

# **Unveiling the Secrets: What Women Do and Don't Say and Do in Shakespeare's Mediterranean Comedies**

Shakespeare's plays have been captivating audiences for centuries with their complex and intriguing characters. Amongst his diverse repertoire are the famous Mediterranean comedies, which provide a unique portrayal of gender dynamics and the roles of women during that time. In this article, we will delve into the world of Shakespeare's Mediterranean comedies and uncover what women do and don't say and do in these extraordinary plays.

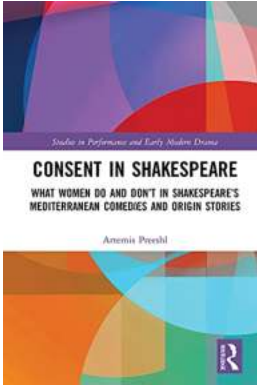
## **The Enigma of Female Characters**

One cannot deny that Shakespeare's female characters hold a special place in the hearts of the audience. From the witty banter of Beatrice in "Much Ado About Nothing" to the cross-dressing Viola in "Twelfth Night," Shakespeare managed to shape strong and multifaceted women when the societal norms dictated otherwise.

However, it is essential to understand that these plays were written during a time when women's roles were primarily confined to the domestic realm. As such, Shakespeare carefully portrayed the complexities of their lives within the constraints of the patriarchal society they inhabited.

**Consent in Shakespeare: What Women Do and Don't Say and Do in Shakespeare's Mediterranean Comedies and Origin Stories (Studies in Performance and Early Modern Drama)**

by Artemis Preeshl (Kindle Edition)



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Shakespeare's depiction of women in Mediterranean comedies often involves elements of disguise, mistaken identity, and the dangerous pursuit of love. The female characters navigate these challenges with intelligence, wit, and a deep understanding of the world around them.

## **Women's Silence: A Powerful Tool**

In many of the Mediterranean comedies, women's silence plays a significant role in character development and plot progression. It is not to say that women simply stand by and say nothing; rather, their silence becomes a means of asserting their agency and challenging the male-dominated society.

An excellent example of this can be found in "The Merchant of Venice" with the character of Portia. Though initially bound by her late father's will and unable to choose her own suitor, Portia cleverly employs silence as a method to test the suitors and eventually influence the outcome of the play. Her silence not only adds intrigue to the story but also showcases her intelligence and agency.

Similarly, in "As You Like It," the character of Rosalind assumes the disguise of a man and adopts the name Ganymede. By doing so, she gains the freedom to express herself and challenge societal norms. Through her wit and clever

language, Rosalind challenges the gender expectations of the time and ultimately influences the outcome of the play.

## **Unveiling the Unsaid: Female Expression**

Beyond silence, Shakespeare's Mediterranean comedies also explore the ways in which women use language to express their desires, opinions, and emotions. Though they may face societal limitations, the female characters manage to navigate these restrictions skillfully, employing language as a tool of subversion and empowerment.

In "Much Ado About Nothing," Beatrice showcases her quick wit and sharp tongue, engaging in spirited verbal duels with Benedick. This playful banter not only creates a delightful dynamic between the characters but also gives Beatrice a platform to challenge the societal expectations placed upon her.

Portia, in "The Merchant of Venice," is another prime example of a woman using words strategically. Through her eloquent speeches and intelligent arguments, she displays her intellect and cunning nature. Portia doesn't merely rely on her physical appearance or charm; instead, she crafts her words carefully to achieve her objectives.

## **Love, Deception, and Transformation**

Love is at the heart of Shakespeare's Mediterranean comedies, and it serves as a catalyst for the transformation of both male and female characters. Women, in particular, experience profound personal growth as they navigate the complexities of love while challenging societal norms.

One of the most famous examples of this can be seen in "Twelfth Night" with the character of Viola. Disguised as a man, Viola finds herself at the center of a love

triangle as she falls in love with Orsino, who is in love with Olivia. Through her disguise, Viola is able to explore themes of gender identity and love, ultimately leading to a resolution that transforms not only her life but the lives of those around her.

In "A Midsummer Night's Dream," Shakespeare presents an intricate web of love and deception. The female characters, such as Hermia and Helena, navigate the challenges of love with both humor and determination. Their relationships with the male characters are not merely passive, but rather they actively participate in the transformative power that love holds within the play.

