

# **Chapter One**

## **Introduction**

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### **1.0 Overview**

Many critics agree that; Shakespeare's plays remain controversial as influenced by Elizabethan era. Grant, T. (2008), claims that "William Shakespeare began writing and performing plays in the late of the fifteen century. Elizabeth Tudor began her reign as Queen in 1558, and died on March 23, 1603. Following the Middle Ages in Europe, the Renaissance era was existed. Renaissance means rebirth, and it meant the rebirth of ancient Greek and Roman culture for the elite class residing mainly in Italy circa (around) 1350-1650, and peripherally in England in the late 16th century. Renaissance scholars think that modern political and economic practices emerged in the Renaissance, while medievalists (scholars of the Middle Ages) think that the antecedents were already present in Medieval Society". Another equal point of controversy was that; whether women themselves contributed to and benefitted from the Renaissance. As noted the historian Joan Kelly asked several decades ago, did women have a renaissance like the men did? The main aims of elite males during the Renaissance was to become educated in the classical culture of the ancient Greeks and Romans, a culture they thought had been lost during the Middle Ages. These ancient ideas had not been lost, but utilized in ways compelling to the Christian Church. Now in the Renaissance period, education was seen as beneficial to an individual for his own sake, not for God's".

Mendelson, S. and Crawford, P. (1998) assume that; "The education that was received by females was to teach them how to act as ladies of the courts and patronesses of arts, not only for lucrative employment in a profession.

Their education was not of schools but acquired from or from especial tutors and their fathers. What was unique for the first time in Western history was that men were emphasizing education for women. Some highly educated ladies came to exert massive impact over the arts, literature, and some even had significant political roles. Desiderus Erasmus of the Netherlands and Thomas More of England felt that women of the middle classes should be educated too. All men thought that women should read specific books that would assist them in their roles. In Italy, Baldassare Castiglione in his ever-popular *The Courtier*, described the attributes Renaissance women needed to acquire to become a proper lady, but basic to this was the idea that in the Renaissance the lady's education was for the benefit of a man. Where as in the medieval courtly and love tales, the man shaped his remarks and actions primarily to please lady. Henry VIII's Lord Chancellor, Thomas More was instrumental in spreading humanism education in England. We know that his eldest daughter Margaret was educated in Latin, Greek, logic, Philosophy, Theology, Mathematics and Astronomy. This encouraged other English nobility to education their daughters too”

As well, Grant, T. (2008) concludes “However, domestic duties were never to be neglected for educational pursuits. Most male humanists preferred that educated women remain unwed, and metaphorically likened them to amazons and women warriors. Proper women were to be ornaments of their class, not significant contributors to scholarship. In his colloquy between the Abbot Antronius and the learned woman Magdala, the Dutch writer Erasmus portrayed in a humorous way the contrast between traditional and more progressive views on women's education”.

## ***1.1 women in early modern England***

The female study of Shakespeare emerged in late 1990s as exhausted and exiting field to which feminism is making a major contribution. (Crawford, P. 1985) claimed “It has become quite difficult for everyone to perform, read, teach or study Shakespeare without an awareness of gender issues; this will prove to be a permanent and positive change in attitude to the plays and their extraordinarily rich afterlife in international culture, as feminist studies have contributed to the now widely accepted view that works of art should be treated within a social frame of reference”.

Regarding the studies of women in early modern societies, the female body was used to woman’s variation, weakness and inferiority. Capp, Bernard. (2003). Suggested; “Women are considered physically and emotionally weaker than men, the weaker sex, and the second sex, men were physiologically different from women and superior for the reason that; the elements composing the human body were combined different in each sex. Apparently, women’s moist and cold constitution made them irrational, emotional, impulsive, and sexually rapacious. In other words medical science “depicted women as physically, intellectually, and morally inferior” Men did not understand the functions of the female body which frightened them, causing them to claim women were unstable and so not be trusted.

Having navigated some published critics books and similar works that concerns women on how they were supposed to behave and think; it is obviously observed that; their position in the society was restricted at home, where they were supposed to serve their husbands, being silent, submissive, chaste and modest. In spite of all that; there was a spacious grey area, a wife for example, was allowed to disobey her husband under certain

circumstances. If her husband forbade her to go to the church or read the Bible she was allowed to disobey him.

Levin, R. (1988), “under the umbrella of feminist criticism there is a wide range of critical practices and approaches to Shakespeare's works, and each of these approaches has its own supporters and detractors due to the diverse array of feminist studies, many feminist critics hesitate to posit a general description of what, exactly, feminist criticism is. It has been observed, however, that feminist criticism reflects the assorted theoretical positions of the feminist movement. Common topics of feminist studies of Shakespeare include examinations of patriarchy, gender and sex roles, and the relationship between gender and power in Shakespeare's plays have been tagged. It is generally agreed that feminist criticism of Shakespeare as a movement began in the mid-1970s”

Lewis, Liz. (2006) is inclined to agree with Mc Luskie (1999) that “Shakespeare wrote for a male entertainment”; it is historically incorrect to regard him as a feminist. He believes that Shakespeare, because of his extraordinary genius for depicting human behavior, enjoys the ability to portray the condition of women within a patriarchal system and created women characters which in their richness, transcend the limitations of his time”.

In this study I will discuss mainly Shakespeare's treatment of the these heroine's Ophelia, Lady Macbeth and Cleopatra, of the tragedies *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *Antony and Cleopatra* successively, beginning with an exploration of Shakespeare's representation of the effects of a patriarchal system upon the characters.

## **Aspects of Shakespeare's Tragedies**

Some of the important components in Shakespearean tragedies are:

The deadly mistake - all of the heroes in Shakespeare's tragedies have a soft point in his character that ultimately leads to their downfall.

Collapses of the nobleman - many of the men in Shakespeare's tragedies have excessive wealth and power, making their downfall more tragic (Hamlet).

Outside effects - Shakespeare's tragic heroes often fall martyr to influences of the others, such as evil spirits and manipulative characters that play a role of devil in their tragic ends (Hamlet & Macbeth).

Hero - The hero has chances for rescue but never has the opportunity of these in the proper time to keep him avoiding death (Antony & Cleopatra).

Shakespeare's tragedies usually share several features, including:

Shakespeare's tragedies begin in an ordered society but end with chaos.

Change is often reflected by changes in the environment, with storms or other happenings in the natural world.

The audience often develops sympathy for the hero.

The hero is usually a person of good personality being devastated by his own selfishness or ambition for plenty of opportunities.

## **1.2 Statement of the Study**

The researcher explores the unobserved aims behind the representation of ladies in some Shakespearean tragedies that a layman reader cannot explore.

## **1.3 The Significance of the Study**

This research is regarded to explore the critical views introduced by some critics and the magic mental ability of Shakespeare in reflecting the complicated nature of woman in his tragic plays.

## **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

The main objectives of this study are to:

- 1- Explore how Shakespeare portrays the role of Ophelia as a martyr.
- 2- Discuss how ill-ambition leads to a tragic end.
- 3- Illustrate how ladies induce the powerful superior men.

## **1.5 Questions of the Study**

1. How does Shakespeare portray the roles of Ophelia in his tragic play Hamlet?
2. How does Shakespeare portray the negative impact of ill-ambition in (Macbeth & Hamlet)?
3. How does Shakespeare depict the power of women in inducement? (Antony and Cleopatra)

## **1.6 Hypotheses of the study**

- 1- Shakespeare portrait the role of Ophelia as a martyr of madness of Hamlet.
- 2- Shakespeare portraits the negative impact of ill-ambition in massive destruction.
- 3- Shakespeare illustrates the women in inducement and in all other cases men are superior to ladies.

## **1.7 Methodology of the study:**

The researcher has followed the descriptive analytic method in order to answer the three questions of the research. Firstly, the researcher introduces the questions, and then provides the critics views concerning the question set forth. After that, he compares and contrasts their views adding his logical viewpoint.

## **1.8 The Limits of the Research**

This study is conducted in four chapters as follows:

Chapter one: Introduction.

Chapter Two: Literature Review.

Chapter Three: Analysis of Characters.

Chapter Four: Conclusion, Recommendation, Results and Suggestions.



## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

## Chapter 2

### 2.0 William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare was born on April 23, 1564, in Stratford-on-Avon. The son of John Shakespeare and Mary Arden, he was probably educated at the King Edward IV Grammar School in Stratford, where he learned Latin and a little Greek and read the Roman dramatists. At eighteen, he married Anne Hathaway, a woman seven or eight years his senior. Together they raised two daughters: Susanna, who was born in 1583, and Judith (whose twin brother died in boyhood), born in 1585. Wain, John (1964)

Robert Greene's *A Groat'sworth* alludes; "Shakespeare may have taught at school during this period, but it seems more probable that shortly after 1585 he went to London to begin his apprenticeship as an actor. Due to the plague, the London theaters were often closed between June 1592 and April 1594. During that period, Shakespeare probably had some income from his patron, Henry Wriothesley, earl of Southampton, to whom he dedicated his first two poems, *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594). The former was a long narrative poem depicting the rejection of Venus by Adonis, his death, and the consequent disappearance of beauty from the world. Despite conservative objections to the poem's glorification of sensuality, it was immensely popular and was reprinted six times during the nine years following its publication".

In 1594, Shakespeare joined the Lord Chamberlain's company of actors, the most popular of the companies acting at Court. In 1599 Shakespeare joined a group of Chamberlain's Men that would form a syndicate to build and

operate a new playhouse: the Globe, which became the most famous theater of its time. With his share of the income from the Globe, Shakespeare was able to purchase New Place, his home in Stratford.

While Shakespeare was regarded as the foremost dramatist of his time, evidence indicates that both he and his contemporaries looked to poetry, not playwriting, for enduring fame. Shakespeare's sonnets were composed between 1593 and 1601, though not published until 1609. That edition, *The Sonnets of Shakespeare*, consists of 154 sonnets, all written in the form of three quatrains and a couplet that is now recognized as Shakespearean. The sonnets fall into two groups: sonnets 1-126, addressed to a beloved friend, a handsome and noble young man, and sonnets 127-152, to a malignant but fascinating "Dark Lady," whom the poet loves in spite of himself. Nearly all of Shakespeare's sonnets examine the inevitable decay of time and the immortalization of beauty and love in poetry.

