"SASTRA DAN LINGUISTIK"

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THE MYTH OF SISYPHUS
(Soleman Onggo Sanusi)

'LOVE IS BLIND?'
(Peter Angkasa)

ANALYSIS OF VIEWS OF DEATH
IN FOUR OF PHILIP FRENEAU'S POEMS
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L'ECRITURE FEMININE AND THE INVENTION
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THE SITUATION OF BEING A WOMAN:
MARGARET DRABBLE'S THE GARRICK YEAR
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'LOVE IS BLIND?' *

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ABSTRACT

This study elaborates love in William Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet. It focuses on how Shakespeare reveals his idea about love through the two protagonists, Romeo and Juliet. In this study, an attempt is made to compare Shakespeare’s concept of love to the definitions of love from two dictionaries and other themes of love revealed through novels, plays, poems and so forth. Although the title of the study is ‘Love is blind?’; the topic is actually: ‘What is Love?’

KEYWORDS:
love in Romeo and Juliet, love in novels, plays, poems.

I. INTRODUCTION

‘LOVE IS BLIND?’ is the title of this article. Why is it necessary for us to put this very common expression between quotation marks? Billions of people all over the world may have said the same thing in their own languages without knowing that it was not written by an anonymous writer. As a matter of fact, it was written by the Bard, William Shakespeare of Stratford-on-Avon, in his famous poetic drama entitled The Merchant of Venice, a comedy which was written in approximately 1600. In the play, Jessica, who is deeply in love with Lorenzo, has stolen a casket containing jewelries and money belonging to her father, Shylock, the rich Jewish miser. Jessica has planned to elope with Lorenzo. Shakespeare’s “Love is blind” is found in the following episode:

JESSICA

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Lorenzo, certain, and my love indeed;
For who love I so much? And now who knows
But you Lorenzo I am yours?

LORENZO

Heaven and thy thoughts are witness that thou art.

JESSICA

Here, catch this casket; it is worth the pains.
I am glad this night – you do not look on me –
For I am much ashamed of my exchange;
But love is blind, and lovers cannot see
The pretty follies that themselves commit,
For if they could, Cupid himself would blush
To see me thus transfigured to a boy. (II. VI. 29-39)

Although Shakespeare has written a great number of poems on love and its beauty and in spite of the fact that ‘Love is blind’ is written in *The Merchant of Venice*, I would rather discuss his love in *Romeo and Juliet* and love in other literary works. Prior to the discussion, however, I would like to reveal what love is according to two dictionaries. *The New Lexicon Webster’s Dictionary of the English Language* defines love as ‘a powerful emotion felt for another person, manifesting itself in deep affection, devotion or sexual desire’, while according to *The Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English*, love is ‘a warm, kind feeling between two persons of opposite sex’.

Two things will be discussed in this study:

1. What does Shakespeare say about love in the tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet*?
2. What is love?

**II.1. LOVE IN ROMEO AND JULIET**

To understand fully what love in *Romeo and Juliet* is, one should surely know the story well. One should at least be acquainted with the exposition of the play. Is Juliet Romeo’s first sweet-heart? In the exposition, Romeo has fallen in love with Rosaline, a Capulet, who is considered an enemy by his family, the Montagues. Rosaline, who also
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loves Romeo and realizes that it is impossible for them to be united in marriage, has sworn never to marry. Romeo is broken-hearted. The lovesick Romeo is extremely moody. He wants to be alone and has decided to seek out a hiding place where there would not be a crowd of people. He desires to be alone so much that even his own company is too much for him. Romeo's mother, Lady Montague, is looking for him in vain. She asks Benvolio, Montague's nephew who is Romeo's friend, where Romeo is: 'O where is Romeo? Saw you him to-day?'

