

An Open Access, Widely Indexed, Peer Reviewed Referred
Journal

Vol. 1 No. 3, September, 2024

Exploring Death in Shakespearean Tragedy through the Lens of the Production 'Koruna O Bhithir Galpo'

Dr. Ahmedul Kabir¹, Shongkar Kumar Biswas²

¹ Professor, Department of Theatre and Performance Studies, University of
Dhaka, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

² Lecturer, Department of Theatre and Media Studies, Habibullah Bahar
College, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Corresponding Author: Shongkar Kumar Biswas, biswashongkar@gmail.com.

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: production,
deconstruction,
performance,
assassination, well-made
play, dramatic structure.

Received : 16 May, 2024

Revised : 1 July, 2024

Accepted: 3 July, 2024

©2023 The Author(s): This
is an open-access article
distributed under the
terms of the [Creative
Commons Attribution 4.0
International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).



ABSTRACT

The principal concept of this research pertains to the existential manifestation of mortality among diverse figures in three renowned tragedies authored by Shakespeare. Furthermore, a theatrical performance entitled 'Koruna O Bhithir Galpo' (The story of pity and fear) has been embraced to scrutinize the essence of death. Fourteen scenes curated from Shakespeare's esteemed trilogy tragedies Hamlet, Macbeth, and Othello for the performance. Through this inquiry, it is elucidated how the director deviated from the Aristotelian linear dramatic structure and embraced deconstructed theatrical philosophies. Simultaneously, considering theoretical frameworks of interpretation and analysis such as 'semiotics', the symbols of death interwoven throughout the production furnish a tangible comprehension. In this investigation, it is evident that there are numerous justifications underpinning the demise of the characters, which include erroneous choices made by the individuals, psychological influences exerted by others, a deficiency in emotional regulation, avarice, and the abuse of authority. Furthermore, the manner in which dialogue, the actor's expressions and gestures, costumes, lighting, stage design, background music, etc., employ signs to articulate the concept of death and its overarching representation is examined. This analysis underscores that by engaging with and attributing novel significances. Ultimately, the conclusion is that the majority of the fatalities that transpire throughout the theatrical piece are politically motivated deaths.

INTRODUCTION

In the early modern period in England, the existence of social violence and recurring illnesses ensured that death was a constant presence. Elizabethan writers, poets, and dramatists were known for their depiction of this particular genre. The aforementioned example holds a remarkable significance. The tragedies of Christopher Marlowe, an eminent precursor of Shakespeare's dramatist and translator, prominently revolve around the theme of death. It is important to acknowledge that the life of this Elizabethan dramatist was fraught with tragedy, mirroring the very essence of the genre. This is because Marlowe himself met a tragic demise, having been fatally stabbed. Marlowe's renowned plays, namely *Tamburlaine*, *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus* (commonly referred to simply as *Doctor Faustus*), *The Jew of Malta*, and *Edward*, all showcase the occurrence of unexpected and unconventional deaths, along with the ensuing tragic consequences. Consequently, it is entirely expected to discover such a prominent motif in the plays of Shakespeare, particularly in his tragedies. His characters also frequently met their death at the hands of one another rather than succumbing to natural causes, whether it be through stabbing, poisoning, or beheading (or even a combination of these three methods!). However, physical brutality is not the sole *origin* of suffering. One must contemplate: which is more severe? To perish due to shame, astonishment, or bereavement? Shakespeare thus utilizes death as a means to explore the fragility of human nature and the precariousness of our mortality. The three prominent themes in life, namely love, death, and war, also hold significant importance in literature. Once again, Shakespeare stands at the forefront as his plays encompass both death and the exploration of mortality. The plays showcase a wide array of imaginable ways of dying, and, as is customary with Shakespeare, these depictions are seldom gratuitous but rather serve as integral components of the plot and overarching ideas of the play. The deaths portrayed in the plays may often be tragic, with many being depicted in a gruesome and violent manner, while others demonstrate a creative approach. Regardless, all these deaths contribute to the progression of the play, ultimately leading towards the resolution of the conflicts within ("Death In Shakespeare", n.d.).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The tragedies penned by Shakespeare offer a vivid portrayal of the harrowing nature of death. A vast majority of the significant characters in his plays meet their demise. To illustrate, in *Romeo and Juliet*, six characters perish, while in *Hamlet*, the number rises to eight. *Othello* witnesses four deaths, while *Macbeth* and *Antony and Cleopatra* each see ten and five deaths respectively. *Julius Caesar*, *King Lear*, and *Titus Andronicus* depict five, eight, and fourteen deaths respectively. Moreover, *Coriolanus*, *Timon of Athens*, and *The Winter's Tale* each have one character death ("Death In Shakespeare", n.d.). The sheer volume of deaths in Shakespeare's plays is noteworthy, and so too are the diverse causes behind them. Al-Azzawy, Q. J. A. (2024) elucidates in his manuscript that the notion of "death" in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* is examined through an analytical lens, as both plays are replete with

