

2015

***Electronic
International
Interdisciplinary
Research Journal
(EIIRJ)***

**REVIEWED INTERNATIONAL
JOURNAL** **VOL IV Issues I**

**Chief-Editor
Mr.Ubale Amol Baban**

www.aarhat.com
25/2/2015



INTERTEXTUALITY BETWEEN MICHAEL RADFORD'S MOVIE *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE* (2004) WITH SHAKESPEARE'S PLAY *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE*.

Research paper in English

Sanjana

Research Scholar

Department Of English

Delhi University

Abstract:

The article tries to disclose the conception of Intertextuality by Focusing on Michael Redford's adaptation of movie The Merchant of Venice for which director has taken raw material from original play The Merchant OF Venice written by Shakespeare. In a way while in the endeavor of adaptation several changes are made by director which gives a new aesthetic beauty to the text, the visual production of the movie in a way send the Shakespeare's message to a large number of audience and make them aware with the Shakespearean theme. The raw material in the process of adaptation remains the same, but theatrical adaptation makes it more magnificent. The discourse of racism acquires new meaning in this whole process.

Keywords: *Intersexuality, Adaptation, Race, Hegemonies, Domination.*

Introduction:

Michael Radford's movie *The Merchant of Venice* (2004) is an extremely luminous project by the director. The movie *Merchant of Venice* (2004) has been adapted from Shakespeare's play *The Merchant of Venice*. The present paper has made an attempt to investigate the Intertextual relationship between Shakespeare's play with the cinematic

representation by Michael Redford's (2004) production of Shakespeare's play. John Frow in his essay "*Intertextuality and ontology*" describing Intertextuality articulates - "*The form of representation of intertextual ranges from the explicit to the implicit. In addition, these structure may be of the order of the message or of the order of the code. Texts are made out of cultural and ideological norms, out of conventions of genre; out of styles and idioms embedded in the language out of connotations and collective sets, out of cliches, formulae or proverbs, and out of other texts.*"¹

Intertextuality can be understood from diverse point. It helps us to bring two different poles together by investigating relationship between each other. The connectivity between different texts can be constructed on the basis of thematic level, level of genre, level of language, discourse etc. Similarly, cinematic representation is another way of looking issue of Intertextuality in a new form of illustration. The process of re-contextualization revival and modification alters the text. Similarly, reader finds Michael Redford's *Merchant of Venice* (2004) similar to Shakespeare's text on the basis of theme, content, plot. But, what makes it fresh, and how an Intertextual relationship shall be drawn between them? So, it can be found that cinematic Representation makes it innovative. When one read the text visually in new condition, the new approach of Representation differentiates it from the original source. Gyatri Chakravorti Spivak defines- "*Theatrical adaptation is an intertextual apparatus, a system of relation and citation is an intertextual apparatus, a system of relation and citation not only between verbal texts, but between singing and speaking bodies, lights, sounds, movements and all other cultural elements at work in theatrical production*".²

Michael Redford's movie is an analogous endeavor done by director. There are some changes in the dialogue in editing procedure, where dialogues are cut down. The prologue of the play comes at the commencement of the movie which helps to understand the time as well as politics in which the story is set. So, it takes the modern audience into historical time of Venice 1596. Thus, the movie in the beginning demonstrates the social aspects of the era. The movie states the fact that "Intolerance of the Jews was a fact of the 16th century life even in Venice, the

¹ Frow, John, "*Inertextuality and ontology*", in Worton Michael and Still Judith, ed. *Intertextuality: Theories and practices*: Manchester; UP, 1990, pp.45

²Fischlin, Daniel and Fortier mark. (eds). 'Introduction' in *Adaptation of Shakespeare: A Critical anthology of plays from the seventeenth century to the present*. Routledge: New York, Pub, (2010), p-7

most powerful and liberal city states in Europe and it also gives the context where audience can perceive the fights, apprehension, abhorrence between Jews and Christians. According to Lyotard “*One converts the Jews in the middle ages, they resist by mental restriction. One expels them during the classical age, they return. One integrates them in the modern era, they persist in their difference. One exterminates them in the twentieth century.*”³ The movie depicts the detestation between Jews and Christian which is given in extreme term. Both, Jews and Christian are looking each other with retaining hatred in their eye. Director marks the distinction between Jews and Christian by giving ‘Red Cap’ as a sign which is a symbol of racial segregation. The movie in the beginning depicts the fire oozing from a ‘Mashal’ which demonstrates the spectators that the movie contains some burning issue; a sort of tension between two is being depicted. Camera captures this tension by capturing the expression of both. Director has used the natural panorama, as a natural stage which reminds the audience about the open stage setting of the Shakespeare’s time. But, like in Shakespeare’s play where on the stage, fire, blood, river such kind of references were artificial which was felt by the audience through the language. Here, the natural setting makes all these cryptogram animate. The cinematography of movie is magnificent. The use of ambient sound has made the movie animate by which reader can listen to the natural reverberation of wind, reverberation of water which soothes the ear of audience. The employment of background music reinforces the disposition or emphasizes the action. The outfit in the movie reverberate the old conventional text. The conflict of racial hatred between Jews and Christian is sustained throughout the film. The spitting by Antonio, Gratiano and then Bassanio on the face of Jews reflects the abhorrence between two diverse religions. Through cinematic representation ‘spitting’ comes naturally and not by verbal communication and thus makes the movie alive which reminds reader about the conflict between ‘Black’ and ‘White’ in Afro-American contexts or the caste clash in Indian context. The Reader Response theory can decipher the movie from diverse perception. So, reader response theory erases the external factor which constructs the text. But, reader creates their own text by their own reaction. For example, The abhorrence between Jews and Christian reminds us of the caste conflict in Indian context, or conflict between ‘Hindu’ and ‘Muslim’ where a kind of communal war can be felt between two diverse people belonging to two different religion. Similarly, In Afro- American context- the discourse can be understood from the point of view of a ‘Black’ community where the epithet as

³ Drakakis, John. (ed) ‘Introduction’ in *The Merchant of Venice*. Bloomsbury: London, Pub (2010). P-28.