Benvolio tells her that Romeo was under a sycamore tree and it seemed that he wanted to shun anyone, as the following excerpt reveals:

Madam, an hour before the worshipped sun
Peered forth the golden window of the east,
A troubled mind drive me to walk abroad,
Where, underneath the grove of sycamore
That westward rooteth from this city side,
So early walking did I see your son.
Toward him I made, but he was ware of me.
And stole into the covert of the wood.
(I. i. 111-116)

Romeo, whose love is unrequited, is really sorrowful. His profound sorrow is very well illustrated through Montague's speech:

Many a morning hath he there been seen,
With tears augmenting the fresh morning's dew,
Adding to clouds more clouds with his deep sighs;
But all so soon as the all-cheering sun
Should in the farthest east begin to draw
The shady curtains from Aurora's bed,
Away from light steals home my heavy son,
And private in his chamber pens himself,
Shuts up his windows, locks fair daylight out,
And makes himself an artificial night.
Black and portentous must this humour prove,
Unless good counsel may the cause remove.
The lovesick Romeo has lost all sense of time. He feels that time passes awfully slowly. The playwright depicts the fact very vividly in the following dialogue:

Benvolio : Good morrow, cousin.
Romeo : Is the day so young?
Benvolio : But now-struck nine.
Romeo : Ay me, sad hours seem long.
(I. i. 151-154)

When Romeo is informed that there has just been a brawl between the Capulets and the Montagues, he expresses his deep unhappiness and confusion of mind through a list of conflicting opposites. Romeo says:

O heavy lightness, serious vanity,
Misshapen chaos of well-seeming form,
Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health,
Still-waking sleep that is not what it is,
This love feel I, that feel no love in this.
Dost thou not laugh?
(I. i. 169-175)

There are evidently many impossible opposites in Romeo’s description of love above. Is it possible to fly with wings made of feather of heavy lead? Is there bright smoke? Is fire cold? Can one be healthy but sick at the same time? If sleep is always awake, is it sleep? Shakespeare believes that is how one feels when one’s love is not returned. Unrequited love also creates other impossible conflicting opposites, as is delicately revealed in the following extract:

Love is a smoke made with the fume of sighs:
Being purged, a fire sparkling in lovers’ eyes;
Being vexed, a sea nourished with loving tears.
What is it else: a madness most discreet,
A choking gall, and a preserving sweet.
(I. i. 183-187)
It is undoubtedly impossible to have loving tears. Does a man cry when he loves a woman? ‘A madness most discreet’ means ‘a very wise madness’. Is it possible for one to be mad and wise at the same time? ‘A choking gall, and a preserving sweet’ implies ‘A deadly poison and a sweet healing medicine’. Is there a deadly poison which is a sweet healing medicine? Romeo is so confused that he does not even recognize himself. He says: ‘This is not Romeo; he’s some other where.’ (I.i.191) When Benvolio advises him to forget to think of her, Romeo replies: ‘O, teach me how I should forget to think!’ Romeo is convinced that to forget to think of Rosaline means to forget to think. When Benvolio recommends him to ‘examine other beauties’ (look for other beautiful women), Romeo remarks:

Show me a mistress that is passing fair:
What doth her beauty serve, but as a note
Where I may read who passed that passing fair?
(I.i.227-229)

In the quotation above, Romeo argues that when he sees a lady of great beauty, he is reminded of the even greater beauty of Rosaline.

Because Romeo is in love with Rosaline, he believes that there has never been a woman who is as beautiful as she is since the world was created. He says:

One fairer than my love? The all-seeing sun
Ne’er saw her match since first the world begun.
(I.ii. 94-95)

Rosaline’s refusal to marry him makes him feel that he is worse than a mad man, as the following quotation reveals:

Not mad, but bound more than a madman is;
Whipped and tormented,...
(I.ii.55-57)
Romeo is so moody that when Mercutio, the prince’s kinsman who is Romeo’s friend, asks him to dance, he refuses and says:

Not I, believe me. You have dancing shoes
With nimble soles: I have a soul of lead
So stakes me to the ground I cannot move.
(L.iv.14-16)

Punning upon the words ‘soles’ and ‘soul’, Romeo suggests that unlike Mercutio, who has active spirits and shoes suitable for dancing, he feels that he has a soul of lead which fixes him to the ground so that he cannot move, let alone dance. He further adds that he is so sad that he feels as if he were sinking under love’s heavy burden, as the following extract indicates:

I am too sore empiercéd with his shaft
To soar with his light feathers; and so bound,
I cannot bound a pitch above dull woe.
Under love’s heavy burden do I sink.
(L.iv.19-22)

Romeo feels that love is not a tender thing. It is very rough, rude, and violent.>

He feels that love pricks him like thorns. He tells Mercutio:

Is love a tender thing? It is too rough,
Too rude, too boisterous, and it pricks like thorn.
(L.iv.25-26)

Although the entertainment is at its peak, Romeo is in gloomy spirits, as Shakespeare reveals in the following line: ‘The game was ne’er so fair, and I am dun.’

