



# REPRESENTATION OF GENDER IN SHAKESPEARE'S OTHELLO AND TWELFTH NIGHT

## Şekspir'in Othello ve On İkinci Gecesi'nde Toplumsal Cinsiyetin Temsili

Asst. Prof. Neslihan ALBAY

Doğuş University, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Department of English Language and Literature, İstanbul/TURKEY

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1933-0125>

**Cite As:** Albay, N. (2021). "Representation Of Gender In Shakespeare's Othello And Twelfth Night", International Social Mentality and Researcher Thinkers Journal, (Issn:2630-631X) 7(50): 2255-2263

### ABSTRACT

William Shakespeare's *Othello* (1603) and *Twelfth Night* (1602) provide distinctive perspectives on gender by exploring the roles of male and female characters in defiance of specific gender norms of the Renaissance period. Despite the specific gender roles assigned to men and women by society in the 16th century, Shakespeare depicted a broad horizon, particularly for silenced women in order to prove and promote their skills and intelligence. While Shakespeare favored and mirrored the Renaissance stereotypes of gender to some extent, he was most likely to defy and play with those representations. In *Othello* and *Twelfth Night*, it is likely to come across female characters who give up their typical female roles and assume the roles of males intentionally, as well as female characters who are committed to their female roles socially constructed. However, all these women end up being silenced or with death if they insist on maintaining their female roles. Shakespeare subverts gender expectations and conventions by assigning masculine features to female characters and highlighting homoerotic attraction and gay male relationships in these plays. The aim of this paper is to analyse *Othello* and *Twelfth Night* from a feminist perspective with a focus on gender roles in Shakespeare's period. It will also demonstrate how the theme of love is depicted to bear some dark features as a result of tragic hero, *Othello's* jealousy, while it turns into a more humorous portrayal because of various love triangles in *Twelfth Night* with Shakespeare's playful treatment of traditional gender roles and relations.

**Key Words:** Shakespeare, *Othello*, *Twelfth Night*, gender, tragedy, comedy

### ÖZET

William Shakespeare'in *Othello* (1603) ve *Twelfth Night* (1602) adlı oyunu, Rönesans döneminin belirli toplumsal cinsiyet normlarını hiçe sayarak, erkek ve kadın karakterlerin rollerini inceleyerek toplumsal cinsiyete farklı bakış açıları sunar. 16. yüzyılda toplum tarafından erkeğe ve kadına biçilen belirli cinsiyet rollerine rağmen, Şekspir, özellikle de becerilerini ve zekalarını kanıtlaması ve geliştirmesi için susturulmuş kadınların ufkunu genişletmiştir. Şekspir, eserlerinde bir dereceye kadar Rönesans klişelerini destekleyip yansıtsa da, büyük olasılıkla bu temsillere meydan okumuş ve onlarla oynamıştır. *Othello* ve *On İkinci Gece*'de tipik kadın rollerinden vazgeçip kasıtlı olarak erkek rollerini üstlenen kadın karakterlerin yanı sıra toplumsal olarak kurgulanmış kadınlık rollerine kendini adanmış kadın karakterlere de rastlamak olasıdır. Ancak tüm bu kadınlar, kadınlık rollerini sürdürmekte ısrar ederlerse ya susturulurlar ya da sonları ölüm olur. Şekspir, bu oyunlarda kadın karakterlere erkeksi özellikler atayarak ve homoerotik çekiciliği ve eşcinsel erkek ilişkilerini vurgulayarak toplumsal cinsiyet beklentilerini ve geleneklerini alt üst eder. Bu makalenin amacı, Şekspir dönemindeki toplumsal cinsiyet rollerine odaklanarak *Othello* ve *On İkinci Gece*'yi feminist bir bakış açısıyla incelemektir. Ayrıca aşk temasının, trajik kahraman *Othello*'nun kıskançlığının bir sonucu olarak bazı karanlık özellikler taşıırken, *On İkinci Gece*'de Şekspir'in geleneksel cinsiyet rollerini ve ilişkilerini eğlenceli bir şekilde ele almasıyla ve çeşitli aşk üçgenlerinden dolayı nasıl daha mizahi bir tasvire dönüştüğünü göstermektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Şekspir, *Othello*, *On İkinci Gece*, cinsiyet, trajedi, komedi

