



A CRITICAL EXPLORATION OF LOVE AND DEATH FOR FAMILY RECONCILIATION THROUGH *ROMEO AND JULIET* BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Alidou Razakou Ibourahima Boro

raziaah.arib@gmail.com

Université de Parakou, Benin

ABSTRACT

Family is one of the most important cells for any human being. We spend most of our lifetime in a family receiving care and love from its members. They are often there for us for any kind of trouble or any happy event. In case of misunderstanding, not only family could be harmful, but its involvement may be destructive. In case of love affairs, family opposition could lead to death. I decided to focus my work on *Romeo and Juliet* by the famous English writer William Shakespeare. The main purpose of this paper is to show how strong true love is and put a stress on its importance for peace and reconciliation. To achieve this work, I have used psychoanalysis which deals with a work of literature primarily as an expression, in fictional form, of the personality, state of mind, feelings, and desires of its author. It helps me to explain and portray some conflicts between the Montagues and the Capulets through the behaviors of some characters through the play. It also has been useful when putting a stress on how powerful romantic love might be. As a result, I come to the conclusion that love is magic. It can contribute to happiness and joy in a family. In case of misunderstanding, love can be destructive not only for the lovers but for the entire family as well.

Keywords: Exploration, Love and Death, Reconciliation, *Romeo and Juliet*, William Shakespeare.

RESUME

La famille est l'une des cellules les plus importantes pour tout être humain. Nous passons la majeure partie de notre vie dans une famille recevant les soins et l'amour de ses membres. Ils sont souvent là pour nous pour tout type de problème ou tout événement heureux. En cas d'incompréhension, non seulement la famille peut être nocive, mais son implication peut être destructrice. En cas d'histoires d'amour, l'opposition familiale pourrait conduire à la mort. J'ai décidé de concentrer mon travail sur *Roméo et Juliette* du célèbre écrivain anglais William Shakespeare. Le but principal de cet article est de montrer à quel point le véritable amour est fort et de mettre l'accent sur son importance pour la paix et la réconciliation. Pour réaliser ce travail, j'ai utilisé la psychanalyse qui traite une œuvre littéraire principalement comme une expression, sous forme fictive, de la personnalité, de l'état d'esprit, des sentiments et des désirs de son auteur. Cela m'aide à expliquer et à dépeindre certains conflits entre les Montaigu et les Capulet à travers les comportements de certains personnages à travers la pièce. Cela a également été utile pour mettre l'accent sur la puissance de l'amour romantique. En conséquence, j'en viens à la conclusion que l'amour est magique. Il peut contribuer au bonheur et à la joie dans une famille. En cas de malentendu, l'amour peut être destructeur non seulement pour les amoureux mais aussi pour toute la famille.

Mots-clés : Amour et Mort, Réconciliation familiale, *Roméo et Juliette*, William Shakespeare.

INTRODUCTION

Love is the foundation upon which God created the universe, and which consists of loving, accepting your fellow human being as yourself. But to some extent, love is clarified as a set of emotions and behaviors characterized by intimacy, passion, and commitment. It involves care, closeness, protectiveness, attraction, affection, and trust. Love can vary in intensity and can change over time. Love which should normally be taken with sincerity, straightforwardness, today has become a game for many people. True love is getting rare and rare. More stress is put on financial capacity and the materialistic power. Still, true love exists and true lovers are sometimes ready to sacrifice their life for each other. William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is a good illustration of true lovers' story. It is true the story ends up with a tragedy but one can put at its credit that it helped bury down the conflicts between the Montagues and the Capulets.

For the purpose of this study, I went through books and articles related to the issue of true love and its implications. I illustrated some of my comments and analysis using psychoanalysis theory. The main purpose of this paper is to show how strong true love is and put a stress on its importance for peace and reconciliation. The study focuses on the supreme sacrifices of the main protagonists Juliet and Romeo.

1. Study Method and Theoretical Framework

To carry out this research, I first used the script play of *Romeo and Juliet* itself. The other data source includes books and other data that have relationship with the research, such as commentaries and other relevant information. I also went through the Internet to find out the information linked to my topic.

Romeo and Juliet, published in 1597, is an important work of William Shakespeare during the sixteenth century. The novel was published during the Renaissance. In effect, the renaissance movement did not necessarily reject the idea of God, but rather questioned the relationship of humankind to God - an idea that caused an unprecedented upheaval in the accepted social hierarchy. It was characterized by the innovations of things in arts in literature where people were promoting the renewal of Greek tradition.

