THE PERSPECTIVE OF NEW ERA SCIENCES
INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC JOURNAL
www.global-science-review.com
editor@global-science-review.com

CONFLICT, INVERSION AND POETIC IMAGERY IN WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S *ROMEO AND JULIET*

Dilnozaxon Otabek qizi Jorayeva

Master's student, Literary Studies (Uzbek Literature)

Fergana State University, Fergana, Uzbekistan

Abstract. This article analyses the conflicts, dramatic contradictions and artistic devices of William Shakespeare's tragedy *Romeo and Juliet*. The opposition between love and hatred, and between the family and society, is interpreted as the basic factor of the play's dramatic conflict, which is shown to operate simultaneously on the external plane of the feud and on the internal plane of the characters' experience. The study also considers the role of similes, poetic expressions and the technique of inversion, in which the outcome of the action is announced in advance, in revealing the content of the work. On the basis of theoretical statements about the literary hero and dramatic conflict, the psychology of the characters, their inner experiences and the tragic essence of love in the play are examined. The article concludes that Shakespeare raised an ordinary love story to the level of universal tragedy through the harmonious combination of dramatic conflict, poetic imagery and compositional technique.

Keywords: dramaturgy; tragedy; conflict; dramatic contradiction; artistic depiction; inversion; Shakespeare; Romeo; Juliet; poetic skill; tragedy of love; literary hero

1. Introduction

William Shakespeare occupies a special place in the history of world literature. His plays are valued for portraying, with great artistic skill, the human psyche, the social relations of society and such eternal themes as love and hatred. Among them, *Romeo and Juliet* (written in the mid-1590s) is recognized as one of the most famous

love stories in world drama. In this work pure love, family enmity and tragic fate are depicted in close connection with one another.

The tragedy has been studied extensively in English-language criticism (see, for example, Bloom, 1998; Gibbons, 1980; Weis, 2012), but the questions of how dramatic conflict is organized in it, how the device of inversion functions and how poetic imagery participates in the disclosure of the play's meaning remain worth returning to, particularly from the perspective of the theory of the dramatic genus developed in Uzbek and Russian literary scholarship. The aim of this article is to examine these questions. The following tasks are set: to define the literary hero and dramatic conflict as theoretical categories; to describe the system of conflicts in the tragedy; to consider the role of inversion in its composition; to analyse the poetic devices through which the theme of love is expressed; and to characterize the psychology of the main characters.

2. Theoretical Background: The Literary Hero and Dramatic Conflict

A literary hero is the image of a human being in a literary work; the persons and characters taking part in an artistic work can be regarded as literary heroes (Hotamov & Sarimsoqov, 1983). The specific feature of the dramatic genus is that the author does not intervene directly in the events: the psychological state and character of the heroes are revealed through dialogue and action. Every action and every utterance of a hero in a dramatic work serves to disclose the author's idea. Because the playwright cannot, as an epic narrator can, comment on events or characterize the persons involved, this responsibility is placed on the characters themselves. For this reason the author of a drama must attend carefully to each detail of the depiction, since it influences the principal specific feature of drama, its second life on the stage (Jalilov, 1984).

Shakespeare's dramaturgy is distinguished by exactly this intensity of dramatic and poetic expression. Action in a play is always built on conflict; the drama retains its power of impact through contradictions and clashes. Discussing the nature of

dramatic plot, Khalizev (1986) writes that the contradictions of the dramatic plot signify, above all, a violation of the harmonious and complete order of the world, or else point to the imperfection and disharmony that are characteristic of that order. In this sense conflict is not only a structural device for constructing the plot. Reflecting the contradictions of real life, it forms the ideological and aesthetic basis of the drama and serves to disclose its content. Put differently, dramatic conflict acts at one and the same time as a means of modelling the process of reality; it is a broader and more capacious category than action. Its development in a concrete artistic realization allows the essence of the depicted phenomenon to be revealed most deeply and a full and integral picture of life to be created. For this reason dramatic collision is rightly regarded as the foundation of dramaturgy.

3. The System of Conflicts in the Tragedy

3.1. The feud and the love of the young lovers

From the very beginning of *Romeo and Juliet* we encounter the ancient struggle between the Capulet and Montague families. The subject of the play, however, is not war. It is the love that arises because the children of two warring houses fall in love with each other, and it is love that takes the leading place. The main conflict of the tragedy is formed by the inherited enmity between the two families, and this contradiction is set against the pure love of two young hearts. As a result, the sharp opposition of love and hatred creates the dramatic force of the play.

