

AN ANALYSIS OF SHAKESPEARE'S INFLUENCE ON THE PRESENTATION OF FEMALE CHARACTERS IN AFRICAN LITERATURE

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper was to analyze the influence of Shakespeare on African playwrights by comparing plays by African playwrights to those of Shakespeare. The women characters are discussed as follows: Namvua in The Bride, Aminata in Aminata, Reverend Sangoi in Inheritance, Tinka in The Burdens and Rola (Madam Tortoise) in A Dance of the forests. These characters are examined in comparison with Juliet in Romeo and Juliet, Desdemona in Othello, Lady Macbeth in Macbeth, and Cleopatra in Antony and Cleopatra. Feminist gender theory was used to shed light on the role of women and their status as depicted in both Shakespeare's and the African playwrights' drama. Despite living in different times, African playwrights borrow heavily from Shakespeare in the creation of their women characters. In both cases, the women characters have succeeded in hitting at the endocentric customs and cultural conventions, art, philosophies of life and religion which have always assigned women the slavish roles that are secondary to men. This is an indication of the influence that Shakespeare has had on African playwrights, a fact that can be attributed to the patriarchal societies in which both lived.

Key words: Shakespeare, Female Characters, African Literature

Introduction

The themes in Shakespeare's works transcend the times in which they were written in the 15th Century and as a matter of fact not only suit the setting in England but the rest of the world. It is not in dispute that the great playwright's works have a universal appeal. Shakespeare's ability to craft characters that reflect modern realities, especially women characters, is unequivocal. It is easy for modern audiences to see themselves reflected in one or more of his characters.

Through Shakespeare's tragedies we see the African experiences of colonialism and independence in the relationship, for example, between master and servant. The universal themes of power and inheritance, love and loss, clashes between old and new worlds are, after all, what sets Shakespeare's works on a world stage.

"In most African countries, Shakespeare is certainly lined to the colonial past, but his universal themes and inherent humanity have seen his works authentically appropriated into African context" (Leverton, 89). Leverton further observes that during the dark days of the apartheid regime, Shakespeare inadvertently became a prominent figure in South Africa's fight for liberation.

The same happened in Kenya in 1989, a period when Kenyan government made a resolution to face out all non-African Literature from the university curriculum, but the then President Daniel Arap Moi intervened to have Shakespeare works retained in the syllabus. Shakespeare, he said, "was a literary genius of universal acclaim". This demonstrated the significance of Shakespeare plays in the African context. The playwright dominated the list of literary giants whose works were read in secondary schools and universities in the country at the time and even in later years. It is no wonder those who were either students or lecturers of literature in the universities at the time would later on become playwrights as well. Indeed, many works produced by these scholars demonstrate evidence of being influenced by the works of Shakespeare.

Specifically, African drama has been influenced by Shakespeare's plays for many centuries especially through the portrayal of women characters. African women, for instance, have played a very crucial role in the development and general nature of their societies both in the traditional and contemporary period. As mothers, they are the core of the family which is the foundation of the nation. Africa is too complacent about the underprivileged position of women in society.

However, just like Shakespeare's female characters, African playwrights have created some strong female characters who raise their voices against male dominance in society. This paper thus seeks to compare and contrast some of the female characters by Shakespeare with female characters by some African playwrights.

Background

During Shakespeare's Elizabethan era, women in England enjoyed limited rights and freedoms. Although the monarch at that time was a female, women had no right over the direction their lives took. William Shakespeare's plays portrays the majority of female characters as submissive. Similarly, African playwrights portray women characters as not free beings. They are either owned by husbands or fathers who take charge of their lives. The fathers/men are thus the heads of households who rule over their wives and children as they deem fit. Formal education is denied women and they are not expected to hold any public office. Women cannot be outspoken and in case of such would be labeled as rebels. In such patriarchal societies the woman is supposed to be the epitome of excellence, an ideal wife, mother a magnificent homemaker and in the process, her individual self is hardly recognised (Prasma, 5-6). The moment such women exhibit contrary behaviour, they are perceived as an abomination and are corrected with demeaning punishments such as abuse and public humiliation for failing to uphold the mandatory societal obligation of being chaste, dutiful and silent.

Theoretical Framework

From a theoretical perspective, the feminist gender theory is useful in this paper to analyse the kind of status that the above-mentioned playwrights have accorded the women characters in their drama. This is so because feminism does not privilege women over men. On the contrary, it is a movement that has the power to transform the whole of society in a meaningful way. It challenges the patriarchal conception of male and female roles in the society. It also draws a distinction between sex and gender in order to redefine male and female roles (Frank, 1987).

The fundamental belief behind feminist gender theory is that from the beginning of human civilization, women have been given a secondary status by masculine dominated social discourse and western philosophical tradition.

The history of every civilization shows that women have always been subordinated to a position where they have no means to re-claim their unique identity unless and until they re-visit the history, explore it and finally re-establish it through their own experiences and insights.

It is commonly regarded that the actual theoretical foundation of feminist theory was laid by Simone de Beauvoir. She claims that femininity is not inherent but a social construct developed through the long process of socialization (Beauvoir, 1949). She says that the inferiority of women was mainly due to the three factors. First, women were always taught to help men and thus derive their existence in relation to them. Secondly, women were encouraged to externalize the aspects of femininity such as docility, selflessness, beauty to validate them in a society. Thirdly, women have enjoyed lesser rights than men. Therefore, she argues that it was not women's inferiority that rendered women as historically insignificant rather it is the historical insignificance that doomed women to an inferior state. According to her, the woman is not born but made into women through the process of socialization which is predominately male centric and that has reduced women to second sex and to the inferior and subordinate state.

Although Shakespeare portrayed the majority of Elizabethan women at the time as willing to uphold the status quo which limited and even diminished their political and social rights, some managed to disregard those societal expectations to chart their own course. To get an overview of how the African playwrights have managed to create women characters with attributes similar to those of Shakespeare, I analyse them through the following perspectives.

The speech A female character's choice of words, the manner in which she communicates and the tone of voice can establish her feelings, her background and the type of relationship she has with the other character/s she's engaged with. According to (Fergusson 6-7), since time in memorial the position of women has been that of wife, mother, mistress and sex object to please the menfolk. As such a female character who speaks calmly is obviously perceived as gentle. However, the one who is sure of herself, with formal grammar and specifically chosen words and can eloquently defend her side of a conversation will come across as headstrong and going across the expectations of society, while loud or coarse language is perceived as a sign of aggressive, immature, violent and probably unintelligent behaviour.

