaten, raped, and imprisoned by men. Additionally, they had total authority over their kids. (Olsen, 2017). In sermons and publications written during the Elizabethan era, women were encouraged to remain silent and submissive to male authority, whether it came from their father or their spouse.

Throughout the Elizabethan period, women's political and legal rights were non-existent. Women were not permitted to vote, regardless of their social standing or status, which was one of the most apparent restrictions. The only way a woman could obtain any political power as long as it was passed down to her, like Queen Elizabeth I, who was in a line of succession, was through the royal Crown.

Overall, the Elizabethan era should be considered a flexible period for women. Women got some excellent opportunities to learn language, life, and living. It was believed that a woman learned more and excelled in education. Despite having limitations, women of that time got the opportunities. The supreme mind of Queen Elizabeth I and author William Shakespeare both questioned the under-representation of women during this time. Shakespeare depicted strong-willed women who defied prevailing societal norms in his plays. Shakespeare's inventive

portrayal of Elizabethan ladies and the Queen's exceptional reign changed society's perception of these women in ways they might not have otherwise.

## **1.2 Daughters in Shakespeare's Plays**

Carlyle (1966) said, "Shakespeare was the grandest thing we have yet done... Indian empire will go, at any rate, someday, but this Shakespeare does not go, he lasts forever with us." Shakespeare's great plays, which cross all boundaries of time and culture, can help us understand his relevance in the twenty-first century. Because of his plays' evocative language and dramatic structure, their stories are considered classics of English literature. Students learn to analyze language with a specific mental discipline by studying and enjoying his plays' stories.

Shakespeare's plays frequently and prominently portray the relationship between a father and a daughter. A Father-daughter relationship is one of the most beautiful relationships. Shakespeare himself, being a father of two daughters, could wonderfully portray the strong promise and love between fathers and their daughters. However, the relationship between father and daughter has changed over time. Nowadays, everyone is independent; as a result, daughters' utmost submission to their fathers or to live under their rulings has taken a different turn.

It frequently happens that daughters choose their spouses based on characteristics that resemble or make them think of their fathers, a phenomenon still piques experts' interest. In her blog entry published in Psychology Today, Kromberg claims that: "Our first attachment patterns shape our expectations for future attachments. Overtly and also unintentionally, our parents teach us how to approach our lives and relationships – they teach us how to express and receive love, how to handle disagreements, how to process feelings, etc." (Kromberg).

Mainly girls shape their choices of men keeping their early-age models like their fathers or father figures in their minds.

In each of the selected plays this essay analyses, each daughter has a significant role irrespective of how big or small the function is. A daughter plays a more critical role in some of them while having a minor role in others, but this does not lessen the importance of her role in the play. The majority of the daughters share a lot of notable characteristics and parallels, despite the fact that their personalities differ. For example, it is noteworthy that most girls are motherless and were raised alone by their fathers.

Feminist critic Jeanne Addison Roberts places the societal norms of Shakespeare's time in perspective concerning modern criticism:

There is no point, of course, in blaming Shakespeare for this lopsided picture of the world. He could have only known a patriarchal society. His actors were male, and competent boy actors for female roles may have been in short supply. We all know that compared to most of his contemporary playwrights Shakespeare showed astonishing insight into a variety of female dilemmas and strengths. (367).

Shakespeare has always been intensely interested in portraying women as obedient to their guardians, mostly their fathers and then their husbands. A daughter was expected to be sincere towards her father; if not, she was supposed to suffer from punishments. Especially fathers have the power to disown their daughters from their wealth. Moreover, the portrayal of women at that time always brought a humble and silent girl as a role model. This portrayal happens because society tends to have preoccupied authority over the weaker sex, women. The audience of that time would always prefer a humble woman over a rebellious one which is still valid in our Bangladeshi society. There is another reason behind fathers treating their daughters this way; we can get the idea that they are preparing them for a future in which they will have to

submit to another man. A woman should become used to obeying her father before shifting her loyalty and obedience to her husband.

