

A Powerful Patriarchal Ideology: Women Challenge Dominant Fathers in Selected Shakespearean Plays

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Abstract

The Shakespearean text cannot avoid socially acceptable practices in its presentation of women characters. However, the presentation of women was neither a blatant exhibition of patriarchal ideology nor an uncritical celebration of its collapse. Patriarchy takes different forms and is portrayed with varying degrees of emphasis in Shakespeare. This study was based upon the exhaustive text analysis and interpretation. This study examined the representation of women in selected Shakespearean plays. The study's aim was to show how some of Shakespearean women characters challenged dominant fathers and, thereby, a powerful patriarchal ideology. In this context, a daughter's rebellion or her refusal to conform to her father's wishes had serious consequences. The characters Rosalind in *As You Like It*, Jessica in *Merchant of Venice*, Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Cordelia in *King Lear*, Desdemona in *Othello* and Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet* played roles ranging from innocent to devious to accommodate the needs of the text and society. The main hypothesis of the study was that though Shakespeare plays highlighted an irreversible search for free spaces for and by women, however unsuccessfully fashioned or unjustly presented, which support a powerful patriarchal ideology.

Keywords: *Patriarchy, women characters, Shakespearean plays, dominant fathers, daughter*