Is Romeo’s love for Rosaline genuine or is it just calf love? In order to be able to answer the question, one needs to continue reading the play and the following analysis of Romeo’s love for Juliet. Romeo, who has previously sworn that Rosaline is the most beautiful woman in the world, evidently denies his own words when he sees Juliet for the first time. Romeo, who has come to the Capulets’ feast in disguise, is very
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much captivated by Juliet's splendid beauty. He eulogizes her beauty in the aside cited below:

[To himself] O she doth teach the torches to burn bright!
It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night
As a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear;
Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear.
So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows,
As yonder lady o' er her fellows shows.
The measure done, I'll watch her place of stand,
And, touching hers, make blessed my rude hand.
Did my heart love till now? Forswear it, sight,
For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night.
(I.V.43-52)

Romeo wonders whether his love for Rosaline was love at all since he never sees true beauty till he sees Juliet. He then talks with her and kisses her. Juliet's nurse calls her and she joins her mother at the side of the stage. Romeo later learns to his grief that Juliet is the only daughter of Capulet, his family's foe. Juliet is equally shocked to discover that she has fallen in love with the only son of her family's great enemy. In an aside, Juliet says:

My only love sprung from my only hate!
Too early seen unknown, and known too late!
Prodigious birth of love it is to me,
That I must love a loathéd enemy.
(I.v. 137-140)

After Romeo and Juliet have found out that they are enemies, does their love for each other end? Romeo's love for Rosaline has been replaced by his new love for Juliet. Charmed by Juliet's beauty, Romeo does not consider Rosaline beautiful any more. In the famous balcony scene, Shakespeare shows that Romeo does not bother about the family enmity; he praises her beauty:
[He sees Juliet]
... What light through yonder window breaks?
It is the east, and Juliet is the sun
Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,
Who is already sick and pale with grief
That thou her maid art far more fair than she.
Be not her maid, since she is envious;
Her vestal livery is but sick and green,
And none but fools do wear it; cast it off.
It is my lady, O it is my love!
O that she knew she were!
She speaks, yet she says nothing. What of that?
Her eye discourses: I will answer it.
I am too bold; 't is not to me she speaks.
Two of the fairest stars in all heaven,
Having some business, do entreat her eyes
To twinkle in their spheres till they return.
What if her eyes were there, they in her head?
The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars
As daylight doth a lamp; her eyes in heaven
Would through the airy region stream so bright
That birds would sing and think it were not night.
(II. i. 44-64)

Juliet warns Romeo that it will be very dangerous for him if any of her relatives finds him in her orchard (considering that he is an enemy). He replies that because he loves her very much, nothing and nobody can stop him from seeing her:

With love's light wings did I o'erperch these walls,
For stony limits cannot hold love out;
And what love can do, that dares love attempt:
Therefore thy kinsmen are no stop to me.
(II. i. 108-111)

Romeo further points out that he prefers dying to living without her love: 'My life were better ended by their hate—Than death prorogued, wanting of thy love.'
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Juliet also continues loving Romeo after knowing that Romeo is a Montague. She loves Romeo very much so that she is ready to discard her family name if Romeo refuses to deny his, as Shakespeare vividly depicts in the following soliloquy:

O Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo?
Deny thy father and refuse thy name:
Or if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love
And I’ll no longer be a Capulet.
(II.i.75-78)

For Juliet, who is deeply in love with Romeo, it is character instead of name that matters. There is much universal truth in what Juliet says about a name in the famous soliloquy below:

What’s in a name: That which we call a rose
By any other word would smell as sweet.
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo called,
Retain that dear perfection which he owes
Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name,
And for that name, which is no part of thee,
Take all myself.
(II.i.85-91)

Romeo is very willing to take the new name ‘Love’ to replace the name he received at baptism. He says to Juliet:

Call me but ‘Love’, and I’ll be new baptized;
Henceforth I never will be Romeo.
(II.i.92-93)

Juliet loves Romeo very much. She says that the more she gives her love to him, the more she has. Here are her precise words:

My bounty is as boundless as the sea,
My love as deep; the more I give to thee,
The more I have, for both are infinite.  
(II.i.175-178)

Juliet later says that if Romeo also loves her, she is ready to be his wife and to follow him wherever he goes. Before Romeo leaves her, he speaks to her in this extremely beautiful verse:

Love goes toward love as schoolboys from their books,  
But love from love, toward school with heavy looks.  
(II.i.118-119)

When a man wants to see his beloved, he rushes to her as swiftly as schoolboys leave the books they are compelled to read. When he has to depart from her, however, he will be as reluctant as schoolboys who have to go to school.

Is Romeo’s love for Juliet genuine and eternal or is it short-lived love? When Romeo tells Friar Lawrence that he wants to marry Juliet, the latter is stunned. He cannot understand why Rosaline, whom Romeo loves deeply, can be forgotten all of a sudden. He says:

Holy Saint Francis, what a change is here!  
Is Rosaline that thou didst love so dear  
So soon forsaken? Young men’s love then lies  
Not truly in their hearts, but in their eyes.  
(II.i.65-68)

When the Friar advises Romeo not to bury his love in order to give birth to another, Romeo says that he really loves Juliet and that he did not really love Rosaline.

Shakespeare also reveals that Juliet’s love for Romeo is so great that she cannot measure the depth of her love:

They are but beggars that can count their worth;  
But my true love is grown to such excess  
I cannot sum up sum of half my wealth.  
(II.v.32-34)
While looking for Romeo, Tybalt, Juliet's cousin, is involved in a fight with Mercutio. Romeo enters and he is insulted by Tybalt, but having just been married to Juliet, he does not want to quarrel with any member of her family. Being ignorant of the marriage, Mercutio considers Romeo a coward so he fights Tybalt. Romeo tries to separate them but Tybalt kills Mercutio under Romeo's arm. Angered by the slaying of the friend who has fought on his behalf, Romeo fights Tybalt and kills him. When Juliet hears that Romeo has killed Tybalt, she angrily blames him. She is torn by conflicting feelings of loyalty to her husband and to her family. She then realizes that she has to be loyal to him first. When the nurse says that Juliet should not speak well of the man who has killed her cousin, Juliet replies as follows:

Shall I speak ill of him that is my husband?
Ah, poor my lord, what tongue shall smooth thy name,
When I, thy three-hours' wife, have mangled it?
But wherefore, villain, didst thou kill my cousin?
That villain cousin would have killed my husband.
Back, foolish tears, back to your native spring;
Your tributary drops belong to woe,
Which you, mistaking, offer up to joy.
My husband lives, that Tybalt would have slain,
And Tybalt's dead that would have slain my husband.
All this is comfort.
(III.ii.97-107)

Romeo is banished. He should leave Verona before daybreak; otherwise, he will be executed. Before leaving for Mantua, Romeo has the last chance to be together with his newly wedded bride, Juliet.

While Romeo is on his way to Mantua, Juliet has a big trouble. Her father forces her to marry Count Paris, whom she does not love at all. Again, she asks for the help of Friar Lawrence, who offers her a drug which will make her unconscious for forty-two hours. She is found seemingly dead and is laid in the family tomb. The Friar sends a messenger to tell Romeo to come secretly to Verona to assist Juliet's
escape, but his message never reaches him due to a plague in Verona. However, Romeo is informed by Balthasar, his servant, who believes that Juliet is dead. Romeo buys some poison and hurries back to Verona. Thinking that Juliet is dead, Romeo drinks the poison and dies beside her. A moment later, Juliet regains consciousness. When she finds Romeo dead by her side, she kills herself with his dagger. Before committing suicide, Juliet says:

O happy dagger.
This is thy sheath; there rust, and let me die.
(V.iii.169-170)

Like Romeo, Juliet is not afraid to die for the one she loves.

