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The Greatness of Feminine Power in Shakespeare's Plays

When considering the greatest scenes of Shakespeare's work, one must first consider the time period in which he wrote. During the almost 25 year period over which he wrote 38 plays, all of the characters in his plays were acted by men. Women were rarely allowed to write plays. Women were certainly not supposed to get onstage and perform for the public. And yet, in this incredibly patriarchal time, Shakespeare wrote incredibly potent female characters. He gave them voices, emotions, and the ability to change their story. Ultimately, women hold more power in his plays than all of his male characters do, and Shakespeare's plays would not carry the same impact that they do today without his strong female characters, especially for female readers. His work differs from others in that "Women critics did not search for the 'man behind the text' because they knew that (he) was their poet, the 'poet of womankind.'" (Bachochin 66).

The praise of his women is not to exclude the skillful writing of his male characters either, as they make up the majority of his plays. However, it is their relationships with women that further the story, especially in plays like *Othello* and *The Winter's Tale*, that focus on sexual jealousy and relationships. Even tragedies such as *Hamlet* emphasize the importance of romance to the characters. It would be impossible to write such realistic and fantastical tales of love and heartbreak without realistic, animated women. Shakespeare remains a household name because of his ability to write women with agency. This anthology will lay out how each scene showcases a new attribute Shakespeare allowed his characters to create compelling women.

Works Cited

Bachochin, Catherine Moore. "*This Precious Book of Love*": *Shakespeare, Women, and Narrative in the 19th Century*". Lehigh University, 2011. ProQuest, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/871857338?%20Theses&pq-origsite=primo&sourcetype=Dissertations%20>.