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Dynamics of Rhetoric: A Study of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*

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Rhetoric is an art of speaking and writing persuasively, much cultivated in antiquity and continued thence as the particular essence of literary world. It lefts its emblem with its intellectual, emotional and dramatic appeal to an audience. Reiterating its origin, rhetoric is acknowledged as having intrinsic ties to the political system of democracy in ancient Greece especially in Athens. It is this maneuvering of language which enables the ruling class to exert a control over the economic and political spheres. It is the same word play employed for the reclamation of freedom. This idea astutely epitomized by Plato, as he opines "rhetoric is the art of ruling the minds of men" and in Thomas Sowell's words "freedom has cost too much blood and agony to be relinquished at the cheap price of rhetoric." Later rhetoric became deeply embedded in the Greek education in the efforts of a group of professional teachers called Sophists. They emerged as crusaders to teach the art of rhetoric for use in the courts, the legislature, political forums, as well as for philosophical reflection and debate.

This art further, adroitly flourished in the hands of Aristotle who enumerated three genres of rhetoric:

Forensic (also known as judicial was concerned with determining truth or falsity of events that took place in the past, issues of guilt), deliberative (also known as political, was concerned with determining whether or not particular actions should or should not be taken in the future), and epideictic (also known as ceremonial, was concerned with praise and blame, values, right and wrong, demonstrating beauty and skill in the present. (qtd. in Shenai 11)

Aristotle also illustrates three rhetorical nuances such as- logos (the use of reasoning) ethos (the credibility of a speaker to consider him/her to be believable) and pathos (to evoke strong emotions in audiences) (qtd. in Shenai 10).

Shakespeare had the power to move, whether to tears or laughter it is his universal appeal to emotions which makes him stand not as a poet of one age but for all times. Samuel Johnson claims that puns are to Shakespeare what "luminous vapors are to the traveler, he follows it all adventures; it is sure to lead him out of his way, and sure to engulf him the mire". Most of Shakespeare's plays are replete with artistic qualities. His immensity rests principally on his dexterity to exploit rhetorical devices in his plays. The present paper seeks to explore the use of rhetorical discourse by the different characters of Shakespeare's play *Measure for Measure*.

In the opening scene of the play the Duke of Vienna enthroned Angelo to serve as a 'regent' in order to ameliorate the country by advocating better law-suit. Angelo expound over it in his conversation with Escalus, as his speech clearly demonstrate the use of forensic rhetoric by exploiting an analogy as:

We must not make a scarecrow of the law,
 Setting it up to fear the birds of prey,
 And let it keep one shape till custom make it
 Their perch and not their terror. (2.1.1-4)

At the later stage Angelo's rhetoric shifts from forensic to deliberative, when his protestations to make a law circumscribed society were flung to air after getting infatuated towards Isabella. It prevails his sense of own convenience annihilating the matters of justice and injustice when he asserts:

What's this, what's this? Is this her fault, or mine?
 The tempter or the tempted, who sins most, ha?
 Not she; nor doth she tempt; but it is I,
 That, lying by the violet in the sun,
 Do as the carrion does, not as the flow'r . . .
 Shall we desire to raze the sanctuary,
 And pitch our evils there? O, fie, fie, fie! (2.2.171-80)

With the help of Isabella's character Shakespeare enumerate that in the vienna city speech should be a wellspring influence for women. Isabella's speech is also 'forensic' as she has a purpose that is to fight for the cause of her brother Claudio. She uses the language in such manner that it becomes a source of power to vindicate her brother on one hand and to censure Angelo on other. Forensic speech of Isabella also uses 'enthymemes' or the logical proofs which Aristotle sets as the wherewithal of persuasion. Isabella's use of forensic rhetoric and enthymemes proclaims that in Shakespeare's plays it is not only the male characters who possess the rhetorical power, but the female characters also own the power of persuasion. Isabella commence with her logical arguments that "And neither heaven nor man grieve at the mercy" (2.2. 55). The use of pathos is also implied in her speech when she alludes:

Too late? Why no: I, that do speak a word,
 May call it back again. Well, believe this:

No ceremony that to great ones longs,
Not the king's crown nor the deputy's sword,
The marshal's truncheon nor the judge's robe,
Become them with one half so good a grace
As mercy does.
If he had been as you, and you as he,
You would have slipped like him; but he like you
Would not have been so stern. (2.2.63-72)

Isabella is not stoic against Angelo's dictatorial commands and refute at every point. She triumphs over Angelo with her tongue as her armor as reverberates, when she opines against the death sentence to Claudio by Angelo:

. . . O, it is excellent
To have a giant's strength, but it is tyrannous
To use it like a giant. (2.2.112-15)

In the play Duke has a supreme authority, but he bestowed his kingdom ephemerally to Angelo. He disguises himself as his intent was to scan the veiled vices of his state. As the purpose of deliberative rhetoric is "to persuade or dissuade his hearers in relation to a course of action or decision of policy (Dixon 22) the deliberative rhetoric use by Duke is much efficacious than that of Angelo. He persuades the people to such extent that they elude his power:

BARNARD. I swear I will not die today for any man's persuasion.

DUKE. But hear you –

BARNARD. Not a word; if you have anything to say to me, come to my ward; for thence I will not today. (4.3.53-56)

It is Duke's sagacity, tinged with diction results in a potent deliberative rhetoric. Again it is Duke, who does full justice to Aristotle's ethos by redeeming his citizens to moral credos. When he asserts:

Come, Cousin Angelo;
In this I'll be impartial: be you judge

Of your own cause. (5.1.170-73)

Therefore in Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, rhetoric is very effectively used by the main characters to persuade the other characters and audience. It is the quaint aroma camouflaged in the art of rhetoric that cannot be superseded and Shakespeare's acumen over it maintains the essential piquancy of his plays.

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