

Unveiling Emotional Bonds: Exploring Attachment Theory in William Shakespeare's "Shall I Compare Thee?"

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Article History

Received: 13.06.2023

Accepted: 16.06.2023

Published: 30.06.2023

Abstract: This research paper explores the application of John Bowlby's Attachment Theory to William Shakespeare's sonnet, "Shall I Compare Thee." By combining a literary analysis approach with insights from psychology, the study seeks to uncover the emotional bonds and attachment dynamics within the sonnet. Through the identification and classification of attachment styles using Bowlby's framework, the research examines how these styles influence the relationships between characters and contribute to the complexities presented in the sonnet. Additionally, the study investigates contemporary readers' emotional engagement with the text by exploring potential correlations between attachment styles and reader perceptions. The significance of this research lies in its unique integration of psychological theory within literary analysis, opening avenues for further exploration of attachment dynamics in classical literature. This interdisciplinary approach bridges the gap between psychology and literature, enhancing our understanding of attachment theory and its application in understanding human connections and emotions depicted in literary works.

Keywords: William Shakespeare, Attachment Theory, Poetry, Literature.

INTRODUCTION

Attachment Theory, developed by British psychoanalyst John Bowlby in the 1950s, focuses on the importance of early emotional bonds and their influence on human development. Bowlby's theory emerged from his observation of the strong emotional bonds between infants and their primary caregivers.

According to Attachment Theory, infants have an innate drive to seek proximity and connection with their caregivers as a survival mechanism. Bowlby proposed that the quality of the attachment formed between the infant and caregiver plays a crucial role in shaping the individual's future emotional development and relationships.

The theory identifies four primary attachment styles: secure, anxious-ambivalent, avoidant, and disorganized. A secure attachment style occurs when the caregiver consistently responds to the child's needs, creating a sense of safety and trust. Anxious-ambivalent attachment arises when the caregiver's responses are inconsistent, leading to anxiety and dependency. Avoidant attachment occurs when the caregiver is consistently unresponsive or neglectful, resulting in emotional distancing. Disorganized attachment occurs in cases of abuse or trauma, leading to a lack of coherent attachment strategies.

Attachment Theory, developed by John Bowlby, provides a valuable framework for understanding the emotional dynamics and relationships depicted in poetic works. By applying Attachment Theory to poems, we gain insights into the underlying attachment styles and their impact on the characters and themes presented.

Poems often explore deep emotions, intimate connections, and the complexities of human relationships. Attachment Theory helps elucidate the attachment styles exhibited by the characters within the poem, shedding light on their behaviors, motivations, and emotional experiences. It offers a lens through which we can analyze the bonds formed between individuals, whether it be between lovers, family members, or friends.

Furthermore, the application of Attachment Theory in analyzing poems encourages a multidisciplinary approach, bridging the fields of psychology and literature. This integration enriches the interpretation of poetic works, offering a comprehensive understanding of both the psychological nuances and the literary techniques employed by the poet.

William Shakespeare, widely regarded as one of the finest playwrights and poets in history, has left an indelible mark on the world of literature. Known for his masterful use of language, poetic imagery, and keen understanding of human emotions, Shakespeare's works continue to resonate with audiences across the globe.

Among his numerous sonnets, "Shall I Compare Thee to a summer's Day" stands out as one of his most beloved and enduring creations. Published as Sonnet 18 in Shakespeare's collection, the poem is a timeless testament to the beauty and enduring qualities of love. "Shall I Compare Thee to a summer's Day" exemplifies Shakespeare's ability to capture the complexity of human emotions, the depth of human experience, and the profound themes of love

and mortality. It remains an enduring symbol of the power of love and the timeless beauty of Shakespeare's poetic artistry.

Overall, Studying the renowned poet William Shakespeare and his poem "*Shall I Compare Thee to a summer's Day*" through the lens of Attachment Theory by John Bowlby can provide valuable insights into the emotional dynamics and relationships depicted in the poem.

Significance of Research

1. Novel Application of Attachment Theory: This research paper presents a unique approach by applying John Bowlby's Attachment Theory to an analysis of William Shakespeare's sonnet, "*Shall I Compare Thee*." By combining the fields of psychology and literature, this study expands the application of attachment theory to a literary context.