### **Breaking Down Barriers: The Eternal Relevance**

Shakespeare's portrayal of women in his Mediterranean comedies has resonated with audiences for centuries, and it continues to be relevant in modern times. The themes of agency, empowerment, and the challenges faced by women are universal and transcend the historical context in which the plays were written.

Through the captivating stories, Shakespeare reminds us that women have always possessed the power to challenge societal norms, express themselves, and shape their own destinies. The struggles and triumphs of his female characters serve as an inspiration for us all, both within and beyond the realm of theater.

Shakespeare's Mediterranean comedies offer a fascinating glimpse into the world of women during his time. Although constrained by societal expectations, the female characters in these plays defy norms, employ silence, and employ linguistic prowess to assert their agency and transform their own lives.

It is through the complexities of love, deception, and disguise that Shakespeare's powerful female characters challenge the patriarchal structures, inspiring

audiences across generations. Their struggles and victories remind us of the timeless power and resilience of women.

In revisiting Shakespeare's Mediterranean comedies, we not only uncover the secrets of what women do and don't say and do, but also discovered the extraordinary strength and influence they hold.



**CONSENT IN SHAKESPEARE**  
WHAT WOMEN DO AND DON'T IN SHAKESPEARE'S  
MEDITERRANEAN COMEDIES AND ORIGIN STORIES

Artemis Preeshl



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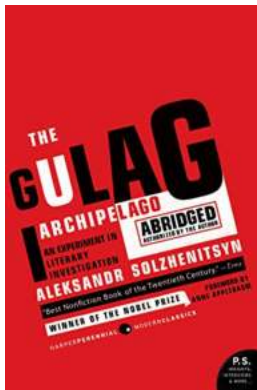


By examining how female characters speak and act during coming of age, engagement, marriage, and intimacy, Consent in Shakespeare will enhance understanding about how and why women spoke, remained silent, or acted as they did in relation to their intimate partners in Early Modern and contemporary private and public situations in and around the Mediterranean.

Consent in intimate relationships is front and center in today's conversations. This book re-examines the verbal and physical interactions of female-identified characters in Early Modern and contemporary cultures in Shakespeare's

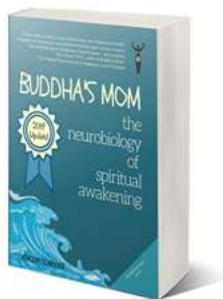
Mediterranean comedies and the sources from which he derived his plays. This re-examination of the words that women say or do not say, and actions that women do or do not take, in Shakespeare's Mediterranean plays and his probable sources sheds light on how Shakespeare's audiences might have perceived Mediterranean cultural mores and norms. Assessment of source materials for Shakespeare's comedies set in the Balkans, France, Italy, the Near East, North Africa, and Spain suggests how women of diverse backgrounds communicated in everyday life and peak life experiences in the Early Modern era.

Given Shakespeare's impact worldwide, this initiative to shift the conversation about the power of consent of female protagonists and supporting characters in Shakespeare's Mediterranean plays will further transform conversations about consent in class, board and conference rooms, and the international stage.



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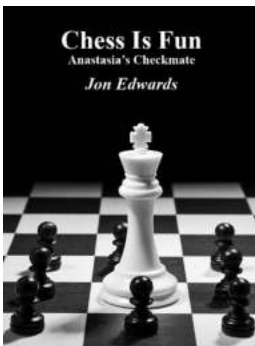
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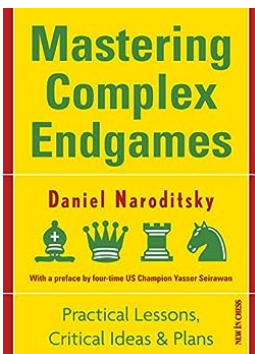
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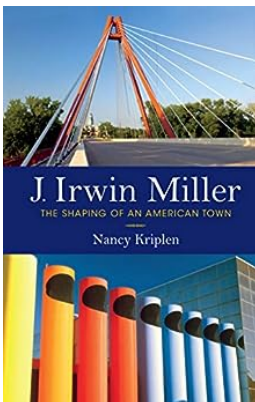
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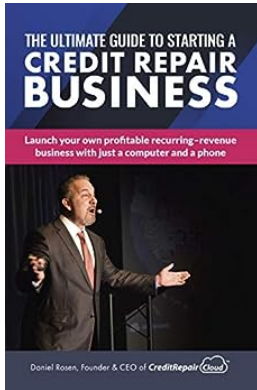
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