themes of murder, executions, and assassinations. He also endeavors to illustrate, drawing upon Macbeth, how the concept of death assumes a significant role as the protagonist ultimately meets his demise.

Sagheer, A. O. M., & Auktum, A. (2021) assert that "Hamlet" represents a pivotal literary composition that thoroughly explores the essence of mortality. Shakespeare articulates diverse viewpoints on death through the character of Hamlet, establishing it as a predominant motif of the narrative. Furthermore, they propose that death is depicted as an abstract notion that is inescapable for all characters involved. Additionally, the intricate nature of death in "Hamlet" scrutinizes not only its corporeal manifestations but also its ramifications for societal and ethical values.

Rauf et al. (2023) concentrate on the demise of the protagonist in two of Shakespeare's works, Othello and Romeo and Juliet. They seek to elucidate how the playwright represents death and the process of dying within his narratives. The demise of the hero serves merely as a Shakespearean technique for unveiling deeper truths about existence.

Conversely, in Shakespeare's Macbeth, death is depicted because of human folly and ambition rather than as an unavoidable destiny, thereby reflecting the profound complexities of human nature and psychology (Shahwan, 2015).

In the preceding discourse, various analyses pertaining to the demise of distinct characters within Shakespearean tragedies have been presented. However, there is a conspicuous absence of a concurrent examination of Shakespeare's trilogy – Hamlet, Macbeth, and Othello – which this investigation endeavors to address. This scholarly endeavor has been conducted with the aim of bridging the existing gap in research concerning the dramatic representation of character mortality in Shakespeare's three aforementioned tragedies. This research endeavour seeks to explore the presence of death and its manifestations in the production titled *Koruna O Bhithir Galpo*, which draws inspiration from Shakespeare's renowned trio of tragedies: Othello, Macbeth, and Hamlet. The production, titled *Koruna O Bhithir Galpo* which brings to life a total of fourteen scenes, consisting of thirteen preserved scenes and one improvised scene sourced from the aforementioned plays. The selected scenes comprise three from Othello (Act 3, scene 3; Act 4, scene 1; Act 5, scene 2), five from Macbeth (Act 1, scene 5; Act 1, scene 7; Act 2, scene 2; Act 5, scene 2; Act 5, scene 5), and four from Hamlet (Act 3, scene 1; Act 3, scene 3; Act 3, scene 4; Act 5, scene 1). This production bears witness to the endeavour of devising an aesthetic language of art to convey a comprehensive vision that invokes the fear and terror associated with death and its grave repercussions. The production was staged at the Nat-Mandal Auditorium of the Department of Theatre and Performance Studies, University of Dhaka, from 26th August to 2nd September 2022.

METHODOLOGY

The qualitative research methodology has been employed in the execution of this study. The texts of the plays "Hamlet," "Macbeth," and "Othello," along with the theatrical adaptation based on these texts entitled "Koruna O Bhithir Galpo," as well as the recorded video documentation of the performance, have been chosen as appropriate samples. These selected samples are subjected to analysis through the framework of 'semiotics-a theoretical construct established by Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. Furthermore, an in-depth reading and analysis of the manuscripts are conducted. The scenes from both live performances and recorded theatrical productions are meticulously and scrupulously observed. Through this careful observation, aspects such as scenes, dialogues, character portrayals, stagecraft, lighting, background music, and other components utilized in the production are systematically analyzed as discrete units of 'semiotics'. Semiotics fundamentally serves as a methodological approach or analytical technique. In essence, it constitutes the study of the generation of meaning through the examination of signs, thereby defining 'semiotics'. As Saussure (1959, p.66-67) explains, the sign is not merely a singular word or tangible entity but rather a composite construct of cognitive notion of sound or image. That is, sound, image, expression (signifier) and concept (signified) amalgamate to constitute a sign and generate meaning. Consequently, in conjunction with the image, lights, costumes, expression, and background music are all regarded as signs in the production of meaning and that is adhered to in this paper's comprehension of the portrayals of death in the theatrical performance.

