

"The Revolutionary Portrayal of  
Shakespearean's Virtuous Female in *King Lear* &  
*Romeo and Juliet*: A Feminist Study"

Asmaa Ayoub AbdEl Aziz

Aswan University

Faculty of Arts

English Department

[AsmaaAyoub@arts.aswu.edu.eg](mailto:AsmaaAyoub@arts.aswu.edu.eg)

## The Revolutionary Portrayal of Shakespearean's Virtuous Female in *King Lear* & *Romeo and Juliet*: A Feminist Study

### Abstract

The emphasis of females in William Shakespeare's works is widely discussed and prevalent topic of debate. It is noticed that Shakespeare has anticipated his age because of his creativity in discovering a lot of the hidden features of the female even negative or positive. Thus, various critics have commented on Shakespeare's feminist depiction in his plays. It is true that Shakespearean female characters are the victims of conventional England of patriarchal domination, but it is also obvious that they deliver the vital and universal female characteristics. The female protagonists are given the most outstanding roles that control their plot in the plays of Shakespeare. In this research, the presentation of female characters in Shakespearean plays: *King Lear* and *Romeo and Juliet* will be discussed from feminist perspective. The central purpose of my research is to confirm that Shakespeare's female characters were revolutionary, which had countless means to struggle against the constraints of the patriarchal society that imposed on them. Accordingly, this analysis should eventually succeed in representing his female in an innovative, virtuous strong and rather revolutionary manner, for an Elizabethan man. These females will be the character of Cordelia in *King Lear* and the character of Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*.

**Key words:** Feminism, *King Lear*, *Romeo and Juliet*, Patriarchal society.

التصوير الثوري للمرأة الفاضلة في مسرحيتي شكسبير "الملك لير"

و "روميو وجولييت" : دراسة نسائية

### ملخص

أصبح مناقشة المرأة في أعمال شكسبير موضوع سائد على نحو واسع. ولقد اتضح أن شكسبير كان سابقا عصره بسبب إبداعه في اكتشاف الكثير من السمات الخفية السلبية أو الإيجابية للمرأة. وهكذا علق العديد من النقاد على تصوير شكسبير للمرأة في مسرحياته. ولقد اتضح أن الشخصيات النسائية لشكسبير رغم أنها ضحية إنجلترا للهيمنة الذكورية، إلا أن الخصائص النسائية الحيوية والعالمية تتوفر في تلك الشخصيات. ويتم منح الأبطال الإناث الأدوار الأكثر تميزا التي تتحكم في حكتهم في مسرحيات شكسبير. وسيتم مناقشة عرض الشخصيات النسائية في مسرحيات شكسبير، وخاصة مسرحيتي الملك لير وروميو وجولييت وذلك من منظور نسائي. ويستهدف البحث على التأكيد على أن شخصيات شكسبير النسائية كانت ثورية، والتي كانت لديها وسائل لا حصر لها للنضال ضد قيود المجتمع الذكوري التي فرض عليها. وبناء على ذلك، ينبغي أن ينجح هذا التحليل في نهاية المطاف في تصوير المرأة بطريقة مبتكرة وفاضلة و قوية وثورية إلى حد ما. وقد صور شخصية كورديليا في الملك لير وشخصية جولييت في روميو وجولييت هذه الأفكار.

**الكلمات الرئيسية:** الحركة النسائية، الملك لير، روميو وجولييت، المجتمع الذكوري

## II-Introduction

It has often been mentioned that Shakespeare (1564 –1616), the unique playwright was ahead of his own time. Ben Jonson already said in 1623 “He was not of an age, but for all time!” (The Author, l.43) and he was right, because to this day people read his plays. Not only was William Shakespeare an English poet but also he was a playwright, and an actor. He was widely regarded as the supreme author in the English language and the best dramatists of the world (Greenblatt, 2005, p.11). Shakespeare's great tragedies were written between 1600 and 1606. They include his most famous plays: *Hamlet*(1600-01), *Othello* (1604), *King Lear*(1605), and *Macbeth* (1606), *Romeo and Juliet* (1595-96) and *Julius Caesar* (1598-1600). This was a rather stormy period, not only in Shakespeare's private life but also in English society as a whole. His plays have been translated, performed and transformed in many parts of the universe. It is believed that his attitudes, in writing plays, differ in several ways, mainly in political, societal, economic, familial and feministic questions (Bradley 1991, p. 226; Boyce 1996, pp. 91, 193).

