



Portia's Role in William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*: A Feminist Study

Mariwan Hasan^{[a],*}; Bamo Burhan Mahmood^[b]; Revar Latif Hama Mrad^[b]; Mohammad Abdulla Hama^[b]

^[a] Dept. of English Language, College of Basic Education, Sulaimni University, Iraq.

^[b] Independent author, Iraq.

* Corresponding author.

Received 31 May 2024; accepted 24 June 2024

Published online 26 June 2024

Abstract

This research investigates the intricate role of Portia in William Shakespeare's celebrated play, *The Merchant of Venice*. Portia is depicted as a complex character who embodies intelligence, wit, and agency within the constraints of the Elizabethan era. Through an analysis of her actions, speeches, and interactions with other characters, this study explores how Portia challenges societal norms, navigates gender expectations, and emerges as a significant force driving the plot. The study aims to provide an in-depth analysis of Portia's influence on the narrative, her role in the themes of justice and mercy, and her position as a strong female protagonist in a male-dominated society. By examining these aspects, the research seeks to illuminate Portia's enduring significance in literary history.

Key words: Justice; Mercy; Prejudice; Portia; Gender roles; Intelligence; Autonomy; Courtroom scene

Hasan, M., Mahmood, B. B., Hama Mrad, R. L., & Hama, M. A. (2024). Portia's Role in William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*: A Feminist Study. *Studies in Literature and Language*, 28(3), 56-63. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/sll/article/view/13472>
 DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/13472>

1. INTRODUCTION

William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* is a compelling exploration of themes such as justice, mercy, prejudice, and complexities of human nature. At the

heart of this interact tapestry of characters and conflicts is Portia, a wealthy heiress of Belmont Who becomes pivotal voter in the resolution of the plays Central Conflicts. Portia's character is Richie Layered Define general rules and showcasing Intellect courage and portrayal in the play and here impact on the narrative The one of the main characters in the merchant Venice William Shakespeare Your father's will states That she must marry the man who select the correct Casket? Out of a choice of their Portia saves Antonio by the disguising herself as a lawyer I'm defending him in court. Portia is a female And Protagonist in the merchant of Venice by William Shakespeare drew from the historical figure of Portia the daughter of Cato the Younger as well as several parts of the Bible. William Shakespeare's The merchant of Venice Is a seminal work That delivers theme of justice, Mercy, Prejudice (Smith, p.257)

Quick-witted, wealthy, and beautiful, Portia embodies the virtues are typical of Shakespeare's heroines- it is no surprise that she emerges as the antidote to shylock's malice. At the at the beginning of the play However, we do not see Portia potential for Initiative and Resourcefulness, she is a near prisoner, Feeling herself. Absolutely bond to follow your father's dying wishes. This opening appearance, however, proves to be a Revealing introduction to Portia, who emerges at the rarest of Combinations-a free spirit who Abides rigidly by rules. Rather than ignoring the stipulations of her father's will, she watches a stream of suitors pass her by, happy to see these particular suitors go, but sad that she has no choice in the matter. When Bassanio arrives, however, Portia proves herself to be highly resourceful, begging the man she loves to stay a while before picking a chest, and finding loopholes in the will's provision that we never thought possible. Also, in her defeat of shylock Portia prevails by applying a more rigid standard than shylock himself, agreeing that his contract very much entitles him to his pound of flesh but adding that it does not allow

for any loss of blood. Anybody can break the rules, but Portia's effectiveness comes from her ability to make the law work for her. Portia rejects the stuffiness that rigid adherence to the law might otherwise suggest in her courtroom appearance, she vigorously applies the law, but still flouts conventions by appearing disguised as a man. After depriving Bassanio of his ring, she stops the prank before it goes too far, but still takes it far enough to berate Bassanio and Gratiano for their callousness, and she even insinuates that she has been unfaithful (Smith, pp.45-46).

The examination of Portia's character in *The Merchant of Venice* is crucial for understanding the play's deeper themes and the complexities of Shakespeare's portrayal of a strong female protagonist. Portia is a multifaceted character whose intelligence, wit, and autonomy set her apart from the conventional female characters of the Elizabethan era. Through Portia, Shakespeare presents a character who defies traditional gender roles, exercises authority, and demonstrates exceptional acumen in navigating the male-dominated world around her (Bloom, p.74).