On the other hand, Shakespeare is challenging his audience by inventing characters for girls who are obviously, and at times even disturbingly, rebellious by the conventions of the time. This is to create a fun contrast and generate interest in the audience's minds. A girl following society's norms would be an ideal girl, but there would not be much to explore or enjoy; rather, a rebellious character can challenge our minds. It is unusual for an audience of that age to watch a woman stand up for her rights and attempt to attain independence in the world of dominating males, making a wayward daughter a much more compelling character.

Four centuries ago, the relationship between parents and their children was not that close. The parents used to dominate their children and as women are always considered subordinate so daughters' positions were more like kings and their subjects. Fathers have been considered themselves kings for ages. Even McEachern, in her study, cites King James I who said that "Kings are compared to fathers in families: for a King is truly *parens patriae*, the politic father of his people" (273). They have the authority to give and take away chances of every sort from other family members, especially the females of the family. Moreover, as they exercise these powers often, they need help to keep up the balance between being a father and a ruler. Lear, for instance, is the best illustration of a parent who is also a king. His royal responsibilities add to his personal and familial problems. Their actions could have far-reaching effects, which they do, as we know from the play.

Fathers consider their daughters their cherished property, which they would function as they like. They even use such properties to enhance their position in society. Thus, it creates a conflict. Women under their fathers' rulings felt pressurized and could not determine how long

they would remain under these rulings. Often, they turn into rebellion, and the easiest way for them to rebel against their fathers is to marry someone of their own choice. Shakespeare intensifies events by utilizing the internal struggles of daughters. A daughter's obligation to her father and her own will are at odds. as Georges Bataille comments:

The gift itself is a renunciation. . . . Marriage is a matter less for the partners than for the man who gives the woman away, the man whether father or brother who might have freely enjoyed the woman, daughter or sister, yet who bestows her on someone else. This gift is perhaps a substitute for the sexual act; for the exuberance of giving has a significance akin to that of the act itself; it is also a spending of resources. (218)

We may see how fathers and children interpret the same views differently due to generational changes in their interactions. Fathers believe protecting the family and respecting authority are the most important virtues. However, their daughters frequently refute them. They frequently put their own needs and wants before those of their family. The girls view their father's efforts to find compatible companions as interfering with their right to personal autonomy rather than an effort to secure their well-being and a brighter future. Shakespeare routinely disregards a father's will in his plays.

Our parents' viewpoints on some topics and facts differ from our own, and it is conceivable that our children will have different attitudes than we do. Parents are not always the problem; historical development and societal changes are also significant factors in our relationships that must be addressed or minimized. So, father-daughter interactions will always be influenced by the individuals involved as well as the effects of the culture they live in.

## **Chapter 2: Significant Representations of Daughters and their relationship with their fathers**

### **2.1 Ophelia**

Shakespeare characterized Ophelia as being kind and timid. These are two characteristics of a female Shakespearean character that the Elizabethan period will celebrate. In the past, critics have called Ophelia a "pathetically weak figure." For her father's abuse of power and dominance, she has drawn compassion as well as criticism. She is portrayed as a "good woman" who is obedient to her father and accepts the dominance as it is, although she admits her love for Hamlet and her independence. The oppressive patriarchal ideal of feminine behaviour, which reduces women to their "honour" or their generative duty in a male dominating society, compels her father to conceal them.

Ophelia's father and brother have frequently underlined to her the weak roots of women's respectability and sense of worth in a patriarchal culture, honour, and virginity. They have diminished the significance of that position by emphasizing masculine dominance over compassion and characterizing females as nurturers and caregivers. The patriarchal concern for legitimate issues, the requirement that young women be presented by their fathers to potential husbands as chaste vessels, and the accompanying double standard all indicate their obsession with female chastity and the sacrifice of their individuality to their role as child-bearers.

Ophelia is an innocent character who is used by her father and her love interest Hamlet as she has no idea about being deceived by her loved ones. Ophelia's father and brother always try to protect her from Hamlet as they find him as a suspicious character. In Hamlet (1992), Polonius is depicted as a parent who worries about his kids' welfare. However, he has nothing to do with moral decency or a feeling of dignity. "The portrayal of Polonius was based on some of Queen Elizabeth's senior statesmen and was intended to be

somewhat humorous, emphasizing vanity, verbosity, servility, and loyalty as well as a bent towards intrigue and espionage," the author of the biography said (Parrott, 1949). He will do anything to achieve his goals and Ophelia being a submissive daughter has shown the loyalty that her father expected from her.

