SHAKESPEARE’S FEMINISM vs. 20th CENTURY FEMINISM

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Abstract

We know very little about William Shakespeare. What we do know for a fact: he is a social phenomena, his name echoes everywhere. He is celebrated as a local poet all over the world. In the history of mankind no writer has enjoyed so much prosperity and reception. In this work I have presented one aspect of his work, his attitude towards womenhood in social, political, and emotional context. Through few plays I emphasized Shakespeare's approach towards philosophy of life, not only when he spoke about women; life in his case has levels which are being reached, and his heroins prove this easily. Finally, this work will explain feminism through heroism in Shakespearean drama, studying similarities and differences within this age, history, and Shakespeare's universal era.

Key words: feminism, womenhood, universalities
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Many thanks to my dearest ones for all the support and sacrifices, patience and encouragement... My parents, my sister, and my love…
If I would choose any earthly reason for doing this it would be to please You…

To my dearest ones…
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Chapter 1

Introduction

The best thing about being a woman is to feel like one. “Žene su narod za sebe.” (Talmud, 1982) Translation of this sentence is: “Women are nation for itself.” While reading Talmud one afternoon I came across this sentence, which is, in a way simple, yet so complex; depends who, and why is one reading it. Some crazy feminist would probably categorize this sentence as anti feminist statement, and just the thought of it makes me angry. If we have in mind perfect literary works, sacred books, like Koran, Bible, or any of Shakespeare’s works, we cannot fail to observe the fact that women have been placed on a golden throne ever since the Earth felt human feet on its surface.

_O mankind! Surely We have created you of a male and a female, and made you tribes and families that you may know each other; …_ (Kur’an s prevodom, 1991)

This means that male and female complement each other in numerous ways; in mental, physical, and emotional qualities. Women in Islam, as in any other religion, are seen as independent, and self-reliant individuals, therefore, this challenges the traditional view of Islamic family structure, and her position in Islamic society in general. For those more suspicious ones these words will say everything:

“O People, it is true that you have certain rights with regard to your women, but they also have rights over you… Do treat your women well and be kind to them…” (Last Sermon, Prophet Muhammad a.s.)

Words spoken centuries ago, by Prophet, make such a great impact on us. The thing that troubles me is that human beings found the way to ruin sacredness of existence, whether it is male or female existence. For example, word _mankind_ ruins sacredness of female existence. Does this word mean woman is kind of a man?! I’m not trying to say that the word should be _womankind_, but it is a simple fact that some other languages found better solutions for this specific word, like Bosnian language – _čovječanstvo_ – it is more neutral. Does this mean that West had less sensitivity when equality, in every sense, is concerned? Of course!
Here is another example: Olympic Games, or better to call those, a farce. There we have a proof so obvious that I can’t perceive why nobody spoke about this. Why do we have separate disciplines, male and female disciplines, at the Olympics, if men and women are equal? Even though, in this writing, I’m ode to “defend” women, I have to point out that not only men are to blame for farce of this kind – women are to be blamed too. It is women’ attempt to compete men in every section of life: military, sports, cooking, baby sitting … It is simply unnatural. Men and women keep forgetting one thing, and that is Balance. If God wanted He could have created us the same, but He obviously had other plans, and hypocritical West can’t realize this, not even in 21st century.

Moreover, from 12th to 15th century, women played an important role in foundation of many Islamic educational institutions; it means women were educated, they were business women, like Muhammad’s wife, Khadijah, or hadith scholars and military leaders like his other wife, Aisha; while in West, women were shadowed, and had to fight, even for their natural rights.