### 1. INTRODUCTION

*Othello* and *Twelfth Night* are the two masterpieces of William Shakespeare that provide new perspectives on gender by exploring the roles of male and female characters in defiance of specific gender norms of the Renaissance period. Despite the specific gender roles assigned to men and women by society in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Shakespeare depicted a broad horizon, particularly for silenced women in order to prove and promote their skills and intelligence. Thinking ahead of his time, William Shakespeare enabled women to discover and believe in themselves as individuals and recognize their dexterity by taking active roles and socializing more instead of being silenced and pacified in domestic sphere. He believed that women could achieve more than what she was expected to do within limits. While Shakespeare favored and mirrored the Renaissance stereotypes of gender to some extent, he was most likely to defy and play with those representations. In *Othello* and *Twelfth Night*, it is likely to come across female characters who give up their typical female roles and assume the roles of males intentionally, as well as female characters who are committed to their female roles socially constructed. However, all these women end up being silenced or with death if they insist on maintaining their female roles.

*Othello* and *Twelfth Night* seem to be quite different from each other thematically and contextually; however, they converge at some points as they blend some features of tragedy and comedy within themselves. *Othello* stands out as a tragedy; however, it also involves the elements of a comedy. *Twelfth Night* stands out with its comedy features, but it also inhabits the elements of a tragedy. Concisely, both plays contain tragedy and comedy elements. Most importantly there is a point that binds both plays tightly. Gender issue is one of the outstanding points that are studied intensively in both plays. For centuries gender problem has been encountered in the patriarchal society and still it maintains its impact in most regions of the world in which patriarchal societies keep their presence. In the words of Joan W. Scott, gender is “a social category imposed on a sexed body” (Scott 1999: 32). The construction of the patriarchal society, its values, and beliefs that are strictly bound, the determined role of genders is discussed in many kinds of literature and still it keeps on. Shakespeare touched upon these subjects extraordinarily and displayed them with his plays. Tragedy and comedy, which are combined genres of these two plays, carry us to the patriarchal society in which Shakespeare lived and show the value that is given to both men and women as well as their roles in this society in a funny way of comedy and in a great seriousness of tragedy. According to some critics, since “Shakespeare is always grappling with the problem of gender, the comedies, which end in gender harmony, are often seen as his solution to the problem, the goal he is seeking, and therefore the tragedies come to represent a failure to solve this problem and achieve this goal” (Levin 1988: 133). Furthermore, Levin highlights that “the difference between the two genres is explained by the role of the women in the thematic gender conflict: when they are able to cure or at least restrain the men's masculinity, the result is a comic resolution, and when the men will not let them do this, the result is tragedy, which makes it, again, a kind of failure” (Levin 1988: 133). The aim of this paper is to analyse *Othello* and *Twelfth Night* from a feminist perspective with a focus on gender roles in Shakespeare's period. It will also demonstrate how the theme of love is depicted to bear some dark features as a result of tragic hero, Othello's jealousy, while it turns into a more humorous portrayal because of various love triangles in *Twelfth Night* with Shakespeare's playful treatment of traditional gender roles and relations.

## 2. REPRESENTATION OF GENDER

In his groundbreaking book entitled “Am I That Name?” Feminism and the Category of “Women” in History, the British poet-philosopher Denise Riley argues:

[The category] “women” is historically, discursively constructed, and always relatively to other categories which themselves change; “women” is a volatile collectivity in which female persons can be very differently positioned, so that the apparent continuity of the subject of “women” isn't to be relied on; “women” is both synchronically and diachronically erratic as a collectivity, while for the individual, “being a woman” is also inconstant, and can't provide an ontological foundation . . . . That “women” is indeterminate and impossible is no cause for lament. It is what makes feminism . . . . On such shifting sands feminism must stand and sway (Riley 1988: 1–2, 113–14).