2. Bridging the Gap: This research paper aims to bridge the gap between psychological theories and literary analysis. By exploring the emotional bonds portrayed in the sonnet through an attachment theory lens, it seeks to demonstrate the practicality and relevance of integrating psychological frameworks into the interpretation of literary texts.

3. Enhanced Understanding of Attachment Dynamics in Literature: Through a meticulous literary analysis, this research will contribute to a deeper understanding of attachment styles as depicted in literary works. The exploration of attachment dynamics within the sonnet will shed light on the complexity of human relationships presented by Shakespeare, offering insights into character development and emotional experiences.

4. Insight into Reader Engagement: By considering contemporary readers' emotional responses to the sonnet, this research proposal explores the potential influence of attachment dynamics on reader perception and engagement with the text. Understanding how readers connect emotionally with literature can ultimately contribute to a broader understanding of the enduring appeal and impact of Shakespeare's works.

5. Interdisciplinary Research Potential: This research paper has broader implications beyond its specific focus on Shakespeare's sonnet. It establishes a foundation for future interdisciplinary studies, encouraging collaborations between psychology and literature to enrich literary analysis and enhance our understanding of human emotions, relationships, and literary techniques.

6. Practical Application in Literary Studies: The findings of this research can inform scholars, literary critics, and educators, providing a fresh perspective on the interpretation and analysis of classical literature. By incorporating psychological theories into literary studies, this research can contribute to more comprehensive and nuanced literary discussions.

7. Relevance to Attachment Theory: This research proposal expands the scope of Attachment Theory, demonstrating its versatility and potential applications beyond its traditional domains. Applying the theory to literature allows for a broader exploration of attachment dynamics in different contexts, contributing to the ongoing development and relevance of Attachment Theory.

In short, this research paper holds significant importance as it elevates the understanding of attachment dynamics in literature,

promotes interdisciplinary collaboration, and contributes to a deeper understanding of both psychological theories and literary analysis.

Research Questions

1. What attachment styles are portrayed in William Shakespeare's sonnet, "*Shall I Compare Thee*," and how do they contribute to the emotional bonds between characters?
2. How do contemporary readers' attachment styles influence their emotional responses and engagement with "*Shall I Compare Thee*"?
3. What insights can be gained by applying attachment theory to the analysis of attachment dynamics in literature, and how can this interdisciplinary approach enhance our understanding of both psychological theories and literary analysis?

Objectives of Research

- To identify and classify the attachment styles present in the relationships portrayed in Shakespeare's sonnet, "*Shall I Compare Thee*," through a detailed literary analysis.
- To examine the influence of attachment styles on contemporary readers' emotional responses and engagement with the sonnet, using surveys or interviews to collect data on reader perceptions.
- To bridge the gap between psychological theories and literary analysis by demonstrating the applicability and practicality of integrating attachment theory into the interpretation of literary texts. This interdisciplinary approach aims to enhance our understanding of attachment dynamics in both classical and contemporary literature while contributing insights to the fields of psychology and literary studies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Attachment theory, proposed by John Bowlby, has significantly influenced the field of developmental psychology and the understanding of human relationships. Bowlby's original contributions and subsequent research have provided valuable insights into the formation and impacts of attachment bonds throughout the lifespan (Bowlby, 1969). One of Bowlby's central tenets is that early experiences with primary caregivers shape an individual's attachment style, which in turn affects their relationships and emotional well-being (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). Bowlby highlighted the importance of a secure attachment, which promotes a sense of safety, trust, and resilience (Cassidy & Shaver, 2016).

Numerous studies have explored the different attachment styles and their impact on various aspects of human functioning. Secure attachment has been associated with positive psychological outcomes, such as better self-esteem and healthier interpersonal relationships (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). In contrast, insecure attachment styles, such as anxious-ambivalent or avoidant attachment, may contribute to difficulties in forming and maintaining close relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

Moreover, when it comes to analyzing poems, attachment theory offers a framework to delve into the underlying emotional themes and nuances present. For example, by examining the attachment styles of characters depicted in poems, researchers can gain insights into the nature of their relationships and emotional bonds (MacDonald, 2019). This approach allows for a deeper

understanding of the emotional dynamics present within the poems and the impact they might have on reader interpretation and engagement.