However, lesbian – feminists dare to criticize everything mentioned, including Shakespeare. Having a pure and opened mind, I decided to write my paper on “Shakespeare’ feminism vs. 20th century feminism”, hoping I’ll free some other minds and souls, giving them opportunity to enjoy natural balance of male and female figures in Shakespeare, as well as in life itself. While the West was sleeping, and women were poisoned by the “tradition”, “About three hundred years ago William Shakespeare, not knowing what to do with his characters, turned them out to play in the woods, let a girl masquerade as a boy and amused himself with speculating on the effect of feminine curiosity freed for an hour from feminine dignity.” (Bloom, 1999)

This is what I want to talk about in my paper, about unconventional Shakespeare, about his female characters, about genius that created us, because:

… Shakespeare’s function is to bring life to mind, to make us aware of what we could not find without Shakespeare. (Bloom, 1999)

Before I start writing about Shakespeare’ plays, I have to give short historical background of feminism, just so comparison between history, presence, and mindset of Shakespeare could be made.
Chapter 2

Historical background of Feminism

Feminism is the belief that women should have political, social, sexual, intellectual and economic rights equal to those of men. According to some, the history of feminism can be divided into three waves; the first wave was in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the second was in the 1960s and 1970s, and the third extends from the 1990s to the present. Feminist activists have campaigned for women's legal rights (rights of contract, property rights, voting rights); for women's right to bodily integrity and autonomy, for abortion rights, and for reproductive rights (including access to contraception and quality prenatal care); for protection from domestic violence, sexual harassment and rape; for workplace rights, including maternity leave and equal pay; and against other forms of discrimination. Feminists and scholars have divided the movement's history into three "waves".

2.1. Three Waves of Feminism

The first wave refers mainly to women's suffrage movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (mainly concerned with women's right to vote).

The second wave refers to the ideas and actions associated with the women's liberation movement beginning in the 1960s (which campaigned for legal and social equality for women).

The third wave refers to a continuation of, and a reaction to, the perceived failures of, second-wave feminism, beginning in the 1990s.

2.2. Important documents regarding women’s rights

American women gained right to women' vote from 1920s. In 1918 the British Parliament finally passed a bill allowing women over the age of 30 to vote. In 1928 the age limit was lowered to 21. Women first won the right to vote in New Zealand in 1893, in Australia in 1902, and
in Finland in 1906, preceding the United States and Britain in affirming full voting rights. Different conventions, agreements, and documents were signed, ratified and came into force, in order to protect rights of women, even though those rights are guarantied by the law of Nature. Some of those documents are: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). This document is described as an international bill of rights for women, it came into force on 3rd of September 1981. The United States is the only developed nation that has not ratified the CEDAW.


The term women's rights, refers to freedoms and entitlements of women and girls of all ages. These rights may or may not be institutionalized, ignored or suppressed by law, local custom, and behavior in a particular society, but we were born with those.
Chapter 3

“As You Like It” – Character of Rosalind

When talking about Shakespearean feminism it is inevitable to start from his play „As You Like It“, and his famous female character, Rosalind.

*Shakespearean women are almost without exception faithful as wives, as lovers, as servants, regardless of changes in circumstances. Shakespearean men may well, as we know, waver and change, forsaking parents, siblings, wives, lovers, and masters. But the women are almost always ready to take risks, leave name, put on a new and dangerous identity, to serve those to whom they have pledged themselves.* (Schalkwyk, 2008)

3.1. Creation of Rosalind’s Character and its Importance

Shakespeare wrote this play for personal reasons. If “Hamlet” was written for his son, than “As You Like It” was written for his daughter. This is the first objective reason why this play cannot be anti feminist. Shakespeare gave Rosalind strong and powerful mind, so she can easily be compared to Hamlet and his mental capacities. Every sentence given to Rosalind, by Shakespeare, is meaningful and intellectual, starting from her humor. Rosalind is the only character in the play to whom Shakespeare gave intellectual kind of humor, and she is a female character in comparison to Touchstone’ professional humor, and Jaques’ melancholic, dark humor. This is one of the reasons why this play is significant, and it has to be said that, Shakespeare, by no means, harmed female mind. Rosalind dominates this play. As George Bernard Shaw said:

*Rosalind matters to us...* (Bloom, 1999) for three reasons:

1. She speaks blank verse only for a few lines; Rosalind speaks to us in prose, and that is Shakespeare’ greatest achievement, because this was prose heard for the first time. Prose makes this play the most understandable one. After 450 years, we still speak this way.
It must not be forgotten that a woman, Rosalind, was the first to speak this way. The conclusion emerges: Shakespeare liberated women’ minds from the boundaries of those days tradition, he liberated intellect of nowadays women. Shakespeare created emancipated woman.