The woman who does not meet the requirements of patriarchal society is evil and unreliable. In *Othello* in the taste of tragedy, this doctrine is presented with Desdemona character. Desdemona falls in love with Othello, and she elopes with him. His father searches for everywhere to find her and accuses the Moor of forcibly getting his girl; however, when he finds out that her daughter willingly has eloped with Othello and wants to stay with Othello. He gets disappointed and cannot stand what she does against himself as her father. In the patriarchal society, women should obey men in any way. They have no right to say anything or tell what they like or hate. They just have to obey whatever is said as they are supposed to do in the patriarchal society. Desdemona tells the congregation who she is obedient to, while reciting her actual wedding vow to obey and serve Othello, abandoning all others, including her father:

My noble father, I do perceive here a divided duty:

To you I am bound for life and education;

My life and education both do learn me

How to respect you; you are the lord of duty;

I am hitherto your daughter: but here's my husband;

And so much duty that my mother show'd

To you, preferring you before her father,

So much I challenge that I may profess

Due to the Moor, my lord. (1.3.181-89)

Especially, marrying with a man that the father determines and conforms is like an inevitable law of the patriarchal society. As it is shown in many plays like *Changling* by Thomas Middleton and William Blake, *Othello* also touches upon the same subject. There is a father, Brabantio who has patriarchal authority cannot accept a Moor for his daughter and his innocent daughter, Desdemona wants to marry with the Moor that his father cannot ever imagine happening. Tragically, she is supposed to obey his rules no matter what she wants. However, Desdemona elopes with Othello surprisingly. Desdemona's eloping with Othello can be perceived as an unacceptable riot against his father and patriarchal society. In this way, she violates the rules of the patriarchal society. After Brabantio learns that her daughter is with Othello with her own will, he says these striking words:

God be with you! I've done.

Please it your grace on to the state affairs.

I had rather adopt a child then get it

Come hither, Moor:

I here do give thee that with all my heart,

Which but thou hast already, with all my heart

I would keep from thee for your sake, jewel,

I am glad at soul I have no other child; for thy escape would teach me tyranny,

To hand clogs on'em. I have done my lord (1, 3, ll.189-198)

Brabantio expresses his feelings clearly with these words. He truly reflects the norms of patriarchal society. Desdemona, by eloping with Othello, disobeys his father and becomes a disgrace in his eyes. At this point Desdemona becomes a daughter model that no father would like to have in the patriarchal society, since she fulfils her own will instead of her father. To the patriarchal society, what a woman feels, thinks, or asks is not important, the essential thing is what a man asks, feels, or thinks about them. This shows how women are oppressed and in second-class position by male-centered society. Brabantio tells another striking point that directs the course of the play and shows the understanding of women in the patriarchal society:

Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see

She has deceived her father, and may thee (1, 3, ll. 292-293).

Brabantio sees his daughter as untrustworthy since she disobeys himself. He points out that if a woman is able to trick and disobey his father, she can also deceive and disobey her husband and she is capable of deceiving everybody. He shows a doctrine of patriarchy: if a woman disobeys a man, she is an evil, untrustworthy, and changeable creature. What Brabantio says actually affects Othello and later on when Iago puts some doubts in his innerside these words, or in other words, doctrine of the patriarchal society strengthens his doubts for his wife's loyalty and reliability. Iago shows the nature of women as changeable and unreliable, and lustful.

I do not in position

Distinctly speak of her; though I may fear

Her wills recoiling to her better judgement

may fall to match you with your country forms,

and happily repent (3,3, ll. 237-241)

Othello is persuaded by Iago's filthy plan, and he says the same things for the nature of women:

We can call these delicate creatures ours,

And not their appetites! I had rather be a toad,

And live upon the vapour of a dungeon,

Than keep a corner in the thing I love

For others' uses. Yet, 'tis the plague of great ones;

Prerogated are they less than the base;

'Tis destiny unshunnable, like death:

Even then this forked plague is fated to us

When we do quicken. (3,3, ll. 272-280)

As Othello points it out above, women are considered as beautiful, charming creatures, but also they are regarded as changeable, unreliable behind their angel face. It is not certain what they will do, how they will act at any moment.

*Othello* highlights that women are regarded to be sensitive creatures. At the very beginning of the play, Othello explains the reason why Desdemona falls in love with him. Othello says that the adventurous life, battle stories, poor events that he goes through, his heroic stories affect her and make her fall in love with himself. When you look at it rationally, you cannot just by listening stories get affected and get married with someone. The play portrays a sensitive woman who can get married by being affected from stories. Normally there is no sense in marrying someone just because of a few stories that are not even known whether they are true or not. To achieve a love marriage, rational people would look for congruency in terms of life perspectives, economic situation, the truth of their love for each other, question all the situations to decide whether the marriage can function properly or not. Shortly, they would look for all the rational explanations that would lead them to marriage; however, when you look at Desdemona, she just shows the stories that she has listened as the justification. This cannot be a real reason to get married with someone and it only shows the emotional side of Desdemona as a representative of all women as patriarchal society perceived in the play.