In his poems and plays, Shakespeare invented thousands of words, often combining or contorting Latin, French and native roots. His impressive expansion of the English language, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, includes such words as: arch-villain, birthplace, bloodsucking, courtship, dewdrop, downstairs, fanged, heartsore, hunchbacked, leapfrog, misquote, pageantry, radiance, schoolboy, stillborn, watchdog, and zany.

Shakespeare wrote more than 30 plays. These are usually divided into four categories: histories, comedies, tragedies, and romances. His earliest plays were primarily comedies and histories such as *Henry VI* and *The Comedy of Errors*, but in 1596, Shakespeare wrote *Romeo and Juliet*, his second tragedy, and over the next dozen years he would return to the form, writing

the plays for which he is now best known: *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*. In his final years, Shakespeare turned to the romantic with *Cymbeline*, *A Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*. Wagner, L. W. (1963): 94-97.

Only eighteen of Shakespeare's plays were published separately in quarto editions during his lifetime; a complete collection of his works did not appear until the publication of the First Folio in 1623, several years after his death. Nonetheless, his contemporaries recognized Shakespeare's achievements. Francis Meres cited "honey-tongued" Shakespeare for his plays and poems in 1598, and the Chamberlain's Men rose to become the leading dramatic company in London, installed as members of the royal household in 1603.

Sometime after 1612, Shakespeare retired from the stage and returned to his home in Stratford. He drew up his will in January of 1616, which included his famous bequest to his wife of his "second best bed." He died on April 23, 1616, and was buried two days later at Stratford Church. Wagner, L. W. (1963): 94-97.

## **Works**

### **Poetry**

*The Rape of Lucrece* (1594)

*The Sonnets of Shakespeare* (1609)

*Venus and Adonis* (1593)

### **Drama**

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595)

*All's Well that Ends Well* (1602)

*Antony and Cleopatra* (1607)

*As You Like It* (1599)

*Coriolanus* (1608)

*Cymbeline* (1609)

*Hamlet* (1600)

*Henry IV* (1597)

*Henry V* (1598)

*Henry VI (Parts I, II, and III)* (1590)

*Henry VIII* (1612)

*Julius Caesar* (1599)

*King John* (1596)

*King Lear* (1605)

*Love's Labour's Lost* (1593)

*Macbeth* (1606)

*Measure for Measure* (1604)

*Much Ado About Nothing* (1598)

*Othello* (1604)  
*Pericles* (1608)  
*Richard II* (1595)  
*Richard III* (1594)  
*Romeo and Juliet* (1596)  
*The Comedy of Errors* (1590)  
*The Merchant of Venice* (1596)  
*The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1597)  
*The Taming of the Shrew* (1593)  
*The Tempest* (1611)  
*The Winter's Tale* (1610)  
*Timon of Athens* (1607)  
*Titus Andronicus* (1590)  
*Troilus and Cressida* (1600)  
*Twelfth Night* (1599)  
*Two Gentlemen of Verona* (1592)

## **Brief and outlines of the three being discussed plays**

### **2.1 Hamlet**

The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, often shortened to Hamlet is a tragedy written by William Shakespeare at an uncertain date between 1599 and 1602.

Set in the Kingdom of Denmark, the play dramatizes the revenge Prince Hamlet is called upon to wreak upon his uncle, Claudius by the ghost of Hamlet's father, King Hamlet. Claudius had murdered his own brother and seized the throne, also marrying his deceased brother's widow.

Hamlet is Shakespeare's longest play, and is among the most powerful and influential tragedies in English literature, with a story capable of "seemingly endless retelling and adaptation by others." (Thompson and Taylor (2006) The play likely was one of Shakespeare's most popular works during his lifetime, Crystal and Crystal (2005). and still ranks among his most performed, topping the performance list of the Royal Shakespeare Company and its predecessors in Stratford-upon-Avon since 1879. Leeds,B. (1965).

It has inspired many other writers – from Goethe and Dickens to Joyce and Murdoch – and has been described as "the world's most filmed story after Cinderella". Thompson and Taylor (2006)

The story of Shakespeare's Hamlet was derived from the legend of Amleth, preserved by 13th-century chronicler Saxo Grammaticus in his *Gesta Danorum*, as subsequently retold by 16th-century scholar François de Belleforest. Shakespeare may also have drawn on an earlier (hypothetical) Elizabethan play known today as the *Ur-Hamlet*, though some scholars

believe he himself wrote the Ur-Hamlet, later revising it to create the version of Hamlet we now have. He almost certainly wrote his version of the title role for his fellow actor, Richard Burbage, the leading tragedian of Shakespeare's time. Taylor (2002, Banham (1998). In the almost 400 years since its inception, the role has been performed by numerous highly acclaimed actors in each successive century.

Three different early versions of the play are extant: the First Quarto (Q1, 1603); the Second Quarto (Q2, 1604); and the First Folio (F1, 1623). Each version includes lines and entire scenes missing from the others. The play's structure and depth of characterization have inspired much critical scrutiny. One such example is the centuries-old debate about Hamlet's hesitation to kill his uncle, which some see as merely a plot device to prolong the action, but which others argue is a dramatization of the complex philosophical and ethical issues that surround cold-blooded murder, calculated revenge, and thwarted desire. More recently, psychoanalytic critics have examined Hamlet's unconscious desires, while feminist critics have re-evaluated and attempted to rehabilitate the often maligned characters of Ophelia and Gertrude.

### ***1- Characters***

*Hamlet – Son of the late King and nephew of the present king*

*Claudius – King of Denmark and Hamlet's uncle*

*Gertrude – Queen of Denmark and mother to Hamlet*

*Polonius – Chief counsellor to the king*

*Ophelia – Daughter to Polonius*

*Horatio – Friend to Hamlet*

*Laertes – Son to Polonius*



*Voltimand and Cornelius – Courtiers*

*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern – Courtiers, friends to Hamlet*

*Osric – a Courtier*

*Marcellus – an Officer*

*Bernardo – an Officer*

*Francisco – a Soldier*

*Reynaldo – Servant to Polonius*

*Ghost of Hamlet's Father*

*Fortinbras – Prince of Norway*

*Gravediggers – a Sexton*

*Player King, Player Queen, Lucianus etc. – Players*

*A Priest*

*A Captain in Fortinbras' army*

*English Ambassadors*

*Messengers, Sailors, Lords, Ladies, Guards, Danes (supporters of Laertes)*

## **Plot**

The protagonist of Hamlet is Prince Hamlet of Denmark, son of the recently deceased King Hamlet, and nephew of King Claudius, his father's brother and successor. Claudius hastily married King Hamlet's widow, Gertrude, Hamlet's mother, and took the throne for himself. Denmark has a long-standing feud with neighboring Norway, which culminated when King Hamlet slew King Fortinbras of Norway in a battle years ago. Although Denmark defeated Norway, and the Norwegian throne fell to King Fortinbras's infirm brother, Denmark fears that an invasion led by the dead Norwegian king's son, Prince Fortinbras, is imminent.

The play opens on a cold night on the ramparts of Elsinore, the Danish royal castle. The sentries Bernardo and Marcellus and Hamlet's friend Horatio encounter a ghost that looks like the late King Hamlet. They vow to tell Prince Hamlet what they have witnessed.

As the Court gathers the next day, while King Claudius and Queen Gertrude discuss affairs of state with their elderly adviser Polonius, Hamlet looks on glumly. After the Court exits, Hamlet despairs of his father's death and his mother's hasty remarriage. Learning of the Ghost from Horatio, Hamlet resolves to see it himself.

As Polonius's son Laertes prepares to depart for a visit to France, Polonius gives him contradictory advice that culminates in the ironic maxim "to thine own self be true." Polonius's daughter, Ophelia, admits her interest in Hamlet, but both Polonius and Laertes warn her against seeking the prince's attention. That night on the rampart, the Ghost appears to Hamlet, telling the prince that he was murdered by Claudius and demanding that Hamlet avenge

him. Hamlet agrees and the Ghost vanishes. The prince confides to Horatio and the sentries that from now on he plans to "put on an antic disposition" and forces them to swear to keep his plans for revenge secret. Privately, however, he remains uncertain of the Ghost's reliability.

Soon thereafter, Ophelia rushes to her father, telling him that Hamlet arrived at her door the prior night half-undressed and behaving crazily. Polonius blames love for Hamlet's madness and resolves to inform Claudius and Gertrude. As he enters to do so, the king and queen finish welcoming Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, two student acquaintances of Hamlet, to Elsinore. The royal couple has requested that the students investigate the cause of Hamlet's mood and behavior. Additional news requires that Polonius wait to be heard: messengers from Norway inform Claudius that the King of Norway has rebuked Prince Fortinbras for attempting to re-fight his father's battles. The forces that Fortinbras conscripted to march against Denmark will instead be sent against Poland, though they will pass through a portion of Denmark to get there.

Polonius tells Claudius and Gertrude his theory regarding Hamlet's behavior, and speaks to Hamlet in a hall of the castle to try to uncover more information. Hamlet feigns madness but subtly insults Polonius all the while. When Rosencrantz and Guildenstern arrive, Hamlet greets his friends warmly, but quickly discerns that they are spies. Hamlet becomes bitter, admitting that he is upset at his situation but refusing to give the true reason why, instead commenting on "what a piece of work" humanity is. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern tell Hamlet that they have brought along a troupe of actors that they met while traveling to Elsinore. Hamlet, after welcoming the actors and dismissing his friends-turned-spies, plots to stage

a play featuring a death in the style of his father's murder, thereby determining the truth of the Ghost's story, as well as Claudius's guilt or innocence, by studying Claudius's reaction.

Polonius forces Ophelia to return Hamlet's love letters and tokens of affection to the prince while he and Claudius watch from afar to evaluate Hamlet's reaction. Hamlet is walking alone in the hall as the King and Polonius await Ophelia's entrance, musing whether "to be or not to be." When Ophelia enters and tries to return Hamlet's things, Hamlet accuses her of immodesty and cries "get thee to a nunnery," though it is unclear whether this, too, is a show of madness or genuine distress. His reaction convinces Claudius that Hamlet is not mad for love. Shortly thereafter, the court assembles to watch the play Hamlet has commissioned. After seeing the Player King murdered by his rival pouring poison in his ear, Claudius abruptly rises and runs from the room: proof positive for Hamlet of his uncle's guilt.