Thought

Most dramas allow access to character's thoughts. As in psychology, a character's mind is an exemplary manifestation of who such a character is (Frank: 18). Thus, allowing the audience access to characters' thoughts enables them build a mental image of who really those characters are and draw conclusions from their behaviours.

Reaction

The way a character responds both physically and emotionally to the issues presented by an author in a dramatic piece of art communicates an immense amount of information to the reader/audience. Naturally, there are certain reactions expected based on a given context. For example, when sad news is given, we expect a solemn dull reception reflecting sadness. When harm is done, we might expect revenge, confusion, bitterness and even death as a natural reaction. According to Wofrey: 68, any time a character reacts as expected, he becomes more humanised and relatable.

The next section will explore selected women characters created by different African playwrights to analyse Shakespeare's influence, if any, in the way they have been presented. The women characters are discussed as follows: Namvua in *The Bride*, Aminata in *Aminata*, Reverend Sangoi in *Inheritance*, Tinka in *The Burdens*, Rola (Madam Tortoise) in *A Dance of the forests*. These characters are examined in comparison with Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*, Desdemona in *Othello*, Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth*, and Cleopatra in *Antony and Cleopatra*. Further, the characters will be discussed under sub-sections namely; women characters as victims of domestic violence and manipulation, women characters as agents of societal development, and women characters as betrayers.

Women characters as victims of domestic violence and manipulation

In this section, I discuss Namvua in A.S. Bukenya's *The Bride* and Tinka in John Ruganda's *The Burdens*.

Namvua

The Bride by A. S. Bukenya is a play that criticises outdated and myopic African traditions that have rendered Africa immobile to the dynamism of western influence in people's lives.

For instance, circumcision which at the beginning is an adored tradition ends up being a cause of conflict among the initiates due to the fact that Namvua, a foreigner's daughter who is not circumcised, is invited to lead in a dance. In protest, the other female initiates leave the dance arena after throwing a mouthful of juicy insults at Namvua.

‘Mtuta: And which knife did that foreign girl of yours face? A peeling knife? (Girls yell out approval and encouragement).

Lekindo: Mtuta! Mtuta: I will say it again: in whose courtyard was Namvua circumcised? On what day? In what season?

Kuye: Yes. Let her open her legs to us if Mtuta lies.

Kitavi: Is that where all your sense lies, Kuye? ...

Kajiru: But we faced the ordeal. We should drink the brew of our courage and expect some respect from those who have not been reborn’ (p.5).

In *The Bride*, Austin Bukonya in an artistic way presents to the audience the impact of female initiation on human relations at both the individual level and at the wider society. In East African Community, initiation of women is such a delicate issue and Bukonya succeeds in bringing out conflicts fueled by individualistic needs of the patriarchal society the women victims live in.

Namvua is ridiculed and ostracized by her age-mates for not having been initiated since her father, Merio, is a foreigner who does not prescribe to this rite. The virtue of sisterhood and togetherness that initiation is supposed to sow among the initiates and the society in general dies even before it germinates. Namvua appears a submissive character resigned to fate and willing to accept the ridicule of her peers.

Further, tradition dictates that no uncircumcised girl can be chosen as the hand maid of Wanga. However, the priest bends the laws to accommodate suffocating tradition since he knows that no sane and living parent from this community can allow a daughter to marry a dead man even if it's meant to save the community. He now twists the situation and takes Namvua as the alternative sacrifice for such a cause. Here, Bukonya showcases how culture and traditions are twisted against women in the guise of saving the community.

Despite Namvua being the protagonist of the play, her words and actions lack the force, energy vigor and authority hence not keenly listened to by the elders. They almost succeed in marrying her off to a dead man until her salvation comes through the chief's son. Since the play has a traditional setting, Bukenya has succeeded in presenting the heroine as a flat character who does not surprise the reader as she offers nothing new. Instead she conforms and her salvation rests on the power of a man. Bukenya has created a stereotypical image of the modest maiden in Namvua, a woman prevented from being a hero and seen to be forever waiting to be saved, constantly a dependent, a victim, usually in the name of love and tradition. He has succeeded in creating a woman character with a conformist mentality; a damsel in distress ready to accept what the men serve her. Here, critics can argue that Austin Bukenya was influenced by Shakespeare's style of fashioning weak, freakish women characters who were a reflection of the distorted Victorian cliché of women as pure, modest angels in the house (Greenblatt, 9) owned body and soul by their husbands and possessing no voice nor will of their own.

According to the feminist gender theory, women are always at the mercy of their fathers or husbands. In the patriarchal society that Namvua lives in, she has to depend on the chief's son to save her from the cruelty of the elders. She cannot fight for her rights even when they are trampled upon. She is thus the ideal woman of her times. Raising her voice against marrying a dead man would portray her as rebellious. She readily conforms to the societal expectations until the chief's son comes to her rescue.

The creation of the foolish virgin image through Namvua is comparable to Shakespeare's Desdemona who cannot rise against her cruel husband and she ends up being strangled. Thus, the independence, emancipation and empowerment of women is greatly impaired in Austin Bukenya's *The Bride*. In the patriarchal society that Namvua is living in, she is not allowed to play an informed active role in deciding her life's direction and fate. Bukenya presents a stereotypical image of the weak female character whose salvation has to depend exclusively on Lekindo through marriage. Instead of Namvua speaking against the oppressive tradition which demands that she be married to the dead Letia, it is Lekindo who challenges his father against their twisted decision. Lekindo challenges him to examine Namvua and tell the world if the girl was less of a woman or a human being than other girls just because she was an uncircumcised foreigner: "Look at this girl.

Look at her two eyes, look at her two lips, look at her two hands and what is it she hasn't got that you non-foreigners have? How many ancestors do you have that Namvua doesn't have? (Bukenya, 23).