II.2. LOVE IN LITERARY WORKS

Love is one of the most common subjects in literature. Playwrights reveal their ideas of love through their plays while novelists through their novels; poets express their feelings of love in their poems. Even politicians talk about love in their speeches. Love is in fact a topic that is never too outdated to discuss. Since there are a great number of opinions about love, I will make a summary of only twenty-five of them to show that different people think of love differently:

1. God’s love is different from our love for God.
2. God’s love is eternal whereas our love is not.
3. To love or not to love.
4. Loving means sacrificing.
5. True love does not really exist.
6. Love is a splendour.
7. Love may lead to tragedy.
8. Love must be reciprocal.
9. Hatred may turn into love and vice versa.
10. Never love a woman who is older than you.
11. Love and jealousy are inseparable.
12. Loving someone means accepting him/her the way he/she is.
13. We cannot buy love.
14. Romantic love is found only in literature.
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15. The first love can never be forgotten.
16. A man in love is a man indeed.
17. To love somebody does not mean to marry him or her.
18. Puppy love is sweeter than true love.
19. Love at first sight is nonsense.
20. Love does not discriminate.
21. Love based on physical attraction does not last long.
22. Love is the root of all evils.
23. Love is a fatal attraction.
24. Love is a source of inspiration.
25. Love is God’s greatest blessing.

III. CONCLUSION

Love in Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet varies. Romeo’s love for Rosaline is different from his love for Juliet. The former is not eternal but the latter is. Juliet’s love for Romeo is also eternal. However, unlike Romeo, who remains faithful to her throughout his life, Juliet is torn by conflicting feelings of loyalty to her husband and her family, specially after she learns that he has killed Tybalt, her cousin.

Having analysed Shakespeare’s concept of love in Romeo and Juliet, and compared it to the definitions of love in the two dictionaries and the themes of love revealed in novels, plays and poems, I am aware of the fact that different people have different opinions about love. Therefore, I find it necessary to reveal what I think about love in the following verse:

WHAT IS LOVE?

Love is life
Love is laugh
Love is love

Love is sometimes selfish
Love may also be selfless
Is it selfish yet selfless?

To love is to give and to give
To love is to give and to take
Or—to take, to take and to take?

Love is not appearance
Nor is it an experiment!
Love is an experience

Even if we have words
This four-letter word
Cannot be put into words

The following stanza by stanza explanation is expected to make the readers comprehend my viewpoint about love more clearly.

Stanza I : The first line tells us that when there is no love, there is no life.
The second line suggests that love brings bliss. The last line is very important because it contains the keywords. It is unlikely to say precisely what love is, so if we are forced to define exactly what love is, we just say that love is love.

Stanza II : When we are in love, we may be selfish, envious, jealous, possessive and dominating, but we may also be altruistic, submissive and indulgent.

Stanza III : When a man falls in love with a woman, he may want to give her all his best-loved possessions. Like Jesus, this God-like man never expects anything in return. The second line implies that a man may give a woman something but also expect to get something from her in return. For example, by giving her something, he may feel happy. The third line presents the fact that a man may be so egotistic
that he never gives but always takes. For instance, he takes all her heart but he never completely gives his heart to her.

Stanza IV : Love is not based on appearance only. There must be other things which make one fall in love. The second line is a reminder admonishing one not to pretend to love someone he does not really love unless he is ready to bear the consequences of his action. Just remember what happens to Mr Polly, one of HG Wells’ most memorable characters in *The History of Mr Polly*, whose marriage to Miriam turns out to be a disaster!

Stanza V : The lines in the last stanza are as significant as the last line of the first stanza. The three lines serve as the conclusion, namely that however eloquent we are, we will never be able to define love accurately because love is an experience which can only be felt by those who have experienced it but which can never be fully described, explained or expressed in words.

IV. REFERENCES


PRIMARY TEXT