Hamlet mistakenly stabs Polonius. Gertrude summons Hamlet to her room to demand an explanation. Meanwhile, Claudius talks to himself about the impossibility of repenting, since he still has possession of his ill-gotten goods: his brother's crown and wife. He sinks to his knees. Hamlet, on his way to visit his mother, sneaks up behind him, but does not kill him, reasoning that killing Claudius while he is praying will send him straight to heaven while the Ghost is stuck in purgatory. In the queen's bedchamber, Hamlet and Gertrude fight bitterly. Polonius, spying on the conversation from behind a tapestry, makes a noise. Hamlet, believing it is Claudius, stabs wildly, killing Polonius, but pulls aside the curtain and sees his mistake. In a rage, Hamlet brutally insults his mother for her apparent ignorance of

Claudius's villainy, but the Ghost enters and reprimands Hamlet for his inaction and harsh words. Unable to see or hear the Ghost herself, Gertrude takes Hamlet's conversation with it as further evidence of madness. After begging the queen to stop sleeping with Claudius, Hamlet leaves, dragging Polonius's corpse away. Hamlet jokes with Claudius about where he has hidden Polonius's body, and the king, fearing for his life, sends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to accompany Hamlet to England with a sealed letter to the English king requesting that Hamlet be executed immediately.

Insane by grief at Polonius's death, Ophelia wanders Elsinore. Laertes arrives back from France, enraged by his father's death and his sister's madness. Claudius convinces Laertes that Hamlet is solely responsible, but a letter soon arrives indicating that Hamlet has returned to Denmark, foiling Claudius's plan. Claudius switches tactics, proposing a fencing match between Laertes and Hamlet to settle their differences. Laertes will be given a poison-tipped foil, and Claudius will offer Hamlet poisoned wine as a congratulation if that fails. Gertrude interrupts to report that Ophelia has drowned, though it is unclear whether it was suicide or an accident exacerbated by her madness.

Horatio has received a letter from Hamlet, explaining that the prince escaped by negotiating with pirates who attempted to attack his England-bound ship, and the friends reunite offstage. Two gravediggers discuss Ophelia's apparent suicide while digging her grave. Hamlet arrives with Horatio and banters with one of the gravediggers, who unearths the skull of a jester from Hamlet's childhood, Yorick. Hamlet picks up the skull, saying "alas, poor Yorick" as he contemplates mortality. Ophelia's funeral procession approaches, led by Laertes. Hamlet and Horatio initially hide, but when

Hamlet realizes that Ophelia is the one being buried, he reveals himself, proclaiming his love for her. Laertes and Hamlet fight by Ophelia's graveside, but the brawl is broken up.

Back at Elsinore, Hamlet explains to Horatio that he had discovered Claudius's letter with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's belongings and replaced it with a forged copy indicating that his former friends should be killed instead. A foppish courtier, Osric, interrupts the conversation to deliver the fencing challenge to Hamlet. Hamlet, despite Horatio's advice, accepts it. Hamlet does well at first, leading the match by two hits to none, and Gertrude raises a toast to him using the poisoned glass of wine Claudius had set aside for Hamlet. Claudius tries to stop her, but is too late: she drinks, and Laertes realizes the plot will be revealed. Laertes slashes Hamlet with his poisoned blade. In the ensuing scuffle, they switch weapons and Hamlet wounds Laertes with his own poisoned sword. Gertrude collapses and, claiming she has been poisoned, dies. In his dying moments, Laertes reconciles with Hamlet and reveals Claudius's plan. Hamlet rushes at Claudius and kills him. As the poison takes effect, Hamlet, hearing that Fortinbras is marching through the area, names the Norwegian prince as his successor. Horatio, distraught at the thought of being the last survivor, says he will commit suicide by drinking the dregs of Gertrude's poisoned wine, but Hamlet begs him to live on and tell his story. Hamlet dies, proclaiming "the rest is silence." Fortinbras, who was ostensibly marching towards Poland with his army, arrives at the palace, along with an English ambassador bringing news of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's deaths. Horatio promises to recount the full story of what happened, and Fortinbras seeing the entire Danish royal family dead, takes the crown for himself.

## 2.2 Macbeth

Macbeth is a tragedy written by William Shakespeare. Set mainly in Scotland, the play dramatizes the damaging physical and psychological effects of political ambition on those who seek power for its own sake.

The play is believed to have been written between 1599 and 1606. The earliest account of a performance of what was probably Shakespeare's play is April 1611, when Simon Forman recorded seeing such a play at the Globe Theatre. It was first published in the Folio of 1623, possibly from a prompt book. It was most likely written during the reign of James I, who had been James VI of Scotland before he succeeded to the English throne in 1603. James was a patron of Shakespeare's acting company, and of all the plays Shakespeare wrote during James's reign, Macbeth most clearly reflects the playwright's relationship with the sovereign.

Macbeth is Shakespeare's shortest tragedy, and tells the story of a brave Scottish general named Macbeth who receives a prophecy from a trio of witches that one day he will become King of Scotland. Consumed by ambition and spurred to action by his wife, Macbeth murders King Duncan and takes the throne for himself. He is then wracked/ with guilt and paranoia, and he soon becomes a tyrannical ruler as he is forced to commit more and more murders to protect himself from enmity and suspicion. The bloodbath and consequent civil war swiftly take Macbeth and Lady Macbeth into the realms of arrogance, madness, and death.

Shakespeare's source for the tragedy is the account of Macbeth, King of Scotland, Macduff, and Duncan in Holinshed's Chronicles (1587), a history of England, Scotland, and Ireland familiar to Shakespeare and his

contemporaries, although the events in the play differ extensively from the history of the real Macbeth. In recent scholarship, the events of the tragedy are usually associated more closely with the execution of Henry Garnett for complicity in the Gunpowder.

In the backstage world of theatre, some believe that the play is cursed, and will not mention its title aloud, referring to it instead as "the Scottish play". Over the course of many centuries, the play has attracted some of the most renowned actors to the roles of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. It has been adapted to film, television, opera, novels, comic books, and other media.

### **Characters**

Duncan – King of Scotland

Malcolm – Duncan's older son

Donalbain – Duncan's younger son

Macbeth – a general in the army of King Duncan; originally Thane of Glamis, then Thane of Cawdor, and later King of Scotland

Lady Macbeth – Macbeth's wife, and later Queen of Scotland

Banquo – Macbeth's friend and a general in the army of King Duncan

Fleance – Banquo's son

Macduff – Thane of Fife

Lady Macduff – Macduff's wife

Macduff's son

Ross, Lennox, Angus, Menteith, Caithness – Scottish Thanes

Siward – general of the English forces

Young Siward – Siward's son

Seyton – Macbeth's armourer

Hecate – Queen of the witches

Three Witches



Captain – in the Scottish army  
Three Murderers – employed by Macbeth  
Two Murderers – attack Lady Macduff  
Porter – gatekeeper at Macbeth's home  
Doctor – Lady Macbeth's doctor  
Doctor – at the English court  
Gentlewoman – Lady Macbeth's caretaker  
Lord – opposed to Macbeth  
First Apparition – armed head  
Second Apparition – bloody child  
Third Apparition – crowned child  
Attendants, Messengers, Servants, Soldiers

## **Plot**

The play opens amidst thunder and lightning, and the Three Witches decide that their next meeting shall be with Macbeth. In the following scene, a wounded sergeant reports to King Duncan of Scotland that his generals—Macbeth, who is the Thane of Glamis, and Banquo—have just defeated the allied forces of Norway and Ireland, who were led by the traitorous Macdonald and the Thane of Cawdor. Macbeth, the King's kinsman, is praised for his bravery and fighting prowess.

In the following scene, Macbeth and Banquo discuss the weather and their victory. As they wander onto a heath, the Three Witches enter and greet them with prophecies. Though Banquo challenges them first, they address Macbeth, hailing him as "Thane of Glamis," "Thane of Cawdor," and that he shall "be King hereafter." Macbeth appears to be stunned to silence. When Banquo asks of his own fortunes, the witches respond paradoxically, saying that he will be less than Macbeth, yet happier, less successful, yet more. He

will father a line of kings, though he himself will not be one. While the two men wonder at these pronouncements, the witches vanish, and another thane, Ross, arrives and informs Macbeth of his newly bestowed title: Thane of Cawdor, as the previous Thane of Cawdor shall be put to death for treason. The first prophecy is thus fulfilled, and Macbeth, previously skeptical, immediately begins to harbour ambitions of becoming king.

King Duncan welcomes and praises Macbeth and Banquo, and declares that he will spend the night at Macbeth's castle at Inverness; he also names his son Malcolm as his heir. Macbeth sends a message ahead to his wife, Lady Macbeth, telling her about the witches' prophecies. Lady Macbeth suffers none of her husband's uncertainty, and wishes him to murder Duncan in order to obtain kingship. When Macbeth arrives at Inverness, she overrides all of her husband's objections by challenging his manhood, and successfully persuades him to kill the king that very night. He and Lady Macbeth plan to get Duncan's two chamberlains drunk so that they will black out; the next morning they will blame the chamberlains for the murder. They will be defenseless, as they will remember nothing.

While Duncan is asleep, Macbeth stabs him, despite his doubts and a number of supernatural portents, including a hallucination of a bloody dagger. He is so shaken that Lady Macbeth has to take charge. In accordance with her plan, she frames Duncan's sleeping servants for the murder by placing bloody daggers on them. Early the next morning, Lennox, a Scottish nobleman, and Macduff, the loyal Thane of Fife, arrive. A porter opens the gate and Macbeth leads them to the king's chamber, where Macduff discovers Duncan's body. Macbeth murders the guards to prevent them from professing their innocence, but claims he did so in a fit of anger over their

misdeeds. Duncan's sons Malcolm and Donalbain flee to England and Ireland, respectively, fearing that whoever killed Duncan desires their demise as well. The rightful heirs' flight makes them suspects and Macbeth assumes the throne as the new King of Scotland as a kinsman of the dead king. Banquo reveals this to the audience, and while sceptical of the new King Macbeth, he remembers the witches' prophecy about how his own descendants would inherit the throne, this makes him suspicious of Macbeth.