Othello represents an ideal man who is masculine, strong, and war-like in the patriarchal society. He is the favourite man of army because he is a successful and warlike man. Everybody knows him and everybody praises him even though he is a Moor. He gains his fame by his masculinity, strength and chivalries in wars. Othello also stands out the feature of men that they like to be praised, put in a high degree and they love everything that make them feel like this. Here the value that men give to women is revealed in the patriarchal society. Othello loves Desdemona because she praises and extols him. She becomes a mirror of him that praises his strength, and success. In a sense, he loves an object that makes himself feel valuable, self-confident, praised, and loved. In the end, he collapses because he thinks he loses the one who shows himself and makes him feel valuable. This is another striking point that shows the value that men of patriarchal society give to women.

In *Othello* Bianca is another female character that reflects the woman's position in the patriarchal society. Bianca is a prostitute that patriarchy exploited. In such a society, there is a sorrowful understanding: some born lucky, some born unlucky. Women have no function, but to control household, maintain their husband and children, cooking and cleaning, these are the only things that women can do for patriarchy. Of course, this is valid for upper-class families, aristocracy, and middle class. They can be even considered as lucky to be born in such families. On the other hand, the women who are born in poor families have to work under hard circumstances with money that will never fulfill their needs or force them to become prostitutes to be able to take breath. Bianca is one of them who are exploited by the patriarchy. She is seen as a gullible person, but she really loves Cassio even when Cassio is wounded she gets in a great suffering and cries out his name many times. Iago right away labels her as a person who must have wounded him with a humiliating call that refers she is a prostitute. She must be a liar and source of evil. In this way, readers have a kind of sympathy for her since she is an innocent and a poor girl who is already hit by the greatest cruel clapse by the patriarchal society and hit by another clapse of man. The society forces her to become a prostitute, terminates all her hopes, dreams, all her life, and does another evil thing to her because speaking ill and slandering the women whom they push into wrong ways by their own hands is easier.

Richard Levin notes: "Greene argues that Othello's killing of Desdemona is the consequence of the gender roles imposed on the pair by their patriarchal society ("This . . . "); but, again, we note that the characters who comment on it (including Othello himself after he learns the truth) do not view it as one of your everyday patriarchal events; instead, they consider it a horrifying violation of the norms of their World" (Levin 1988: 127). In the patriarchal society, women are oppressed by men that have all the privileges and

power that they even direct the morality course according to their will. In *Othello* Emilia is the character that displays this distortion of social situation and criticizes it. To what Emilia tells there is a paradox that a man can deceive his wife, but his wife cannot deceive him and has to be always loyal to her husband. Men repress women and dominate all family. A man can be jealous of his wife and apply violence on a woman. However, women do not have the rights that men have. While men have many privileges, women are always deprived of them. There is a visible inequality in society and this gives birth to the immorality of the morality system of patriarchy. Snow asserts that Othello kills Desdemona because of the “pathological male animus toward sexuality” and “underlying male fear” of “thralldom to the demands of an unsatisfiable sexual appetite in woman” (Snow 1988: 388, 407), which are triggered off in him by the consummation of his marriage. Cohen continues, later in his essay:

English tragicomedies between 1610 and 1642 presuppose the analogy between family and state, deploying the love-and-honour code to produce a series of homologies and articulations that make women integral, even central to the fate of the nation. The plays characteristically raise and resolve interdependent fears about women and monarchs. Anxiety about uncontrolled female sexuality, often manifested in fraternal incestuous desire, points in somewhat mystified fashion to the threat of women's independence from men (Cohen 1992: 128).

