



ע"ש ד"ר מג'די אבו לטיף - على اسم الدكتور مجدي أبو لطيف - Named after Dr. Majdi Abo Latif

The Impact of William Shakespeare on the Modern English Literature

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Abstract

William Shakespeare establishes a peculiar position in the world of English literature. No living reputation of any literary writer can be compared to that of Shakespeare. From his dramatic piece of writing through his stories to his theatrical plays, they are still read and performed, respectively, by people of different cultures and socio-political groups. He revolutionized the world of English literature through his literary genius. This research attempts to throw light on the impact of William Shakespeare on modern English literature, which is influenced by his creation of both poetry and prose, which enhanced the use of English language with the passing of each century. The phrases and words he disseminated in his writings are prevalent and employed all around the world, particularly through social tragedies, political occurrences and cultural norms. This is why Shakespeare was successful in achieving timelessness and universal recognition with the utilization of various aspects of literature.

Keywords: William Shakespeare, English literature, Poetry, Phrases, Drama



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1. Introduction

William Shakespeare, also known as Swan of Avon or Bard of Avon, establishes a peculiar position in the world of English Literature. He was a renowned playwright, an English poet and an actor whose work has had an enormous impact on the development of modern English literature (Johnson, 2015). From his poems to his plays, he influenced the English literature heavily on various fronts. As stated by Aziza (2021), English literature gained a massive popularity during Shakespeare's time. Moreover, he is reckoned for the impact he made on the early development of modern English. In 1616, as a result of his inevitable contributions to the literary arena of English, he was honoured in England by considering him as one of the renowned playwrights, both of his and all time due to which he was conferred with being a National Poet for his countrymen. Though Shakespeare did not attain any academic degree nor did he go to a college or any educational institution, he succeeded in leaving an indelible mark on the world of English literature. Not only literature, Shakespeare played a pivotal role in developing and standardising English Grammar. As a consequence, the rules depicted in his writings were later on followed in the English literature throughout the world. Though many appeared to change the spelling of his name, the rules adopted by English grammar have been retained (Parvin & Islam, 2020).

Keeping in view his greatness and genius through which English literature was revolutionised, this paper attempts to present the immense contribution of William Shakespeare on the modern English literature, which is regarded to be invaluable even in the twenty-first century.

1.1 Research Background

During the British life of sixteenth century, William Shakespeare highlighted the spirit of golden epoch by revolutionising and transitioning themes regarding religious concerns to socio-political discourse. He did so by creating timeless characters along with the greatest poetry the world has ever witnessed. Besides, in the history of English language, he created various genres, plots and structures by adding countless words,



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images and phrases. For instance, Shakespeare depicted a mixed form of romance and tragedy in his famous work 'Romeo and Juliet' (Whiteley, 2021). Indeed, as evinced by ... Shakespeare is a literary inventor and was the master of his time, and even after. Through a raft of his creations, almost all other literature around the world were influenced by his works. During his time, he was highly revered by his friends and companions, particularly the poet 'Hugh Holland' and the playwright 'Ben Jonson' when they mentioned in their prefaces in the 1623 first Folio, 'The life yet of his lines shall never out', and 'He was not of an age, but for all time'.

