

Three Characteristic Women
of Shakspeare
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Three Characteristic women of
Shakespeare.

References:-

- 1- Appleton's Shakespeare
- 2- The Variorum - Furness
- 3- The Women of Shakespeare - Furness
- 4- Characteristics of Women - Janssen

Women

- 1 Portia
- 2 Lady Macbeth
3. Juliet,

Portia. Lady Macbeth. Juliet.

The study of character, the study of the impulses which prompt humans to deeds includes also a study of our own impulses.

In interpreting the character of these three great women I can only give to you my idea, my feeling, as to what would prompt me to the same action.

I must act as a mirror in which these characters are reflected, if my make-up is warped I can only give to you a warped reflection which may be so different from your idea, that it seems absurd.

It is not necessary for me to speak of Shakespeare's life. For that you can turn to those who have carefully studied the history as well as the impulses of that great master soul, in whose mind all moods existed, in whose breast every passion existed, each being sovereign for a time

What I could say of him would be little. He is beyond the comprehension of most minds. We can only stand and gaze at him, in wonder and admiration. We can only hope to take a small part of his creation and analyze and try to understand it.

"Portia"

An attempt has been made by different authors to classify the women of Shakespeare. This time, a German writer on this subject, chooses a historical means of reaching this end, and classifies Portia in the "Second Period"

Mrs. Pearson in her admirable book "Characteristics of women," classifies Portia as a woman of intellect.

It is not for me to criticize this, and yet it seems that Portia was not a woman of

intellect, but a woman who
knowing little of society, dare
its established customs, and
is successful.

Intellect does not enter
except in the "Trial scene", and
even here the master hand has
made the reasoning so simple
that we do not wonder at Portia's success.

The story of the "Merchant of
Venice" is derived from two sources.
The story of "Antonio and Bassanio"
from an old Italian tale, "Il
Mercante di Venezia", and the
story of the Casket trial from
"Gesta Romanorum".

Portia is the creation of
Shakespeare alone, and how
well he has builded, the
intellectual world has already
said.

Imagine a beautiful little
valley stretching close in the
hills of Belmont.

Nature has made a supreme
effort here, the earth is capricious

with a mg of beautiful green,
 life is free, expansive, the air
 seems to rush into our souls
 a feeling of peace and comfort.

In this beautiful valley,
 Portia was born and reared.
 In a family of wealth and
 title, she has known no want.
 never seeing evil, she does not
 know it. Surrounded by the
 intellectual influence of a
 learned father, she becomes
 acute in reason, but beneath
 the outward calmness of reason,
 there runs that deep passionate
 underflow of affection which
 bursts forth and knows all
 else where Bassanio her favorite
 one, has chosen the right Casket.

"You see me, Lord Bassanio, when
 I stand,

such as I am, I do for myself
 alone

I would not be ambitious in
 my wish,

To wish myself much better, yet,
for you
I would be troubled hourly times
myself;

A thousand times more fair,
ten thousand times more rich;
That only to stand high in your
account

I might in virtue, beauty, worth,
friends,
Exceed account; But the full sum of
me

I sum of something, which to him is
gross.

So an unlearn'd girl, unschoold,
unpractic'd.

Happy in this, she is not yet so old
But she may learn; happier than
this

She is not bred so dull, but she
can learn;

Happiest of all is that her gentle
spirit

Commits itself to you to be
directed

as from her lord, her governor,
her king.

myself and what is mine, to you
and yours

So now converted; but now I was
the lord

Of this fair mansion, master of
my servants,

Turn o'er myself, and even now,
but now

This house, these servants, and this
savage myself

are yours my lord, I give them
with this ring.

Which when you part from,
lose, or give away

Let it besage the ruin of your love
and be my vantage to exclaim on
you."

When Antonio, Bassanio's friend,
gets into trouble thru Bassanio's
profligacy, Portia, forgetting herself
sends Bassanio to Venice and
helps him not to return until
Antonio is free.

After Bassanio has gone, she

cannot remain at home, but, wishing to help Bassanio's friend, she sends to her uncle, Bellario, a learned lawyer, in Padua, asking him to give her the necessary documents and arguments to plead before the Court of Venice.

Bassanio's efforts to rescue Antonio prove futile; Shylock remains firm, and thus wrongs, forces Antonio to stand trial; but we have seen, those of us who have read the "Merchant of Venice," that Portia proves herself to handle even the crafty Jew.

