

Dramatic Elements in Shakespeare's Plays: Othello as a Sample

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Abstract

This study is distinctively restricted to the study of important features of Shakespeare's tragic plays. It deals with three dramatic elements in Shakespeare's plays such as characters, tragic flaw, and soliloquy. He uses characters that represent high class such as kings, barons, princesses, and fools. the protagonist sometimes has a weak point which leads to his end. This defect is called tragic flaw. Soliloquy as the way in which the character talks to himself either aloud or silently. This study deals with Shakespeare's Othello as a sample in analyzing these important aspects. This study hypothesizes that these literary terms or dramatic elements are so important in Shakespeare's plays. It is divided into eight sections, each analyzing a topic. Finally, the study has reached some conclusions that verify the hypothesis of the study.

Key Words: Shakespeare, Othello, Style , Tragic Flaw, Soliloquy, Drama.

I. Introduction

In the history of English/western drama, Shakespeare is the greatest playwright. He wrote thirty-seven plays in his literary history. Shakespeare's plays occur in away by which the past events are shown clearly. But they do not relate too much to recreate historical reality in the systematic way. Elizabethan scripts preserve the essential social, political and human relationships but the language is commonly a heightened version of that of Elizabethan London.

1.1. Shakespeare' s Style

Shakespeare's style is described as an unrealistic one. This term describes traits of dramatic presentation. For example, the unrealistic is shown in Hamlet's famous speech "To be or not to be". He describes the heavy qualities of life and untimely death on two counts. First, it appears as a soliloquy. Second it is in blank verse. This way exposes Hamlet's meditative mind, his clear rationality and his deep feelings in a powerful way (Arp and Johnson, 2006:1076-1077).

A tragedy of Shakespeare converts an ethical idea into dramatic form. It is a way of knowing which is different from obvious science. Tragedy treats with unrealistic thing, with imaginations which must be emotionally experienced. The relationship between religion and this experience is very close (Sen,2011:14). Shakespeare is characterized by his astonishing knowledge of a wide variety of subjects such as music, law,

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seamanship, the Bible, military science, the stage art, politics, history, psychology, hunting, woodcraft, animal husbandry, and sport. He has the ability to select different information and to use it perfectly. For example, in scene one of the *Tempest*, he gives us a scene which is full of information about sea. He depends on what he knows through talking of sailors (ibid: 31).

Salmon and Burness (1987: xvii) state that Shakespeare has the ability to put ordinary words in an effective use. He does not follow the usual standards of Elizabethan prosody. His speech surpasses anything says. Shakespeare has a distinctive use of English. Every individual has a unique understanding of what is possible in the language of his time and place (ibid: 4). Shakespearean conversation is characterized by complexity of thoughts and toleration of differences in an audience (Adamson, 2001:135).

1.2. Features in Shakespeare's Plays

Shakespeare's tragic plays are explained by Bradly in the following way: First, the story consists of one person, the hero or at best two persons, the hero and the heroine. This way is preferable in romantic tragedies such as *Romeo and Juliet*. Second, the story talks about suffering and extreme calamity which lead to death of a man. Third, this suffering happens to a person who feels happiness in his last life. Fourth, the calamity is achieved by men. Fifth, the tragedy goes off from an action done by a man or the action formulating the character of the person. Sixth, the catastrophe resulting from the deeds of men and the main source of these deeds is the character of them. Seventh, the abnormal conditions of mind such as madness and hallucination are not the origin of deeds of any dramatic moments. Eighth, the supernatural is never compulsive in his plays wherever it is introduced. Ninth, there is no exclusion to accidents. They are used sparingly and are not allowed to damage the impression of casual sequence. Tenth, the main tragic feature is noticed on mindness of character. The last feature is that the tragic truth is the remains of something pathetic, scared and strange (Bhatia, 2012:81).

1.3. Dramatic Elements in Shakespeare's Plays

Shakespeare as a great playwright in literature used many dramatic elements and devices in his play such as character, monologue, dramatic irony, aside, soliloquy, tragic flaw and others. This study show three dramatic elements such as characters, tragic flaw, and soliloquy. These dramatic devices can be shown in Shakespeare's *Othello*.

1.3.1. Characters in Shakespeare's Plays

Shakespeare is the greatest playwright. He is exceptional and distinctive in his writing. In his plays, we can note a lot of things. First of all, he uses a lot of human figures. He uses characters that represent high class such as kings, barons, princesses, and also uses others that refer to opposite personalities such as fools, soldiers, peasant girls, witches and magicians. There are various visual contexts in which these figures appear such as festivals of state alongside inn drinking, sense of love, boats and rough brawls, mask party, marching armies, murder scenes, soliloquies, dancing parties, etc. Second there is variety in the language such as highly speech and fast prose dialogue. In his plays, we find a lot of formal Elizabethan verse and they are also wealthy with melodramatic rhetoric scenes of grand passion (Clemen, 1972:198).

Lall (2012:15-16) shows the ability of Shakespeare to portray characters both historically and imaginarily. These characters are various and differ in age, sex, and state of life. In spite of that they share one feature in being alive. Their roles may be short. Some of them speak about twenty lines of verse but they are not

forgettable. National history appears clearly in Shakespeare's plays and they belong to old religious drama. The primary object of his plays is moral improvement. The conversation of Shakespeare is natural. His words are beautiful. His plays are rich with similes and metaphors.

