

Feminism in the merchant of venice: radical feminist perspective

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



Music sound while he doth make his choice. Let us all ring fancy's knell I'll begin it- Ding, Dong, bell. Ding, Dong, bell'.

Apparently, the situation correlates with the comprehensive patriarchy and its power. Portia however, appeared to work against the oppressive agreement she was bound to and chart the itinerary of the selection of her husband. In addition to the creation of a balance in her destiny by manipulating father's will, both Portia and Nerissa are able to show some means of assurance that they will keep their husbands with the ring test. The concept of loyalty of the Bassanio and Gratiano towards their women exemplified within a ring serves as a form of faithfulness and gives directions to end at the engagement of marriage should such a memento be misplaced. The pledges Bassanio and Gratiano made to Portia and Nerissa respectively in respect to the rings is a strong contract for the women as a legal pact similar to the contract between Shylock and Antonio. When Portia and Nerissa raised alarm to the loss of the rings to Bassanio and Gratiano, they showed signs of panic and bitterness so much as to deny them their love. This illustrates the feministic viewpoint because they were able to use as much circumspection a man could in the gaining and later dismissal of their fiancés.

Feministic values are very prominent in the play *The Merchant of Venice*, mostly those involving the radical feminist concept of a patriarchal society. The female personas were able to exploit the activity of cross-dressing to accomplish the business they needed so that their lives might be more tolerable while under the control of men within the society. Not all of the

personas felt empowered by their action to become men, Jessica developed a sense of shame during her disguise as a man. Portia and Nerissa were able to take control of their future husbands to come up with an equal ground for both couples with the ring test. Portia also even was able to guide the husband selection outcome to suit her interests. The continuous differing tension between the male and female personas in their grapple for dominance over the other indicates that William Shakespeare had a deep and acute knowledge of the dynamism between men and women. Portia understood that gender was the cause of her oppression and had to use radical means to overcome that.

Portia was in a unique territory with her position as a single and wealthy female without a male controlling her. Although she had her father's will which forbids her choice for marriage, she remains a character with savage autonomy and a stunning sense of self. Portia is typically admired as a feminist in a male-dominated society, although, a contrasting view can also be taken. Portia's most outstanding moment as an intelligent, successful, rational female is demonstrated in the courtroom scene when she dressed as a man. Portia had to dress like a man in order to speak in the courtroom. Female lawyers were not allowed in the courtroom by the Venetian court system, and also there were no educational institutions in place that allowed this. However, Portia as a female took it upon herself to 'fix' the difficulties the men could not fix, taking no credit. William Shakespeare portrays Portia as intelligent and cunning and does not show similar characteristics of other female characters. It is difficult to characterize her, as a feminist because her

future was firmly in the control of the patriarchal system, and therefore she manipulated the system for her own self-interest instead of fighting it.

Portia could be labeled a radical feminist, she believed their oppression was exclusively based on their gender and its manifestation as inferior. Radical feminism seems to be the most suited Portia's character. She referred to herself as, "lord of this fair mansion, master of my servants" instead of lady and mistress, putting into consideration the gendered differences. Portia understands she cannot be in charge of her family as a lady because that means there remains a lord. After her father's death, Portia was in control, and to be in full control she must be the 'Lord'. Nevertheless, she is only 'radical' in that she knew that her gender was the source of her oppression. Portia didn't appear as an individual looking to fight against the Venice culture or the female cause, she rather set to fight against her own personal oppression. However, the play can be classified as because Portia was the beneficiary at the expense of her father's desires.

She successfully manipulated those around her at the end of the play with more independence than in the beginning. At the end of Act III, Portia and Nerissa appeared in the courtroom dressed like male lawyers in defense of Antonio, Portia used her skill to turn the tables and made Shylock the victim. Portia knew that Shylock was on the right by demanding to cut Antonio's pound of flesh but she was also aware that the law stipulated that if someone attempted to end a Venetian's life, his property would be confiscated. Portia brilliantly twisted the case in favor of Antonio. Portia absorbed Shylock's wealth, whereas Antonio was set free. The play, the

Merchant of Venice depicts women's intelligence over the actions of the males. Although the play presents Venice as a male-dominated society, the actions of the women characters turn out to be superior to those of the male characters. Portia and Nerissa were able to take control of their future husbands to come up with an equal ground for both couples with the ring test. By absorbing Shylock's wealth, Portia was able to increase her riches and remain sovereign over her inheritance. She began the play as a prisoner of her father's will, and at the end, she turned out to independent as she could. She was able to change her destiny and fate despite all the obstacles put ahead of her by her father. She was able to guide Bassanio to pick the correct contrary to her father's will. Portia could claim to be the unrivaled merchant at the end of the play and the true Merchant of Venice.