During this period, rival nobles' houses existed within that frame, and their actions disturbed the local peace in Italy. People were divided, and a lot of jealousy and tyranny existed. In the play, rivalry and enmity are all displayed, reflecting this historic frame and conflicts, war between families were pushing people to commit

crime by killing their fellow human beings. People were also dying from plague and this has led William Shakespeare to emphasize its relevance for his audience. The reading of this novel first caught my eye on the notion of marriage and conflict through the different characters of the novel. Love, conflict and death all the time going together. The message conveyed by the author dates back to 1597 in his tragedy, and this is still a reality that happens most of the time between some families in our time by portraying the different conflicts and love lived by the main characters.

In psychoanalysis, love is viewed as utterance of a psychic inflexible and almost impervious to external world. To achieve this work, I used psychoanalysis. It has been useful because it helps me to better understand the relationships between the main characters and the why of the behaviours in the play. According to Sigmund Freud, Georges Simmel, Hegel, Nietzsche "people get involved in a conflict or living in a conflict within their own their own psychic strong emotion state: anger, frustration, sadness sometimes aggression and violence. While psychoanalysis is the study of the mind and human behavior, study of mental and emotional process.

Sigmund Freud was the first psychoanalyst and a right innovator in the recognition of the importance of unconscious mental activity. His theories on the inner workings of the human mind, which seemed so revolutionary at the turn of the century, are now widely accepted by most schools of psychological thought. In 1896, Freud coined the term „psychoanalysis“, and for the next forty years of his life, he worked on thoroughly developing its main principles, objectives, techniques, and methodology (Dr Seguedeme, H., & Towa-Sello, K. (2017).

More importantly, the mind and human behavior theory has helped me to understand the root causes of the conflicts between Romeo and Juliet's families. The two young lovers are innocent and even ignore the causes of their families' troubles but they are the victims of the tragedy.

2. Study Results

Romeo and Juliet is a play by William Shakespeare one of the most prolific writers during the Elizabethan and Jacobean ages of British theatre sometimes called the English Renaissance or the Early Modern Period. The play is mainly about an age-old vendetta between two powerful families erupt into bloodshed. A group of masked Montagues risk further conflict by gatecrashing a Capulet party. A young lovesick Romeo Montague falls instantly in love with Juliet Capulet, who is due to marry her father's choice, County Paris. With the help of Juliet's nurse, the women arrange for the couple to marry the next day, but Romeo's attempt to halt a street fight leads to the death of Juliet's own cousin, Tybalt, for which Romeo is banished. In a desperate attempt to be reunited with Romeo, Juliet follows the Friar's plot and fakes her own

death. The message fails to reach Romeo, and believing Juliet dead, he takes his life in her tomb. Juliet wakes to find Romeo's corpse beside her and kills herself. The grieving family agree to end their feud¹.

Romeo and Juliet is the most famous love story in the English literary tradition. Love is naturally the play's dominant and most important theme. The play focuses on romantic love, specifically the intense passion that springs up at first sight between Romeo and Juliet. In *Romeo and Juliet*, love is a violent, ecstatic, overpowering force that supersedes all other values, loyalties, and emotions. G. Lipson & S. Lipson (2007) expressed that "of the 37 plays written by William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet* is the play that appeals most strongly to young people. Although the play belongs to another century, the conflicts in it are timeless. Both the consuming urgency of Romeo and Juliet's love and the ill-fated couple's defiance of their parents evoke a strong sense of identification from today's teenager."²

The related story in *Romeo and Juliet* is applicable in today's love stories. William Hazlitt in his work entitled *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays: Romeo and Juliet*, wrote "*Romeo and Juliet* drama was experimental for its time, it was well-received by contemporary audiences and remained popular through the centuries".

2.1. True Love Despite Family Opposition

According to APA Dictionary of Psychology, love means a complex yet basically integrated emotion involving strong feelings of affection and tenderness for the love object. Pleasurable sensations in his or her presence, devotion to his or her well-being and sensitivity to his or her reaction to oneself. Although love takes many forms, including concern for one's fellow humans parental love, erotic love, self-love, and identification with the totality of being (love of god), the triangular theory of love proposes three essential components: passion, intimacy and commitment. Social psychological research in this area has focused largely on passionate love, in which passion (sexual desire and excitement) is predominant and companionate love, in which passion is relatively weak and commitment is strong. Shakespeare's treatment of the concept of love is complex and multifaceted. Through different characters and relationships, he portrayed various types sentiments sometimes to choc and draw

¹ www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/shakespepedia/shakespeares-plays/romeo-and-juliet/

