

POWER OF SHAKESPEARE'S ATMOSPHERIC SONGS AS EXPRESSIVE THERAPY IN SELECTED PLAYS

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Pythagoreans believe that every living creature in Nature has an individual keynote and when it is vibrated, the emotional response is evident. And music serves a range of different functions in a society with different degrees for different participants. Turino, an ethnomusicologist points out the same idea in his study on Peruvian highland music thus, “Music, dance, and drama are especially apt media for simultaneously, articulating and uniting widely divergent and even conflicting images and meanings” (99). Turino through his research has expressed that the art of music, dance and drama can be articulated and simultaneously create different and conflicting images and meaning and they are the apt media for such communication.

The expressive therapies are a unique domain of psychotherapy which can foster awareness, encourage emotional health and enhance relationships with others. Malchiodi further observes:

Music often taps feeling and may lend itself to socialization when people collaborate in song or in simultaneously playing instruments; and dance / movement offer opportunities to interact and form relationships. In other words, each form of expressive therapy has its unique properties and roles in therapeutic work depending on its application, practitioner, client, setting and objectives. (3)

The therapeutic activity of music in the dramas of Shakespeare is focused in this thesis. In order to understand music therapy, Malchiodi refers to American Music Therapy Association, “Music therapy uses music to effect changes in the psychological, physical, cognitive, or social functioning of individuals with health or educational problems” (2).

Art and literature are peace time activities and they were essentially needed for both internal and external peace which was provided by the glorious virgin Queen Elizabeth. There were three kinds of theatres in London during Shakespeare's time: (i) public theatres (ii) private theatres (iii) the halls of Royal Palaces and Inns Court. They were either circular, octagonal in shape, with raised dais in the centre. Shakespeare's plays were performed in private theatres and at least a few in the Royal Palaces too. The absence of scenery had far-reaching effects on the construction and style of Shakespeare's plays. The drop curtains were unknown in the Elizabethan age. Therefore, at the end of each scene the actors had either to walk away or were carried off the stage leaving it empty. Another method of indicating the close of Shakespearean scene was the use of a rhyming couplet at the end. The rhymed couplet was believed to

ring the death-knell of the scene or the act. The lack of scenic effect was made good by the poet by gorgeous descriptions and graphic effects of poetry. The actors had to use highly emotional and exalted poetry in order to arouse the emotions of the spectators. All these peculiarities of the stage and its limitations had marked influences on the structure, action and even the style of Shakespeare's dramas. Blank verse is employed in a wide range of situations because it comes close to the natural speaking rhymes of English but raises it above the ordinary without sounding artificial. Blank verse, as opposed to prose, is used mainly for passionate, lofty or momentous occasions for introspection and it also suggests a refinement of character.

Many research articles explain the influence of music on human psyche. Especially when used horizontally or vertically in dramas, it is not only an embellishment but also a tool for an expressive therapy. Sue Jennings in her research article on "Reason in Madness Therapeutic Journeys through *King Lear*" explains Shakespeare's plays can be understood as a drama therapy or a kind of Expressive therapy. She elucidates, "The task I now set myself is: how can an understanding of a Shakespeare play assist a drama therapist in practice? . . . I maintain that an in- depth understanding of the play provides the drama therapist with the wealth of archetypal material, as well as sharpening their responses to a plethora of imaging . . ." (6). Earlier she declares that for therapeutic experience in a drama. ". . . theatrical distance enables people to come closer and engage more profoundly with damaged or buried aspects of themselves" (5). According to expressive therapists, dramatic therapy enables people to come closer not only to their damaged selves but also to the make-believe world within themselves.