In the trial scene Portia discloses to us her entire self. Every feeling from mercy to hate is brought before us in such a manner that we admire the one and are awestruck by the other.

She appeals for justice, the Jew applauds; the honor of Venice must be upheld.

With consummate art she
begins that wonderful appeal to
pity and mercy.

"The quality of mercy is not
shamed,
It droppeth as the gentle rain
from Heaven,
Upon the place beneath. It is
twice blest,
It blesseth him that gives and
him that takes,
Tis mightiest in the mightiest, it
becomes
The throne'd monarch better than
his crown
His scepter shows the force of
temporal power,
The attribute of awe and majesty,
Wherein doth sit the dread and
fear of kings.
But mercy is above this scepter'd
sway,
It is enthroned in the hearts of
kings,
It is an attribute of God
himself.

" And earnestly pour doth thou show
 What God's
 Whose mercy reasons justice. Therefore
 For,
 Who justice be thy plea, consider
 this,
 That, in the course of justice, none
 of us
 Should see salvation; we do pray
 for mercy;
 And that same prayer doth teach
 us all to render
 The deeds of mercy. I have spoke
 thus much
 To mitigate the justice of thy plea;
 Which if thou follow, This strict
 Court of Venice
 Must needs give sentence 'gainst
 the merchantmen"

Shylock is unwilling, and
 Portia wishing not only to
 free Antonio, but also to discharge
 the debt of her husband, Bassanio,
 offers the Jew his money and
 urges him to stay in the Court
 thus unwillingness to receive it.

At the end he is mounded of this refusal.

Slowly but surely, Portia draws the net higher about the Jew, and at last, when the verdict is given, she stands out before us primarily, the woman, secondarily the Char, logical thinker.

In the Fifth act, Portia, the judge at Venice, becomes the judge at Belmont.

Bassanio has given her the ring she pledged him with, while she was impersonating the lawyer, and now she accuses him of infidelity; but, making what feeling had prompted him to part with it, she loves and honors him the more because he has proven himself so strong a friend to Antonio.

Portia is probably the most complete of Shakespeare's characters. We find no defect in her. Her make up is flawless.

Lady Macbeth

There is so much force, so much of the irresistible embodied in this Character that we never fully understand the power upon which it moves and acts.

She has no choice in her destiny but is impelled by an irresistible force, ambition, which pushes her on thru her entire life, ever toward the breaking of remorse.

She realizes this, but is powerless to stop. One can imagine her being forced to choose this destiny rather than wishing it.

Those of us who have not carefully studied this Character, must regard her as a woman whose impulses are those of a tiger. She awakens in us a feeling of dread and of horror; we stand aghast at the cold, hard, ambitious mind, which over-
 flows all feeling of love, and compassion. No! not all love is forgotten, for thruout her

enter life, we find that she, altho
sincerely realizing her superiority
over that weak, undetermined,
soul Macbeth, is the wife in
every sense of the term.

When first we meet this
Character in the play, it is after
that cruel ambition has seized
her and forced her to choose
to satisfy it. She does not
consider the effect, the awful
consequences of what she
intends doing. There is no choice.
Grasping the situation with
firm hands, she curses out
to her soul that it shall itself.
She begs that her womanhood do
not desert itself. She is no
longer the woman but is
now the machine.

"Come you spirits"

That tend to mortal thoughts! Unsex
me here,

And fill me from the crown to
toe top full

Of direst cruelty; Make thick my blood

"Stop up the access and passage to
 mine,
 That no compunctions visitings
 of nature
 Shake my fell purpose, nor keep
 peace between
 The effect and it! Come to my woman's
 breast
 And take my milk for gall, you
 murdering ministers
 Whom even in your sightless substances
 You wait for nature's mischief!
 Come thick night
 And pall me in the funeral smoke
 of Hell,
 That my keen knife see not the
 wound it makes,
 Nor heaven pierce through the blanket
 of the dark.
 No cry. Hold! Hold!"

When Macbeth arrives at
 home. She has fully determined
 what to do. Duncan must die.
 And when told by her husband
 that Duncan comes that night,
 she asks so much in so little,

she discloses her entire purpose,
she anticipates the weak dream
of ambition in Macbeth by
making it a real desire.

Macbeth, spiritless, weak, but
his restless soul knows no
weakening.