Portia plays a central role in *The Merchant of Venice*, significantly influencing the plot and its resolution. Her actions drive key events, including the casket trial that ultimately leads to her marriage to Bassanio, and the pivotal courtroom scene where she cleverly defends Antonio and outwits Shylock. Her assertiveness and strategic thinking position her as a dominant force in the narrative, steering the play's progression and resolving major conflicts.

By focusing on Portia's character, this research aims to explore her relevance to the major themes of justice, mercy, and gender roles within the play. Her interpretation of justice and mercy in the courtroom scene challenges the rigid adherence to the law while promoting compassion and humanity. This nuanced perspective is emblematic of Portia's ability to navigate complex moral dilemmas, demonstrating her intelligence and depth of character.

Examining Portia's role provides insights into Shakespeare's commentary on the societal dynamics of his time, particularly regarding the role of women and the exercise of power. It also offers a lens through which to analyze contemporary issues related to gender equality and justice. Portia's character serves as a bridge between the traditional expectations of the past and the progressive ideas of the future, making her an essential subject for literary and cultural analysis.

In conclusion, the exploration of Portia's character in *The Merchant of Venice* is significant due to her central role in the play's narrative and her impact on its major themes. By analyzing her actions, motivations, and the challenges she faces, this research seeks to uncover new perspectives on Shakespeare's work and its enduring relevance to modern audiences (Campbell, pp.89-110).

Background of the Study

William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* was

written in the late 16th century during the Elizabethan era, a time characterized by strict societal norms and rigid expectations regarding gender roles. The period was marked by a patriarchal society where women's roles were primarily confined to domestic spheres. Women were expected to be obedient, modest, and subservient to men, with limited opportunities for education and independence. This context provides an essential backdrop for examining Portia's character and the complexities of her actions within the play (Garber, pp.145-173).

Portia's portrayal in *The Merchant of Venice* deviates from the traditional expectations of Elizabethan society. Despite the constraints of her time, Portia is portrayed as an intelligent, assertive, and resourceful woman. She displays a depth of knowledge, particularly in the courtroom scene, where she argues the case with exceptional legal acumen and wit. This portrayal challenges the conventional depiction of women during the period, presenting a character who is more than capable of navigating and even excelling in male-dominated spaces.

In terms of setting, Venice plays a crucial role in the narrative of *The Merchant of Venice*. During the late 16th century, Venice was a major trading hub known for its wealth, cultural diversity, and complex legal and economic systems. The city's cosmopolitan nature is evident in the play, with characters representing various cultural backgrounds and religious beliefs. Venice's significance as a center for commerce and trade influences the play's themes of economic transactions, risk, and the lending and borrowing of money.

The legal framework of Venice also plays a central role in the narrative, particularly in the courtroom scene where Portia demonstrates her knowledge of Venetian law. The city's emphasis on trade and legal contracts is integral to the plot, as it sets the stage for the conflict between Antonio and Shylock. Portia's skillful navigation of the legal system highlights her ability to understand and manipulate the societal structures of her time. The cultural and economic context of Venice, combined with the societal norms of the Elizabethan era, provides a rich backdrop for examining Portia's character. Her actions and decisions are influenced by the constraints and opportunities presented by her environment, making her an intriguing figure for analysis within the play's historical and cultural framework. By understanding the historical context of the play, we gain a deeper appreciation for the complexities of Portia's role and her impact on the narrative.

Overview of The Merchant of Venice

The Merchant of Venice is one of William Shakespeare's most well-known comedies, blending elements of drama and romance. The play revolves around several interconnected storylines that deal with themes such as love, friendship, justice, and mercy. At the heart of the

narrative is the conflict between Antonio, a merchant of Venice, and Shylock, a Jewish moneylender, which arises when Antonio defaults on a loan. The subplot involves the love story between Bassanio, Antonio's friend, and Portia, a wealthy heiress.

