

**Challenging Elizabethan Expectations of Gender Role
in Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* (1594),
Hamlet (1601), *Macbeth* (1606) and *King Lear* (1608): A
Feminist Reading.**

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Al-Zaytoonah University of Jordan, 2023

Abstract

This thesis delves into the application of feminist theory across four Shakespearean plays: *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*. Through an examination of specific female characters within these works, such as Lady Macbeth, Catherine, Goneril, Regan, Ophelia, and Gertrude, it elucidates the strength and defiance exhibited by women against societal norms prevalent during that era. Notably, characters like Lady Macbeth and Catherine exemplify resilience and independence, challenging traditional gender roles and societal expectations.

Conversely, Ophelia and Gertrude are depicted conforming to the societal norms imposed on women. Despite the oppressive environment and prevailing vulnerabilities associated with women of their time, these characters assert their autonomy and exhibit unwavering determination. The analysis focuses on instances of extreme violence and empowerment, highlighting the power and malevolence inherent in these characters. Through this feminist lens, the thesis aims to illuminate the strength and agency of women in Shakespeare's works, challenging perceptions of gender roles and emphasizing the complexity of female characters in literature.

Key words include feminism, power, gender roles, and wickedness.