Background or atmospheric music also provides emotional cues to the audience and an ambience that frames the drama to follow a technique that is in wide use in modern day movies. The atmospheric music is used to let the audience know either through the text or when performed, about the personality of the singer. In *The Tempest* Ariel's sing and reassures the arrival of wrecked ships into Prospero's magical realm and also informs the audience that Ariel is a spirit, "Ariel *invisible, playing and singing*: Ferdinand *following*. / Ariel's song, come unto there yellow sands" (Tmp. 1.2.375). The sense that the music is coming from somewhere that cannot be seen promotes the feeling that is also atmospheric, in that it gives the audience the feeling that something magical is about to occur. A dramatist cannot cherish his creative experience, until he provides a means to reflect upon human experiences. In developing such a psychological awareness, the actors and audience experience a process of therapy. In such a kind of facilitation of expression for therapy, music and songs have a special role in a drama for they supply expressive therapy. The function of a song in a drama is:

The ironic and the multiplicities of meaning they evoke can be extremely subtle and complex. Certainly, not all of this dimension can be perceived by an audience during the performance. When sung on stage, a dramatic song will have a more immediate, emotional effect. When reading it in leisure it will participate in the literary structure of a more

immediate emotional effect. When rereading in leisure it will participate in the literary structure of the entire drama and contribute to the aesthetic patterning of the whole.

(Winkler 20)

As the explanation given by Winkler sums that the dramatic function of a song has an emotional effect and an aesthetic patterning of the whole, it is important to study the atmosphere that these songs create and induce among the actors and audience. Drama creates a whole world of imagination instigating emotions and atmosphere which inculcates an 'alternative mental world' sometimes towards a cathartic effect on the alter ego of the characters as well as that of the audience.

A pleasant affectation of songs mostly can be an effect of romantic songs or love songs introduced to create a romantic ambience. It can be a harmonious music inviting the audience young or old and the actors to the emotional response in *Twelfth Night*. The play opens with music with comments for the need of music for lovers. The play opens with the Duke who is apparently afflicted with love, but to the audience, it appears to be a dream love, which the Duke has to keep alive by music, desperate longing, sighs and groans:

DUKE ORSINO. If music be the food of love, play on;
 Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting,
 The appetite may sicken, and so die.
 That strain again! it had a dying fall:
 O, it came o'er my ear like the sweet sound,
 That breathes upon a bank of violets,
 Stealing and giving odour! Enough; no more:
 'Tis not so sweet now as it was before. (TN 1.1.1-8)

He begins his brief conceptualizing of love by saying if the music is love's food, play on. Earlier the music was like the sweet sound of a breeze that gently blows upon a bank of violets, stealing and spreading the perfume. Suddenly, he stops the music for it is not as pleasing as it was before because now he is love-sick. The Duke feels at one time that music can satiate his yearning for love so asks for more and suddenly asks it to be stopped because he feels love alone is high fantastical. In Act 2 Scene 3, Sir Toby and Sir Andrew are at their revelry. It appears late night and they are not in bed. Sir Toby argues that not to be in bed after midnight is to be up early. While Sir Toby thinks that life consists of the four elements, Sir Andrew thinks that it consists of eating and drinking. Sir Toby calls for wine. The clown enters and they want him to sing and Sir Andrew admires his sweet voice and wit and in admiration of his art, he gives him six pence and wants him to sing. The clown sings a love song:

CLOWN. Would you have a love-song or a song of good life?
 SIR TOBY BELCH. A love-song, a love-song.

...

CLOWN. [*Sings*]

O mistress mine, where are you roaming?

O, stay and hear; your true love's coming,

That can sing both high and low:

Trip no further, pretty sweeting;

Journeys end in lovers meeting,

Every wise man's son doth know.

. . .

What is love? 'tis not hereafter;

Present mirth hath present laughter;

What's to come is still unsure:

In delay there lies no plenty;

Then come kiss me, sweet and twenty,

Youth's a stuff will not endure. (AYL 2.3.35-51)

