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Heroic Traits in Female Characters in the Selected Plays of William Shakespeare

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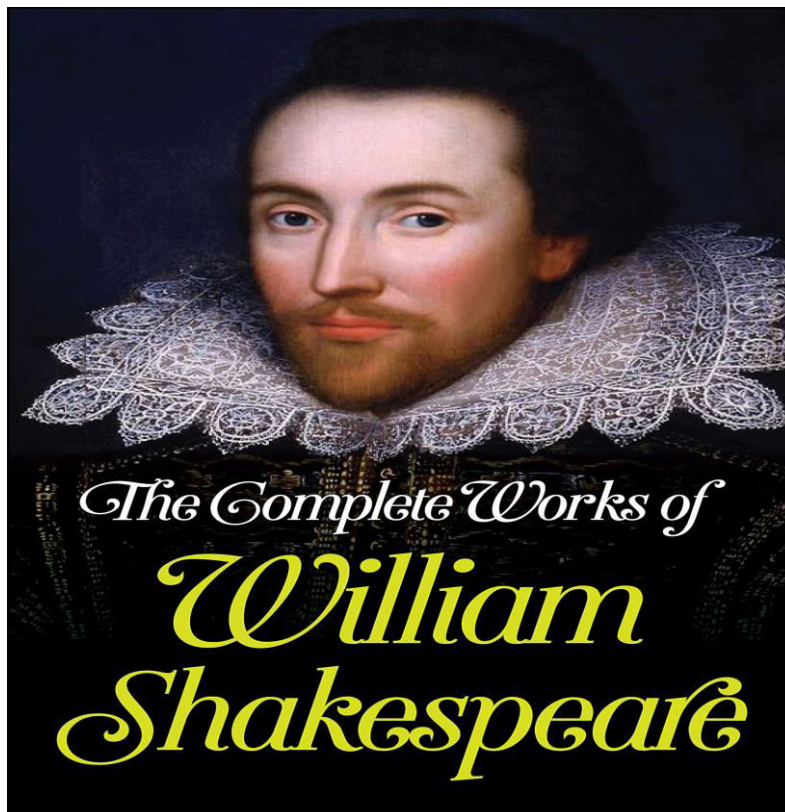
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ABSTRACT: Shakespeare's influence extends beyond his era, as his themes of love, ambition; power, fate, and human nature remain universally relevant. His pioneering use of blank verse, soliloquy, and dramatic irony set new standards in theatrical writing, inspiring generations of playwrights, directors, and actors. **The present paper is an honest attempt to attract the attention of the readers towards the Influence of Shakespeare on heroism in female characters.** Shakespeare's strong women often use intelligence, disguise, and agency to navigate patriarchal systems, influencing plots and challenging societal expectations, making them some of literature's most complex and memorable figures. His tragedies, such as Hamlet and Macbeth, delve into existential dilemmas, while his comedies, like Twelfth Night and A Midsummer Night's Dream, use wit and satire to entertain and critique society. His historical plays not only dramatize the past but also comment on political power and leadership of female.

KEYWORDS: Heroism, Female, drama, tragedy, comedy, soliloquy, blank verse, character development,

I. INTRODUCTION



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William Shakespeare stands as one of the greatest dramatists in history, and his works continue to influence theatre globally. His dramatic structure, particularly the five-act format, has influenced modern playwriting. Shakespeare skillfully balanced exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution, ensuring a compelling narrative arc. This structure is still widely used in contemporary theatre.