Dramatic structure of 'Koruna O Bhithir Galpo'

Battin (1975) explains according to Aristotle, a poetic work is considered complete or unified when it imitates a single action and a unified poetic work has a non-arbitrary beginning, middle, and end, and is of a medium size and appropriate length. While some forms of poetry may imitate more than one action, all forms of poetry imitate some action to some degree and are complete or unified to some extent (p.297). However, this particular production deviated from the conventions of classical poetic structure. Despite this deviation, the work presented a unique perspective that explored significant ideas through a post-dramatic approach. According to Aristotle's Poetics, the events of the play unfold in accordance with a specific dramatic action. However, Elizabethan theatre deviated from this simplistic characteristic and linear framework of classical theatre. Although Shakespeare's works still adhere to Aristotle's notion of a beginning, middle, and end sequence, they do not confine themselves to a single continuous dramatic act. Since the Elizabethan era, Shakespeare's writing and production style has played an active role in the creation of new plays. Nonetheless, it is important to note that it has not completely escaped the influence of classical theatrical structures. The dramatic action in Shakespeare's works is not confined to a single integral, due to the sheer necessity of the events within the drama and the wide range and diversity of the dramatic structure. The unity of place, time, and action found in classical theatre provided a sense of coherence in thought, which Shakespeare's tragedies departed from in order to

achieve their distinct form. Just as Shakespeare had to reject certain aspects of classical theatrical style to establish his central idea in his play, this production also abandons Shakespeare's imitation of the Elizabethan style in order to make his tragedies more contemporary. It is important to note that this does not imply any denigration of Shakespeare's writing or production practices.

However, this production falls short in fully capturing the comprehensive portrayal of Shakespeare's work as a whole. The main body of the work is presented without adhering to a strict chronology. Given the abundance of characters, actions, events, and given circumstances in Shakespeare's works, it is a challenging and time-consuming task to combine them all into one production. Therefore, in this particular production where *Othello*, *Macbeth*, and *Hamlet* are performed together, the selection of main scenes from these plays has been made and the attempt to convey a sense of dismay related around unexpected death and death in these three tragedies has been pursued simultaneously. By focusing on the chosen particular scenes from the three plays, the *Koruna O Bhithir Galpo* itself assumes a unique dramatic structure, as dictated by the requirements of the production. At the same time, this production aligns with 'Deconstruction' ideas by revolving around the dramatic structure.

Referring to Balkin's quote Yegen, C., & Abukan, M. (2014) state that: The deconstruction is firstly a detailed, popular, a bit narrow and technical phenomenon. Secondly it expresses the text reading techniques developed by Derrida, Paul de Man and others. The deconstruction first came out in the United States as the literal criticism of texts and the technique to interpret them. Consequently, it can be interpreted as a situation that expresses the response of the reader to the text at the point of producing the meaning even if it is confused with other trends. From a different aspect, the deconstruction has developed as a response to the structuralism in Europe. Because according to the structuralism, the thought of an individual is shaped via language, but according to Balkin the structuralists ignore the relation of language with the culture at this point and according to him the deconstruction feeds the language with the assumption that it has cultural, universal, historical and flexible meanings. He remarks that the importance of meaning should not be reduced by adding perception and the role of culture to the lingual praxis. The deconstruction is a useful practice in unfolding the concealed meanings and perceptions in texts, and it is in fact an interpretation style that is sometimes leading to find out unexpected meanings. The deconstruction indeed aims to reveal the concealed and other implicit meanings, not to show up the meaningless of the text by separating it (p. 53).

So, 'Deconstruction', in essence, is a method of revisiting a text. This method uncovers the currently absent meaning through the act of reading. As the drama created takes the form of a visual poem, a significant portion of the poem's meaning remains unexplored. In truth, the thoughts, events, dialogues, and actions depicted in the playwright's works surpass those meanings through the process of deconstruction, and new meanings are revealed in front of the

audience. “Deconstruction is avowedly ‘post-structuralist’ in its refusal to accept the idea of structure as in any sense given or objectively ‘there’ in a text” (Norris, 1982, p.3). It accepts huge meaning hidden but does not follow the rules of ultimate reality. The theatrical approach employed in this production exemplifies a distinct performance style and narrative method that effectively conveys the enigmatic essence. Consequently, it deviates from the conventional structure typically associated with well-made plays, a dramatic genre prevalent in nineteenth-century theatre, which was initially formulated by the French dramatist Eugène Scribe. “... the well-made play is based on a structure comprised of the following: exposition, complication, development, crisis and denouement” (Saunders, 2008, p.2).

