

A Comparative Study On The Plots Of William Shakespeare's *Othello* And Paulo Coelho's *The Zahir* (Sebuah Kajian Bandingan Pada Alur Cerita Pada *Othello* Karya William Shakespeare dan *The Zahir* Karya Paulo Coelho)

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Abstrak

Drama *Othello* dan novel *The Zahir* adalah dua karya sastra yang sangat fenomenal di masanya. Kedua karya diatas menceritakan tentang cinta dan kecemburuan pada tokoh utamanya yang membuat alur cerita pada kedua karya sastra tersebut semakin menarik. Penelitian ini dilakukan guna mencari perbedaan dan persamaan dari kedua alur cerita dalam karya drama dan novel tersebut. Tindakan-tindakan yang tersirat dalam percakapan-percakapan dari para tokoh utama dan para tokoh pendukung di dalam drama dan novel merupakan data utama. Selain itu, data penunjang dikumpulkan dari berbagai sumber yang mempunyai hubungan dengan subjek penelitian. Pada tahap ini, kajian bandingan dan pendekatan struktural digunakan oleh peneliti untuk meneliti alur cerita dalam karya sastra yang terbagi dalam awalan, pertengahan dan akhiran yang menjadi unsur intrinsik. Setelah memperoleh data, peneliti menganalisa kesamaan dan perbedaan pembangun unsur alur cerita dalam drama dan novel. Hasil dari analisa menunjukkan bahwa konflik dari tokoh utama dalam drama dan novel tersebut berpengaruh pada pembentukan alur cerita. Hasil analisa selanjutnya menunjukkan bahwa persamaan dan perbedaan alur cerita hampir sama, artinya tidak terdapat perbedaan dan persamaan yang mencolok.

Kata kunci: drama, karya bandingan, novel and plot.

Abstract

Othello and *The Zahir* are two phenomenal works of literature in their times. The two works tell about love and jealousy of the main characters that make the plot interesting. This study is conducted to look for similarity and dissimilarity of the two storylines in both works. The actions implied in dialogues of the main characters and the supporting characters in the play and the novel are the main data. In addition, supporting data are collected from various sources that have relationships with the research subjects. A comparative study and the structural approach are used by the researcher to investigate the story of the works. The plot of literary works using structural approach is divided into the beginning, the middle and the ending. After obtaining the data, the researcher analyzed the similarities and the differences that build the plot in the drama and the novel. The results of the analysis indicate that the character's conflicts influence the plot, eventhough they are not completely different and similar in each of the story line.

Keywords: Comparative study, play, plot, novel and setting

Introduction

A novel is in some sense a 'telling' rather than an 'acting', and this is an important distinguished sense the novel from the drama. Hawthorne says (1985:1) that "Novel is a fictitious prose narrative or tale of considerable length (now usually one long enough to fill one or more volumes) in which characters and actions are representative of the real life of past or present times which are portrayed in a plot of more or less complexity". Literature uses language as a medium to express thoughts and feeling. On the other hand,

reading a play or a novel is like observing the experiences of human life. Pleasure here is not only happiness but also sadness. Shakespeare and Paulo Coelho are famous writers from different ages. They have brilliant talent and they create surprises. It is the reason why their works exist up to now. *Othello* and *The Zahir* tell about love story and jealousy. The works have the same stories about the wives and husbands. But in a time, they become different in how they make their husbands in agony. In the play *Othello*, Shakespeare describes a good wife in the sixteenth century. She follows whatever her husband says. The wife in *The*

Zahir is the opposite. This novel was originally written and published in 2005 in Portuguese and has been translated into 59 languages. This novel tells about Esther, Jorge's wife who leaves him. It is really a new thing when a woman leaves her husband. They never meet because they work in different places. His wife is seen with a young man the day before her leaving. The different character of the two female characters in the play and the novel is interesting to analyze. Structural approach is focused only on the intrinsic literary element especially the plot. The discussion explores the elements of the plot which build such interesting works.

Method of Analysis

Some sources related with plot and comparative study are used in this study. Structural analysis is needed in the process of the research. This research is conducted by library research. It concerns with collecting data and information taken from several websites, books, journal, articles, and other references. The important data are taken from the play *Othello* and the novel *The Zahir* that consist of dialogues. The statements and the discussions of the two works are as the basic data of this journal.

