



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol. 4. Issue.2., 2017 (April-June)

ISSN

INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

**REAL-SELF TO IDEALIZED- SELF: TRACING THE LATE ADOLESCENT CHANGE IN
ATTITUDES AND GROWTH OF SHAKESPEARE'S PSYCHE IN WRITING CLIMAXES FROM
OTHELLO TO THE WINTER'S TALE**

D. WILFIN JOHN

M.Phil. English Lit., St. John's College, Palayamkottai
pr.devaasirvatham@rediffmail.com



D. WILFIN JOHN

ABSTRACT

When a reader gets to read a writer's complete works, the growth of the writer's psyche, especially his varied opinion and change in attitudes with reference to his handling of similar subject matter in different works, can easily be traced. According to Professor Edward Dowden's classification of Shakespeare's plays, *Othello* is classified under the four main tragedies, while *The Winter's Tale* is classified under Shakespeare's late romance plays. Though Shakespeare handles the same subject matter 'Infidelity' in the two plays, the scenes leading to the climax differs in both. In a sense, *The Winter's Tale* can be claimed as a re-writing of *Othello* because of the writer's handling of similar subject in both the plays. A psychoanalytical approach is therefore needed in order to justify that it was Shakespeare's intention of re-writing the climax scene of *Othello* in the later play *The Winter's Tale*, where Hermione comes alive at last and lives happily with her husband Liones. Shakespeare might have changed his opinion of punishing an innocent victim, Desdemona, blamed of infidelity, in his former play *Othello*, where she is given a death penalty. This research paper attempts to prove that the growth of Shakespeare's psyche, his change in attitudes, and the experience and wisdom he gathered throughout his life, helped him in the development of his personality from his domain *Real- Self* to seek an *Idealized-Self* and thereby re-designing the character of innocent Desdemona into Hermione and giving her a happy life to live with her husband at last.

Key-Words: Infidelity, Attitudes, Domain, Psycho-analysis, etc.

The man who never alters his opinion is like standing water, and breeds reptiles of the mind— **William Blake**

According to theory of personality types developed by John L. Holland an American psychologist, individuals who show social interest or share a cooperative behavior with others to achieve their personal as well as social goals are said to be Social-Personality type. These Social personalities share a closest environment with "Artistic" type and "Enterprising" type persons. When Shakespeare's personality is taken into consideration for analysis, he can be studied on the basis of social type person, an Artist, or even an

Enterpriser type. The mixed emotions that Shakespeare had handled in his literary works and his Judgmental attitude towards his characters proves Shakespeare as a unique all rounder personality. However the environment in which Shakespeare had lived also had contributed to his personal achievement. Hence Shakespeare may no doubt be called a Social- personality type.

In Erik Erikson's theory of stages of psycho-sexual development, he believed that the outcome of one stage is not permanent but may be modified later according to the experience and wisdom the individual gathers from his environment. This can be further applied to Shakespeare's personality; the adolescent Shakespeare differs from the adult, and again differs in his late adulthood stages. The psycho-social crisis that Shakespeare had had faced with his environment in each stages is reflected in his works of art. Shakespeare's possession of knowledge about his environment and his proper study of mankind helped him to form the proper body of fact needful to become a successful artist. Hence it is important to analyze Shakespeare's Self which Sigmund Freud calls as 'psyche'. The study of 'Self' deals with the cognitive as well as affective state of human psyche, where the former deals with the knowledge, experience, wisdom, etc. while the latter deals with feelings and emotions.

Karen Horney a German psychoanalyst and a follower of Freud in several aspects believed the concept of "Self" as the core of one's potential and further stated that the accuracy of one's conception of his Self helps in the realization of one's potential within reasonable boundaries. She viewed "Self" as 'real' and 'Ideal' and stated that the former is what one actually is, and the later is what one wants to be. The Ideal-Self in a person helps him develop his potentiality to reach a level of Self-Actualization which is the core achievement of Human living. From her words the real self is "... common to all human beings and yet unique in each, which is the deep source of growth." (17). She also argued that the reason for a person developing an Ideal image in himself is because of his aversion to real self.