Shakespeare's prominence and supremacy as a dramatist are recognized in the whole universe (Bevington, 2002, p.3). He is greater than others by the extreme diversity of his talent and his various sided curiosity. The significance of character in Shakespeare's plays was first recognized by Dryden, who wrote in 1679 that Shakespeare understood the passions; therefore, he made his characters distinctive, because it has been proved already that confused passions make undistinguishable characters.

Literary critics witness that Shakespeare, the distinguished tragedian exerted a great effort in presenting the most powerful characters to the audience particularly that of repressed woman. The audience perceived that he portrayed the positive female character than the other contemporary playwrights, and providing occasions for meaningful discourse about gender and social norms. (Grady, 2001, p.29).

Shakespeare's depiction of women, and the ways in which his female roles are presented, have become the prevalent topics of interest of the scholars. His heroines cover a wide range of types and characterizations. Within his female characters, Shakespeare's women characters demonstrate vitality, a powerful sense of personal independence great intelligence. These qualities have led some critics to consider Shakespeare the distinguished dramatist who was sharply

away from flat, stereotyped characterizations of women. William Shakespeare wrote all his works based on the Elizabethan era when women were portrayed to be weaker than men.

The Elizabethan age of Shakespeare was a period of male dominion and patriarchal authority. Women were weakened under the unfair version of law, dress-code, religion and professionalism. Though Elizabeth I was the exceptional highest authority ruling the Kingdom, general women were deprived of many common rights. Regarding this, Phyllis Rackin (2005) states that “Shakespeare lived in a time and place where women were excluded from the universities and the learned professions, married women lost the right to their own property unless special provisions were made to preserve it, wife-beating was regarded as a perfectly acceptable means of resolving domestic disputes (p.7).

Actually, Elizabethan women were considered inferior to their male counterparts in their patriarchal society. As a result, they were provided with fewer rights in society. They were seen inferiors to their fathers when compared to their sons. In some actual statuses, daughters were considered as the valuable gifts of the God. Their husbands were chosen by their father based on the economic interests. Clearly, this shows that they lived in the society of patriarchal dominance.

The study is based upon an analysis of *King Lear and Romeo and Juliet* in the light of Feminism. According to Humm (1995), feminism is generally the ideology of women’s liberation since intrinsic in all its approaches is the belief that woman suffers prejudice because of the sex (p.94). Based on *Meriam Webster’s Encyclopedia of Literature* (1995): feminist approach is “any variety of approaches to literary criticism that attempt to examine the ways in which literature has been shaped according to issues of gender (p.409).” This approach is appropriate to the literary works because this approach is closely related to woman’s struggle in determining her life. Bressler in his *Literary Criticism: An Introduction To Theory and Practices The Second Edition* (1999) says that “Feminism’s goal is to change this degrading view of women so that all women will realize that they are not a ‘non-significant Other,’ but each woman is valuable person possessing the same privilege and rights as every man.” (p.180).

Numerous critics affirm that Shakespeare's observations of his social milieu were the mirror from which his art sprang. Irene Dash maintains that "Shakespeare created several strong women in his plays, women whose models must have existed in the Elizabethan world." (Dash, 1981, p.85). Robert Omstein states that "Shakespeare...depicted robust, strong-minded, and independent women who are unwilling to suffer any indignity at the command of their lords and masters...There were many women of like spirit in Elizabethan society who refused to accept the dependent, submissive roles which were conventionally prescribed for their sex." (Omstein, 1976, p.130)

Shakespeare's depiction of the character of the female is totally different than any other writer. He usually describes the female characters in his works as a powerful character that has active minds. His female character is aware of the discrimination over women in the Elizabethan patriarchal society, and reacts against it.

In this paper, an attempt has been taken to explore Shakespeare's presentation of woman, Cordelia in his tragedy, *King Lear* and Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet* demonstrating his virtuous female characters who are central to the action of the plays, and suffer from the fact that the male dominated society of the Elizabethan England. Moreover, they risk losing everything in their attempt to achieve their basic right to control their own destiny. For Cordelia and Juliet, survival and the assertion of their female identity are the central issues. That is why, their unique and powerful female characteristics will be clear.