2. She wore skirt for few moments. Rosalind matters to us for another reason: we dress like her. She was the first woman to wear men’ clothing with pride. This is where Shakespeare put the sign of equality between men and women. Maybe, nowadays, this doesn’t seam like something special, but in 1597/98 it was of a great significance. Truth is:

*If femininity and masculinity have any permanent validity, it exists independent of the clothes society ordains for men and women to wear... a woman in disguise, or the masculine woman in breeches, is changed by her male dress only because it allows her to express a part of her nature which society suppresses in the interest of that narrow femininity... Disguise makes a woman not a man, but a more developed woman.* (Dussinbere, 1975)

3. Finally, she made love to a man, instead of waiting for a man to make love to her.

   Genius, Shakespeare, liberated sexuality of a woman. It is sad that his message isn’t completely understood in 21st century; however, he gave us sexual power. In my opinion, the purpose of the play is to explain men – women relationship:

   *...that between you and women the play may please...* (Shakespeare, 1996)

This play was not written to glorify women and degrade men, nor the other way around, but to give an example of how things should look like. Just like Prophet, Shakespeare gives us instructions for future. His every play can be applied to any time. Every period sees something of its own interest in Shakespeare’ plays and characters; Elizabethans and Victorians were not exception, nor are we today.
3.2. Purpose of the Play

*Shakespearean dramas often attribute cunning intellect, calculated control and enigmatic beauty to his female protagonists.* (Bence, 2001)

Shakespeare was and still is beyond conventions.

*Rosalind who was then unconventional for an hour is now the convention of an epos.* (Bloom, 1999)

As far as this play is concerned, he went against one of the two main principles of drama; he gave woman the power and assignment of chorus, he left her sum up the play, he gave her epilogue:

*It is not the fashion to see the lady*  
*the epilogue; but it is no more unhandsome*  
*than to see the lord the prologue...* (Shakespeare, 1996)

As professor Khan said, her epilogue comes out of the mouth of 20th century feminist, not Elizabethan. Fascinating.

*Rosalind is a joyous representative of life’s possible freedoms...* (Bloom, 1999), and depiction of modern women, us.
Chapter 4

“Macbeth” – Character of Lady Macbeth

It is absolutely fabulous how Shakespeare portrayed his heroines. It is certain that he knew origin of female character and its essence. His every heroine represents one aspect of a woman which is undeniably there, hidden or obvious, but still incorporated in a woman by her birth and knowledge of the world. I can’t decide which one of Shakespeare’s heroines I like the most, but it is certain that all of them deserve respect. Talking and writing about Lady Macbeth would be so easy if I could only gather my thoughts. So many things I have to say about IRON LADY.

4.1. Iron Lady or Disatrium?

While reading some “feministic” criticism, which I will not bother to mention here, concerning Lady Macbeth as a female character, and Macbeth as a play and character, I couldn’t stop wondering; am I being too pretentious when calling myself a feminist, or so called feminists lost their sense of femininity, so they are categorizing Macbeth as anti feministic play. Then I came to a conclusion: not every soul has the capacity to see behind, and not every feminist is a lesbian. However, Lady Macbeth is so impressive female character of Shakespeare. She is ambitious, passionate, brave, and she deserves our respect; but most of all, her role is the leading one because Macbeth needs her. She moves his mind.
So, not only has Shakespeare equalized man and woman, but he put woman ahead of man. Still, we cannot forget that:

…with surpassing irony Shakespeare presents them as the happiest married couple in all his work. (Bloom, 1999)

Shakespeare surpassed those days patriarchal system and he showed true love of a man for a woman. We can clearly see that in a letter that Macbeth sent to his lady, where he called her:

…my dearest partner of greatness… (Shakespeare, 1996)
Besides that Shakespeare made Lady Macbeth an expert in speech:

