

**The Balance of Power in the Merchant of  
Venice and A Midsummer Night's Dreams**

**Deniz CAN**

**Yüksek Lisans Tezi  
İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı  
Danışman: Prof. Dr. Hasan BOYNUKARA**

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**T.C.  
NAMIK KEMAL ÜNİVERSİTESİ  
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ  
İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI  
YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ**

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..... ANABİLİM DALI  
YÜKSEK LİSANS/DOKTORA TEZİ

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JÜRİ ÜYELERİ	KANAAT	İMZA

## ABSTRACT

Shakespeare's works have been an interest for all literary researchers as well as feminist literary critics for several reasons. Female characters in his works reflect his opinion about women besides his themes revolving around women characters reflect the perception of women during his era. Aside the fact that Shakespeare being one of the most important writers during his time, the themes that he present are unique for feminist literary critics. Therefore present study aims to investigate the balance of power in "The Merchant of Venice" and "Midsummer Night's Dream" by examining both male and female characters by using feminist literary criticism theory.

**Key words:** balance of power, feminism, Midsummer Night's Dream Shakespeare, The Merchant of Venice,

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**ABSTRACT**

**ÖZET**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**INTRODUCTION**

1. Feminist Literary Criticism Theory
  - 1.1. Historical Background
  - 1.2. Contemporary Approaches
2. Shakespearean Tragedy
3. The Merchant of Venice
  - 3.1. Characters
    - 3.1.1. Female Characters
    - 3.1.2. Male Characters
  - 3.2. Major Motifs and Symbols
  - 3.3. Themes
    - 3.3.1. Power
    - 3.3.2. Struggle
    - 3.3.3. Deception
    - 3.3.4. Love (Romance)
4. Midsummer Night’s Dream
  - 4.1. Characters
    - 4.1.1. Female Characters
    - 4.1.2. Male Characters
  - 4.2. Major Themes and Symbols

### 4.3. Themes

4.3.1. Power

4.3.2. Struggle

4.3.3. Deception

4.3.4. Love (Romance)

**CONCLUSION**

**WORK CITED**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Literary criticism is one of the most important tools to evaluate and comprehend a literary work. Subcategories of literary criticism allow researchers as well as readers to investigate the work further and fully comprehend the work. However criticizing a literary work from multiple aspects using different literary criticism techniques often results in degrading the work itself for these criticism approaches can lead the critic or the reader to places that the writer did not intend to emphasize.

Some of the main approaches are; formalist, biographical, historical, gender, psychological, sociological, mythological, reader-response, deconstructionist, moral/philosophical. Criticizing a literary work only from a certain aspect can devalue the nature of the work or discover the hidden value of the work. Thus, not all literary works can be examined with all these approaches. On the other hand the diversity of a literary work can be dissolved with the application of all these approaches and the true value of this particular work can be reflected.

Although without the literary criticism theories, Shakespearean tragedies found their rightful spot in literary history. Thus, reading Shakespeare's works with certain literary criticism approaches only reflects the enrichment of his works and indicates the need to apply other approaches as well. Though all his works are investigated by all criticism approaches and made valid conclusions, thematic investigations can enlighten other aspects of his works. Therefore present study aims to investigate the balance of power between genders comparing two of his works. In order to achieve a valid point of view present study aims to investigate the subject from a certain point of view, which is the feminist literary criticism approach.

## 1. Theory of Literary Criticism

Feminism is defined as: “the struggle of women against the men-dominated norms and values of the world and sexist politics by creating cooperation between themselves”<sup>1</sup>. The struggle to salvation, freedom and equality; and to be the successor of women’s rights is understood when we talk about feminism. The term defines the suppression of women in society as ‘the use of sexual reproduction by only one men or corporation’<sup>2</sup>, along with this; it aims to question the concepts of the world dominated by men and also to prevent the difficulties that women face in society. According to this, women take part in the feminist movement because of the many tense elements that they encounter in their daily lives such as insults, offensive acts and rapes most of which are resulting from the exploitation of men. So, most of those women mean to fix the situation that they are a part of, not devoting to themselves to create a brand-new society<sup>3</sup>.

The advancement and the rise of feminist movement and its appearance in every field like philosophy, literature, history, psychology, sociology and law, in which there is the sex ‘female’, resulted in many other definitions of the term and the outcome was the birth of feminist theories.

The fact that social and political thinking is in constant movement, also enables the feminism and feminist theories to be in constant movement and change. While enriching the feminist thought, this hinders the movement from being a widely accepted theory. In this concept, the feminist theory keeps away from being holistic one. On the other hand, it cannot be put aside that, as the feminist theory is an interdisciplinary movement, it has given the opportunity and rise to feminist philosophy,

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<sup>1</sup> Andre Michel, *Feminizm*, (Çev. Ş. Tekeli), İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 1995, p.6

<sup>2</sup> Gisela Notz, *Feminizm*, (Çev. S.D. Çetinkaya), İmge Kitabevi, İstanbul, 2012, p.13

<sup>3</sup> Hikmet Saim, *Kadının Gizli Dünyası*, Arion Yayınları, İstanbul, 1997, p.262

feminist geography, feminist psychology, feminist history, feminist anthropology, feminist law and feminist literary criticism<sup>4</sup>.

What feminist theory is and what it aims can be defined in the way that it tries to explain the life of women and the underlying reasons. In a more broad way, the feminist theory head for the gender inequality and focuses on gender politics, sexuality and power relations. Moreover, it prepares the critical grounds for social relations mostly on women's rights. The feminist theory not only extends to the analysis of sexism and the strategies against patriarchal system but also shapes the new models of social interactions. If it is taken into consideration that our acts in life are rooted and stabilized in the theory, we can say that the feminist movement has been the '*guideline*' of women for a very long time. The target of the theorists is taking the '*women's point of view*' as their base point, by putting the issue of women and the position of the women into the center of their researches. With this aspect, they look into the men dominated society with a critical eye and move with the trigger that the scientific methodology has to be recreated without all the male characteristics and '*an autonomous feminist methodology*' must be generated. At this point, they are in scientific, forensic, organizational and operational struggle against all the constraint acts that women face in political, economic and social areas<sup>5</sup>. As it is understood all from these, 'the main objective of feminist theory is to search and improve the life, thinking style and language of women without the male impact; and to provide the acceptance of all these by the men'<sup>6</sup>.

The feminist theory researches on '*woman*', whom it sees as the main object of attention, in three fundamental ways. First of all, as the starting point of the researches is woman, it investigates the condition and the social status of women. Secondly, due to the fact that women are the central object, all the interest of the research process is women and everything in society is evaluated on the basis of their

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<sup>4</sup> Elmas Şahin, "Leyla Erbil'in Eserlerine Feminist Bir Yaklaşım" *Yüksek Lisans Tezi*, Atatürk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı, 2009, p.85-86

<sup>5</sup> Serap Suğur, "Toplumsal Cinsiyet" *Toplumsal Yaşamda Kadın* içinde, (Ed. G.Y. Oğuz), Anadolu Üniversitesi Yayınları, Eskişehir, 2006, p.7-9

<sup>6</sup> Judith Butler, *Cinsiyet Belası: Feminizm ve Kimliğin Altüst Edilmesi*, (Çev. B. Ertür), Metis Yayınları, İstanbul, 2009, p.81

point of view. And lastly, the feminist theorist is the critique and activist at the same time, and tries to find a better place in society for women or to create a new world<sup>7</sup>.

Feminist theory, which roots back to 19th century, by regaining pace in the 1960s and the emergence of different types of feminism, became popular again and earned new dimensions. As the theory expands, it has become more local, rather than becoming international and shaped by the local diversities linked to time, location and the position of women in that society. Hosting the international references and expressions in itself, feminism accelerated by the needs in the U.S.A, England, Netherlands, Iceland or Turkey<sup>8</sup>.

The feminist criticism mostly follows a theoretical way; on the other hand, the feminist theory mostly covers into the way of criticism. In that way, the feminist theory and criticism becomes an inter-disciplinary movement and by opposing the women's universal subordinate position, it takes an anti-position to traditionalize unfairness and inequalities. The feminist theorists are especially fight against domestic violence, sexual abuse and rapes; and they stand for that women must have the right to birth control, pregnancy pretension, motherhood, professional work life, and equal wages with men, marriage and divorce. The fact that women are under pressure in the patriarchal world and that they are in need of defense both in their private lives and public lives; interest all the women of the world because the movement has already expanded all over the globe. As a result of this, the phenomenon of feminism has turned into a theory, and every other theory it has faced criticism<sup>9</sup>.

Both the feminist theory and the criticism use the woman as their raw material and thus the out coming product is *woman* as well. But in this case, by woman, it is meant the *free* woman who has managed to pull through the masculine system. Women, not only in real life, but also in the literary and visual world have been

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<sup>7</sup> Enver Özalp, *Davranış Bilimlerine Giriş*, Anadolu Üniversitesi Yayınları, Eskişehir, 2002, p.36

<sup>8</sup> Caroline Ramazanoğlu, *Feminizm ve Ezilmenin Çelişkileri*, (Çev. M. Bayatlı), Pencere Yayınları, İstanbul, 1998, p.25-27

<sup>9</sup> Şahin, p.85-86

under pressure due to the same patriarchal traditions and especially those women looked into by the feminist criticism<sup>10</sup>.

As a definition, feminist literary criticism which struggles with the general problems that women face “by making a systematic explanation of the relation between gender and literary style, it freely and openly talks about the issues of power and gender discrimination”<sup>11</sup>. According to another approach the feminist criticism is “the most effective trigger of the professional economy. Because it was not necessitated not only by the rereading of the principles but also by being an infinite row material of the female texts, it created an immense critical explosion”.

As to the women’s studies editors, the main duty of feminist approach to literature and literary criticism is: “It is essential that women be awakened that literature has been a male institution until now, that institution never stopped this image pass onto women. And the image has been so creative until now that it is the biggest representative of the emotions of primitive men<sup>12</sup>”. Women were perceived as the live examples that are carrying the mystery of miraculous fruit of productiveness. On account of this, literature, which is accepted as a male instruction, has to be a presented as a socialized establishment. And it must be responsible for offering the hierarchical order of patriarchal society, its gathering in different ways and equalizing individual roles and models to both genders”.

As if women’s being under the domination of the male yoke in real life does not make the matters worse, their being treated the same way in the literary world prepared a strong base for feminist criticism in the literary theory with works such as “the *Second Sex*, *the Feminine Mystique*, *Sexual Politics*, *the Dialects of Sexuality and the Female Eunuch*”. Of the pioneer works, “Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* and Kate Millett’s *Sexual Politics*”, they both insist that literature is as an important patriarchal power as the family. Both Betty Friedan’s *Feminine Mystique*

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<sup>10</sup> Ahu Türkmen, *Sanat/Cinsiyet Sanat Tarihi ve Feminist Eleştiri*, (Çev. E. Soğancılar ve A. Antmen), İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2008, p.7-14

<sup>11</sup> Maggie Humm, *Feminist Edebiyat Eleştirisi*, (Çev. G. Bakay), Say Yayınları, İstanbul, 2002, p.22

<sup>12</sup> Süheyla Kadioğlu, *Batı Ülkelerinde Kadın Hareketleri*, Gri Yayınevi, İstanbul, 2005, p.271-272

and Germaine Greer's *Female Eunuch* links the feminist approach to the cultural criticism. These writers have asked very crucial and inclusionary questions about literary art and culture. De Beauvoir inquires why woman is the "other" in the texts written by men, Millet, on the other hand, researches on what "sexual politics" is and how it is represented in the literary world. Along with those, Friedan and Greer question why the cultural stereotypes are so effective and why women accept them. All four writers have asked different questions and they created a new type of criticism style in some ways. Because, they stated new ideas on how to approach those questions. And all four writers shared a common purpose of the feminist criticism: How to unveil and explain the cultural subordination women in society<sup>13</sup>.

Just like feminism, the "feminist criticism" is not only one type, it is as various as the feminist theories. "Some feminists have taken the Marxist criticism, some psychoanalyses, some the reader oriented criticism and some the writer oriented criticism as an example to themselves. Because of that, it can be debated under which theory the feminist criticism be investigated. Actually, there is no need to place it somewhere<sup>14</sup>". Without any doubt, feminist criticism covers all types of feminism such as liberal, socialist, Marxist, radical, anarchist, lesbian, post-colonialist, poststructuralist and post-feminist; and makes all of them a subject matter for itself. In the social and political context, the feminist movement revived in England and the U.S.A in the 1960s. Following this, it appeared in the literary world with various approaches. Feminist literary criticism helps us come up to texts with a feminist approach and investigating them by adding in different thoughts and spheres and seeing them with a feminist eye. A theoretical feminist approach is crucial in text analysis with reader and writer dimensions<sup>15</sup>.

Feminist criticism directed to research on many fields by benefiting from history, psychology and anthropology in whose roots there the female figure stand. Toril Moi suggests that the feminist criticism appeared as a theoretical and political

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<sup>13</sup> Humm, s.60-61

<sup>14</sup> Berna Moran, *Edebiyat Kuramları ve Eleştiri*, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2007, p.249

<sup>15</sup> Şahin, p.104

discourse against patriarchal and sexist attitudes<sup>16</sup>. And according to Maggie Humm, on the other hand, it is the kind of criticism which looks into some language customs that are not accepted in the male dominated world<sup>17</sup>.

To have the full understanding of feminist criticism, the concepts related to this theory have to be scrutinized. In the patriarchal social regulations, it is suggested that there is the possibility of patriarchal system in deliberately or intentionally may cause a sense of chaos if the important concepts of feminist terminology such as “*feminism*”, “*feminist*”, “*woman*” and “*feminine*” are not totally understood<sup>18</sup>.

Feminist critiques have seen it crucial to explain those concepts in accordance with the contemporary feminist criticism’s political and theoretical facts to avoid the misunderstandings. According to Toril Moi, the concept of “*feminine*” is the biological difference of sex; “*woman*” on the other hand, defines the types of behavior that are stated by the cultural and social norms<sup>19</sup>. According to Berna Moran, “*feminine*” is natural and by birth; “*woman*” on the other side is won as a result of education and decency<sup>20</sup>. Moran states that, the real danger emerges when patriarchal understanding considers the concepts of feminine and woman as equal. She defends that, the description of woman as the description of feminine serves to the male dominated comprehension. Along with this, another threat is the co-using of the terms “*feminine*”, “*woman*”, “*feminist*”, and “*feminine*” instead of each other. On the other hand, another similar confusion is possible between “*female*” and “*feminist*”<sup>21</sup>. Feminist can be defined as, the person who has adopted feminism as a political stand and ideology, who sees the world from this point of view and evaluates the circumstances with that aspect. According to Moi, it is a fact that only being a woman does not mean to have a feminist approach and also, the fact that a literary work is read or written by a woman does not always mean that she has a

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<sup>16</sup> Toril Moi, “Feminist, Female, Feminine” in *The Feminist Reader: Essays in Gender and the Politics of Literary Criticism*, (Ed. C. Belsey and J. Moore), Basil Blackwell, New York, 1989, p.117

<sup>17</sup> Humm, p.65

<sup>18</sup> Rosemary Putnam Tong, *Feminist Düşünce*, (Çev. Z. Cirhinlioğlu), Gündoğan Yayınları, İstanbul, 2006, p.355

<sup>19</sup> Moi, p.117

<sup>20</sup> Moran, p.232

<sup>21</sup> Moi, p.120

feminist stand against the patriarchal system. Besides, she states that, in a society where the experience of woman is more, it does not mean that the analyses with the feminist approach are denser in this context. Moi underlines that, the men who grow in a male dominated world will see the world with a different aspect other than women and thus they will state their thoughts with that aspect. So, those two perspectives are not very possible to match up<sup>22</sup>.