Compared to Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*, Namvua in *The Bride* seems to lack resilience and willpower. Being the protagonist on whom the major conflicts in the play revolve around, it is disappointing, that she lacks the fierceness, determination, resilience and power needed to direct her life. Namvua has no personal purpose, will or taste for her life. Just like Desdemona, she lives the god-will see-you kind of life enduring humiliation by male chauvinists. Desdemona is a central character in Shakespeare's play *Othello*. She is Othello's wife and portrayed as a beautiful young white girl from Venice. Desdemona projects the true image of the accepted Elizabethan woman. She presents the image of the virgin, also referred to as the good angel who is chaste and ignorant of worldly things. Desdemona is complimented throughout the play with words such as divine and the grace of heaven (Ferguson, 120). This naturally imposes strict limits on her mobility, knowledge and curiosity. Even though she at first appears as having an independent mind and even disobeys her father by marrying a man of her choice, Shakespeare changes tack and develops her later in her marriage life as a passive, docile wife, a stereotype that never allows the female to acknowledge her sexuality (Fergusson, 67). Even though she asserts her individuality by defying society and marrying the man of her choice, the patriarchal society thwarts her attempts to enjoy her freedom and choice.

Iago uses Desdemona as the means of destroying Othello. He succeeds in building a lot of mistrust in Othello by lying to him that Desdemona was sleeping with Michael Cassio, Othello's lieutenant. Desdemona keeps on being humiliated as the lie is heightened. As Othello is reading a letter brought to him from Venice, Iago's words about Desdemona's affair creeps into his mind. He strikes Desdemona and commands her to depart from his sight. Othello then seizes the opportunity to insult her before her old friends. In that scenario, Desdemona- is depicted - as the submissive docile wife who tolerates violence from her own husband and cannot question his cruelty. Instead, she obeys by walking away. Even when he insults her by calling her a whore, she remains loyal to him and loving. Despite his misunderstanding of her, his jealous and emotional outbursts, she resolves to love him. As Othello mistreats her, Desdemona's feelings are unwaning: "My love doth so approve him / that even his stubbornness, his checks, his frowns."

While many liberated female characters like Aminata actualise their happiness after rejecting the status quo of the societal expectations, the opposite is true for Desdemona. Desdemona cannot ditch her husband Othello even when he is too cruel towards her. Even when faced with signs of an impending death from Othello her husband, Desdemona cannot even think of returning to her father's house -. Despite facing death from the man, she devotes her life entirely to Othello. Desdemona asks Emilia to commend her to her kind lord. She remains in love with him, even while knowing that he is responsible for her unhappiness. Desdemona projects the image of a male-dependent woman whose life is never fulfilled. She projects a pathetic figure as Shakespeare's through Desdemona, Lady Macbeth and even Cleopatra seems to pursue the school of thought that women can never directly exercise the power invested in the position of the father because they do not have a penis (Ward, 68). The same school of thought is still held by many African playwrights where they depict their female characters totally dependent on their male counterparts.

It is evident that Bukenya, just like Shakespeare, gives support to the Elizabethan notion that it was a sign of disobedience for a woman to be outspoken, eloquent, and confident in fighting for her rights.

Tinka

In developing Tinka, John Ruganda in his play *The Burdens* leans heavily on capturing the realities of the Idi Amin reign on the people of Uganda especially on the domestic sphere. Due to the harsh

economic times facing the people, the domestic bliss is a long-forgotten phenomenon as people are barely surviving with some like Tinka resorting to selling cheap brews to make ends meet while her husband abdicates his responsibilities. Here Ruganda seems to borrow Shakespeare's image of the docile Elizabethan woman who silently accepts to be downtrodden by the men in their lives.

Tinka's weak and battered body appears to represent a suffering mother, the image of a brutalised wife. From her facial features, we see a female body that has been humiliated by endless beatings and harassments from her husband. Tina is a victim of brutality and violence from her alcoholic husband. She is a victim of male chauvinism projected by her cruel husband. During one of the many domestic violence spats, Wamala injures her in a scuffle over a bottle of enguli which he had stolen from Tinka's brew, hidden outside their house. The fact that Tinka silently endures such inhumane treatment from her husband resonates with the political reality of the time that informed Idi Amin's rule of terror. However, despite the violence and mistreatment that Tinka is enduring, she refuses to succumb to self-pity and to the damsel-in-distress image.

Through Tinka, Ruganda depicts a resilient woman trying to emancipate herself and her family from the voicelessness being forced on her by her abusive husband as she tries to control the scarce family resources from her chauvinistic husband, Wamala, a character who Ruganda perhaps creates on influence by Shakespeare's patriarchal society of the Elizabethan era. Tinka is fighting the challenges emanating from their physical as well economic and social translocation from the former high-upkeep residential section of the city to the lowly dwelling in the slums. She announces:

Tinka: We suffer. Wamala. It is difficult for us especially after such a past.

Wamala: (dreamily) Oh the glorious past...

Tinka: At least with you and the children it's okay. You have your drink and women to turn to. But me, I'm one huge lump of pain and suffering. (p. 37)

Apart from the resigned woman image, Ruganda also borrows from Shakespeare's presentation of women as sex symbols existing merely to entice men with their bodies. Wamala accuses Tinka of seducing him the moment she realized that he was heading for better a life. Tinka readily agrees

with this accusation by saying “In a way ...every woman does,” (p. 39). Wamala brags of how selfishly he capitalized on Tinkas naivety to achieve his political ambitions.

Wamala: Boy, I gave them what they deserved. Their most trusted nun, the only daughter of an eminent Catholic chief. Ha ha, it was a political masterpiece. And in your spiritual dusk, my dear was my political dawn and their defeat. The way I chewed the host would have made a bone bleed. (pp. 40 -41)

As the play progresses, Ruganda develops Tinka as a progressive protagonist who has refused to accept fate lying down. Tinka refuses to be pushed down by her husband as she subverts the male stereotype of women as helpless by picking up the challenge to improve the family’s economic situation. Despite the family’s dwindled fortunes, she takes up the role of the family’s sole bread winner through weaving mats and selling enguli, an illicit local gin, to feed the family.

When Kaija reveals the demeaning words Wamala had said about her, Tinka refuses to accept mudslinging from her alcoholic husband. Instead, she tries to build a positive image of herself in the children’s minds.

Kaija: That you kept pulling him down and down. A millstone round his neck, he says. A big burden.

Tinka: He has never been up, Kaija; I want you to know that. Never been really up. As high up as men like Isaza, or Isimbwa. A lamb is not a lion, son. (6)

Tinka is not about to allow her husband to poison Kaija’s mind against her and she is more than ready to paint the picture of Wamala as a failure who is solely responsible for the family’s current predicament due to his involvement in an attempted coup.