### III-Literature Review

There were different studies that dealt with different issues of the two major tragedian plays *King Lear* and *Romeo and Juliet*.

Bowling (19: 49) found it extremely hard to assign one specific, overarching theme to *Romeo and Juliet*. The central theme includes a fact that characters as human beings are neither totally good nor completely evil, but instead are more or less alike awaking out of a dream and into reality, the danger of hasty action, or the power of tragic fate (pp208-20). Donald A. Stauffer (1949) has recognized love and its healing power as the chief theme of the play.

Brian Gibbons (1980) stated in his introduction to *Romeo and Juliet* essentially the quality of this tragedy. He has also proposed the greater role of literature in effecting resolution, greater good, through the effect of the control of faith and love and the consequences of them on the fate of the human beings.

As Morris (1985) criticized that in *Romeo and Juliet* “Shakespeare did not invent the plots of his plays. He found a likely theme in a chronicle, a poem or a book of tales or biographies, and recreated it to suit his own purposes”. Moreover, he mentioned the existence of a lot of French and Italian versions of the story of Romeo and Juliet.

Holding (1992) explained the historical relationship of this play with other literary works and stated, “Versions of this popular folklore tale exist in many languages but it is clear that Shakespeare thoroughly followed an English translation (1562) by Arthur Brooke, *Romeus and Juliet*. It is possible that Shakespeare was at least aware of another English version by William Painter, 'Rhomeo and Julietta', included in the second volume of his popular collection of prose translations, *Palace of Pleasure*.”

Halio (1998) determines that it is clear that the play is full of numerous minor, thematic elements that link in complex ways. Several of those most often debated by scholars are discussed below (p. 65)

Connolly (2000) mentioned that Shakespeare created his play *Romeo and Juliet* early in his career, between 1594-1595, around the same time as the comedies *Love's Labour's Lost* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Researchers often set these major plays together as they define the themes of marriage, love, marriage and courtship.

Yayoi Miyashita (2002) in her annual report on cultural science *Juliet's Acquisition of Independence and Patriarchy in Romeo and Juliet*, an, says that Juliet is the one who shows noticeable advance from the first stages of adolescence to the mature adult being able to take her own decisions and determine her fate. This maturity is clear in Juliet and is not clear in the character of Romeo. Therefore, it is clear that the theme of gender roles changes between Romeo and Juliet (200, p. 19).

Molly Cooper (2006) wrote in her thesis *Bad Girls: Romantic Feminine Rebellion in Renaissance Drama*, sees the suicide in changed way. She says in her thesis that “She [Lisa Hopkins] perceives suicide, such as that found in *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Spanish Tragedy*, as a result of the mechanism in which the dominant power structure acts upon powerless women” (Cooper, 2006).

G. Lipson & S. Lipson (2007) stated that among thirty seven plays written by Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet* is the play that is most powerfully to young people. Though it was written in the language of 16<sup>th</sup> century, the struggles in this play are endless. It makes that obvious that *Romeo and Juliet* is not only a play that people enjoyed in the earlier times, but its pleasure is still lasting till now, because the love story in the play can be still applied on many other couples at this time.

Furthermore, Bloom (2010) stated that in *Romeo and Juliet*, a broiling Verona summer provides a volatile backdrop for Romeo and Juliet’s passion and their families’ rancor. Although male violence is clear in the play, Juliet flourishes as a strong, clever woman whose commitment to her love and her principles makes her courageous.

A lot of researchers studied Shakespeare’s *King Lear* critically for its being the primary source for their study. Some additional ideas were collected from *King Lear* considering it as a secondary source. Books of Bradley (1905) and Samuel Johnson were very much supportive to the subject matter of *King Lear* (Dr. Samuel Johnson, Preface to Shakespeare).

Degünther (2012) examined exactly what William Shakespeare’s intention was in going against the traditional track of poetic justice, or even what there was in his mind when he wrote *King Lear*; nevertheless, it is right that, though there is exaggeration of the ‘evil’ over the ‘good’, Shakespeare shows his artistic genius by mixing the good and evil forces while presenting the tragic significances of the suffering *King Lear*.

