

# Artistic Delivery of Sublime Thoughts in Shakespeare's Dramas and Sonnets

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper's central concern revolves around the sublime thoughts delivered artistically in the works of William Shakespeare, the tremendously influential playwright and poet of all time. A piece of art particularly speaking literature includes some traits or qualities for which it remains afresh the test of time. Among the qualities, sublimity is one through which a writer may make a space in the reader's mind. William Shakespeare has been enchanting and entertaining the readers of different languages with his artistic delivery of thoughts of varied fields expressing universal thoughts. These thoughts become the finest pieces of expression when they are shrouded with sublimity. Shakespeare has portrayed his characters with sublime thoughts galore. These sublimities help the readers find the significance of human hearts, the necessity of reading literature, pleasure in discovering inner truth, weighing the greatness of human souls and the supremacy of humans indicating the notion - the aristocratic thought of an aristocratic being- after all, man is the sublime creature having sublime thoughts.*

**KEYWORDS:** Sublimity, thought, soul, supremacy, aristocracy, elevation, eloquence.

## Introduction

This paper's prominent purpose is to demystify the artistic delivery of sublime thoughts in Shakespeare's dramas and sonnets. When an artist with his personal experience and pregnant imagination presents an ever-continuous beauty of nature that creates a never-ending enchantment to a reader or a listener or a beholder, it may be called an art. Critics uncounted, intellectuals many, writers more have spent ink much to give definitions available which have satisfied the asking of the connoisseurs worldwide. Herbert Read comments that sublimity is a state of wonder on admiration on more coldly but more exactly a state of recognition. (Read,1996) Leo Tolstoy states: 'To evoke in oneself a feeling one has experienced and having evoked it in oneself, then employing movement, hues, colors, sounds on forms expressed in words so to transmit that feeling that others experience lie the same feeling that is the activity of art.' (Tolstoy, 1960) Therefore when some thought is expressed through this method namely the art, it is called artistic. Shakespeare's writings are full of arts, hence they are artistic. Immanuel Kant regards the sublime as a presentation of an indeterminate concept of reason. An object, according to him, can be terrifying and thus sublime, without the beholder being afraid of it. He furthers that it is connected to a rational mind and morality. He says, " True sublimity must be sought

only in the mind of the judging subject, and not in the object of nature".( Kant, 1914 )

The view of this writing is why the dramas namely Julius Caesar, Macbeth, Hamlet, and the sonnets (23,34,83,130&151) astonish us with their sublime thoughts. We have tried to assay our best to find out the greatness of the human soul through which Shakespeare can be once more weighed on the ground of Sublime thoughts. Julius Caesar unfolds the awe, shock, murder, intrigue, malice, bloody action under the guise of reason, argument, administration democracy, patriotism, sacrifice. Macbeth profoundly represents the evil desire or ambition for the state, power, pelf a man can possess. In Hamlet, we notice intellectually supreme personality who by no means can be an instrument/toy to the circumstances. Hamlet announces man's superiority over anything (as 'mind' is glorified in Paradise Lost). Like an epic hero, Hamlet conveys a grand message to mankind. The sonnets stated above provides the softest issues i.e. love, beauty, beloved, all these are linked with the same thread- the Sublime thought. The same identity which the sublime thoughts produce helps us to enlarge our imagination. We have tried this article to test with the definitions, interpretations, opinions of the connoisseurs on sublime. Above all, the purpose of this article

is to show the artistic delivery of the sublime thoughts which makes Shakespeare a giant star shining gallantly in the milky way of literature.

## **Methodology**

As the study involves in finding the artistic delivery of sublime thoughts in Shakespeare's dramas and sonnets – Julius Caesar, Macbeth, Hamlet, and selected sonnets (23,34,83,130&151) – using qualitative research method, we have applied different sorts of techniques and methods. Sublimity in Shakespeare's dramas and sonnets has been found in the hidden words, phrases and sentences. Many research articles and books written on this very particular issue have been summarized and analyzed for collecting data from direct and indirect sources to demonstrate our findings.

