

**The Problematization of Love in Shakespeare's plays *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello* and
*Antony and Cleopatra***

By

Muhammad Al-Trawneh

Supervisor

Professor Asad Al-Ghalith

Al-Zaytoonah University of Jordan, 2022

Abstract

Literature, as is known, interacts with social and emotional relationships, and perhaps love is at the core of these relationships. Shakespeare's participation in this human relationship is very distinguished in its nature. He introduces love relationships at their most intimate moments. Yet, he, in a very realistic scope, explores that human love does not survive outer interventions. In particular, when that love challenges all socio-political boundaries and transgresses beyond the established norms, it becomes like fighting a losing battle. Indeed, in his adroit way of examining love-relationships that have a subversive nature to the social status quo, Shakespeare demonstrates how both objective and subjective forces intermingle to complicate and problematise love. Shakespeare reveals to both the audience and the readers that human relations are not left free to thrive and be fruitful to lovers, simply because we live in a world that is ruled not by mercy and appreciation of human emotions and feelings, but precisely by social and political interests. This hammering force is masterfully depicted when parading love and its developments in the lives of various people of various ages, social status, ethnicity, and perspectives on life. Love relationships in *Romeo and Juliet* (1597), *Othello* (1603), and *Antony and Cleopatra* (1607), take different forms and progress along different paths. Each love-relationship reaches a high level of complexity and, tragically, ends with death. Shakespeare's depictions of love stress that while it expresses itself loudly in the hearts of human beings, it is also encountered by the ill-will of those who have a paradoxical nature. He portrays love as a part of human nature and simultaneously expresses that hatred does exist in human hearts; he depicts how love overcomes difficulties in life but fails to encounter those who actively oppose love through antagonising means. From that, it becomes difficult to decide whether Shakespeare intends to celebrate love when it challenges social and political boundaries. Or whether he shocks and warns us by revealing that love that is transgressive is likely to have a disastrous and sad ending! Shakespeare shows hate with various faces and manifestations that seem to float around and overcome love. It is there through social rivalry and enmity, through

jealousy, and through socio-political interests and priorities. These are forces that problematize love in the plays we study and indicate that human beings have an antithetical nature that is difficult to handle or even understand.

Keywords: *Romeo and Juliet, Othello, Antony and Cleopatra, Love.*