The discussion in this thesis uses a suitable approach to get a clear description and a detailed explanation related to the problems. In this thesis, the researcher uses a structural approach to analyze both works. The play *Othello* and the novel *The Zahir* are viewed in line with the topic discussed, especially in relation with the intrinsic of the plot. Inductive method is used as the method of analysis. Shaw (1972:201) explains inductive method as "a form of reasoning from the specific to the general". The analysis starts from the specific concept to the general conclusions with a purpose to make a precise chronological analysis. To apply this method, this thesis begins the analysis from particularly different attitude. The play *Othello* and the novel *The Zahir* portray loyal wives to their husbands. It stimulates the husbands to respond with various ways. The responses of the two husbands become the similarities and differences of both literary works.

Result of Data Analysis

After analyzing the play *Othello* and the novel *The Zahir*, the results of data analysis are presented. The data of the study shows that the play *Othello* describes a woman in the sixteenth era. The woman follows her husband and she is always at home to wait for her husband. On the other hand, the novel *The Zahir* portrays a woman as a good wife having a profession. It presents a career woman. The comparison of the plots show that there are similarities and differences of the plot through the conflicts experienced by the main characters, both as husbands and wives.

Discussion

This discussion shows the plots in William Shakespeare's *Othello* and Paulo Coelho's *The Zahir*. The discussion only focuses on the intrinsic elements, especially the plots of the two works. The authors begin with conflict

connected with the following conflicts. It means that talking about a plot is talking about all of the various conflicts in the works and the ways in which those conflicts build the story line.

The structural analysis will define the plots of both works. The first analysis will be the plot of the play *Othello* and the discussion of plot in *The Zahir* will be the second one.

The result will show the similarities and the differences of the plots.

The first similarity of the novel and the play is how the main characters reach their love. In *Othello*, Othello shows his love in their marriage life. However, the marriage is not as good as he has thought. The marriage causes anger of Iago and Roderigo. Both of them snitch Othello's marriage to Desdemona's father. It appears a conflict among Brabantio, his daughter and Othello.

In *The Zahir*, Coelho describes that Jorge shows his love by his efforts to find his wife. Suddenly, the police arrests him because of his wife's disappearance. Coelho starts his novel with the imprisonment of the main character. Jorge feels disbelieved and shocked with this. In jail, he knows that his wife has abandoned him. He has mental conflict in jail because his wife has left him.

The second similarity is a difficult situation of Othello and Jorge. In *Othello*, Brabantio arrests Othello with his soldier. Brabantio accuses him at robbing his daughter. Brabantio wants him to be sent to prison. His duty as a father drives him to forget Othello as his friend as well. Othello is saved by Desdemona's testimony.

In *The Zahir*, the author sends the main character, Jorge to prison. It is the impact of her wife's disappearance. Jorge is arrested by the police of France because he is Esther's husband. The effect of Esther's job as a war journalist makes the police connect her with a network of terrorists.

The third similarity is the mental conflict of the two main characters. Mental conflict is one of the conflicts which shapes the middle part of the story. Othello suspects his wife to have a love affair with Cassio. Moreover, Othello's handkerchief on Cassio's hand sharpens Othello's suspicion. It starts when Iago knows the importance of Desdemona's handkerchief for Othello. In the same time, his wife Emilia gives him the handkerchief. It makes his plan easy to provoke Othello. Othello feels that he is totally betrayed by his wife. His emotion rises up because Desdemona cannot show her handkerchief. His emotion shows that the main character has mental conflict.

In *The Zahir*, Jorge starts his mental conflict when he hears that his wife has left him and has met Mikhail. The last information is about his meeting with Esther and it makes Jorge jealous. They keep a space to each other. Jorge insists Mikhail to show his wife with his frequent meetings. His efforts to get closer with his wife never happens because Mikhail wants Jorge to change his personality first. Mikhail admonishes Jorge that he gives him a message through their meeting with other people to straighten the way of Jorge's love. Moreover some mental conflicts appear from their meetings with some sects and nomad. The conflicts occur because Jorge walks away from his true love.

The fourth similarity is the regret of the main characters. Othello begins to weep and realize that Desdemona is innocent. He is aware of his being fool but it is too late. The dead Desdemona cannot live anymore. He feels sad and guilty. Othello thinks that his fault in killing his wife is unforgiven. The strong and brave general is hopeless. He feels that he has thrown away an important thing in his life, notably his wife. Tragically, the regretful Othello pays for everything that he has done to his beautiful wife by conducting a suicide. He stabs himself and falls upon the bed in his bedroom and dies.

