

HUMOR AND SATIRE IN SHAKESPEARE’S COMEDIES

Nurillayeva Oysha Sirojiddin qizi

Student of bachelor degree,

Chirchik State Pedagogical University,

Scientific advisor: Saidfozil Akmalxonovich Akmalxonov

Teacher of Chirchik State Pedagogical University

ABSTRACT: *Shakespeare's works have occupied an incomparable place not only in English but also in world literature for years. This article provides a brief analysis of Shakespeare's comedies in the direction of satire and humor, the place of his works written in this genre in literature, and some examples.*

Keywords: *satire, humor, comedy, “Twelfth Night”, history,” A Midsummer Night's Dream”*

INTRODUCTION

Shakespeare’s comedies are known for their clever humor and sharp satire. His works are very famous all over the world. William Shakespeare, widely regarded as one of the greatest playwrights in history, is renowned for his masterful use of humor and satire in his comedies. Through clever wordplay, witty banter, and sharp observations, Shakespeare artfully weaves humor and satire into his works to entertain audiences while also offering insightful commentary on society and human nature. In this article, we will explore how Shakespeare employs humor and satire in his comedies to illuminate the complexities of human relationships, challenge societal norms, and provide a source of laughter and entertainment for audiences of all ages. As in Shakespeare’s tragedies, the speech of the characters in his comedies is full of sharp and deep thoughts, and jokes.

FINDINGS

William Shakespeare was an English poet, playwright, and actor of the Renaissance era. He was an important member of the King's Men theatrical company from roughly 1594 onward. Known throughout the world, Shakespeare's works—at least 37 plays, 154 sonnets, and 2 narrative poems—capture the range of human emotion and conflict and have been celebrated for more than 400 years. Details about his personal life are limited, though some believe he was born and died on the same day, April 23, 52 years apart. The Bard of Avon has gone down in history as the greatest dramatist of all time and is sometimes called England's national poet. He is credited with inventing or introducing more than 1,700 words to the English language, often as a result of combining words, changing usages, or blending in foreign root words. If you've used the words "downstairs," "egregious," "kissing," "zany," or "skim milk," you can thank Shakespeare. He is also responsible for many common phrases, such as "love is blind" and "wild goose chase." Shakespeare wrote comedies throughout his career, including his first play *The Taming of the Shrew*. Some of his other early comedies, written before 1600 or so, are: the whimsical *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the romantic *Merchant of Venice*, the wit and wordplay of *Much Ado About Nothing*, and the charming *As You Like It*. Some of his comedies might be better described as tragicomedies. Among these are *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*. Although graver in tone than the comedies, they are not the dark tragedies of *King Lear* or *Macbeth* because they end with reconciliation and forgiveness.

Additional Shakespeare comedies include:

- As You Like It
- The Comedy of Errors
- Love's Labour's Lost
- Measure for Measure
- The Merchant of Venice
- The Merry Wives of Windsor

- A Midsummer Night's Dream
- All's Well That Ends Well
- Much Ado About Nothing
- The Taming of the Shrew
- The Tempest
- Twelfth Night
- The Two Gentlemen of Verona
- The Winter's Tale

Troilus and Cressida is emblematic of the Shakespearean “problem play,” which defies genres. Some of Shakespeare’s contemporaries classified it as a history or a comedy, though the original name of the play was The Tragedie of Troilus and Cressida.

At the heart of these plays are themes that resonate with audiences even today:

Love and Romance: Often depicted through complex relationships and romantic entanglements.

Mistaken Identities and Disguises: A common plot device that leads to humorous situations.

Social Norms and Satire: Shakespeare often uses his comedies to comment on societal norms and human behavior.

“Twelfth Night”

Plot: A tale of mistaken identity and unrequited love.

Humor: Lies in the absurdities of the situations the characters find themselves in.

“A Midsummer Night’s Dream”

Plot: A complex interplay of love interests set in a mystical forest.

Humor: Arises from the interactions between humans and mystical creatures.

“Much Ado About Nothing”

Plot: Revolves around two pairs of lovers and the obstacles they face.

Humor: Found in the witty banter and comedic misunderstandings.

Take **The Merchant of Venice** for example – it has the love and relationship element. As is often the case, there are two couples. One of the women is disguised as a man through most of the text – typical of Shakespearean comedy – but the other is in a very unpleasant situation – a young Jewess seduced away from her father by a shallow, rather dull young Christian. The play ends with the lovers all together, as usual, celebrating their love and the way things have turned out well for their group. That resolution has come about by completely destroying a man's life.

The Jew, Shylock is a man who has made a mistake and been forced to pay dearly for it by losing everything he values, including his religious freedom. It is almost like two plays – a comic structure with a personal tragedy embedded in it. The 'comedy' is a frame to heighten the effect of the tragic elements, which creates something very deep and dark.

Twelfth Night is similar – the humiliation of a man the in-group doesn't like. As in *The Merchant of Venice*, his suffering is simply shrugged off in the highly contrived comic ending.

Not one of Shakespearean comedy, no matter how full of life and love and laughter and joy, it may be, is without a darkness at its heart. **Much Ado About Nothing**, like *Antony and Cleopatra* (a 'tragedy' with a comic structure), is a miracle of creative writing. Shakespeare seamlessly joins an ancient mythological love story and a modern invented one, weaving them together into a very funny drama in which light and dark chase each other around like clouds and sunshine on a windy day, and the play threatens to fall into an abyss at any moment and emerges from that danger in a highly contrived ending once again.

Like the 'tragedies' Shakespeare comedies defy categorisation. They all draw our attention to a range of human experience with all its sadness, joy, poignancy, tragedy, comedy, darkness and lightness. Below are all of the plays generally regarded as Shakespeare comedy plays

Examples of Shakespeare's comedies that showcase these elements of humor and satire include "A Midsummer Night's Dream", "Twelfth Night", and "Much Ado About Nothing". These plays explore of love, mistaken identities, and societal conversation through a comedic lens. Shakespeare was a master of wordplay and witty dialogue. His comedies are filled with puns, double entendres, and clever wordplay, which adds a layer of humor to the dialogue. The characters engage in playful banter and use language to create comedic effects. Shakespeare's comedies feature a wide range of characters, including witty fools, clowns, and comedic foils. These characters provide comic relief and serve as contrasts to the more serious or complex characters. Their humorous antics and amusing personalities contribute to the overall comedic tone of the plays. Many of Shakespeare's comedies feature mistaken identities, where characters are confused for one another. This leads to humorous misunderstandings, comedic situations, and often results in a resolution that brings about laughter and joy.

CONCLUSION

Humor and satire indeed play a vital role in Shakespeare's comedies by enriching the characters and themes. By employing clever dialogue, comedic situations, and satirical elements, Shakespeare not only entertains audiences but also provides insightful commentary on society, human nature, and the intricacies of relationships. Not one of Shakespearean comedy, no matter how full of life and love and laughter and joy, it may be, is without a darkness at its heart. Much Ado About Nothing, like Antony and Cleopatra (a 'tragedy' with a comic structure), is a miracle of creative writing. Shakespeare seamlessly joins an ancient mythological love story and a modern invented one, weaving them together into a very funny drama in which light and dark chase each other around like clouds and sunshine on a windy day, and the play threatens to fall into an abyss at any moment and emerges from that danger in a highly contrived ending once again.

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