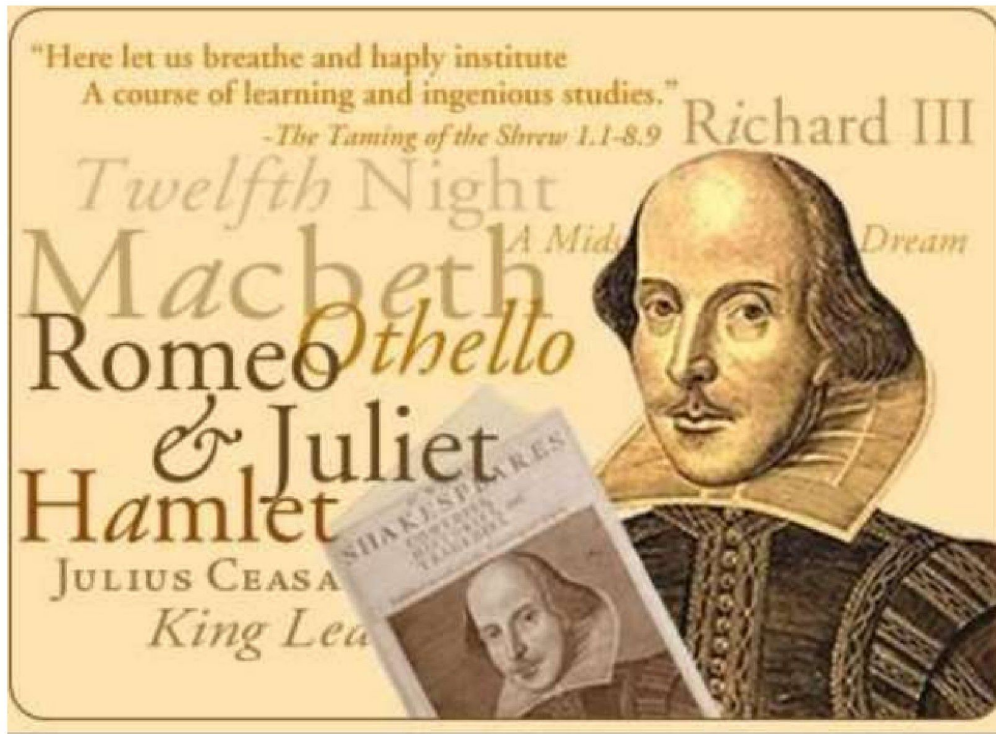


Figure 1: The Immortal Contributions of William Shakespeare

Since the sixteenth century, Shakespeare has been regarded as one of those prolific writers who contributed massively in the promotion of both English literature and language in the world beyond England. This is why, as noted by Hoenselaars (2014), many expressions and words in common English usage entailing 'uncomfortable', 'addiction' and 'multitudinous', to name a few, were first appeared in his plays.



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Audiences and numerous readers were, and still are, adherents and disciples of his aesthetic work, regardless of their culture or language. As far as English grammar is concerned, he played a great role in standardising it. In particular, he rejuvenated the use of prefix and suffix in English grammar, which was hardly employed during his time. When there were a number of grammatical options open to other English writers, he wrote immensely during his transitional period from an actor to a playwright.

Furthermore, Shakespeare altered the English speaking world, which no other English writer endeavoured to do. By creating new tropes and words, along with establishing relations between patrons and writers, he heavily impacted contemporary literature. Not only are actors still using his work's wordplay and symbolism, but they also appear to be performing his plays where characters are inspiring contemporary English writers to help them nudge their boundaries of creativity (Bird, Eliadis & Scriven, 2016). He was the pioneer both in the fields of theatre and literature, while he employed the tools existent during his time to establish new ideas. That is why any history of English drama is reflected in his works. The general consensus is that he wrote as many as thirty seven plays, but no one, for certain reasons, know the exact figure owing to the inexact documentation during the time the plays were organised and subsequently published. The contributions he made on comedies and tragedies were remarkable, which include Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet, King Lear, Julius Caesar, Merchant of Venice, As you Like It, All Well That Ends Well, and many others. As much as fifty translations of his plays were made in over 50 languages, and where performed all around the globe for people of all ages (Rao, 2011).

As stated by Aziza (2021), the influence of Shakespeare on literature, art and language and the wide array of plays have long been known and documented in various manuscripts. In the Western Hemisphere, he is still regarded as the most-read playwright, and the English language is laden with many phrases and quotes which are originated from his works. 'Iambic Pentameter', which is considered one of the forms of poetry, was invented by him, which is widely used in today's world. It was due to Shakespeare's



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efforts that almost all of Europe and particularly England was awakened during the period of 'Renaissance' to understand the importance of Classical Literature and culture, which was reeling from the dark ages of Greece-Roman era. To infer, during the cultural development of Renaissance movement occurred during Elizabeth I of England, he was regarded as one of the main pioneers of contributing immensely through his literary works (Hoenselaars, 2014). As a result, the English lexicon got richer with the emergence of the Renaissance, which is also known as 'The Age of Shakespeare'.