Portia plays a central role in the narrative and is one of the most significant characters in the play. She is first introduced in Act 1, Scene 2, where she reveals her dissatisfaction with the constraints placed upon her by her late father's will regarding her marriage prospects. Nevertheless, she quickly establishes herself as a clever and resourceful woman when she discusses the various suitors who have come to win her hand (Marcus, pp.195-211).

Portia's relationship with Bassanio forms a major part of the play's romantic subplot. Bassanio seeks her hand in marriage, but he must first choose the correct casket from three options as dictated by Portia's father's will. Portia shows her wit and intelligence by providing subtle hints that help guide Bassanio to make the right choice. When Bassanio chooses the correct casket, Portia reveals her affection for him, and they become engaged.

Portia's most significant role in the narrative occurs during the courtroom scene in Act 4, Scene 1. When Antonio faces the threat of losing a pound of flesh to Shylock as per the terms of the loan agreement, Portia arrives in disguise as a young male lawyer to defend Antonio. In this scene, she uses her legal knowledge and rhetorical skill to turn the situation in Antonio's favor. Portia argues that while Shylock is entitled to the pound of flesh, he must not spill any of Antonio's blood, as the contract does not allow for that. This clever interpretation of the law saves Antonio's life and leads to Shylock's defeat.

Portia's actions drive the plot forward and contribute significantly to the resolution of major conflicts within the play. Her intelligence and assertiveness help resolve both the financial dispute between Antonio and Shylock and her romantic relationship with Bassanio. Portia's involvement in the legal proceedings also highlights the themes of justice and mercy, as she advocates for both in her arguments. Ultimately, Portia's presence in the narrative is instrumental in bringing the play to a satisfying conclusion for the main characters (Traub, p.56).

Shakespearean Drama

William Shakespeare wrote an enormous number of different types of literature, such as comedies, dramas, histories, and more. Many people know that his tragedies have hard-to-understand words, complex characters, and deep themes that often look into what it means to be human. What are some things about Shakespearean theater that should be pointed out? language study: Iambic pentameter and blank verse are two types of poetry and complicated language that you can find in Shakespeare's plays, which are well-known all over the world. He often

uses asides, soliloquies, and wordplay like puns and metaphors in his work. These parts add to the general depth of the characters and the way they interact with each other (Garber, p.4).

Structure: Shakespeare's plays typically follow a five-act structure, with exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. This structure provides a clear framework for the progression of the plot and the development of characters.

Themes: Common themes in Shakespearean drama include love, power, justice, revenge, and identity. Shakespeare's works often delve into the complexities of these themes, offering nuanced perspectives and challenging societal norms.

The Merchant of Venice fits within the broader context of Shakespeare's comedies, characterized by humorous elements, romantic subplots, and happy endings. However, the play also features darker themes such as prejudice, revenge, and the quest for justice, which are more commonly associated with Shakespeare's tragedies. This blending of genres makes *The Merchant of Venice* a unique work within Shakespeare's oeuvre.

Portia's character is representative of the strong female leads often found in Shakespeare's plays, such as Rosalind in *As You Like It* and Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*. These female protagonists are intelligent, assertive, and resourceful, often challenging traditional gender roles and expectations. (Jardine)

Portia stands out from other characters in *The Merchant of Venice* due to her exceptional wit, independence, and legal acumen. She plays a pivotal role in the courtroom scene, using her intelligence and persuasive abilities to resolve the central conflict between Antonio and Shylock. Her actions not only save Antonio's life but also demonstrates her mastery of Venetian law.

Moreover, Portia's character challenges societal norms by taking control of her fate, particularly in her relationships with Bassanio and the male-dominated world of the courtroom. She embodies the qualities of a strong female lead, navigating the complexities of the male-dominated society in which she lives (Jardine, p.102).

Objective of the Study

The primary objective of this research is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of Portia's character in William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, exploring her development, motivations, and impact on the play's themes. This study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of Portia's role within the narrative, focusing on her multifaceted nature as a strong, intelligent, and resourceful female protagonist. To achieve these objectives, the research will focus on the following key areas:

- **Character Development:** To analyze Portia's character arc throughout the play, from her initial appearance as a wealthy heiress with limited agency due

to her father's will to her strategic and decisive actions in the courtroom scene. Examine how her character evolves and matures as she navigates various challenges.