Feminist criticism, addresses to a vast area with various works on different races, classes and cultures; and with different experiences of women from several places on earth. Inside the feminist criticism, many different feminist approaches have emerged because of different understandings, different problems, various thinking systems and socio-political differences.

### **1.1. Historical background**

It is said that the feminist literary criticism started with a text about “Inanna” –a goddess said to attack to *sexual discourse* and hanged- dating back to 2000 BC. But it was not seen as a representative of intellectual attempts in the academic field until the second wave of feminist movement<sup>23</sup>.

Feminist criticism emerged as a reaction against the attitude and action towards women in the male dominated world. Elaine Showalter asserts that the literary improvement of women emerged in three states: the “*feminine state*” in which the women writers imitated the dominant literary male customs (1840-1880), the “*feminist state*” in which women protested for rather trivial rights and started to defend themselves (1880-1920), in the “female” state<sup>24</sup>.

We see that the feminist criticism has shown itself with gradual women’s movements that are against the patriarchal system which has despised women throughout the course of history and put women under pressure. Of the motions in

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<sup>22</sup> Moi, p.120-122

<sup>23</sup> Humm, p.18

<sup>24</sup> Guerin et al., “Feminism and Gender Studies” *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005, p.224-225

the 1920s, the attempts pioneered by Virginia Woolf took a lot of attention. But the real effective one was the 1960s women's movements where all the women from all the bases of society gathered and joined together. The suppression against women is reflected in works such as novels, poetry and dramas as an unpreventable result. In those years, in the U.S.A, France and England feminist movement rose as a conclusion of social and political fight and moved towards to literature. And this resulted in the birth of feminist literary criticism.

According to some critiques, the idea of women writer and women experience started in the 1850s England. In the base of feminist literary criticism, there lies the women's movement which tries to explain the meanings of male and female social roles in the 18th century with the aspect of women's point of view. The purpose of starting point of feminist criticism is to state the ideological male determination of sex roles further than the biological needs. That is to say, the feminist criticism is a wide critical movement which includes the acceptance, criticizing and changing need of a sociological phenomenon<sup>25</sup>.

For this reason, Mary Wollstonecraft's "*A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*" published in 1792 as the first important piece of work on women's movement. This work constituted the main text of women's movement for more than a hundred years. In her work, Wollstonecraft asked equal rights for women by inspiring from human's rights cases which were brought into surface by the 18th century<sup>26</sup>. In the text, the writer underlined that women had to have the equal standards with men in the legal, educational and political fields. Along with this, it was defended that as the women are also "*human*", they also have logic and mind. However, she accepted that male and female were different in physical condition but in the intellectual field, both sexes have the same capacity. Another topic she mentioned in her work was that the middle class women were more in need of equal education with men as they were the women who were in the most natural position

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<sup>25</sup> Sibel Irzık ve Jale Parla, *Kadınlar Dile Düşünce: Edebiyat ve Toplumsal Cinsiyet*, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2004, p.21

<sup>26</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft, *Kadın Haklarının Gerekçelenirilmesi*, (Çev. D. Hakyemez), Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları, İstanbul, 2007, p.88

compared to other women. To sum up, the emphasizing point was that women had to become masculine, not in a way that they capture the bad habits of the men but in the way they have the same education as men<sup>27</sup>.

The 18th century ideology, while being equitable, was a male oriented ideology and was first challenged by Margaret Fuller in “*Woman in Nineteenth Century*” in 1845 in which she talks about an independent women’s culture and that the roles attributed to women by the society may have to be embraced instead of denial because those qualifications may not be weaknesses but they may be the powerful points. According to Fuller, who thinks it as another mistake that male and female roles are seen as an opposition to each other, women have to ore the gem in themselves. Only by this, the humanity can find the lost harmony, the polarized qualities can come together to shape the whole human and the individual can get rid of the social roles that are suited by the community. By this way, Margaret Fuller and the women’s movement took a step further and it added its case the idea of influencing, even transforming the male dominated world along with its fight for equal rights. In this respect, Fuller’s book can be taken as a main text which suggests a separate women culture in the 20th century. Actually, Fuller, who was a feminist between individualist and socialist points, is appreciated as one of the most important theorist and activist of the first wave of feminism<sup>28</sup>.

Virginia Woolf’s “*A Room of One’s Own*”, published in 1929, and is the first modern work of feminist criticism both in style and content. This book contains evaluations on cultural, economic and educational drawbacks of patriarchal society which disable women from improving their creative opportunities. With its liberating and smooth autobiographical openness, this book takes the social, literary and cultural difference of women in a serious manner<sup>29</sup>.

When Woolf decided to write on woman and fiction writing, she could not reached to a decision very easily. Because, she decided that it would not be as she

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<sup>27</sup> Wollstonecraft, p.9-15

<sup>28</sup> Necla Arat, *Feminizmin ABC’si*, Say Yayınları, İstanbul, 2010, p.65-66

<sup>29</sup> Humm, p.18

wanted with the samples she had in hand and she decided to tell the reader a much more important evaluation of her own: “The only thing I could do might be to offer my opinion on an issue of minor importance, tell you that the woman who wants to write must have money and a room of her own; this, as you see, leaves the issue of women and fictional writing’s real structural problem unresolved<sup>30</sup>”. By this quotation, Woolf placed it work on a very important place in the feminist literary criticism not only by explaining how she reached to her views about money and room but also by putting forward her beliefs on women and fiction. Because for the first time in history, a women writer was questioning the inequality between male and female and was making this by writing.

Another important theorist who made important contributions to feminist theory was Simon de Beauvoir who was in the existentialist feminist movement. De Beauvoir was the first feminist thinker to discuss the place of women in private space since Plato. Although published in 1949, Simone de Beauvoir’s “*The Second Sex*” was still very effective 1960s<sup>31</sup>. The existential philosophy had seen the self a divided one as one part is observer, creator and transformative; the other conventional and adaptable. By setting off from the principles that the human conscious when blended with crowds is under constant conflicts and contradictions, De Beauvoir suggested that women are pushed towards the minor position and later this position is considered as an in evitable outcome of her natural or structural qualities. De Beauvoir, by opening the women’s position in private field into question, caused the emergence of new types of feminism<sup>32</sup>.

Simone de Beauvoir’s contribution to feminist theory was that she used existential vision to explain woman’s cultural and political status. For, De Beauvoir proved that dialectics is as dominant for the individual as culture, in the patriarchal culture male or masculine is established as affirmative or normative whereas female or feminine is taken as non-essential, non-normative and negative; in short it is established as the other. Man is not defined according to man but woman is defined

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<sup>30</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Kendine Ait Bir Oda*, (Çev. S. Öncü), İletişim Yayınları, 2004, p.6

<sup>31</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *Kadın, İkinci Cins: Genç Kızlık Çağı, Evlilik Çağı, Bağımsızlığa Doğru*, (Çev. B. Onaran), Payel Yayınları, İstanbul, 1993

<sup>32</sup> Barbara Arneil, *Politics and Feminism*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1999, p.164

according to man; woman against essential man is not essential but incidental. He is in the subject and absolute position and woman is simply the other<sup>33</sup>.

Both Woolf and Beauvoir reflects the debates of their ages clearly and what the most spotted and common view in both writers work is that the positioning of genders in the public field is definitely linked to the raising up of boys/girls and the founding of man/woman in daily life. The writers suggest that the inequality in public space must be investigated in the private space which arrived untouched until that time and considered as confidential. This book has been a bridge between liberal-cultural feminism as Mary Wollstonescraft, Margaret Fuller and Virginia Woolf; and the more radical feminism after 1970s as Helene Cixous, Mary Daly who totally refused the women seen as the other<sup>34</sup>.

Feminist historians, while working on the presentation of women in classical dramas and historical texts, noticed that the separation between private and public life has a fundamental importance. In those sources, while the private life is partly in invisible state, public space is specially favored and in sight. The new feminist analysis proves that this separation is socially gender-based<sup>35</sup>. So, the public space is the existence place of man and women are places in this invisible private house. Culture finds its way to represent social gender as a result of repression “*real*” woman. The woman that we face in stage, mythology, plastic arts etc. is the “*fictional*” woman who suppresses the “*real*” woman’s experiences, stories, emotions and fantasies and is linked to patriarchal social gender values. The new feminist approach, opposing such cultural setups, separates the historical woman from the fictional woman who is a product of male fiction claiming that there is of little connection between those two<sup>36</sup>.

In the beginning of 1960s, feminist literary criticism, which was the parallel outcome of women’s salvation movement, was deeply affected by Betty Freidan’s

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<sup>33</sup> Rosemary Tong, *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction*, Westview Press, USA, 2009, p.244

<sup>34</sup> Irzik ve Parla, p.24

<sup>36</sup> Hülya Durudoğan, “Unes Femmes: Kristeva, Psikanaliz ve Kadın” *Cinsiyetli Olmak: Sosyal Bilimlere Feminist Bakışlar*, (Der. Z. Direk), İstanbul, Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2009, p. 65

book: *“The Feminine Mystique”*. In this book Freidan claims that a women’s mystique was created in the 1950s, suggesting women to leave their jobs to men who were returning from war and being a housewife and motherhood were promoted by the mass media. What is called the women’s mystique transfigures the woman figure just like character with similar qualities as in Virginia Woolf’s *“Angel in the House”*. *“The Feminine Mystique”* published in 1963, was very effective in the rise of women’s movement. It gave hope to women who had no idea what to do other than housework and because of which they felt in a great sensual emptiness<sup>37</sup>.

Along with Freidan’s this contribution, the feminist criticism turned towards Kate Millet’s *“Sexual Politics”* which emphasized the building of gender and differences between social sex/biological sex. Published in 1969, Millet tried to take attention in the matter that the relation between genders is in fact a conflict of power, thus she placed the word *politics* to the headline of her book. In this masterpiece, by investigating the woman images, sexual ideologies and sexual fantasies of women in the works of the writers such as Lawrence, Miller, Mailer and Genet and she explained how women’s identity is distorted by the desires of men and how woman is turned into an entity which is bound to men<sup>38</sup>.

In those works, Millet, who defined the male-dominated ideology with a woman’s point of view, concluded that relations between male/female are a power fight, namely politics. According to Millet, male dominated ideology is (west) the widest cultural ideology and the essential power concept; the gender distinction caused by this ideology is far more powerful, widespread and constant than other social or class distinctions. What is more, men are holding power in all social levels thanks to their ideology and gender politics. According to the writer, the literary world is of the pioneer domains which supported the widening of the dominant ideology. Millet says that, *“sexuality is a classification with political qualities”* and this politics is way that one gender uses to suppress the other one. As the army, university and financial institutions are in the control of men, women are under

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<sup>37</sup> Daniel Horowitz, “Rethinking Betty Friedan and The Feminine Mystique: Labor Union Radicalism and Feminism in Cold War America” *American Quarterly* 48 (1):1-42, 1996  
<http://projects.ecfs.org/fieldston57/us45/Readings/US45HorowitzFriedan.pdf> (11.03.2015)

<sup>38</sup> Kate Millet, *Cinsel Politika*, (Çev. S. Selvi), Payel Yayınları, İstanbul, 1998

pressure in the patriarchal society. At this point, she offers a critical view to gender based social and individual power relations and claims novels that novels are the tools which are used to perform gender politics and literature is the extension of such patriarchal mind.

From the mid-1970s, there started a new attention to works by women themselves from the female representatives of male writers' works<sup>39</sup>. The invisibility of the women writers and their ignored texts were handled. A lot of women writers were rediscovered. The attempts to build an alternative tradition for female literature turned the feminist critiques towards women's literature and experience.

The first feminist literary criticism anthology, "*Images of Women in Fiction*" is one of the first sample works of studies on female writers. While Annis Pratt, Elaine Showalter, Sandra Gilbert, Susan Gubar and Alice Walker were rediscovering many ignored female writers, in 1977, Ellen Moers's "*Literary Women*" shaped the female literary custom. This work of Moers is one of the first texts which gave the female writers a history and celebrated female writers' power as to create an identity: There is no need to tell women what they cannot do in literature because history shows that they can do anything<sup>40</sup>.

Josephine Donovan, in her work "*Feminist Literary Criticism*" suggested that the masculine values have to change with the new forms of feminist criticism. The book was a good example of the variety of rediscovering of pioneer woman writers in bibliographies and language studies. Although it was limited to time in focusing of gender roles, it includes a real dialogue between Carolyn Heilbrun and Catherine Stimpson: "*femmes de lettres*", this form changed the feminist criticism from its roots as in Audre Lorde's "*An Open Letter to Mary Daly*"<sup>41</sup>.

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<sup>39</sup> Humm, p.30

<sup>40</sup> Maggie Humm, "Into The Millennium: Feminist Literary Criticism" *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses*, 2004, p.47-48

<sup>41</sup> Maggie Humm, *Feminist Edebiyat Eleştirisi*, (Çev. G. Bakay), Say Yayınları, İstanbul, 2002, p.30-31

## 1.2. Contemporary Approaches

In the 1980s, post-modern feminists emerged in the feminist theory. The post-modern feminist theory starts its journey by accepting the fact that it does not necessarily has to sentence the macro analysis beforehand. The necessary thing was to, without being a hostage of historically or non-historically established institutions, give importance to freedom of different cultures and periods and the freedom of people of these different cultures and groups. In that way, it will be constantly renewed by conceptual time format and restored by liberties. This means that, it is wrong to think that by taking the historically established institutions, cultures and norms as an absolute reference, and making judgments and trying to all societies and periods by leaning to those references. The unified explanation of the improvement of humanity and the attempts to determine the subject of history will only stay as a historical memory<sup>42</sup>.

Post-modern feminists, who set up from the criticism against the illuminated mind and modern society, in accordance with the radical feminists, stated that the mind of liberal rationalism represents the male mind and they resisted the west-centered choices and understanding of politics of modern society. They claimed that in the 20th century, the dilemma of the feminist theory cannot be solved between social gender conscious and identity. In another words, they suggest that the solution to the tension between political unity and the representation of alternative ideas could be reached by human's choosing and its possibilities. And this can be understood historically and culturally<sup>43</sup>.

The feminist criticism, which made a categorical rise with the second wave of women's movement, has progressed a lot up to 90s. The most important contribution of this period to the field of theatre is that, it brought the social gender analysis to every area of art and especially to artistic disciplines. When it comes to the 80s, the feminist movement lost its pace, became marginalized and so it turned to the academic field and started to produce there. In the 90s, social gender debates were

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<sup>42</sup> Nancy Fraser ve Linda Nicholson, *Felsefesiz Toplumsal Eleştiri*, (Çev. M. Küçük), Vadi Yayınları, Ankara, 1993, p.276-277

<sup>43</sup> Zekiye Demir, *Modern ve Postmodern Feminizm*, İz Yayıncılık, İstanbul, 1997, p.98

taken into consideration with language and identity concepts. With the effect of “new” concepts such as multiculturalism, post structuralism and deconstructivism, there emerged new aspects in the feminist theatre stage both in playwriting and dramaturgy.

According to structuralism, meaning is an element which is constant in language and is able to protect its own quality in time. This point of view is totally challenged in the poststructuralist theory and meaning becomes plural, variable and open to comment. According to Scott, there are four main concept of poststructuralist literary theory that contributes to feminist thought. These are language, discourse difference and deconstruction. To the poststructuralists, language is the place in which meaning is established, cultural dynamics are organized and people acquire and represent their world. According to this belief, ideas are not mere representations but both the reason and the outcome of concrete relations<sup>44</sup>.

Post-structuralism, or post-constructivism presents a way to understand the formation of gender and literary processes which is simply to *construct*. If gender formation could be deconstructed by the critiques, then the gender identities might be able to get rid of misogyny in writing or any other social statements of expression. According to Mary Joe Frug, the post-modern feminists claim that language has an important mission in the expansion of power and reproduction mechanisms. Feminist approach uses language analysis in three ways<sup>45</sup>:

- Focusing on how male and female qualities are represented in texts.
- Examining how the cultural typologies and discourses on man and woman are approached in binary forms
- Revealing how social gender relations, which are ingrained in society consciously or unconsciously, are used by the way of rhetoric.