Figure 2: The Greatest Dramatist of English Literature, William Shakespeare

1.2 Research Question

- 1: What is the impact or influence of William Shakespeare on the Modern English Literature?
- 2: What is the timelessness of his plays, dramas and creation of words, phrases and expressions on the contemporary English literature and language?

1.3 Research Objectives

- To analyse the impact of William Shakespeare on the Modern English Literature



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- To assess the timelessness of his works in the cotemporary settings of English literature and language

2. Literature Review

When delving deep into the influence of Shakespeare's work on the contemporary literature, there hardly seems to be any long segment pertaining to English literary history which has remained untouched by the hand of the bard. Various scholars have analysed his influence upon the works of other philosophical giants like Goethe, Keats, Milton, Voltaire, Dickens, Faulkner, and Bryon (Thompson, 2011). Many of his plots have been revisited over time, as well as seen in recent times in the modern stories of young children like the Twilight Saga and West Side Story. Moreover, his works are prevailed by the classic narrative depictions that, although not created by Shakespeare himself, were applied later on by many authors but not better than him. Most among these are the romantic and heroic tragedies. In the former, lovers meet and interact, fall into a conflict, and then eventually get separated, while in the latter, a social power is disrupted and dominated by another, or an invasion through the overthrow of a king. The key difference between a romance and a tragedy in either of the cases is the resolution: in the former, political stability restored and lovers get reunited, whereas in the latter, heroes are demised and lovers are parted but known forever (Bird et al., 2016). Thus, these classic plots, when written in a well manner, resonate with the audience, as they are laden with adventure, emotions, laugh, and other universal phenomena.

When it comes to Shakespeare's use of metaphor, symmetry and rhetorical questions, those who appear to have inhabited his work practically go past the pages, speak to others in vivid and passionate verses. Metaphor, for which Shakespeare is known for, is where one can see creative turns and rich imagery of phrase, while with the help of symmetry, one can mean more than mere repetitions, but a style of effective phrasing that exhibit a certain character by making speeches in order to make them more compelling (Erikson, 2016). Finally, with rhetorical questions, readers can be drawn into attention by engaging



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them in the dialogue. These and many other changes brought by Shakespeare revolutionised the art of writing both in the retrospect of past decades as well as at present. In order for one to have a more knowledge about the contributions he made in English literature which have massively influenced the literature of the modern era, it is essential to assess how he helped enriched the vocabulary, together with improved essay writing, influenced theatres, and disseminated the writing industry in general and services in particular with professional writing skills (Rao, 2011).

2.1 His Contribution to Enriching the Vocabulary

William Shakespeare was successful in coming up with new English words that are hitherto in use all around the world. Some studies like those of Siddiqui (2014) & Bird et al., (2016) have inferred that out of 17,000 words used by Shakespeare in his writing, as many as 1700 appeared to be new words. He was able to borrow such words from classical literature and foreign languages. In addition to it, his influence helped in the improvement of the styling and structure of grammar, which eliminated and streamlines the vagueness and absurdities in English grammar. With the passage of such improvements, writers of the past and present age have employed these words and followed the grammatical rules set by Shakespeare to prove their English skills.

Handy words like ‘anchovy’, ‘dauntless’, ‘lacklustre’, ‘besmirch’, ‘puppy dog’, ‘eyeball’, were disseminated by Shakespeare in various transcripts ranging from ‘A Plaque’ to ‘The History of English in Ten Minutes’. Both his poetry and playwright suggest that the world of English was rich and vibrant in language (Rajput, 2016). He insinuated that more discovery to this language would make it emotionally powerful and expressively limitless.

