“A Body Past Compare”: Romeo and Juliet and the Language of Appearance

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Introduction

William Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet has been performed all over the world for over 450 years, and yet it has never been more relevant to the performance community than this past year through the lens of the COVID-19 pandemic. The cancellation of live theatre due to the pandemic has given us a unique opportunity to explore not only the language of appearance in Shakespeare’s text but also the impact of the current social and political climate on the interpretation of the play. This research has been inspired by previous scholars looking into the temporal relevance of the text. How have audiences, through perspectives that suggest new contexts and environments for the play (Alberstat & Carlei, 2013), in clothing contemporary to its setting, or theme: some productions emphasize the divide between houses, while others focus attention on the romance of the protagonists. The play begins with violence in the streets, and ends with the untimely death of Romeo and Juliet: a love story that is as relevant in the 21st century as it was 500 years ago. (Thalberg & Cukor, 1936; Brabourne & Zeffirelli, 1968). This research topic was approached from two theoretical frameworks: New Criticism, which focuses on the underlying themes and ideas of a text, and Semiotics, which considers how the language of appearance shapes the meaning and interpretation of the play. From this research, we will gain a deeper understanding of how Shakespeare’s language of appearance has continuities and diversities across time. This will allow us to fashion a new understanding of the text which will expand our critical and scholarly perspective on Shakespeare’s language of appearance. The purpose of this study is to:

- Examine the language of appearance in Romeo and Juliet
- Draw conclusions from the narrative analysis that reflect the themes of the play

Methods and Procedures

Content Analysis

An initial content analysis of Romeo and Juliet was performed to gain an understanding of the language of appearance in the text. This analysis involved counting the number of times specific language of appearance terms were used in the text. This data was then used to create a list of themes that were relevant to the play. This list was then used to guide the design and construction of the costumes for theplay. A series of quick sketches were created to reflect on creative meaning and to evaluate design decisions. The data from this initial content analysis was then used to design the costumes for the play. This data was then used to evaluate the success of the costumes in reflecting the language of appearance in the text.

Purpose of Study

William Shakespeare was a playwright who lived in England from approximately 1564-1616 (Johnson, 2002). He is known for his contributions to literature, drama, and theatre. His plays, such as Romeo and Juliet, have been performed all over the world and have been translated into many different languages. His works continue to be popular today and are studied in schools and universities around the world. His plays are known for their themes of love, fate, and death, as well as their exploration of complex moral questions. His plays have been studied from a variety of perspectives, including literature, religion, and philosophy. This research is an exploration of the language of appearance in Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet. The language of appearance is the way that Shakespeare uses language to describe the appearance of his characters, such as their clothing, their body type, and their facial features. This research examines how the language of appearance is used in the play and how it contributes to the themes of the play. This research also examines how the language of appearance is used in contemporary productions of Romeo and Juliet.

Background

There is a rich history of research on the language of appearance in Shakespeare’s plays. This includes research on the language of appearance in the plays themselves, as well as research on the language of appearance in contemporary productions of the plays. This research has been inspired by previous scholars looking into the temporal relevance of the text. How have audiences, through perspectives that suggest new contexts and environments for the play (Alberstat & Carlei, 2013), in clothing contemporary to its setting, or theme: some productions emphasize the divide between houses, while others focus attention on the romance of the protagonists. The play begins with violence in the streets, and ends with the untimely death of Romeo and Juliet: a love story that is as relevant in the 21st century as it was 500 years ago. (Thalberg & Cukor, 1936; Brabourne & Zeffirelli, 1968). This research topic was approached from two theoretical frameworks: New Criticism, which focuses on the underlying themes and ideas of a text, and Semiotics, which considers how the language of appearance shapes the meaning and interpretation of the play. From this research, we will gain a deeper understanding of how Shakespeare’s language of appearance has continuities and diversities across time. This will allow us to fashion a new understanding of the text which will expand our critical and scholarly perspective on Shakespeare’s language of appearance. The purpose of this study is to:

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Theoretical Underpinnings

This research topic was approached from two theoretical frameworks: New Criticism and Semiotics. New Criticism is a way of analyzing a text on its own merit to discover its underlying, unifying theme. Unlike other literary movements, New Criticism does not look to the outside world for meaning, but rather to the text itself. Semiotics is the study of signs and symbols and how they are used to communicate meaning. This research draws on the theories of both New Criticism and Semiotics to analyze the language of appearance in Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet.

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The research was performed on a total of 75 pages. The data was then analyzed using a variety of statistical methods. The data was then used to create a series of quick sketches to reflect on creative meaning and to evaluate design decisions. Eight formal renderings were created to represent the designs for the costumes. The data from this initial content analysis was then used to design the costumes for the play. This data was then used to evaluate the success of the costumes in reflecting the language of appearance in the text.

The research was conducted from the spring of 2020 to the spring of 2021. The data was then analyzed using a variety of statistical methods. The data was then used to create a series of quick sketches to reflect on creative meaning and to evaluate design decisions. Eight formal renderings were created to represent the designs for the costumes. The data from this initial content analysis was then used to design the costumes for the play. This data was then used to evaluate the success of the costumes in reflecting the language of appearance in the text.

References


Discussion

The research was conducted from the spring of 2020 to the spring of 2021. The data was then analyzed using a variety of statistical methods. The data was then used to create a series of quick sketches to reflect on creative meaning and to evaluate design decisions. Eight formal renderings were created to represent the designs for the costumes. The data from this initial content analysis was then used to design the costumes for the play. This data was then used to evaluate the success of the costumes in reflecting the language of appearance in the text.

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