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<sup>44</sup> Joan W. Scott, “Deconstructing Equality-Versus-Difference: Or, The Uses of Poststructuralist Theory for Feminism” *Feminist Studies*, 14 (1): 33-50, 1988, p.34

<sup>45</sup> Mary Joe Frug, “A Postmodern Feminist Legal Manifesto (An Unfinished Draft)” *Harvard Law Review*, 105 (5):1045-1075, 1992, p.1046-1047

The third wave feminism covers all the new stream feminism types. This term, is a usage for all feminist approaches which emerged after second wave feminism, regardless of their differences. In our day, there are now different views on new feminism streams. According to some feminism is not needed any longer, because the new generation women are powerful, have gained their rights and feminism is not a political and efficient movement as in the past.

The ones, who defend that feminism is dead, are the ones who criticized the second wave feminist theorists. The relation between second wave and third wave feminism is likened to a relation between mother and daughter. As Astrid Henry emphasizes in her book “*Not My Mother’s Daughter*”, the second wave is acting just like a dominant mother telling the third wavers what to do all the time. To her, the relation between the generations can be read in two ways: The first model is the positivist one defending that every generation moves further than the previous generation. According to this, the new feminism does not want to identify with the second wave<sup>46</sup>. As Schulamith Firestone stated in one of her essays, feminism includes negative images: the word feminist makes one imagine a dull-faced old maid, obsessed with the right to vote. This is how the third wave sees the second wave: dominant, finite and with constant meaning<sup>47</sup>.

In spite of all these things, some theorists claim that feminism has not died yet. According to them, the third wave is a definition open to comment and hosts to both models. Its being defined as a wave, implies that it is a part of and a follow up of something else<sup>48</sup>. The troubles of women; injustice, inequality and patriarchal system, are still continuing in our day. The most ideal way for the third way to advance on the way the second way established. The word feminism may not be used

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<sup>46</sup> Anthea Taylor, “Not My Mother’s Sister: Generational Conflict and Third Wave Feminism” 2004, [http://artsonline.monash.edu.au/colloquy/download/colloquy\\_issue\\_11\\_may\\_2006/taylor.pdf](http://artsonline.monash.edu.au/colloquy/download/colloquy_issue_11_may_2006/taylor.pdf) (11.03.2015)

<sup>47</sup> Gisela Notz, *Feminizm*, (Çev. S.D. Çetinkaya), İmge Kitabevi, İstanbul, 2012, p.53

<sup>48</sup> Astrid Henry, *Not My Mother’s Daughter: Generational Conflict and Third Wave Feminism*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2004, p.24

openly, but feminism is still valid to the lives of young women in very different categories<sup>49</sup>.

In “*Fire with Fire*” Naomi Wolf suggests that women as individuals voting and taxing, have use their power in politics to realize equality. Wolf claims that with power feminism, women will become aware of their own sexuality and will have no problems with men<sup>50</sup>. In “*The Morning After*”, Katie Roiphe states that the anti-rape actions were exaggerated by the second wavers and this reinforced the roles of women as victims. Camille Paglia also defends that the new generation feminism should deny being a victim and enjoy the liberties<sup>51</sup>. But power criticizes feminism in two ways. The first criticism is that the second wave feminism is not over yet. Because the second wave feminism motto that women are good and men are bad is still at issue. The second criticism on the other hand is that, the power feminism is not interested in racial or class differences.

Manifesta, written up by Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, defines the orders and ideology of new feminism. At the end of the book, there is the 13-item manifesto of third wave feminist movement. Manifesta clearly states that the new generation is also feminist and talks about the issues that previous generation attracted to. This new type of feminism takes attention to women’s having right to their own bodies, gender equality, feminist activism, equal health assurance, equality at work and better working conditions. They say that it is essential that every woman read old feminist theorists, learn the history of woman and defend sisterhood. Along with these they state that they will fight off on the new subjects as lesbians’ right to have children and their right to have power in all stages of life; women’s benefiting from military services and finding ways to save especially young women from abuse, violence and silence. The manifestos’ claiming that feminist ideology must be applied in every area of life, aims to educate young women as feminists, talking about problems, reacting and struggling individuals to live feminism in an active

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<sup>49</sup> Bell Hooks, *Feminizm Herkes İçindir*, (Çev. E. Aydın), Çitlembik Yayınları, İstanbul, 2002, p.85

<sup>50</sup> Rebecca C. Hains, “Power Feminism, Mediated: Girl Power and the Commercial Politics of Change” *Women’s Studies in Communication*, 32 (1):89-113, 2009, p.89-90

<sup>51</sup> Camille Paglia, “Feminism Past and Present: Ideology, Action and Reform” *Arion*, 16 (1):1-17, 2010, p.15-16

way. They give addresses of third wave associations', publishers' and health associations' phone numbers and addresses in order to achieve this<sup>52</sup>.

Amongst the new feminism streams, it is this last stream namely, the third wave, which separates from the others and the second wave in the way of its diversity of female experience. The third wave feminism is said to be influenced by power feminism, second wave feminism, poststructuralist theories, working class and ethnic feminism. It is interested in the problems of women with different ethnicity, class and sexual choice. Because they believe that violence against women is constant and varied<sup>53</sup>. Although the second wave is appreciated, they say that it did not give much importance to individual self and lives that are not considered "normal" by the society. The third wave, multi-cultural, multi-racial and multi-sexual, includes all kinds of opposite and hybrid identities; and is a movement which is established in the crossing points of post-modern structuralism and post-colonial theories. Ann Brooks says that the most significant quality that differentiates third wave from the second wave is its construction on differences not equalities<sup>54</sup>.

Thus, 90s were the period, when new feminist streams emerged with diverse groups founding their own kind of feminism. In this decade, the variety of female identity started to cover not only the racially excluded ones but also the alienated ones due to their class and sexuality.

Feminism brought up separation of public space and private space, which was clearly differentiated by advancing of modernism and capitalism. They put into discussion that, with the language of private space and women being stuck in it, the public space was left to men<sup>55</sup>. Woman's movement, which is an attempt to change the cultural, political and social construction radically, with the motto that "*private*

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<sup>52</sup> Caroline Ramazanoğlu, *Feminizm ve Ezilmenin Çelişkileri*, (Çev. M. Bayatlı), Pencere Yayınları, İstanbul, 1998, p.37-38

<sup>53</sup> Michell Sidler, "Living in McJobdom: Third Wave Feminism and Class Inequity" (Ed. L. Heywood and J. Drake), *Third Wave Agenda: Being Feminist, Doing Feminism*, 2003, p.25-38

<sup>54</sup> Ann Brooks, *Postfeminisms: Feminism, Cultural Theory and Cultural Forms*, Routledge, New York, 1994, p.4

<sup>55</sup> Güzin Yamaner, "Susan Glaspell'in Önemsiz Şeyler'inin Önemi" *Tiyatro Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 19:1-20, 2005, p.3

*one is political*”, evaluated the female information produced at home with a different aspect and by this way enabled the adding of a totally different matter to the literary world.

The 20th century, with its radical acceleration and advancement on language theories, put forward the criticism of feminist language streams and took attention to relation between language and female accretion. Especially with theorists such Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva and Helene Cixous, who were following Bakhtin, Barthes and Derrida and Freud-Lacan line, the female agenda participated in the debates. A lot of feminist linguistic theorists keenly supported the emphasis on a new fiction language and literature. Irigaray, Kristeva and Cixous put in a very diverse point of view and conceptual frame to feminist literary criticism<sup>56</sup>.

The most essential ascertainment of feminism is that the woman has to live in a language made by men. According to Irzık and Parla, this means the silence of women be defined and secured by a language that constantly talks about and on women.

As Irzık and Parla emphasized in “*When Women Talked About (Kadınlar Dile Düşünce)*”, the important thing is not women being talked about in a good or bad way; not creating positive or negative images about them; or talking about some prejudices or placing them, it is not simply these alone. Further than those, it is the concept of woman which is abstracted from other women one by one, to which positive or negative qualities are attributed. That concept of woman becomes the cultural means of talking about other things, specially power relations and identities and loaded with a kind of super indicative function<sup>57</sup>.

The possibility of subjectivity offered by language necessitates one to separate oneself from the tools of language and gaining the quality of talking about objects by means of signs. But the language of patriarchal society made women the

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<sup>56</sup> Josephine Donovan, *Feminist Teori*, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2007, p.15-16

<sup>57</sup> Irzık ve Parla, p.8

instrument of establishing male subjectivity by objectifying female and hindered the process of being the subject of language for women<sup>58</sup>.

The feminist literary criticism has changed the way to teach, write literature and our way of thinking of literary world. Generally, while the feminist criticism aims to social ideologies and practices, the feminist literary criticism takes its attention to those ideologies' and practices' shaping of literary texts. But still, both of them focus on gender as a fundamental solution category<sup>59</sup>. Irzık and Parla on the other hand, evaluate feminist literary criticism as a new analytical category and persist on the analytical criterion which is brought by feminist criticism. Of course, this approach depends on some fundamental assumptions. Many theorists, writing on the thing they name feminist criticism, share these assumptions and move from the discourse that the representation of woman in literature is constructed by male dominated point of view and patriarchal structure causes a false female perception.

Maggie Humm summed these assumptions in three categories. According to first one, gender is set up in terms of language and becomes visible in writing style. Due to this, the feminist criticism, by analyzing the relation between language and gender, sorts out the effect of power on sexual hierarchies, style and form. The second assumption claims that the writing strategies are built gender relating and that women write in the boundaries of male writing customs as they are permitted to. And the last assumption says that, while the dominant criticism evaluating the works of women, it is triggered by the male oriented forms and uses male norms. These norms, exalt the concepts such, mind, intellect and culture as male values and categorize the values such as instinct, body and nature as female and suppress them<sup>60</sup>.

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<sup>58</sup> Irzık ve Parla, p.9

<sup>59</sup> Humm, *Feminist Edebiyat Eleştirisi*, p.11

<sup>60</sup> Humm, *Feminist Edebiyat Eleştirisi*, p.21-23

Like Maggie Humm, Annette Kolodny states three factors in her essay: “*Dancing through the Minefield*”<sup>61</sup>:

- a) Literary history is arbitrary, even fiction.
- b) Text reading techniques are ways to condition us to sustain that fiction;
- c) For this, both the critical evaluations and basic reading lists based on those evaluations are arbitrary.

Feminist criticism, moving with these ascertainments and fundamental assumptions, denies being a sub-category of traditional dominant literary criticism. They settle the matter of representations of women in male writing; also they chase a writing and language style for women by following the women’s traditions.

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<sup>61</sup> Annette Kolodny, *Dancing Through the Minefield: Some Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*. *Observations on the Theory, Practice and Politics of Literary Criticism*. (Ed. R. R. Warhal and Diana P. Herndl), Rutgers University Press, 1997, p.176-182

## 2. General qualities of Shakespearean Tragedies

Since the very existence of human kind, people have always tried to make sense of their surrounding and attempted to understand the effects of the concepts on humanity such as the good, the beautiful, the supreme, the ugly, the wrong and the right. From the first they of his/her presence the tragic and comic one have a crucial place in his/her life cycle. For, the happy moments makes her/him smile while the tragic moments such as extreme natural conditions and starvation makes her/him turned into a mournful state of mood<sup>62</sup>.

The societies founded by the coming up of humans in groups, have deeply been involved in tragic and comic elements effected by the changing political and economical conditions and thinking systems. For this reason, concepts of comic and tragic, which have been intimated with humankind from the very first beginning, have become two of the most up to date terms in the following ages. A significant point was that, up until the emergence of drama/melodrama, the concepts of comic and tragic were assessed as two poles apart. Although they were blended with drama/melodrama, tragedy; with the influence of tragic one and comedy; with the influence of comic one, have continued to secure their places in the literary world since Ancient Greece<sup>63</sup>.

In modern drama, tragedy has been a less common type. Drama, which is the most diverse one among all other kinds, stands out with its richness of conflicts. The term drama can be applied to every situation, which is filled with sensual entity to create an inner challenge in human. This challenge can be or not be solved but it is crucial that it stands there. When the term is applied to theatre, it covers up every kind of written work to make to be represented there<sup>64</sup>. At this point, drama means the play written to be performed on stage in verse or prose. The text, which is of the most important elements of theatre, is significant in the way that it is long-lasting.

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<sup>62</sup> Terry Eagleton, *Tatlı Şiddet Trajik Kavramı*, (Çev. K. Tunca), Ayrıntı Yayınları, İstanbul, 2012, p.115

<sup>63</sup> Özdemir Nutku, *Dram Sanatı Tiyatroya Giriş*, Kabalcı Yayınevi, İstanbul, 2001, p. 41

<sup>64</sup> G. Wickham ve G. Brereton, *Dram Sanatı*, (Çev. M. Ergin ve G. Yener), Elif Yayınları, İstanbul, 1964, p.23

The representation of play in front of others by being interpreted by one person or a group: physical representation also means drama. In another words, drama is the show of and presentation of person in motion. When its general meaning is considered as physical representation on stage, drama expands from tragedy to melodrama, from high comedy to mockery. To Nietzsche drama starts with the experiment of visible eye capability. Tragedy is mere chorus at the beginning, not drama<sup>65</sup>.

Tragedy, as a part of drama, plays an important role in the expansion of theatre by being of the oldest play types. It shows difference in the birth ground. Tragedy rises from the rejection of all kinds of instabilities, takes its source from cruelty and opposes to living conditions. Summing up, when we investigate the birth ground of tragedy, we see that it was born in the 5th and 6th centuries as a religious ritual. It took its contents from epic subjects and myths and with its becoming widespread; it started to be staged in open theatres and continued in a definite form. Tragedy, which resulted from personification of Dionysus' birth and death rituals, in which dithyramb's songs were exhibited<sup>66</sup>. In tragedies there are conflicts between the protagonist and heroes and between the conscious, personal endeavor and powerful life codes. The topic serves to the improvement and solution of this conflict. Thus, the protagonist of the play is not only in fight with other figures but before everything he/she fights a war inside of him/herself. The origin of tragedy is the conflict itself.

Pospelov thinks that tragedy varies due to its problematic side in its kind. According to him, Aeschylus' and Sophocles' tragedies are didactical. Their tragedy figures are the pioneers of political and ethical norms and they reflect the opposition of codes between the new and the old. Some other tragedies handled national-historical conflicts as a problematical side. (Like Shakespeare's Macbeth)<sup>67</sup>. Tragedy says that human intentions can be developed by unexplainable and destructive

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<sup>65</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Müziğin Ruhundan Tragedyanın Doğuşu*, (Çev. İ.Z. Eyüboğlu), Say Yayınları, İstanbul, 2011, p.56

<sup>66</sup> Nutku, p.33

<sup>67</sup> Gennadiy Pospelov, "Edebiyat Türleri" *Edebiyat Bilimi*, (Çev. Y. Onay), Evrensel Basım Yayın, İstanbul, 2005, p.525-526

powers. There is no a happy ending beyond the tragic one in another time or place. The wounds cannot be cured, the demolished cannot be fixed. There is no compensation in tragedy<sup>68</sup>.