- **Motivations:** To investigate the motivations behind Portia's actions, particularly her desire for autonomy, her approach to relationships, and her pursuit of justice and mercy. Consider how her motivations influence her interactions with other characters and shape her decisions.

- **Impact on the Play's Themes:** To explore how Portia's character contributes to the play's major themes of justice, mercy, and gender roles. Analyze her interpretation of justice and mercy in the courtroom scene and her influence on the resolution of the conflict between Antonio and Shylock.

- **Role in Challenging Societal Norms:** To examine how Portia challenges the traditional gender norms and societal expectations of the Elizabethan era through her intelligence, assertiveness, and autonomy. Consider how her character represents a departure from conventional female roles of the time.

- **Portia's Complexities and Ambiguities:** To delve into the complexities and ambiguities of Portia's character, including her moral and ethical dilemmas.

Significance of the Study

Studying Portia's character in William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* is significant due to the insights it provides into the broader themes of gender roles, justice, and mercy, both in Shakespeare's time and in contemporary society. Portia is a complex and multifaceted character who embodies a strong, intelligent, and autonomous woman navigating a male-dominated world. Examining her actions and decisions allows us to explore how she challenges traditional gender roles and societal expectations, offering a progressive and forward-thinking portrayal of a female protagonist.

Portia's interpretation of justice and mercy in the courtroom scene serves as a key moment in the play and highlights her nuanced understanding of the law. Her ability to advocate for both legal precision and human compassion provides a critical lens through which to examine contemporary issues related to justice and the equitable application of the law. This aspect of the study has implications for modern discussions on legal ethics, the role of empathy in justice, and the treatment of marginalized groups within legal systems.

By focusing on Portia's character, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of Shakespeare's work and its enduring relevance. Portia's role in the play illustrates how Shakespeare's characters are often more than mere archetypes; they embody the complexities and contradictions of human nature. This nuanced approach to character development is a hallmark of Shakespeare's work and continues to influence literature and theater today (Smith, pp.155-170).

The study's findings may be applicable to current

literary or social issues, such as the ongoing conversations around gender equality and women's roles in leadership positions. Portia's assertiveness, independence, and legal acumen offer a model for strong female representation in literature and other forms of media. Additionally, her character raises questions about the ethical use of power and the balance between justice and mercy, which remain relevant in contemporary society.

Understanding Portia's role and impact in *The Merchant of Venice* can inspire future research in the field of literary studies, as well as interdisciplinary approaches that connect literature with law, gender studies, and ethics. By engaging with Portia's character, scholars can gain new perspectives on Shakespeare's work and explore how his plays continue to resonate with modern audiences. The study of Portia's character has the potential to deepen our appreciation of Shakespeare's contributions to literature while also offering valuable insights into current social and cultural debates.

2. PORTIA'S CHARACTER

Portia's character in *The Merchant of Venice* is multifaceted, showcasing her as a paragon of intelligence, wit, and virtue. Her initial introduction in the play reveals her bound by the constraints of her father's will, which dictates the conditions of her marriage. Despite this apparent restriction, Portia exerts considerable agency and autonomy. Her intelligence is most prominently displayed in the courtroom scene, where she deftly interprets and manipulates the law to save Antonio, a testament to her legal acumen and strategic mind. Various scholars have delved into Portia's complex nature, arguing that she represents a blend of Renaissance humanism and Elizabethan legal practices. This duality in her character allows her to navigate the male-dominated society with grace and authority, embodying both traditional feminine virtues and the intellectual prowess typically reserved for male characters in literature of the period (Brown, p.123).