Thus, this particular production failed to meet the specified requirements of a well-made play. The reason for this is that the production consists of various selected scenes from three different plays. Although the juxtaposition of these scenes from the three plays creates a painfully coherent whole, it is important to note that Othello, Macbeth, and Hamlet each possess distinct conceptual traits. The presence of Othello’s jealousy, Hamlet’s desire for revenge in the face of his father’s murder, and Macbeth’s ambition and lust for power all contribute to the non-linear and flexible structure of the production. On the other hand, the well-made play typically depicts the general crisis of the middle-class and the ordinary way of life in modern times, which starkly contrasts with the nature of this performance. Consequently, this production does not adhere to the plot structure that is characteristic of a well-made play like exposition, complication, development, crisis and denouement. In this particular production, the scene commences with the third act of Othello and concludes with the fifth act of Hamlet, but it is not performed exactly as written. Therefore, the dramatic structure employed in recounting the *Koruna O Bhithir Galpo* is far from simple; rather, it is non-linear in order to generate various meanings. Furthermore, despite being a tragedy, this production does not follow the classical structure that is typically associated with such works. Additionally, many contemporary realistic well-made play ideas have not been embraced. Instead, the concept of deconstruction is employed to create multifaceted meaning through the inclusion of multiple scenes. Thus, according to Derrida, the objective of deconstruction is not to alter the structure; instead, it aims to reconstruct it (Yegen, C., & Abukan, M., 2014). Indeed, the comprehensive production is shaped through the curating of specific scenes from three distinct plays. Notwithstanding the disparities in narrative and themes across the plays, the entirety of this production showcases a profound exploration of unexpected and atypical death, the motives driving such death, and the psychological responses of different characters post-mortem, all while grappling with the inability to view continual death as a commonplace and straightforward occurrence.

DISCUSSION

The deaths depicted in this theatrical presentation distinctly deviate from natural causes, leaning towards unanticipated circumstances. The majority of these

demises manifest as acts of murder or self-inflicted deaths. Nevertheless, beneath these occurrences lies a plethora of motives, including envy, hunger for authority, and vacillation. The death or killing of a character triggers a disarray in their prior cognitions and actions, leading to a surge in inconsistency, ultimately resulting in undesirable predicaments. On occasions, characters veer from their ethical compass due to falling prey to external machinations, as exemplified by Othello's character. The initial scene of this adaptation, sourced from Shakespeare's *Othello* [Act 3, scene 3], portrays General Othello growing dubious of his spouse, Desdemona, and orchestrating the dismissal of Captain Cassio. Desdemona beseeches Othello for Cassio's reinstatement, an entreaty that Iago exploits as the inaugural seed of doubt regarding Desdemona's loyalty. Iago perceives Cassio's interactions with Desdemona as clandestine affection. Cassio unwittingly becomes ensnared in Iago's scheme, heedlessly adhering to Iago's counsel during his encounters with Desdemona to safeguard his standing. Seizing upon this juncture, Iago assumes an active and nefarious role, instigating calamitous circumstances through intricate machinations, inadvertently paving the way for multiple casualties.

Iago incited Othello into slaying Desdemona and Cassio, a fact which eluded the other characters, notably the protagonist Othello himself, and Iago, who was consistently devising the fatal snares, failed to comprehend that he was ushering in his own death alongside the others. Iago arouses Othello's intrinsic vulnerability by ceaselessly acquainting himself with Othello's markedly secluded life and ensures Desdemona's death. Iago desires to acquaint himself with Desdemona with Cassio prior to matrimony to ascertain if there was any form of interaction. Othello stated that Cassio acted as a delegate to ensure the prosperity of their affection before their nuptials. Iago subsequently utilizes this intelligence to misguide Othello into believing that Desdemona and Cassio had been engaging in a romantic entanglement since before their marriage. His contentions and misinterpretations incited Othello to harbor animosity towards Desdemona, and this amalgam of hatred and suspicion estranged Desdemona from love, honour, and elegance. Their bond commences to sour and this acrimony gradually manifests itself through Othello's conduct. This sequence illustrates Othello's apathy and disregard towards Desdemona. When Desdemona endeavours to affix her handkerchief to Othello's forehead, Othello declines his wife's gesture; despite the handkerchief being presented to him by Othello as a token of affection. Subsequently, the handkerchief is conveyed to Iago by Emilia, Iago's spouse, and it ultimately reaches Cassio's paramour. In the initial segment of Act 4 (scene 5 of this production), Iago exhibits the handkerchief to Othello and narrates the fallacious tale of the amorous liaison between Desdemona and Cassio and furnishes evidence to corroborate his assertion to Othello regarding the adulterous love of Desdemona, thereby prodding him to eradicate Desdemona. Othello is so influenced by the proof that he elects to terminate her, a moment where the audience anticipates the demise and slaughter of blameless existences. Voicing his ire towards Cassio, Othello exclaims "How shall I murder him, Iago?" (Shakespeare, 1622/2017, 4.1.190). In

