



SHAKESPEARE'S ART OF ORATORY: A STUDY OF *HENRY IV PART II* AND *HENRY V*

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ABSTRACT



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William Shakespeare is the most versatile literary person in the history of English literature. As a poet, playwright, actor and a dramatist, he is synonymous with excellence. His influence on theatre and English literature is immeasurable. Shakespeare has been studied and appraised from almost every angle but critics and scholars still try to assess him in different perspectives. This paper attempts to analyze the use of rhetorical language as a tool of persuasion in Shakespeare's history plays *Henry IV part II* and *Henry V*. The paper unravels the purpose and affect of crucial speeches of the nobles which frequently use rhetorical devices. A closer analysis of the selected speeches reveals that various tools and techniques like metaphor, simile, metonymy, paradox, puns, personification, imagery etc have been frequently and skillfully used. King Henry IV uses highly rhetorical language to persuade his son to mend his ways while Henry V employs rhetorical devices to control his associates and public. This paper through rhetorical analysis closely studies, evaluates and analyzes the speeches. It also attempts to identify different figures of speech, their purpose and their contextual suitability to achieve the desired effects.

Keywords: Rhetorical, Persuasion, Devices, Oratorical, Language

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William Shakespeare, a poet, playwright, actor, dramatist, and gifted English literary legend is synonymous with excellence in the world of English literature. His influence on theatre and literature is immeasurable. After the Bible he is the most quoted writer in the history of English language and literature. Shakespeare has been studied and appraised from every angle. He has been assessed through different critical approaches. Contemporary theories and concepts have also been applied to his work. Appreciations, approbations and eulogies from renowned writers like John Dryden, S.T. Coleridge, William Hazlitt, and T.S. Eliot etc. prove that English literature has been following in his foot-steps for a long time.

Shakespeare played a leading role not only in energizing and transforming the English drama and theatre but also in making invaluable contribution to English language. Critics have often celebrated the infinite variety and treasure of Shakespeare's language and style. Rhetoric is one of those features of his style in which he achieved marvelous excellence. Some critics are of the view that rhetoric is central to many aspects of Shakespeare's style.

Rhetoric means the art of using language in a most effective and persuasive manner. According to [1] rhetoric is, "the faculty of observing on any given case the available means of persuasion." [3] explain the rhetorical analysis approach to a text as a, "mean to analyze the structure of a narrative text to show the linguistic mediation of a story determines its meaning and effect. And the underlying aim of this form of criticism is to demonstrate that what look like redundant or random detail in realistic fiction is in fact the functional details, contributing to a pattern of motifs with experience and thematic significance."

The present paper seeks to answer some questions like:

-How do the characters deliver such extraordinary eloquent speeches in crisis? How do the characters sustain their inventiveness in perplexed circumstances?

-How do the dense, complex and articulate speeches at intensely dramatic movements uncover and investigate character and motivation, and as rhetoric

they involve eloquent language employing recognizable devices.

-How do metaphors, simile and other devices work to explain and resolve the struggle and result in extraordinary poetic language?

HENRY IV-II

Henry IV uses highly eloquent and rhetorical language suited to his benefits. As the play opens the king is remorseful and highly regretful for his own unethical manipulations to obtain the throne. When he meets Earl of Surrey and Warwick, he confesses:

Thou then, God knows, I had no such intent
But that necessity so bow'd the state
That I and greatness were compell'd to kiss.
(III.i.70-74)

With these utterances the king tries to justify the plotted murder of Richard. Uttering "necessity so bow'd the state" he tries to convince the noblemen that it was all essential and inevitable in those circumstances. The king uses synecdoche and further he says, "that I and greatness" to win the sympathy for himself.

King Henry gives vent to his emotional feelings of remorse rhetorically when he mumbles, "How I came by the crown, O God forgive" (IV.v.218). He also employs metonymy here when he refers the crown for the whole kingdom. The king tries to convince his son that the state is insecure and he must mend his ways and take responsibility for the state by saying, "And grants it may with thee in true peace live" (IV.v.219). The king's speech incorporates pathos as a tool of persuasion and emotional appeal. The poignant and appealing speech achieves its objectives when Prince Hal replies, "My gracious liege, / ... You won it, wore it, give it me; / ... 'Gainst all the world will rightfully maintain" (IV.v.220-224).

In crown- on- the pillow scene a highly eloquent and oratorical language is employed. The king rebukes his son, "Is he hasty that he doth suppose my sleep my death" (IV.V.59). Imagery as a rhetorical device has been applied by the king when he expresses his concern for his kingdom what it will look like when prince Hal becomes the king? He says:

Pluck down my officers; break my decrees;
For now a time is come to mock at form-
Henry the fifth is crown'd! Up, Vanity!



... Now, neighbor confines, purge you of your scum!
Have you a ruffian that will swear, drink, dance,
Revel the right, rob, murder, and commit
The oldest sins the newest kind of ways... (IV.v.117-130)?

Imagery has been employed to make the speech more explicit and emotive. Hyperbole has also been used time and again to vivify and emphasize the context.

In response to the king's speech, Prince Hal uses salutation as a rhetorical device. He greets his father by saying, "My gracious liege (V.iv.220) and further uses anaphora "You won it, wore it, keep it, gave it me," to convince and persuade his father about his concerns for the crown.