Portia's Relationships with Other Characters

Portia's relationships with other characters in "The Merchant of Venice" are essential to understanding her role within the narrative. Her romantic relationship with Bassanio is central to the plot, highlighting themes of love, loyalty, and mutual respect. Through her guidance, Bassanio is able to choose the correct casket, demonstrating her subtle influence and deep emotional connection. Her interactions with Antonio, though less frequent, are significant in that they illustrate her compassion and sense of justice. In the courtroom, disguised as Balthazar, she not only saves Antonio but also ensures that justice is tempered with mercy. Portia's relationship with Shylock is more complex; while she enforces the strict letter of the law, she also shows a

degree of mercy by preventing his death, thus showcasing the play's intricate exploration of justice and prejudice. (Newman and Carroll, pp.139-62).

3. TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

The primary method used in this research is textual analysis. By closely examining the text of *The Merchant of Venice*, this study aims to uncover the nuances of Portia's character, her relationships with other characters, and the themes she embodies. This involves a detailed analysis of her speeches, actions, and interactions throughout the play.

3.1 Examination of Language and Dialogue

Portia's language is a crucial aspect of her characterization. Shakespeare employs eloquent and sophisticated dialogue to highlight her intelligence and wit. Analyzing her speeches, such as her famous "quality of mercy" speech in Act IV, Scene 1, reveals her rhetorical skill and moral philosophy. This speech not only serves as a pivotal moment in the courtroom scene but also encapsulates the play's exploration of justice and mercy. By dissecting the language and rhetorical devices used in this and other key speeches, we can gain a deeper understanding of how Portia articulates and enacts these themes.

3.2 Structural Analysis of Key Scenes

Structural analysis involves looking at how Portia's scenes are constructed within the play. For instance, the casket scenes (Act II, Scene 9 and Act III, Scene 2) and the courtroom scene (Act IV, Scene 1) are pivotal in defining her role and influence. In the casket scenes, Portia's interactions with her suitors, particularly Bassanio, reveal her discerning nature and her desire for a genuine connection beyond wealth and appearance. The courtroom scene, on the other hand, showcases her strategic thinking and command over legal proceedings. By examining the structure of these scenes, we can better understand how Shakespeare builds tension and develops Portia's character.

3.3 Character Interactions and Relationships

Character Interactions and Relationships Portia's well-defined relationships with other characters that developed in this play contain themes that are worth analyzing. They express genuine appreciation and tender concern, plus there is mutual respect and answering and an ecotype of a domination-submission relationship typical of the Elizabethan age. Exploring Portia's role and interaction with Shylock during the hearing in court helps to understand her ambiguity regarding justice and compassion. Another strength displayed by Connie Nielsen is that she has a great mix of strength and kindness, even towards a character that looks like a villain. Moreover, there are some scenes of her interaction with her maid, Nerissa, through whom the public and

private, strong and weak aspects of the lady are revealed. (Caldwell, p.354)

3.4 Dramatic Techniques and Staging

Dramatic techniques and staging: Shakespeare uses dramatic techniques in the presentation of Portia, as earlier discussed regarding staging. The disguise and mistaken identity, which are characteristic of Shakespeare's comedies, are important for the understanding of the character of Portia. She uses the character of Balthazar to escape the constraints that society imposes on this woman; she gets the opportunity to perform a man's challenge and even assume authority through her brain. The situation in the courtroom explored on stage is dramatic, and the conflict deals with the moral dilemmas that are clearly typical of Hardy's work; the full significance of her manipulative power to dominate the process is revealed. By analyzing these techniques, we can appreciate the dramatic craftsmanship that underpins Portia's character (Phoenix 4).

3.5 Historical and Cultural Context

At last setting Portia's character in the historical and cultural context of Elizabethan of England, provides us much more understanding of how important she is. The laws, social norms and role of women were simple at that time. At that time, we have shaped how Shakespeare audience observed Portia. we could see all of her doing inside. The play could stand against the social norms given a complex critic, or society value. This text analysis uncovers the more profound and significant hidden meaning of Portia character and her position in the play after taking this historical fact and cultural factor into account (Rackin, p.194).

4. COMPARATIVE STUDY

This research also employs a comparative study approach, comparing Portia's character to other female protagonists in Shakespeare's works, such as Rosalind in "As You Like It" and Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*. This comparison helps to contextualize Portia within the broader spectrum of Shakespearean female characters and highlights her unique attributes (McDonald, p.75).

