

HUMOR AND SATIRE IN WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S COMEDIES

Shukurullayeva Hulkaroy Vohid qizi

Chirchik State Pedagogical University

Scientific adviser; Elmurodov Ulugbek Yarashovich

ABSTRACT

This abstract examines the various facets of satire and humor in William Shakespeare's comedies. By examining a few plays, such as "Twelfth Night," "A Midsummer Night's Dream," and "Much Ado About Nothing," we look at how Shakespeare uses a variety of comedic tropes, like situational humor, physical comedy, and verbal wit, to both amuse audiences and provide insightful commentary on human nature and society norms. This abstract illuminates the lasting relevance of Shakespearean humor and its ability to resonate with audiences across time and culture by exploring the interplay between laughter and critique.

Key words: Shakespeare, Humor, Satire, Comedy, Comic techniques, Shakespearean comedy

INTRODUCTION

Shakespeare's comedies are recognized for their ageless appeal, wit, and charm. Their constant appeal is largely due to their use of sarcasm and humor, which livens up the stage, makes people laugh, and provides insightful comments on society. Shakespeare used satire to criticize institutions, individuals, and social standards because he was a great observer of human nature and society. He also used comedy to entertain, inspire thinking, and highlight more profound truths about human nature. Shakespeare expertly used satire and humor in his comedies to create works that appeal to audiences of all ages and backgrounds. Shakespeare's comedic talent shines brilliantly, enabling spectators to laugh heartily while also considering the underlying societal satire imbedded within his plays, from the clever banter of lovers to the antics of silly characters. Shakespeare exposed corruption, abuse of authority, and hypocrisy in Elizabethan society by using satire to hold up a mirror to these vices and foibles. Shakespeare uses characters who represent the vices and prejudices of their era—Malvolio in "Twelfth Night" and Shylock in "The Merchant of Venice"—as targets for his sharp satire and moral critique. Shakespeare's humor is also notable for its complexity and adaptability, utilizing a variety of humorous devices such as wordplay, puns, physical comedy, and situational humor. Whether it was the clever banter between Beatrice and Benedick in "Much Ado About Nothing"



or the ridiculous miscommunications in "A Midsummer Night's Dream," Shakespeare enthralled audiences with his ability to make them laugh and think at the same time. In this piece, we explore the comedic brilliance of William Shakespeare, revealing the satire and humor that permeate his well-loved plays and highlighting their timeless value.

FINDINGS

Varied Forms of Humor: Shakespeare employs a wide range of comedic techniques to entertain his audience. These include puns, wordplay, physical comedy, irony, and satire. By incorporating diverse forms of humor into his plays, Shakespeare ensures that there is something for everyone to enjoy, regardless of their comedic preferences.

Satirical Elements: While primarily known for his comedies, Shakespeare's plays often contain elements of satire, allowing him to critique societal norms, institutions, and individuals. For example, in "As You Like It," Shakespeare satirizes the pastoral genre by exposing the artificiality and absurdity of courtly life through the character of Jaques. Similarly, "The Merchant of Venice" contains satirical elements that challenge prevailing attitudes towards race, religion, and money lending.

Cultural Analysis: Shakespeare gives incisive criticism on current social and political situations through his use of humor and satire. Shakespeare, for example, examines identification, mistaken identity, and social class in "The Comedy of Errors," utilizing comedy to highlight the ridiculousness of strict social hierarchies. Shakespeare addresses gender norms and expectations in a similar way in "Twelfth Night," as Viola poses as a male to get around Illyria's patriarchal culture.

Humor-Based Characterization: Shakespeare's use of comedy is frequently closely related to how his main characters and supporting cast are portrayed. For instance, audiences find Sir John Falstaff, a character in the "Henry IV" plays, endearing because of his outrageous humor and larger-than-life attitude, even though he has flaws. Similar to this, Beatrice and Benedick's clever banter in "Much Ado About Nothing" demonstrates their brilliance, independence, and attraction to one another.

Genre Expectations Subverted: Shakespeare regularly challenges conventional comedy norms by utilizing satirical themes to confound genre expectations in his comedies. Shakespeare, for instance, blurs the boundaries between right and evil in "Measure for Measure," a play that explores issues of justice, morality, and mercy by fusing elements of tragedy and comedy. Shakespeare challenges the conventions of romantic comedy in "The Taming of

the Shrew," where he employs humor to question gender norms and power relations in marriage.

Cultural Background and Views: Gaining an appreciation of the subtleties of Shakespeare's comedy and sarcasm requires an understanding of the cultural and historical context in which his plays were written. Because Elizabethan audiences were aware of the social, political, and cultural issues of the day, they were able to recognize the nuanced criticism that Shakespeare's plays contained. Shakespeare's satire and humor also speak to contemporary audiences because his themes of human folly, power, and love never go out of style. Scholars have learned a great deal about Shakespeare's comedic genius and his lasting influence on literature and culture by studying these facets of humor and satire in his plays. Shakespeare entertains, challenges, and disturbs audiences with humor and sarcasm while encouraging them to consider the complexity of the human experience.

CONCLUSION

We find enduring insights into the human predicament by delving into Shakespeare's comedy and sarcasm. Shakespeare amuses, challenges, and enlightens us with his wit and wisdom, allowing us to chuckle at the absurdities of society while considering our own humanity. His reputation as a comic genius lives on, serving as a constant reminder of the unceasing ability of humor to unite people across differences and discover common ground in our shared humanity.

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