She plans with consummate
skill and faith for him the
fiction of "Sovereign sway and
Machidone"

When Duncan comes, she counterfeits
so faithfully the hospitable hostess, the
humble vassal, that even we who
know, wonder if she has forgotten
her purpose.

Duncan retires, and the hour
for the dark deed approaches. Macbeth
falters and once more the strength of
the woman shows itself. She encourages
him, and when he still falters, she
burst forth in an arraignment of
his love, so fierce, so eloquent, and
yet so true. She shows her entire
self, her intensity of purpose and
fills us with admiration for her strength.

"What trait wast' thou
 That made you break this enterprise to
 me?
 When you durst do it thou wert
 a man;
 and, to be more than what you were,
 you would
 Be so much more the man. Nor time,
 nor place
 slid thru adieu, and yet you would
 make both;
 They have made themselves, and
 that their futures now
 does unmake you. I have given
 such; and know
 How harder 'tis to love the babe that
 milks me;
 I would while it was smiling in
 my face,
 have pluck'd my nipple from its
 boneless gums,
 and dash'd its brains out, had I
 so sworn
 As you have done to this"
 O he true for the deed
 approach'd. Macbeth again falters

but is ever pushed onward by the undomitable will of Lady Macbeth.

How strong she is! never faltering, she marches on toward the deed. She is not afraid of the Crime.

She exclaims, "Had he not resembled my father as he slept, I had done't."

When all is over, Macbeth is worried, excited; but she calmly, coolly arranges the plans that are to cover their crime.

She treats Macbeth, and checks him as she would a child. He is not left alone, she manipulates him and brings him to his success.

She shows her consummate art in acting thruout the entire time of excitement and horror, after the crime.

Now for getting herself, until sleep leaves her, she, after her ambition is satisfied, does not commit more crime.

Had she done this, she would have been an entirely different woman. She would then have been not the agent of a great force itself but would have been the force.

Nature and God demands that all debts be paid; the end must come.

Lady Macbeth has defied the law of God ~~and~~ man. ambition having her taken away from her heart.

Before, her restless ambition carried her onward; having her it left her helpless, it left her and having her took away the great motive power which moved her and she dropped downward into the dismal sea of remorse.

We are driving her and then she searches for comfort and forgetfulness, but not finding either she is buffeted to and fro by the irresistible waves of conscience.

At last, this grand mind, this strongest of all of Shakespeare's minds, must be wrecked and

like the dronk ship with no
pilot, it wanders back to the
old days, and there is dashed to
pieces on the rocks that it
did not see before.

Pity her! how sad, how
full of deep, overwhelming sorrow
is her cry, "Here's the smell of blood
still; All the perfumes of Arabia
will not sweeten this little hand"

I have before this seen a
bird, driven by a storm, dash
its poor quivering body against
a wall, its flight was straight
and intelligent but after this
and when the storm had
abated, the bird, poor helpless
little thing, flies aimlessly about
and finally flutters wounded to
the ground.

Such is my conception of
this spirit. Driven onward by
the storm of ambition. The
wall of night presented itself
and this spirit dashed against
it, a blind obedient slave to its

strongest repulsor.

After the storm it is not
the same, the repelling force
is gone, and this over strong,
restless, spirit flutters helplessly
to the ground.

Juliet.

Portia personifies calm and intellectual love, that thinks and compares. Lady Macbeth personifies the fire of fierce, ambitious love. Juliet is love itself.

Knowing nothing of love: kept close at home, no thought surrounded by the influences of a fashionable father and mother, and the coarse almost vulgar nurse, her awakening was like the opening of some grand flower, which feeling the sunlight of love, burst forth in magnificent, radiant, beauty.

Knowing little of the world, the transformation from the girl, unthinking, unweird, just, to the determined woman whose entire soul was centered with the spirit of love is great, and yet not too great to be real.

It is as when wandering across the fields we see a

sun withered flower with drooping
head, and then on returning
after the refreshing shower has
passed we see this flower again
filled with strong, undying, life.

Juliet is the daughter of a
wealthy and titled Venetian
family and like all girls of her
time and station, she has not
seen the world as it is!

Her life has been as a blank
page. It remained for Romeo to
come and paint on it in glowing
colors, the picture of love, joy
and undying.