2.2 His Contribution to Improving Essay Writing

Shakespeare was also succeeded in helping set up rules and streamline grammar that govern it. It thereby became easier for essay writing fellows to edit and improve their essays. Students in colleges are acquainted with these rules, while many of them assume the significance of these rules if followed rightly. They provide their essays with proper



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grammatical structure in order to improve their academic grades (Siddiqui, 2014). Many students have found essay about Hamlet by Shakespeare, which disseminates certain grammatical rules to be followed.

2.3 His Contribution to Influencing Theatres

Most of the top-rated plays around the worlds were written by William Shakespeare. For instance, the Hamlet had King Lear as one of the highest-rated characters. It is fascinating to see the way he adopted the characterization in his plays, which reckons his genius. Also, he portrayed both the positive as well as negative aspects of humanity in his plays and acknowledged the fact that they have emotions and feelings. There was a dramatic mixture of both humour and tragedy in his plays with a bit flavour of comedy (Rajput, 2016). Before him, no playwright could attract the masses like he did. Up until his time, theatres used to be reserved uniquely for the educated and wealthy classes. With the arrival of his writing, certain tales were emerged that appealed highly to the masses. Moreover, his plays were frequently embedded with universal truths regarding human existence, instead of acting like mirrors of the privileged classes. Ultimately, the experience of his plays in theatres took a new turn. This was the time when audience began engaging themselves with the events and plots taking place on theatrical stage by becoming raucous and often vocal. It may have been complex to determine at times which people were audience members and which appeared to be part of his performing troupe (Huang, 2012).

In particular, theatre experienced some significant changes owing to his massive influence. For instance, the manner in which his plots glided forward helped in defining the modern-day playwriting. In a similar way, his complex characterisation brought at the forefront some new forms of storytelling whereby choices from characters drove plots forward (Lanier, 2010). Thus, journeys in his theatrical plays were dynamic and his characters underwent a significant extent of change. Besides, he is also credited with having a mixture of both comedy and tragedy in his invented genres.



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2.4 Facilitation to Essay Writing Services

As stated by Rao (2011), William Shakespeare established a new set of English vocabulary. The words like Dwindle, Lonely, Green-Eyed, and many others may be unknown to most of the students. If one a student and his academic task requires him to employ Shakespeare's words, he can access those words by approaching professional writers. They have the capability of reading every bit of Shakespeare's writings. Apart from it, they are also able to help students craft engaging essays on any field of discipline.

2.5 Impact of Shakespeare's work on the English Lexicon

There is no denying the fact that William Shakespeare had an enormous influence not only on theatrical playwrights but also on the English lexicon and those writes employed it likewise. He is regarded as one of the prolific writers who seasoned and enriched the English lexicon with his numerous works. Also, he is reckoned as a synonymous to poetry owing to the fact that he succeeded in elevating literary creation; thereby, he accomplished it through his rich vocabulary and eloquence (Aldoory, 2019). Though he would write in a simple manner, he often used to utilise different geographical and historical facts to justify his writing.

According to Goff (2004), Shakespeare's writings appeared in the middle of a period of English linguistic history, which is also called Early Modern English. This period runs from the year commencing at 1500 to around 1751. It is important to note that early modern English has some sort of resemblance from the present-day modern English. Nonetheless, those who seek and read Shakespeare's works should comprehend this language with an aim to understanding his message and the period during which he created his works. The rationale behind this is that many of his words have transformed into various meanings, while some of others became completely redundant. Thus, keeping in view this context, one is supposed to analyse his time in order to explore his linguistic norms and ideas.