… yet do I fear thy nature;
It is too full o’ th’ milk of human kindness
To catch the nearest way: thou wouldst be great;
Art not without ambition; but without
The illness should attend it: what thou wouldst
highly;
That wouldst thou holily, wouldst not play false,

… That I may pour my spirits in thine ear;

… (Shakespeare, 1996)

No misogynist could give such speech to a woman. Shakespeare made intellectual, competent, strong, and authoritative woman who spoke philosophy. Not only she made herself “big” by her statements and acts, but Macbeth speaks of her as the great one:

Bring forth men – children only;
For thy undaunted mettle should compose
Nothing but males… (Shakespeare, 1996)

This is Scottish/Irish context and it means that Lady Macbeth is a woman who is greater than women. Macbeth glorifies her, he admires her. Macbeth’ psychological life depends on Lady Macbeth:

Psychologically and spiritually she is more potent. (Khan, 2008)

Since Lady Macbeth looks scary, at least in the beginning of the play, and as professor Khan says: “inhuman”, I feel obliged to elaborate on her femininity which she tried to conceive.
... 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! Make thick my blood,
Stop up th’ access and passage to remorse,
... Come to my woman’s breasts,
And take my milk for gall, you murd’ring minis-
Ters, ... (Shakespeare, 1996)

It has to be understood that Lady Macbeth would not invoke evil spirits to come into her if she was evil in her nature. Shakespeare did not take away her femininity. He gave her consistency and ambition. Even her crudest sentences like:

I would, while it was smiling in my face,
Have pluckt my nipple from his boneless gums,
And dasht the brains out... (Shakespeare, 1996)

preceeded with lines like:

I have given suck, and know
How tender ’tis to love the babe that milks me: ... (Shakespeare, 1996)

Just like professor Khan said:

… a woman is the symbol of life and care… (Khan, 2008)

Shakespeare didn’t deny that part of Lady Macbeth’ personality, but he emphasized her ambition and consistency. With these lines she was persuading Macbeth to proceed with their plan. She was manipulative, and she didn’t choose means to gain her goal. Moreover, Shakespeare didn’t deny her feminine weakness, or better to say her humanity:
Ark! The crime is not done
Hath he not resemble my
father I could have done it
myself. (Shakespeare, 1996)

Clearly, she is making excuses not to commit a murder. This is perfectly normal state of mind. Guilty conscience made her weak:

Out, damned spot! out I say! One, two;
. . . . . .
Here is the smell of the blood still: all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand… (Shakespeare, 1996)

She is a very complex character, and as professor Khan said, it is in her character that in her weakest moments she can stop the agony of her life with only one determined strike. (Khan, 2008) Great woman!
Chapter 5
“King Lear” – Character of Cordelia

“Today is to be decided…” (Shakespeare, 1996) if the play “King Lear” should be categorized as misogynist play. Shakespeare’ tragedy “King Lear” is often criticized by feminists for its supposed misogyny, but opposing patriarchal and feminine notions prove exactly the opposite. One would underestimate Shakespeare by saying such nonsense. To prove that Shakespeare pictured strong female characters, I will analyze this play through character of Cordelia. In hope that my words, some day, will be taken as positive, true, feministic theory, I will try to convince poisoned female minds, and say that very few men in the world will have negative concept of women in their minds, unless women make them think so by their constant effort to find “humiliating statements” spoken or written by men and concerning women. Dear ladies, expand your horizons. Cordelia appears in the play only few times, but the impression she leaves is long and permanent. She is not representative of mercy, but morality. Everything about Cordelia is love full, starting from her name: “cor” which means heart, or “cordel” which means one that unites. She is totally “love personified”. (Khan, 2009) Shakespeare made her, from the very beginning, such a symbolic character. Only a very crazy person can say that Lear is misogynist. How can hatred exist in a father – daughter relationship? It is not possible, and the text proves my point:

Now, our joy,
Although our last, not least, to whose young
love
the vines of France and milk of Burgundy
Strive to be interest; … (Shakespeare, 1996)