² Rahmatullah Katawazai, *A Critical Analysis of William Shakespeare's: Romeo and Juliet* <http://dx.doi.org/10.29322/IJSRP.8.10.2018.p8235> www.ijsrp.org

reader's attention. The Tragedy is structured in tragic manner that makes readers and audience cry. Most of the events in the play are as a chain of suspense till the end of it. The main protagonists are deeply infatuated with one another, so committed to being together that they defy their respective families. Romeo and Juliet's love could be considered as a matter of fate; their love is given a cosmic significance, which suggests that the universe plays a role in the creation of deep romantic love. Despite the opposition of their respective families, they irresistibly love each other to the supreme sacrifice. "Juliet: Prodigious birth of love it is to me. That I must love a loathed enemy" (Shakespeare 1595). Shakespeare presents their love as a force of nature, so strong that it transcends expectation and tradition. The two young men decide to commit suicides because they can't live one without the other. True love constantly runs into trouble. This is what Lysander explains to his beloved Hermia at the beginning of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*:

*Ay me! for aught that ever I could read,
/
Could ever hear by tale or history,
/
The course of true love never did run smooth,*

The lovers do not feel responsible for the misfortunes of true love. They see themselves as innocent victims of tyrannical parents, jealous friends and other unwanted meddlers. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is at one level the celebration of that myth and, at a deeper level, its humorous deconstruction.³

2.2. From true love to death and reconciliation

Romeo and Juliet is not only a story but also a play of extreme violence and death. The play begins and ends with violence, confusion, and chaos. These themes are brought on by the play's central concepts, which are love or passion, prejudice and pride, and power. These themes provoke and cause the violence that occurs within our "fair Verona". The whole play is punctuated with challenges, wars and deaths. The root causes of all this is the pride fight between the Capulets and the Montague's. The opening scene of the play itself emphasizes this feud and conflict in a community and society, set in Verona, creating such a serious situation that the Prince threatens death to anyone who disturbs the peace of the city again because of it. The love of Romeo and Juliet is therefore set within a world of hate created by their fathers' feud and in

³ René Girard (2007), *The passionate oxymoron in Romeo and Juliet* in Société Française Shakespeare.

the making, the families' feuds are directly responsible for the tragedies that follow in the play. The hatred and violence that is set up is in direct contrast to the love of Romeo and Juliet, and in the end they are victims of it, as the Prince points out at the end of the play: 'See what a scourge is laid upon your hate! / That heaven finds means to kill your joys with love ...' (Act 5, Sc 3) From the Prince's words, he treats the affair as a matter as karma, in that the 'scourge' or punishment is because of the families' 'hate'. He then associates the affair with 'heaven' to show that a supreme, natural is governing our lives, and as consequence of the families' hatred, heaven killed 'your joys'. But the Prince claims that it was 'love' that killed them, relating that it was the families' feud that destroyed them because they created a society where Capulets and Montagues did not mix, and they did not provide a peaceful atmosphere for the future generations, but dwelled upon old family problems.

The passionate love between Romeo and Juliet is linked from the moment of its inception with death: Tybalt notices that Romeo has crashed the feast and determines to kill him just as Romeo catches sight of Juliet and falls instantly in love with her. From that point on, love seems to push the lovers closer to love and violence, not farther from it. Romeo and Juliet are plagued with thoughts of suicide, and a willingness to experience it: in Act 3, scene 3, Romeo brandishes a knife in Friar Lawrence's cell and threatens to kill himself after he has been banished from Verona and his love. Juliet also pulls a knife in order to take her own life in Friar Lawrence's presence just three scenes later. After Capulet decides that Juliet will marry Paris, Juliet says, "If all else fail, myself have power to die" (3.5.242). Finally, each imagines that the other looks dead the morning after their first, and only, sexual experience ("Methinks I see thee," Juliet says, ". . . as one dead in the bottom of a tomb" (3.5.55-56)).⁴

When Love is true it becomes a defensible emotion worth to personal sacrifice. The conflicts between the two families leadsto a no contact pact between the two families set by the authorities of Verona. Despite this the two protagonist found ways to get regularly in touch and succeeded in getting secretly married. Romeo shows that he is truly in love with Juliet and that he is willing to do anything to be with her. Romeo's heart drives him to make, at times, irrational decisions to be with his Juliet. They are so young but so in love that they all are ready to any sacrifice for each other. The extreme violence and the inner family conflicts may be considered as the cause of their premature death. The two lovers die so young but their death contributed to end up the two families conflicts and brings reconciliation.

⁴www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/romeojuliet/themes/

CONCLUSION

In *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare presents the duality of love and death. The two concepts are part of human life. We all need love and lovers to give a meaning to our existence. Conflicts between lovers could positively or negatively impact not only their lives but it can also destroy an entire family life. The war between the Montague and the Capulets is the main reason for all the conflicts and the tragic end of the main protagonists. Many people die because of the pride and useless war of their families. Through the character of Romeo and Juliet I come to understand that true love exists and that it could lead to disaster. Romeo and Juliet passed away but their sacrifice has contributed to unify their families. Shakespeare's play is written and published centuries ago, the messages and the narrated story are still of great interest for the new generation.

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