The will to realize him/herself (anagnorisis) against the total inexplicitly of the beginning and ending constitutes the main subject of tragedy. The tragic one feeds on the ambiguity. Especially in the Antique Greek tragedies, the troubles that one faces while passing to the state of illumination from the state of ignorance are reflected. The tragic hero comes to grief as soon as she/he reaches knowledge. Anagnorisis is simply the realization of finite of the life that the hero created for her/himself; not the realization of what has he/she faced. Like Oedipus and King Lear, tragedies display the person's process of recognition of him/herself. But this is gained only with the ransom of destruction. The tragic characters are educated by disasters and only by death they fulfill their responsibilities.<sup>69</sup>

In tragedy, the action part of theatre and the didactic part of philosophy are joined. In the actions, there is the aim to achieve moral one as a result of ethical questioning and thus tragedies carry the mission to combine ethics and action. Applying the ethic one is only possible with creating the tragic one. However superior the protagonist is, who is the holder of tragic, he/she will be carried to tragic end by the very first trivial mistake. That mistake is only the visible cause of the destruction, yet the real reason is his/her not realizing the boundaries and the fatal powers of the counter-parties. The protagonist will face such respect when she/he goes under destruction in the level he/she disregards his/her own life to protect the values of society. By the creation of pity and fear on the audiences, such powerful catharsis emerges. Tragedy has always been the universal one, while it is fulfilling the way to earthly one from the ritualistic one. The values struggled for in tragedy are universal.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> George Steiner, *Tragedyanın Ölüümü*, (Çev. B.İ. Dinçel), İş Bankası Yayınları, İstanbul, 2011, p.95

<sup>69</sup> Wickham ve Brereton, p.24

<sup>70</sup> George Steiner, *Tragedyanın Ölüümü*, (Çev. B.İ. Dinçel), İş Bankası Yayınları, İstanbul, 2011, p. 122-123

In the Renaissance period of England, the Elizabethan tragedies are important. The rise English theatre during the Tudor period and the brilliant glory in the Elizabethan period made the concept of tragedy regain its values. Without any doubt, Shakespeare, who is by far the most important tragedy writer of that age and all the ages until now; with his plays' solid structures, poetic language, sensible setting and placing fantastic elements gave tragedy a superior place.<sup>71</sup>

Shakespeare, who appeared on the scene of history before a passage period to capitalism, can said to have been a forerunner of a new age but he was still a medieval man on his world view. As in the Aiskhylos' Athens, human behavior was under the control of a kind of supreme power in Shakespeare's London. These powers appear on some scenes tangibly. Human kind attempted to explain natural events by some symbols.

With the emergence of Renaissance period, there was an innovation in every field and thus in tragedy. Especially in England, drama was born with Shakespeare with an understanding which took the human in center and opposed to strict rules. The drama of Shakespeare that influenced all kinds of literature types all over the world, is named the new tragedy with the elements such being written with superior language and choosing of the historical and noble characters. With Shakespeare the classical tragedy approach disappeared and an environment of freedom started to rule. Shakespeare not only made the Elizabethan period of drama live its golden age, but also he made it the most significant period of the world history of theatre. The elements which helped him to achieve this can be observed in all his plays. He worked from the base of his period's social-cultural heritage towards the Renaissance humanist thinking and as a result of these he gained a multi-directional way of expression<sup>72</sup>.

“.....Shakespeare achieved a multi-directional and a diverse expression by bringing up tragedy and comedy together and combined them with the traditional medieval folk theatre and as dramatic language he used both use verse and prose.

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<sup>71</sup> Stanley Wells, *Shakespeare Yazar ve Eserleri*, (Çev. C. Sevgen), Yapı Kredi Yayınları, İstanbul, 1995, p.85

<sup>72</sup> Turan Vahit, *İngiliz Edebiyatına Toplu Bir Bakış*, Doğan Kardeş Yayınları, İstanbul, 1952, p.32-33

The theoretical one and the dramatic one are in a complete balance in his plays. Theatre, as a social institution, became integrated with the court, which was the center of national living style, with the help of historical plays that rose social conscious. Thus, the combination of vividness and reality of public traditions with the Renaissance's universal values created a new style of national theatre and this is all visible in Shakespeare's plays. The building of multi-dimensional play structure which enabled the expression of the richness of experience brought by that new style has been the main element of Shakespeare's plays that firmed the unity. The representation of social values with the anti-heroes instead of chorus balanced the individual-public values. And people's multi-directional individual structure made the way to multi-layered structure of the tragedy and comedy"<sup>73</sup>

What had been done for the harmony of society in ancient theatres was then done to defend individual rights in Shakespeare's theatre. Because in the center there was the individual and he/she must be revealed with all the aspects. So we can define Shakespeare as a writer who used the traditional structure of drama in a versatile way and if needed he knew how to break those structures. He stood against the traditions of Greek tragedy with a perfect application of rival expression of tragic structure. Whenever required, he shaped those traditions in a dramatic way and used them with utmost reality. Reality, fantasy, tragic and comic; took their place in Shakespeare's way of perceiving life. Consequently, Shakespeare's theatre requires a rule less and a temporary point of view<sup>74</sup>.

There are many comments on Shakespeare, who has gained a lot of praise with his plays and whose works have been passing through many evaluations. He was influenced by Kyd, Marlowe and ancient tragedy traditions but while he was creating a rush towards drama, he handled heroes, language of the play and action etc. with a far more attention<sup>75</sup>. When we look at the history of drama, we see that ancient Greek tragedies influenced the subsequent writers and poets and works were created by this sense. In most of the dramatic works, there was the aim to revive

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<sup>73</sup> Mina Urgan, *Shakespeare ve Hamlet*, Altın Kitapları Yayınevi, İstanbul, 1984, p.112

<sup>74</sup> Steiner, s.15

<sup>75</sup> Adrien Brine ve Michael York, *Shakespeare Oyunculluğu*, (Çev. A.H. Neyzi), Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, İstanbul, 2002, p.68

Ancient Greek ideal. What makes Shakespeare original is that he managed to keep off from that powerful effect.

Shakespeare's play characters range to form multi-dimensional types from the clumsy and funny to the strict and heroic; from the young and innocent to the elderly and brave. He welcomes them all by giving them a vivid outlook. That is why he has kept his respectability for the following generations.

Another significant point of Shakespeare's tragedies is that he was able to talk about places in the plays as if he had been living there for a very long time although he had never been there before which shows that he had a very creative mind. Besides, there emerged immortal characters that are total heroes and have been talked about for ages.<sup>76</sup>

Wilhelm Schlegel attributes Shakespeare's the success of reflecting emotions of the interior world to the personification in his plays. Schlegel states that "Shakespeare's play characters are like crystal watches; they not only shows the time as accurate as the others but also enables us to see how this perfection is created."<sup>77</sup> He also states that "...he had a capability to turn himself to everyone else". In personification, one of the most spotted elements is that the characters express themselves with their inner dynamics and fundamental qualities without the peripheral factors. While showing that his characters are like everyone else, Shakespeare separated them from the others. In that, he provided his characters with a private space and thus the characters focuses on their inner motives. There are no social, political or economic conditions on the characters. They take action with their own characteristics. Shakespeare, by keeping a distance between the character and socio-cultural context, explained them with their own inner-mechanism. In his plays, these characters struggle for a just idea or belief. For this struggle, the character has

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<sup>76</sup> Brine ve York, p.87-89

<sup>77</sup> Marvin Carlson, *Tiyatro Teorileri*, (Çev. B. Yıldırım ve E. Buğralılar), De Ki Yayınları, Ankara, 2008, p.35

his/her own reasons and justifications. When all this combined with a high spirit, he emerged the best characters ever written till today<sup>78</sup>.

Besides, another quality that he used in tragedies to change the movement and pace of the plays is the art of “*inner monologue*”. Here is the characters’ construction on the play with only their own comments.<sup>79</sup> For instance, in *Hamlet* the expression “*to be or not to be*” has been a very universal example of inner monologue. And besides, by giving the play characters on the audiences’ character, he joined them to the stage.

In Shakespeare’s plays, the characters make their own decisions. There is no hesitation or deviation in their tendencies. In *Hamlet*, the protagonist Hamlet shows an indecisive and suspicious mood during the whole play. But this hesitant mood of him is not on what to do but on how to do it. The characters take responsibility on whatever the outcome of his/her actions be. For example Oedipus kills the man on the way to the Oracle. His victim is also his father. He marries to the queen and soon finds out that she is her mother. Oedipus, who knows that what he has done is a result of ignorance, punishes himself. Because, when evaluated as a whole, his intentions and what he has done are contradicting. The flaws are resulted from him and he takes responsibility for that.<sup>80</sup>

Shakespeare used language in a way that no other playwright has ever achieved to surpass. His poetic and figurative dialogues not only reveals some certain states of mind, emotions and opinions but at the same time constructs a network of relations and connotations which combines the dramatic state with all the creation. In his tragedies, there are elements such as power mechanism, fear, flattery, deceit and the operations of human heart. There is no good king or the bad king; only the King and the regulations and social norms that the King is in. This state never lets the person to use his/her free will independently.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Carlson, s.38-39

<sup>79</sup> Urgan, s.71

<sup>80</sup> Martin Esslin, *Dram Sanatının Alanı*, (Çev. Ö. Nutku), Yapı Kredi Yayınları, İstanbul, 1996, p.157-158

<sup>81</sup> Jan Kott, *Çağdaşımız Shakespeare*, (Çev. T. Güney), Mitos-Boyut Yayınları, İstanbul, 1999, p.22

In Shakespeare's plays, the game will be played by characters who know that they will die sooner or later but by trying to save their lives they will face the fortune's wheel with respect, courage and integrity. However, no of them will succeed and at the end, history will disregard them initially and later wipe them out. This kind of Shakespeare belongs to Renaissance and is the most contemporary one. It is savage, pitiless, worldly and infernal. In addition to dream and poetry, it awakens fear and horror. The plays go back to real life suddenly. Before a war that is to determine the actual result, or although the destiny of the kingdom is tied up to a conspiracy, they go dinner or sleep<sup>82</sup>.

In Shakespeare's kingdom stories, there is only passion and brutality: The supreme mechanism turns the victim to an executioner, and the executioner to a victim<sup>83</sup>. As there is no the good or the bad king, there are kings in different stages. The names of the kings may vary, but there is always a Henry to push down Richard or the exact opposite. The characters in Shakespeare's plays belong to the supreme mechanism and for him this mechanism is a historical order where the king is determined by the God.<sup>84</sup>

In Ancient theatre, Shakespeare plays and the great works of modern theatre, passage states are handled, and how the human beings pass through these tests is staged. In the following periods of theatre, the noble characters give up their places to more flawed and power-limited characters. These characters are aimed to think about the conditions of the test along with their own humanly qualities while they are passing through those states. In Shakespeare's tragedies, the play hero is evaluated in the special conditions of the passage period. It is shown that those states and periods revive the passions of the self and put the character in a great deadlock.<sup>85</sup>

Shakespeare's tragedies are not like ancient tragedies in which moral behaviors are questioned in front of immortal gods. The future of the characters is determined by fate. Shakespeare was aware how human elements contributed to

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<sup>82</sup> Kott, p.26--27

<sup>83</sup> Kott, p.45

<sup>84</sup> Kott, p.39

<sup>85</sup> Şener, *Dram Sanatı*, p.43-45

history and this shows the immensity of his reality. While some create history, the other becomes the victim of it. Some are one the other hand, only under the delusion that they create history but they are nothing more than the victims of history as well.<sup>86</sup> The sacrifices offered at the end of the Ancient tragedies are the symbol of the reestablishment of order, whereas the sacrifices at the end of Shakespearean tragedies do not set up as a guarantee of harmony and order. Besides, the element of plot structure is different in Shakespearean plays. In them, the phenomenon starts just very close to the start of story, grows and completes along the conflicts and struggles. In Ancient Greek tragedies, on the other hand, the essential target of the argument is clarification and catharsis.<sup>87</sup>

It is obvious that in Shakespearean tragedies, the flaws of the heroes are brought into the forefront. However noble and dignitary those characters are, their passions are increased at the same level. Their extreme passions not only prepare their own tragic end but also affect the whole society starting with their kith and kin. Hence, the society is sensitive to the fallacy of characters. Shakespeare's kings, princes and commanders do not give sufficient consideration to political responsibilities because of their individual demands and preferences. The tragedies of King Lear, Macbeth, Coriolanus, Julius Caesar, Antonius and Cleopatra; are the plays whose characters put their countries to the state of war. The ones who have investigated Shakespeare's heroes find them very interesting in the way of their individual mental conflicts and their power to effect society. The flaws of the characters in Shakespearean tragedies cause the flaws of humanity; the suffering of them results in the pain in society and their tragic destruction is the reason to the devastation of mankind. By this the plays provide the audience with a philosophical approach.<sup>88</sup>

The tragic hero carries supreme qualities in one hand; on the other he/she bears the common qualities of humanity. The fact that they are special, typical, supreme and flawed at the same time enables them to be multi-dimensional

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<sup>86</sup> Kott, p.25

<sup>87</sup> Sevda Şener, *Dram Sanatı*, Mitos-Boyut Yayınları, İstanbul, 2003, p.43

<sup>88</sup> Şener, s.50-51

characters. As a result of what they have been through, the characters are under constant change and transformation. Especially when they face important milestones and lethal states; Shakespearean characters show a dramatic transformation.<sup>89</sup> For instance, in “*King Lear*”, Lear goes into a great change when he faces the betrayal of his daughters. He no longer has the spite and anger he had all through the play. The reason for such change is the great depression and disappointment he has faced.

Shakespeare, while stating his belief for special characters’ nobility, greatness and responsibility, also takes attention to passionate and devilish side of human nature. The audience, initially surprise in the face of complex realities of life, conflicting values and the struggle of opposing powers. Then gradually starts to handle life with a different aspect and re-evaluate the status by thinking deeply.<sup>90</sup> Hamlet is open to debate as he is sometimes sensitive and fragile; sometimes brave and exhilarated and when it is time he is puzzled but at the same time gives reckless decisions. Macbeth, on the other hand, arouses respect and fear with his extreme passionate nature.<sup>91</sup>

Shakespearean tragedies, hesitation is included in individual mistakes and flaws. The play character both makes a mistake and surprised upon seeing the outcome. Yet, now the problem is not to choose between the compulsory things or to defend his/her own compulsory value to the end. As the society in a variable value state, the truth and illusion is intermingled. There are delusions that show the truth as illusion and the illusion as truth.<sup>92</sup>

King Lear thinks that he has done the right thing to divide his kingdom among his daughters when he retired. In this division the measure has to be the love of his children has for himself. The one who shows her love in the most exaggerated way will have the greatest share. However, the king should neither have the right to divide his kingdom, nor to do it by way of a subjective and emotional way. Macbeth

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<sup>89</sup> Terry Eagleton, William Shakespeare, (Çev. A.C. Yalaz), Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınları, İstanbul, 2005, p.54

<sup>90</sup> Sevda Şener, *Yaşamın Kırılma Noktasında Dram Sanatı*, Dost Kitabevi, Ankara, 2003, p.108

<sup>91</sup> Şener, p.87

<sup>92</sup> Steiner, p.98

decides that he must be the person to rule the country after the war and for his own sake he sees no harm to murder the king. But a commander neither has the right to make such decision not to apply it. In Shakespearean plays, such wrong decisions are followed by the hesitation period. At this period, the so called truth is scrutinized, mistakes and flaws are explained. Along with this, Shakespeare's heroes are not the type of characters to go on their lives with regret; they continue to struggle as powerful and honored people; instead of draining away in stagnancy, they prefer to demolish in motion. When they reach the end, they turn up to be grown, experienced and enter a state of illumination. Shakespearean characters are the ones to see the truth and reality after a long period of hesitation and struggle; however they are late to direct the incidents to a probable way.<sup>93</sup>

In Shakespeare's world, there is a dilemma amongst natural phenomenon and moral regulations. This conflict happens to be the inevitable destiny.<sup>94</sup> This rule is a complex but comprehensible psychic entity, which is constructed by combining the astonishingly prosperous elements in a way to create unified, simplified and infinite profound effect. This ideal, creates a risk for the actor/actress as it requires him/her to present all the acting talents.<sup>95</sup>

They way that Shakespeare perceived life was more hopeful and calmer than the play characters but still he shared their emotions. Man, as they are aware that the constant entity evil is such powerful that it cannot be created by the Eves; women. But still they cannot balance the anxiety in the center of tragedies with the sense of security that religion arouses. Every tragedy was a concept that he created out of his own imagination and by these means Shakespeare tested the life and its meaning himself. Along with it, he included the religion element in the plays. This fact lies behind the reason for tragedy heroes' speaking in such a hurt and vicious way.