this scenario, Othello entertains the notion that his spouse is culpable and in a fit of fury, Othello vocalizes intentions of extinguishing his unfaithful wife through various means. He yearns to extinguish his spouse Desdemona through various brutal methods, desires to dismember her, to eliminate her through poison. "I will chop her into messes! Cuckold me? [...] Get me some poison, Iago, this night I will not expostulate with her lest her beauty unprovident my mind again" (Shakespeare, 1622/2017, 4.1.220-229). It is evident that Cassio has gained full mastery over Othello's hesitant mind and Othello is observed embracing the suggestion to murder as instructed by Cassio. The demise of Desdemona is perceived as the sole means through which peace can be restored to Othello. By refraining from obstructing Desdemona's death, Iago is demonstrating to Othello a more secure course of action to ensure the success of the murder. He is recommending to execute the act through strangulation in bed rather than by the use of poison. "Do it not with poison. Strangle her in her bed, even the bed she hath contaminated" (Shakespeare, 1622/2017, 4.1.228-229). On one hand, Othello strays from his usual discernment, while Iago advances towards the accomplishment of his scheme; the death of Desdemona triggers a chain reaction leading to the demise of Emilia, Rodrigo, Cassio, Iago, and Othello. Consequently, Cassio fulfils the prerequisites for the demise of the other characters.

A comparable scene of death is scored by Macbeth and Lady Macbeth through their unethical aspirations. Analogous scenarios of death were instigated by Macbeth and Lady Macbeth due to their unethical ambitions. Just as Iago incited Othello to murder Desdemona, Lady Macbeth incited Macbeth to assassinate King Duncan. In the 4th act of this performance directed by Kabir (2022), Lady Macbeth was depicted sitting alone engrossed in the letter dispatched by Macbeth. Subsequently, Macbeth entered and disclosed to her that King Duncan was likely coming at their residence that evening. Upon receiving this information, Lady Macbeth urge Macbeth to kill Duncan, as they desired to ascend to the throne through this act of regicide. During the banquet, while all present, including King Duncan, were dining, Macbeth excused himself and confided in Lady Macbeth about his apprehensions and qualms, prompting Lady Macbeth to censure him persistently to goad him into committing the assassination:

But screw your courage to the sticking place
And we'll not fail. When Duncan is asleep
(Whereto the rather shall his day's hard journey
Soundly invite him), his two chamberlains
Will I with wine and wassail so convince
That memory, the warder of the brain,
Shall be a fume, and the receipt of reason
A limbeck only. When in swinish sleep
Their drenchèd natures lies as in a death,
What cannot you and I perform upon
Th' unguarded Duncan? What not put upon
His spongy officers, who shall bear the guilt
Of our great quell? (Shakespeare, 1606/2003, 1.7.70-80)

Lady Macbeth persuades her spouse to kill the monarch in his slumber, with the king's two Chamberlains also being in a state of rest. The plan is for everyone to presume that the king was assassinated by his two attendants. Ultimately, Macbeth carried out the assassination of Duncan while he was sleeping, and this initial murder instigated a series of further deaths. Banquo, Lady Macduff, Macduff, and the two Chamberlains fall victim to murder, culminating in the death of Duncan. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, pivotal figures in numerous fatalities, find themselves ensnared in the cycle of unintended death.

In this performance it is observed that the primary characters are significantly impacted by demise. In the 6th scene of this production, we perceive the character Hamlet eager to avenge his father's murder; it has been noted that he embarked on a mission to eliminate Claudius in supplication (Kabir, 2022). Claudius, whom Hamlet intends to eliminate, is also the killer of his sibling. Nonetheless, Hamlet abstained from executing him in a state of supplication. However, this abstention did not persist, as many perished shortly after death of Polonius. Kabir (dir.2022)



demonstrated in scene 9, Hamlet had strangled his mother in a frenzied state, and Polonius, who was concealing in the chamber, had erroneously made a sound and assumed Hamlet would murder his mother, Gertrude. Polonius, who was concealing in arras, was murdered by Hamlet presumed by his uncle Claudius. Subsequently, it was discerned that Ophelia had taken her own life due to the demise of her father and Hamlet's apathetic demeanour and sorrow, and Laertes, Ophelia's sibling, was forceful concerning the demise of her father and sister.