The opposition is stated in the very first scene, in which a quarrel between servants of the two houses grows into a street brawl that the Prince is forced to stop. It is expressed in the oxymorons that Romeo, still in love with Rosaline, pours out at the beginning of the play (“O brawling love, O loving hate”, 1.1), and it acquires its personal form in Juliet’s cry on learning the identity of the young man she has just met: “My only love sprung from my only hate!” (1.5). The lovers’ situation is thus formulated as a paradox: the object of the deepest attachment belongs to the family that must be hated.

3.2. Family, generation and society

The conflict is manifested not only in external events but also in the inner experience of the heroes. In their love Romeo and Juliet oppose family custom and the views of society. Their love expresses the purity and sincerity of human feeling, while the enmity between the families reveals the tragic consequences of outdated attitudes in society. The play develops this opposition through a series of secondary conflicts. Juliet's father, who at first tells Paris that his daughter should be allowed time to choose, later insists that she marry him within days and threatens to disown her when she refuses (3.5). The Nurse, who has helped the lovers, advises Juliet to forget Romeo and marry Paris, so that Juliet is left without any confidant among the members of her household. The generation gap is here a real element of the conflict: the world of the old, governed by inherited hostility and by property interests, confronts the world of the young, governed by feeling.

Violence is represented by Tybalt and Mercutio. The death of Mercutio, who curses both houses with the words "A plague o' both your houses!" (3.1), and Romeo's revenge on Tybalt turn the private love story into a public catastrophe and lead directly to Romeo's banishment. In this way the external conflict of the families irrevocably enters the intimate sphere of the lovers.

3.3. Inner conflict and the problem of fate

Alongside the external conflicts, the tragedy also depicts collisions in the consciousness of the characters. Juliet's soliloquy before she drinks the potion offered by Friar Laurence (4.3) shows an inner struggle in which fear of the tomb and of a possible betrayal is overcome by her determination to remain faithful to her husband. Romeo's reaction to the false news of Juliet's death, "Then I defy you, stars!" (5.1), expresses a moment at which the hero rejects the idea of fate as an external force and takes the decisive step himself. The tragedy is therefore not reducible to the working of blind destiny. The feud, the haste of young passion, the

ill-fated coincidence of the undelivered letter and the individual decisions of the characters combine to produce the catastrophe.

4. Inversion in the Composition of the Play

Sometimes a play begins with inversion, that is, the outcome of the conflict is shown in advance, before the action starts. The primary function of inversion is usually to attract the spectator from the very beginning and to arouse interest in seeing how the play will end. In the prologue of *Romeo and Juliet* the sonnet spoken by the Chorus announces that "a pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life" from the "fatal loins" of the two enemy houses, and speaks of "the fearful passage of their death-mark'd love" (Prologue). The fatal ending of the love is thus told before the first scene begins.

In this case, however, inversion serves a purpose other than the mere anticipation of later events. Because the audience knows the end, the interest of the spectator shifts from the question "what will happen?" to the question "how and why will it happen?" Each moment of happiness is felt through the shadow of the catastrophe, and each speech of the lovers is heard with a dramatic irony that intensifies its emotional effect. Parting is "such sweet sorrow" for Juliet (2.2) in a sense that the audience understands more deeply than she does. The prologue also names a cause for the catastrophe: it is the enmity of the parents that, as the Chorus says, only the death of their children could remove. Inversion in this play is therefore not only a compositional device, but a means of expressing the play's central idea, the cost of social hatred.

5. Poetic Devices and the Language of Love

Shakespeare's style has its own rhythm and tone. In *Romeo and Juliet* he makes productive use of sharp depiction and unrepeatable comparisons, and the tragedy, although it ends in disaster, can be regarded as one of the most beautiful songs about love. The language of the play is remarkably varied. The lovers' first meeting is built on a shared sonnet in which religious imagery of pilgrimage and shrine is used to

express the birth of feeling (1.5), so that the poetic form itself expresses the harmony of the two hearts in the midst of a hostile environment.

Imagery of light and darkness pervades the tragedy. On seeing Juliet, Romeo says that "she doth teach the torches to burn bright" (1.5), and in the balcony scene, "It is the east, and Juliet is the sun" (2.2). Such comparisons transfer the beloved to the level of cosmic phenomena and thereby raise the private feeling to the level of universal experience. At the same time the imagery of light is set against that of night, secrecy and death, so that the poetic language repeats on its own plane the conflict between love and the hostile world.