Shakespearean theatre has been the basic material for various discussions for hundreds of years. On the other hand, his being scrutinized on a feminist point of view is a relatively new aspect. It starts from the 1960s, when feminism legitimated

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<sup>93</sup> Şener, *Dram Sanatı*, p.54-55

<sup>94</sup> Kott, p.22

<sup>95</sup> Martin Lings, *Shakespeare'in Kutsal Sanatı*, (Çev. İ. Durdu), Ayıışıği Kitapları, 2001, p.250

itself by becoming an *-ism*. At this period, the works of male writers was questioned on the basis of sexism. Jan Kott ironically brought this *new* approach to Shakespearean theatre. In the conference “*Is Shakespeare still our contemporary?*” in 1989, one part of the meeting was selected for the debate “*Is Shakespeare sexist?*” Jan Kott who made assessments on this topic said that: “For 450 years it has been talked how sexy Shakespeare is, for 15 years now, we have been talking how sexist he was<sup>96</sup>”.

Most of the feminist theatre players and critiques almost agree that for the feminist theatre dramaturgy, Shakespearean plays are not possible to be staged as the way they are. Shakespearean plays are very important references for feminist theatre but there is a need for severe intervention or at least revision. Shakespearean women characters are vivid but plays lack the feminine voice.<sup>97</sup>

According to Juliet Dusinberre’s argument, who is the pioneer feminist theorist to re-read Shakespeare: “there is a modernism among Shakespeare’s women to improve their lives”<sup>98</sup>. Sue Ellen Case also shares this point of view. Case, claims that Shakespeare was the precursor of his time while he was forming the portrays of women and he presented the most coherent depiction of women in his age by putting forward the independent woman image in his comedies and by opposing them to the dependent and negative woman of tragedies.<sup>99</sup>

The feminist intervention to Shakespearean play can generally be states as: The silence of women in the plays has to be interpreted and the feminine voice has to be revealed. The dramaturgy of the plays has to be reshaped in this manner. The ability of historical narratives to reflect reality is, by nature, related to subject whom it is narrated or the written by and it cannot be divided from this subject. Yet, it is the men who have written history, so the practice of writing is male by nature. That is

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<sup>96</sup> Wells, p.92

<sup>97</sup> John Elsom, “Is Shakespeare Sexist?,” *Is Shakespeare Still Our Contemporary?* London, Routledge in Association with the International Association of Theatre Critics, London, 1989, p.54

<sup>98</sup> Güzin Yamaner, *20. Yüzyıl Tiyatrosuna Kadın Bakış Açılarının Yansımaları*, T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, Ankara, 2001, p.68

<sup>99</sup> Güzin Yamaner, *20. Yüzyıl Tiyatrosuna Kadın Bakış Açılarının Yansımaları*, T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, Ankara, 2001, p.68

why the historical reality of women is a mere part of male fiction: The women are marginalized and assimilated. The women's real narrations echo with a lost voice.<sup>100</sup>

According to Cixous, an actor and actress pass through different states while they are going to a play. Men find themselves while women face a crisis of identity. At this point the actress needs to create her own language: "The emotions of our own need to be reflected. Femininity needs to be recognized and reflected"<sup>101</sup>. The lines in the texts are about how men see women. Cixous encourages women to throw themselves to the area of writing and speaking. Actresses are usually in a narrator position on stage, they tell what is written. Yet, they must speak their own words. An image on behalf of women will rise from the theatre stage. To Cixous, Shakespeare is a good exercise material for this: He portrayed living and conflicting characters. And it is essential that a feminist character is brought in his plays.

Penny Gay, an important Shakespeare expert, objects to that general opinion and takes attention to the effect of live-performance on the audience. In Shakespearean period, as the women's roles were also staged by actors, it is not realistic to intervene in the interpretation of characters.<sup>102</sup> But in our day, those roles are acted by women and they are not obliged to adopt what they think is offending from the women's perspective or to tell those lines. They can reject to act them, change them or revise them. As a matter of fact, as women we must oppose to surrender to the dramaturgy of the play or story. "Live performance has always the chance to suspend the reading and to intervene in them. The change of interpretation and the intervention to the stage affects the audience directly. At the end, the audience will understand if we agree with the text or not"<sup>103</sup>.

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<sup>100</sup> Elsom, p.54

<sup>101</sup> Lisa Jardine, "Unpicking the Tapestry: The Scholar of Women's History as Penelope Among Other Suitors," *The Routledge Reader in Gender and Performance*, (Ed. L. Goodman), Routledge 2003, p.32-33

<sup>102</sup> Penny Gay, "The History of Shakespeare's Unruly Women," *The Routledge Reader in Gender and Performance*, (L. Goodman), Routledge, 1994, p.41-42

<sup>103</sup> Gay, p.44

### 3. The Merchant of Venice

The Merchant of Venice is believed to have been written in between 1596 and 1598. Some sources give clues on the writing period but it is difficult to detect the exact date. Similarities between Shakespeare's construction of play characters and the frame of the plot are found between the Merchant of Venice and some Italian stories of the time. Also, there is a play called The Jew of Malta, which was staged more than eight times by the competitor theatre group, Lord Admiral's Men.<sup>104</sup>

The play is categorized as a comedy in the first folio, but it does also have very dramatic and serious elements. The heroine, Portia of Belmont has lost her father who prepared a riddle for her suitors. There are many suitors arriving from the different corners of the world; the Neapolitan Prince, the Count Palatine, the French Lord Monsieur Le Bon, Falconbridge the young baron of England, the Duke of Saxony's nephew and a Venetian scholar and soldier: Bassanio. In the act I, scene III, we see Portia and her maid Nerissa, commenting on the suitors. Portia has no affection for any of them but then her maid reminds her of Bassanio. She says "I remember him well and I remember him worthy of thy praise". By this, the reader understands that she is really fond of him. On the other hand, the protagonist Bassanio, seeks help from his very best friend Antonio, who is a Venetian merchant. In the meanwhile, Antonio's all revenues are invested in merchant ships all of which are at sea. Antonio is in no place to make the loan himself and offers to take the loan from the city's money lender: Shylock the Jew. Bassanio convinces Shylock to lend him 3000 ducats on condition that Antonio is the guarantee of the loan. Then Antonio enters to stage and then we find out that the two gentlemen hate each other. Antonio accuses him of lending money with interest which is a great sin for Christianity. Shylock is also offended by Antonio's public humiliation of him. So he decides to lend him money without interest. In act I scene III, the conflict of the play emerges. The Jewish moneylender wants to have the assurance of Antonio's flesh. Antonio, who is sure to pay off his debts, agrees to give him a pound of his own flesh in case he cannot pay him back. Bassanio disagrees harshly but Antonio accepts the

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<sup>104</sup> J.R. Brown, *The Merchant of Venice*, The Arden Shakespeare, Oxford 1995, p. xxiv.

offer. But he does not see this act as a threat but as a gesture. We understand this from Antonio's lines: "The Hebrew will turn Christian, he grows kind".

In act I scene I, Portia takes stage again. She is welcoming her suitors who are to choose between a golden, silver and a lead chest. The prince of Morocco chooses the golden chest that writes "Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire" (II.vii.37). When he opens it he sees a skull, not the portrait of beautiful Portia. Then Prince of Aragon comes to choose between the chests. He decides to pick the silver one with lines whoever chooses this chest "shall get as much as he deserves" (II.ix.35). Inside he finds a portrait of an idiot and a short poem which accuses him of being a fool.

In act I scene II, we meet Launcelot Gabbio, servant of Shylock. He is in great dilemma whether to stay in the Jew's service or not. Although he has no specific complaints, as he sees his master a "kind of devil" he is troubled by this fact. Then Bassanio enters the stage and he agrees to take Launcelot into his service. Meanwhile, in scene III, we see Shylock's daughter Jessica giving a letter to Launcelot to deliver to her lover Lorenzo, Bassanio's friend. As like Launcelot, she hates her father and wishes to marry a Christian gentleman. In later scenes just as she has planned, she runs away with Lorenzo.

For reunion of Bassanio and Portia we need to wait for act III, scene II. There we see poor Portia trying to delay Bassanio from choosing between the chests. She fears that if he picks the wrong one, she will lose him forever. After much debate, Bassanio picks the lead chest, which he opens to reveal Portia's portrait, along with a poem greeting him on his choice and assuring that he has won Portia as his wife. The blissed lovers make pledges one another love and loyalty, and Portia gives Bassanio a ring that he must never give away or lose, as his disappearance of the ring will show the end of his love for her. Meanwhile Nerissa, Portia's maid and Gratiano, Bassanio's accompany suggest a double wedding telling them that they have fallen in love. In the midst of their joy, Lorenzo and Jessica arrive and all lovers are united.

But joyful moments come to an end, Bassanio receives a letter from Antonio asking him to urge to Venice because all his ships are wrecked and he is not able to

pay back the loan. In act III scene III we see Shylock escorting the poor Antonio to jail. Antonio begs Shylock to listen, but he disagrees. Reminding that Antonio referred him as a sinful Hebrew, Shylock tells the merchant to beware of his merciless character. Believing that the court will provide him with a just decision, Shylock insists that he will have his flesh and tells Antonio not even to bother asking to him of fairness. People state that Shylock is the most hard hearted of men, and Antonio reasons that the Jew hates him for keeping away many of Shylock's debtors. Solanio tries to relax Antonio by telling that the duke will never let such a stupid deal to be valid, but Antonio does not agree. He is willing to sacrifice himself for the sake of his honor. Antonio claims that the city Venice is a reputable as a rich trading place with a great stand for obeying the law and justice. If someone breaks that law, Venice's reputation can face a great danger. When Solanio leaves, Antonio prays desperately that Bassanio will come to "see me pay his debt, and then I care not" (III.iii.36).

In act IV scene I, Antonio is taken to before the Duke and the call for people of Venice to watch his trial for paying off his obligation to Shylock. The Duke is shocked about the deal, a pound of Antonio's flesh, but he cannot find any lawful way of providing Antonio off his bond. Shylock enters the court and the Duke tells him that all of the men gathered there want him to forgive Antonio. People offer to pay the tripple of the loan but the stubborn Jew does not agree.

Shylock is in control of the court in Venice, but Portia, is now opposing him. She disguised as a man, very typical of women in Shakespeare's comedies, she comes to Vence. Dressing as a man is necessary since Portia is about to play a man's role, showing herself as member of a male profession, she is now a lawyer: Balthasar. The duke greets her and asks if she knows the circumstances of the case. Portia replies that she knows the case well, and the duke calls Shylock and Antonio before her. Portia asks Antonio if he admits to owing Shylock money. When Antonio answers yes, Portia concludes that the Jew must be merciful. But still he shows no mercy. She comments that she must therefore stand up to Shylock. The Jew is shocked that the lawyer supports his case. Portia demands that Shylock has the right to ask for a pound of flesh from next to Antonio's heart according to the bond.

Antonio shows his bosom bare and Shylock gets ready to cut. Portia asks him if he has a surgeon ready to stop the bleeding once he has taken his pound of flesh. He says he is not planned for this as it is not in the deal. Just as Shylock is getting ready to cut again, Portia says that the deal does not give him the right to spill his blood. The laws of Venice are such that if any Venetian's blood is spilled, all the goods and lands of the guilty have be seized by the state. Shylock sees that he cannot cut the flesh without shedding blood, and then he agrees to take the loan as they offered before. Yet, Portia does not agree on this and instead only gives him the pound of flesh, further saying that if he takes a tiny bit more or less he will be put to death himself. Shylock, unable to deal with this situation, decides to take off his case. And he tries to leave the court.

Portia tells Shylock to stay in the court. She states that Venice has a law that says that if any foreigner tries to kill a Venetian, the foreigner will have half of his property go to the Venetian against whom he plotted, and the state will receive the other half. Besides, the life of the foreigner will be in the hands of the Duke, who may decide to do whatever he wants to. Shylock is forced to kneel on the ground before the court, but the Duke pardons his life before he can beg for mercy. And the Duke leaves the court.

Bassanio and Graziano go to Portia and thank her gratefully, and Bassanio offers the young doctor anything he asks for. Portia decides to test her husband's reliability, and asks him for the ring, the ring which she gave him. First, he refuses, and Portia leaves. But, when Antonio insists, Bassanio gives away the ring to her.

At the end of the act, Portia and Nerissa leave for Belmont. They plan to arrive one day before the arrival of their lovers. The next day, Bassanio and Gratiano arrive at Belmont. As we expect, the two ladies ask for the whereabouts of the engagement rings. They explain that they gave them to the lawyer and his clerk who saved Antonio from death. Portia pretends that she does not believe in him and claims that he must have given it to a woman. The two men swear that they are telling the truth. Then Portia and Nerissa give them the rings and state they have to be more careful next time. Bassanio is shocked to find out the rings are the same with

the ones they gave to the lawyer. The ladies tell them they slept with the men to take back the rings. But before either Bassanio or Gratiano can become too upset to be betrayed by their women, they reveal the truth that they were disguised as the lawyer and the clerk. At the same time, a messenger arrives to announce some of Antonio's ships have been saved. As it all the joy is not enough, Lorenzo and Jessica are told that they will inherit half of Shylock's fortune. At the end of the play all the company unites in exultation.

### **3.1. Characters**

Konstantin Stanislavski's fictional acting teacher Torstov states that: "without building up an outer form, it is possible neither to create an inner form nor to deliver the spirit of the image in your mind to the audience"<sup>105</sup>. In *The Merchant of Venice*, Shakespearean characters were all visible of their time: The witty women, the clever fool, the hated Jew and the suitors who are after a young rich woman. There can be many readings of the characters but present study will categorize them as male and female characters.

#### **3.1.1. Female Characters**

##### **Portia**

The strongest character in the play is Portia. Although she is tightly bound to his late father's will, she is a very strong and independent woman. Witty, rich, and adorable, Portia includes all the virtues that are found in all of Shakespearean heroines. In Greek tragedies, the protagonist is a character with one good specific characteristic. In Shakespearean comedies on the other hand, the good character has many virtues and he/she reaches a blessed end.<sup>106</sup> So, with all the good qualities and a warm heart, Portia not only marries the man she fancies but also is able to save his best friend from a terrible situation. It is no surprise that she appears as the opposite to Shylock's hatred. At beginning acts of the play, however, we do not see Portia's

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<sup>105</sup> Stanislavski, Konstantin. *Bir Karakter Yaratmak*, Agora Kitaplığı, 2012

<sup>106</sup> Boal, Augusto. *The Theatre of the Opressed*, Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2011.

potential for power and leadership, as she is almost the prisoner of her late father<sup>107</sup>. She feels herself totally tied to assure her father's dying wishes. In act I scene II, she tells her maid: "But thinking like this won't help me choose a husband. Oh, the word "choose" is strange! I can't choose who I like, or refuse who I dislike. I'm a living daughter still controlled by the wishes of her dead father. Isn't it a pain that I can't choose or refuse anyone, Nerissa?"(I, ii) By those lines, we understand that she is well aware of the fact that she has no claim upon her own fate. Although her father is not alive, she has to fulfill her wish. Would a father ask the same thing from his son as well? Is Portia just the property of her father? Shakespeare leaves us with these questions at the beginning, but soon Portia's wheel of fortune turns to the good side. Her good heart is rewarded with a fine gentleman. This opening appearance, however, proves to be a revealing introduction to Portia<sup>108</sup>. Although she shows a free spirit, she has the urge to live as her father would approve. Rather than disobeying the will of her father, she welcomes many of her suitors to choose between the chests. She may be happy to see that she is a woman in demand, but in agony that she has no choice in the matter. When Bassanio arrives, however, Portia proves herself to be highly enthusiastic<sup>109</sup>. She begs to him to wait a bit before opening a chest. She is very worried that the man would choose the wrong chest and she will lose him forever.