Shakespeare emphasizes the value of trust, particularly on the father's part. Polonius has a different level of confidence in his daughter. He does not think that Ophelia cannot be trusted in her connection with Hamlet as Ophelia herself shows her father the letters she has received from Hamlet. It also shows that Polonius has a keen interest in the private life of his daughter, and he thinks that his daughter is too naïve to be left alone on her own. Therefore, he overprotects her. Ophelia is given the unjustified advice to stay away from Hamlet by Polonius, who also succeeds in temporarily destroying all of Ophelia's fate in Hamlet. Every time he persuades Ophelia to meet Hamlet, Polonius tells her not to. Polonius views Hamlet as an immature young man. He counsels Ophelia not to believe Hamlet's oaths and promises. He also wants Ophelia to make amends and follow his instructions. She submits calmly to her father's wishes.

Ophelia's doubts are planted by Polonius, ruining their developing bond and the loving relationship between them. As in the Elizabethan period fathers often consider themselves as kings or rulers so they always want their subjects, the daughters to listen to them and consider their permission while making any life-changing decisions such as choosing a partner. If young people of either sex have benefited from the advantages of cultured blood and breeding, their first passion is a reaction to some real or imagined ideal. Nothing is more harmful or futile than elders interrupting themselves into a romantic situation of this nature, not even the cold, calculated blight of intellectual and worldly judgment or the more harmful poison of suspicion, the insinuation of a dubious motivation or mistrust of good faith. All of this is poured on the daughter of Polonius, who is shocked and ashamed (Gerwing, 1929).



Despite her inherent propensity for virtue, Ophelia's father influences her to view love as a form of lust and lunacy, reject other people in *Hamlet*, and turn into her brother Laertes' tool of evil in the nunnery scene. Because Ophelia is so emotionally linked to her father, she becomes insane after Hamlet kills her father and exhibits odd behaviour later. She loses her composure and drowns. All of the above-mentioned instances emphasize Ophelia's close relationship with her father, which she repeatedly exemplifies in the play. Because they are each other's entire worlds, she is unable or unwilling to leave her father. This fact is widely known to Polonius, who is pleased with his daughter's obedience. Her father might use her as a tool since she submits to him and respects him. Even while his actions may seem odd, beyond all of the intrigues, we can see the loving father who raised a daughter he can rely on.

## **2.2 Desdemona**

Desdemona is a sensual and attractive woman who is by nature odd in a society that upholds a cold, chaste ideal. In the Elizabethan era when humility was the traditional feminine norm, she is courageous and active. She spreads her loving affection to everyone, despite all forms of patriarchy. In her father's house, Desdemona behaves like a dutiful daughter in her father's house, but her affection for Othello demonstrates her self-assurance and nobility. One of the most often criticized women in the play is Desdemona. She appears to be a contradictory fusion of voluntary submission and fierce individualism. Shakespeare vividly portrays her as a beautiful, intellectual Venetian. She is capable of expressing her own viewpoints and coming to her own decisions, but she exemplifies the values of a wife via her loyalty at the same time. These traits are displayed as Desdemona defends her union with Othello in front of Brabantio and the Senate.

My noble Father.

I do perceive here a divided duty.

To you I am bound for life and education;

My life and education both do learn me

How to respect you. You are the lord of duty;

I am hitherto your daughter. But here's my

husband,

And so much duty as my mother showed

To you, preferring you before her father,

(Shakespeare, 1975, 1.3.182-89)

This noble woman, breaking all social conventions, is the one who forcefully professes her love in front of her father and the Duke in the council. This young woman, however, now perceives her love through a conventional lens and refers to her "divided obligation" between her father and her husband, whereby filial piety is transferred.

The conservative dads steadfastly refuse to accept that their daughters have matured, unable to release them into maturity. Their actions are the result of a variety of factors. They stubbornly hold on to their previous positions of power and influence rather than moving on to the next phase of their lives.