## **Artistic Delivery of Sublime Thoughts in Julius Caesar**

Julius Caesar, Shakespeare's one of the greatest tragedies abounds with sublime thoughts. The lines below present before the intelligent readers a mathematical calculation of identifying enemies of the beasts including of human beings:

Decius:

'That unicorns may be betrayed with trees,

And bears with glasses, elephants with holes,

Lions with toils, and men with flatterers.

But when I tell him he hates flatterers,

He says he does, being then most flattered.' (Shakespeare, 2010)

A discussion between Cassius and Decius happens whether Julius Caesar will go to the Capitol or not. If not, Decius says that he is able to make Caesar go there through flattery. Flattery, Decius asserts, is the trap by which a man can be trapped. Here some traps are described sublimely with poetic verses. The following lines prove this sublime thought through the voice of the protagonist, Caesar himself:

'Danger knows full well

That Caesar is more dangerous than he.' (Shakespeare, 2010)

Let's look at the pieces of advice of Brutus to Caius Cassius regarding the murder of Antony and Julius Caesar:

(These pieces of advice of Brutus are similar to the ones of Satan to his disciples expelled from Heaven in 'The Paradise Lost' which supplies grand sublime thoughts a lot.)

'Our course will seem too bloody, Caius Cassius.

To cut the head off and then hack the limbs.

Like wrath in death and envy afterwards;

For Antony is but a limb of Caesar,' (Shakespeare, 2010)

In the artistic lines above inform us of the fact that Caius Cassius proposes Brutus to murder Antony along with Caesar. Brutus, but, brutally, brilliantly and bravely to dissuades him to kill Antony. He rather argues to arrange a demonic act under the guise of an angel. A mixture of tragedy and enjoyment co-exists here when he namely Brutus advises Caius Cassius that they should murder Caesar in the spirit of persons offering a sacrifice and not in the spirit in which a butcher slaughters an animal whose flesh is to be sold as meat. He adds that they will assassinate him boldly not angrily. To make the killing lawful he further assures that they are against the tyranny not, Caesar. He again emphasizes that the flesh of Caesar is for the Gods not for the dogs. Brutus eventually shrewdly says that their heart should instigate their hands to commit this act of violin and afterward rebuke them for having committed it in the same way. He exemplifies and tells Cassius that they will be called purifiers, not murderers. Before the killing of Caesar, the killers want to take the oath but Brutus advocates that gentlemen like them do not take the oath to do something. He with his excellent language brings out some real fact that oaths are not meant for honorable men. Naturally, he points out that priests, cowards, cunning fellows, old and miserable persons with no vigor or spirit, the suffering souls swear. Here lies the truth or reality of supreme kind that once again confirms us the sublime quality that enchants us either with its style of expression or with its inner fact. Julius Caesar marvels at us, the avid readers, entailing plenty of sublimes. The following quotations bear their testimonies undoubtedly:

"Cowards die many times before their death

The valiant never taste of death but once.

My heart laments that virtue cannot live out of the teeth of emulation.

There are no tricks in plain and simple faith." (Shakespeare, 2010)

An important aspect of the sublime is the work of one's imagination to comprehend something so great that it seems inconceivable. To describe the personality of Caesar, Cassius upholds a comparison that proves Caesar's dignity, honor, strength, in fact, an image that is rare in this mundane world. To Brutus, he tells about Caesar:

'Why man he doth bestride the narrow world

Like a Colossus, and we petty men

Walk under his huge legs, and peep about

To find ourselves dishonorable graves.' (Shakespeare, 2010)

Caesar is here compared to a huge stature which legs span the whole world. Colossus is the name of a huge statue of god Apollo. This statue is regarded as one of the Seven Wonders of the World. The statue stood at the entrance to the harbor of Rhodes, with one leg planted on one side of the harbor, and the other leg planted on the other side. The ships entering the harbor had thus to pass under the legs of this statue. Cassius, speaking about Caesar, says that this man rules the world unchallenged and that this whole world is too small for him. This thinking of Cassius reveals the sublime character of Caesar.

### Artistic Delivery of Sublime Thoughts in Macbeth

Most scholars point to Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1758) as the landmark treatise on the sublime. He defines the sublime as "whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger whatever is any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects or operates in a manner analogous to terror". Burke wrote about a terrible sublimity linked to notions of death, powerless, and annihilation and in doing so, linked it to the vast, uncontrollable, unknown ocean.