Figure 1

Hamlet tried to strangle his mother in a frenzied state

Note. Source: (Kabir, 2023).

To evade Hamlet's increasingly dubious demeanour, Claudius devised a covert strategy to eliminate Hamlet and once more, when Hamlet became aware of this intelligence, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern perished. Hamlet's mother Gertrude succumbed to the poison that was administered by Claudius to eliminate Hamlet, Hamlet and Laertes were killed by poisoned daggers in each other's grasp, Claudius, the primary instigator of so many demises, was eliminated by Hamlet.

It illustrates that one demise has unveiled the context of another demise. That is to say, the storyline of the play has unmistakably resulted in numerous deaths. In the aftermath of Hamlet's father's demise and seeking revenge for his demise, nearly all the characters are killed.

Hence, in production, Kabir (dir.2022) demonstrates the circumstances or context of the demises that have occurred by or under the power of Othello, Macbeth and Hamlet. This context offers us a general principle, which discloses how many lives are instigated by the specific intent of one individual, and this correlation establishes to the spectators an idea and notion that one death is closely connected to the cause and consequence of another death or incident. Concurrently, the cognitive uncertainty, psychology, motive of the assassination, and the pre-assassination scheme of the main characters mentioned previously heightened the audience's enthrallment in the death scene later. The previously discussed scenes unveil that particular characters are soon to meet their end by the clandestine assaults of other characters. The 13th scene of this theatrical presentation features an improvised scene - not derived from Othello, Macbeth, and Hamlet but also foreshadows a political murder in this segment (Theatre and Performance Studies, 2022). The evident inherent resemblance between this scene and the preceding ones lies in the fact that in the preceding segments, the director has depicted a sort of preliminary preparation and reflective composure for the assassination of the perpetrators, and in this scene as well, the premeditation of the homicide is evident and this one is very similar to murder of king Duncan. However, there is a distinction, as opposed to the characters in the preceding segments, not making choices individually, but a military group deciding on a political killing. The scene on the murder of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the mastermind behind sovereign Bangladesh, a well-liked political personality, and his family members, and it seems that certain military personnel are scheming to assault the then Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, in Dhaka on August 15, 1975. The segment portrayed a cluster of defiant soldiers bearing a coffin box around their necks in the obscurity of the night, and one of them was issuing directives on whom to proceed in which direction, what to execute; and promptly thereafter, they were exterminating the entire Prime Minister's family intentionally (Theatre and Performance Studies, 2022).

Findings

The preceding analysis has revealed the conspiracy to assassinate various characters. At this point, the director introduced the concept of death to the audience within the production. As depicted in the 8th scene of this production, Macbeth was depicted making final arrangements to murder the sleeping king (Theatre and Media Studies, 2022). During the late hours of the night, the ambient sounds of crickets and owls blend with the background music as Macbeth stands alone on stage. In his soliloquy, he described a hallucination of a dagger stained with blood, urging him to kill the king in his sleep. This manifestation signifies his mental torment regarding the forthcoming act of committing a brutal murder. Following a lengthy monologue and contemplative walk, he hastened to King

Duncan's chamber, committed the regicide, and returned brandishing a bloodied dagger. In the 12th scene, the director has skilfully employed lighting, staging techniques, and music to artistically portray the death of Lady Macbeth. The scene unfolds with the piercing cries of multiple women, and as the lights illuminate the stage, Macbeth is witnessed dashing across it while a group of women wail and scream around the lifeless body of Lady Macbeth, who hangs offstage. Lady Macbeth's suicide is prompted by her deteriorating mental state following King Duncan's assassination. Tormented by the imagined bloodstains of the murdered king, she succumbs to a despairing illness and takes her own life. The maids' lamentations over the deceased Lady Macbeth's body persist, as Macbeth's introspective monologue unfolds. Through a series of ruthless acts, the tyrant eventually comprehends the insignificance of life. The visual representation of this scene evokes a tragic ambiance that elicits simultaneous feelings of pity and fear in the spectators.

Figure 2

Around the hanging dead body of Lady Macbeth the maids are lamenting



Note. Source: (Kabir, 2023).