The fathers' pride has been irreparably damaged by their daughters' increasing independence and love of other men. The dads view their girls as suddenly naughty, rebellious children rather than as young women. These men are frightened and enraged by the sudden change in their daughters' behavior, vehemently demanding complete compliance.

In the Senate chamber, after Desdemona elopes with Othello, which he finds hard to accept, let alone comprehend, Brabantio addresses his daughter:

Come hither, gentle mistress. Do you perceive in all this noble company Where most you owe obedience? (Shakespeare, 1975, 1.3. 200-205)

His beloved daughter is to relate to him as his obedient kid, not the young woman she has grown into. Her response is a kind effort to ease her father's concerns and signal her entry into adulthood.

Desdemona respects her father according to custom while transferring her obedience to her new spouse. But the miserable Brabantio, who was also horrified by her elopement, took her remarks hard. After being stung by what he believes to be a terrible betrayal, he disowns her, and instead of granting a parental blessing, he curses the newlyweds. The main cause of Brabantio's surprise is the fact that he is unfamiliar with his daughter. If we focus more on Othello's description, we find Desdemona, whose father has completely ignored her.

The male presentation and home tragedies characterize Shakespeare's "Othello" and the Renaissance period. Desdemona's character of blind obedience by using the play Othello as a reference. The battle between the father and daughter in the tragicomedy Othello begins when Desdemona secretly weds Othello. She leaves her father's influence and authority when she marries Othello.

According to Dreher (2021), this truth leads to identity issues for both Desdemona and her father. The drama does not explore the tension between Desdemona and her father. It is there at the play's outset and will impact how many people die. Taking these factors into account, Desdemona left her family and nation, defying preconceived notions of the ideal lady at the time. She declares her love for Othello while defying the patriarchal society. Brabantio was never prepared to accept Othello as Desdemona's husband after learning that her daughter had secretly wed a Moor named Othello. He believed that, as a father, her daughter ought to heed all of his advice.

Additionally, he believed he should have the power to decide who would marry her daughter. However, Desdemona secretly weds Othello, a man of her choosing, without seeking her father's approval. Brabantio was taken aback by the idea that Desdemona could fall in love with a black Othello. Othello was accused of tricking her daughter, and he complained to Duke about it. The Duke then called Desdemona, who proclaimed that she had decided to marry Othello and had absolute faith in him. Whether Desdemona selected Othello as her spouse or Othello chose Desdemona, Brabantio was completely surprised when he heard these words come out of Desdemona's mouth. He also suspected that the Moor had tricked her lovely daughter, Desdemona. Until the play's conclusion, the uncertainty persists.

As we read the play and attempt to assess the relationship between the father and daughter from the first point of view, we get the impression that Brabantio cares for Desdemona more than she should and treats her like her own kid. Because of this, Brabantio was unhappy to learn that Desdemona had wed Othello and accused Othello of tricking her daughter. The patriarchal system of the Renaissance, in which the father held all the rights, is typified by Brabantio. Nevertheless, when Desdemona married Othello in the play "Othello," and Desdemona herself said that she had chosen Othello as her husband, it was too much for Brabantio to take. Desdemona defied Renaissance convention in this instance. She wed Othello rather than follow her father's moral code. Hence, it is assumed that Desdemona hit her father and convinced him she was not a puppet. Simply put, Desdemona rebelled against the patriarchal ideologies of the Renaissance and made the most critical decision of her life by picking her husband.

The daughters' various outcomes are determined mainly by their behaviour. Shakespeare was skilled at engaging audiences and manipulating their emotions to the point where they crossed their fingers for the rebellious daughter. This is because, while breaking societal norms, she fights for love, which they might be able to support. Shakespeare's plays use the contrast between romantic, yet forbidding, young love and a controlling, somewhat heartless patriarch

as a motivating factor. Shakespeare blatantly adopts the social norms and behavioural patterns of early modern women, which included, of course, his audience. He utilized these expectations in his plays by frequently developing characters who challenge expectations. However, Shakespeare always sees that these infractions are corrected or punished after each play.

