

Analysis of selected passages from othello by william shakespeare

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When William Shakespeare utilized the stylistic gadgets he therefore attempted to paint a multi-dimensional image of his understandings that he extended in his characters till the limits of reality and belief. And to create range in this frame of multi-dimensionality Shakespeare not only revealed through the words in the lines which the characters uttered rather the development of the words and the lines also exposed specific patterns that could be deciphered to spot much more subtle factors and justification behind those expressions.

Such flow and proficiency of expressing the conceptions can not be taught easily through the science of composing rather it needed the unschooled instinctive capability like Shakespeare's to have fun with the words with a special ability of potency that can metamorphosed the words to endure as the animated version of Shakespeare's intelligence and vision even after being uttered by the characters in the play.

In the following excerpts from the play ' Othello', there is a variety of Shakespeare's use of stylistic devices to organize words in order to express the difference of ideas, state of minds, intentions and beliefs of the protagonist (Othello) and also how making use of such words in a specific style cater in constructing the plot and developing the characters.

Theres magic in the web of it. A sybil that had actually numbered worldwide
The sun to course 2 hundred compasses,
In her prophetic fury stitched the work;
the worms were hallowed that did break the silk,

And it was colored in mummy which the competent
Saved the maidens hearts.

These lines are from the IV scene of the Third Act of the play, and they are uttered on the grounds of misunderstanding that is set by Iago in the mind of Othello. If we observe closely these lines summarize the truth that Othello is ignorant about and the words reveal the irony that Othello has become a victim of. The use of the words like "magic" and "web" are justifiable elements of the speech of a contaminated brain and the word "magic" can be the symbol of Iago's spell of poisoning Othello's mind with suspicion and "web" can be the symbol for the perplexed state of Othello's mind, which lost the ability to think and trust his own reasons. And the two hundred years old "sibyl" can be a metaphor for the evil master minded Iago, whose "prophetic fury" fabricated the whole chaos to take his revenge.

The "silk" can be speculated as a metaphor for the love of Desdemona that came out of her "hallowed" trust and faith. And the word "dyed" can be taken as a pun (when analyzing these lines from symbolic references), as the faithful and sacred love of Desdemona 'dyed' or "died" within her "maiden heart". The worth and value purposely exaggerated by Othello is a fine example of hyperbolic fantasies that Shakespeare is capable of designing. And thus the handkerchief becomes the symbol of the thin threaded relationship of Othello and Desdemona that was based on superficial beliefs and yet sought the possibility of sustenance of their love.

It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul,
Let me no name it to you, you chaste stars
It is the cause, Yet Ill not shed her blood,
Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow,
And smooth as monumental alabaster,

The above mentioned lines are from the Act V Scene II and anaphoric beginning of this passage is Othello's expression for his exalted emotional dichotomy of disbelief and love for Desdemona. The repetition of the phrase " it is the cause" are the words that come out of Othello's weeping brain that has been so badly eclipsed by the poisoning suspicion injected by Iago that it had totally become impotent of thinking on its own. As these lines are uttered during the climax of the play thus it is quite typical of Shakespeare that he lends his protagonist with an ample energy to utter dramatic and highly emotional phrases which let them have catharsis. The desperate utterance of " my soul" by Othello shows that perhaps the only salvage left for his consolation is to confide in to his soul.

Or " my soul" can also be taken as Othello's address to Desdemona as it can be observed that Othello still loves her in these lines. And from the ironic aspect the first line also conveys the meaning that it is the " soul" of Othello that can be taken as the " cause" of the whole tragedy, because if Othello had really loved Desdemona from his soul he would have had a complete trust in her love and honesty but since he believed more what he listened to and less what was known to him thus he became the victim of suspicion that

proved fatal for him and his love. In the proceeding line the address to the “stars” is made by Othello to mock at Desdemona’s infidelity.

“Stars” have been used as a metaphor for their heavenly status for chastity. It can also be a reference to the Greek tradition of naming the stars by the names of their gods and goddesses. Thus as Othello has completely lost his trust in his wife thus he consider her reference to be an insult for the stars. These lines depict the imbalance of Othello’s power to reason and think and express in coherence with his flow of emotions. In the later lines he reveals his intension to kill Desdemona, but unlike his valiance as a general, he prefers to strangle her because her physical beauty still absorbs his feelings in love and compassion for her.

And being a black man himself he admired her fair skin and he refers to her with two different categories of symbols. The use of “snow” as a simile conveys the softness and coldness of her fair physique which Othello never wanted to distort by killing with a weapon and the metaphor of “monumental alabaster” can be referred to the stiff and lifeless beauty of Desdemona that laid with no worth for Othello anymore.

I have seen the day

That with this little arm and this good sword

I have made my way through more impediments

Than twenty times your stop. But O vain boast!

Who can control his fate? Tis not so now.

Be not afraid, though you do see me weaponed.

Here is my journeys end, here is my butt,
And very seamark of my utmost sail.

These lines are uttered in the Act V Scene II which is almost the resolution of the play and it is one of Shakespeare's special characteristics that his tragic heroes lose the intensity and the energy of their rhetoric in the last scenes of the play. It is because of the reason that Shakespeare develops his tragic heroes to attain the status of being larger than life and thus speech loses its value when the characters become paranormal. In the above lines the most important aspect that one can notice is the tone of submission and retreat which is conveyed by the choice and arrangement of words like " little arm" " But O vain Boast!" and " Who can control this fate?" by Othello who was a valiant and unbeatable general but in these lines appears to be the defeated and subjugated one in the hands of fate.

These lines though do not consist of any special rhyme scheme that would help in bringing an effective poetic impact whilst delivering these lines on the stage but the second line does show some signs of alliteration as the words " made my way through more impediments" as well as in the third line where the words " twenty times" are stressed and can be delivered with some high pitched voice by the character. But after these lines the tone changes as the desperation and despondency appear in the words. The last three lines are symbolically referred by Othello to his death. And despite he is " weaponed" yet he is incapable to fight as he desires death due to his lamenting guilt and in vain repentance. In the last line the use of the metaphor " seamark" is an appropriate expression for Othello's choice of

vocabulary as it adequately represents his experiences and knowledge as a sailor and warrior.