Despite the low financial position, they are currently in, Tinka proves she is not a submissive wife and she refuses to accept all the misguided patriarchal accusations directed to women for everything that goes wrong in society.

Whilst her husband resigns more into himself, giving up and falling into depression and alcoholism neglecting his responsibilities and being a bad model for the children, hardship and strife seem to recharge Tinka. Tinka takes economic and financial charge of the family. She asserts herself and refuses to live under her husband’s shadow. She succeeds in shedding off his dominance over her. Further, Tinka does not take her husband’s infidelity lying down.

She asserts:

“I am going to kill that bitch of yours, I warn you. I will pluck out her squinty eyes. She is making all of us suffer” (26)

Unfortunately, Tinka fights with her husband, stabbing him to death. Overall, her motherhood and womanhood does not entirely conform to Shakespeare’s Elizabethan patriarchal definition that a mother and more so a woman mother should take everything lying down. On the contrary, her aggressiveness can be compared to that of Lady Macbeth in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* or Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*.

In *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare presents Juliet as a strong female character who steps outside her societal boundaries to become daring and witty as the male characters. Juliet is an independent character who fights for what she wants in life, ready to sacrifice her family name and status. Her love for Romeo powers hers to defy her parents. She secretly gets married to Romeo despite the enmity that has existed between the Capulets and the Montagues. Juliet was a Capulet while Romeo was a Montague. At the beginning of the play, Juliet is presented as an innocent, naïve 14-year-girl who does not show any interest in marriage nor love. But Shakespeare builds her to become a complex character who rebels against society’s expectations the moment she meets Romeo. She grows up quickly, tastes the sweetness of love and develops an immense interest in love and marriage whose intensity defies the long-feuding hatred between the Capulets and the Montagues.

Unlike Namvua, Juliet stands up against her father and mother and against the enmity that has persisted between the Capulets and the Montagues. Juliet has control of her destiny unlike Namvua whose destiny seems to lie on the chief’s son Lekindo. Whereas Namvua is resigned and has accepted the demeaning position of becoming a dead man’s bride, Juliet is rebellious and determined to follow her convictions at all cost. Shakespeare succeeds in presenting through Juliet that women do not need to abide by societal expectations on feminine roles of being submissive (Bryson 1999). Feminist gender theory challenges the paradigms and intellectual premises of western thought and takes an activist stance by proposing frequent interventions and alternative epistemological positions meant to change the social order. According to Judith Butler, gender is a human construct enacted by a vast repetition of social performance and that the sexual categories

are products of culture and as such help create social reality rather than simply reflect it (Culler 1997).

By secretly marrying Romeo, Juliet goes against her father's wish to marry Paris. In rebelling against her father, therefore, Juliet emerges as a woman who is determined, focused and unrelenting in pursuing her convictions. She tells her mother:

I pray you tell my father and lord/madam I will not marry yet and when I do I swear It shall be Romeo whom you know I hate/Rather than Paris' (III.5 119-121).

Juliet is an independent woman with her own mind. She is not dissuaded from her set purpose of being Romeo's wife and readily swallows the vial given to her by Friar Lawrence. On taking the portion, she is to fall into a deep sleep which would convince the entire household that she is dead and so she would be buried at the Capulet's cemetery where she will supposedly meet with her beloved Romeo upon waking up. Eventually Juliet dies by stabbing herself on waking up from the effects of the portion and finds Romeo dead besides her. Even on her death bed, Juliet is persuaded that her resolution to love Romeo was right. As Juliet stabs herself, she triumphantly declares:

"Juliet: Yea, noise? then I'll be brief. O happy dagger!

[Snatching ROMEO's dagger]

This is thy sheath;

[Stabs herself]

there rust, and let me die.

[Falls on ROMEO's body, and dies]" (III.3.169-170)

Despite the fact that Juliet has an independent mind, Shakespeare is inclined to the Elizabethan image of the weak, helpless woman who has to keep on depending on a man. Juliet seems lost without Romeo's life. When Juliet is informed that Romeo had been banished by the prince for killing Tybalt, she keeps weeping for him and makes her parents think that she was mourning

Tybalt who had been slain. To safeguard her from more weeping and mourning, that is when her father arranges for her marriage to Paris.

Tinka, Juliet and Lady Macbeth share similar characteristics: they are outspoken, aggressive and do not conform to the expectations of the patriarchal societies they live in. Tinka is an emancipated woman who wants the best for her family. She defies her husband and takes on his responsibilities to save the family. The play is set in an African continent where gender disparity has pervaded many societies. Many of these societies are grounded on traditional patriarchal systems of governance. The place of women in many African societies has for a long time been culturally defined. Women have been relegated to domestic backgrounds and their specified places of operation been known as domestic spaces (Frank, K. 1987). Enter modernity and the once culturally defined roles and places for women are sharply contested and gender equality has come to the fore front space amongst human rights crusaders. They argue that women, like men, need and deserve to be treated as decent human beings, to be listened to and to inherit property and above all they have the right to engage in politics of the land. This modern reality defines who Tinka becomes after her husband abdicates his responsibilities. The feminist gender theory recognizes that women will rise against the oppression and unfair practices meted on them by male counterparts to demand equal treatment for both genders.

Women characters as agents of societal development

In this section, I discuss Aminata in Francis Imbuga's play by the same name *Aminata*, Mama Rosina also in *Aminata* and Reverend Sangoi in David Mulwa's *Inheritance* in comparison with Shakespeare's female characters.

Aminata

Aminata set in Kenya powerfully depicts how women are discriminated against by a deceiving male-dominated system. Francis Imbuga presents the challenges that a brilliant and tenacious lawyer called Aminata has to overcome in the name of traditional beliefs. She defies the odds by rising against some male chauvinists out to deny her the right to inherit a piece of land that her father has legally bestowed to her. Before his death, Pastor Ngoya, father to Aminata, bequeaths his daughter his piece of land. Although this is found in his will, his decision is met with a lot of resistance from many especially Jumba, Ngoya's brother and Aminata's uncle. He claims that Aminata is a woman and so tradition automatically outlaws her from inheriting land. Aminata

fighters to possess the land while Jumba teams up with Ababio, her biological brother to deny her the land. Jumba, also a leader of the elders (headman of membe), arrogantly misuses this position to influence opposition against Aminata's inheritance of land as he wants it given to Ababio, the habitual drunkard. It takes the confrontation of Jumba by Ngoya's ghost for him to give up his leadership post to his wife, Rosina, and to accept Aminata's inheritance of the land. Not to be seen a coward, Ababio commits suicide in protest.