### **2.3 Lear's Daughters**

Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of King Lear* is widespread with greed, hopelessness, betrayal, and pain. Numerous passages describe the suffering that Lear or any of the other characters endure. There is one issue that, while not ignored, needs to receive more attention. King Lear's egotism is made abundantly clear in the first act when he forces his daughters to profess their love for him in exchange for a share of the kingdom's property, only to exile the youngest daughter after she refuses to lie about her feelings for him. Even when his devoted servant tries to warn King Lear of the mistake of his ways, Lear sends him to leave because his pride prevents him from being the best monarch for his country. The problem is that Lear does not grasp his circumstances or the behaviour of others around him because he lets his kingly ego get in the way. Although he voluntarily yielded his power, his arrogance causes him to believe he is untouchable. Based on the wind's words, they made him nothing more than a King.

It isn't easy to maintain a steadfast sense of self-righteousness and self-deprecation in this ego-stimulating position. These types of people understand that what is needed, at least concerning their past and present destructive feelings, fantasies, and actions, is not so much forgiveness as the need for reconciliation with their life histories, some difficult reparative work, and the need to keep a watchful eye on regressive moves toward persisting unconscious unforgiveness. They are better equipped to see the self and others as a whole, complexly motivated persons with distinct life histories. That is the unforgiveness that manifests in the

venomous, frequently illogical, self- and other-directed accusations that can break out during the agitated interactions in loving relationships like Lear and Cordelia; in this instance, Cordelia is portrayed as the contrast of Lear's egoism.

Commitment, generosity, attractiveness, and honesty—possibly excessive—are among Cordelia's most notable qualities. She is contrasted with Goneril and Regan throughout the play since they are neither loving nor honest and use their father for their own ends. By declining to participate in Lear's love test at the start of the play, Cordelia establishes herself as a trove of virtue. Her love for Lear seems genuine, highlighting how foolish the king was to exile her. Cordelia never leaves the audience's minds while we witness Goneril and Regan's disobediences and Lear's descent into madness, even though she is offstage for the whole of the play's middle act. Despite how badly Lear treats her, Cordelia makes the proper decision to forgive him.

Nonetheless, the reasons why egotistical fathers rule over their daughters vary. The latter see their children as extensions of themselves. In Jungian terminology (1986), they have inflated egos and cannot distinguish between themselves and others. Shakespeare's portrayal of many fathers' words reveals how severely their ego limits have been worn. Shakespeare's fathers tend to see their daughters as extensions of themselves. Parents repeatedly allude to their children as part of their bodies. This kind of behaviour helps to explain, in part, why they are shocked and amazed when their daughters decide to leave them for other men on their own. As unbelievable as it would be for their arms and legs to defy them is this act of disobedience. Shakespeare portrays a ruler in King Lear, his celebrated tragedy, whose ultimate arrogance, fundamental superiority, enormous wrath, and error of judgment wreak havoc on the British territory. Shakespeare immediately introduces his audience to a king whose weakness in obeying his daughters and other friends destroys his entire realm and leads him to utter agony. Lear divides his kingdom among his daughters according to who flatters him the most, giving

it to Goneril and Regan and banishing Cordelia for expressing her true, unrequited love without using flattering language. Lear demonstrates his nasty and selfish nature by entrusting his kingdom to his wicked daughters, who have ulterior motivations, proving that he is a harsh parent and a vicious ruler. Shakespeare dishonours this openness to flattery because he sees it as a fault in a ruler who should be in command of an entire nation. It is insufficient and unreasonable for Lear to use the love his daughters have for him as justification for how he divides his territories. Before his redemption begins on the heath with the poorest and least noticeable of his former followers, Hadfield (2003) claims, "The problem is that he then gives his kingdom away foolishly to his evil daughters, retaining the name of the king and a supposed vestige of power, before his redemption begins on the heath with the poorest and least visible of his former subjects" Regan and Goneril, Lear's other daughters, "are startled by how big a fool he is, and they realize that they have to be on their guard to stop him from ever having the power to do to them what he has just done to Cordelia" (Bloom, 2010) since Lear behaves so impulsively and hastily. In addition to his interest in flattery, Lear's arrogance worsens the situation. The fundamental internal factor driving Lear toward poor judgment, persistence in his hasty decisions, and ultimately destruction and downfall is his sense of superiority, his biggest hamartia. Lear disregarded Cordelia's honesty and left his kingdom in the hands of his dishonest daughters because he saw himself as a "dragon" (Shakespeare, 2015, 1.3. 135-140) and his rage as the "wrath" (Shakespeare, 2015, 1.3. 135-140) of the dragon. "He is filled with self-love" (Ashton, 1932), and because of this, he cannot recognize the reality or appreciate Cordelia's candor, as stated in her forthright remarks. That prevents him from recognizing Regan and Goneril's deceit, which involves using charming remarks to obtain a larger portion. Cordelia suddenly injures Lear's bloated ego, which Goneril and Regan had previously stroked, in front of his friends and courtiers. Lear banishes her daughter to eliminate what has made him helpless, powerless, and insecure. He cannot understand how his manly arrogance is