Before these lines were spoken, Lear spoke to his other two daughters:

Goneril,
Our eldest – born, speak first. (Shakespeare, 1996)
and

*Our dearest Regan, wife to Cornwall? Speak.* (Shakespeare, 1996)

It is more than obvious that Lear loves Cordelia the most. He changed the tone and vocabulary when he spoke to her. So, by no means Lear is misogynist. Shakespeare gave Cordelia only 16 years and a very strong mind. When Lear asked her what she had to say concerning her love for him, her answer was:

*Nothing, my lord.* (Shakespeare, 1996)

Lear loved her so much that he gave her more than one chance to “mend her speech”, but she stayed persistent in her decision, and proved feminine determinacy and morality. Shakespeare gave her very honest and truthful speech:

*I love your majesty  
According to my bond; nor more nor less.*

... ... ...

*Good my lord,  
You have begot me, bred me, loved me: I  
Return those duties back as are right fit,  
Obey you, love you, and most honor you:  
Obey, when I shall wed,  
That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry  
Half my love with him, half my care and duty:  
Sure, I shall never merry like my sisters,  
To love my father all.* (Shakespeare, 1996)

This is so beautiful speech. She remained faithful to her heart. She thought her sisters’ speeches were hypocritical, and she didn’t want to deliver one like they did.
This can, also, be explained as Machiavellism, because we can suppose that she was in love with king of France.

Anyway, Shakespeare portrayed Cordelia as strong, love full and honest person. She might not be willing to respect “code of mannerism” (Khan, 2009), and speak the way one speaks to a king, but the point is that she could not be different.

Even, when her father banished her from England:

*Here I disclaim all my parental care,*

... ... ...

*thou my sometimes daughter.* (Shakespeare, 1996)

she only wanted to explain her “sin”:

*I’ll do’t before I speak, - that you make known*

*It is no vicious blot, murder, or foulness,*

*No unchaste action, or dishonour’d step,*… (Shakespeare, 1996)

These words gave Cordelia even bigger reputation, and king of France was impressed. His statements like:

*She is herself a dowry. ,*

or

*Love is not love*

*When it is mingled with regards that stand*

*Aloof from the entire point. ,* (Shakespeare, 1996)

show that in only few minutes Shakespeare gave respect, honor, love, and a title of a queen to a female character. I am sure that this proves my point.

There is another fact that proves Lear’s true love for Cordelia. He wanted to marry her to Burgundy and not to King of France because he wanted her to be close to him, always. Even
when he banished her from country, he offered her to Duke of Burgundy, just to keep her close to him.

5.1. Cordelia – Machiavellian or Christ figure?

Shakespeare gave Cordelia the power to be everything. At the beginning of the play she was Machiavellian (but not in negative context – Shakespeare created characters who are positive Machiavellians), then she left the play, and when she came back it was to restore balance in the kingdom. She fought for the cause which was not entirely hers, that is why critics properly called her “CHRIST FIGURE”. She fought for the cause for which she suffered, but she was mindful of a great sacrifice:

_We are not the first_

_Who, with best meaning, have incurr'd the worst._ (Shakespeare, 1996)

The woman is not harmed in this play. Great tribute that Shakespeare gave to a woman/Cordelia is Lear’s kneeling and begging for her forgiveness. But, “Cordelia’s feminine modesty is active and heroic” (Fernie, 2002), and Shakespeare gave a suggestion that “men should learn shame from women.” (Fernie, 2002)

When Lear asked Cordelia for forgiveness, his ego was not functioning. “Since there is no self, there’s no ego. Lear’s self has Cordelia’s self, and reversely. Without erasing ego there’s no love.” (Khan, 2009)

In the end, when Cordelia dies, Shakespeare’s intention is clear; “she may die, but her purpose of life becomes her essence.” (Khan 2009) That essence will continue through a man, Edgar. From her very first sentence and after her death Shakespeare portrayed Cordelia as a great woman, and this play must not be argued as misogyny.
Chapter 6
“Hamlet” – Character of Ophelia