Despite his success, Macbeth, also aware of this part of the prophecy, remains uneasy. Macbeth invites Banquo to a royal banquet, where he discovers that Banquo and his young son, Fleance, will be riding out that night. Fearing Banquo's suspicions, Macbeth arranges to have him murdered, so he hires three men to kill them. The assassins succeed in killing Banquo, but Fleance escapes. Macbeth becomes furious: he fears that his power remains insecure as long as an heir of Banquo remains alive. At the banquet, Macbeth invites his lords and Lady Macbeth to a night of drinking and merriment. Banquo's ghost enters and sits in Macbeth's place. Macbeth raves fearfully, startling his guests, as the ghost is only visible to himself. The others panic at the sight of Macbeth raging at an empty chair, until a desperate Lady Macbeth tells them that her husband is merely afflicted with a familiar and harmless malady. The ghost departs and returns once more, causing the same riotous anger and fear in Macbeth. This time, Lady Macbeth tells the lords to leave, and they do so.

Macbeth, disturbed, visits the three witches once more and asks them to reveal the truth of their prophecies to him. To answer his questions, they summon horrible apparitions, each of which offers predictions and further prophecies to allay Macbeth's fears. First, they conjure an armoured head,

which tells him to beware of Macduff (4.1.72). Second, a bloody child tells him that no one born of a woman shall be able to harm him. Thirdly, a crowned child holding a tree states that Macbeth will be safe until Great Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane Hill. Macbeth is relieved and feels secure, because he knows that all men are born of women and forests cannot move. Macbeth also asks if Banquo's sons will ever reign in Scotland: the witches conjure a procession of eight crowned kings, all similar in appearance to Banquo, and the last carrying a mirror that reflects even more kings. Macbeth realises that these are all Banquo's descendants having acquired kingship in numerous countries. After the witches perform a mad dance and leave, Lennox enters and tells Macbeth that Macduff has fled to England. Macbeth orders Macduff's castle be seized, and, most cruelly, sends murderers to slaughter Macduff, as well as Macduff's wife and children. Although Macduff is no longer in the castle, everyone in Macduff's castle is put to death, including Lady Macduff and their young son.

Meanwhile, Lady Macbeth becomes wracked with guilt from the crimes she and her husband have committed. At night, in the king's palace at Dunsinane, a doctor and a gentlewoman discuss Lady Macbeth's strange habit of sleepwalking. Suddenly, Lady Macbeth enters in a trance with a candle in her hand. Bemoaning the murders of Duncan, Lady Macduff, and Banquo, she tries to wash off imaginary bloodstains from her hands, all the while speaking of the terrible things she knows she pressed her husband to do. She leaves, and the doctor and gentlewoman marvel at her descent into madness. Her belief that nothing can wash away the blood on her hands is an ironic reversal of her earlier claim to Macbeth that "[a] little water clears us of this deed" (2.2.66).

In England, Macduff is informed by Ross that his "castle is surprised; [his] wife and babes / Savagely slaughter'd" (4.3.204–5). When this news of his family's execution reaches him, Macduff is stricken with grief and vows revenge. Prince Malcolm, Duncan's son, has succeeded in raising an army in England, and Macduff joins him as he rides to Scotland to challenge Macbeth's forces. The invasion has the support of the Scottish nobles, who are appalled and frightened by Macbeth's tyrannical and murderous behaviour. Malcolm leads an army, along with Macduff and Englishmen Siward (the Elder), the Earl of Northumberland, against Dunsinane Castle. While encamped in Birnam Wood, the soldiers are ordered to cut down and carry tree limbs to camouflage their numbers.

Before Macbeth's opponents arrive, he receives news that Lady Macbeth has killed herself, causing him to sink into a deep and pessimistic despair and deliver his "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow" soliloquy (5.5.17–28). Though he reflects on the brevity and meaninglessness of life, he nevertheless awaits the English and fortifies Dunsinane. He is certain that the witches' prophecies guarantee his invincibility, but is struck with fear when he learns that the English army is advancing on Dunsinane shielded with boughs cut from Birnam Wood, in apparent fulfillment of one of the prophecies.

A battle culminates in Macduff's confrontation with Macbeth, who kills Young Siward in combat, the English forces overwhelm his army and castle. Macbeth boasts that he has no reason to fear Macduff, for he cannot be killed by any man born of woman. Macduff declares that he was "from his mother's womb / Untimely ripp'd" (5.8.15–16), (i.e., born by Caesarean section) and is not "of woman born" (an example of a literary quibble),

fulfilling the second prophecy. Macbeth realises too late that he has misinterpreted the witches' words. Though he realises that he is doomed, he continues to fight. Macduff kills and beheads him, thus fulfilling the remaining prophecy.

Macduff carries Macbeth's head onstage and Malcolm discusses how order has been restored. His last reference to Lady Macbeth, however, reveals "'tis thought, by self and violent hands / Took off her life" (5.9.71–72), but the method of her suicide is undisclosed. Malcolm, now the King of Scotland, declares his benevolent intentions for the country and invites all to see him crowned at Scone.

Although Malcolm, and not Fleance, is placed on the throne, the witches' prophecy concerning Banquo ("Thou shalt get kings") was known to the audience of Shakespeare's time to be true: James VI of Scotland (later also James I of England) was supposedly a descendant of Banquo.

## **2.3 Antony and Cleopatra**

Antony and Cleopatra is a tragedy by William Shakespeare. The play was probably performed first about 1607 at the Blackfriars Theatre or the Globe Theatre by the King's Men. Barroll, J. Leeds (1965). Shakespeare, William (1998). Its first known appearance in print was in the First Folio of 1623.

The plot is based on Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's Lives and follows the relationship between Cleopatra and Mark Antony from the time of the Sicilian revolt to Cleopatra's suicide during the Final War of the Roman Republic. The major antagonist is Octavius Caesar, one of Antony's fellow triumviri of the Second Triumvirate and the first emperor of the

Roman Empire. The tragedy is set in Rome and Egypt, characterised by swift, panoramic shifts in geographical locations and in registers, alternating between sensual, imaginative Alexandria and the more pragmatic, austere Rome.

Many consider Shakespeare's Cleopatra, whom the playwright described as having "infinite variety", as one of the most complex and fully developed female characters in his entire body of work. Neill, Michael (1994 )p.45 She is frequently vain and histrionic, almost provoking an audience to scorn; at the same time, Shakespeare's efforts invest both Cleopatra and Antony with tragic grandeur. These contradictory features have led to famously divided critical responses. David, B. (1990). It is difficult to classify Antony and Cleopatra as belonging to a single genre. It can be described as a history play (though it does not completely adhere to historical account), as a tragedy (though not completely in Aristotelian terms), as a comedy, and as a romance, and some critics, e.g. McCarter, have also classified it as a problem play.

### **Main Characters**

*Mark Antony*-Roman general and one of the three joint leaders, or triumvirs, who rule the Roman Republic after the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 B.C.

Octavius Caesar – another triumvir

Lepidus – another triumvir

Cleopatra – Queen of Egypt

Sextus Pompey – rebel against the triumvirate and son of the late Pompey

Antony's party

Demetrius

Canidius – Antony's lieutenant-general

Schoolmaster – Antony's ambassador to Octavius

Octavius' party

Octavia – Octavius' sister

Gallus

Proculeius

Sextus' party

Menecrates

Menas

Varrius

Cleopatra's party

Charmian – maid of honour

Iras – maid of honour

Alexas

Mardian – a eunuch

### **plot**

Mark Antony – one of the triumvirs of the Roman Republic, along with Octavius and Lepidus – has neglected his soldierly duties after being beguiled by Egypt's Queen, Cleopatra. He ignores Rome's domestic problems, including the fact that his third wife Fulvia rebelled against Octavius and then died.

Octavius calls Antony back to Rome from Alexandria in order to help him fight against Sextus Pompey, Menecrates, and Menas, three notorious pirates



of the Mediterranean. At Alexandria, Cleopatra begs Antony not to go, and though he repeatedly affirms his deep passionate love for her, he eventually leaves.

Back in Rome, a general brings forward the idea that Antony should marry Octavius's younger sister, Octavia, in order to cement the friendly bond between the two men. Antony's lieutenant Enobarbus, though, knows that Octavia can never satisfy him after Cleopatra. In a famous passage, he describes Cleopatra's charms: "Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale / Her infinite variety: other women cloy / The appetites they feed, but she makes hungry / Where most she satisfies."

In Egypt, Cleopatra learns of Antony's marriage to Octavia and takes furious revenge upon the messenger that brings her the news. She grows content only when her courtiers assure her that Octavia is homely: short, low-browed, round-faced and with bad hair.

At a confrontation, the triumvirs parley with Sextus Pompey, and offer him a truce. He can retain Sicily and Sardinia, but he must help them "rid the sea of pirates" and send them tributes. After some hesitation Sextus agrees. They engage in a drunken celebration on Sextus' galley, though the austere Octavius leaves early and sober from the party. Menas suggests to Sextus that he kill the three triumvirs and make himself ruler of the Roman Republic, but he refuses, finding it dishonourable. Later, Octavius and Lepidus break their truce with Sextus and war against him. This is unapproved by Antony, and he is furious.

Antony returns to Alexandria, Egypt, and crowns Cleopatra and himself as rulers of Egypt and the eastern third of the Roman Republic (which was

Antony's share as one of the triumvirs). He accuses Octavius of not giving him his fair share of Sextus' lands, and is angry that Lepidus, whom Octavius has imprisoned, is out of the triumvirate. Octavius agrees to the former demand, but otherwise is very displeased with what Antony has done.