Aminata the protagonist is viewed in relation to her interaction with the menfolk just as it was with Shakespeare's characters. The description of characters like Lady Macbeth, Cleopatra and Juliet is based on their interactions with the menfolk, they are either daughters, mothers, wives or lovers (Oldroyd, 77).

From a departure from Shakespeare, Francis Imbuga has created through Aminata a strong female character in the fictional Membe society who contrary to the traditional female characters, is educated and a professional lawyer. However, Imbuga seems to have borrowed from Shakespeare portrayal of the downtrodden Elizabethan woman in a patriarchal society. Imbuga presents Aminata as representation of women being denied the credit they deserve, women being victims of an oppressive, exploitative and discriminatory society strongly leaning on social prejudice. Aminata is a true picture of women occupying prestigious positions or have gained significant economic, political social and even financial independence, yet they have to put double efforts to those of men before they can be listened to. Just like Shakespeare's Cleopatra, Juliet and Desdemona, women's role in society are subordinate and relegated to the domestic spheres (Horne, 67).

In *Aminata*, Jumba, is projected as a blind custodian of culture whose sole reason for existence is to ensure that tradition is blindly followed to the letter as the village headman and thus with all the pomp of a chauvinist refuses to let Aminata inherit the piece of land legally bestowed to her by her father because it stands against the traditional practices that he is supposed to protect.

He argues "That woman is stubborn as a he-goat on heat" (Curry 15). Curry observes that 'In demanding to know from her uncle, Jumba, what is wrong with her inheriting property such as land. Aminata seems not only to speak for herself but also for her fellow African women who for decades have been oppressed and disinherited by the patriarchal power structures in their society'.

The constant struggle for expression by women who are projected as the bleeding voiceless victims of this oppressive structure is evident. Aminata as a highly educated, brilliant, aggressive and opinioned lawyer with a mind of her own overturns this oppressive status quo. Her knowledge, especially in law, is the weapon and shield for this battle for land. Here, Francis Imbuga creates an image of a modern woman playing a significant role in the emancipation of women, an illuminating positive image of the African woman through education which enable women to transcend all societal boundaries as they chart their destiny without being appendages to men (Ward, 242). From feminist gender theory perspective, Aminata represents the empowered woman who comes to save her fellow womenfolk from the unfair practices by male chauvinists. She fights for her rights and is not afraid to take on her own uncle in the fight for her inheritance. The feminist gender theory predicts that society will have such few outspoken women who will save other women from oppression in patriarchal societies.

In many traditional African communities, the worth of a woman is based on how she plays her role as a wife and a mother despite the diverse situations she finds herself in. The role of wife and mother being the measure of true womanhood in these societies, it is crucial to ensure that a sense of true commitment to this noble cause is planted and nurtured in her from an early age. One way for the woman to show how committed she is to her community is by giving birth to many children as a way of propagating the family lineage. In *Aminata*, Aunt Kezia's concerns about Aminata's inability to have many children does not bother the latter. Aminata does not bow to this pressure and instead challenges this system by getting only two children and shows all and sundry that a woman can have few children and still be a success in the society. Aunt Kezia laments:

‘All we want is the woman in her. Is she to invest all her goodness in only two children? That, son of my brother, is our worry. Every time we switch on our wireless, it is Aminata's name we hear. What happened of yours?’ (33)

Aminata has shown the world that women can balance career and family life. She is a lawyer, a wife, a mother and a career woman. The fact that she has two children and does not bow to pressure to have a large family as expected by tradition shows how women can have power and control of what happens to their bodies and lives in general. To Aminata, the woman in her is shown by how much she has achieved for her family and the community at large. The playwright further

shows through Aminata that women, unlike their male counterparts, are concerned about the wellbeing of the society and its development.

Thus, Aminata has been depicted as a wheel of change catapulting social transformation in her society through the various projects that she initiates such as bringing piped water, campaigning against outdated cultural practices whose discriminatory tendencies have no place in the life of the modern world. Through her development projects, Aminata has not only endeared herself to the people but to society at large. In her struggle to change the status quo promoted by the patriarchal society and blind male chauvinists like Jumba and Ababio, she has succeeded in showing the world that a woman is capable of actively taking part in the society's social transformation processes both at personal and societal levels.

Even though Shakespeare creates some female characters who appear to be independent-minded, the playwright further portrays such as terrible failures in their ventures, for instance, Cleopatra and Lady Macbeth. Shakespeare largely succeeds in developing female characters who are incapable of living their lives unless they have men as their anchors. On the contrary, Francis Imbuga in *Aminata* creates liberated women characters who do not conform to societal dictates and still go on to succeed. Imbuga depicts Aminata as an educated and financially empowered character, who does not have to rely on a man to be successful.

Using her money, Aminata is able to improve her people's living standards. Firstly, she brings piped water into the village, then starts a tailoring business for her uncle Jumba (Curry 17). She also pays school fees for Ababio's children, takes care of her father and hires a choreographer for the children's choir (17).

As such, Aminata has been presented as an agent for social transformation in the society through education. Aminata's development record speaks for itself as it endears her to the villagers. She is unable to comprehend why Jumba cannot embrace change which some of the elders have already accepted instead of blindly clinging to myopic traditions. She says:

“That is precisely why I am asking, no, demanding that my uncle and his circle of elders tell me what is wrong with being a woman. I want them to tell me what is wrong with me!” (39).

Through Aminata as a main character and Mama Rosina as a minor character, women empowerment and women emancipation is brought to the fore. Championing the rule of law for the protection of women's right to inheritance and the upholding of women's dignity in society is emboldened in Aminata. She challenges the status quo which hitherto had relegated women to beasts of burden, victims of suppression and objects of pleasure who are subordinate to their men. Throughout the play, Aminata and Rosina do not lose sight of their struggle to free themselves from their archaic culture. At an event hosted by her father, Aminata demonstrates this freely by eating chicken and its soup, something hitherto unheard of, to show women that they are supposed to eat chicken contrary to their culture.