The egregious act committed by Othello in the 11th scene of the theatrical production, resulting in the death of Desdemona, evoked a sense of fear among the spectators. Othello meticulously followed the malevolent guidance provided by Iago, leading him to the bed room where Desdemona lay asleep. In a fit of blind rage, he unjustly accused Desdemona before ultimately resorting to the heinous act of strangling her to her untimely demise. The director of the theatrical performance exhibited a remarkable prowess in creating a visually dramatic scene through the strategic application of music, lighting effects, and stage props during this particular scene. By skilfully manipulating elements such as lights, musical accompaniment, and spatial arrangement, the director effectively transmitted a clear 'sign' to the audience, prompting them to 'decode' the impending tragedy about to unfold on stage. Positioned at the centre of the backdrop, a lengthy white curtain descended reminiscent of a sombre cloud, its upper hem tinged with hues of crimson, while a cool azure glow bathed the expansive fabric, symbolizing the imminent occurrence of a violent act [sign] to

the keen spectators. Meanwhile, Desdemona lay in a slumber upon a bed adorned with a luxurious velvet coverlet atop a vast expanse of pristine white fabric; it was there that Othello, consumed by a tumult of fear, loathing, and ire, solemnly took his seat, declaring to the unconscious Desdemona, "I shall end your life, only to cherish you thereafter" (Theatre and Performance Studies, 2022, 1:20-21:03). Upon awakening, Desdemona found herself accused by Othello of trivializing their love, of scorning it, and was urged to offer a final prayer to God as her penance before meeting her demise. Despite her earnest attempts to rectify Othello's misconceptions and affirm her unwavering devotion to him, his heart remained unyielding to her pleas. With callous resolve, Othello proceeded to asphyxiate her with a pillow, sealing her tragic fate. The continuous foot movement of the actress portraying Desdemona, the escalating tempo of the background score, the crimson wash of lighting, and the elongated silhouettes cast by the actor embodying the murderous Othello in the background collectively served as a chillingly evocative 'sign' of the impending murder for the captivated audience.

Figure 3
Othello killing Desdemona



Note. Source: (Kabir, 2023).

In the portrayal of the 9th scene, there is a significant depiction of blood on Hamlet's weapon, marking the initial instance of such a gruesome sight. The act of killing Polonius is carried out by Hamlet through the forceful thrust of a rapier through the arras, under the mistaken belief that his target was his uncle Claudius, the individual responsible for the murder of his father. Within this intense moment, Gertrude, the Queen, is depicted as being deeply shocked and appalled by the sheer horror and bloodshed resulting from the fatal act, a sentiment that is vividly conveyed through her dialogue. Her lines, as captured in the performance, reflect the sheer emotional turmoil and distress experienced in the aftermath of the tragic event: "Polonius: O, I am slain! / Queen: O me, what hast thou done? / Hamlet: Nay, I know not. Is it the King? / Queen: O, what a rash and bloody deed is this!" (Theatre and Performance Studies, 2022, 1:06:03-49).

CONCLUSION

Assassination, the murder of a public figure. The term typically refers to the killing of government leaders and other prominent persons for political purposes—such as to seize power, to start a revolution, to draw attention to a cause, to exact revenge, or to undermine a regime or its critics. Such politically motivated murders have taken place in all parts of the world and in every period of history (Britannica, 2024). So, if one carefully examines the manner in which the director has portrayed the various deaths within this theatrical production, it becomes evident that a significant portion of these deaths possess a distinct political nature. Indeed, it is observable that many of these deaths are executed through acts of ‘assassination’. This assertion is substantiated by the specific reference to the 13th scene of the production in question. Within this particular scene, viewers are presented with a depiction of the former Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and his family presenting a scene portraying an assassination. The unfolding of events in this scene involves the arrival of a fleet of military vehicles onto the stage, proceeding with a synchronized march accompanied by a backdrop of ambient musical arrangements. The enactment of the murder unfolds before the audience through a multi-sensory experience involving music, the resonating sound of boots, and piercing screams. Consequently, it becomes unmistakably clear that the deaths depicted throughout this production are underpinned by overtly ‘political’ motivations. This thematic exploration of political machinations is further echoed in the narrative of Shakespeare’s ‘Othello’, where the character of Iago’s manipulative schemes are driven by political ambitions. Similarly, the death instigated by Macbeth, particularly his regicide of King Duncan, is characterized as an act of both assassination and political intrigue. Likewise, the fatalities witnessed in ‘Hamlet’ can be interpreted as politically motivated deaths. This is exemplified by the unfaithful actions of Claudius, who committed the murder of his own brother in a bid to seize control of the kingdom. The analogous portrayal of Macbeth’s unscrupulous yearning for kingship further underscores the prevalence of political undertones within these tragic events. Ultimately, these portrayals of death evoke within the audience a complex interplay of emotions, eliciting feelings of both pity and fear.