harmed and feels anxious about losing his power and royal pride. Even Lear's query about "Which of you shall we say doth love us most" (Shakespeare, 2015, 1.1. 55-60) comes from his conceited and egotistical nature, and the answer is what Lear wants to hear. Lear gets what he asks for because he asks such a foolish question, which also necessitates a terrible answer. Why would he want to be kind to his daughters based on their flattery if his love for them was genuine? If Lear truly loved his daughters, he would not bother to look for anything in return besides their happiness. The cancer of jealousy and self-centered pride is eating away at his heart and head at the play's outset, as Ashton (1932) claims. In his fruitless attempt to appease his inflated ego, Lear finds his ego wounded by Cordelia's candor and finally discovers his kingdom in ruin. After the events that follow the division of Lear's kingdom and Regan and Goneril's rejection of their father, Lear gradually comes to see the truth about the treachery of his daughters. Lear recognizes Cordelia's dedication and fidelity but refuses to acknowledge the truth of her claims. Once more, Lear is torn between admitting his mistake and his feeling of hubris, which prevents him from further damaging his already battered ego. Lear clings to his band of knights as the last visible signs of his kingly holdings after losing his palace, an emblem of his pride and vanity. Regan and Goneril's decision to dissolve his army, which they contend will cause the nation's resources to evaporate, shatters his idea that his assets define his identity. Lear has lost his identity and is now a commoner whose regal pride and possessions have abandoned him. His ignorance has turned into awareness. Although he knows his poor judgment and unwarranted rage, he still struggles to swallow his pride and accept responsibility for his mistakes.

As Cordelia must cope with a man who is both unpredictable and passionate—and to whom she is entirely devoted, she is the one who deliberately, if not calmly, stirs up this storm. Lear requests that she express her love for him because he knows how much she loves him—more than Goneril and Regan combined. Cordelia politely declines, saying she will not say anything.



When she is forced to speak further, her words are, at best, utterly careless and casual. She claims that her love has no superior qualities; she loves by her bond, "no more nor less." (Shakespeare, 2015, 1.1.100-105), and criticizes her sisters for declaring a higher standard of love. No matter how foolish, this is not a response fit for a king or even a father. Given what we discover later, we are aware that Cordelia's response covers her genuine emotions. We assume that whatever her motivations may be, they must be the best ones possible. Nevertheless, the mindset they force her to embrace is shocking and profoundly unsuitable. The tragedy that will be performed is not entirely Lear's fault.

The first response Cordelia gives her father is "Nothing, my lord" (Shakespeare, 2015, 1.1. 95-100), and the second is that she is unable to heave her heart into her lips and that she loves her father per their link. It is evident so far that she has decided to avoid using superlatives. The most crucial response is her third one. She declares her devotion to Lear and commitment to obeying him before criticizing what her sisters have said. "Why have my sisters husbands if they say They love you all?" Cordelia queries (Shakespeare, 2015, 1.1. 105-110). She will devote half her love, care, and obligations to the guy she marries. Indeed, she says, "I shall never marry like my sisters, To love my father all." (Shakespeare, 2015, 1.1. 115) The most stressed words in the speech are "They love you all" (Shakespeare, 2015, 1.1. 105-110) and "To love my father all" (Shakespeare, 2015, 1.1. 115), which is meant to mock the usage of superlatives because a parent's ability to demand love from his daughter is cut in half when she marries a man.