Neely indicates that the thematic “central conflict [in *Othello*] is between the men and the women” (Broken 108), which drives her into a series of contrasts placing all the men on one side and all the women on the other. In one part of this demonstration, she accuses the men of “persistently placing blame for their actions outside themselves” and compares this attitude to that of Desdemona, whose last words exonerating Othello and assuming responsibility for her own death “provide the sharpest possible contrast to the men's excuses” and to “Othello's evasions” (Neely 1985: 124-25). However, Neely neither mentions Desdemona's crucial evasion of responsibility about the handkerchief in 3.4.80-87 nor Othello's response: “She's like a liar gone to burning hell: / 'Twas I that kill'd her” (5.2.129-30), which rather blunts that sharpest possible contrast, as also pointed out by Richard Levin in his article “Feminist Thematics and Shakespearean Tragedy” (Levin 1988: 129).

On the other hand, in *Twelfth Night*, women are mostly reflected to be both intelligent and skilled. The play, which is a comedy as its main genre mockingly, criticizes the society that puts women into a lower position. In this respect, this play can be analysed well from a feminist perspective. Viola thinks that she has lost also her brother, who is the only one from her family life in this world after the ship's breaking into pieces with a storm that explodes in the sea. She disguises himself into a young man and works for Duke Orsino. The interesting thing is that Viola who is supposed to be stupid and unskilled as a woman, but only to serve man makes people amuse with her intelligence, skills in everything and language. She can prove her intelligence, skills and become active only in disguise of a man. At the very beginning of the play right after her disguise into a young man as Cesario, she gains the appreciation of Duke Orsino with her intelligence and skills. In addition to her intelligence, she is also a very cautious person who takes her steps with the fullest care and questions the events and the words with their visible sides and invisible sides that are behind of the words and events:

Val. If the Duke continue these favours towards you, Cesario, you are like to be much advanced: he hath known you but three days, and already you are no stranger.

Viola. You either fear his humour, or my negligence, that you call in question the continuance of his love. Is he inconstant, sir, in his favours? (I, 5, ll. 1-7)

Just as Viola proves her intelligence in many ways, Olivia is another female character who proves her intelligence in the play. Olivia is a countess who is wealthy and intelligent. When Viola is sent to Olivia to declare his duke as Cesario, Orsino's love to her with her skill in language, you can conceive both characters' intelligence mutually by their words:

Viola. [...] Are you the lady of this house?

Olivia. If I do not disturb myself, I am

Viola. Most certain, if you are she, you do usurp yourself: for what is yours to bestow is not yours to reserve [...]

Olivia. Come to what is important in't: I forgive you the praise.

Viola. Alas, I took great pains to study it, and 'tis poetical

Olivia. It is the more like to be feigned; I pray you keep it in. (I.5, ll. 185-197)

They both compete with their intelligence and skill to use the language. It is obvious how Viola is far away from stereotypical woman profile who acts with her senses instead of her rationale. When Viola attempts to persuade her with classical things like a poetic love speech that are supposed to be liked by all women, she tells that if they are poetical things, that means they are just rubbish things that are written to deceive women. She turns out to be a quite rational woman on the contrary to the classical stereotypical woman that is depicted by patriarchy.

Viola demonstrates how ambitious, decisive, determined and successful she is as men at least. Olivia mourns for her brother's death for a long time by not accepting anyone to his house and wearing always black. It is impossible to enter her house; however, Viola endures with her determination and by not going anywhere until she accepts her. She manages to draw Olivia's attention and able to enter to her house that no one manages to enter. She manages to fulfil his task. From the beginning, she expresses that she wants to be the wife of Orsino.

Abareful strife

Whomever I woo, myself would be his wife (1. 4, ll. 41-42)

These words show how ambitious and determined she is to do everything to reach her goal. Finally, we see that her intelligence and her skill in using the language affect Orsino, and when her real identity is revealed, Orsino wants to marry her and she manages to become Orsino's wife. Orsino shows how men are deceptive in their love and women have no function but just to fulfil their whims by themselves. Orsino who seems dying of the love of Olivia and shows his love with his words that express his eternal strong love shows his conception of real love and the woman's place in his love by making generalisations and references to all men's feelings and thoughts in the patriarchal society:

For such as I am, all true lovers are,

Unstained and skittish in all motions else

Save in the constant image of the creatures

...

Too old by heaven! Let still the woman take

An elder than herself. So wears she to him,

So sways she level in her husband's heart.