Antony prepares to battle Octavius. Enobarbus urges Antony to fight on land, where he has the advantage, instead of by sea, where the navy of Octavius is lighter, more mobile and better manned. Antony refuses, since Octavius has dared him to fight at sea. Cleopatra pledges her fleet to aid Antony. However, during the Battle of Actium off the western coast of Greece, Cleopatra flees with her sixty ships, and Antony follows her, leaving his forces to ruin. Ashamed of what he has done for the love of Cleopatra, Antony reproaches her for making him a coward, but also sets this true and deep love above all else, saying "Give me a kiss; even this repays me."

Octavius sends a messenger to ask Cleopatra to give up Antony and come over to his side. She hesitates, and flirts with the messenger, when Antony walks in and angrily denounces her behavior. He sends the messenger to be whipped. Eventually, he forgives Cleopatra and pledges to fight another battle for her, this time on land.

On the eve of the battle, Antony's soldiers hear strange portents, which they interpret as the god Hercules abandoning his protection of Antony. Furthermore, Enobarbus, Antony's long-serving lieutenant, deserts him and goes over to Octavius' side. Rather than confiscating Enobarbus' goods, which he did not take with him when he fled, Antony orders them to be sent

to Enobarbus. Enobarbus is so overwhelmed by Antony's generosity, and so ashamed of his own disloyalty, that he dies from a broken heart.

Antony loses the battle as his troops desert en masse and he denounces Cleopatra: "This foul Egyptian hath betrayed me." He resolves to kill her for the treachery. Cleopatra decides that the only way to win back Antony's love is to send him word that she killed herself, dying with his name on her lips. She locks herself in her monument, and awaits Antony's return.

Her plan fails: rather than rushing back in remorse to see the "dead" Cleopatra, Antony decides that his own life is no longer worth living. He begs one of his aides, Eros, to run him through with a sword, but Eros cannot bear to do it and kills himself. Antony admires Eros' courage and attempts to do the same, but only succeeds in wounding himself. In great pain, he learns that Cleopatra is indeed alive. He is hoisted up to her in her monument and dies in her arms.

Octavius goes to Cleopatra trying to persuade her to surrender. She angrily refuses since she can imagine nothing worse than being led in chains through the streets of Rome, proclaimed a villain for the ages. She imagines that "the quick comedians / Extemporally will stage us, and present / Our Alexandrian revels: Antony / Shall be brought drunken forth, and I shall see / Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness / I' th' posture of a whore." This speech is full of dramatic irony, because in Shakespeare's time Cleopatra really was played by a "squeaking boy" and Shakespeare's play does depict Antony's drunken revels.

Cleopatra is betrayed and taken into custody by the Romans. She gives Octavius what she claims is a complete account of her wealth but is betrayed

by her treasurer, who claims she is holding treasure back. Octavius reassures her that he is not interested in her wealth, but Dolabella warns her that he intends to parade her at his triumph.

Cleopatra kills herself using the poison of an asp. She dies calmly and ecstatically, imagining how she will meet Antony again in the afterlife. Her serving maids, Iras and Charmian, also kill themselves. Octavius discovers the dead bodies and experiences conflicting emotions. Antony's and Cleopatra's deaths leave him free to become the first Roman Emperor, but he also feels some kind of sympathy for them: "She shall be buried by her Antony. / No grave upon the earth shall clip in it / A pair so famous..." He orders a public military funeral.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Analysis of Characters**

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### **Analysis of the Characters**

#### **3.0 Ophelia**

Shakespeare portrays the women in a patriarchal society as characters with richness transcend the limitations of time and Shakespearean themes become eternal.

Ophelia is a young woman has no power, because she is susceptible to love and love kills. For most critics of Shakespeare, Ophelia has been an insignificant minor character in the play, touching in her weakness and madness but chiefly interesting, of course, in what she tells us about Hamlet. And while female readers of Shakespeare have often attempted to champion Ophelia, even feminist critics have done so with a certain embarrassment. As Kolodny, A. (1980) admits: “it is after all, an imposition of high order to ask the viewer to attend to Ophelia's sufferings in a scene where, before, he's always so comfortably kept his eye fixed on Hamlet.

Showalter, E. (1997), states out that; “Yet when feminist criticism allows Ophelia to upstage Hamlet, it also brings to the foreground the issues in an ongoing theoretical debate about the cultural links between femininity, female sexuality, insanity, and representation. Though she is neglected in criticism, Ophelia is probably the most frequently illustrated and cited of Shakespeare's heroines. Her visibility as a subject in literature, popular culture, and painting, from Redon who paints her drowning, to Bob Dylan, who places her on Desolation Row, to Cannon Mills, which has named a flowery sheet pattern after her, is in inverse relation to her invisibility in Shakespearean critical texts: Why has she been such a potent and obsessive

figure in our cultural mythology? Insofar as Hamlet names Ophelia as “woman” and “frailty,” substituting an ideological view of femininity for a personal one, is she indeed representative of Woman, and does her madness stand for the oppression of women in society as well as in tragedy? how should feminist criticism represent Ophelia in its own discourse? What is our responsibility towards her as character and as woman?

Neel, C. (1981), for example, describes advocacy—speaking *for* Ophelia—: “As a feminist critic,” she writes, “I must ‘tell’ Ophelia’s story.” But what can we mean by Ophelia’s story? The story of her life? The story of her betrayal at the hands of her father, lover, court, society? The story of her rejection and marginalization by male critics of Shakespeare? Shakespeare gives us very little information from which to imagine a past for Ophelia. She appears in only five of the play’s twenty scenes; the pre-play course of her love story with Hamlet is known only by a few ambiguous flashbacks. Her tragedy is subordinated in the play; unlike Hamlet, she does not struggle with moral choices or alternatives”. Thus another feminist critic, Edwards, L. (1979), concludes that it is impossible to reconstruct Ophelia’s biography from the text: “We can imagine Hamlet’s story without Ophelia, but Ophelia literally has no story without Hamlet.”

Showalter, E. (1997), adds “If we turn from American to French feminist theory, Ophelia might confirm the impossibility of representing the feminine in patriarchal discourse as other than madness, incoherence, fluidity, or silence. In French theoretical criticism, the feminine or “Woman” is that which escapes representation in patriarchal language and symbolism; it remains on the side of negativity, absence, and lack. In comparison to

Hamlet, Ophelia is certainly a creature of lack. "I think nothing, my lord," she tells him in the Mousetrap scene, and he cruelly twists her words:

*Hamlet:* That's a fair thought to lie between maids' legs.

*Ophelia:* What is, my lord?

*Hamlet:* Nothing.

(III.ii. 117-19)

Lyons, B. (1977) alludes; "In Elizabethan slang, *nothing* was a term for the female genitalia. To Hamlet, then, *nothing* is what lies between maids' legs, for, in the male visual system of representation and desire, women's sexual organs, as well has pointed out, "Ophelia is most persistently presented in terms of symbolic meanings. Her behaviors, her appearance, her gestures, her costume, her props, are freighted with emblematic significance, and for many generations of Shakespearean critics her part in the play has seemed to be primarily iconographic. Ophelia's symbolic meanings, moreover, are specifically feminine. Whereas for Hamlet madness is metaphysical, linked with culture, for Ophelia it is a product of the female body and female nature, perhaps that nature's purest form. On the Elizabethan stage, the conventions of female insanity were sharply defined. Ophelia dresses in white, decks herself with "fantastical garlands" of wild flowers, and enters, according to the stage directions of the "Bad" Quarto, "distracted" playing on a lute with her "hair down singing." Her speeches are marked by extravagant metaphors, lyrical free associations, and "explosive sexual imagery." She sings wistful and bawdy ballads, and ends her life by drowning.

Conolly J. (1863) claims that; "the graceful Ophelia who dominated the Victorian stage were quite unlike the women who had become the majority



of the inmate population in Victorian public asylums”. “It seems to be supposed,” He protested, “that it is an easy task to play the part of a crazy girl, and that it is chiefly composed of singing and prettiness. The habitual courtesy, the partial rudeness of mental disorder, are things to be witnessed.... An actress, ambitious of something beyond cold imitation, might find the contemplation of such cases a not unprofitable study.”

As well Conolly, J. (1863) remarks; “in 1859 Ophelia is the very type of a class of cases by no means uncommon. Every mental physician of moderately extensive experience must have seen many Ophelia. It is a copy from nature, after the fashion of the Pre-Raphaelite school.” In his *Study of Hamlet* in 1863 he noted that; “even casual visitors to mental institutions could recognize an Ophelia in the wards: “the same young years, the same faded beauty, the same fantastic dress and interrupted song.”

He also points out that; the graceful Ophelia who dominated the Victorian stage were quite unlike the women who had become the majority of the inmate population in Victorian public asylums. “It seems to be supposed,” then he protested, “that it is an easy task to play the part of a crazy girl, and that it is chiefly composed of singing and prettiness. The habitual courtesy, the partial rudeness of mental disorder, are things to be witnessed.... An actress, ambitious of something beyond cold imitation, might find the contemplation of such cases a not unprofitable study.”

Yet when Ellen Terry took up Conolly's challenge, and went to an asylum to observe real madwomen, she found them “too *theatrical*” to teach her anything. This was because the iconography of the romantic Ophelia had begun to infiltrate reality, to define a style for mad young women seeking to express and communicate their distress. And where the women themselves did not willingly throw themselves into Ophelia-like postures, asylum

superintendents, armed with the new technology of photography, imposed the costume, gesture, props, and expression of Ophelia upon them.

Bradley, A. (1906) spoke for the Victorian male tradition and notes that “a large number of readers feel a kind of personal irritation against Ophelia; they seem unable to forgive her for not having been a heroine.”

The feminist counterview was represented by actresses in such works as Martin, H. (1914), concludes; “study of Shakespeare's female characters, and *The True Ophelia*, written by an anonymous actress in 1914, which protested against the “insipid little creature” of criticism, and advocated a strong and intelligent woman destroyed by the heartlessness of men In women's paintings of the *fin de siècle* as well, Ophelia is depicted as an inspiring, even sanctified emblem of righteousness”.

But since the 1970s the feminist discourse which has offered a new perspective on Ophelia's madness as protest and rebellion. For many feminist theorists, the madwoman is a heroine, a powerful figure who rebels against the family and the social order; and the hysteric who refuses to speak the language of the patriarchal order, who speaks otherwise, is a sister.

