


<p><b>AN EXAMINATION AND EVALUATION OF SHAKESPEARE’S STYLISTIC FIGURES THROUGH THE LENSE OF REFLECTION</b></p>		<p><b>Shakespearean Literature</b></p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Reflection, Shakespeare, Figures, Plays, Language, English.</p>
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<p><b>Fatbardha Doko</b></p>	<p>Faculty of Philology. Department of English Language and Literature. University of Tetova, North Macedonia</p>
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**Abstract**

William Shakespeare, the pioneer of the English literary world, is a universally famous dramatist whose creations and literary contributions became more popular in the Elizabethan period than in the Jacobean age. Shakespeare has written thirty-seven plays in his lifetime. Not only did he enrich the field of literature by using different literary figures, but he also contributed a lot to the development of the English language. His vocabulary was abundant, and through the creation, fusion, and incorporation of new terms into the English of that era, he breathed fresh vitality into the language, catalyzing its evolution and development, leading to the unmistakable designation of Shakespearean English. His plays are very vivid as far as the literary figures are concerned; there are many metaphors, many examples of imagery, and many examples of dramatic irony. Masterfully written monologues and soliloquies incorporate all these figures, but they don't end there. Our students reflect on the revealed personalities of the characters in these monologues and soliloquies. Shakespeare mastered his use of blank verse. Nevertheless, Shakespeare created unforgettable and powerful characters, interesting and attractive themes, and interesting plots. Shakespeare's plays, from his life to the present, depict the atmosphere, language, theme, characters, and construction of every age, especially incorporating modern elements. In fact, using the above features has made Shakespeare universal and appealing for all ages.

**INTRODUCTION**

It is always a pleasure to write about Shakespeare and his literary art. Many studies have been conducted, and there is always a lot to say about him. This study focuses on his works, the students’ perceptions of them, and the elements they deem significant and artistically valuable. First, we must acknowledge his contribution to enriching the English language. His genius Shakespeare’s genius is evident in the vocabulary he used in his plays, the new words he introduced and incorporated into the English language, and the common words we use today, such as Bandit, Critic, Dauntless, Dwindle, Elbow (as a verb), Green-Eyed (to describe jealousy), Lackluster, Lonely, etc. lary of an ordinary person is approximately 15.000 words, whereas Shakespeare’s language covers up to 35.000 words. Therefore, Shakespeare’s work in prose, poetry, and drama marked the beginning of the modernization of the English language by introducing words and expressions, style, and form to the language.

However, Shakespeare’s greatness is not solely due to his newly invented words, but also to his unique writing style and features. While reading his plays, students notice that his language is figurative and very rich in poetic devices. Shakespeare presents his art through his verses, the speeches of his tragic heroes and major characters in his plays, and his sonnets. There, he played with many devices, such as metaphors, which are figures of speech that, for rhetorical effect, directly refer to one thing by mentioning another, or, in other words, directly refer to one thing by mentioning another. Here are some examples of notable metaphors in Shakespeare’s works:

*However, look, the morn, in russet mantle clad, /Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastern hill,* Hamlet, etc.

Imagery is another figure of speech that Shakespeare uses, and it triggers the reader to recall images, or mental pictures, that engage one of the five senses: sight, sound, taste, smell, and touch; for example, “The bell invites me. “Hare it not, Duncan, for it is a knell that summons you to heaven or hell.” (Macbeth.II.i.63-65)

Another very important aspect of speech is symbolism. It is, in fact, an image that Shakespeare used to represent something else larger than itself, such as the Storm in King Lear, which refers to the inner rage of the old king. On the other hand, Shakespeare used allusions to refer to mythology, the Bible, geography, and other literary works, for example, “Hear Minerva speak.” – Lucentio (1.1.84) in Taming of the Shrew.

Dramatic irony arises when the audience possesses knowledge that the characters do not, a common occurrence in Shakespeare’s plays. For instance, in the final scene of Romeo and Juliet, the audience is aware that Juliet is alive. However, our students focus on the monologues and soliloquies, where Shakespeare masterfully employs blank verse to mock the characters’ personalities.