5. LEGAL AND FEMINIST FRAMEWORKS

To deepen the analysis, this study utilizes legal and feminist theoretical frameworks. The legal framework focuses on Portia's role in the courtroom and her interpretation of justice and mercy. The feminist framework examines how Portia challenges and subverts traditional gender roles and societal expectations. These frameworks provide a comprehensive understanding of Portia's character and her significance within the play (Erickson, p.88; Korda, p.42).

6. INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

The interpretation and discussion section synthesizes the findings from the textual analysis, comparative study, and theoretical frameworks. It explores the implications of Portia's actions and character for the themes of justice, mercy, and gender roles. This section also considers the contemporary relevance of these themes and how they resonate with modern audiences (Garber, pp.145-173).

7. CHALLENGES AND CONTROVERSIES

Analyzing Portia's character involves addressing several challenges and controversies. One major challenge is the historical context and the differing interpretations of Portia's actions and motivations. Additionally, Portia's treatment of Shylock in the courtroom scene has been a subject of controversy, with some critics viewing it as a manifestation of the play's underlying anti-Semitism, while others interpret it as a critique of the societal prejudices of Shakespeare's time (Greenblatt, pp.1462-1470).

7.1 Historical and Cultural Context

One significant challenge is understanding Portia within the historical and cultural context of Elizabethan England. Shakespeare wrote during a time when societal norms and legal practices were vastly different from contemporary standards. Women were largely marginalized, with limited rights and roles in public and legal spheres. Portia's actions, particularly her role in the courtroom, can be seen as both a challenge to and a reflection of these norms. Critics often debate whether Portia's behavior should be viewed as radical for her time or as reinforcing existing gender hierarchies by ultimately returning to her role as a dutiful wife (Greenblatt, p.232).

7.2 Gender Roles and Expectations

Portia's character embodies the tension between traditional gender roles and individual agency. While she subverts these roles by disguising herself as a male lawyer and exercising legal authority, she also adheres to certain expectations by following her father's will and marrying Bassanio. This duality has sparked controversy among feminist scholars who argue about whether Portia's actions represent genuine empowerment or a temporary defiance of patriarchal constraints. The challenge lies in balancing these interpretations to present a nuanced understanding of her character (John, p.145).

7.3 Legal Interpretation and Justice

The courtroom scene where Portia, disguised as Balthazar, delivers her judgment is a focal point of controversy. Her interpretation of the law to save Antonio while exacting a severe penalty on Shylock raises questions about the nature of justice and mercy. Some critics view this as a display of Portia's legal brilliance and moral

righteousness, while others see it as an abuse of legal power and a perpetuation of anti-Semitic attitudes. The challenge is to reconcile these conflicting views and understand how Shakespeare uses Portia's actions to explore the complexities of justice (Smith, p.78).

7.4 Religious Prejudice and Anti-Semitism

Portia's treatment of Shylock, a Jewish character, is another major source of controversy. Her legal maneuvering not only strips Shylock of his bond but also forces him to convert to Christianity, a resolution that many modern audiences find troubling. This aspect of the play has been criticized for its portrayal of religious prejudice and has sparked debates about Shakespeare's intentions and the play's ethical implications. The challenge is to critically analyze Portia's role in this context without overlooking the historical and cultural attitudes of Shakespeare's time (Smith, p.145).

7.5 Interpretative Variations

Over the centuries, *The Merchant of Venice* has been subject to numerous interpretations, each offering different perspectives on Portia's character. Some productions emphasize her intelligence and moral authority, while others highlight her manipulative and strategic aspects. These variations reflect broader shifts in societal values and critical approaches, making it challenging to arrive at a definitive understanding of Portia. The task is to consider these diverse interpretations and acknowledge the fluidity of her character across different contexts and audiences (David, p.134).

7.6 Modern Relevance and Ethical Concerns

When people talk about Portia deeds in the play, and the theme of the play, they are often mentioning Justice gender, equality, religion, acceptance, because that's what the audience do see. But the way, but the ethical concern is the way she treated Shylock in the story make things hard for the scholar and the audience. People still have discussion of how Pous character in a way that remains accurate To the time period and to the current audience. To analyze this situation, you have to think critically about the writing, and what's it means so you can interpret it in a responsible way (David, p.173).