### **3.1 Ophelia and Lady Macbeth**

In the two of Shakespeare's tragedies, (Hamlet and Macbeth) Dall, J. (2000) claimed that; “Shakespeare implicitly suggests the danger of women's involvement in politics at the sovereign level. Through Gertrude's marriage to Hamlet's uncle and also through Lady Macbeth's unbridled political ambition, Shakespeare dramatizes real political concerns that evolved from and during the reign of Elizabeth Tudor. In the characters, Shakespeare reflects political gender anxieties; in the themes, he develops a schema of

conflict and chaos erupting from such anxiety, and in the plays' contextual resolutions, he fulfills the desire for a return to state stability through a solidification of the patriarchal system. Hamlet and Macbeth do not make an explicit political argument regarding Elizabeth's monarchy, but in these plays Shakespeare does invoke the tensions of the day as related to female leadership".

Some critics Scholars discuss, however, the degree to which his plays should be interpreted as contemporary political writing versus universal philosophical statement. Bloom, A and V. Jaffa (1964) criticize the limitations of interpreting Shakespeare within historical terms. Although, they concede that his writing produced an accurate thematic picture of the current social concerns: "The poet is an imitator of nature; he reproduces what he sees in the world, and it is only his preoccupation with that world which renders him a poet." In reproducing the world, the playwright necessarily reconstructs current social and political concerns as well as universal themes.

Other scholars like Tennenhouse, L. (1986) concludes that; "Shakespeare was distinctly a Renaissance individual and playwright, and his writing cannot be divorced from this own perspective". As well as he concedes that; "Shakespeare's writing reveals the character of the Renaissance world as well as it portrays individual characters in the plays. Regardless of the perspective under which scholars suggest Shakespeare should be studied, they agree that his writing provides an opportunity to examine cultural perspectives during and immediately after Elizabeth's reign. Shakespeare opens a window on the nature of the Elizabethan world.

Wain, J. (1965), considers that; “Shakespeare is from first to last an intensely political writer. He knows that the happiness of the common man is very much bound up with the question of who has power at the top.” he elaborates on Shakespeare’s thematic goals and finds that the stability of the sovereignty had greatest importance: “The English scene, viewed from an Elizabethan standpoint, was dominated by one urgent need: the need for political stability, guaranteed by an undisputed monarchy.” The instability of the Tudor monarchy, plagued with the problems of Henry’s succession, the failed marriage of Mary, and the ambivalence of Elizabeth’s feelings toward matrimony, had created a desire within the culture for a stable monarch. Female rule lacked stability and thus contained an inherent danger. Many of the English reacted with ambivalence to the idea of a woman ruler. The ambivalence centered directly on the conflict between her rule and her femininity. If a queen were confidently to demonstrate the attributes of power, she would not be acting in a womanly manner; yet womanly behavior would ill-fit a queen for the rigors of rule.

Even more Tennenhouse, L. (1986) describes Lady Macbeth’s power; “At the outset of Macbeth, Shakespeare gives Lady Macbeth the very same elements which other Jacobean playwrights use to display the absolute power of the state. He shows how these might be used destructively.”

Lady Macbeth denays her femininity for power:

Come you spirits

That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here;

And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top-full

Of direst cruelty!

So in discussing sexuality, Frye, S. (1993) alleges “Because questions of marriage and the succession connected her natural and political bodies in ways that Elizabeth constantly sought to control, the queen herself became the most politically significant sign of her reign.”

Neale, J. (1974) asserts that “Elizabeth was prejudiced by the knowledge that; Mary’s major mistake had been her marriage.” Perhaps Elizabeth’s decision not to get married comprised a desire to avoid English enmity toward a joint ruler. Her pattern of courtship and her flirtation with proposals simply danced around the issue of matrimony. Yet, the marriageability of Elizabeth produced constant anxiety within Elizabethan society. If Elizabeth married, her husband might assume royal authority. If Elizabeth married a non-Englishman, foreign rule might come to England. If Elizabeth married an Englishman, a new family might assume royal status. Given these concerns, no man could be an ideal husband for Elizabeth. Therefore, she assumed the weight of the sovereignty on her own. Unlike Mary, Elizabeth made no choice of a king for England.

In *Hamlet*, Gertrude, however, chose a new king for Denmark with marrying Claudius, Gertrude gives him access to the symbolic seat of the sovereignty. Tennenhouse, L. (1986) holds the centrality of theme of Gertrude’s natural body: “The dilemma of the play therefore arises from and turns upon the meaning and disposition of Gertrude’s body.” He further comments that “the fate of Gertrude makes *Hamlet* an Elizabethan play. Upon the condition of her body depends the health of the state.” Claudius’s access to Gertrude’s body leads to state upheaval just as Lady Macbeth’s ambitions cause chaos.

Levin, C. (1994) relates that; “the English felt free to speculate about her lovers and supposed bastards.” These implied accusations threatened Elizabeth’s position in significant ways, as he explains: “In accusing the queen of sexual improprieties, people were charging her with dishonorable behavior in a way that would not be the case in a similar rumor about a king.”

### **3.2 Cleopatra**

Antony and Cleopatra seems to have a special place in Shakespeare's works because it is in a crossroad between two types of play. But it is also considered as a tragedy. But one might wonder what is specifically tragic in Antony and Cleopatra, and what can be said about the tragic in a play which is so different from the other tragedies.

Vingnier, I. (2008) states; “taking into account a wide writings about plays, from Antiquity as well as from France and England, we can detect several constant features that can define the tragic. A tragedy usually shows a character that is outstanding by his rank or/and inner abilities, falling into misfortune as a result of fate, and because of an error or a weakness for which he is not really responsible. Several tragic elements can be detected in Antony and Cleopatra. First, we find characters that have high rank because they are outstanding figures; we also see a tragic situation because from the beginning of the play we see no hope of a happy ending. In the end, even if it is hard to see transcendence in action, the play shows a failure of human freedom and determinism in the character's fate that can be considered as the essence of the tragic”.

As well Vingnier adds “Cleopatra has got such a strong moral sense, as she is remarkable for her royal rank - the last queen of Egypt - her beauty, her intelligence and her audacity, furthermore her sense of honor and dignity gives her a special nobleness. Although she fears death - which is why she flees from the sea battle - she'd rather kill herself than be exposed to Caesar's triumph. Cleopatra, even if she shows weakness and unpleasant traits, stands apart from other women. Even Octavia, who possesses all the typical Roman virtues, cannot compete with her”.

Henri, S. (2000) asserts; “a tragic hero is usually outstanding, but not perfect. He/she is unwittingly guilty of some fault that makes him somehow deserve the disaster that happens to him. Tragic heroes must consequently have an imperfect goodness, and fall into distress because of some sin which would make people feel sorry for them and not hate them”.

Cuddon, J. A. (1992) comes up with that; “One cannot deny that Antony's love for Cleopatra is a weakness and even a fault. His passion makes him forget his duty, his honor as a soldier. He leaves the battle against Caesar because of Cleopatra, and he is an unfaithful husband to Fulvia and Octavia. On Cleopatra's advice he decides to fight at sea although his chances would be much better on land. On the other hand, his passion is not voluntary. He tries to resist it - by marrying Octavia, he tries to give politics a higher priority than love - but fails. As a result, the spectator - or reader - cannot but feel compassion for him, even if he more or less 'deserved' his terrible end. Cleopatra, even if many traits of hers are unpleasant (she mistreats the unfortunate messenger who announces the marriage of Antony and Octavia, and she is particularly mean to her rival) deserves our compassion too.

According to an article from Hrou, J.(2000), “Antony and Cleopatra: sources and influences' (2000) although Shakespeare followed very carefully the historical events described by Plutarch, he took some liberties with his source, especially in the treatment of Cleopatra's character. Plutarch describes her as a woman without scruples, manipulative, ready to do anything to keep her throne. To her, Antony was nothing more than a puppet she had to seduce for political reasons. She did not care about his person but only about his power. In Shakespeare's play, she is truly in love with Antony. When he is away, she asks for mandragora, 'That (she) might sleep out this great gap of time', while 'My Antony is away' (Act I, scene V). We do not see any reason why she should feign in the presence of Charmian. This true passion makes us sympathise with her”.

Therefore Vingnier, I. (2008) adds “Antony's two great passions: his ambition and his love for Cleopatra are fundamentally impossible to reconcile. From the first verse of the play, we see that Cleopatra is not accepted by Antony's soldiers, she is shown as incompatible with his honour, It also makes him neglect his new wife Octavia, which breaks the brief reconciliation between the two rivals. A solution to the problem might be for Antony to give up Cleopatra, but to do so is not in his power and would not make him happy The love between Antony and Cleopatra is tragic because there is no way it could make them happy”.