Her soul was like a
well tuned instrument. Much it
stood, and waited for the master
hand to come and touch, and
bring from it the harmonic
chords of love, love more
powerful than life, love
unconquerable even by death.

Innocent Juliet, when
Romeo came to her, does not
recognize the passion which

has mastered her.

Her soul is full, she must
confide to some one, something,
the power, the feeling, that burns
within her.

Afraid of her mother, disdaining
the common mirror, she goes out on
the balcony to sing, it, to the
night air.

Alone with nature and
the dear sweet remembrance of
him who has awakened this
new thought in her, she pours
out her tale of love in a song
as full as the deep throated,
unpassioned, song of the
nightingale.

"O! Romeo! Romeo! wherefore art
thou Romeo?

Deny thy father, and refuse
thy name;

Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn
my love,

and I'll no longer be a
Capulet."

She does not hesitate to make
her love known to Romeo, and
questions him in regard to his love.
"O gentle Romeo if thou dost love,
I pronounce it faithfully."

Romeo is ready to swear by
anything, everything, that his love
is true and she faithful confiding,
spirit believes him.

How happily even as before
to make these two love one another
faithfully, and yet there is ever
present an undercurrent of sad,
melancholy, destiny.

The consummation of their love is to
come but with it comes the end.

They in despair list this
plan shall be discovered appeal
to the good Friar Laurence, that he
help them, he acquiescing, Juliet
returns to his cell to meet Romeo.

They meet and after a time
of happy companionship, which is
to them a glimpse of Paradise, Romeo
departs to make preparations for
an elopement into the country.

until they shall be forgiven. While
pursuing his errand, Romeo
becomes involved in a quarrel
with Tybalt a kinsman of Juliet,
and Mercutio. For this deed, Romeo
is banished from Verona.

In the cell, Juliet frets at
his long absence and wonders why
her Romeo remains away.

At last, when the nurse
bursts in with the story of Tybalt's
death and Romeo's banishment, Juliet
bursts forth in an awful accusation
to his love.

'O serpent heart, hid with a
flowering face!
Did ever dragon keep so fair a cave?
Beautiful Tybalt! Friend of angels!
Love of fathers! Raven! Wolfish
muzzling lamb?

Just opposite to what thou justly
deservest.

O damned saint! an honorable
villain!

O villain! what hast thou to do
in Hell?

"Where thou didst bow the
 spirit of a friend
 In mortal paradise of such
 sweet flesh?
 Was ever book containing such
 vile matter
 So fairly bound? & that dicit
 should dwell
 In such a gorgeous palace!"

I he must then chide Romeo,
 and justify, true to his love, condemn
 himself for questioning his dear
 love and name, and scolds the
 nurse for her criticism of Romeo.

"Blest be thy tongue
 For such a wish! He was not born
 to shame!"

Upon his brow shame is ashamed to
 sit;

For 'tis a throne where honour may be
 crowned

Sole monarch of the universal
 Earth.

What a treat was it to chide at him
 Then again she condemns herself
 for speaking ill of Romeo, & ybalt, how,

all are forgotten, and her love
 rising supreme above all else finds
 expression in this beautiful passage.

"Shall I speak ill of him that
 is my husband?"

Ah! my poor lord, what terrors shall
 smooth thy name
 when I, thy, three hours, wife have
 mangled it?

But wherein villain didst
 thou tell my cousin?

That villain cousin would have
 killed my husband:

Back, foolish fears, back to your
 native opening;

Your tributary drops belong to
 woe,

which you, mistaking, offer up
 for joy

My husband lives, that Tybalt
 would have slain;

And Tybalt's dead, that would
 have slain my husband.

All this is comfort, wherein weep I
 then?

"Sour word thine was worse than
 Tybalt's death,
 That murder'd me, I would forget
 it fain;
 But O! it presses to my memory,
 Like damned guilty deeds to
 sinners minds
 Tybalt is dead, and Romeo banished,
 That "banished," that our word
 "banished,"
 Hath slain ten thousand Tybalts!
 Tybalt's death
 Was worse enough, if it had
 ended there.
 Or if our woe delights in
 fellowship,
 And needs will be mix'd with
 other griefs
 Why follow'd not when she
 said Tybalt dead,
 Thy father or thy mother, nay
 or both
 Which modern lamentation
 might have moved?
 But with a narrow following
 Tybalt's death,

411
"Romeo is banished," To speak that
word,

Is father, mother, Tybalt, Romeo,
Juliet,

All slain, all dead: 'Romeo is
banished,'

There is no end, no limit, measure,
bound,

In that words death; no words that
can that woe sound.