The use of soliloquies and asides is another hallmark of Shakespearean drama. These techniques allow audiences to access a character's innermost thoughts, enhancing dramatic tension and emotional depth. The famous soliloquy, "To be, or not to be" (Hamlet, Act 3, Scene 1, p. 56), exemplifies this technique. Shakespeare's thematic diversity further solidifies his reputation as a dramatist. He explored themes ranging from love and betrayal (Othello) to political intrigue (Julius Caesar), showcasing his ability to tackle various human experiences. His language and wordplay have enriched English theatre. Shakespeare coined numerous words and phrases still in use today, demonstrating his linguistic ingenuity. His dialogues are imbued with poetic devices such as metaphors, alliteration, and iambic pentameter, enhancing their theatrical impact. Shakespeare's impact on theatrical performance is also significant. His plays were written for live performance, emphasizing stagecraft, dramatic pacing, and audience engagement. The enduring popularity of his works on stage and screen reflects his lasting influence. William Shakespeare's legacy as a dramatist is unparalleled. His contributions to character development, plot construction, and theatrical techniques continue to shape modern drama. His ability to capture the complexities of human nature ensures that his works remain relevant, securing his place as one of the greatest dramatists in history.

Shakespeare's influence is also evident in the structural elements of modern theatre. Many contemporary plays employ his five-act structure, demonstrating the lasting impact of his dramaturgical framework. His use of dramatic irony, foreshadowing, and subplots has become integral to modern storytelling, reinforcing the depth and intricacy of contemporary scripts. Furthermore, Shakespeare's linguistic creativity has significantly shaped modern playwriting. His inventive use of metaphors, puns, and rhetorical devices continues to inspire playwrights and screenwriters, enriching the lexicon of theatre. His contributions to the English language, including phrases still in common usage today, underscore his lasting impact on dialogue and expression in modern theatre. Beyond textual influence, Shakespeare has left an indelible mark on performance styles. His plays have been adapted into various theatrical movements, including realism, absurdism, and postmodernism. Directors and actors continue to reinterpret his works, demonstrating their versatility and adaptability across cultural and temporal contexts.

Objectives of the Research Paper:

- To explore the impact of Shakespeare's female character development techniques on modern playwrights.
- To investigate the role of strong female characters in Shakespearean drama

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative approach, utilizing literary analysis, performance reviews, and critical discourse analysis to examine Shakespeare's influence on modern theatre. Primary sources include Shakespeare's plays and their contemporary adaptations, while secondary sources consist of scholarly articles, journals, and critical essays. The study also incorporates case studies of theatrical performances, both traditional and digital, to illustrate the ways in which Shakespearean elements persist in modern productions. Additionally, interviews with theatre practitioners and academic critiques provide further insights into how Shakespeare's legacy continues to shape modern dramaturgy, performance styles, and audience engagement.

Portia in the *Merchant of Venice* is unusual in that, since her father's death, having no brother, she has had to perform the role of a man and manage the very wealthy estate he has left her. Nevertheless, he has been able to exercise power over her from beyond the grave by stipulating in his will that those wealthy and powerful men who come to woo her from around the world will have to undergo a test and choose from three caskets, one of which contains the permission to marry Portia.

Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth* is thought of as a very strong woman. She certainly exercises power over her husband, Macbeth, in the first half of the play, as she encourages him to murder Duncan. She uses her sexuality, she taunts him and mocks his lack of courage. She appeals to his sense of obligation towards her. She comes in more strongly as he wavers and finally, he goes ahead with it. She seems like a strong woman but psychologically, she is not strong enough to deal with her guilt. Their marriage falls apart and they become estranged. She suffers terrible nightmares and finally commits suicide.

Desdemona in *Othello* Although Desdemona submits passively to her husband, Othello, as he strangles her to death, she demonstrates her strength at the beginning of the play when her father asks the Duke of Venice to stop her marriage to the Moor, Othello. He has ideas about who he wants to marry her to but she has fallen in love with a black man and he is opposed to their marriage, which has already taken place in secret by that time.



Rosalind in *As You Like It* is the central character in the play. She is disguised as a man throughout, until the end, and is able to organise everyone to fit in with her needs and desires. Her aim is to turn the man she wants to marry into someone who can match her qualities and be as strong as she is.

Viola in *Twelfth Night*

Finding herself shipwrecked of the beach at Ilyria, and having lost her twin brother in the wreck, Viola's first instinct is not to appeal for help as a helpless woman but to disguise herself as a man and find a job as a servant in the household of the Duke. Her ability to adapt herself to her circumstances in spite of her female upbringing where she has been protected by men and all decisions about her have been made by men is an indication of her strength. It is not only that adaptation that suggests strength but the ability to manipulate her circumstances for her own desired outcome, which is to marry the duke.