When the time came to write about “Hamlet”, or to be more precise, Ophelia, I felt very uncomfortable. She is a kind of a woman that makes my heart sorrowful and her destiny makes me very angry. She is the symbol of humbleness, as professor Khan says, but he also suggested that her being humble, very often, transmits into being weak. She is gentle, mild, submissive, obedient, and fragile. These are all human qualities, in general, but a woman should own them to some extent. Everything else is about being post of society. If the line: “Frailty, thy name is woman.” Has double meaning, than this other, negative one, can easily be applied to Ophelia. I cannot ignore the fact that Ophelia was only 16, she was a teenager, insecure, childish, innocent. Professor Khan said that her innocence gives to her character such a charm, that despite her frailty, she is so lovely. (Khan, 2008)

6.1. Ophelia’s Frailty

I appreciate professor Khan’s comment so much, because he described Ophelia’s character in very positive manner. Ophelia was not sure about anything; she didn’t even know if she loved Hamlet, or not, she didn’t know herself primarily.
However, I have to justify her – she was a teenager in pursuit of happiness – in pursuit of “self”. Some people spend their entire life trying to discover the essence of their own life and don’t
manage to discover it, that is why we cannot blame a 16 year old girl for being weak and not revealing the “only truth”. She is not passionate like Cordelia, but maybe, just maybe, she didn’t want something so badly like Cordelia did. If she was passionate enough about anything, the action would be certain. We cannot underestimate her character if we have in mind her estimation of Hamlet’ character: courtier, soldier, scholar, an example of all Denmark. Character of Ophelia can’t be fully analyzed without Hamlet. He is the reason for her tragic outcome. Critic described him as:

A hero who pragmatically can be regarded as a villain: cold, murderous, solipsistic, nihilistic, and manipulative. (Bloom, 1999)

Each of these characteristics influenced and helped Ophelia’s madness, and finally, her tragedy. In Act I, Scene III we have obvious example of Ophelia’s childishness. Leartes tried to worn her about Hamlet:

For Hamlet and the trifling of his favor
Hold it a fashion, a toy in blood;
A violet in thy youth of primy nature,
Forward, not permanent, sweet, not lasting,
The perfume and suppliance of a minute;
No more. (Shakespeare, 1996)

Ophelia didn’t believe that love was just that; she laughed. Every word Leartes had spoken came out to be truth. It seams like Leartes knew Hamlet better than anyone else. Shakespeare created a character who would protect Ophelia, but the only person from whom he couldn’t protect her was Hamlet, because Hamlet was a King.

How innocent was Ophelia to think, in one moment, that she loves Hamlet, when in other she is so scared of him:

Lord Hamlet, with his doublet all unbraced;
No hat upon his head; his stockings foul’d,
Ungarter'd, and down-gyved to his ancle;
Pale as his shirt; his knees knocking each other;
And with a look so piteous in purport
As if he had been loosed out of hell
To speak of horrors.-- (Shakespeare, 1996)

How can a person that you “love” so much scare you that way. Indeed, she was not only childish, but childishly confused.

One group of critics said that Hamlet went to Ophelia after meeting ghost of his father, because he needed a word of consolation, and these critics would blame Ophelia because of not saying anything.

Other critics said that Hamlet went there on purpose, to give an impression that he is mad. He appeared to her as a mad man, so she could tell that to her father, Polonius to King and Queen; so Hamlet would gain his aim. Ophelia was used by Hamlet.

Hamlet is not the only one who used Ophelia; Polonius and king used her too. Two of them agreed to set a meeting between Hamlet and Ophelia where she was suppose to prove that Hamlet is mad because of love letter he allegedly wrote to her. When they saw each other they hugged, and for a second, Ophelia forgot the purpose of her being there:

My lord, I have remembrance of yours
That I have longed long to re-deliver;
I pray you, now receive them. (Shakespeare, 1996)

But Hamlet, superior mind, knew that something was going on:

No, not I;
I never gave you aught. (Shakespeare, 1996)

Now Ophelia changed her mood and gave Hamlet idea something was wrong. After this, Hamlet turned to be very violent. He pushed Ophelia and he insulted her by saying:
Get thee to a nunnery: why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners? …

He literally pushed her to madness.