Where is my father and mother, Nurse?"

Before Romeo leaves Verona, he
does everything to see Juliet, and
meets her in her room. She is
anxious to keep him, and when
he last informs her that it is day,
Juliet insists that it is the
nightingale but finally realizing
that it is dangerous for him
to stay, she forgets her
pleasure and bids him
leave.

On the morrow, the
Court of Paris has asked Juliet's
parents for her hand in
marriage. Juliet's mother

and father are highly pleased by
this offer and command Juliet to
marry Paris.

The strength of this young,
seemingly weak girl asserts itself,
and she defers all for her
lord Romeo. She does not weigh
the consequences, but rushes madly
onward, seeing nothing, but
the overpowering love she has
for Romeo.

She cannot think of any one
else as her husband. Romeo
has possessed himself of her
entire heart.

"O bid me lap, rather than
marry Paris

From off the battlements of
yours tower,

Or walk in thirish ways; Or bid
me lurk

"When orphans are, O ham me
with waning tears;

Or shut me nightly in a
Chamber house,

"O'er covered quite with dead men's
 rattling bones,
 With rusty shafts and yellow
 Chaplins skulls,
 Or bid me go into a new made
 grave
 And hide me with a dead man
 in his shroud,
 I know that to hear them told have
 made me tremble
 and I will do it without fear or
 doubt,
 To live an unstained wife
 to my sweet love."

Juliet in her extremity
 again appeals to the good Friar,
 Francis, and he, in order
 to make the coming nuptials
 between Paris and Juliet possible
 gives her a vial which contains
 a fluid that will throw her into
 a state resembling death for a
 period of forty-two hours.

The Friar promises to
 arrange to have Romeo in
 the tomb at the hour of her

awakening.

Juliet is afraid at first to take the draught, and imagines all of the horrors that surround the grave marching before her in view; but finally true to her resolution to her Romeo she seizes the vial and drinks it off.

After crossing her arms over her pure white breast she passes into the realm of peaceful unconsciousness.

"Come, I say

What if this mixture do not work at all?

Shall I be married to-morrow morning?

No! No! 'Tis he shall forbid it; Let thou turn.

What if it be poison, which the Friar

Subtly hath ministered, to have me dead

And so this marriage he should be dishonored

Because he married me before to
Romero?

I fear it is and yet methinks it
should not,

For he hath still been tried a
holy man.

How if, when I am laid out to the
ground,

I wake before the hour that
Romero

Comes to redeem me? There's a
grateful thought.

Shall I not then be sheltered in
his vault,

To whose foul mouth no health
ever air breathes in,

Or there die strangled ere my
Romero comes?

Or, if I live, is it not very like
I'll horribly encounter of death
and night

To go through the horror of the
place,

As in a vault, an ancient
receptacle,

When for three many hundred years
the bones

Of all my buried ancestors
are pack'd;

When bloody Tybalt yet but
grew in earth,
Who fishing in his shroud, when,
as they say,
at some hours in the night
spirits resort,

Alack! Alack! is it not life
that I,

So early waking, what with
loathsome smells
And shrieks like mandrakes torn
out of earth,
That living mortals hearing
thru mine head;

O! if I wake shall I not be
distracted,

Ever sound with all these
hideous fears?

And maddly play with my
forfathers joints?

And pluck the mangled Tybalt
from his shroud?

"And, in this rage, with some
 great human's burst,
 As with a club, dash out my
 desperate brains?
 O look! Mr. Mums I see my
 Cousin's ghost
 Seeking out Romeo that did
 spit his body
 Upon a rapier point. Stay,
 Tybalt Stay!
 Romeo, I come! I too do drink
 to thee."

Juliet is placed in the boat
 and then slips in the substance
 of death, and poor, wretched Romeo
 he dug her over her beautiful
 body and believing her dead
 in the agony of love kills himself.

Juliet awakes and her
 first question is, "where is my
 Romeo" and then seeing him lying
 there bespattered by his life's
 blood she sees all hope of
 her vanish and bravely
 she dies.

United at last in eternal

slip, these two lovers become
the immortal shrine at which
all love must bow.

Emmett V. Hoffman.