For, boy, however we do praise ourselves,

Our fancies are more giddy and unfirm,

More longing, wavering, sooner lost and worn,

Than women's are. (2, 4, ll. 17-19, 29-34)

As it is seen clearly, Orsino implies that women should marry older men. Only if a man is old, he can be loyal to his wife. Men are lewd and can never love women with a real permanent love. Men's love is something that can emerge abruptly and extinguish right away. As Orsino expresses, women are like a rose, men smell it and the rose fades away. Such a kind of love can only be the lust, but nothing. The real love would last eternally by changing shapes. Psychologists say that the love that makes heart thumb crazily and give excitement lasts approximately 3 years later this changes shape, and respect, and a different kind of love comes. In this way, love lasts eternally. However, the love that Orsino tells that all men feel based on lust, but nothing and it is not humanly love alone. Therefore, men see women as objects to fulfil their desires, but nothing else. Men also deceive women with their gaudy and effective words that hit women's hearts and make them feel they are given a great value and they are the only ones in this world. However, these are the only words that have no real meaning. Orsino makes the situation clearer with these words:

There is no woman's sides

Can bide the beating of so strong a passion

As love doth give my heart; no woman's heart; no woman's heart

So big, too hold so much: they lack retention.

Alas, their love may be call'd appetite

No motion of the liver, but the palate,

That suffer surfeit, cloyment, and revolt; (2, 4, ll. 94-100)

As Orsino indicates in the above lines, men seem to love women with a great passion, but it lasts only a short time. What they feel is just temporary, as they taste the love. As he resembles the love to an appetite, they get love abundantly from different women and each time when they get the taste of them, they vomit the love that they die of. The love that they say they would die for its sake turns into meaningless rubbish. In such a kind of love conception of men, women are just exploited physically and spiritually. The one who suffers most and gets harm finally is women again.

Fabian and Sir Toby mock stereotypical images of women in a patriarchal society. Olivia talks with Cesario whom she thinks is a man in an interested way and Sir Toby gets angry with this situation. Fabian tries to deceive Sir Andrew that a woman loves to see making man jealous and awake his heroic powers to show her by fighting with the one whom she just seemed interested in but not in a real sense. Although it is given in a funny way, it reflects the woman who likes to be cared by the one she loves and wants to be the only one loved by a man in that society. Toby also mocks with Sir Andrew that he should write a letter with adoring the woman's beauty and he can get the one that she loves right away: "It is no matter how witty, so it is eloquent and full of invention. Taunt him with the licence of ink. If thou "thou"-est him some thrice, it shall not be amiss, and as many lies as will lie in thy sheet of paper, although the sheet were big enough for the bed of Ware in England, set'em down" (3, 2, ll. 41-46). He seems just to have fun with poor gullible Andrew; however, he conforms what Orsino says about men in patriarchy. Men are just telling lies with flamboyant beautiful words for women and women are so sensitive that they can be deceived and affected easily. In this way, men exploit women as if they were objects and after they get bored of them, they let them down. Women are indifferent to a cloth or socks that they wear and change for men in the patriarchal society, according to what Orsino and Sir Toby say.

Maria represents a stereotyped image of women which associates women as evil characters. Throughout the history especially in western literature women play evil roles who deceive and do all the intrigues, they can be a murderer or a merciless who does evil deeds, like Lady Macbeth, a stereotype of evil female character that takes places in *Macbeth*. Mostly the reason for this is based on the Bible interpretation about the story of Fall of Adam and Eve. Eve is a woman who is created as a helper to the man and the one who listened to the Satan in the shape of serpent and persuaded Adam to eat the forbidden fruit. This interpretation influences the way of looking at women and let men label women as evil creatures. Their ideas are also reflected on their literature that mirror their life. For Snow, "the principle of evil and malice" in *Othello* is "the outraged voice [. . .] of the patriarchal social order," which kills Desdemona to "undo the breach her sexuality has created in the stable male order of things" (Snow 1980: 410-11). In *Twelfth Night*, Maria is shown as the evil one who cruelly makes plans and humiliates Malvolio. She writes him a letter on behalf of Olivia. In this letter, she expresses Olivia's love that is made up for Malvolio with a writing that resembles to the writing of Olivia. Malvolio who knows the letters of Olivia believes the reality of this letter. In the letter, Olivia asks him to wear yellow socks and cross bootlace. She wants him to talk about political subjects and wants him to be against relatives and servants. He feels happier and thinks more about his status that will be elevated thanks to Olivia and does everything as the letter asks him. However, Olivia, who does not know anything, finds him mad and asks Toby to imprison him. Malvolio is humiliated by a plan that was made by Maria. She plays a very cruel woman when Fabian says that they will make her mad if they go on in that way. The only answer that Maria gives is that "the house will be the quieter" (3, 4, l. 135).