In *The Zahir*, the regret of the main character is not for having opportunity to see his wife. It is the step that gives Jorge his consciousness. Jorge said that “*A time to rend and a time to sew*” (Coelho, 2005:72). From the quotation, he wants to sew his relation with Esther. So many mistakes he had done in the past that he had affairs with more than one woman. At the moment, his accident gives him awareness. He must change himself because he wants to sew his relation with his wife, Esther.

The fifth similarity is the settings of the story that influence both the play and the novel. The events of the story in *Othello* takes place in Venice and Cyprus with a kingdom's background. This setting creates a conflict that happens in the kingdom. Actually, the conflict happens among the people of the kingdom. The setting supports the conflict. Iago sometimes calls Othello with “a Moor”. A Moor implies a racial act. Othello has black skin. It sharpens Iago's jealousy because of his physic. It is Iago's jealousy that makes Othello fall into tragic ending.

Furthermore, the events of the story of the novel *The Zahir* take place in France, Madrid, Barcelona, Spain, Amsterdam, Belgium, Almaty and Kazakhstan. In depth, the settings of place influence the novel. France, Madrid, Barcelona, Spain, Amsterdam, Belgium are western countries. Those countries show free life style as described through characters of Jorge and Marie. Coelho portrays their lives and thoughts. They live together and have sexual intercourse without marriage. Furthermore, they finish their relationship when Jorge searches his wife. Marie tolerates Jorge's choice. On the other hand, Almaty and Kazakhstan are the middle east countries. Esther is influenced by the characteristic of these countries. Esther has left Jorge because she has protested his behaviour. Here, Esther is close to the middle east culture.

The two works do not only have the similarities, but also the differences are as the followings. The first difference between the play *Othello* and the novel *The Zahir* starts from the plots of both works. Shakespeare in *Othello* offers a complex plot. Love conflict of *Othello* and Desdemona appears. Iago's jealousy is the center of the conflict. This conflict drives Iago to break Othello's love to Desdemona.

The Zahir offers a simple plot. It only concerns with the conflicts of a single character. The novel portrays a single character to reach the purpose. *The Zahir* performs Jorge as the main character. He has a purpose to find his wife in this story. Each sequence shows his effort until it brings him to his fortunes to meet Esther.

The second difference of the story shows the way the female characters convey their love to their husbands. In the play *Othello*, Desdemona realizes her love. Firstly, her true love drives her to marry Othello. In the second, she proves her love to accompany Othello in Cyprus. Inversely, *The Zahir* describes the character Esther as a wife who has left her husband. She has abandoned Jorge without saying goodbye. Even, Esther has not told her position to Jorge. Esther always tells him that she wants to go somewhere. It means that he has lost the contact with his wife until the police arrests him. Simply, his wife has abandoned him. At the end of the story, Esther proves her love to Jorge. Esther has been waiting for Jorge's coming to see her in Afghanistan. Esther hopes that, although she has ever left him, her husband still loves her.

The third difference is a big picture of the plots of both works. A female character in *Othello* represents a position of a woman in Shakespeare's era. Desdemona shows her love to her husband by following him. She is a good wife; an obedient woman to her husband. The story shows a man as a provider. It means that a man gets a job for his wife. A woman waits for her husband at home and her husband goes to the battle. From the battle, her husband has a part of war compensation that becomes income for the kingdom. This income will be shared to the soldiers as the salary. Desdemona, in this case, is characterized as a loyal woman.

In contrast, Paulo Coelho creates a novel by giving different characterization of the female character named Esther. The conflict in *The Zahir* starts when Esther leaves Jorge and pursues her career as a war journalist. Esther is also characterized as a tough woman. The story flows when Jorge is trying to seek where Esther is. The tough character of Esther makes the plot of the story move. Actually, the author has something new to convey to the readers.

The fourth difference is the general plot structure. *Othello* uses a Dramatic or progressive plot. The setting is the first part of dramatical plot. The setting gives influence to the plot. The play *Othello* uses the setting to support the conflict. Iago's dissatisfaction with his position as the part of the kingdom makes him wicked. Moreover, *Othello* is a Moor with black skin. It raises Iago's hatred that later leads him to destroy Othello's life.

The plot of the novel *The Zahir* starts from the flashback which conveys information about the events that occur before. It permits the author to begin the story in the midst of the action. It starts when the main character is arrested. Esther has abandoned Jorge for a week since she has disappeared. It means that his wife's disappearance gives influence in his life. In fact, Jorge does not have any relation with his wife's cases, but the police forces him to stay in prison for a day.