"Antony's death is fortunate for Caesar - from a strictly political point of view - but that does not stop him from weeping for Antony, whom he respects and perhaps even loved: 'my brother, my competitor' he says. The merciless conflict is tragic because no one is to blame for it. The two characters try not to fight each other, but they cannot escape their own



nature. Neither of them is the 'good' or the 'bad' one. A situation where characters have no other choice than fighting each other, without one being more innocent than the other, is typically tragic". (Ibid)

If the conflict between the two leaders is inevitable, so it is the decline of a country and a civilization. The independence of Egypt is doomed from the beginning of the play. Cleopatra tries to preserve it but she has no chance. The love between Antony and the queen of Egypt may seem to offer some hope, but the submission of one nation to another is as inevitable as the victory of one of the two competitors. When Antony leads the battle by sea, it is because of his passion for Cleopatra; she makes him defend her country: 'I made these wars for Egypt', he says, believing himself betrayed by the queen. As soon as Antony has lost, Cleopatra has no political power and has to submit herself to the master of Rome. The ambassador explains to Caesar, even before Antony's death:

Cleopatra does confess thy greatness,  
Submits her to thy might, and of thee craves  
the circle of the Ptolemies for her heirs,  
Now hazarded to thy grace. (Act III, scene XII)

For that, Christian, B. (1997) Concludes: "The minimum definition of what tragic is might be the following: tragic is anything that belongs to fate, to necessity, and makes human freedom radically fails, although it is indeed exerted. We do not hear (as we do in Classical tragedy) about gods pursuing vengeance against one of the protagonists, but nevertheless we can see elements of a determinism that does not let the hero master his fate. The first is the irresistible violence of passion that Antony cannot resist, and against which his free will fails. Antony is perfectly aware that his passion for

Cleopatra wrongs him. He tries to escape the power she has on him, to use his freedom to be himself again. His marriage with Octavia shows this: he is not compelled to marry her, but shows enthusiasm for the idea, it's is an attempt to make use of liberty that fails. According to Lepidus, Antony simply cannot change his nature:

His faults in him seem as the spots of heaven,  
More fiery by night's blackness ; hereditary  
Rather than purchas'd : what he cannot change,  
Than he chooses. (Act I, scene IV)

As well he claims; "Antony is not only the victim of his own nature: his will also fails against the power of Cleopatra. This power is only human, but is no less mighty for that. It seems that Cleopatra is so cunning and attractive that there was absolutely no possibility for Antony to resist her once she had set her mind to seduce him. Enobarbus - who, interestingly, does not particularly like Cleopatra - gives a description of the queen the first time Antony saw her that clearly presents her as irresistible:

.....For her own person,  
It beggar'd all description: she did lie  
In her pavilion, cloth of gold, of tissue,  
O'er-picturing that Venus where we see  
The fancy overlook nature. (Act II, scene II)

"When Antony fails in his military duty by following Cleopatra, who flees the sea battle, he confesses that he could not have acted differently. Cleopatra's power on him is so strong it was impossible for him to resist it" (Ibid).

Antony and Cleopatra also seem to have to submit to a force that makes Caesar inevitably triumphant. Here again, it is more about a psychological determinism than about the traditional will of gods. Early in Act II, the winner of the struggle for Roman power is foretold, since we hear the Soothsayer predicting to Antony that he has no chance to win against Caesar.

## **Chapter Four:**

### **Conclusions, Results, Recommendations and Suggestions**

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#### **4.0 Conclusions:**

Shakespeare implicitly conveys not only his concern and anxiety of the danger of women's involvement in politics at the sovereign extent but really he depicts the worry of the street and society. Through Gertrude's marriage to Hamlet's uncle and Lady Macbeth's inordinate political desire, so, he dramatizes real political concerns that developed during the reign of Elizabeth Tudor. He reflects political gender anxieties; in the themes he steps up the plan of anarchy and conflict, as he fulfills the desire for a return to state stability through a stabilization of the patriarchal order. Hamlet and Macbeth do not make an obvious political controversy concerning Elizabeth's monarchy, but in these plays Shakespeare arouses the tensions of the day as related to female leadership.

Considering some critics' views the researcher realizes the contrast of having the ideas of Shakespeare (gender and sovereign) feminism movements. Some of them are protagonists while others are misogynist. Carol Neely, for example, describes advocacy—speaking *for* Ophelia—as our proper role: “As a feminist critic,” she writes, “I must ‘tell’ Ophelia's story.” But what can we mean by Ophelia's story? The story of her life? The story of her betrayal at the hands of her father, lover, court, society? The story of her rejection and marginalization by male critics of Shakespeare? Shakespeare gives us very little information from which to imagine a past

for Ophelia. She appears in only five of the play's twenty scenes; the pre-play course of her love story with Hamlet is known only by a few ambiguous flashbacks. Her tragedy is subordinated in the play; unlike Hamlet, she does not struggle with moral choices or alternatives. Thus another feminist critic, Lee Edwards, concludes that it is impossible to reconstruct Ophelia's biography from the text: "We can imagine Hamlet's story without Ophelia, but Ophelia literally has no story without Hamlet."

Showalter, E. (1997) adds "If we turn from American to French feminist theory, Ophelia might confirm the impossibility of representing the feminine in patriarchal discourse as other than madness, incoherence, fluidity, or silence. In French theoretical criticism, the feminine or "Woman" is that which escapes representation in patriarchal language and symbolism; it remains on the side of negativity, absence, and lack. In comparison to Hamlet, Ophelia is certainly a creature of lack. "I think nothing, my lord," she tells him in the Mousetrap scene, and he cruelly twists her words:

*Hamlet:* That's a fair thought to lie between maids' legs.

*Ophelia:* What is, my lord?

*Hamlet:* Nothing.

As In Elizabethan slang, "nothing" was a term for the female genitalia. To Hamlet, then, "nothing" is what lies between maids' legs, for, in the male visual system of representation and desire, women's sexual organs, in the words of the French..

The Researcher comes up with that; Ophelia's story can be read as the female subtext of the tragedy, the repression of Hamlet's story. In this

reading, Ophelia represents the strong emotions that the Elizabethans as well as the Freudians thought womanish and unmanly (coward) and Hamlet's disgust at the feminine passivity in himself is translated into violent revulsion against women, and into his brutal behavior towards Ophelia and perhaps because Hamlet's emotional vulnerability can so readily be conceptualized as feminine that this is the only heroic male role in Shakespeare which has been regularly acted.

The researcher finds out that; the feminist modulation of Ophelia presents as much from the actress's liberty as from the interpretation of critics. When Shakespeare's heroines began to be acted with females instead of males, and the existence of the female body and female voice, is so far from details of interpretation, created new meanings and devastating tensions in these roles, and perhaps most importantly with Ophelia, and within regarding Ophelia's history on and off the play, I point out that; the contest between male and female representations of Ophelia, cycles of critical repression and feminist retrieval of which contemporary feminist criticism is; only the most recent compatible view.

As Bridget Lyons has point out, "Ophelia is most persistently presented in terms of symbolic meanings." Her behavior, her appearance, her gestures, her costume, and her props, are freighted with emblematic significance, and for many generations of Shakespearean critics her part in the play has seemed to be primarily iconographic. Ophelia's symbolic meanings, moreover, are specifically feminine. Whereas for Hamlet madness is metaphysical, linked with culture, for Ophelia it is a product of the female body and female nature, perhaps that nature's purest form. On the

Elizabethan stage, the conventions of female insanity were sharply defined. Ophelia dresses in white, decks herself with “fantastical garlands” of wild flowers, and enters, according to the stage directions of the “Bad” Quarto, “distracted” playing on a lute with her “hair down singing.” Her speeches are marked by extravagant metaphors, lyrical free associations, and “explosive sexual imagery.

The mad Ophelia's bawdy songs and verbal license, while they give her access to “an entirely different range of experience” from what she is allowed as the dutiful daughter, seem to be her one sanctioned form of self-assertion as a woman, quickly followed, as if in punishment, by her death. Drowning too was associated with the feminine, with female fluidity as versus to masculine dryness.

The researcher finds out that; the case study of Ophelia was one that seemed particularly useful as an account of hysteria or psychological breakdown in adolescence, a period of sexual instability which the Victorians regarded as risky for women's mental health, and even though regarding the spinsterhood that faces our girls under these critical financial crisis., the madwoman is a heroine, a powerful figure who rebels against the family and the social order; and the hysteric who refuses to speak the order language of the upper class families as general.

Taking into considerations some critics views for Hamlet and Macbeth with analyses, such as Dall, J. (2000) assumption; “Shakespeare implicitly suggests the danger of women’s involvement in politics at the sovereign level. Through Gertrude’s marriage to Hamlet’s uncle and also through Lady Macbeth’s unbridled political ambition, Shakespeare dramatizes real



political concerns that evolved from and during the reign of Elizabeth Tudor. In the characters, Shakespeare reflects political gender anxieties; in the themes, he develops a schema of conflict and chaos erupting from such anxiety, and in the plays' contextual resolutions, he fulfills the desire for a return to state stability through a solidification of the patriarchal system. Hamlet and Macbeth do not make an explicit political argument regarding Elizabeth's monarchy, but in these plays Shakespeare does invoke the tensions of the day as related to female leadership".

With regard to Levin, C. (1994) comments "free to speculate about her lovers and supposed bastards. These implied accusations threatened Elizabeth's position in significant ways.

The researcher realizes the plain accusations to the queen of sexual improprieties, and disrespectful behavior as that wouldn't be a similar disgrace case for a king.

As Wain, J. (1965) concludes "Shakespeare is from first to last an intensely political writer. He knows that the happiness of the common man is very much bound up with the question of who has power at the top." he elaborates on Shakespeare's thematic goals and finds that the stability of the sovereignty had greatest importance: "The English scene, viewed from an Elizabethan standpoint, was dominated by one urgent need: the need for political stability, guaranteed by an undisputed monarchy."

The researcher agrees with the concept of the above mentioned critics' analysis, to that; the instability of the Tudor monarchy, disturbed with the problems of Henry's succession, the failed marriage of Mary, and the

equivalence of Elizabeth's feelings toward marriage, had found an aspiration for a stable monarch. Woman rule lacked stability and surrounded with danger. Many of the English negatively impressed with the idea of a woman ruler. The equality concentrated on the conflict between her rule and her femininity. If the queen confidently displays the species of power, she will not be behaving in a feminine manner; and female behavior would hinder the queen from holding the reins of power perfectly and properly.

Comparing Shakespeare's plays with the source he used and how he portrayed and modified their characters, and how he processed and converted into a dramatic works, had been taken into consideration at the time of women's repression. And consequently makes his heroines really exceptional.

So, the researcher comes up with that; the conception of Hamlet reflects moral norms of the day, and royal sexual activity concerns about both power and purity in the Elizabethan world. As women had no opportunity to fight on the battlefield, so chastity was the principal measure of their honor and virtue. Thus, Hamlet's claims of infidelity, attacks Gertrude's grace and morality. Not surprisingly, Elizabeth's sexual conduct also drew public attention in huge measure, and the Queen benefited by the society's connection between female honor and chastity, and frankly claimed her purity, even adopting the title, "Virgin Queen." This image combined the virtues of sexual purity with attributes of the royal sovereignty, serving to reinforce the legitimacy and moral authority of her rule.