Alam (2016) criticized *King Lear* for its subjects that is characterized by of a lot of exaggeration of the evil forces and their recurrent victory over the good ones refusing the traditional ‘poetic justice’ (99-102).



King Lear has been commented upon by a lot of critics. Those critics comment on different elements of weaknesses which is dramatic or structural. It has also been commented from the viewpoint of its poetry and imagery.

The brief review of literature presented here establishes the context and the sufficient justification for the present study.

#### IV-Discussion and Analysis

Shakespeare usually describes the females in his works as a powerful character that are characterized by distinguished features (Bradley, 1905). The most important two tragedians that exhibit the ability of him in depicting the female in a challenging and virtuous image are *King Lear* and *Romeo and Juliet*. Concerning King Lear, it has been described as Shakespeare's greatest work, the best of his plays, the tragedy in which he shows most fully his countless powers.

Shakespeare begins *King Lear* with an emphasis on Cordelia's individuality: "I love your Majesty according to my bond, no more nor less" (I, i. 94-95). The tragedies of both father and daughter are indicated when Lear replies not with sympathy, but with an illustration of control on his own behalf. Lear first tries to persuade Cordelia with a threat: "Mend your speech a little, lest you may mar your fortunes" (I, i, 96-97). Lear cannot or will not recognize the independence of Cordelia. When she will not match his desire of expressing her emotions to him, he uses the power of his position to destroy her future: "...Thy truth then be thy dowser!...Here I disclaim all my paternal care" (I, i, 110, 115). Lear endeavors to establish his own royal tradition by threatening to end Cordelia's individual rights.

The King, noting the decline of his own fortunes, wants to promise himself of a worthy heir. Cordelia's disappointment to assure Lear of her devotion is her defeat. Her choice of honesty over flattery is misunderstood by Lear as a show of lack of respect. The daughter, in following her own instincts does not follow traditions held by her father and his male-defined culture. Lear's hasty response suggests disgust 'with her attitude: By attacking Cordelia's beliefs, he sets in motion a sequence of destructive events. Although Cordelia's behaviors with her father shows rebellions according to Lear's opinion, it is obvious that her virtue not to flatter him is a sign of her strength. Her good personality to be honest leads her to a breakdown

in her relation with her father. She is independent in bearing the responsibility to her decisions.

King Lear limits Cordelia's role in the world. First, he rejects her right to individual thought. Lear's disapproval results in Cordelia's social shame within her culture, Lear has had authority in the world; nevertheless, he is thoughtlessly trying to keep Cordelia from emerging her own sense of power. Cordelia's individuality shows in her actions, ideas and language,"Why my sisters have husbands, if they say they love you all? Haply, when I shall wed, that lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry half my love with him, half my care and duty. Sure I shall never marry like my sisters, to love my father all." (I. 1. 98-102)

She expresses herself as an individual: this differs her from her sisters, who try to control within the patrilineal system. Lear's acknowledgement of Cordelia would have allowed her to own her individualism with pride although he denies Cordelia's maturity and independence.

From the beginning, Lear creates himself as the master, and Cordelia does not openly criticize Lear's harshness towards her. Lear sees Cordelia as making a fool of him. He threatens her to 'mend her speech'. Avoiding argument and display severe loyalty, Cordelia answers not with a threat but with respect, "Good my lord. You have begot me, bred me, loved me. I return those duties back as are right fit. Obey you, love you, and most honour you." (I, i, 98-102)

In spite of her effort to be respectful and loyal, the King insists on patrilineal obedience or nothing. Cordelia has a good knowledge of the language and introduces a reasonable argument. And yet, Lear's response to her eloquent speech leaves her powerless; in his rage, confusion and ignorance, he chooses to misinterpret her words:

Lear: So young, and so untender ?

Cordelia: So young, my lord, and true (I, i, 108, 109)

Cordelia's assessment of the situation must certainly be that she is being wholly honest with her father, and consequently fair. Lear's evaluation, from his patriarchal perception, is essentially quite different. He identifies her as his female offspring who is using his own language to make a fool of him. To Lear, Cordelia further weakens the royal power by her disrespectful attitude.