A person builds up an idealized image of himself because he cannot tolerate himself as he actually is. The image apparently counteracts this calamity; but having placed himself on a pedestal, he can tolerate his real self still less and starts to rage against it, to despise himself and to chafe under the yoke of his own unattainable demands upon himself. (112)

When Shakespeare's Real- Self is analyzed the domination of several psycho-social crises like intimacy, isolation, stagnation, etc. because of his early love relationship, work and parenthood can be traced. His early plays show the struggle between self-will and reason, between "blood" and "judgment" (Dowden 47), between intelligence and wit, between human anguish and human joy, etc and also his setting of wit and fancy in his early writing can be observed. But Shakespeare was not stagnant but an updating personality, through his 'Creative-Self' he was able to reach the level of Idealized Self and thereby become a Self- Actualized person.

Alfred Adler an Austrian psychotherapist believed personality as Self- created. His concept of Creative self-attempts to prove further that every individual have freedom to act, determine his fate, determine his personality and his style of life and he cannot blame others or any other force for his present condition. Creative power of the self is primarily an essential quality in human life which gradually shapes one's personality and destinies. According to him the individual "...uses his own 'creative' way in building up his attitude toward life". (206)

The establishment of Shakespeare's freedom as an artist helped him to discover the more awful and mysterious darkness, and the more intense and lovelier light inside human psyche. As a person out of state of transition from his adulthood stage to ripping manhood stage instead of being crusted over by the contact with the world and losing the emotional energy Shakespeare grew in imagination, thought, wisdom, mirth, charity, and experience. Years developed his power of thought to confront with the dreadful past and gave him Self-control to differentiate the actual process of human anguish and human joy. As Shakespeare penetrated farther and farther deep into the actual facts of human life, he obtained at the end the serene and indefeasible possession of himself. In all his later plays his 'Self' is intently fixed upon the deep in soluble questions suggested by every human character and destiny.

Carl Rogers an American humanistic psychologist believed that the role of environment is necessary in shaping every personality. He also believed in Abraham Maslow's concept of "Self-Actualization" and further

elaborated the part of environment with 'genuineness', 'acceptance', and 'empathy' giving people the way of congruence to reach their potential. Rogers also described the Self-Actualizing person as the full functioning person who are continually growing and changing. According to him the self-actualization occurs when a person's Ideal self is congruent with his actual behavior and his subjective experience and feelings are continually growing and changing.

The creative thinking and risk taking are important features or characteristics of fulfilled person. Such person gets the ability to adjust, change and seek new experiences. Full filled persons always look for new challenges and experiences. Roger's central notion in his personality theory is the concept of 'Self'. What Horney defined as 'real-self' was named as 'Self-image' by Rogers. He further believed that a state of congruence exists if a person's self-image and ideal self are consistent. When they did not harmonize they are likely to affect the self-esteem of a person. Rogers viewed Ideal self as a creation out of life time experience, societal demands, and admiration for predecessors while Real-self as the negatives, positives, attributes, and characteristics in every personality.

Shakespeare's transition from his Real-self to Ideal-self happened during the later part of his adulthood stage and his last plays purely explains his transition. In order to further trace his change in attitude, his change in Judgment of characters, the two plays *Othello* and *The Winter's tale* are taken into consideration for analysis. The both play deals with the similar theme of 'Infidelity' and hence it is easy to argue that Shakespeare's change in his opinion in his later play is because of his change in 'Self'. In the plays, Shakespeare had carefully constructed each plot and had given free spaces of situation for his men (*Othello* and *Leontes*) to develop rage and sexual jealousy, while he had restricted the areas of space for his women characters especially *Desdemona* and *Hermione* to prove their love and respect to their husbands. In both the plays *Desdemona* and *Hermione* were portrayed much only by the male characters while they do not have enough dialogues or conversation with their husband or with other characters to show off their real nature. Shakespeare had portrayed *Desdemona* through *Othello's* image of her as 'gentle', "A fine woman! A fair woman! A sweet woman." (IV.i.175-176), while she does not have her own identity to express herself in the play. This may be because Shakespeare was himself aware of his preference for dominating women characters in his early plays, so as compensation to the weak role played by men characters in his early plays like *Twelfth Night*, *Merchant of Venice*, and *Measure for measure*, etc. Shakespeare gave dominating role to his male characters in his later plays. Even after his powerful male characters in the later plays, his later successors like Dr. Johnson and John Ruskin criticized his plays that "He had no heroes."