The fifth difference is that a man is imprisoned. Othello is a friend of Brabantio. Brabantio really loves his daughter, Desdemona. Othello breaks the relationship with Brabantio because he marries his daughter. Later, Brabantio

accuses him of robbing and using magic to marry Desdemona. However, he cannot send Othello to prison because Desdemona loves him and the Duke wants him to lead the war against the Turks.

In *The Zahir*, the main character, Jorge, has been arrested and imprisoned. *The Zahir* is different from *Othello* because in *the Zahir*, Jorge has no cases with crime and he stays in jail for a day. It is because of his wife's disappearance. Directly, Jorge has no relation with the case but he is sent to jail nonetheless.

The last difference is the endings of the stories. *Othello* has sad ending while *The Zahir* has happy ending. Othello says that :

"OTHELLO. I kissed thee ere I killed thee:--no way but this,

Killing myself, to die upon a kiss.
Falls on the bed, and dies" (Act V, scene 2,

p.931)

Othello kills his beloved wife by his own hand and finally commits suicide. Surely, it makes Lodovico and other part of

Venice kingdom sad.

While in *The Zahir*, Jorge finds his wife and starts a new family again although Esther is pregnant with another person. It is happy ending. They realize their mistakes, but they forgive all and start a new life.

The following picture shows the similarity and the difference of the big plots of the two literary works.

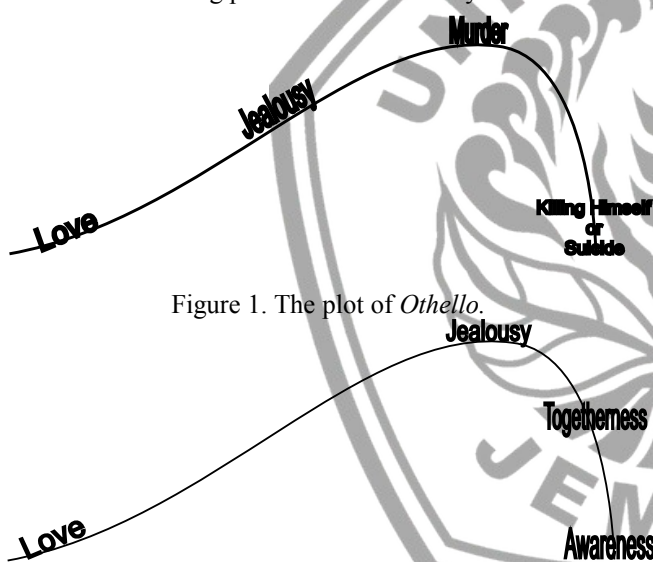


Figure 1. The plot of *Othello*.

Figure 2. The plot of *The Zahir*.

Both figures show the similarity that love and jealousy bring the main characters to the conflicts. The analysis of the similarities of the plots describes the effort of the main characters to show their love. Jealousy is included a mental conflict. It is the impact of their enormous love. The third similarity explains the mental conflicts of both the main characters.

The difference of the two literary works above is seen from the main characters' response to the problem. In *Othello*, Othello is in jealous rage. Jealousy drives the main character to murder. He kills his wife then he commits suicide. In *The Zahir*, Jorge as the main character grows better in the story. Jealousy leads him to the awareness that he and Esther still love each other. It gives a positive ending that he reconciles at the end of the story.

Conclusion

The interesting thing of the two literary works here is the eras of the authors that influence their works. Shakespeare in Elizabethan era describes that a woman is still at home and a man goes out for war, food, job, etc. Paulo Coelho in modern era depicts an opposite character of a woman from the play *Othello*. In *the Zahir*, a woman has a freedom. A woman is not only at home waiting for her husband, but she has freedom to leave her husband for her own career.

This research shows some similarities and differences between *Othello* and *The Zahir*. *Othello* offers a complex plot within complex conflicts. It offers the conflict in the parts of Venice's kingdom. Iago's jealousy as the Moor is the main conflict. On the other hand, a closed plot is the ending of the story. Othello's and Desdemona's deaths end the story. Shakespeare depicts the main character's fate to finish the story.

The Zahir serves a simple plot. It conveys Jorge's love story to find his wife. The story portrays a closed plot with a happy ending. Both of them have a new life after them separate. Moreover, a meeting of them is a reconciliation. It also makes their relationship clear. The main characters solve their problem by finding the meaning of true love. Jorge accepts his wife as what she is.

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