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There is a familiar relation between Shakespeare and the Early Modern English. The more one understands the linguistic settings of his age, the more he will be able to praise his departures from linguistic norms (Hoenselaars, 2014). At the same time. Shakespeare's character portrayal was so wide ranging, and his linguistic understanding was so sharp that much of what people know about the linguistic rules have been emerged from the plays themselves. As deduced from the study of... Shakespeare was much shrewd and prudent with his words, and this is the reason why he is considered to be unique among his contemporaries. He coined as many as 5,000 new words which can now be found in the Oxford English Dictionary. According to Parvin & Islam (2020), out of 2,000 words in the Oxford English Dictionary whose initial recorded use was drawn out from Shakespeare, more than 1,700 words are regarded as plausibly his inventions. Words like Disproperty, Assassination, Insultment, Irregulous, Uncurse, and others have remained stayed in the modern English language settings. To infer, the manner in which he employed the already existing words and invested some new ones ensued a great level of portion of his inventing words. Thus, it may be exhilarating to mention some ways which assisted Shakespeare in contributing to the English Lexicon influentially.

2.5.1 Inventing and Borrowing

William Shakespeare either invented a new set of words or just borrowed a lot of words from foreign languages. The reason lies in the notion that he wanted to 'make effects' out of them. He wrote about various characters of different occupations, social statuses including locations. As a result, he wrote on various topics like greed, love, war, murder, etc. (Johnson, 2015). Doubtlessly, it required a huge set of compositions of different words. In this perspective, he had the requisite need to borrow or invent new words. It appears that sources carved out by Shakespeare were not available in English during the period when he made use of them. Therefore, he perhaps employed them in the intermediary or original version, or he got acquainted with them through oral communication (Whiteley, 2021).



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Furthermore, many phrases and words entered the language including idioms like ‘brevity is the soul of wit’, ‘to the manner born’, and others. These and many other expressions owe their present-day status. Moreover, through his well-known writings, the literature was significantly impacted particularly with rhythmic theme, philosophy, culture, and melody. Perhaps the biggest accomplishment of Shakespeare was that he was able to merge the three major areas of literature, which involve poetry, drama and verse (Erikson, 2016). Through these, it was usual for theatrical plays to be written in rhyming verses. In a converse manner, he combined poetry and verse in the drama he produced. The below figure depicts the external contribution of William Shakespeare.

The application of poetry and rhyming verses in his dramas hugely influenced the soul of English literature, while it significantly enhanced the additional strength to the establishment of the language. In addition to it, conventions with regard to his drama further widened the vocabulary and, thereby, forbade the English language from any naught of indistinctness. These main areas were directed to the time of new expressions, form and style (Honigmann, 2016). Also, application of blank verse was materialised while writing plays because of the free form of speaking rhythm offered to the writers.



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3. Materials and Methods

This section of materials and methods provide in detail with all the materials that have been incorporated and subsequently analysed to conduct a particular research study. They are basically the procedures which are undertaken to reach a logical conclusion to the study. For this, it is important to select a particular research method that could provide a path towards a logical conclusion to the research. Different scientific and literary studies employ different research methods, given the nature of the study and the problem within it. Thus, this section is divided into research approach, philosophy, design, data collection and analysis methods, and ethical considerations involved while conducting a study.

3.1 Research Philosophy

To put it simply, a research philosophy is considered as a belief about the manner in which research data is gathered, analysed and subsequently used about a specific phenomenon. It is basically a system of the thought following which new and credible knowledge can be acquired with regard to a certain research object. According to Cr (2020), there exist different types of research philosophies that researchers choose according to the nature of study. These involve positivism, pragmatism and interpretivism. As far as positivism is concerns, it is used in a research that is mainly quantitative in nature as well as involve certain types of calculations, stats or measurements. On the other hand, pragmatism is the research that involved operational decisions which are based on the ways that could work effectively in order to find answers for the questions under investigation. This type of research philosophy enables the researcher to be pragmatic while conducting research in a dynamic and innovative way with a view to reaching solutions to the identified problem. Lastly, when it comes to interpretivist research philosophy, it emphasises on the reality which is given or socially constructed. Most of the philosophies support qualitative over quantitative analysis. As far as the current research is concerned, interpretivist research philosophy appeared to be



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most feasible as it focus on the knowledge generated through meanings in terms of the context of the study.