Lear became upset because he could not recognize the emotion beneath Cordelia's comments. He was too consumed with ego and power to see the genuine affection and concern that only Cordelia felt for him. He hated her, expelled her, and left her without any possessions. Even after Lear's torturous deeds, Cordelia remained silent and did not even complain; instead, she accepted her fate. She spent a long time away from the spotlight, yet she never hated or accused

her father of anything. Even though Lear had disowned her without attempting to comprehend her love for him, Cordelia forgave him when reunited. Through her generosity, Cordelia defended, assisted, and forgave her father, which is practically difficult to anticipate from her other sisters, who were even conspiring to kill their father for some land. Cordelia's generosity and compassionate heart restore Lear and Cordelia's estranged father-daughter connection.

The fundamental justification for Cordelia's goodness and status as the embodiment of compassion is that it contrasts with King Lear's tragic flaw, or ego and pride. Lear cannot understand Cordelia's response because he cannot attribute the attitude Cordelia exhibits to him as being of his own making. He exhibits the behaviours of a king who could not distinguish between the substance of Cordelia's response and the hollowness of his elder daughters' assertions. He gives and seeks to receive unfathomable love. His intentions are clear and sincere, and he considers each statement formally and ultimately truthful because he anticipates the same in return. Despite the shocking meagreness of Cordelia's comments, he is not immediately conscious of the limitations that the use of authority has had on his perspective on life and love. Lear ruins what is ultimately valuable and trustworthy by acting under his estimation of whom he believes to be.

On the other hand, Lear is bewildered by his egotistic ignorance and fails to see the profundity of Cordelia's message that she did not wish to compare her love for her father to that of her sisters. She felt a great affection for him and was therefore trying to figure out how to respond to his inquiries. She could not put her fervent love into words since she did not know how. Nevertheless, Cordelia was ignored by the egotistic King Lear, who only valued the flattering remarks of his other two daughters. Without a doubt, he loved the most. However, in the end, Cordelia helps him find shelter, tries to keep him safe, loves, forgives him, and restores their father-daughter relationship. Because she was aware of her father's affection for her and his promise to one day express it, her ego was not wounded by his actions. Her

generosity kept her alert and prevented her from becoming overtaken by pride and ego. She opposes Lear's arrogance and ego by demonstrating the strength of kindness and how it might have avoided the mishap. In contrast to Lear's hamartia, Cordelia's kindness highlights Lear's character defects and demonstrates how pride and vanity may lead a person astray.

Shakespeare used these heroic blunders to forewarn rulers against equally terrible and unforgivable errors. Shakespeare, a master of tragedy, never loses sight of the political machinations that would have prevented the calamity from unfolding, despite showing a dark universe and a heartbreaking tragedy. By the end of the Elizabethan period, Shakespeare wrote *King Lear* as a warning to James I, who had just assumed the British throne. In *King Lear*, the effects of an unfavourable succession are demonstrated, but the focus is on what needs to be fixed rather than whether the monarch may be overthrown. The play fits under a tradition of the mirror for princes' literature, offering advice and correction to rulers or those who had the authority to do so. The question of succession and the veracity of a government is a recurring theme in Shakespeare's plays written both before and during Elizabeth's reign.

As a result, *King Lear* is particularly tragic because each time a character ultimately repents and gains a deeper understanding of reality, their world is suddenly turned upside down, causing them to suffer even more until succumbing to death themselves. Because this family is torn apart at the seams for some land or the love of another, the tragedy also plays with the concept of family. Most people fear being betrayed by a close friend or relative, especially if they believe they can hurt them right away or are weaker than them. Because of this, *King Lear* is a tragedy brought about by a betrayal of the family and by fear, greed, and vanity.

Also, this melancholy play emphasizes the divergent morality of a father and daughter. A game of ego and kindness that showed the adverse effects of ego while compassion restored a loving relationship that might have prevented the accident. This is a cautionary tale

to King James I and the leaders, who should never be so overcome by conceit and ego that they fail to distinguish between truth and falsehood.