Elizabeth's image as "Virgin Queen," however, had its critics. Levin relates that the English felt "free to speculate about her lovers and supposed

bastards.” These implied accusations threatened Elizabeth’s position in significant ways. Levin explains: “In accusing the queen of sexual improprieties, people were charging her with dishonorable behavior in a way that would not be the case in a similar rumor about a king.” Some of this speculation took on political significance with treasonous import. In a 1588 treatise entitled *Admonition to the Nobility and People of England*, Cardinal William Allen suggested that Elizabeth failed to marry “because she cannot confine herself to one man” and that resulted in “the whole world deriding our effeminate dastardie, that have suffered such creature almost thirty years together to raigne both over our bodies and soules.” The Cardinal suggests by implication that the English should not support their queen. Although steeped in religious contention, this and other charges of “whorish” activity threatened the integrity of both the queen’s person and her sovereignty. An impure maiden queen was not fit for the throne.

According to the above, the researcher realizes that; Elizabeth’s royal assertions of chastity invited some of this speculation, but the criticisms also reflect a general distrust of women. Shakespeare captures this cultural mistrust as well.

Hamlet’s accusation of his mother rests on a general accusation of the female sex: “Frailty, thy name is woman. “His peculiar criticism of Gertrude’s sexual behavior reflects the idea that women were the weaker sex. Just as women’s integrity relied upon their chastity, their very gender made them liable to accusations of corruption. In the Elizabethan world, women were weak and could not be trusted. Such a social attitude characterizes the anxieties accompanying Elizabeth’s reign.

Shakespeare's develop themes from historical scenes in his time definitely in Macbeth and Hamlet, reflecting the Elizabethan desire for a stable male monarch. He presents pictures of chaos and rebellion that partially created by female ambition or exploitation. This summation directly applies to the gender anxieties presented in Hamlet and Macbeth. In both plays, female monarchs exist and female power suffers.

The researcher comes up with that Shakespeare's drama conveys the Elizabethan world. Within the plays Hamlet and Macbeth, we can observe potential strife emerging from female ambition for sovereign power and corruption of the politic body through corruption of the female sovereign body. In both plays, Shakespeare reflects anxiety from the Elizabethan world relating to the existence of dependency upon a female monarch. Also, both plays end with the decrease of female sovereign authority and an obvious return to a state of normal life within more traditional and patriarchal framework.

In Antony and Cleopatra, witnessing with some critic's views and try to find out what the crucial point differences from the other tragedies.

Within Vingnier's statement; "If Cleopatra does not have such a strong moral sense, she is remarkable for her royal rank - she is the last queen of Egypt - her beauty, her intelligence and her audacity. Enobarbus quotes the episode of her being brought to Antony in a carpet. Last but not least, her sense of honour and dignity gives her a special nobleness that is typically tragic. Although she fears death - which is why she flees from the sea battle - she'd rather kill herself than be exposed to Caesar's triumph. Cleopatra, even if she shows weakness and unpleasant traits, stands apart from other

women. Even Octavia, who possesses all the typical Roman virtues, cannot compete with her.

As Cuddon, J. A, Concludes “One cannot deny that his love for Cleopatra is a weakness and even a fault. His passion makes him forget his duty, his honour as a soldier. He leaves the battle against Caesar because of Cleopatra, and he is an unfaithful husband to Fulvia and Octavia. On Cleopatra's advice he decides to fight at sea although his chances would be much better on land. On the other hand, his passion is not voluntary. He tries to resist it - by marrying Octavia, he tries to give politics a higher priority than love - but fails. As a result, the spectator - or reader - cannot but feel sympathy for him, even if he more or less 'deserved' his terrible end. Cleopatra, even if many traits of hers are unpleasant (she mistreats the unfortunate messenger who announces the marriage of Antony and Octavia, and she is particularly mean to her rival) deserves our compassion too”.

The researcher perceives the contrast between the greatness of Antony and the unworthiness of his love and causes him to make fatal mistakes and lose a decisive battle against Caesar. It also makes him neglect his new wife Octavia, which breaks the brief reconciliation between the two rivals. A solution to the problem might be for Antony to abandon Cleopatra, but to do so is not in his power and would not make him happy.

Vingnier stated “the independence of Egypt is doomed from the beginning of the play. Cleopatra tries to preserve it but she has no chance. When Antony leads the battle by sea, it is because of his passion for Cleopatra; she makes him defend her country, Cleopatra has no political power and has to submit herself to the master of Rome. When Antony fails in his military duty

by following Cleopatra, who flees the sea battle, he confesses that he could not have acted differently. Cleopatra's power on him is so strong it was impossible for him to resist it”.

However the researcher comes that; it cannot be said that the characters have no freedom at all. In their defeat they can find a new way of expressing their freedom and escaping the worst. When she finds out that Caesar will inevitably lead her in triumph, Cleopatra manages to avoid this dishonor by killing herself. For this, she has to defeat herself, to master her fear of death, although we saw her retreating from battle. Surpassing oneself is a common feature among tragic heroes who have to overcome most common human feelings to accomplish their fate.

The researcher concludes that, a solution to the problem for Antony could be to abandon Cleopatra, but to do so is not in his power and would not make him happy. In their failure they can find a new way to express their freedom and get rid of their fatal end. When she finds out that Caesar will inevitably lead her in victory, Cleopatra manages to avoid this dishonor by killing herself. For this, she has to beat herself, and controlling her fear of death, as she retreated from battle. It was outstanding species among tragic heroes who have to overcome most common human consciousness to achieve their destiny.

## **4.1 Result and Findings**

Any drama whether it would be Romance, Comedy, Tragedy or historical “on stage or in different seen devices” has its own incidence, social, political scenes and different circumstances that fabricated the dramatic work. And the players (heroes, heroines and sub-characters) have their own touches and influence on the dramatic text and on the spectators and viewers as they cannot change the essence texture of the play, and the dramatic work has its resonance and impact on the society if it is limited but has its own smack on the authorities whether it can be as a hint for socio-political reforms or a rigid condemn as a whole for the general situation. As well as the presentation, context and showing of the dramatic work differs from time to time, the mentality and the taste of watching and understanding which depends on environmental of social cultural and political atmosphere.

The purpose of this research is not to find a conclusive answer to the assumption whether Shakespeare was an antagonist or misogynist, that would simply be unrealistic, and my aim is to show some aspects of misogyny that is seen in some of Shakespeare's tragedies.

And I think it is important to discuss feminist criticism before discussing the plays. Although feminism is not a new critical approach anymore, it is important to know its origin, development and impact, as well as its different assumptions, approaches and aims.

Shakespeare’s life which was full of social and political turmoil, so, when he got acquainted with the origins of his plays, he selected and modulated his female characters particularly heroines and presented them somehow in pleasant and positive manner more than the sources and he created females

with impressive smack who have been effective and incentive to many audience, even Elizabeth herself been influenced and inspired by Shakespeare and particularly to the whole female that were fighting the misogynist attitude in the society.

- Based on the research questions, the researcher has come up with the following results:

How does Shakespeare portrait the roles of Ophelia in his tragic play Hamlet?

How does Shakespeare portrait the negative impact of ill-ambition in (Macbeth & Hamlet)?

- In the plays; Hamlet and Macbeth struggles step up from female ambition for sovereign power and the corruption of the politic body through corruption of the female sovereign body.

- In both plays, Shakespeare reflects the social anxiousness from the Elizabethan culture connecting to the existence of dependence on a female monarch.

- Also, both plays have an end with the decreasing of female sovereign authority.

- The absolute accusations to the queen of sexual improprieties, and disrespectful behavior as that would not be a similar rumor case, as that wouldn't take place if the monarch is male.



In *Antony and Cleopatra*, Shakespeare coils the resentment that taken place during the Elizabethan period and conveys the cultural fear and worry of the time specifically through Cleopatra.

How does Shakespeare depict the power of women in inducement?

- Cleopatra refuses to adhere the stereotypes of patriarchal society, and transforms her natural sexuality into part of her power, rather than diminishing of her goodness.

- So too, Cleopatra insists on fulfilling a political role against the wishes of the patriarchal men: when Enobarbus attempts to prevent her from doing so she answers in furious intention:

And as the president of my kingdom will  
Appear there for a man. Speak not against it.  
I will not stay behind.

- Submission and quietness were very much part of the patriarchal conception of femininity. A conception to which Cleopatra refuses to adhere.

- Cleopatra makes her voice heard whenever she wishes, challenging and meeting challenges. She mocks Antony and quarrels with him, challenging him with a masculine aggression when they debate, and her physical attack on the messenger informing her of Antony's marriage to Octavia.

## 4.2 Recommendations

The researcher recommends that the casual readers have to be aware of the qualities and values in the work of art that they may overlooked, and enable them to understand what they read. A certain great masterpieces might be puzzling, dull, or even unknown to the general public unless there were many different critics to enrich the essence of the work and point out their own value and significance. Criticism also stimulates discrimination between good and inferior works...Thus in the meantime to encourage them to read and scrutinize the beauty of literal works and its purposes as a historical background, social media of entertainment and reform.

As a result of the decay of the English language in all stages of public education or higher and even in all aspect, particularly in some Curriculum of today, the study is supposed to raise the awareness of the importance of English Literature - as an essential reservoir of English vocabulary, romantic and political expressions; as well, it reinforces the command of English language for us as foreign language learners. And I hope the concerned authorities to adopt English language as a second language in our beloved country.

Also, it is a big Cry for those who are in the competent authorities in Educational Foundations, especially those who are in concern of teaching English language for different levels: To adopt and apply the simplified series of English Art (Literature) at the Primary School (especially Sixth, to the Ninth grades) and for the secondary schools again. As well it's a hint for our universities not only to be confined to English Language Teaching

(ELT) but to expand the umbrella of teaching language in its different aspects.

### **4.3 Suggestions for Further Research**

The researcher suggests the following literary titles for further research:

- 1- Comparing and contrasting the role of women in other Shakespearean plays.
- 2- Comparing the role of women in Shakespearean plays with Contemporary dramatists.
- 3- Comparing the role of women in Shakespearean plays with John Webster's empathetic presentation of women who follows her own desire in "The Duchess of Malfi"(1614) Comparing the role of women in Shakespearean plays with Thomas Dekker's –The Showmakers Holiday(1599) .

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