## **REFLECTION IN TRAGEDIES**

However, there are many other important literary features, devices, elements, etc. that make Shakespeare’s works among the most timeless and greatest. Shakespeare’s plays are considered his true artistic masterpieces, and we will examine the key elements that students typically analyze and identify in tragedies. One of the most important elements of tragedies is the character, or more specifically, the tragic hero. The tragic hero, in fact, is a victim of one’s fault, or Hamartia; so as a result, we follow one’s downfall and eventually their tragic end. We also examine the actions, emotions, and relationships of other characters. Hamlet’s character, for example, is a victim of his own emotions. He is a great overthinker, and he must deal with the consequences of his overthinking. However, readers also encounter the effects of other characters’ manipulations. In this case, Claudius’s ruthless ambition leads to tragic consequences. Hamlet’s character is intricate; he bears numerous burdens, leading to significant mental turmoil that exacerbates his suffering and undermines his stability. We observe that Hamlet exhibits indecisiveness, acting both when he should and when he shouldn’t. As a result, Hamlet brings up the question of life and death, indicating his attitude toward life and human existence. They viewed human existence and its purpose as insignificant due to the divine nature of the human soul, leading them to fear death as an unknown aspect of human existence. Shakespeare’s most famous line, “*To be or not to be,*” exemplifies this.

What students think about Hamlet is also a feminist issue. Hamlet's relationship with his mother, Gertrude, and his beloved Ophelia exemplifies this. The marriage of Hamlet's mother to Claudius shortly after King Hamlet's death caused Hamlet to view her differently, which in turn influenced his behavior and attitude towards women in general, leading him to be considered a misogynist. Regardless of why he loves Ophelia, his misogynic mind does not allow him to express his love, show affection, or stay close to her, but instead to be cold, offensive, and unreasonable toward her. The only female characters in this story are Gertrude and Ophelia, who find themselves surrounded by powerful men. As a result, they succumb to male dominance; succumb to their own needs and desires, and lack the strength to challenge male dominance.

However, Hamlet is a revenge play. This means that the major theme is revenge. Students primarily analyze this theme, specifically focusing on the reasons behind the revenge, the motivations of those seeking it, the morality of the action, and the potential consequences. Here, we observe that not only Hamlet seeks retribution, but also Leart, who mourns the loss of his father, Polonius, and Fortinbras, who believes Hamlet's father, killed his father, the king of Norway.

Macbeth is another tragedy worth discussing and reflecting on. It's the darkest and shortest play. It explores the themes of ambition and power, as well as the consequences of unchecked desire. We meet Macbeth as a great warrior and brave man who, due to his hamartia, i.e., his unchecked ambition, becomes a murderer and ends tragically. This is a very powerful play that explores the mind of a criminal, and one reflection on the story could revolve around the 'complex nature of human character, the destructive potential of unrestrained ambition, and the fragility of the human psyche.'<sup>1</sup>

Macbeth's prevalent transformation is what the researcher likes most about the play. In the beginning, Macbeth was a brave and loyal man. As the play progresses, Macbeth grapples with the dilemma of upholding morality or risking his own life to seize the throne. It is great how Shakespeare makes Macbeth's internal struggle realistic and therefore relatable to a point.

In fact, the influence of Lady Macbeth is what contributes the most to the change in his personality and makes his inner struggle even more difficult. She successfully persuades him that the crown holds paramount importance, and to demonstrate his masculinity, he must assassinate the king, thereby becoming king himself. It was only the first time that Macbeth needed Lady Macbeth's "motivation" and conviction to commit the terrible act, which would make him a coldblooded murderer, a real Machiavellian, who would kill everyone who would endanger his reign. However, the couple's ambition for power would ultimately lead to their downfall, as evidenced by their spiritual turmoil and deep-seated understanding that they had committed a terrible mistake or crime. This is best reflected in the sleepwalking scene of Lady Macbeth saying 'Out damn spot, Out', which refers to bloody hands caused by the murder of King Dunkan, and in Macbeth's delusional state of mind when the wood 'approaches' the mansion just before he was

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<sup>1</sup> <https://successtutoring.com.au/king-lear-summary-and-analysis>

killed. This inner turmoil in fact led Lady Macbeth to a loss of sanity, probably to the act of suicide, and led Macbeth to lose sense of time and order and eventually to his death. Their tragic end can only be attributed to their unbridled ambition and desire for power and the throne.