Terror in all cases whatsoever either more openly or latently the ruling principle of the sublime. In 'Macbeth', Lady Macbeth instigates Macbeth, the hero to be determined strictly for killing Duncan, the king. Through the lines below the readers or audiences witness a horrible kind of the sublime:

'I have given suck, and know  
How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me;  
I would, while it was smiling in my face,  
Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums,  
And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn  
As you have done to this.' (Shakespeare, 2015)

These lines compel us to imagine an image of unparalleled cruelty that lies in human brains. Here some soft and beautiful words like suck, tender, love, babe, milk, smiling, nipple, boneless gums, and on the contrary, some hard and cruel ones like dash'd, brains out, plucked are actually used to make a horrible plot for fulfilling the plan of Duncan's murder.

To save themselves in a crucial warring environment, Malcolm and Donalbain want to separate themselves from each other leaving for England and Ireland respectively. To convey a man's terrible identity under the guise of smiling Donalbain declares:

'To Ireland, I; our separated fortune

Shall keep us both the safer; where we are,  
There's daggers in men's smiles: the nearer in blood,  
The nearer bloody.' (Shakespeare, 2015)

Here 'daggers' or 'bloody' make us remember atrocities, on the other hand, 'smile' or 'blood' indicate kind of human kindness.

'To be weak is miserable' is the key sense of the sublime thought in *The Paradise Lost*. Satan gains inspiration from this key sense and so does our Macbeth.

The order of Macbeth also depicts a tragic picture in our mind when news came from the battlefield:

'Send out more horses, skirr the country round;  
Hang those who talk of fear.' (Shakespeare, 2015)

When a soldier or a hero faces the failure miserably he like Macbeth can realize the inner reality of life, the definition of life, the interpretation of life, with these lines that are delivered artistically containing a sublime thought that strikes every reader. He confronts death and defines life as follows:

'Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player,  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,  
And then is heard no more: it is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.' (Shakespeare, 2015)

Through frustration, Macbeth defines life artistically with a well delivered sublime which is hardly impossible to forger but to quote it to satisfy our thirst created from failure.

### Artistic Delivery of Sublime Thoughts in Hamlet

'Hamlet', in fact, undoubtedly instructs how the mind of man becomes a thousand times more beautiful than the earth. The following lines of 'Hamlet' clearly, artistically, superbly reminds the sublimity of man's mind:

'What piece of work is a man!  
How noble in reason,  
how infinite in faculty!  
In form and moving how express and admirable!  
In action how like an angel,  
in apprehension how like a god!

The beauty of the world.' (Shakespeare, 2019)

Shakespeare demonstrates the infinite faculties which astound a reader, overwhelm a thinker, leading him to a realm of the unknown or subconscious or unconscious region from a conscious world. These lines say that Man is a superb work of artistic creation. He is wonderfully noble in having the powers of reasoning. He has faculties whose range is limitless. In his appearance and his movements, he is admirably exact and well proportioned. His actions are angelic in their benevolence and beneficence. In his powers of apprehension, he is divine. He represents the highest form of beauty in this world. He possesses the highest excellence of all the animals.

These verses bear the testimony of incomparable power a man possesses. For this, these lines are sublimated. According to Kant, the presentation of an indeterminate concept of reasoning is sublime.

The soliloquy of Hamlet in 'Hamlet' "does bear evidence of sublime thought:

"To be or not to be, that is the question:

whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer

The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,

Or to take arms against a sea of troubles" (Shakespeare, 2019)

This soliloquy helps us think about the unlimited injuries through which an intelligent mind goes and the consequences that he has to bear having got no way to escape. It is overstated that this expression contains sublime thought which has made it popular worldwide.

The thinking of Ophelia about Hamlet, the prince once again gathers the sublime thought of a noble mind.

'O, what a noble mind is here overthrown!

The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword

The expectancy and rose of the fair state,

The glass of fashion, the mould of form,

The observed of all observers, quite, quite down..." (Shakespeare, 2019)

Ophelia speaks to herself that it is a pity that such a noble-minded man as prince Hamlet should have lost his wits. He had the graces of a courtier. He had the courage of a soldier. He had the learning and eloquence of a scholar. He was one from whom a great deal was expected. He represented the perfection of young manhood in their beautiful country. She says that

he always served as a mirror reflecting an excellent taste in dresses. But the consequences have made him miserable enough that has created awe, shocking, terror, unhappiness, and surprise in the mind of Ophelia. The delivery of the sublime thought of course is artistically and acutely cute.