It is clear that through *King Lear*, Cordelia is obviously referred to as an element of possession when France says she is a dowry (I, 1, 243). Nevertheless, she also breaks the rule of women adhering to the private sphere. Cordelia does liberate herself from the traditional roles of a womanhood, at least partially, by becoming a soldier in France. The reunion with her father and her following death dilute her strength as an individual and reestablish her in her 'proper' position within the family. Death hardly seems a fitting end for one so daring and courageous. Yet once having broken the unspoken rule that women remain at home, there seems to be no other position left for Cordelia to 'return' to.

In Cordelia two obvious qualities coexist: Independence of will and loyalty. Shakespeare's use of language reflects both her loyalty and her independence of will. She reconciles the early alienation of her father through her later loyalty to him, at a time when, as Lear himself points out, she has reason not to be loyal. Cordelia's simple, calm answer: "No cause, no cause" (IV, VII, 75) provides a powerful moment in the play because her statement tells the audience that she has finally found reconciliation with the old king. Her early denial of her father's will showed her independence, her later reconciliation with Lear shows her loyalty to him. Cordelia exemplifies the good image of the faithful daughter although she is described that she is characterized by ingratitude according to Lear in the beginning of the play. The researcher believes that she is a symbol of virtue in the play.

The foreshadowing of her return to Lear's inner sanctum is told in Act IV, scene VII, when Cordelia asks about the state of her father's health (12, 44). Lear, for his part, expresses his guilt at losing Cordelia and his hostility against her killers: "A plague upon you, murderers, traitors all! I might have saved her; now she's gone forever" (V, iii, 172, 173). The regret of Lear is a victory of Cordelia's pure and virtuous characteristics.

It is clear that Cordelia symbolizes countless idealized traits of womanhood. She is faithful, loyal, nurturing and loving; she does nothing untoward throughout the play and merely answers her father honestly, making her death seem exceptionally harsh. The attitude of Cordelia is considered suitable for the known social gender archetypes at that time. She is prepared to love her father in his due measure but is aware of the respectability of moving her loyalty and

deference to the man who will become her husband. Moreover, she replies to her father honestly and appropriately, yet she still faces exile, abandonment by her father, and, ultimately, execution as a result of her adherence to these ideals. Although Cordelia is ultimately unable to restore her father or herself and avoid disaster, Cordelia was able to maintain her ideals despite the trials and tribulations of life and, for this achievement. She represents a model of feminine ideals and behavior. She represents the revolutionary hidden characteristics of the female as independence of will, Christian virtue of mercy, charity, honesty, forgiveness, unselfishness, loyalty and strength in facing her responsibilities.

The second example of the female characters that represents the revolutionary virtuous traits is Juliet in *Romeo & Juliet*. According to the title of the play, this play is telling about Romeo and Juliet, a young couple who struggles for their love. Romeo's family, the Montagues, is the enemy of Juliet's family, the Capulets. This is the obstacle of their will to be together. Nevertheless, this situation cannot stop their love. They get married secretly. The situation is becoming harder when Romeo is exiled to Mantua because he has broken the law made for the feud families. He kills a Capulet who has killed his best friend.

Juliet takes her action to be with her husband. Her father has arranged her marriage with Paris, the cousin of the governor, because he does not know that she had married. Directly, Juliet declines her father's will. Hence, she tries to find a way to avoid the marriage. She comes to Friar Lawrence to ask for his advice. Friar Lawrence suggests for her to drink the potion, so everyone will think that she is dead. Unluckily, Romeo's servant tells him that Juliet dies. Romeo is desperate and decides to drink poison. Therefore, Juliet decides to end her life as her husband Romeo. At the end, the lovers die.

Some of Shakespeare's female characters are described to have independence of will, lively minds, and strong characters (Boulton, 1968: 166). In this play, the character who has those characteristics is Juliet. She courageously takes decision of what she is going to do even though it might put her life in danger. Degradation is one that continuously shadows her. How great bravery that she has, people always doubt her endurance. Thus, she tries hard to rebel against the people's thought and underestimation about being a woman.