Mama Rosina takes over from Jumba to become the first woman in Membe clan to sit on the stool of rule which since time in memorial had been the preserve of men. It can be argued that Shakespeare bears immense influence here. Just like in creating Cleopatra and Juliet, this African writer succeeds in creating a strong woman not alienated by the traditions of her community. She is not a mere decorative flower to the men around her. Mama Rosina epitomizes the free-thinking new African woman. In *Aminata*, Imbuga - succeeds in deconstructing the patriarchal misguided belief that women are only meant for domestic spaces. Imbuga has invested in his female characters and developed them making Aminata glow with humanity and dignity despite the challenges she faces in a patriarchal society.

Reverend Sangoi

The image of the new independent modern woman cannot be ignored. This is the woman who has struggled and triumphed against gender asymmetry and inequality (Mikell, 13). This modern woman's perspective asserts that the new woman represents a personhood where the individual exists as a free independent being who is under no obligation to conform to her kinship relations, and instead she has the power and responsibility to realize her potential for happiness rather than to blindly accept her femininely accepted societal roles. This woman also has indefinable value that is far reaching than the limiting quantitative financial worth, and she reasons and decides about her own values rather than fit into a stereotyped tradition (Frank, 93). This aptly describes Reverend Sangoi in *Inheritance* by David Mulwa.

David Mulwa deviates from Shakespeare in the presentation of the liberating power of freedom of choice among female characters. Through Sangoi, Mulwa builds an all-round character who breaks

away from stereotypical societal expectations of a woman and leads her community in activism. When Lacuna meets with elders to discuss the possibility of a forced evacuation of the people to create land for foreign investments as dictated by the donors, Sangoi is in the delegation. Without batting an eyelid, she takes Lacuna head on and reminds him that the people are entitled to their own decisions and that no one had asked him to request for foreign aid on behalf of the people.

The feminist gender theory envisages the emergence of such a woman, an activist who challenges the status quo to bring development in society. Reverend Sangoi plays the role of an effective activist through her outspoken and fearless character. In that she goes against the grain to bring meaningful change in her community. She says that Kutula could have done well without the foreign aid which in real sense ended up in Lacuna's private pockets. Sangoi and respected leaders from Bukelenge basin have come to see Lacuna over the evacuation of people from the valley to Samuka. Sangoi and the leaders inform Lacuna that the evacuation of the people against their will would not be possible. Lacuna threatens to eliminate Sangoi. She tells Chipande that that is the only way for him to remain on the throne. This shows Sangoi as a fearless critic of the barren gospel of mindless obedience, silence and fear, a break from the submissive following of patriarchal tendencies (Fernald, 89). In this regard, the influence of education, and the realization of the modern ideas about freedom of choice have been emphasized.

This is a sharp contrast with the independent, strong-minded female characters by Imbuga and Mulwa. They seem to have deviated from Shakespeare's image of the Elizabethan woman and instead created the image of an educated, liberated woman in Aminata and Reverend Sangoi. These are women who have struck a balance between their public and family lives. They enjoy their freedom as educated, independent women.

Unlike Shakespeare, David Mulwa creates an image of a strong woman who is not ready to accept nor be tossed about by ugly traditions and blind male chauvinism. True to her motherly and patriotic nature, Reverend Sangoi cautions the people against spilling any blood as they oust Lacuna. She promises to think about the leadership matter and get back to the movement leaders. This is a sharp contrast to the impulsive and violent nature of Lady Macbeth. Unlike Lady Macbeth, Sangoi is not for change through bloodshed rather for peaceful transition.

Bengo and the other leaders of revolution patiently wait to hear from Reverend Sangoi. The whole operation depends on her agreeing to be the people's new leader or not. When she comes through, she accepts to lead the people on condition of a bloodless coup.

Sangoi is only ready to lead the people until such a time that Kutula would be ready for an election and henceforth she would retire to her church ministry and her family having served her community. David Mulwa presents Reverend Sangoi as committed and sincere. She is willing to protest against her brother's leadership which she does not relate to. On assuming leadership, she states the need to deal with the evils of the past before forging forward with the reconstruction and healing of the land. She is quick to point out that the evil ones have reduced the people to beggars in their own home land, the youth into criminals and, disintegration of families,"... Tamina Zen Melo and others.... since disaster struck her home, she has lost her mind."(pg.135).

It is evident that Reverend Sangoi and Aminata stand for the oppressed. They portray an inner resilience. Through this inner resilience powerful and wholesome female characters emerge, who embrace and promote democratic values and systems and become role models and symbols of hope not only for the empowerment of women but also for the total liberation of their communities from the yokes of negative traditions and oppression.

Women characters as believers in supernatural powers but also as betrayers

In the section that follows, I discuss Reverend Sangoi in David Mulwa's *Inheritance* and Rola by Wole Soyinka as compared to Shakespeare's Cleopatra in *Antony and Cleopatra* and Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth*.

Reverend Sangoi

In David Mulwa's *Inheritance*, Reverend Sangoi is created as an inquisitive character right from a young age. She wants to know more about God and she ends up being a reverend. Mulwa's dalliance with the supernatural can be connected to Shakespeare's creation of female characters like Lady Macbeth who calls attention to the spirits to help her relinquish her feminine qualities. Lady Macbeth desperately beseeches, "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!" (1.5.38-41). Here, she implores the spirits to stop her menstrual cycle and instead fill her with cruelty "Make thick my blood; / Stop up the access and passage to remorse, / That compunctious visiting of nature / Shake my fell purpose," (1.5.41-44).

According to Kenny, 46, not only is her reproductive system averse to cruelty, but it is also responsible for the remorse that might impede her goal of urging her husband's purpose. To support her husband's planned ascent to the crown through the murder that she is scheming, she is ready to disown the aspects of her bodily functions than for her to be associated with weakness and she calls upon the spirits to help her. While Mulwa's Reverend Sangoi is admirable and accepted by the majority of her society, Lady Macbeth is cold and only wishes to use the spirits to achieve selfish ends of gaining power through murder. For Sangoi, power can only be seized through a bloodless coup.