1.3.2. Tragic Flaw

Barnes and Coleman (2008:64) explain another feature of Shakespearean plays which is called fatal flaw. They show that in his tragedies such as *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello* and *Macbeth*, one very important theme is the concept of character's personal weak point leading to damage. The end is either death or obliteration. Examples of personal weaknesses in Shakespeare's plays are jealousy (in *Othello*) and greed or ambition (in *Macbeth*).

Flaw can be considered as heroic property of the protagonist in the play. It contributes in his heroic qualities. This melancholy explains in *Hamlet*, ambition *Macbeth*, jealousy *Othello* and so on (Dotterer, 1989:119).

The defect which obstructs the character's good judgment and causes him to make unfortunate choices is known as flaw (Downs et al., 2013:435). Cuddon (1998:933) defines tragic flaw as imperfection in a tragic hero or heroine which leads to their downfall.

In tragedy, the protagonist sometimes has a weak point which leads to his end. This defect is called tragic flaw. A well known example about this characteristic is *Othello's* jealousy. This idea requires a narrowing and personalizing of the broader Greek opinion *Hamartia* (error or failure) (Baldick, 2001:261).

1.3.3. Soliloquy in Shakespeare's Plays

Abrams (1993:196-97) defines soliloquy as the way in which the character talks to himself either aloud or silently. In drama, it points to the convention by which a character alone on the stage, utters his ideas aloud. The intentions of the character and his state of mind are shown through information conveying by this style. Cuddon (1998:838) states that the audience knows important information about a particular character through his soliloquies. It is one of the advantages of this style.

The famous feature of Shakespeare's plays is his soliloquies which stand for speeches by characters rather than their unspoken ideas (Hirsh, 2003:119). There are situations in which the characters speak about their dilemmas, their love, their schemes, their furies when they are alone. The situation differs when someone enters. The characters stop talking or lower their voices. The difference between Shakespeare's soliloquies and others is that his soliloquies are performed as if the character is thinking but not speaking (Blaisdell, 2006: iii).

Farabee (2014:7) clarifies that there are many reasons for using soliloquies. Firstly, characters excite concentration because their soliloquies are long and theoretically complex speeches. Secondly, soliloquies offer playgoers what appear to be moments of unmediated access to the ideas and often feelings of characters. Thirdly, they can address playgoers directly. In the soliloquies, the character tells the truth. For example, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Helena is the only character who has soliloquy. This happens commonly when she interacts with other characters and then left alone on the stage (ibid: 30).

1.4. Othello

Othello is a wonderful and successful play in modern drama. It is also accorded a position of high merit among the superior works of art. The character of Othello fascinates scholars, readers, critics, psychologists and actors. Its ingredients were a leader or a brave dark soldier who sought revenge for some wrong done by his wife, tricky characters who incited the revenge. He was so jealous and a hero who reproached himself for some inability and adopted a pose of craziness and crimes of adultery, murder and devices such as bloody handkerchief and effective scenes. All these conventions, with the exception of witches, are found in some form in *Othello*.

1.4.1. Tragic Flaw in Shakespeare's Othello

Othello has always been one of the clearest and the clearest of Shakespeare's tragedies. It is a domestic tragedy which is based on the idea of jealousy. Othello's tragic flaw is jealousy when the hero of this play (Othello) slaughters his wife when he discovered that Desdemona was in an illegal love relationship with another character (Iago). Eldred Jones states that the character of Othello is both Moore and noble hero while Iago is both soldier and villain. Desdemona, with sublime innocence and faithfulness, subverts the character of the loose Venetian woman. Because of Othello's jealousy on Desdemona, he kills his wife heartlessly. He kills her to keep the values of Venetian society but when he discover that Desdemona was innocent, he punished himself in a similar way. (Jones, 1965 : 86)

1.4.2. Soliloquy in Shakespeare's Othello

The famous feature of Shakespeare's plays is his soliloquies which stand for speeches by characters rather than their unspoken ideas (Hirsh, 2003:119). In this play, Othello has famous soliloquy that is written in poetic style:

She loved me for the dangers I had passed,

And I loved her that she did pity them.

This only is the witchcraft I have used. (Act 1, Scene 3, 167-168)

This quotation explains the love relationship between Othello and Desdemona that is presented as a real marriage of true minds and the very reverse of the low lust commonly attributed to the racist stereotype of similar situations. In fact, the major thrust of the first act is to underline the nature of this love. The nobility of Othello's love and character is , moreover greatly strengthened by the support of another noble character Desdemona.

II. Conclusion

In *Othello*, Shakespeare uses more dramatic elements such as character and its advantage in describing and exploring the secrets of the thoughts and the feelings. Tragic flaw in Othello's personality that is jealousy. Soliloquy is an important technique used by the writer to express what is inside the character for the audience. The main character of this play " Othello" is a man of war and faithfulness in his life . He is a great lover for his beloved " Desdemona". So the hypothesis of this study is accepted.

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