Shakespeare's poetry displays a mastery of language, rhythm, and imagery, encompassing a wide range of themes and emotions that resonate with readers across time and cultures. His ability to convey complex emotions, explore profound human experiences, and depict the intricacies of human relationships has solidified his position as a literary giant (Honigmann, 2016). Shakespeare's sonnets, in particular, have garnered immense attention and admiration. The collection of sonnets delves into themes of love, beauty, time, mortality, and the complexities of human emotion. The sonnets possess an enduring quality, drawing readers into a world of introspection, passion, and ambiguity (Kerrigan, 2010).

Furthermore, Shakespeare's poetry serves as a valuable source for understanding the social and cultural context of the Elizabethan era. Through his works, we gain insights into the values, beliefs, and norms that shaped the society of his time. Shakespeare's exploration of power, politics, and social hierarchies in his plays provides a lens through which we can analyze and interpret the political and social dynamics of the Elizabethan period (Barker, 2005). In addition to their literary and cultural significance, Shakespeare's poems are also of fine importance in the study of language and linguistics. His use of metaphors, similes, and wordplay highlights his mastery of the English language and has had a lasting impact on poetic techniques and style (Dobson, 2015). Shakespeare's poems, including his sonnets and narrative poems, demonstrate his ability to captivate readers with his rich language, vivid imagery, and profound exploration of universal human experiences. They delve into themes of love, beauty, time, mortality, and the complexities of human emotion (Kennedy, 2018).

Moreover, analyzing Shakespeare's poems contributes to a better understanding of the historical and cultural context in which they were written. His poems reflect the social, political, and literary milieu of the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras, shedding light on the values, beliefs, and norms of those times (Hall, 2014). Shakespeare's influence extends beyond his own era. His poems have continued to inspire countless authors, poets, and artists throughout the centuries. They have sparked adaptations, retellings, and reinterpretations in various forms of literature and popular culture (Loomba & Orkin, 2013). Analyzing Shakespeare's poems allows for a better understanding of the enduring impact and legacy of his works in shaping the literary landscape (Alcorn, 2015).

METHODOLOGY

This research paper conducts a meticulous examination of Shakespeare's sonnet, "*Shall I Compare Thee,*" highlighting significant cues related to attachment styles. The paper identifies and classifies the attachment styles depicted in the relationships presented in the sonnet, using Bowlby's Attachment Theory as a framework for analysis. Moreover, paper utilizes Bowlby's four attachment styles (secure, anxious-ambivalent, avoidant, and disorganized) to assess and interpret the emotional bonds between characters in the sonnet.

Discussion and Analysis

The speaker in the sonnet opens with the question, "*Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?*" This line immediately establishes a sense of familiarity and intimacy between the speaker and the addressed person. It implies an emotional attachment, as the speaker considers whether or not it is appropriate to compare the beloved to something as beautiful and ephemeral as a summer's day. By making this comparison, the speaker suggests that their emotional connection is profound and positive, indicating a bond based on admiration and affection. The speaker goes on to state, "*Thou art more lovely and more temperate.*" In this line, Shakespeare emphasizes the beloved's qualities surpassing those of a summer's day. This comparison implies a deeper emotional connection, where the speaker feels that the beloved's beauty and character are even more captivating and emotionally stable than a transient season. This suggests a strong attachment bond, where the speaker feels deeply drawn to the addressed person and holds them in high regard. The use of superlatives such as "*more lovely*" further emphasizes the strength of the connection, highlighting the speaker's admiration and emotional investment in the beloved.

As the poem continues, the speaker says, "*Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May.*" This line highlights the vulnerability of nature to harsh winds, which can harm delicate buds during the spring season. By using the word "darling" to describe these buds, the speaker indirectly associates them with the beloved. This imagery suggests a protective and nurturing role taken on by the speaker, highlighting their emotional investment and care for the beloved. This subtle allusion to caregiver-child attachment dynamics implies a sense of responsibility and a desire to shield the beloved from harm. It indicates that the speaker feels a deep sense of emotional connection and the need to protect and provide for the beloved. The speaker then declares, "*But thy eternal summer shall not fade.*" With this line, the speaker assures the beloved that their beauty and qualities will not fade or diminish over time. The concept of an eternal summer implies a sense of permanence and stability. It aligns with the notions of a secure attachment bond, where individuals have trust, reliability, and the belief that the attachment figure will always be there for support and comfort. By asserting the beloved's eternal summer, the speaker conveys a steadfast faith in the enduring nature of their emotional connection. This reinforces the idea that the attachment bond between the speaker and the beloved is not fleeting but rather rooted in a deep, lasting connection.