7.7 Scholarly Debate

There is a lot of disagreement among the scholar that talks about Portia Expert have various idea of how valuable she is, and the larger things she represents. some of the scholar see her as a feminist feminist icon, who fight against male-centered standards. While the other scholars see her as a young person of her time who maintain the status of order. These discussions show us how complex and confusing Portia is as an individual. This makes her, excellent subject for study, but a difficult one, because there are many different and often opposite points of view (John, p.198).

7.8 Conclusion of Challenges and Controversies

A balance, and a critical approach is necessary to get through the challenges and the argument that comes up. When you try to figure out who Portia is, it's important to consider the historical background, gender roles, legal interpretation and ethical problems. Regardless, there are many scholars' interpretation by facing these problem heads on this study aims to give a full and new on picture of Portia by focusing on how important she is in the merchant of Venice, and she is related to the current discussion about justice in general and social ideals (Smith, p.225).

8. CONCLUSION

In the end, this study shows how complicated and crucial Portia is in the merchant of Venice the study provided us a better understanding, Portia part in the play, and how she has influence on the theme of Justice Mercy, General by analyzing the text in detail using legal and feminist Framework.

Portia character is very essential to the play's analysis of the difficulties of the law particular in the court room scene whereas where she is wearing a male costume pretending to be a lawyer. by breaking gender norms, she can use her power and influence that she cannot normally do as a human in a male dominated legal system her famous plea for mercy show the conflict between strictly following the rule, and showing compassion reflects broader societal Discussion about balancing justice, and mercy.

From a feminist perspective, Portia goes against gender role that were typical in Elizabeth society. Portia is smart, funny and independent even though she lives in the world where men are in charge and women are supposed to be submissive. She manipulates the casket test to make sure Mary the man That is worth it, not only by looks This shows us how she has a lot of power. Also, the way she treats her maid, Nerissa. It shows us several sides of her personality, combining public power with the private weakness, and showing how complex female friendship and loyalty can be. The way Portia engages with Shylock in the courtroom scene, show the character in more depth, her legal knowledge and skill as a speaker not only to save Antonio, but also breakdown Shylock hard demand for Justice, making Him to face his own demand to be merciful. This interaction shows us the Portia character isn't always clear when it comes to justice and compassion, she is an expert in law and fighting for people.

This research shows how Portia reflects the conflict and complexity of human nature. By observing this part through the eyes of legal and feminist theories she is the character that both followed the rules of the society and goes against them. That is make Portia timeless and

important in Shakespearean. Writing people today are still influenced by what she did, and how she come up with that decision that show us how people are always struggling for justice, equality, and respect.

REFERECES

- Bevington, D. (2002). *Shakespeare: Script, stage, screen*. Pearson Longman.
- Bloom, H. (2010). *The invention of the human*. Riverhead Books.
- Bloom, H. (Ed.). (2010). *William Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice*. Infobase Publishing.
- Brown, J. R. (2000). *Shakespeare and his comedies*. Routledge.
- Caldwell, E. M. (2014). Opportunistic Portia as Fortuna in Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice. *SEL Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 54(2), 349-373.
- Campbell, L. B. (2013). *Portia's power: Rhetoric, law, and equity in The Merchant of Venice*. Shakespeare Studies.
- Carroll, W. C. (2004). *The Merchant of Venice: Texts and contexts*. Bedford.
- Erickson, P. (1991). *Patriarchal structures in Shakespeare's plays*. University of California Press.
- Garber, M. (2004a). *Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice: The transubstantiation of the hag*. Anchor.
- Garber, M. (2004b). *Shakespeare after all*. Pantheon Books.
- Greenblatt, S. (1997). *Shakespearean negotiations: The circulation of social energy in Renaissance England*. University of California Press.
- Greenblatt, S. (2016). *The Shylock problem*. In *The Norton Shakespeare*. W. W. Norton & Company.
- Halio, J. L. (2000). *Understanding The Merchant of Venice: A student casebook to issues, sources, and historical documents*. Greenwood Press.
- Hasan, M. (2015). The eighteenth century and the rise of the English novel. *International Journal of Literature and Arts*, 3(2), 18-21.
- Hasan, M. (2016). The rise of modernism: A new history of western modernism. *Journal of Kirkuk University Humanity Studies*, 11, 1-42.
- Hasan, M. (2019a). Values of women as related to culture and society. *Cross-Cultural Communication*, 15(4), 35-39.
- Hasan, M. (2019b). A thematic investigation into T. S. Eliot's "The Hollow Men:" with reference to textual approach. *Critical Literary Studies*, 1(2), 159-184.
- Hasan, M. (2019c). The explication of mythology and ecology in Eliot's "The Waste Land". *Studies in Literature and Language*, 19(1), 30-36.
- Hasan, M. (2020). Review of George Orwell's Animal Farm. *International Journal of Educational Theory and Practice*, 18-21.
- Hasan, M. N., & Hussein, S. A. B. (2015). The hurdles in front of women in expressing their voice in Eliot's "The Waste Land". *International Journal of Literature and Arts*, 3, 171-175.