3.2 Research Approach

A research approach is the procedure or plan required by the researcher spanning certain steps or phases from detailed methods to broad assumptions of data collection and interpretation. Moreover, it is the pattern utilised to decide the overall process of research. According to Patel & Patel (2019), there exist two main types of research approaches: inductive approach and deductive approach. While the former is the bottom-up approach, the latter is deemed as top-down. Besides, the inductive approach takes the research from the specific to the general, whereas the deductive research helps the research in making inferences from general premises to a particular conclusion. It is important to note that most of the quantitative types of studies employ deductive approach. However, since the current study is literary in nature and does not require any quantitative analysis, deductive approach can easily be omitted and replaced by the inductive approach, which helped in collecting the relevant material with regard to the nature of the topic. After the data collection process, the researcher might endeavour to look for patterns in data for developing theories that could best explain those patterns. Since the current study is literary in nature, data and patterns will be collected and analysed, respectively. Therefore, the inductive approach was mainly used in this research.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Generally, the data is collected from two source: primary data collection and secondary data collection. The former is regarded as the first-hand data source which the researcher collected himself. It is done by disseminating with primary sources that range from interviews and questionnaires to survey and focus groups. Interviews in particular can be close-ended or open-ended. On the other hand, the latter (secondary data collection) is the type of data which is already available through existing literatures and can be found in different books, university or library sources, official government



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documents, news, and websites (Rinjit, 2020). Thus, given the nature of the current research, secondary data collection method seemed to be relatively more appropriate. Since the topic pertains to analysing the impact of Shakespeare on Modern English Literature, it was obvious that ample knowledge could only be gained by delving deep into retrospective studies carried out by literary scholars and assessing their work with regard to the influence of Shakespeare on contemporary English literature. Therefore, different books, articles, and websites were accessed in order to generate as much data related to the topic.

When it comes to data analysis method, several analytical procedures are carried out for both primary and secondary data sources. The analysis of primary data, is usually done with the help of 'thematic analysis, which is a method for analysing qualitative data entailing search across a range of data to identify, assess and consequently report repeated patterns. On the other hand, when considering analysis of secondary data, it is done with the help of 'content analysis'. According to Neuendorf (2018), content analysis is basically one of the research tools employed for the determination of the presence of certain themes or concepts with the help of words within some given qualitative data. Thus, keeping in view the application of qualitative research method with the help of secondary data collection, content analysis was deemed as the most appropriate method for the current research for data analysis.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

It is often acknowledged that the use of secondary data helps the researcher in relieving himself from the onus of applying for ethical approval, or more often, from thinking about ethical considerations altogether. However, as inferred by Rinjit (2020), the entire procedure of any comprehensive research requires ethical consideration, whether or not the primary data collection method is involved. This begins from the initial research design to incorporation of results that should collectively ensure publicness, replicability and transparency. To be more specific, the use of secondary data requires to meet certain conditions: consent of study subjects must be reasonably



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assumed; data should be re-identified before it gets released by the research; the use of data should not result in any modification, change or damage to its original researcher, and; results of the overall analysis should not allow the re-identification of participants. For the current research, these essentials were appropriately taken into account before reaching a logical conclusion to the study.



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4. Results

The results in this study are basically inferences drawn out from the above literature together with interpreting previous or existing studies on the topic 'The Impact of William Shakespeare on the Modern English Literature'. First and foremost, it was found in Goff (2004) that Shakespeare had massively influenced the development of contemporary English literature. During his times, English was regarded as generally poor and less developed in terms of lexicon, which was something that Shakespeare would not pin down as an accomplished play writer and poet in his career. Therefore, he came up with new words that are now used in individuals' daily lives, even centuries after his departure, which is considered as a great transformation of the English language.

From the book of 'The Merchant of Venice', several words were used which were inexistent before, which involve 'Thou art (you are)', 'Thus Speaketh (That is what he speaks)', and 'Thou Saith (this is what he says)', to name a few. Some of these words and expressions have been transmitted in the present-day world of English. Though some of these words may no longer be in use, they have indeed helped immensely in the development of the language.