The motif of the sea voyage, too, is used to express the strength of feeling. Answering Juliet's doubts about his safety, Romeo declares:

I am no pilot; yet, wert thou as far
As that vast shore wash'd with the farthest sea,
I would adventure for such merchandise. (2.2)

Here the language of merchants and navigators is used to state that the beloved is of a value that justifies any risk. The images of love in the play are, as a whole, pure and true, and love itself is presented as something that remains alive even when the lovers have died. It is on this poetic level that the tragedy makes its statement that the feeling is stronger than the hatred that destroys the lovers.

6. The Psychology of the Characters

The characters of the tragedy develop under the pressure of the conflict. Romeo appears at the beginning as a conventional lover, sighing over the unresponsive Rosaline in the language of literary fashion. The meeting with Juliet changes him, and the change is confirmed in the shift of his speech from conventional formulae to direct and concentrated expression. Juliet, still not fourteen, develops even more quickly. From an obedient daughter who answers her mother's question about marriage with dutiful politeness, she becomes a person who makes independent decisions, deceives her family, and is prepared to risk her life for her chosen

husband. The rapid maturing of the two is one of the play's most striking psychological features.

The secondary characters are also drawn with psychological precision. Friar Laurence, who hopes that the marriage of the lovers may reconcile the two families, embodies a well-meaning but fatally hasty mediation. Mercutio's wit and his readiness for a quarrel represent the energy of a society in which honour is defended with the sword, and Tybalt represents the inflexible spirit of the feud. Through such characters Shakespeare shows that the conflict is not the fault of one person: it is a social condition in which everyone participates.

7. The Tragic Essence of Love

The final scene demonstrates the meaning of the tragedy most clearly. Romeo, believing Juliet dead, takes poison at her tomb; Juliet, waking to find him dead, stabs herself. Only at this price do the fathers reconcile and agree to raise golden statues in memory of the lovers. The Prince's closing couplet, "For never was a story of more woe / Than this of Juliet and her Romeo" (5.3), gives the play its final emotional tone. The reconciliation does not undo the loss; it reveals to the survivors the price of their hostility.

The tragedy of love in this play is not the tragedy of an unattainable feeling but that of a feeling that is realized fully and purely in a world unable to receive it. This gives the work its lasting force. The conflict, the composition and the poetic imagery are united by a single idea: that human happiness is destroyed by hatred inherited from previous generations, and that only the sacrifice of the young makes people aware of this. Since this idea is not confined to one time or place, the tragedy has retained its artistic value for centuries.

8. Conclusion

William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is one of the highest examples of world dramaturgy. In the work, dramatic conflict, poetic imagery and artistic means of expression are applied harmoniously, and the tragic essence of love is deeply

illuminated. The conflict operates on several levels: between the feuding families, between the generations, between the lovers and society, and within the consciousness of the heroes. The inversion of the prologue transforms suspense into dramatic irony and helps to express the central idea of the work, while the poetic imagery of light, sea and sacred devotion makes the love of the lovers a symbol of the highest human feeling.

Through the images of Romeo and Juliet the purity of human feeling is revealed, along with the destructive consequences of enmity and hatred in society. Shakespeare's artistic skill consists in his having raised an ordinary love story to the level of a universal tragedy, which is why *Romeo and Juliet* has lived for centuries without losing its artistic value as a rare jewel of world literature.

References

Bloom, H. (1998). *Shakespeare: The invention of the human*. New York: Riverhead Books.

Gibbons, B. (Ed.). (1980). *Romeo and Juliet* (The Arden Shakespeare, 2nd series). London: Methuen.

Hotamov, N., & Sarimsoqov, B. (1983). *Adabiyotshunoslik terminlarining ruscha-o'zbekcha izohli lug'ati* [Russian-Uzbek explanatory dictionary of literary terms]. Tashkent.

Jalilov, B. (1984). *O'zbek dramaturgiyasi poetikasi masalalari* [Problems of the poetics of Uzbek dramaturgy]. Tashkent.

Khalizev, V. E. (1986). *Drama kak rod literatury (poetika, genezis, funktsionirovanie)* [Drama as a literary genus: Poetics, genesis, functioning]. Moscow: Moscow University Press.

Shakespeare, W. (2001). *Romeo va Julyetta* [Romeo and Juliet]. Tashkent: G'afur G'ulom Publishing House.

Weis, R. (Ed.). (2012). *Romeo and Juliet* (The Arden Shakespeare, 3rd series). London: Bloomsbury.