In *Twelfth Night*, men play the role of plotters who make trouble with malicious feelings in the patriarchal society. Maria intrigues a play to deceive Malvolio, but Sir Toby, Fabian, and clown become part of this play. Even they make clown to disguise into a priest and mock with Malvolio while he is helplessly asking help and expresses his blamelessness. While he asks the priest Topas, the clown to save him from the darkness that they put him in, the clown assures him that there is no darkness and, in this way, and they go further on their kidding and they really could make him mad. When you look at the other side of the medallion closely, women who are shown as "evil" just reflect men's own evil deeds. Disguising is the central point of this play because *Twelfth Night* symbolizes the 6th of July the last day of Christmas holiday.

In the great party that is held on this day people disguise, play, and get the people who has some weak sides and mock with them cruelly and call it as entertainment by injuring the people's honour, and feelings. Who regulates this party? Who starts such plays and makes them traditional? In a patriarchal society, of course you would not accept that these are made by women who do not have rights for anything. All these cruel things are started and regulated by men. This is a kind of paradox that is evident in the whole play.

"Twelfth Night intensifies both allure and anxiety by its attention to same-sex attraction as well as to female empowerment" (Berek 2004: 361). The love that is unacceptable is also shown by the way of disguise in patriarchal society. Antonio and Sebastian seem to make good friends after Antonio saves him on that terrible day. Antonio seems to be loyal to Sebastian and bound to him; however, when his actions are observed, it is obvious that the interest that Antonio shows is more than an interest that two male friends can have. He loves Sebastian, and cares for him to the point of endangering his life. In the past in a sea fight Antonio does some deeds against the galley of duke. He thinks that if they catch him, it will be the end of him. Sebastian goes to see around and get something. Antonio gives him money just in case he may want to buy something that he has seen. After Sebastian goes, he cannot stand to wait and goes after him even if it can cost his life. He loves him with a great passion actually and he reveals this strong love indirectly when he thinks Cesario as Sebastian, and he is deceived by Sebastian who is Cesario:

[...]

From the rude sea's enrag'd and foamy mouth

Did I redeem. A wrack past hope he was.

His life I gave him, and did thereto add

My love, without retention or restraint,

All his in dedication. For his sake

Did I expose myself (pure for his love)

Into the danger of this adverse town;

Drew to defend him, when he was beset (5, 1, ll. 76-83)

Especially in patriarchal religious societies, gay male relationship is unfavorable and unacceptable. If men preferred having relationships with other men, they had to do this secretly like the great author Oscar Wilde. He was a successful playwright of Victorian period. He had a family and children, and seemed to lead a happy life. However, behind of this he was a homo-eroticist and has relationships with males. He had to conceal this side of himself and shows another face to the public. In time, his homoeroticistness was revealed and people gave up seeing his plays. His books and stories were collected, all his fame demolished and became an evil filthy creature of this world, and he was prisoned because of sodomy. Therefore, such a kind of relationship is unacceptable in patriarchal societies. The love that Antonio feels for Sebastian was not acceptable in ancient times. It can only be seen in such plays as *Twelfth Night* where people disguise into everything and have fun. Based on Shakespeare's use of cross-gendered disguise, in the early seventeenth century, both gender and political authority were sites of conflict. Walter Cohen explains how the conflicts interacted with one another:

At the level of ideology, the analogy between patriarchal family and patriarchal monarchy is alien to modern distinctions between private and public: the position of women before 1660 was understood to be intimately connected to the nature of the state. Yet this period also witnessed a crisis of gender relations. The patriarchal model regularly ran into theoretical trouble. Puritan household manuals stressed the spiritual equality of husband and wife. In political treatises the hierarchies of father and child and of king and subject lined up rather nicely, but the (admittedly unequal) partnership of husband and wife more plausibly supported a Parliamentary perspective on the limits of royal power. The well-known, quite open controversy over the nature and status of women in early Stuart England also suggests the instability of traditional categories and perhaps of modes of behaviour as well (Cohen 1992: 122-50, 123).