In the words of Reyes C, 'Lady Macbeth's first lines in the play do not consist of her own words, but her husband's, which signals that her character's primary motivations are invested towards her husband' (84). In this chapter she is first seen reading from a letter that Macbeth has sent her. On reading the letter, she realizes that the witches' premonitions will come true which is a source of worry for her. She states, "Glamis thou art, and Cawdor; and shalt be / What thou art promised: yet do I fear they nature; / It is too full o' the milk of human kindness / To catch the nearest way:" (1.5.13-16). After the witches' prophecy, Lady Macbeth seems to establish that power can only be attained through violence. Macbeth becomes her target for ridicule and insults when he doesn't agree to participate in her violent plans. Despite the fact that Macbeth is in power, she asserts that 'she knows that for all his bravery in battle, all his soldierly and diplomatic qualities, he is basically much too soft, too full of the milk of human kindness to take advantage of the opportunity'. (1.4.20-27). This also asserts her as a cruel, ruthless and a psychologically manipulative character who exhibits many symptoms of sociopath (Baktir 50).

Towards the end of the play, fate seems to catch up with Lady Macbeth's as her blind ambition and cunningness leaves her an empty shell filled with insanity. The constant guilt and stress of her killing Duncan builds up and finally pushes her into insanity. "Out, damned spot! Out, I say! One:/ two: why, then 'tis time to do 't. hell is murky. / Fie, my lord, fie! A soldier, and afeard? What need/ we fear who knows it, when none can call our/ power to accompt? Yet who would have thought/ the old man to have had so much blood in him." (5.1.38-43). In the above quote, Lady Macbeth is ranting about the blood on her hands, but no one else can see it. This is Duncan's innocent blood adamantly sticking on her hands no matter how much she washes. On his last leg, with the rebels closing in, Macbeth gets the message that she's dead. Dismissively he says "She

should have died hereafter, (5.5 16–27). This can be described as a retribution of the supernatural forces which finally destroys their marriage. Shakespeare and David Mulwa could be suggesting that supernatural forces have a say on an individual's destiny.

As per the dictates of the Elizabethan era, it was not an everyday occurrence for a woman to lead an entire empire on her own. In *Anthony and Cleopatra*, although Cleopatra at first ruled with her father and then brother, she finally ascended to the throne as a sole ruler. Shakespeare has succeeded in portraying Cleopatra, the revered queen of Egypt and Antony's lover, as an all-round character whose presence is felt by all. She has control over her country, Antony and even Caesar. Most of the decisions that governed both Rome and Egypt were as a result of her feminine capabilities. She wields so much power over Antony and is excited at the thought that she has caught Antony like a fish. Cleopatra demands Antony to quantify how much he loves her, and he says unabashed that it can't be fathomed.

A messenger brings news from Rome but Antony is not interested in the news. His concern being primarily on Cleopatra alone. He dismissively says: "Let Rome in Tiber melt and the wide arch / Of the ranged empire fall" (1.1.35-36). It can be argued that African writers like Imbuga used Juliet and Cleopatra as a source of inspiration to create female characters who are aware of their downtrodden status in the African setting. Some of these characters developed a voice to question the male ideology about the place of women in society.

On the one hand, Shakespeare's heroines appear to meet their destruction for championing what they believe in. Although Cleopatra is a monarch, she is rarely seen performing the duties of the throne. On meeting Antony, she immediately falls in love with him and becomes totally devoted to pleasure and to finding fulfillment in this new relationship.

Moreover, Antony clearly becomes infatuated with Cleopatra's exotic nature and allows him to become seduced by her sensuality and charms. As a result of Cleopatra's hold on Antony, ill-advised decisions are made which at times lead to nationwide losses. For example, Enobarbus scolds Cleopatra for accompanying them at the battlefield but she insists on taking part in the war, though the armies display their displeasure at her presence and grumble that they become 'women's men' (3,7,69). Antony is eager to fight Caesar at sea, and readily agrees at Cleopatra's insistence (3, 7, 29). The fight ends with his defeat.

“Octavia:

My lord, in Athens.

Octavius:

No, my most wronged sister; Cleopatra

Hath nodded him to her. He hath given his empire

Up to a whore; who now are levying

The kings o’ the earth for war”. (III.6.75-78).

For Cleopatra, Antony’s love for her seems to become with time ultimately the most important thing in her life. However, it appears as though Antony considers Cleopatra more of a "lover" than a potential wife. In Antony’s view, Cleopatra, ‘is a charming woman but also a destructive seductress. Antony seems resigned to the fact that one cannot easily leave her and get rid of Cleopatra after being involved with her. He wants ‘from this enchanting queen break off’ (1,2,129), but even after he gets married to Octavia he cannot forget his strong passion for Cleopatra. He gives up peace between him and Caesar; he decides to go to Cleopatra’ (Baktir 45).

Antony is encouraged to "leave his lascivious wassails"(1.4.60-65) and return to his duties. However, to Philo and other male characters, Cleopatra is the stereotypical image of the seductress-goddess snuffs life out of individuals without a backward glance and derives pleasure from men’s weakness. Philo even comments that Cleopatra has turned Antony into a “strumpet’s fool” (1.1,5). He argues that Cleopatra is a seductress who exhibits immoral tendencies.

This raises the question of whether Cleopatra is an epitome of irresponsible lust or whether it is a celebration of devoted love (Deats, 2). Together with Demetrius, Philo cheapens Cleopatra’s sensuality to the theatrics of a whore (1,1,6-8) that makes men forget official responsibilities. (1,1, 6-11).

Pompey is another character who claims that Cleopatra’s wile and her ‘Epicurean cooks’ sauce (Antony’s) appetite’ (2,1,20) makes him forget where his duty lies, therefore, Antony will ultimately be seduced by pleasure that would lead to his eventual downfall in the hands of his

enemies. Thus, in the political and social scenes, Cleopatra and Lady Macbeth are women who bring disaster. Shakespeare makes them more of whores than successful independent female characters.

Shakespeare succeeds in portraying Cleopatra as a masterful seductress woman whose power to charm men is derived from her beguiling craft. However, beneath Cleopatra's unbecoming theatrics and her overstated love and sensuality, there is a hint that her actions are determined by her affection and on whom it is projected to'. (Corey 45). Corey further observes that 'In the last scene of the first Act we see the impact of her sensuality upon her behaviour. For instance, after Antony leaves Egypt for Rome, she has nothing to occupy her time, and can only keep thinking about him, worrying about what he is doing, how he looks and what he is thinking (46). She questions Alexas about Antony and she is told. 'He was not sad /for he would shine on those That makes their looks by his/he was not merry, /Which seem'd to tell them his remembrance lay. In Egypt with his joy; but between both' (1,5,80-5). Even though Cleopatra is glad to hear about Antony, she is displeased that Antony is happy without her.