However, Shakespeare had given the prime action to his men in these two plays and portrayed their character in a way that both the protagonist does not listen to any woman even their wife's justifications. They were convinced only by their own knowledge and what they felt within them. *Leontes* calls *Hermione* as "an adulterous"(II.i.77) conceived with the child of *Polixenes*, his former friend. Similarly *Othello* suspects *Desdamona* of adultery with *Cassio*, his lieutenant. He even accuses his wife to *Emilia* her servant maid that: "She turned to folly, and she was a whore." (V.ii.131). Shakespeare had made his male character in both the plays immortal by exaggerating the quality of arrogance and bumptiousness in them. His tragic heroes especially *Othello* and *Leontes* are person with supreme ego justifying their actions and deeds but not responding to the words of their woman. *Iago* after abusing *Othello's* mind tries to play the innocent instigator by consoling *Othello* about his plans for killing *Desdemona*. He cunningly induce him by saying "Patience, I say. Your mind may change". But *Othello* replies him immediately in his full rage that "Never, *Iago*...my bloody thought, with violent pace, shall nev'r look back, nev'r ebb to humble love, till that a capable and wide revenge swallow them up" (III. iii. 449-450, 454-457). Similarly in *The Winter's Tale*, *Paulina* the maid servant tries her best level to unite *Hermione* with *Leontes* by announcing the birth of his daughter "For she is good, hath brought you forth a daughter: Here it is; commends it to your blessing", but *Leontes* replies in an egoistic attitude: "A mankind witch! Hence with her, out o' door: A most intelligencing bawd!" (II.iii.65-68). Harold Bloom observes both the heroes to be paranoiac. The sexual jealousy in *Leontes* surpass the behavior in *Othello* and he defines *Leontes* as "He is his own *Iago*"(10), which implies to the serious trauma that *Othello*

was abused to some extent by Iago while Leontes completely resembled the image of Iago. This further proves the Real-Self of his male characters as well as the Real-Self of Shakespeare himself.

But on the other hand Shakespeare with his creative-self goes even to the extreme of idealizing the women characters with a quality of innocence such that even at their difficult situation they expressed love and affection to their husband and not revolted nor argued against them. Desdemona goes to the extreme of even lying about the cause of her death to save her husband.

Emilia. Oh, who hath done this deed?

Desdemona. Nobody; I myself. Farewell

Commend me to my kind lord. Oh, farewell!(5.2.128)

Similarly in *The Winter's Tale* when Leontes imprisons Hermione, she tells him "I never wished you to see you sorry" (II.i.123). Observing this Prof. Edward Dowden writes that "Shakespeare creates his women by a single strong or exquisite inspiration; but he studies men"(110). Almost in all last plays of Shakespeare one can observe the women characters are almost to the advantage of the men. Though the actual Characterization in both the plays and situations are same, the climax part of both the plays is very unique that one ends in tragedy and other ends in joy and happiness. In order to understand the reason behind it, a psycho-historical study of Shakespeare's works and life is therefore needed.

As Shakespeare source for all his plays were relied from the outside world. His source for *Othello*, principally rely on Giraldi Cinthio's *Hecatommithi* of 1565/6 (Honigmann 3). But Shakespeare modified quite a lot changes from his source. Sanders observes Honigmann's comparison of the original source and Shakespeare's version and defines "The changes made by Shakespeare to his source text, demonstrate his ability to create three-dimensional characters, developing Cinthio's stereotypes of men and women, who function merely as plot devices, into fully-rounded characters with whom we are encouraged to empathise" (Norman Sanders 29). In Cinthio's version the heroine is murdered by Ensign (Iago) and the moor (Othello) is banished from Venice, but Shakespeare kills both his character in the final scene. Prof. Dowden after clearly observing the psycho-social crisis encountered by Shakespeare writes that the period from 1601-1608 was the most crucial period in the life of Shakespeare, his father's death in 1601 and the execution of Earl of Essex for treason by Elizabeth and with the same charge Earl of Southampton was send to tower too. As they were patronizing Shakespeare he was even said to have had suspected of that charge. Naturally that had a great impact over Shakespeare's psyche and the plays written during those periods were almost great tragedies like *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth* etc.

