

DE GRUYTER
MOUTON

2010 · VOLUME 39 · NUMBER 2
ISSN 0341-7638 · e-ISSN 1613-3838

JOURNAL OF LITERARY SEMANTICS

AN INTERNATIONAL REVIEW

EDITOR

Michael Toolan, Birmingham

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www.degruyter.com/jls

2010 · VOLUME 39 · NUMBER 2

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AN INTERNATIONAL REVIEW

EDITOR

Michael Toolan

University of Birmingham

Birmingham B15 2TT

UK

Email: m.toolan@bham.ac.uk

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Unveiling the dramatic secret of 'Ghost' in *Hamlet*¹

SHIGEO KIKUCHI

Abstract

This article examines Shakespeare's dramatic secret of a "Ghost" in Hamlet. The idea of a "Ghost," a being of uncertain existence, whether an idea or an event or the soul of a deceased person, is effectively used in this work to create a world of doubt into which Hamlet is drawn by the words of what seems to be the ghost of King Hamlet. Through Hamlet's words and behavior, Claudius is drawn into this world, which I call the world of SEEMING. It is in this world that Hamlet utters the famous phrase "To be, or not to be." Finally, Hamlet kills his uncle without obtaining evidence of Claudius's crime and himself dies without knowing whether Claudius actually killed his father. In this circumstance, Hamlet cannot be said to have taken vengeance, which even in Elizabethan times was not allowed by law or religion; and yet vengeance is seemingly created in the audience's belief world.

1. Introduction

In this article, by extending the functional linguists' notion of the theme–rheme sequence at clause level to the level of the entire text, I will examine Shakespeare's dramatic secret of a "Ghost" in *Hamlet*. For this purpose, I will also discuss *Othello* before probing into the more complex structure of *Hamlet*. In both plays, by transferring *Othello*, Hamlet, Claudius and the audience from the first textual world of "appearance is as appearance is" (what I term "discourse theme"), through the stages of doubt (the "mediation" of a ghost, or what I call "Ghost Implicature"), into the world of conviction in which "appearance needs no proof" (my "discourse rheme"), Shakespeare challenged the audience's intelligence and the religious, moral and legal codes of the time.

The "endless discussion of the aesthetic problem of *Hamlet* . . . for two centuries never reduced the play to aesthetic consistency", Robertson claimed in 1919 (Robertson 1919: 11); and T. S. Eliot went so far as to call *Hamlet* "an

artistic failure” (Eliot 1997: 84). Did Shakespeare not have an aesthetically consistent grand design in mind when he wrote this work? *Othello* is structurally simpler, and can provide us with a good clue to access *Hamlet* with (even though it is assumed to have been written after *Hamlet*). The processes by which Iago drives Othello to ruin and those by which Young Hamlet achieves his vengeance upon Claudius are inter-textually parallel, and it is possible to see what the complicated grand design of *Hamlet* was like in Shakespeare’s mind through the structurally easier text of *Othello*.

Keen (2003: 109) states that: “All narrative fiction has a discourse or textual level and a story world.” Following the frameworks of John Ross’s Performative Hypothesis (1970) for the declarative sentence based on Speech Act Theory, and Leech and Short (1981) and Short (1996) for multi-layered discourse, Keen’s claim can be represented diagrammatically as in Figure 1 below.

Ross claims that every declarative sentence “derive[s] from deep structures containing one and only one superordinate performative clause whose main verb is a verb of saying” (Ross 1970: 259). By specifying the verb of saying as “narrate,” which has specific performative features, we obtain this Figure 1. The TEXT in the square brackets is a little more complex in structure, however.

Prague linguists like Vilém Mathesius discussed the clause in language as consisting of a “theme,” a “rheme” and a “transition” between them, where the theme is what is talked about and the rheme is what is said about it (Mathesius 1975). Halliday (2004) redefined Mathesius’s Functional Sentence Perspective and Jan Firbas’s Communicative Dynamism (CD) (Firbas 1964, 1966) as “the ‘textual’ component in the grammar of the sentence” (Halliday 1976: 28). I assume that, like an ordinary message, a literary message addressed by a single addresser also performs the Prague linguists’ and Halliday’s textual function at the level of literary discourse.

At the TEXT level, superficial “textual coherence” must be governed by the discourse structure above it because, unlike the natural, oral narrative discourse examined by Labov and Waletzky (1967), for example, the addresser in the story world of literature is by no means the source of coherence there. In lit-

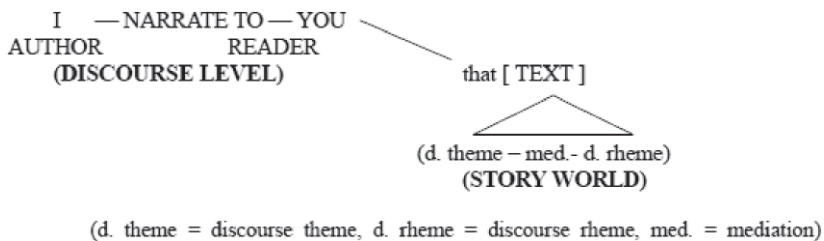


Figure 1. *Two layered structure in literary discourse*

erary discourse, only the addresser at the discourse level above the story world, i.e., the author, is the ultimate source of coherence of literary significance. This literary significance is manifested in a communicatively dynamic way through the transformation of "discourse theme" through some "mediating stages" into literary "discourse rheme," ensuring coherence in the story world.