Shakespeare aimed to teach us about love at a period when a man dominated a woman, and the woman submitted to his dominance. Real love does not include one person controlling the other. Shakespeare understood that two people shared love equally and intended to show this in his characters. Shakespeare presents us with two young lovers in "Romeo and Juliet" who sacrifice everything—including their lives—for one another. Shakespeare conceived Paris as the polar opposite of Romeo and his love for Juliet. As Angelo lusted for Isabella in *Measure for Measure*, Paris did not love Juliet but merely lusted after her. With Desdemona and Othello, we have another pair of sincere lovers in *Othello*. Shakespeare demonstrates how lies and jealousy may cause true love to end miserably. Without trust, Othello and Desdemona's relationship tragically disintegrates. Othello acknowledges that he made a mistake by killing his wife before realizing what was happening. True love has gone wrong. So, instead of doing it to be with Desdemona, he kills himself because the pain of knowing he killed his real love in error would be too much for him to endure for the rest of his life.

Shakespeare aimed to convey moral lessons to his audience. Shakespeare depicts the profound remorse and sadness Macbeth experiences as he descends further into wickedness in his play *Macbeth*. The evil that Macbeth's wife pursued and committed alongside her husband drives her into madness. In "*Measure for Measure*," we get the character Angelo, portrayed as a relatively average guy who commits some horrific things. To prevent her brother from being executed, he tries to persuade nun Isabella to have sex with him. After initially receiving a death sentence, Angelo's punishment is ultimately converted to an arranged marriage. In "*Othello*," a seemingly good character—whom Othello believed to be a friend—becomes evil due to someone else's influence. Shakespeare taught us not to believe everything we see and

that appearances can be deceitful. Conversely, if one tends to trust what one hears, one should resist the need to act rashly out of rage or envy because doing so would only result in terrible crimes.

### Chapter 3

#### Conclusion

Shakespeare's plays offer a response to the query, "How is the world now?" His plays are so extensively read because they consistently and repeatedly highlight the importance of human connection. Shakespeare produced a cast of characters that people may relate to on several levels. He did not want to develop characters that no one would find fascinating. Shakespeare's characters are still cherished by the audiences who first fell in love with them. In Shakespeare's plays, a father is an important figure. The fathers' attitudes toward their children, their effect on their lives, their love and authority, their expectations, their reputation in their children's eyes, and other factors are discussed through the father-daughter relationship. Every one of Shakespeare's fathers has a unique relationship with their daughter; they are all dominant, some more than others, they are proud, and they have an impact on their daughters' lives by either accepting or rejecting their decisions, assigning them to delicate and essential tasks, or making decisions on their behalf. In "Hamlet," we get a psychological analysis of how the parental figures instigated the events. It paved Hamlet's oedipal complex's journey and his id, ego, and superego paths. As Polonius is a cunning manipulator and a mercenary is the most abominable father, he gives us a picture of what a mercenary father is like. We see an egocentric father character in "King Lear" once more violating his daughter's affection for him and the family and causing catastrophe out of fear, avarice, and vanity. This depressing play highlights a father and daughter's opposing moral perspectives.

An exercise in kindness and ego demonstrated the adverse effects of ego while reviving a loving connection that would have prevented the accident. In "Othello," Brabantio, an archconservative father, is also shown. He is a beautiful picture of a girl's father, excellently illustrating how a parent's fixation with patriarchal standards and excessive child protection may kill their offspring. Desdemona respects her father according to custom while transferring her obedience to her spouse. However, the miserable Brabantio, horrified by her elopement, took her remarks hard. Her father, however, only noticed her devotion to her husband and failed to notice her affection for him.

Shakespeare's father-daughter relationships, however, portray the father as an overbearing, obsessed figure who is constantly attempting to shield his daughter from males. There is no sense of shared authority between them; instead, their connection is based on love, devotion, and obedience. The daughter must listen to her father, who is the only authoritative figure, at all times. The father disowns his daughter and acts as though they have damaged their reputation if she ever wants to do something on her own which is considered as a betrayal, or if she becomes rebellious and disobeys her father. Seemingly Shakespeare portrays early modern women's social pattern of behaviour and commitment which, of course, included his audience. At the same time, by constantly creating characters who violate expectations, he was able to use these norms in his plays. Shakespeare, however, always makes sure that these offenses are rectified or punished at the end of each play.

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