Shakespeare's influence on modern theatre is profound, extending from female character development and storytelling techniques to language and performance styles. His ability to portray human emotions and conflicts with depth and complexity makes his works timeless. The purpose of this critical study is to analyse how Shakespeare's plays continue to shape contemporary theatre through adaptations, interpretations, and innovative stagings. One of the most remarkable aspects of Shakespeare's influence is his ability to create multifaceted characters. For instance, Hamlet's introspective soliloquy, "To be, or not to be" (Hamlet, Act 3, Scene 1, p. 56), has influenced modern playwrights in crafting psychologically complex protagonists. Many contemporary plays borrow from Hamlet's existential struggles, reflecting on themes of doubt, fate, and morality. Similarly, Shakespeare's tragic heroes, such as Macbeth and Othello, serve as archetypes in modern drama. The downfall of Macbeth due to his unchecked ambition (Macbeth, Act 5, Scene 5, p. 89) echoes in contemporary works that explore power and corruption. Likewise, Othello's descent into jealousy (Othello, Act 3, Scene 3, p. 67) finds parallels in modern psychological thrillers that examine trust and manipulation.

Shakespeare's influence extends beyond character development to storytelling structures. His five-act structure, evident in *Romeo and Juliet* and *King Lear*, remains a template for many modern plays. Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* and Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* adopt similar dramatic pacing, showcasing how Shakespearean storytelling techniques persist in contemporary theatre. Moreover, Shakespeare's inventive use of language has had a lasting impact on modern theatre. His metaphors, such as "All the world's a stage" (*As You Like It*, Act 2, Scene 7, p. 45), continue to be referenced in theatre and literature. Playwrights like Tom Stoppard and Harold Pinter often integrate Shakespearean wordplay into their scripts, demonstrating the linguistic legacy of his works. The thematic depth of Shakespeare's plays also resonates with modern audiences. Themes of identity, betrayal, ambition, and justice explored in *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, and *Macbeth* are frequently revisited in contemporary drama. For instance, *Julius Caesar*'s political intrigue (*Julius Caesar*, Act 3, Scene 1, p. 78) mirrors the complexities of modern political dramas.

Shakespeare's influence on performance techniques is equally significant. His use of soliloquies and direct audience address has been adapted in modern productions to create engaging narratives. For example, in *Richard III* (Richard III, Act 1, Scene 1, p. 33), the titular character's manipulative monologues have inspired similar narrative strategies in contemporary theatre and film. Furthermore, Shakespearean drama has been reimagined in modern theatre through various adaptations. Productions such as Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet* (1996) and Julie Taymor's *Titus* (1999) showcase how filmmakers and theatre directors reinterpret his plays for new audiences. These adaptations highlight the flexibility of Shakespeare's works in different artistic forms.

Shakespeare's influence extends beyond theatre into global literature, shaping narratives, character archetypes, and linguistic styles across diverse literary traditions. His works have inspired novelists, poets, and playwrights worldwide, leading to cross-cultural adaptations and reinterpretations. From Japanese Noh adaptations to Bollywood retellings, Shakespeare's legacy continues to impact storytelling across various literary and artistic domains.

III. SUMMING UP

To sum up; the research scholar comes to the point that the present research paper has explored the far-reaching influence of female characters in selected plays of William Shakespeare. Most playwrights use tragedies to convey some moral lesson. Shakespeare, however, prefers to give an assessment of the character he has created, as if it is not important to him what did the character do but what kind of human she was. The playwright presents an exceptional female figure which contrasts with the traditional portrayal of women. Although Shakespeare really tried to embed in Cleopatra and Juliet as many features of the female character as possible: beauty, innocence, obedience, goodness, etc. the playwright still built two unique characters depicted with attributes new to the world: undeniable beauty, strength, determination, power, domination, etc., a woman whose essence is above the restrictions of the patriarchal code.



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