REFERENCES

- Al-Azzawy, Q. J. A. (2024). The Concept of Death in William Shakespeare's Macbeth and Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*. *Journal of Language Studies*, 8(6), 114-124. <https://doi.org/10.25130/Lang.8.6.7>
- Battin, M. P. (1975). Aristotle's Definition of Tragedy in the Poetics. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 33(3), 293-302. <https://doi.org/10.2307/428355>
- Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia (2024, May 7). *assassination*. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/assassination>
- Yegen, C., & Abukan, M. (2014). Derrida and language: Deconstruction. *International journal of Linguistics*, 6(2), 48-61. Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Ceren-Yegen-2/publication/276180609_Derrida_and_Language_Deconstruction/links/5f94080a458515b7cf99309e/Derrida-and-Language-Deconstruction.pdf
- Death In Shakespeare. (n.d.). Retrieved from No Sweat Shakespeare website: <https://nosweatshakespeare.com/play-themes/death/>
- Kabir, Ahmedul. (Director). (2022, August 26). *Kuruna O Bhitir Golpo* based on *Hamlet, Othello & Macbeth* by Shakespeare, W. [Play]. Department of Theatre and Performance Studies, Dhaka University, Dhaka.
- Kabir, Ahmedul. (2023, January 1). *Othello killing Desdemona*. [Koruna O Bhithir Galpo performance photograph]. Theatre and Performance Studies, University of Dhaka, ON, Dhaka.
- Kabir, Ahmedul. (2023, January 1). *Around the hanging dead body of Lady Macbeth the maids are lamenting*. [Koruna O Bhithir Galpo performance photograph]. Theatre and Performance Studies, University of Dhaka, ON, Dhaka.
- Kabir, Ahmedul. (2023, January 1). *Hamlet tried to strangle his mother in a frenzied state*. [Koruna O Bhithir Galpo performance photograph]. Theatre and Performance Studies, University of Dhaka, ON, Dhaka.
- Norris, Christopher. (1982). *Deconstruction: Theory and Practice*. London and

New York: Routledge.

Rauf, R., Faida, F. R., Ulya, A., Mutmainnah, M., & Harianto, E. (2023). Death of

Hero in Othello (1603) and Romeo and Juliet (1595): Death and Dying Studies in English Literature.

<https://doi.org/10.34050/elsjish.v6i3.29605>

Saunders, G. (2008). The persistence of the 'well-made play'. In *Non-standard*

forms of contemporary drama and theatre (pp. 11-21). Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier. Retrieved from:

<https://centaur.reading.ac.uk/31307/2/saunders.pdf>

Sagheer, A. O. M., & Auktum, A. (2021). A Study of Physical and Figurative

Death in Hamlet. *Journal of Language Studies*, 4(3), 104-114.

<https://doi.org/10.25130/jls.4.3.8>

Shakespeare, W. (2017). *Othello* (B. A. Mowat & P. Werstine, Eds.).

Washington, D.C: The Folger Shakespeare Library. (Original work published 1622).

Shakespeare, W. (2003). *Macbeth* (B. A. Mowat & P. Werstine, Eds.).

Washington, D.C: The Folger Shakespeare Library. (Original work published 1606).

Shakespeare, W. (1992). *Hamlet* (B. A. Mowat & P. Werstine, Eds.).

Washington, D.C: The Folger Shakespeare Library. (Original work published 1603).

Shahwan, S. J. (2015). "Fair is foul, and foul is fair": Themes of Loss and Death

in William Shakespeare's Macbeth. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 5(12), 92-95.

https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C5&q=Fair+is+foul%2C+and+foul+is+fair%E2%80%9D%3A+Themes+of+Loss+and+Death+in+William+Shakespeare%27s+Macbeth&btnG=#d=gs_qabs&t=1724696326567&u=%23p%3D8Vf4OHSeWQsJ

Theatre and Performance Studies. (2022, December 22). *Koruna O Bhithir Galpo*

[Vedio]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/Bw6sOedHnBc?si=fu8-SBuOKB75X_vE