When it comes to the relevance of Shakespeare's tragedies in contemporary society, we can assert that many individuals today, in one way or another, understand the destructive and hurtful nature of lies and deception (Hamlet). Few people today would seriously contemplate murder, but they can relate to Macbeth's ambition and the conflict he encounters as a battle between good and evil. Romeo and Juliet, on the other hand, mirror the love you experience in your youth, a universal experience that everyone encounters at some point in their life. Other themes found within Romeo and Juliet can strongly relate to contemporary society, such as hatred, love, ignorance, the power of fate, revenge, star-crossed lovers, forgiveness, overcoming adversity, and separation from loved ones.

### **REFLECTION IN COMEDIES**

In regard to comedies, it is obvious that Shakespeare uses jokes and puns, often including mistaken identities, confusion, and confidence. They primarily focus on love and relationships, often featuring weddings that end happily.

For example, in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, the readers encounter the difficulties of love through Helena's struggles with her one-sided feelings for Demetrius. It also examines gender roles and stereotypes in ancient Greece, with male characters trying to control women. While comedic on the surface, the play has deeper meanings around relationships and power dynamics.

Shakespeare employs dramatic techniques such as dialogue, soliloquy, and dramatic irony in *Twelfth Night* to depict human desires. Through these techniques, Shakespeare presented themes of ambition, identity, and relationships, as well as his views about love, self-love, friendship, etc., in a way that produced laughter on the part of the audience. In fact, not only do the audience and readers laugh, but they also take the dramatic portrayal of love as a source of both pleasure and suffering for the characters more seriously. The love triangle that forms between Viola (Cesario), Orsino, and Olivia demonstrates this. This also applies to Malvolio, who finds himself both a victim and an object of his own ambition. For example, Olivia uses bear-baiting imagery. Cesario's ferocious thoughts, she imagines, chain her emotions to a stake and attack them, believing that Cesario holds a dishonorable image of her for being so forthright with her affections. The *Twelfth Night* satirizes the normative forms of love of the era, as well as the masses' perceptions of sex and gender. A hacker or a master parodist could only have written the play's absurd double wedding.

Since *Much Ado about Nothing* is a play about marriage and love, we must analyze its aspects of comedy, romance, and tragedy. However, love invariably involves tricks, disguises, and games, as demonstrated in instances where Don Pedro, in disguise, wins Hero for Claudio, when Benedict and Beatrice unite through a complex prank, and when Claudio reconciles with Hero

only after her staged death, among other scenarios, these things can suggest that love is a game based on appearances, poses, and the manipulation of situations.

Women are also a very important part of the play, and they develop aspects of marriage and honor. On their wedding day, Claudio rejects Hero; he humiliates her at the altar, falsely believing that Hero had cheated on him, thereby destroying her dignity and honor. We see this as an example of when this serves as an example of a time when discrimination against women was prevalent, and marriage was viewed as an institution that valued despite the deprivation of their elemental rights, women in Shakespeare's comedies demonstrated their intelligence, cleverness, and fighting skills, demonstrating their importance in society at that time.

As far as sonnets are concerned, Shakespeare wrote 154 sonnets, which adds great value to English literature. Shakespeare composes these poems, expressing his poetic skills in writing about beauty, love, time, death, and the complexity of human nature, in 14 lines of iambic pentameter, with most following the traditional rhyme scheme of the English sonnet: *ababcdcdefefgg*. Shakespeare's sonnets typically consist of three distinct quatrains, each characterized by a unique metaphor and a concluding couplet that unifies everything. Shakespeare dedicates these sonnets to three individuals who significantly influenced his life: the fair youth, the dark lady, and the rival poet.

For example, in sonnet 18, Shakespeare praises his beloved's beauty and describes all the ways in which their beauty is preferable to a summer day. However, the stability of love and its power to immortalize someone are the overarching themes of this poem. Verse, poetry, and art achieve this immortalization.

*But thy eternal summer shall not fade,  
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;  
Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,  
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st:*

Sonnet 130 is a kind of inverted love poem or atypical love sonnet. This implies that the woman is very beautiful, but it suggests that it is important for this poet to view the woman he loves realistically. In this case, false or indeed "poetical" metaphors, such as conventional exaggerations about a woman's beauty, will not occur.<sup>2</sup> There might also be a dose of humor involved, which makes this sonnet slightly different from the others. For example:

*My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;  
Coral is far more red than her lips red;  
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun?  
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.*

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.buckingham.ac.uk/english/schools/poetry-bank/sonnet130>

In sonnet 29, the speaker is contemplating his own fate in a moment of self-reflection. It emphasizes that this sonnet is about the speaker rather than the normal subject, presumably Fair Youth, as the speaker is looking upon himself rather than looking upon the one he loves.

*Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,  
Featured like him, like him with friends possessed,  
Desiring this man's art and that man's scope  
With what I most enjoy contented least.*

## WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SHAKESPEARE'S WRITING?

Therefore, Shakespeare's work in prose, poetry, and drama marked the beginning of the modernization of the English language by introducing words and expressions, style, and form to the language. English is a rich and vibrant language that possesses limitless expressive and emotional power. Its critical weapons include language figures such as personification, malapropism, metonymy, and rhetorical questioning, among others. These figures, rather than various literary devices like metaphors, similes, personification, and alliteration, aid in creating vivid imagery. Additionally, the use of iambic pentameter enhances the musical quality. In the 17th and 18th centuries, Shakespeare contributed to the standardization of the English language. As his work gained importance, correctly spelling words became more common. He created compound words, adverbs, and adjectives from verbs. He added suffixes and prefixes to many words, combined two words to make a new one, changed verbs into adjectives, changed nouns into verbs, and added prefixes or suffixes to words. Shakespeare introduces new words, expressions, styles, and forms to the language by creating new words and tropes. Shakespeare greatly influenced contemporary literature and contributed to the modernization of the English language, grammar, spelling, vocabulary, and literature.

Shakespeare has had a great impact even today. Not only did he contribute to the modernization of language but also to cultural education, as his works evoke many emotions and feelings, motivate us to attend theaters, and help us learn more about theater and drama. More than 410 film adaptations of Shakespeare's plays are part of today's filmography, which allows us to recognize the people and situations presented in his plays today. Readers and the audience see that Shakespeare 'portrays the human imagination as a creative source of new critical awareness of ourselves, society, and the world around us'<sup>3</sup>, for example, by reflecting ideologies such as justice, loyalty, and morality.'

Another important point of reflection pertains to the characters, particularly the complex ones that Shakespeare created. Shakespeare's characters are heavily defined by predicaments that require them to respond in complex ways to the world around them; they develop because they have the ability to overhear themselves talk, either to themselves or to others, and are thus able to

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<sup>3</sup> <https://bulkeley.org/page/2/?id=assignments-search-patent>

reconceive themselves.<sup>4</sup> They express human sentiments in human language derived from real life. For instance, characters like Iago, Hamlet, and Shylock are intricately complex; comprehending their psyche, actions, and deeds necessitates delving deeply into the minds of criminals, villains, and highly insecure individuals. Shylock is hated for his contract, but he also feels sorry about being punished and having to be converted. Hamlet is a person whose inner struggle is very complex, a struggle between his mental unrest and his ambition, his desire for revenge, his action and inaction, etc.; Iago's villainy is unique, etc.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, as we continue to appreciate and engage with Shakespeare's works, we not only honor his legacy but also recognize the enduring relevance of his language and ideas. Eventually, the English language owed a significant debt to Shakespeare, whose genius and linguistic prowess continued to inspire and captivate audiences, ensuring that his legacy lived for generations to come. Despite the shifts and changes in his work, his dramas remain timeless creations, as Shakespeare presents the enduring qualities of human nature and addresses universal and timeless human issues. The reader perceives a universal and timeless validity in the experiences and words of the characters. It is likely that this recognition of the permanent, timeless, and universal nature of Shakespeare's dramas gives them their perennial appeal. Therefore, Shakespeare's influence on the development of English grammar and syntax by introducing and inventing more than 1700 words and new phrases and expressions, as well as creating consistent spelling and pronunciation rules that became part of everyday English, is extraordinarily important, provides a strong foundation for understanding and analyzing modern works, and provides us with a strong basis for reflection.

He was incomparable and matchless; he is still so and will remain in the future. The empire he has built will never meet its downfall. He is an institution. His merits and contributions are boundless, surpassing the limit of expression. In addition, the author of this reflective essay concludes her study by quoting Bloom: "Shakespeare extensively informs the language we speak; his principal characters have become our mythology; and he, rather than his involuntary follower Freud, is our psychologist." (Bloom, 1998)

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<sup>4</sup> <https://hbr.org/2017/01/shakespeares-characters-show-us-how-self-development-should-happen>

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