Until now readers see an obedient and easy going character in the play. When she finds out that Antonio, to whom they own their union, is in trouble; she has no hesitation to act. Here comes the acting in acting. As it is well known, in Shakespeare's time female characters were acted by male dressed as women. It is like a riddle to imagine an actor playing a female's role has to act like a man. The reason why women were not allowed on stage is a big subject of debate. Hereon the way women seize power can be discussed: only by acting like a man. The audience or the reader knows that she is a powerful character as an individual, but not as a woman. As the head of the Church is Christ, the head of the state the king, the head

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<sup>107</sup> <http://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/merchant/canalysis.html?>

<sup>108</sup> <http://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/merchant/canalysis.html?>

<sup>109</sup> <http://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/merchant/canalysis.html?>

of the family was the father figure in the 15th century English society.<sup>110</sup> The most important thing to support women in society to take one step forward was the start of Queen Elizabeth's reign in 1558. So, the high-class women had some power indeed, though not as much as man. Portia decides to disguise in man's clothes to gain full power. She and her maid head for Venice to attend the court as Balthazar and his clerk. Can one imagine that trousers give her the power to become a lawyer or a moustache makes her cleverer? Well, according to 16th century society, skirts were not for the court but for the home. We must not surprise to see women becoming nuns and discarding all the male influence in their lives. Lawrence Stone, who studied on the English history of middle ages claims that, the women joined monasteries which allowed them to discuss, vote and even to work on religious interpretations.<sup>111</sup>

Portia not only defeats Shylock at the court, but she also ridicules his position. First she asks for his mercy on Antonio. When he questions their understanding of mercy she replies: "The quality of mercy is not strained, It dropped as a gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath, it is an attribute to God himself" (IV, i). Even as she follows the standard court procedure of asking Shylock for mercy, Portia shows her intelligence by talking to him a soft but warningly way<sup>112</sup>. She does not argument like a woman, as they are attributed to, but reasons on a careful process of mind. First, she states that the joy of mercy will make him happier and arisen in the eyes of people, and second, that he will have his loan paid. Lastly, Portia warns Shylock that his quest for justice without mercy may result in his own disaster<sup>113</sup>. However hard she tries, the Jew does not agree. Very cleverly and wittingly, she asks him to have Antonio's flesh without shedding blood. Shakespeare let the intelligence of a woman to exceed the one of a man. He shows that woman, if given the opportunity, can manage as well as man. In all in all, Portia is a woman bound to social norms but still these do not stop her being the most character in the play.

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<sup>110</sup> Augusto, p. 55

<sup>111</sup> Stone, Lawrence. The causes of English Revolution, Penguin Books, 1972, p. 22-23

<sup>112</sup> <http://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/merchant/canalysis.html?>

<sup>113</sup> <http://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/merchant/canalysis.html?>

## **Jessica**

Jessica is Shylock's daughter, and she hates life in her father's house. She is fond of a young Christian gentleman, Lorenzo. Just like Portia, her fate is in the hands of her father. But unlike her, she decides to run away with the man she loves instead of expecting the fortune to turn from her side. She differs from Portia in another fundamental way; the fact that she is of Jewish born. When she runs away, she takes the ring of her father, which was a present of her late mother. Unhesitatingly, she sells it to buy a monkey for herself. This seems a really dishonored action. Her father hates her because she is such a cruel daughter. Even Lorenzo doubts if she will make a good Christian and get rid of her old traditions. But as we anticipate, the fact that she is Jewish origin will show itself in a society which is so anti-Semitic.

There is also a feminist reading of Jessica. She may have betrayed her father but she has the power to decide on her own fate. Even today, not many women are able to do this. She is in love with a man, she hates her life, but she does not sit there and wait for the others' decisions. She takes charge of her own life and stands up to her own free will. So it can be concluded that she is a powerful female character as well. But again, as she is not Christian and shows some undignified manners, she is not as "valuable" as Portia.

## **Nerissa**

Nerissa is the waiting maid of Portia. She is as clever as her and she acts with her during the whole play. When Portia is in love, she is also in love with Gratiano and they decide to get marry. Just like her, Nerissa gives her lover a ring to bind their love. She is perfect company for her lady.

When Portia decides to help Antonia, Nerissa dresses as a law clerk and follows her to Venice. It is clear that they are in different levels in society, one a lady with a good fortune, the other a maid probably that has nothing. Of course we know she is not the main character of the play, but I need to take your attention that just

like in their own lives, when they disguised, Portia becomes a lawyer, which is a higher position than a simple law clerk.

So what Portia has and Nerissa lacks? It is obvious that the social status affects the power that people have in hand. If one is born in a poor family and becomes a maid, she is sure to be the lawyer's clerk even she wears a moustache.

### **3.1.2. Male Characters**

#### **Shylock**

According to most of the critics Shylock is *The Merchant of Venice's* most outstanding character. There are two main approaches to see him: a bloodthirsty and hateful Jewish moneylender, or a tragic figure whose mind is full of inferiority because of his religion. It is very clear that everyone in the play hates him, even his daughter. The whole society looks down on him. To be sure, Shylock is the play's antagonist, but there are moments when he raises pity on the readers' heart. He is a member of a group who had crucified the Christ himself; and he was doubly despised as an extortionate moneylender. We do not have clear information on how the Jews were treated or perceived in Europe in 16<sup>th</sup> century. But it is certain that the only country to welcome Jews as citizens was the Ottoman Empire. They were not taken as citizens in the Christian lands. They were protected by the governor of the country they live in. For example they were under the protection of Henry III. and Edward I. in their reign. Although there were many Jews around Venice at that time, as also portrayed in the play, they were usually trade dealers and were seen as strangers.<sup>114</sup> This understanding of the Jews is very visible in *The Merchant of Venice*. In act III, scene I, he says: "I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions; fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is? If you prick us do we not bleed? If you tickle us do we not laugh? If you poison us do we not die? And if you wrong us shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in

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<sup>114</sup> Celil Roth, "A Day in the life of a Medieval English Jew," *Essays and Portraits in Anglo-Jewish History*, Philadelphia 1962, p.36

that. If a Jew wrongs a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? Why, revenge. The villainy you teach me I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction.” These lines are very disturbing for the modern reader but it must have had the same effect on the 16th century audience. Today, some see Shylock as a sympathetic character. It is difficult to know whether the reading of Shylock is entirely because of changing moralities of modern readers, or whether Shakespeare, an author who always created complex, and multi-dimensional characters, deliberately structured him in this way. By these lines we see that he will take the revenge from the Christian society by cutting the flesh out of Antonio. But he is acting the same way he has been acted to. Instead of choosing to elevate himself above the people of Venice, he degrades himself to the same level. This is a fatal hamartia, and this hatred prepares his end.

Throughout the play, there are many times that he has been given the chance to withdraw his case. When they are at the court, even the Duke offers him to pay the loan himself. Especially when Balthazar, asks him for mercy he shows no hesitation. No one can change his mind; he even takes the knife and approaches the open bosom of Antonio.

At the end of the court scene, he is not only deprived of his money and all his properties, he is also humiliated by them. The justice is created only in the eyes of Christian society. Shylock is forced to Christianity and pardoned by the Duke. As a “stranger”, he has no claim to power and he can never elevate up to level of Christians.

## **Antonio**

Although the play’s title refers to him as the *Merchant*, Antonio may be the most unlucky character of the stage. In Act I, he is a desperate and anxious person, who is not sure about the destiny of his life. At first the reader thinks that his depression is due to his misfortune as a trader. But when Bassanio asks him for some

money, he happily agrees to lend him and becomes the securer of the loan from Shylock. He disagrees with the moneylender that there is no possibility of him not paying his debt because he has many ships at sea trading for him. So, throughout the play, the reason for Antonio's initial depression mood is not revealed. He has so much affection for Bassanio that he makes a fatal deal with Shylock to unite him with his lover.

Some critiques read this as Antonio's being in love with Bassanio. Only such great love can make someone make such a stupid contract. When he finds out that his ships are wrecked, he calls for Bassanio not to save him but to say farewell before he dies.

Antonio is portrayed as a man of honors; he is good Christian who does not lend money with interest and a devoted person to his beloved ones. He stands up to his contract and though he begs for mercy at the beginning, he willingly opens his chest to Shylock. At the end he is saved by Portia, he may lose his love, Bassanio but he gains the lovers affection.

### **Bassanio**

He is a Venetian gentleman, and a kinsman and dear friend to Antonio. Bassanio is in love with the wealthy Portia. But he has not enough money to visit her as a suitor. This situation makes him borrow money from Shylock with Antonio as his securer. He manipulates Antonio's affection for himself. But still we are not sure if is aware of the fact that Antonio does love him in a different way. Whatever the case, Bassanio solves the riddle of Portia's father. He chooses the lean chest reasoning that the appearance can be decisive. And he is united with his lover when he finds her portrait in the chest.

When Antonio sends him the message, he heads back to Venice with the hope of saving him. Bassanio in fact is the luckiest character in the play. He has a trustable friend who gives him his guarantee without any hesitation and he is also lucky to marry Portia, rich and beautiful.

## **3.2. Major Motifs and Symbols**

### **Disguising**

As in some other comedies of Shakespeare, the element of disguising is used to solve the conflict of the plot. First, Jessica dresses as a male to escape from her father's home. Only by this she achieves to gain freedom. Later in the play, we see Portia and Nerissa dressed as a Venetian court man. They were able to save Antonio by their male clothes. Dressing is defining in the social status as well, it is not mere the outlook.

### **Parental Relations**

Portia's obedience to her late father's wish is the key motif in the play. If it was not for her obedience, the society will probably blame her for being a cruel child. Even if he does not live any more, she still keeps her promise. Jessica, on the other side, has the role of a disobedient child. She not only escapes from her husband, but also distain on his wealth. Her hatred of Shylock is just the contrary of Portia's affection for her late father.

### **Justice**

The search for justice is the main motif of *The Merchant of Venice*. The name of the play includes, the merchant, which is a term to define the person who buys and sells things to make a living. Trade is regulated by the laws of the state. In the play the state of Venice is set up as a rich trade place where everybody obeys the rules. If it were not for the regulations and the law, it would not be so.

However ridiculous the rules may seem, everybody is bound to them with strong ties. Antonio makes a contract to offer his flesh in case he does not pay his loan back. So when he is not able to accomplish to do so, Shylock has the right to take action and goes to court. Although everyone tries to convince him to withdraw his case, Antonio agrees to pay it with his own flesh so that the laws of the Venice are not broken. It may seem stupid to the audience when they see how Shylock tried to escape from justice when the laws stroke against him. So one can deduct that laws

can be processed in both ways, but just like in the play, the truth and justice gain their throne at the end.

### **Three chests**

The riddle of Portia's father is prepared to find the right suitor for her daughter. It is not easy to win the beautiful Portia. Bassanio must not choose the gold chest, which has the inscription, "Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire" (II. vii.), and the silver casket, which says, "Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves" (II. vii.). The correct chest is the lead one and warns that the person who chooses it must give and risk everything he has; just like love<sup>115</sup>. To have the real love one must be ready to embrace all the risks. It may not seem of choosing at the first because lead is the least valuable of all. But it gives the most valuable result; Portia.

### **3.3. Themes**

#### **3.3.1. Power**

The most important element of *The Merchant of Venice* may be the structure of characters in relation to power. This power relation is defined with terms of gender and social status. The female characters of the play are determiner of the male characters. Portia is such a witty woman that he is the one who saves his lover's best friend and defeats Shylock with her clever mind. Not only Antonio's, but also Shylocks and even Bassanio's fate is bound to her speech. However independent she may seem, Portia is still has to obey so social order, she is may seem dignified not to break his father's will, but we are sure that she is not happy with all the choosing process and openly wishes that the suitors that she does not like, would not be able to solve the riddle. So Portia, as a woman, is only seemingly seizes the power. So although rich, clever and high class; her gender determines her fate.

Shylock, on the other hand, prepares his deadlock. He is rich, he is a male, but he is the outsider. So being a male is not enough to hold power. In his case, the social status is the determiner of his demand of power. As a Jew, he cannot have any

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<sup>115</sup> <http://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/merchant/canalysis.html?>

claim in Venetian society. So we can say that one quality is not enough to gain power, there are many other standards that are have to be intermingled.

### **3.3.2. Struggle**

The main conflict in the play is the struggle between the good and the evil. Shylock represents the evil nature of humankind, when filled with spite, he acts like a manslayer. The protagonist of the play, Portia represents reason and justice. As mentioned the law can be manipulated but justice shows itself at the end of the play. Shylock acts with his instincts to take revenge and attempts to take a good Christian's flesh, though he is offered to receive his loan. The law says he can, but it is not fair to do so. In that we can say that he struggles to obtain law but can we say he is good? Well, obviously not. So the struggle between the good and evil is resolved by Portia and Antonio's life is saved.

Another theme of struggle is between religions. In an anti-Semitic society, the Jew represents the evil of the "other". Whereas the good Christian Antonio serves as the element of kindness of majority's religion in today's world, it is very inappropriate to insult people on their religion, but in those days, in the whole Christian world there was a great prejudice for the Jews. They were seen as the strangers in the society even if they lived there all their lives.

The play is structured partly on the struggle between idealistic and realistic ideas on society and relationships. On the one hand, the play tells us that love is more important than money, mercy is also a kind of revenge, and true love lasts to eternity. On the other hand, some doubtful commenters show us that money which gives power, rules the world, mercy and justice alone cannot govern our world.

Thus we can conclude that, the struggle was a key theme that enables the play to keep its tension. Conflicts arise and resolves, and the struggle between the good and the bad, justice and injustice and self and the other keeps the pace of the drama.

### **3.3.3. Deception**

In most of Shakespeare's comedies, deception is the fundamental element. In *The Merchant of Venice*, the play revolves around deception in disguise. The protagonist Portia deceives everyone in the play by pretending to be a male lawyer. Deceit may not be a moral behavior but it is used as a means of reaching justice. But again, we cannot say that it is not humiliating for the others. Shylock is totally defeated by deception, there is no way that Antonio would be saved.

As all we know, art imitates real life. As many people do, we also tell lies to avoid unwelcomed outcomes of truth. In his tragedies, deceit and lies result in harsh and unexpected consequences. But in his comedies he uses it in a soft way to solve the problems and everybody is happy at the end.

### **3.3.4. Love (Romance)**

The comedy world of Shakespeare is totally impressed, with the pleasure of healthy living standards. One cannot find a clearer way on than his approaching to the relations between men and women. For here Shakespeare's preferences are very visible; he is pleased to unite the lovers at the end of comedies. You can find criminal love, of any kind; in his tragedies and, on the other hand, there are ideal characters to be seen there. The tragic love is demolishing and devastating whereas the comic love is joyous and elevated.

The couples usually fall in love at first sight, and decide to get married immediately. But their love is tested in some ways. Portia's love is tested seriously and she had to save the best friend of the man she loves. And Bassanio's love is tested by the riddle of his father-in-law. They both accomplish to prove their love in the eyes of society.

As mentioned, women are more powerful characters in the play than men. So they are the testers of the lovers' reliability. The rings are the symbol for the affection to one another. But when Bassanio gives away his ring, Portia forgives him and presents it back to him. Knowing that her lover really had to give up on it because it was asked by the lawyer who saved Antonio, she behaves very sensibly.

So we can say that, theme of love is intermingled in the play very cleverly. It is not the center of attention but it is a side element to work for the main conflict. Their love is not wrecking or devastating, but it kind and gentle. Love does not make the characters suffer; it is, on the other hand, the source of their joy.