The Winter's Tale which is said to be the last of Shakespeare's plays is based on the work of Robert Greene, who commented Shakespeare as an 'Upstart crow, beautified with our feathers' in his work *Groatsworth of Wit* in 1592. Marking this Lois Potter crucially commented Shakespeare that "he was stealing from the dead" (279). Some critics suggested that Shakespeare's handling of Greene's novel may be an act of vengeance or as an act of forgiving. But Robert Greene was not alive when Shakespeare wrote *The Winter's Tale*. Similarly in Greene's novel the heroine dies and the father, who longs for his lost daughter, feels sorry for his past and tries to commit suicide. But it was Shakespeare to change the subject and bring a state of congruence to the separated family and unite them together. Historically the period from 1609-1613 in Shakespeare's life is remarked for its calm strength and sweetness. His mother's death in 1608 gained Shakespeare wisdom about the reality of life. It had filled him with compassion, love and forgiveness which were reflected in last plays as that of *Cymbeline*, *The winter's Tale*, and *Tempest*. The remorse and vengeance revealed in *Macbeth*, *Othello* all resolved and peace filled in his heart. Commenting on his late adolescent period Prof. Dowden defined as:

Shakespeare still thought of the graver trials and tests which life applies to human character, of the wrongs which man inflicts on man; but his present temper demanded not a tragic issue,—it rather demanded an issue into joy or peace. The dissonance must be resolved into a harmony, clear and rapturous, or solemn and profound. And, accordingly, in each of these plays, *The Winter's Tale*, *Cymbeline*, *The Tempest*, while grievous errors of the heart are shown to us, and wrongs of man to man as cruel as those of the great tragedies, at the end there is a resolution of the dissonance, a reconciliation (406)

The writing of Shakespeare in his last plays is more refined and serene. The naivety in him no more existed as Shakespeare studied carefully the injuries of man to man which are irreparable. He attained a balanced state of Sagacity to reach the Ideal-self there by enriching his views on life and art no more on evil and tragedy but with joy and peace. But Shakespeare was also well aware of the pinnacles and troughs in life. His creative-self did not allow him to create an art reflecting only fantasies, but he wanted his imagination to do something which should be a mere reflection of human life. This can be noticed very well in his later play *The Winter's Tale* where the opening acts sets the play into more complications resembling the real life situations and Shakespeare's real-self. But towards the climax the Idealized-self of Shakespeare works out as everything is reconciled and resolved. Shakespeare with his Idealized-self might have felt as if like a true philosopher and a true master in writing climaxes for all his last plays. He no more wanted to treat his characters with partiality. His Idealized-Self helped him to change his attitude towards the treatment of his characters not anymore to suffer and degenerate. It also enhanced Shakespeare to make his characters celebrate and enjoy the festivity of his retirement as a playwright thereby bringing a state of congruence among the characters. Thus the climax scene in *The Winter's Tale* is very unique which shows Shakespeare's brilliant craftsmanship to bring harmony into the separated hearts by uniting them at last. Hermione's reunion with her husband and the resurrection scene especially is purposefully written by Shakespeare in order to prove his wisdom over life and art. Further his change in attitude, his psychic growth and his Idealized-Self helped him to re-design the character of innocent Desdemona into Hermione and giving her a happy life to live with her husband at last. Thus Shakespeare's personality finally achieved a state of Self-Actualization.

WORKS CITED

- [1]. Adler, Alfred. "The use of hereditary and environment." *The individual psychology of Alfred Adler*. Ed. H.L. Ansbacher & R.R. Ansbacher. New York: Basic Books. 1956. Print.
 - [2]. Shakespeare, William. *Othello*. New York: EMC/ Paradigm publishing .2005. Print.
 - [3]. Shakespeare, Williams. *The winter's Tale*. UK: Richard clay ltd. 1967. Print.
 - [4]. Bloom, Harold. *Bloom's Shakespeare through Ages: The Winter's Tale*. New York: 2010. Print.
 - [5]. Boyce, Charles. *Critical Companion to William Shakespeare: A Literary Reference to his life and works*. N.Y: Facts on File, Inc. 2005. Print
 - [6]. Dowden, Edward. *Shakespeare: A Critical study of his mind and art*. U.K: Cambridge University Press. 2009. Print.
 - [7]. Honigmann, E. A. J. 'Introduction' in William Shakespeare, *Othello*. London: The Arden Shakespeare. 1997. Print.
 - [8]. Horney, K. *Neurosis and human growth: The struggle toward self-realization*. New York: Norton. 1950. Print.
 - [9]. Potter, Lois. *The Life of William Shakespeare*. U.K: John Wiley and sons ltd. 2012. Print.
-