From the excerpts of Aldoory (2019), it was analysed that William Shakespeare was a well-known poet and a respected playwright, whose reputation rose to its present heights until the present day. The comedy and romance, in particular, acclaimed his genius, while the Victorians of his times appeared to worship Shakespeare through reverence, which was also called as 'bardolatry' by George Bernard Shaw. Also, both in the commencement and at the turn of twentieth century, his work was repeatedly rediscovered and adopted by new performances and movements in scholarship. Also, his plays remain the most popular in the present-day world in general and in his native hometown, England, in particular. They are conveniently performed and remoulded in diverse political and cultural context.

The findings drawn out from Behir & Ahlam (2018) exhibit inspiration taken by other poets and writers from the predecessors, and develop things external to the literary



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ambit, such as common culture. When delving deep into plays created by Shakespeare, evidence of his influence is explicit. His writing demonstrates the bifecta of influence, past writers and current writers, thereby, helped in informing the reader about the importance of modern-day English literature. Certain candidates like Christopher Marlowe, Francis Bacon, and others used Shakespeare's name as a pen name. Even the famous Swiss Psychoanalyst 'Sigmund Freud' drew on his psychology from his theories regarding human nature, specifically that of Hamlet.

The results generated from the studies of Siddiqui (2014) & Partovi (2013) deduced that there is no denying the fact that Shakespeare is reckoned as the most influential poet and playwright, both of his time as well as the present-day world. This can be evinced through his legacy as words and expressions that still resonate among the chief contemporary writers of literary fields. For instance, the quote 'To be, or not to be, that is the question' has had an enormous impact for many scholars that opened doors of the pursuit of questionable knowledge. Today, they generally think of Shakespeare as the best dramatist that people have ever witnessed, particularly because of his plays and sonnets.



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5. Discussion

Though the above descriptive results, it was analysed that the timeliness of Shakespeare's works and the ensuing tragedies he created through the works of Othello, King Lear, Hamlet, and Macbeth are unrivalled and unequalled in every form of literature around the world. This is certainly owing to the relevant lessons these stories address to the people. The narration of stories he depicted through his writings of certain characters contending with different complexity or problems are paralleled with the modern-day society. In every place around the world, there is the twin of Lear, Macbeth, Othello, and Hamlet; however, with different names. Such inedible tragedies are required as a way of altering bad attitudes that dominate the world societies. Certainly, his influential tragedies are the main source that led him to visit other countries in order to learn foreign language. As asserted by Thompson (2011), 'Shakespeare himself did not travel abroad; however, since he created his works, they evolved and subsequently mutated to resemble new places and new times. Thus, his literature is that kind of literature which still functions. His plays disseminate issues that are actually related to individuals' real life in contemporary societies. They are deemed as relevant themes which people at present live through. As evinced from the above literature, the themes of love and sacrifices in Romeo and Juliet and Macbeth, respectively, are the main themes prevalent in the twenty-first century societies. Even the headlines of newspapers, movies, radio, and television broadcasts are laden with love and tragic scenes. Societies do contend with lamentable events like people are killing themselves for the sake of love, money and avenge. Also, the theme of crime is replete in today's politics around the world. To round off the discussion, it can be inferred that Shakespeare has left an indelible mark on the contemporary English literature and the events that are characterised through his literary works by immortality and longevity.



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6. Conclusion

It can be concluded from the above comprehensive findings and discussion that William Shakespeare is the most influential dramatist and poet around the world. People in general and literary scholars in particular still read, adapt and translate his writings in their respective works. This is mainly because of his memorable and fascinated themes and characters. There is no denying the fact that Shakespeare's contribution to the English literature resonates his genius and intellect, and he has not lost no status in the world of English literature. The phrases like 'to be or not to be', 'all's well that ends well', etc. are still intact, in different texts and genres. Due to his influential works, the phrases and expressions he employed became part and parcel of the present-day vocabulary usage.



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