God has given you one face, and you make yourselves another: you jig, you amble, and you lisp… (Shakespeare, 1996)

She is innocent and 16, so we cannot believe Hamlet. If we remember description of his father, that Hamlet gave to us, or his accusations of Claudius, than we are aware of his exaggeration.

Professor Khan divided this play into two parts:

1. before “About, my brain!”, which he calls emotional part, and
2. after “About, my brain!” which is, according to Khan, intellectual part. (Khan, 2008)

The way he spoke to Ophelia I can only describe and categorize as his emotional crises. This was Hamlet’s state between “To be” and “Not to be”. When the “player scene” took place I realized that Shakespeare’ design was very clear:

*Hamlet was designed as deranged person, with deranged mind.* (Khan, 2008)

Hamlet: *Lady, shall I lie in your lap?*
Ophelia: *No, my lord.*

…

Hamlet: *I could interpret between you and your love, if I could see the puppets dallying.*
Ophelia: *You are keen, my lord, you are keen!*
Hamlet: *It would cost you a groaning to take off my edge.* (Khan, 2008)
This conversation was happening in front of Polonius. This was the way people talked to prostitutes. I can’t figure out who is to be blamed for this: Hamlet for being so obscene, Polonius for not reacting, or Ophelia herself, for being so weak. This play is not the tragedy of Hamlet, it is the tragedy of Ophelia; undeserved destruction and death. She is a victim.

To make things worse, at Ophelia’s funeral Hamlet said:

*I loved Ophelia: forty thousand brothers
Could not, with all their quantity of love,
Make up my sum.* (Shakespeare, 1996)

This is not romance for God’s sake. It is just the way to compete with his brother. It is just a matter of possession.

Hamlet had no mercy, not just for Ophelia, but for his friends Rosencrantz and Guildestern, Polonius, Claudius, nor anyone else in this play.

*Life remains imbalanced, inharmonious; so purpose of existence is to create balance, harmony, paradise.* (Khan, 2008)

Hamlet shows how balance can be achieved; Ophelia, unfortunately, didn’t live long to do the same, or at least to try. Probably, she wasn’t suppose to. Maybe, she was simply depiction of those days women. However, Gertrude’ words spoken at Ophelia’s funeral: “sweets to the sweet”, best describe this lovely woman.
Conclusion

I must say, it was so easy to write this paper, I enjoyed every second of it. Shakespeare and professor Khan influenced my life so much. It seams like all of us were veiled “…till one greater Man Restore us…” I felt so many things before we have met, but I couldn’t name those. Now, my universe functions perfectly. Certainly, “The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a haven of hell and hell of haven.”

This topic, “Shakespeare’s feminism vs. 20\textsuperscript{th} century feminism”, gave me a lot of things to talk about. My freedom was unburdened. I loved writing about Cordelia, Rosalind, Ophelia, Lady Macbeth. Moral, strong, independent, weak, lovely, women released all my passions. The thing that makes this topic even more attractive is the fact that all these women were explained and carefully stored in my mind by a man, actually, by two men.

When Shakespeare was creating, God was expressing Himself, it was the Beauty, it was the Truth. The tragedy of human existence is passing time, but Shakespeare and his Ladies are eternal. Now, I feel like I leave a part of me with them, and I know I’ll be there longer than even I can perceive.

Now I am sure that words of a certain lady:

“If a woman has a misfortune of knowing something, she must conceal it. Imbecility in a woman is great enhancement.”, were completely wrong.

One of Prophet’s friends once said that we should say whatever we want, because our death protects us. I know these words are true.

This is the reason why I wanted to write about women, not to be silent.
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Appendix A Format for References

A.1 Examples for Alphabetical System
The following reference list provides examples of referencing journal articles, books, articles in a book, theses, conference papers, reports, and articles in the internet.

References


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