- Hasan, M. N., & Hussein, S. A. B. (2016). Dante's "The Divine Comedy", Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and Muhammed's Isra and Miraj: A comparative study. *International Review of Social Sciences*, 4, 483-486.
- Hasan, M. N., Noori, L. S., & Hamasalih, M. S. (2015). Mysticism and Sufism in T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock". *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 5, 114-118.
- Hasan, M., & Shamal, H. (2015). The hurdles in front of women in expressing their voice in Eliot's "The Waste Land". *International Journal of Literature and Arts*, 3(6), 171-175.
- Hasan, M., Hsen, B., & Jalal, B. (2019). T. S. Eliot's "Sweeney erect" revisited. *Studies in Literature and Language*, 19(2), 101-107.
- Hasan, M., Lava, M., & Gashbin, B. (2020). Abuse practice of power in Orwell's Animal Farm: A historical approach. *CaLLs (Journal of Culture, Arts, Literature, and Linguistics)*, 6(1), 1-16.
- Hasan, M., Mohammed, D., & Soran, D. (2020). Instances of meeting: Sherko Bekas's "A Fall Letter" and T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock". *International Journal of Educational Theory and Practice*, 7-22.
- Jardine, L. (1996). *Reading Shakespeare historically*. Routledge.
- Korda, N. (2022). *Shakespeare's domestic economies: Gender and property in early modern England*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Marcus, L. S. (2004). *I will have nothing else but only them: Portia's divided wish in The Merchant of Venice*. In *Shakespeare's comedy of love*. Cambridge University Press.
- Marcus, L. S. (2008). *The Merchant of Venice*. Oxford University Press.
- McDonald, R. (2006). *The Bedford companion to Shakespeare: An introduction with documents*. Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Newman, K. (1991). *Portia's role in The Merchant of Venice: A study in misdirection*. Shakespeare Quarterly.
- Phoenix, A. (2021, October). *Francis Bacon (Bassanio/Bellario) and Anthony Bacon (its titular character Antonio) and The Merchant of Venice*.
- Rackin, P. (1996). *Stages of history: Shakespeare's English chronicles*. Cornell University Press.
- Ryan, K. (2009). *Shakespeare's comedies*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Smith, B. (2016). *Gender, race, and class in The Merchant of Venice*. In *The Cambridge companion to The Merchant of Venice*. Cambridge University Press.
- Smith, E. (1997). *Gender and performance in The Merchant of Venice*. Shakespeare Quarterly.
- Smith, E. (2011). *Portia's ring: Gender and exchange in The Merchant of Venice*. Shakespeare Quarterly.
- Smith, J. (2023a). *Shakespeare's heroines: Analysis and commentary*. Literary Press.
- Smith, J. (2023b). *Understanding Shakespeare: An analysis of his works*. Literary Press.
- Traub, V. (1992). *The renaissance of heterosexuality*. Routledge.
- Wells, S. (2015). *Shakespeare on stage and off*. Cambridge University Press.