### 3. CONCLUSION

*Othello* and *Twelfth Night* touch upon the gender issue from various perspectives. They both contain roles, features of men and women and the norms of patriarchal societies for both genders. They both contain the opposite truths with these roles and feature of genders and the fault of patriarchy. In *Othello*, in its tragic



pattern, it is evident that a woman cannot disobey the patriarchal society, otherwise women become a disgrace for her family and society. With Desdemona you see how sensitive a woman is and how she can even get married under the effect of a few stories. With Othello, we come across the image of an ideal man as masculine and strong. Emilia becomes the voice of women in the play, criticises the patriarchal system that oppresses women, and makes them slaves and the paradoxes of the patriarchal morality that allows men to do whatever they want and deceive their wives but see women as immoral and disloyal if they attempt to do such a thing. In *Twelfth Night*, in its comedy pattern, we come across a successful, intelligent woman, Viola who can prove herself only by disguising into a man. She can only play an active role as man, Cesario in society. Another intelligent woman character is Olivia; however, she is a woman who submits to patriarchy and lives according to the norms of that society just by controlling her house and does nothing. Orsino and Toby exhibit male characteristic features. They resort to lies, deceptions and ornate words full of compliments. They represent the type of men who do not really love women and their understanding of love is just exploiting women as objects to repress their instincts. Maria is shown as an inevitable evil female character of the play. By portraying Maria as a cruel and evil person who makes fun of Malvolio with a tricky plan, *Twelfth Night*, as its characteristic feature, also shows men's cruelty who set up all the cruel plays that make fun of weak sides of the people in such parties as one on the 6th of January, last day of Christmas holiday. The controversial gender issue is a kind of gay male relationship in patriarchal society. As emphasized by Casey Charles: "the representation of homoerotic attraction in *Twelfth Night* functions rather as a means of dramatizing the socially constructed basis of a sexuality that is determined by gender identity" (Charles 1997: 122) The love of Anthonio for Sebastian is unacceptable for a patriarchal society. The most significant point Shakespeare pointed out about gender issue in *Othello* and *Twelfth Night* is that men and women are equal in their rights and free in their choices and decisions. He subverted gender expectations and upended gender conventions by assigning masculine features to female characters and highlighting homoerotic attraction and gay male relationships in these plays. No gender has the right or privilege to repress or control the other gender and every gender should be respectful for the choices of the other gender as intimated by Shakespeare through cross-gendered disguise in his works *Othello* and *Twelfth Night*.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Berek, Peter. "Cross-Dressing, Gender, and Absolutism in the Beaumont and Fletcher Plays". *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Spring, 2004, Vol. 44, No. 2, Tudor and Stuart Drama (Spring, 2004), pp. 359-377.
- Cacicedo, Alberto & Levin, Richard. "Shakespeare and Feminist Readings". *PMLA*, Oct., 1988, Vol. 103, No. 5, pp. 817-819.
- Casey, Charles. "Gender Trouble in "Twelfth Night". *Theatre Journal*, May, 1997, Vol. 49, No. 2, pp. 121-141.
- Cohen, Walter, "Prerevolutionary Drama," in *The Politics of Tragicomedy: Shakespeare and After*, ed. McMullan and Jonathan Hope (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 122-50, 123.
- Levin, Richard. "Feminist Thematics and Shakespearean Tragedy". *PMLA*, Mar., 1988, Vol. 103, No. 2, pp. 125-138.
- Neely, Carol Thomas. *Broken Nuptials in Shakespeare's Plays*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1985.
- Riley, Denise. "Am I That Name?" *Feminism and the Category of "Women" in History* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), 1-2, 113-14.)
- Scott, Gender and the Politics of History, rev. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).
- Shakespeare, William. *Othello*. Penguin Classics, 2015.
- Shakespeare, William. *Twelfth Night*. Dover Publications, 1997.
- Snow, Edward. "Sexual Anxiety and the Male Order of Things in Othello". *English Literary Renaissance* 10 (1980): 384-412.