‘Negro’ was put on them. They were seen as ‘other’ or ‘foreigner’. They found themselves out of the structure. The movie depicts the release of concealed issue by giving autonomy to women by liberating them into open space. The characters of women in the movie are also played by women, where, earlier in Shakespeare’s time the roles of women were played by men. The moving picture in continuance “shows” the story instead of telling by “Words.” The audience finds the movie’s setting as darker. The depiction of movie in a dark setting resembles the darkness in the societal aspect of Venice. Where, one community is thinking itself as more superior as compared to other. The darkness resembles the darkness in the heart of one type of people over other. The employment of camera’s close shoot is high-quality to get expression for audience which a large number of people can capture in Cinematic presentation where as in theatre it is impossible for audience to grasp the expression. The addition of scene according to director’s demand has enhanced the beauty of movie. For example, the addition of the scene as shown in the market where flesh lies on the balance and Shylock is buying flesh seems to bring an innovative type of milieu for those readers who are unaware of the context of the play and the reader can presume that Shylock grasps the initiative from there to take flesh from Antonio’s body. Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice* incorporates Shakespeare’s other play *Othello* which explores racial discourse. Thus, the idea of Barthes comes as right as she articulates “any text is intertext, other texts are present in it..... the texts of the previous and surrounding culture... Intertextuality [is] the condition of any text whatsoever.”⁴

The portrayal of hatred towards ‘Jews’ and ‘Moor’ helps reader to connect the two texts together, but, in *Othello*, reader knows Iago utters at one point that his malignity towards *Othello* is motiveless, but, *The Merchant of Venice* depicts an intention behind Shylock’s malignity. The following Speech of Jew’s in the play *The Merchant Of Venice* is a sharp attack on the nation and institution which does discrimination between divergent individual on the basis of race, religion.

Shylock: “I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, sense, affections, passion? Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapon, subject to the same disease, healed by the same means, warned and cooled by the same winter and summer as

⁴ Fischlin, Daniel and Fortier, Mark. (eds) ‘ Introduction’ in *Adaptation of Shakespeare: A critical anthology of plays from the seventeenth century to the present*. Routledge: New York; Pub, 2010, p-4.

Christian is? If you prick us do we not bleed? If you tickle us do we not laugh? If you poison us do we not die? And if you wrong us shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge! If a Christian wrong a Jew, What should his sufferance be by Christian example? Why, revenge! The Villany you teach me I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction.”⁵

This dialogue articulated by Shylock very undoubtedly explores the bigotry on Jews by Christian where they are seen as ‘Foreigner’ and outside of the system.

It was William Hazlitt who observed that, although Shylock was “*the depository of the Vengeance of his race whose bitterness has hardened him against the contempt of mankind.*”⁶ Jessica, the daughter of Shylock also becomes the victim of Christian’s ruthlessness like her father who can’t be accepted by a Christian suitor as like her father she falls exterior of the system. Similarly, in the movie when ‘black suitor’ of Portia becomes unable to open the right casket in the movie then the relief which comes on Portia’s face very clearly demonstrates the relief from Morocco who is also seen as an individual who is not a part of system.

In Shakespeare’s *Othello*, Brabantio becomes incapable to accept the husband of Desdemona, despite the fact, that he is on the highest and virtuous post as lieutenant. But, still the color of Othello comes as an obstacle which stops Brabantio’s acceptance for Othello.

G.K. Hunter in “National and Racial stereotype” states - In *The Merchant of Venice* Shakespeare focuses his Venice..... not by pointing it back to England, but by pointing it out to the remoter world of “*blaspheming Jews,*” whose non-Christianity, like that of Pagans, infidels, Moors and Turks gave depth of meaning to “*Foreignness*” that mere difference of European race could hardly do’.⁷ Similarly, Susan Bennett in *Performing Nostalgia* states “What all these reworking of the classical texts of theatrical tradition illustrate is a contemporary obsession with staging old texts, to explore the possibilities of performance in the present, to explore the present itself.”⁸

⁵Drakakis, John. (ed). *The Merchant of Venice*. Bloomsbury: New York; (2010). p-284-285

⁶ Drakakis, John. (ed). ‘Introduction’ in *The Merchant of Venice*. Bloomsbury: New York; (2010). p-27

⁷Jackson, Russel (ed). “National and racial stereotype” in *Shakespeare on film*, Cambridge, UP, 2000. p-267.

⁸ Bennet, Susan. *Performing Nostalgia: Shifting Shakespeare and the Contemporary past*. Routledge, 1996. P (20).

So, in a way Michael Redford's movie can be called as a Dialectic movie which addresses current political and religious problem and helps the spectators to shift their paradigm from Elizabethan to today's contemporary time, where, still these conflict exists. These conflicts further make us to think on the concept of cultured and barbaric, Pure and Impure, human and animal which is the root cause of these racial stereotypes which inhabits in today's contemporary time by which human beings has been divided.

Copyrights @ Sanjana This is an open access reviewed article distributed under the creative common attribution license which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provide the original work is cited.