Cleopatra,

Where think'st thou he is now? Stands he, or sits he?

Or does he walk? Or is he on his horse?

O happy horse, to bear the weight of Antony! (I.5.25-28).

Cleopatra's impulsiveness and rash behaviour is also especially evident. When Cleopatra realizes that Antony has returned to Rome and married Octavia, she breaks out in a rage. She strikes the messenger who has just reported to her the unfortunate news, and threatens to stab him.

She laments her loss by weeping and praying for death. This brings her out as too dramatic and emotional to the point of being vulnerable.

However, Juliet and Cleopatra have also been projected as active characters who decide not to be passive objects of history. Even though they eventually meet their doom, they are actively involved in major decisions about their lives. In love context, Cleopatra and Juliet have been presented as icons of bravery. Cleopatra understands the agony of Antony and is devoted and loyal to the end.

As Antony is about to die, he proposes that she seek safety by surrendering to Caesar but Cleopatra adamantly refuses. She tells him: /they do not go together/my resolution and my hands I'll trust/None about Caesar (4.1353-58). When Antony dies, Cleopatra cries out, "The crown o' the earth doth melt. My lord!" (4.15,63-68), she then faints. On regaining consciousness, she orders for Antony's state burial and tells her servants that they "have no friend / But resolution, and the briefest end." (4.15, 95-100). After Antony's death rather than accept to be servant, slave or prisoner to Octavius, she decides to preserve her dignity by taking her life and thus holds her destiny in her hands.

Rola (Madame Tortoise)

Rola is a prostitute, who was once Madame Tortoise in a past life, and queen to Mata Kharibu. She was known for pushing men to madness. She is held responsible for the castration of Dead man and the eventual death of his wife. Wole Soyinka seems to lean heavily on Shakespeare's negative portrayal of women in leadership. Madame Tortoise or Rola is a cruel being with no respect for human life. She is projected as the catalyst or the temptress who influences Mata Kharibu to harass and dehumanize those that he comes in contact with. Rola's existence as a woman always depended on the death of others (Oyin 75). Her world is full of the cries of her murdered lovers whose death she is responsible. Her lack for value for human life is evident in her act of ordering the castration of the captain who refuses to go to war to recover her trousseau. This can be described as a betrayal to the mother image. The Dead Woman, heavily pregnant with the Dead man's child tries to plead for her husband's life in Mata Kharibu's court. However, due to Rola's influence, her plea was rejected and she and her husband ends up dead.

To Rola, killing others is a joyful act meant to induce pleasure in her being but on a deeper level, this castration is the annihilation of the potential for the growth of human life.

This is the link between the castration of the captain and the death of his wife at a time when she carries his child. It is no wonder then Dead Woman concludes that Rola 'had no womb '50.

She tells the warrior:

Torture! I have cause to torture you. Did you know the one who fell from the roof? The one who leapt to his death, on my account? He would not understand that I took horn, just as I select a new pin every day. He came back again and could not understand why the door was barred to him. He was such a fool. (52)

Rola's act of castrating the dead woman's husband makes the Dead woman commit suicide during her pregnancy. This death, taking place at a most productive moment in a woman's life, shows the extent to which Soyinka borrows from Shakespeare's assumption of the destructive power in women more so in Lady Macbeth.

By creating the non-feeling, Rola who shows no remorse for her action, Wole Soyinka heavily borrows on the whore image, a disreputable prostitute and a materialistic bitch who quashes anybody who seems to stand against her ambition. She betrays those that need her sympathy and nurturing aspect as a woman.

Rola's name, Madame Tortoise, has been borrowed from the West African folk tales whereby the tortoise is known for his wisdom (Oyin 68). Rola is a schemer. In developing Rola as having the ability to use her position and her charm for her own selfish ends in the political arena, Wole Soyinka seems to have borrowed heavily on Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth; it does not matter to both characters that human lives are lost merely to satisfy their blind ambitions. He sees women using their beauty as a bait to catch unsuspecting men and to destroy those who stand between them and their set purposes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the greater image that seems to come out through women in Shakespeare's plays is the destructive impact of sexuality and desirability more so for those who go against the era's gender assigned norms. Shakespeare has projected through Juliet, Lady Macbeth and Cleopatra, the stereotypical image of the femme fatale, the totally evil beings, the Delilah's, who turn everything they touch into death or evil. They are all presented as huge stumbling blocks against the moral integrity and dignity of the protagonists, tempting their men into their doom. This has been replicated in Tinka who in her efforts to emancipate herself from the claws of humiliation and indignity from her husband, she ends up committing murder.

On the other hand, Aminata and Reverend Sangoi, have been portrayed as strong, resilient, focused, independent and convincing characters that boldly resist male projected paternalism, oppression and dominance, ready to look and embrace the future with courage and determination (Horne, 59).

Despite living in patriarchal societies, these women characters have succeeded in hitting at the endocentric customs and cultural conventions, art, philosophies of life and religion which have

always assigned women the slavish secondary roles position to men (Prasanna S:11-12). In fact, they are presented as bold and daring, independent individuals who are the proud architects of their own potential happiness rather than as kinship extensions (Currey 67). They are women who embrace challenges of their times with strength, and poise. The creation of strong independent female characters like Aminata, who fight against males' discrimination on women's inheritance, Reverend Sangoi who promotes peace in her society by leading the society against her dictatorial stepbrother could have been influenced by Shakespeare's characters like Juliet who secretly weds the love of her life behind her parents back. These are female characters who refuse to be mere silent extensions of male voices in their lives (Chapman ,128). They have embraced the liberated modern woman. On the other hand, Namvua just like Desdemona have been presented as victims and passive receivers of the dictates of patriarchy.

Despite the difference in the Elizabethan times when Shakespeare wrote and the time when Austin Bukenya, John Ruganda and Wole Soyinka wrote their works, the latter borrows heavily from Shakespeare in creating the image of the virgin in Namvua and the whore image in Tinka and Rola. This could simply imply that the authors are thinly conveying the message that marriage is the bedrock foundation of happiness for women, and any woman who dares challenge such societal dictates is a betrayer. Those who dare venture out of such boundaries like Cleopatra, Juliet and Lady Macbeth are denied the happiness, a Renaissance assumption firmly projected in all of Shakespeare's female characters analysed in this paper.

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