#### 4. A Midsummer Night's Dream

Shakespeare wrote *A Midsummer Night's Dream* probably in the mid-1590s. It is claimed as one of his most dreamlike and most joyful comedies, and it marks a departure from his earlier works and from others of the English Renaissance.<sup>116</sup> The play shows both the creative mind of Shakespeare's background and the immensity of his knowledge. There is a vast amount of references in the play: He wrote it on sources as different as Greek mythology; English country life; and the theatrical practices of his London. Moreover, many of the characters are chosen from diverse texts: Titania comes from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and Oberon may have been taken from the medieval romance *Huan of Bordeaux*, translated by Lord Berners in the mid-1530s.<sup>117</sup> Different from the topics of many of Shakespeare's comedies, yet, the story in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* seems not to have been drawn from any known resource but it is to be the original product of his own imagination.<sup>118</sup>

The play is set up in an unknown time in Athens. The opening stage is the palace of Theseus, duke of Athens. We see him and Hippolyta, his wife to be, talking about their wedding. Egeus, a noble citizen of Athens, comes into the room, followed by his daughter Hermia and the Athenian youths Lysander and Demetrius. Egeus has come to see Theseus to complain about his daughter. In spite of Egeus's promise to Demetrius to marry his daughter to him, Lysander has won Hermia's heart, and Hermia denies obeying her father and marrying Demetrius. Egeus asks to punish Hermia if she does not stick onto her father's promise. Theseus speaks to Hermia in a very tough manner. He gives her two options: to be sent to a monastery or to be executed. Lysander interrupts, accusing Demetrius's changeable mood of love, saying that he was once engaged to Hermia's friend Helena but left her after he met Hermia. All leave except for Hermia and Lysander. The two lovers are not in agony but they are hopeful. They decide to run away to a place where Athenian law is not valid. They forthcoming night they will meet in the woods and leave Athens behind. Then Helena comes to stage cursing herself that she is not worthy of Demetrius and

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<sup>116</sup> G.L Kittredge. *Sixteen Plays of Shakespeare*, Ginn and company, London 1946, p.145

<sup>117</sup> Kittredge, p. 95-96

<sup>118</sup> Alexander, Peter. *Shakespeare's Life and Art*, James Nisbet and Co.INC., London 1946

blames Hermia for stealing her love. The two lovers explain to her that they have nothing to do with Demetrius and they reveal their plan to run away together. Their concern of Helena causes them to make a terrible mistake. Blinded with her love, Helena decides to tell Demetrius about their plan which starts the conflict of the play.

In another place in Athens, some craftsmen are preparing a game to stage on the Duke's wedding day. They are amateur players who are common laborers. Quince, a carpenter, tries to place the roles but Nick Bottom keeps interrupting him and mocks the situation and the play they are rehearsing. The name of the play is *The Most Lamentable Comedy and Most Cruel Death of Pyramus and Thisbe*, which is about the sad story of two lovers, who cannot unite because of their parents. Upon sharing the roles, the company leaves the stage deciding to meet in the woods the other night.

With the third group of the play, we meet in act III. It is a group of fairies residing in the woods. The fairy queen Titania and the king Oberon are not doing well on these days as they have argued on an Indian boy. Oberon sends Puck to look for a white-and-purple flower that was hit with one of Cupid's arrows. He states that the flower's juice, if rubbed on a sleeper's eyelids, will cause the sleeper to fall in love with the first living thing he or she sees. Oberon decides to take revenge on her by using the juice on Titania, hoping that she will fall in love with some stupid creature. In scene ii, Puck rushes away to find the flower and Helena and Demetrius arrive at the woods. Oberon secretly watches them and feels sorry for Helena. Demetrius insults her and harshly tells her that she is not welcomed. When Puck arrives with the potion, he orders him to drop some potion the Demetrius's eyes so that he falls in love with the refused Helena. While Oberon is leaving to find Titania, Puck rushes out to find the young Athenian. Oberon succeeds his deed but Puck mistakenly pours the potion to Lysander's eyes, who is sleeping in the wood with Hermia. At the same time, Helena chases Demetrius to the stage. He still insults her and says that she no longer follow him. She complains that she is afraid of the dark, but he still he rushes off without her leaving Helena behind. Crying for her lost love, she sees the sleeping Lysander and wakes him up. The potion shows its effect, and

Lysander falls in love with Helena. He begins to talk about her beauty and the inevitable love for her. Helena tells him that he is deeply in love with Hermia; but he states that Hermia is nothing to him and Helena is his true love. She assumes that Lysander is making fun of her. In anger and agony she leaves the stage and Lysander chases after her. Then, Hermia wakes up alone and is depressed to see that Lysander is nowhere to be found. She goes into the woods to find him.

In the next act, the craftsmen, who are also amateur actors, meet in the woods to rehearse their play. Since they will be performing in front of a large group of nobleman and ladies, they change certain elements of the play and add some prologues to explain that the lion is not a real lion and the sword is not a real sword. In the meanwhile, Puck comes to stage to watch the rehearsal and plays a trick on Bottom. He transfers his head into a donkey's head. The other players are shocked and frightened to see him and they run away into the woods. At the same time, Titania wakes up and she sees Bottom, the flower potion on her eyelids works its magic, and she falls in love with the donkey-headed Bottom immediately. She keeps telling him that her love for him is deep and eternal. Bottom is confused and mocks her love. But still she is not convinced that Bottom cannot respond to her love. She appoints a group of fairies: Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Mote, and Mustardseed to ensure the wellbeing of him and show her love. Bottom does not know his head has been replaced with that of a donkey and he introduces himself to the fairies. Blinded with love, Titania follows him to the woods.

At the next scene, we see Puck telling Oberon about the situation that Titania has fallen in love with a donkey-headed amateur actor. Oberon is very pleased by his revenge. Then enter the stage Demetrius and Hermia. She is asking the whereabouts of Lysander. Puck and Oberon see that they have made a mistake and the lovers are mixed. Demetrius is angry with Hermia and he still cannot find response for his love. He sees that it is of no use to chase her. Hermia leaves the stage to find Lysander and Demetrius falls asleep.

Puck decides to drop some potion to Demetrius's eyes so that he is in love with the woman he rejected, Helena. She comes to stage followed by Lysander. Demetrius wakes up and he instantly sees Helena and grows a very deep affection for her. Now, both of the men declare their love for Helena and insist that he is the one who truly loves her. Perplexed, she becomes very furious that they are making fun of her. Then to make matters worse, Hermia shows up in happiness to find Lysander. But she is shocked to see that the man she loves and ran away with is in love with another. She thinks that Helena has stolen her love and mocks her. On the other hand, Helena thinks that Hermia is a part of the set up and she blames her for betraying their friendship. Afraid to be beaten by Hermia, Helena runs away to the woods. And worse, Demetrius and Lysander decide to have a duel and see who wins Helena.

Becoming worried the two men will kill each other, Puck rushes to the woods to avoid the duel. He imitates their voice to confuse them and the two men go different directions. In the next scene, the four desperate lovers fall asleep and Puck drops the potion to Lysander's eyelids.

In act IV, the action starts to fall down. While the four lovers are sleeping, Titania comes to stage with Bottom the donkey-headed. The fairies are accompanying them. Bottom makes them scratch his head and sends one of them to find honey. Titania is so deeply in love with him that she even adores his donkey ears and they fall asleep. Meanwhile Oberon and Puck arrive and they are delighted by the revenge. As promised, Oberon takes the spell away from Titania and she is shocked to see that she was sleeping with Bottom. As agreed, she gives her word to Oberon that she will give away the Indian boy. The couple starts dancing and goes away. Then Puck undoes the magic on Bottom.

When the Sun rises, Theseus, Hippolyta, and Egeus enter with the hounds. It is very obvious that they are looking for the four young lovers. They find them sleeping in the woods and wake them up to learn the story, surprisingly, all of them remembers the story only partly. For them, the night before seems as delusional as a

day-dream. But it is certain that Demetrius and Helena love each other, just like Lysander and Hermia do. The lovers are elevated in joy and the Duke asks them to have a wedding fest.

In the next scene we see the amateur players worrying about their play and Bottom. He has been nowhere to be found since the night and they think that he may have been murdered by the donkey-headed creature in the forest. Surprisingly, Bottom enters and all are filled with joy. They immediately wear their costumes to get ready to act the play.

At the last act, the craftsmen perform their play in a very comic way. They make so many mistakes that a very lamenting love story turns out to be a comedy. When all is gone, Puck and the fairies come to stage to bless the newlyweds and the palace of the Duke. They wish good luck to the lovers and assure that they will have beautiful children.

The play can be defined in many terms: it is romantic; comedic; fantastic; satirical; dreamlike; joyful; farcical. Every act and each sub story evoked different notions of emotions.

## **4.1. Characters**

### **4.1.1. Female Characters**

#### **Hermia**

The audience meets Hermia, in the first scene while she is following her father to the court of the Duke. She is a disobedient daughter and she is not willing to fulfill her father's promise to marry Demetrius. Although she may seem foolish in the hands of love for Lysander, she is brave enough to stand against her father's rules and the law in front of the Duke as well. It may seem much exaggerated that her father wants her to be killed, but this is probably how Athenian regulations were. A daughter has to obey her father's will or choose to die. Theseus threatens her to be sent to a nunnery but she still insists that she loves Lysander and will not marry to

Demetrius. As a character she is in a very similar situation like Portia of *The Merchant of Venice*. Just like her she is not in a position to choose for herself. She knows what she wants but her father; as the authority decides upon her fate. But Hermia is not a fool; she is a bold character to stand against the will of her father and even of the Duke's. She chooses to run off with Lysander anyway.

Through the play, she faces some tests on her love. The first one is her father; but the worse one is of the man she loves. At the woods, she suddenly finds out that Lysander is no longer in love with her. She thinks that the reason is Helena mistakenly. But, although her lover openly declares his love to Helena, she still fights for him. She bravely invites Helena to a fight in spite of their friendship. Though many of the characters tend to fall in and out of love quickly, she knows the true love and chases it; she sticks to her love no matter how it results. When falling asleep after learning that Lysander is no longer in love with her, she prays for him to be safe instead of cursing his delusional love. So she is portrayed as contrast to flippant love theme of the play.

In all, she is not only a powerful character to disobey the law and authority but also an outstanding figure whose concrete affection for Lysander wins at the end.

### **Helena**

Helene is introduced as character that nobody loves. Among the four of Athenian lovers, she is the one who philosophize most on the nature of true love. As at the beginning of the play she is drawn out of the love triangle between Lysander, Hermia, and Demetrius. She dismisses their understanding of love as:

“Through Athens I am thought as fair as she.  
But what of that? Demetrius thinks not so.  
He will not know what all but he do know.  
And as he errs, doting on Hermia's eyes,  
So I, admiring of his qualities.  
Things base and vile, holding no quantity,  
Love can transpose to form and dignity.

Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind,  
And therefore is winged Cupid painted blind.” (I,i)

She believes that Demetrius has grown an exaggerated mood of Hermia’s outlook that keeps him away from seeing Helena’s own beauty. So we can say that she is the best representative of true love. Unlike Hermia, she has no outside effect to prevent her from her lover, but the lover himself is not fond of her. At times she may seem foolish and is insulted all the time, but as a female character she is very powerful. Even today women hesitate to open their heart to the men, in society there is a general assumption that the men are the ones to chase. But Helena is so deeply in love that she breaks the social norms and openly reveals her love.

She is so faithful to Demetrius that Helena sets out the plan of Lysander and Hermia to win his heart. Although she puts her own love into danger she follows Demetrius to the woods. This also shows the insecure mood of her character. When both Demetrius and Lysander fall in love with her, she thinks they are mocking her and cannot overcome her unsure nature about her appearance. She is very skeptical that the three are setting a plot against her and making fun of her. But at the end, although by the means of potion, she wins the love of Demetrius and rewarded for being stuck onto her love.

### **Hippolyta**

Hippolyta is the legendary queen of the Amazons who is engaged to Theseus. Shakespeare bases the character on Plutarch’s *Life of Theseus* in which there is a battle between Theseus and the Amazon. But he does not portray her as a warrior Amazon woman but she is a loyal wife to be for him.<sup>119</sup> When the opening scene we see her along with Theseus who happily reminds her that “I wooed thee with my sword and, and won thy love doing thee injuries.” (I,i) as far as we can tell, Hippolyta is happy to be engaged to her and just like him she is looking forward to the wedding day.

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<sup>119</sup> Kittredge. P. 37

Here in the play, Hippolyta represents the oppressed female power, unlike the other female character like Hermia, she does not resist to man power. She even seems very eager and does not resent being kept away from her homeland.

### **Titania**

Titania is the queen of fairies who live in the woods. She is the wife of Oberon. As a couple, they are powerful authorities in the world of magic. As a wife and husband they are in constant power struggle. There is an Indian boy who is under the protection of herself and Oberon keeps asking for the control of the boy. Titania refuses to give away the boy as his mother was a loyal servant of hers. Their constant argument disorders the nature as well and Titania has worries on this issue, so he does not push him too much.

She has a similar fate with Hippolyta, who is also a beaten ruler; but in a more funny way. To take revenge Oberon plots against her and uses the love potion on her. She falls in love with a donkey-headed actor and is mocked by her husband. Although she seems to be the most powerful female character in the play, as she both has the magic and fairy servants, she is subject to male machinations. And she is the only woman in the play who is enchanted by the spell. And also the only woman to fall in love with another man; she is not loyal. But her madness can be forgiven as she is spelled on.

At the end she loses the Indian boy to Oberon who promised to cast the spell away. She may seem defeated but she has no other choice to select from.

### **4.1.2. Male Characters**

#### **Puck**

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, there may seem little character development and nearly all the characters are protagonist. Almost all the critics claim Puck to be the most distinguished character of the play. His funny and clever spirit is the reason for many of the play's conflicts. He keeps the play in motion with his magic, via both intentional jokes on the characters (like changing Bottom's head into

that of a donkey) and funny mistakes (pouring the love potion on Lysander's eyelids instead of Demetrius's). He loves a good practical joke more than anything else. Depending on his mood, he does irritating tricks on human or sometimes helps them out. (Avoiding the duel of Lysander and Demetrius) His sense of humor is the key element of the play. Although he has smooth-heart he is also capable of cruel tricks.

He is not as powerful as Oberon, the fairy king, but he is more powerful than the other servant fairies. He has certain powers to transform human beings. He is not a simple servant but is a jester of Oberon.

By setting up the conflicts of the play and sending the lovers into chaos, Puck makes sure that the audience is well entertained. In the epilogue he is the one to talk to the audience telling them that he is aware of the fact that everything was unreal and the play is like a dream. He even makes a gesture and promises to act better the next time if they do not like the way they have acted.

To me, Puck is like the God-like, omnipotent character in the play, as if he is there to change the course of their fate. He may be taking orders from Oberon but at the end of the play we see that he is the only one to realize all is a dream.

### **Nick Bottom**

While Puck's humor is always clever and witty, the comic elements around the serious but delusional craftsman Bottom is extremely visible. He is the central figure in the amateur players' group who are trying to stage the play of Pyramus and Thisbe. Bottom surpasses the other amateur actors with an exaggerated belief in his own capability in acting. He thinks he is fit to every role in the play; a female role and a lion. Along with this, he is an incapable actor and often makes rhetorical and grammatical mistakes in his role. Here the humor of Bottom comes from the reason that he is totally unaware of his own stupidity. His acting is too dramatic and self-elevating. But still he thinks that everybody else takes him very seriously just he considers of himself. His stupid self-esteem gains its utmost limit when Puck transforms Bottom's head into that of a donkey. In that scene Titania, who is under the effect of the love potion that has been poured by Puck, instantly falls in love with him. But he thinks that the love of the fairy queen is only an ordinary one he

deserves it. He makes use of the fairy servants and makes them scratch his head and find honey and nuts for him. He still does not have the awareness that his head has been changed into that of a donkey. He is unable to understand that it is absurd that a fairy queen be in love with him.