A universal teaching, a noble message, a struggling story in this harsh world, being a homo supine Hamlet, the prince wants to leave for

the generations coming next. So he urges Horatio to live more hours than he to tell his agonies of his soul to advise the new world. And this advice bears a grand sublime thought which leaves grave mood full of sorrows, pains, sufferings, we hear Hamlet advise the world :

'Things standing thus unknown, shall I leave behind me,

If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,

Absent thee from felicity awhile,

And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain

To tell my story.' (Shakespeare, 2019)

In fact, 'to tell my story' means to tell the world-full of uncertainty, terrible pains, violent struggles, the burden of life which is almost unbearable for those who bear a sensible heart with a sensed mind along with a reasonable head. Having finished the lines the adroit readers are again and again compelled to rethink what lesson Hamlet has conveyed for mankind.

Again, the last sentence Hamlet whispers 'the rest is silence' is an impregnated sublime which touches the only sensible soul so much. The extreme ultimate truth about death which no being escapes is pronounced as a whimper from the dying lips of Hamlet remains a supreme kind of sublime.

### **Artistic Delivery of Sublime Thoughts in Sonnets of Shakespeare**

Before the inception of the debate on either the sonnets of Shakespeare bear sublime thoughts or not, we have to look at the look of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, a poet, critic, and scholar who was very concerned with the sublime especially in contrast to the beautiful. Let us concentrate on the views Coleridge asserts: "I meet, I find the beautiful but I give contribute on rather attribute the sublime. No object of sense is sublime itself; but only as far as I make it a symbol of some idea. The circle is a beautiful figure in itself; it becomes sublime when I contemplate eternity under that figure."

Therefore, the speaker must contemplate more than just the object itself; it is sublime in its greater context. Coleridge did not demand the sensation of awe or terror within the sight; rather he focused on the elements of infinity.

In sonnet 23 Shakespeare says that an actor who is not fully experienced feels nervous when he begins to perform his role on the stage. Similarly, a man who is in a state of extreme rage finds himself unable to express himself. His love for his friend is as great that he does not nearly know how to express his feelings of thoughts about his friend in writing so he advises him to learn to read his silent love and emphasizes to hear with eyes not with ears and it is the finest art to comprehend love. Let's look at:

'O, learn to read what silent love hath writ

To hear with eyes belongs to love's fine wit.'

Sonnet 23 (Shakespeare, 2020)

The last line strikes us with its fine abstract and infinite hearing with the eyes. This idea surpasses the natural hearing with the ears. So here lies the sublime.

Another sonnet namely sonnet 30 produces a thought that the poet feels sorry or sad for his past misfortune but when he thinks over his friend his grief is naturally done away with. This idea wonders us:

But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,

All losses are restored and sorrows end.

Sonnet 30 (Shakespeare, 2009)

The sonnet also reminds us of the sublimity of love that goes below:

'Ah, but those tears are pearl which thy love sheds,

And they are rich and ransom all ill deeds.'

Sonnet 34 (Shakespeare, 2020)

The power of love crosses its limits or boundaries and exceeds the power of all writers who praise his friend's beauty. Here go the lines:

'There lives more life in one of your fair eyes  
Than both your poets can in praise devise.'

Sonnet 83 (Shakespeare, 2020)

## Conclusion

After a long strenuous study, different kinds of sublime thoughts have been found in Shakespeare's dramas & sonnets namely heroic sublime, romantic sublime, universal sublime, poetical sublime, soft sublime, strong sublime, religious sublime, moral sublime, political sublime etc. The thoughts, broadly speaking, quoted in the paper; hint at the versatile brilliance of William Shakespeare. It is mainly because of memorable speeches delivered by the various Shakespearean characters artistically producing sublime thoughts that have made him a maestro of the world literature. So, the responsible readers are often seen in an interrogation cell to answer the question, "Why is he a grand maestro?" Some often may reply, "For his grand (artistic) ground-breaking (sublime) getup (thought)".

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