King Henry applies metaphor to generate oratorical effects when he says:

Stay but a little, for my cloud of dignity
Is held from falling with so weak a wind
That it will quickly drop; my day is dim.

(IV.v.98-100)

Here the cloud symbolizes the decline of king's supremacy. By designating it 'weak wind' and 'dim day' the king employs highly metaphorical language to make his speech more touching, penetrative and compelling to his son and audience. King also uses a grandiloquent style of exclamation (expression of extreme emotion) when he pronounces "O foolish youth!...O my poor kingdom!" (IV.v.96-136)

King employs the words like 'we', 'our' and 'us' while addressing his noblemen to metamorphose them to his views and uses the word 'God' to establish himself a holy man designed to rule by Almighty. Hence king's religious devotion converts his noblemen to evoke empathy.

Throughout the play it is observed that the grandiose language succeeds in persuading his noblemen and helping his son to mend his ways and be a responsible king Henry V.

HENRY V

In *Henry V* [4], King Henry V executes his speeches to his design more brilliantly than his father. He is more efficient in influencing his surroundings with his eloquent language and elegant speech than Henry IV. For instance Henry V warns Falstaff not to interfere with the royal activities, he

says; "I know thee not old man"/ "presume not that I am the thing I was" (V.v.47-72). The utterances are contradictory but king does so intentionally. He not only warns Falstaff but also gives message to the public that he is no more a person of low life. He induces his noblemen by calling Falstaff 'a fool', 'jester and "a dream I despise" (V.v.47-72). In fact the speech denouncing Falstaff proves Shakespeare's capacity to handle the rhetorical language.

King Henry V converts the Archbishop of Canterbury to his point of view by using highly oratorical language. He uses flattery to excite him; he calls him "may gracing Lord of Canterbury (I.ii.1), and further he calls him 'cousin' and 'good uncle'. The king finally succeeds in inducing the Archbishop and nobility through the selective use of language. King employs religion as a device to persuade the Archbishop and cleverly imposes all the responsibility of the consequences of the Salic Law on him.

King Henry employs heavy imagery to vividly paint the graphic picture of the Scot's invasion of England. He calls them "coursing snatchers" (I.ii.143) and portrays the invasion of England as "came pouring like the tide into a beach" (I.ii.149) and imagines England as an "unfurnished Kingdom" (I.ii.147). In this speech Henry V uses the rhetorical device of alliteration along with the vivid imagery for persuasion.

King Henry V frequently uses the words 'we', 'our', 'ours' and 'us' several times in his speeches to influence the public and his associates by showing equal importance of every individual of the state. Use of such words reveals that King Henry comprehends the emotions of common man and he describes the same. By employing inclusiveness and collectiveness as rhetoric devices the king maintains his position and convinces the people. He succeeds in using their consents for his benefits. The king uses the word 'I' in his own context to emphasize his individual strength and capacity for the goodness of the state. The appropriate and fitting use of 'I' and 'we' enhances the strength of King's speeches.

King Henry also uses highly grandiloquent language in his 'reaction' speech against Scroop. He employs anaphora when he comments "Why, so didst than" (I.ii.124) repeatedly. He further employs the rhetorical questions to galvanize the listeners and



manages to orchestrate the conversation to his benefit. The King quotes religious references and invokes God to validate death penalty for the traitors. Thus religion is used as an instrument of intimidation to take advantage of the public.

Use of pun is apposite and efficacious which makes the language more potent. Humorous utterances and jokes make the speeches more appealing. Fusing humor with seriousness the king establishes a successful communication. The King also uses the device of anaphora to describe his deepest and harsh feelings to the traitors.

There is another long speech which has several oratorical devices. It is the King's speech delivered to his people to prompt them to fight France with full courage and strength. He starts his speech calmly and gradually moves to instigation. He uses the device of metonymy frequently in his speech. The king's speech on Saint Crispin's Day is highly rhetorical as he instills verve in his weary, wounded and exhausted soldiers. He does not force them to fight but he motivates them through a very eloquent language as:

...he which has no stomach to this fight

Let him depart

This passport shall be made

And crowns for convey put in purse. (IV.iii.35-37)

Through these lines he rhetorically questions the patriotism of his soldiers. Henry V addresses his men as 'dear friends', 'my friends' and 'band of friends'. This speech depicts his leadership quality like Satan in *Paradise Lost*.

He also uses the prayer as an oratorical device and his body movements also aid in persuasion. When he falls to his knees while praying and utters, "O God of battles steel my soldier's hearts" (IV.i.263). During this prayer he also uses the device of repetition and paralipsis to make his language more eloquent

King Henry uses heavy imagery and symbols to portray the war. He calls the war 'hungry' and 'vast jaws', and compares it with 'thunder' and 'earthquake'.

It is observed from the above discussion that like other plays of Shakespeare there is frequent use of different rhetorical devices and figures of speech such as simile, metaphor, rhetorical questions,

emotive language, metonymy, repetition and imagery in both the plays. These rhetorical devices and figures perform various functions apposite to the speaker's advantage. In both plays the nobles use these devices and figures to manipulate, convince, convert, motivate, impress, flatter and orchestrate the circumstances "but these devices are not used in equal proportions as some are given more preferences" [2] as required. So, it is clear that oratorical use of language in the speeches is not an imposition or superficial ornamentation rather it serves a purposeful objective which an ordinary language cannot achieve.

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