According to Stanton in his *An Introduction to Fiction*, most stories including drama include a central character. The character is related to every event in the story (1965:17). Juliet is the dominant character in this play since she is related to the main story. According to Nurse, her maid who always accompanies her, Juliet is a hardheaded girl. Her stubbornness can be seen from Nurse's frustration from her. She is a woman with a strong principle. Nurse sometimes angers her because she favors to do anything she thinks, and not listen to other's idea. That is why, her father calls her "headstrong" (Shakespeare, 1952:930) when she did not agree to marry County Paris. Furthermore, she holds her idea so strongly that no one can move her. This behavior is disappointing Old Capulet which then makes him to call her "young baggage, disobedient wretch" (Shakespeare, 1952:927). However, Juliet's obstinacy more tends to be her determination. She is stubborn, from the start until the finish of the story she does not consider that County Paris is worthy for her.

Lady Capulet, the nurse, and Old Capulet cannot change Juliet's idea that her marriage to County Paris is not a true idea, although Nurse and Lady Capulet encourage Juliet that County Paris is a nobleman with abundant wealth. Furthermore, being richer as a result of the Wealth of County Paris, Juliet can also improve the prestige of her family. However, she is not tempted to the bargain (Shakespeare, 1952:907). She believes that she does not want to marry that way; her family chooses the man to be her husband. It is not about what things she gets from the marriage, but getting married is her choice.

Juliet is holding her principle until the end of her life. She prefers to die beside her husband, Romeo. She is aware that her father will force her to marry County Paris, if she remains alive. That is why, she chooses to end her life. Therefore, she stabs herself using a dagger while she has an opportunity to live.

In contrast to all women in the play, Juliet is brave to voice her opinion and not follow the rule in her family and society. She is brave to refuse marrying County Paris when everyone convinces her to agree to her father's decision made for her. Not only does Juliet make problems between Old Capulet and Juliet, but also Capulet family and the County. She sees the marriage that her father plans is not an order that must be done. She has a choice that is not offered to

her, but she chooses it. The choice she takes is to not accept the marriage.

Juliet's courageousness can be seen from her involvement in a lot of actions in the play. She is strong enough to decide to drink the sleeping potion and end her life, as she is fearless enough to do the plan. She then bravely says "Give me, give me! O, tell not me of fear!" (Shakespeare, 1952:930). Although she worries to drink the potion in the very beginning, eventually she drinks it. By all her awareness, she takes the risks she might get.

Although she is brave enough to against her father, she knows that her efforts will not work out simply. This means that when she knows that Romeo dies, she decides to die. Stanton says that explicit motivation is the immediate cause for any specific speech or act. In this notion, Juliet's action is committing suicide. For that reason, her motivation is Romeo's death. She loves him to a great extent, and if she lives, she could break her promise. Consequently, she chooses to die.

Juliet is also heroic enough to offer Romeo to 'put off' their family name. Romeo is related to a Montague and Juliet is one of the Capulet's family . Accordingly, Juliet will put off her Capulet name, and Romeo will put off his Montague name. It is clear from Juliet's words as follows, "JULIET. O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo? Deny thy father and refuse thy name; .. I'll no longer be a Capulet." (Shakespeare, 1952:912)

Refusing their family name means that they are will not be a part of the family. Both families, Capulet and Montague, are high-class and honored family in the society. If Romeo and Juliet refuse their family name, the risk they got is that they lose legacy from their parents, prestige, and social honor. Juliet's question is a kind of challenge. If Romeo is not brave enough to put off Montague name, Juliet says it bravely that she will be the one that is going to do that. She is not afraid that she will lose the legacy, title, prestige, and honor from the society.

Although Juliet has bravery to fight against her father, she cannot reach her purpose if she keeps protesting against her father. Therefore, she uses tricks in solving her problems. She is quite tricky to hide her situation. There are some ways to show her trickery. In the beginning, she uses Nurse to send messages to Romeo. She secretly puts a plan for her marriage with Romeo by delivering Nurse to Romeo to compile information. Second, Juliet plays words to conceal her sadness over Romeo's banishment. Juliet is trying to express her grief, but if her mother feels that she is worrying about Romeo, she will be mad. That is why, she is playing the words. She feels sadder to hear Romeo is banished to Mantua than to know Tybalt's death. Nonetheless, her mother thinks that she is sad because of her cousin's death. She tells Nurse that she is going to confession for not doing her father's will. The fact is that she goes to Friar Lawrence for making a plan to be with Romeo.