John H. Long says that it is a contrast to the earlier song and remarks, "In marked contrast to the music which pleases the melancholy Duke, the next episode employing music (II, iii) present gay love song, a catch, and snatches of other convivial songs" (168). He also comments that the dramatic function of the instrumental music provides an insight into the character of the Duke as a lover. This thought enables him to accept his sudden switch of interest from Olivia to Viola at the end of the play and is thus partially motivated. But in contrast, the love song sung by the clown is one of the first types of Shakespeare's song that harmonizes with the theme and mood of the characters. The song 'O mistress mine' is in one sense an invocation to Olivia to put off her self-indulgent grief and her dead brother's memory. The song asks his mistress where she is wandering about and to come and listen to her true lover who can sing both in high and low pitch. He advises her not to wonder because all journeys end in lovers meeting. The clown with such a positive response continues this song emphasizing that love is present, not of the future for the future is uncertain. There is no gain in delaying because youth vanishes away. A music dictionary defines a catch thus, "A song or sometimes an instrumental piece in which three, four or more parts follow each other in the manner of a round or canon . . . catches were not meant to be sophisticated formal songs" (Wilson 83). The catches were sung for fun. So the clown's song has been integrated to create a mood of mirth and comic atmosphere. A critic views "I now want to suggest that it is peculiar genius of music to capture and evoke a pattern of intentional feelings, pattern which can result in a distinctive balance of effect of superfine subtlety" (Madell 126). Since it is meant for fun this catch creates mirth and laughter among the dramatist, performers, and the audience.

The other kind of popular song integrated into the plays of Shakespeare is the 'ayre or air'. This shall be quoted with subsequent example to define 'ayre or air':

The ayre was one of the major vocal genres of English Renaissance The musical substance of the ayre was contained in its solo melodic voice and largely harmonic accompaniment . . . the ayre was able to represent the poem it set more closely and directly. This made it more suitable for insertion in dramatic dialogue (Wilson 26)

Shakespeare incorporates many kinds of ‘ayres or air’ according to the dramatic context or the function of the song. As Winkler says dramatic song introduces ‘a lyrical and musical moment’ and the ‘ayres or airs’ is introduced in the plays to sweeten the air or to sweeten the mood of the play. In *Much Ado About Nothing* in Act 2 Scene 3 an ayre is sung by Balthazar to sweeten the mood of the other actors as well as to help them to woo their beloved ones.

BALTHASAR. Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more,
Men were deceivers ever,
One foot in sea and one on shore,
To one thing constant never:
Then sigh not so, but let them go,
And be you blithe and bonny,
Converting all your sounds of woe
Into Hey nonny, nonny.
Sing no more ditties, sing no moe,
Of dumps so dull and heavy;
The fraud of men was ever so
Since summer first was leafy:
Then sigh not so, & c. (Ado. 2.3.57-69)

This story has a peculiar way of wooing. It is an atmosphere of wooing and love making but in a very strange way. Hero is wooed by Claudio. Don Pedro takes upon himself the task of wooing the hero for his friend. It is a peculiar situation indeed. What is more peculiar is that Hero does not feel any awkward in the change of her wooer. There is an indication of what Hero exactly feels towards the lover who lacks the initiative of his own wooing. In this thread of the story, the element of love making is less prominent. The song “sigh no more ladies, sigh no more” (Ado. 2.3.57) is sung in a wooing atmosphere, a healing music to the confused heart of Claudio and Benedick, as Benedick points out before the song that it is a heavenly melody and his soul is delighted. And he has a rhetorical question that the musical instrument made of sheep guts changes the human soul out of men’s bodies. Music should harmonize man’s soul with cosmos as well as with his body. While quoting the explanation for ‘music humane’ by Boethius, Christopher R. Wilson, and Michela Calorie, they define it as: “human music’, has to do with the ‘harmony’ or music within man’s being, the relation of his soul to his body, a state of well-being, of

equilibrium both within himself and in relation of his soul to his body, a state of well-being, of equilibrium both within himself and in relation to the world about him” (292).

Benedick experiences harmony when he hears Balthazar’s music and song. This has a ‘ripple effect’ on the audience too. Roger Grainger explains “A vital transaction takes place of an Aristotelian kind. The actors involved both receive life from the play and give life to it, endowing the fictional characters with their joy and suffering. Individuals emerge refreshed, having for however short a time lost themselves in judging somebody else” (25). This wooing mood and atmosphere raised by this song must have refreshed the author, actors and audience.

There are also songs, sung to create ‘a pathetic atmosphere or a serious atmosphere’ like in *Macbeth* or *Othello* or to create an ironical atmosphere like in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* or in *King Lear*. The willow song in the play *Othello* stores all the melancholy and pathos felt by Desdemona because of her husband’s suspicion. The atmospheric songs amidst the blank verse and prosody induce the desired mood and emotion in the audience and the actors. They also heal them with morals or with merriment at least for a short span of time.

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