When the fairy queen gets rid of the potion's effect he wakes up sees that he all alone. He probably thinks that he has seen a magical dream:

“I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream past the wit of man to say what dream it was. Man is but an ass if he go about t'expound this dream. Methought I was—there is no man can tell what. Methought I was, and methought I had—but man is but a patched fool if he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report what my dream was. I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream. It shall be called 'Bottom's Dream', because it hath no bottom. ” (IV,i)

Still thinking that he is an elevated person, he decides to write a play on this magical dream to be performed. He may be a foolish character in our eyes but he is very important to the other craftsmen. They are in a terrible situation as now their beloved, handsome friend is lost and they do not know how to perform the play. When Bottom arrives back, they are filled with joy and start to rehearse immediately. This foolish Bottom may seem stupid in a serious world, but among them who are as incapable and foolish as him, he seems to have been accepted as normal.

Among Shakespeare's fool, all of whom have some wits, Bottom may be the most ridiculous one. But his idiocy is innocent and pure. He is the only human who enters the three different worlds of the play; the working class, fairy world and the noble world. He trans- passes the boundaries of social hierarchy by intermingling the play.

## **Oberon**

Oberon is one of the strongest male characters of the play, he is the fairy king, husband to Titania and master of Puck.

From the beginning of the play we observe him as an eager husband to take revenge. He does not accept Titania's insist on keeping the Indian boy and plots against her. At the end he gets he wanted, and his male power defeats the Fairy Queen.

He can be approached in two ways; one is that he is merciful and kind. He feels sorry for the pool Helena and asks Puck to retain Demetrius's love for her. And when Demetrius and Lysander decide to have a duel he wants no one hurt and avoids their fight. In those ways he is gentle. But he is also a mean character to make his wife fall in love with t donkey headed fool and seems to be really enjoying the situation. Though, at the end, he has pity for Titania only when he assured to keep hold of the Indian boy.

He is a character who has a very big thirst for power. He abuses his powers to maintain his goal. He may have some pity but he shows his merciful face only after enjoying the characters' foolish situations. As a power holder and male, he seems really female enemy. He has no tolerance for his wife to be more powerful than him.

## **Theseus**

Theseus is the Duke of Athens and he has the opening lines in the play. We see him as an engaged person who looks forward to his wedding with the Amazon queen whom he defeated in war and gained her love. As a lover he is passionate and impatient.

He is not only a man of love but also a man of law. The angry father Egeus takes his daughter in front of him to establish justice. He complains about his daughter and Theseus strictly threatens Hermia that she will either be killed or sent to a nunnery. He says: "What do you have to say for yourself, Hermia? Think carefully, pretty girl. You should think of your father as a god, since he's the one who gave you

your beauty. To him, you're like a figure that he's sculpted out of wax, and he has the power to keep that figure intact or to disfigure it. Demetrius is an admirable man. (I,i). It is clearly observed that the daughter is seen as a property of the father and he has the right to decide upon her fate. And Theseus is the one to establish that justice on the people.

We see him only at the beginning and the end of the play. The Duke, as a symbol of rational world, is kept away from the entire dreamlike incident in the play. He is there to restore reality and gain power by his social position. To sum up, he is the concrete reflection of Oberon the fairy king, in the real world.

### **Demetrius**

Demetrius is one of the obsessive lovers in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. He is a young Athenian man who is engaged to Egeus's daughter Hermia. From Theseus's comments that his love for Hermia may be fickle because he left Helena, a woman whom he has courted before and she is deeply in love with him. The father Egeus thinks Demetrius to be the better suitor for his daughter than Lysander. However, Hermia does not love Demetrius, but instead she loves Lysander. Demetrius's obstinate pursuit of Hermia brings the conflict of the play and harms the balance among the four lovers. If not for his obsession, the story would be a dull one.

He is a very mean character in that, he treats Helena very badly and abusively and says: "Do I ask you to follow me? Do I speak to you kindly? Don't I tell you in the clearest terms that I do not and cannot love you?" (II,i). He even leaves her in the woods alone in the middle of the night: "I'll run away from you and hide in the bushes, and leave you to the mercy of wild animals." (II,i) We see that he is really obsessed to win back Hermia from Lysander.

At the end of the play, even with the effect of love potion and magic, he finally falls in love with Helena and all is resolved in a joyous way.

## **Lysander**

We meet the desperate lover Lysander at the first act rushing to the stage with the angry father Egeus and his lover Hermia. He is deeply in love with her just like Hermia. But although his love is returned, he has no way to run off the city with Hermia to escape punishment. We sympathize with him at this point because he stands for his love and has a backup plan to gain love.

When they get lost in the woods he offers to sleep close to her but she refuses him and keeps her chastity. The story becomes confusingly mixed at the time they fall asleep. Puck mistakenly pours the potion in eyes and upon waking up; he falls in love with Helena.

Just like his love for Hermia, his love to Helena is deep and passionate. He chases her all the way through the wood to prove his love but as Helena thinks that he is mocking, she keeps scolding him. When Puck and Oberon realize their mistake they restore his love back to Hermia and as all the other characters he thinks he saw a dream. They happily rejoined at the end of the play.

## **4.2. Major Themes and Symbols**

### **The Play of the Craftsmen**

In Act V we see the play-within-a-play which composes the plays action the whole scene. The craftsmen are foolish actors who are trying to stage the dramatic play of Pyramus and Thisbe. The play they are trying to act is a dramatic one and requires very qualified acting capabilities. But still they think they will be able to perform it. Shakespeare uses to construct comic elements of the play. When the main play begins it looks as though it is going to end as a tragedy. If Hermia did not decide to run away with Lysander, she would probably be executed or forced to marry Demetrius. This effect is changed in the very next scene when we meet Bottom and his friends trying to choose the characters to be enacted to celebrate Theseus' wedding. But the way they go to the woods to rehearse the play is dramatically funny and the audience instantly see that Shakespeare has comic intentions. The sub-play has been borrowed from Ovid would have been familiar to

Shakespeare's Renaissance audience which would have immediately seen the parallel connection to the main story of the play: parental opposition to romantic love.<sup>120</sup>

At the final act, the craftsmen were able to perform their play in front of the noblemen and ladies. Their foolish acting raises laughter instead of catharsis. The acting within the acting serves as an element to remind the audience that stage is not real and what they are watching is just the reflection of the author's imagination.

### **Supernatural Powers**

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* needs a great amount of creativity, it is a play in which people believe that magical creatures can contact with them and change the course of their lives. The human instinct to believe in the supernatural powers to explain unnatural events is visible in some parts of the world. Our play characters, the four Athenians, face so much trouble in the woods which was created by the supernatural creatures.

The most important fairy in the story is of course Robin the Goodfellow, namely Puck. He is emotionally remote from the human lovers and he does not sympathize with them.<sup>121</sup> This remoteness makes him to approach their agony with fun rather than empathy. It is not Puck's idea to help the poor Helena and to make Demetrius love her. Oberon is the one to ask him to pour love potion on Demetrius because he has mercy on Helena's terrible situation. Puck's mistake results in funny perplexities and again Oberon is the one who orders him to restore complexities.

It may seem that Shakespeare tried to find grounds for the stupidity of human action in the play. We already know that most of the characters in the play have flicker attitudes toward love. Demetrius for example, courted Helena in the first place; Oberon on the other hand, has an open relation with the Fairy queen. People may act foolishly sometimes and it is the supernatural powers there to blame.

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<sup>120</sup> Kittredge. P,29

<sup>121</sup> Briggs, Katherine, M. *The Anatomy of Puck*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959. P. 45

Another important element of the supernatural actions is the love potion. The love potion is made of the juice of a flower that was hit with one of Cupid's arrows. It is used by the fairies to set romantic and complex relations in the Acts II, III, and IV<sup>122</sup>. The one who is affected by the potion in the most bizarre way is the fairy queen Titania. He is deeply humiliated by falling in love with the Donkey headed Bottom. So we can say that magic is exploited not only to disturb human beings but also in the fairy world as well.

As the title itself suggests, all the happenings in the play are just a "dream". The fairies, magical queen and the king, love potion and Puck, all serve to accomplish the dream like atmosphere of the play.

### **4.3. Themes**

#### **4.3.1. Power**

During the whole play, the relations of power are defined by the limits of the gender of the characters. It is very clear that men are the ones to hold power in the whole play.

To discuss power relation one can approach the matter couple by couple. Our first couple who opens the stage is Theseus and his fiancée Hippolyta. Theseus is the Duke and Hippolyta is the war beaten Amazon queen. It is very certain that Hippolyta is in love with the duke as well and she looks forward to the wedding day. She is totally bound to his directions. She may be the Duchess to-be of the Athens but we know she used to be the Queen of Amazon. By losing the war, she not only lost the power in her homeland, but also in her personal life.

The second power relation can be set up on Oberon and Titania, the lords of the fairy world. We know that both of them have fairy servants and they have a certain power on nature. Even when they fight the order of the nature is disturbed. They seem equal on magical power, but as a husband and wife, Titania is the loser one. On their first meeting in the play, when Oberon's request of the foster child is

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<sup>122</sup> <http://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/merchant/canalysis.html?>

rejected, he immediately decides to take revenge and achieves it by humiliating Titania. He decides to undo the magic in act IV, I only when he has the control of Indian boy: “When I had taunted her as much as I wanted to, and she begged me very nicely to leave her alone, I asked her for the stolen Indian child. She said yes right away, and sent a fairy to bring him to my home in Fairyland. And now that I have the boy, I’ll undo the spell that makes her vision so disgustingly wrong. And, gentle Puck; take this transformed ass’s head off of the head of that Athenian man ...” So we can say that, Oberon is the one who has male power over Titania.

There are also other elements of male power through the play. Egeus, for example, has power over his daughter; Demetrius has power over Helena. In all in all, Female power is smashed to the grounds by the male authority during the whole play.

#### **4.3.2. Struggle**

There are two key struggles in the play. One is of love, the other is of power. As the stage is just a mere representation of reality, just like our lives, love and power are the two major motives of the survival.

From the very beginning of the play till the end, Helena struggles for the love of Demetrius, and him to gain affection of Hermia. Hermia and Lysander struggle to unite with each other; they even decide to run off. So love calls for the conflictions and is the main cause of troubles of the characters.

The other major struggle is between the ones who are after power. But that power struggle is not totally defined in the boundaries of social hierarchies. It is, almost all the time, limited to the gender power. The conflicts between the potent characters: Oberon-Titania and Theseus- Hippolyta seem to stem from the hunger for power. Do we know why Oberon insists on having the Indian boy? Well, surely not. While Titania has certain reasons to keep him, (his mother was a loyal servant to her), Oberon seems to have no reasonable grounds. Probably just to surpass her authority, she plots her to take revenge. So the characters’ approach to their relation is settled on their seizing of power.

### **4.3.3. Deception**

One can say that the whole conflicts of the play are caused by deceptions. Although most of the deceit is caused by the supernatural powers, there are two outstanding realistic ones. One of them to be of Hermia's; at the end of the first act, she decides to run off with her lover and to do this she needs to disobey her father and deceive him. At some point before the play, obviously before the first act, we know that Demetrius has deceived Helena and made her believe that he loves her. Then he claims to be in love with Hermia.

As all is sure, the rest of the deceptions are supernatural events and they are the elements to keep the action of the play. If Oberon is the king of fairies, Theseus the Duke of Athens, we can surely say that Puck is the Master of Deception. Puck deceives just about everyone with the use of magic and love potion. At the epilogue he even implies that he and the rest of the actors have deceived us and all was just a mere dream.

### **4.3.4. Love (Romance)**

In the play, it is very definite that love is not easy to have. The theme of love is mostly investigated by the motif of love lacking the balance. There is always something that disturbs the harmony of love. At first it is disturbed by the lovesick Helena who reveals Hermia's plan to run off. This causes imbalance in the cross work of love among the four young Athenians: Hermia loves Lysander, Lysander loves Hermia, Helena loves Demetrius, and Demetrius loves Helena instead of Hermia. At the end the lovers' trouble resolves itself into happy couplings; the customary joyous end is gained by the love potion.

The fickle notions of love are justified by magic and supernatural elements. Love is deceitful and unreliable. Lovers change their minds and their hearts tend to keep action going. It was not the love potion that made Demetrius courting with Helena and deceiving her. Then he falls in love with Hermia. This incident is the very best proof that their love is not strong and it is changeable. It will be very childish to think that he is a trustworthy gentleman as his mind may keep changing.

Love makes people act irrational and stupid. It is love that throw Demetrius into the woods to find Hermia and it is still the love which caused Helena to keep following Demetrius although he keeps scorning him. Who can tell the difference between the people who fall in love “normally” and the ones who fall in love with the love potion? Of course it is worse in the case of Titania, who loves a donkey-headed weaver. But this is only an exaggerated element of laughter. One can see that with or without the potion the Cupid is after the lovers. So Shakespeare used the tool of magic to find reasons for people acting strange when they are in love. Who knows, Puck may have dropped love potion in our eyelids as well, as Theseus tells us upon hearing the story of four Athenians:

“Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,  
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend  
More than cool reason ever comprehends.  
The lunatic, the lover and the poet  
Are of imagination all compact:  
One sees more devils than vast hell can hold,  
That is, the madman: the lover, all as frantic,  
Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt:  
The poet's eye, in fine frenzy rolling,  
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;  
And as imagination bodies forth  
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen  
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing  
A local habitation and a name.” (V,I)

As he compares the mad man and lovers as like hallucinating things, he does not believe their story. Love can make a dark, skinny gipsy seem like a gorgeous woman in the eyes of the lover.

A strange kind of relation is observed when it comes to the fairy land. The king and the queen probably have an open relationship. Titania and Oberon have been together for many years and of that time have formed a strong relation between one another. Even though this marriage has lasted a long time they tend to fight

about foolish things and this leads to foolish acts. An example would be when Oberon is jealous of Titania's relationship with the Indian boy who gets too much of affection from Titania. To our surprise Titania blames Oberon of having a relation with Hippolyta but Oberon replies, "How canst thou for shame, Titania, glance at my credit with Hippolyta, knowing I know thy love to Theseus?"(III,I) This helps us see that they do not fully trust each other and are jealous of one another. But just like the Athenian lovers they are reunited at the end.

## CONCLUSION

In both of the plays the central theme is the struggle between the male and female powers. The woman characters are sometimes determining and powerful, like Portia. But sometimes they are inactive and abused, like Hyplolitia. The grounds for this struggle is visibly love, but we know that the underlying fact is power. Therefore it can be assumed that according to Shakespeare all relationships between two genders revolve around the concept of power and all other aspects presented only conceal the most important urge, which is power. By examining both male and female characters in his work, it can be concluded that Shakespeare equally divided the problematic situations between male and female characters. Such as he present both weak and powerful male characters and equitably distribute power to female characters. On the other hand, in order to reflect his point of view he slowly shifts the element of power where a weak female character can gain or reflect power at the end of the play. This element of surprise is also a characteristic of Shakespearean tragedies.

In *The Merchant of Venice*, the female power diminished the male power and the men are grateful to women in that they establish justice. Throughout the play although the female characters reflect powerless, the readers or audience are aware of the underlying naïve power which is intellect. Therefore it can be concluded that women establish justice with their intellect so they have ultimate power over male characters. The basic approach of women in the play is manipulation and through manipulation they gain power over male characters.

Whereas in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* we see women defeated and becoming subjects of men. Shakespeare seems to settle the conflicts on grounds of love. We cannot say he was sexist when we see such powerful characters as Portia. But he definitely portrays men as elevated and winning characters in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The reason behind this shift of power can be his way of criticism about the era and supernatural perceptions where female characters tend to be reflected as less powerful.

The result depends on the reader or audience. One can either approach the female characters of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as delusional, dream like ones to say that he did not reflect the real identities of women in his mind or can say that Shakespeare had a degrading treatment for women. But he well balances this notion by creating strong female characters.

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