Her behaviors show that she is clever. She has a policy in overcoming difficulties and solving problems. She is trying to be rational. If she only argues, nobody will listen. She actively tries to discover the best way for her problems, not only waiting for others to help her. Besides, she is trying to be critical. she needs only time to question and considers what she is going. She also refuses Romeo's flirting by saying "O, swear not by the moon, th'inconstant moon, that montly changes in her circle orb, Lest that thy love prove likewise variable." She continues " ..., if thou wilt, swear by thy gracious self, ..." (Shakespeare, 1952:913).

Juliet's fight is mostly done on purpose. She deliberately arranges the plan to achieve what she thinks is good for her. She is not waiting for the others to give her instructions. In other words, she is an active character who voices her opinion, fights for her idea, and supports her idea. She enthusiastically tries to find solutions to all problems happening to her.

From the explanation, the basic motivation of Juliet can be noted. Stanton(1965) mentioned that the central motivation is a feature of the general character; it is the continuing desire or intention that directs the character throughout the story (p.17). Her basic motivation is independence of will and freedom. Juliet wants to be liberated from the domination of her father and society symbolized by County Paris. She wants to be self-determining in making choice, voicing her opinion, and shaping her life.

From the previous analyses, Juliet is not like any other women in the play. She prefers to fight against the men's control. By understanding the true problem of the woman, Juliet shows the society that women should not reject the fight but they must accept it to be liberated from their otherness. She sees the possibilities that she can do something to struggle her will to be subject. She is not only blaming the condition because it will be unworkable, but she devalues herself by struggling her idea that woman should be regarded as a subject, not an object. It can be seen from what she has done to free herself from her father's force to marry County Paris. She does not blame anybody, but she says her objection to her father. When her father does not want to listen to her protest, she tries to find a way to solve it. Although her family wants her to marry County Paris, she does not stop struggling. She goes to Friar Lawrence to ask for some advices so that she can be with Romeo.

Instead of blaming her condition, Juliet struggles hard to show that woman is also a subject. She wishes to transcend the limitation of being a woman unlike any other women who accept their otherness. Therefore, it is noticeable that Juliet is persistent, brave, tricky, clever, and active. Those characteristics encourage her to struggle against the patriarchal society that commands how she should be. She acts according to what she believes instead of following the dominant group. She does not act and respond the condition happening to her as any other women, like Lady Capulet or Lady Montague. Here, it is shown that she refuses to accept the otherness shaped by the patriarchal society. Juliet does not internalize the control. The threat, aggression, or control does not affect the way she acts against the oppression.

In this play, Juliet bears the spirit of feminism because she is totally different from other female characters in the play that are very passive and obedient to men. Juliet chooses to fight for her right and rejects to make others to control her life. She lastly gives an evidence that woman has a significant role although the situation hampers her struggle. The play is not simply a love story. Patriarchal system and rebellions lie in this play. Thus, perspective of feminism is needed in order to reinforce Juliet character as a feminist agent. She bravely rebels against her family and breaks the rule to determine her own life. Her struggle proves that she bears the idea of feminism.



## V-Conclusion

Through the analysis of the characters of Cordelia and Juliet, both try to reason with their fathers; both fall. Although the relationships of Juliet and Cordelia with their fathers show the powerful men hold over women, they succeed in expressing themselves, their choices and their existence as true human beings who have all the rights to survive or end their lives.

From beginning to end, Cordelia and Juliet face their father's traditions and their patriarchal culture. Both of them are punished for making their own decisions as marriage and career choices. Definitely, the actions of Cordelia and Juliet are very unfamiliar in a culture that believes women, especially young daughters to be controlled by the patriarchal ideology. It is obvious here that Shakespeare is advocating feminism by presenting these two strong young women. Juliet and Cordelia face when they try to apply their own answers to their problems.

In a word, Cordelia and Juliet represent a model of feminine ideals and behavior. Shakespeare, through presenting their characters, can present some of the female revolutionary characteristics. Cordelia embodies independence of will, Christian virtue of mercy, charity, honesty, forgiveness, unselfishness, loyalty and strength in facing her responsibilities. Similarly, Juliet is a true representation of challenge, intelligence, bravery, independence of will, and virtue in keeping her promises with her lover. Both of them sacrifice their lives for the sake of their strong principles and determination to be true human beings.