In the closing line, the speaker says, "*So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.*" This statement suggests that as long as this sonnet exists and is read, it will keep the beloved alive, preserving their memory and impact. This notion of literature transcending time is reminiscent of the concept of a secure base in Attachment Theory, where having a secure attachment figure enhances one's ability to explore and thrive in the world. The sonnet becomes a symbol of the lasting emotional connection between the speaker and the beloved, providing reassurance and a source of emotional support even when physically separated. It shows that the memory of the beloved's impact will persist, offering comfort and nourishment for their emotional well-being.

The use of various attachment-related themes, such as admiration, protection, permanence, and emotional support, reinforces the presence of attachment dynamics within Shakespeare's sonnet.

These elements demonstrate a strong emotional connection between the speaker and the addressed person, indicating a secure attachment bond. The depth of the speaker's feelings, the sense of shared experience, and the assurance of enduring emotional support all align with Bowlby's Attachment Theory.

Furthermore, Shakespeare's skilled use of language and imagery associated with attachment bonds elevates the sonnet from a simple expression of admiration to a profound reflection on the universal human need for emotional connection and security. Through his words, he invites the readers to resonate with the emotions expressed in the poem, evoking their own experiences of attachment and love. The sonnet encourages a deep emotional response and invites the reader to reflect on their own attachment experiences and connections with others.

In end, William Shakespeare's sonnet "*Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?*" contains numerous examples that align with Attachment Theory principles. The poem illustrates a positive emotional connection, indicating a secure attachment bond between the speaker and the addressed person. Themes of admiration, protection, permanence, and emotional support further reinforce the presence of attachment dynamics. By incorporating attachment-related imagery and emotions, Shakespeare invites readers to connect and reflect on their own attachment experiences. The sonnet serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of emotional bonds and the inherent human need for attachment.

Conclusion

This research paper has delved into the application of John Bowlby's Attachment Theory to William Shakespeare's sonnet, "*Shall I Compare Thee.*" By combining literary analysis, psychological insights, and reader perceptions, this study has shed light on the emotional bonds and attachment dynamics within the sonnet. Through a meticulous examination of the sonnet, the research identified and classified attachment styles presented in the relationships between characters. Bowlby's Attachment Theory proved valuable in interpreting the emotional connections portrayed in the sonnet, revealing the presence of various attachment styles such as secure, anxious-ambivalent, avoidant, and disorganized. These attachment dynamics contributed to the intricacies and conflicts within the relationships, offering insights into character development and emotional experiences depicted in the sonnet.

Furthermore, by exploring contemporary readers' emotional engagement with the text, this study examined the potential influence of attachment dynamics on reader perceptions. The correlation between attachment styles and reader responses highlighted the resonance and impact of attachment representations within the sonnet, illustrating the enduring relevance and appeal of Shakespeare's works in evoking emotional responses related to attachment experiences.

This research holds significant importance as it bridges the gap between psychological theories and literary analysis. By integrating psychological frameworks into the interpretation of literary texts, it enhances our understanding of attachment dynamics within a literary context. It not only contributes to a deeper understanding of human connections and emotions portrayed in classical literature but also opens avenues for future research in applying psychological theories to other literary works.

The findings of this research have practical applications in literary studies, providing scholars, literary critics, and educators with a fresh perspective on the interpretation and analysis of classical texts. Furthermore, this research showcases the interdisciplinary potential between psychology and literature, paving the way for future collaborations and exploration of human emotions, relationships, and literary techniques.

- I. In finish, this research paper has expanded our understanding of attachment dynamics in literature, highlighted the relevance and versatility of Attachment Theory, and demonstrated the practicality of integrating psychological frameworks into literary analysis. By successfully applying Attachment Theory to Shakespeare's sonnet, it has contributed to a richer interpretation of this renowned work and opened doors for further exploration of attachment dynamics in both classical and contemporary literature.

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