Therefore, Female characters of Shakespeare offer a distinct record of revolutionary characteristics by women who were directly impacted by the attitudes and cultural practices of patriarchal domination. These women sometimes confirm, and sometimes challenge such exploring the distinctive positive traits of Shakespeare's plays and give the reader a new conceptions of womanhood.

## References

### Primary Sources

Alexander, Peter. Ed. (1952). *William Shakespeare The Complete Works*. New York: Random House.

Shakespeare, W. (1980). *Romeo Juliet*. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd.

### Secondary Sources

Alam, A. M. (2006). *Shakespeare's Vision: Concept of Good & Evil in King Lear*; The Muse: An Anthology of English Writing, English Society of Manarat International University, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Bevington, David (2002). *Shakespeare*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Bloom, H. (2010). *William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet*. USA: Infobase Publishing.

Bloom, H. (1998). *William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet*: Westport, CT: Greenwood Press

Boulton, Marjorie. (1968). *The Anatomy of Drama*. London: Routledge Paperback.

Boyce, C. (1996). *A Critical Companion to William Shakespeare*. United States: Charles Boyce and Roundtable Press

Bradley, A.C. (1991). *Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear and Macbeth*. London: Penguin.

Bressler, Charles E. (1999). *Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practices The Second Edition*. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall.Inc.

Connolly, F. A. (2000). *Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet*. USA: IDG Books WorldWide.

Dash, Irene. (1981). *Wooing. Wedding and Power: Women in Shakespeare's Plays*. New York: Columbia UP.

Gibbons, B. (1980). *Jacobean City Comedy: A Study of the Satiric Plays by Jonson, Marston and Middleton*. London: Methuen & Co.

Grady, Hugh (2001). "Modernity, Modernism and Postmodernism in the Twentieth Century's Shakespeare". In Bristol, Michael; McLuskie, Kathleen (eds.). *Shakespeare and Modern Theatre: The Performance of Modernity*. New York: Routledge.

Greenblatt, Stephen (2005). *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*. London: Pimlico.

Hall, J.L.( 2001). *King Lear: A Guide to the Play*. Westport, CT, USA: Greenwood Publishing Group, Incorporated

Holding, P. (1992). *Romeo and Juliet: Text and Performance*. UK, London: Macmillan Education LTD.

Humm, M. (1990). *The Dictionary Of Feminist Theory*. Ohio State University Press.

Johnson, S. (1961). *Preface to Shakespeare*, London: Routledge.

Jonson, Ben (1996) [first published 1623]. "To the memory of my beloued, The Author Mr. William Shakespeare: And what he hath left vs". In Hinman, Charlton (ed.). *The First Folio of Shakespeare* (2nd ed.). New York: W.W. Norton & Company

Lex, Barbara W. (June 1976). "Review: The Psychology of Consciousness by Robert E. Ornstein". *American Anthropologist. American Anthropological Association*. **78** (2): 395

Lipson, G. B and Lipson, S. S (2007). *Romeo and Juliet Plainspoken*. USA: Teaching and Learning Company.

Miyashita, Y. (2002). Juliet's Acquisition of Independence and Patriarchy in Romeo and Juliet. *The Annual Report on Cultural Science* :(106) 35-48

*Meriam Webster's Encyclopedia of Literature*. (1995). Springfield: Meriam-Webster, Incorporated.

Morris, H. (1985). *Macmillan Master Guides: Romeo and Juliet*. UK, London: Macmillan Education LTD.

Rackin, P. (2005). *Shakespeare and Women*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press

Richards Jennifer & Thorne Alison (eds.). (2007). *Rhetoric, Women and Politics in Early Modern England*. London and New York: Routledge,

Shakespeare, W. (1977). *King Lear*. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd.

Stauffer, Donald. A. (1949). *Shakespeare's World of Images New York: Norton*

Stanton, Robert. (1965). *An Introduction to Fiction*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.

### **Internet Sources**

Cooper, Molly, "Bad Girls: Romantic Feminine Rebellion in Renaissance Drama" (2006) . Undergraduate Research Conference (URC) Student Presentations. 347. <http://scholars.unh.edu/urc/347>

Degünther, A. (2012). *Good and Evil In Shakespeare's King Lear and Macbeth*, Munich, GRIN Verlag. Retrieved from <http://www.grin.com/en/e-book/200565/good-and-evil-in-shakespeare-s-king-lear-and-macbeth>