2. The ghost world as a mediator in Shakespeare's works

2.1. The structure of cheating and 'Ghost Implicature' in *Othello*

Among the fascinating characters whom Shakespeare created, Iago in *Othello* undoubtedly ranks high on the list. Agatha Christie, one of the greatest of British mystery writers, had her Poirot say in the last case of the Hercule Poirot series, *The Curtain*, that Iago in *Othello* was a perfect murderer:

- (1) The play of *Othello*. For there, magnificently delineated, we have the original of X. Iago is the perfect murderer. The deaths of Desdemona, of Cassio – indeed of Othello himself – are all Iago's crimes, planned by him, carried out by him. And *he* remains outside the circle, untouched by suspicion – or could have done so. For your great Shakespeare, my friend, had to deal with the dilemma that his own art had brought about. To unmask Iago, he had to resort to the clumsiest of devices – the handkerchief – a piece of work not at all in keeping with Iago's general technique and a blunder of which one feels certain he would not have been guilty. (Christie *Curtain*, p. 254)

But did Iago, who has long been thought a villainous liar, really tell lies? By analyzing dialogues in the play using the Cooperative Principle of Grice (1975), we can tell that Othello's full understanding of the Cooperative Principle and the conversational implicatures, which result from the regulating process to avoid violation of the maxims, caused his fatal fall. He fell before Iago's manipulative and deceptive use of maxims. The verbal techniques which Iago used were, contrary to general belief, in most cases not "lies": they were what we may call villainous maxim violations and they resulted in the creation of a "Ghost Implicature": a false implicature that Iago artfully created to get Othello to assume that Iago had something to hide.

Critics who refer to Iago's false statements as 'lies' include Rymer (1970: 123) (Iago . . . forging his *lies*), Hazlitt (1903: 35) (*a lie* that kills), Bradley (1991: 358) (Iago doubtless is *a liar*) and Barton (1980 [1929]: 158) (the *liar* Iago). Ewbank (1991: 231–262) includes Iago in her British Academy lecture entitled "Shakespeare's Liars." Some critics avoid this term. Nowotny (1952: 332–338), for example, prefers a "true/false" dichotomy. She suggests Shakespeare shows the process of *false* testimony and the impossibility of discriminating between *true* and *false*; Othello is convinced that Iago's tale is *true*,

while what Iago has said is *false*. She restricts her use of “lie” to the cases of Cassio and the handkerchief (Iago’s *lies* about Cassio and the handkerchief). Other critics who avoid the word “lie” are Coleridge (1979 [1951]: 167) (Iago’s *suggestions*) and Neely (1994: 72) (Iago’s *insinuations* about her [i.e. Desdemona’s] sexuality). (In the foregoing, italics are mine).²

Although many critics think that Iago lied to Othello, I assume rather that Iago drove Othello to draw a false inference through his manipulative use of Gricean maxims. In Kikuchi (1999: 30), I named this false implicature as “The Ghost Implicature.” Iago’s success rests upon his accusation-evading Ghost Implicature. Contrary to a remark of Webster (1942: 233), actress and producer, that “There are no ghosts in Othello . . .,” when viewed from the perspective of Ghost Implicature, it is clear that *Othello* was also motivated by the same stage idea as others of Shakespeare’s ghost plays.

2.2. *Grice’s maxims and Iago’s Ghost Implicature*

If the speaker’s intention is not explicitly stated, the hearer will make an inference about the speaker’s intention, termed “implicature” by Grice, in order to maintain the coherence of the discourse.

Briefly outlining his Cooperative Principle, Grice says: ‘Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged’ (Grice 1975: 45). Under normal circumstances, each conversation participant assumes that the other participant is cooperating by obeying certain conversational conventions, or maxims. The maxims are: QUANTITY (Don’t provide more or less information than is necessary for the current exchange); QUALITY (Tell the truth); RELATION (Be relevant); MANNER (Be clear).

2.3. *VIOLATION STAGE 1*

‘What dost thou say?’: violations of QUANTITY and MANNER

Iago’s first vicious scheme starts with this dialogue with Othello. This first stage of Maxim Violation begins with a question “What dost thou say?” The passage (2) below is the first scene in which Iago attempts to arouse suspicion in the mind of Othello:³

- (2) IAGO: Ha, I like not that.
 OTHELLO: **What dost thou say?**
 IAGO: Nothing, my lord; or if – I know not what.
 OTHELLO: Was not that Cassio parted from my wife?
 IAGO: Cassio, my lord? no, sure, I cannot think it
 That he would steal away so guilty-like
 Seeing you coming.
 OTHELLO: I do believe ’twas he. (*Othello* 3.3.34–40)⁴

The first underlined part of Iago's reply "Cassio, my lord?" to Othello's question is less informative than is required here. What Othello sought was confirmation that the man was Cassio. In this exchange, Iago gives Othello only an echoing reply in order to make him believe that Desdemona is having an affair with Cassio. These repetitive replies provide a smaller amount of information than is necessary, leading the addressee to infer that the speaker might have some important information that he does not want to disclose, and causing the addressee to create an appropriate inference. Without any special justification, Iago's replies flout the Gricean maxim of QUANTITY. This first underlined part also violates the maxim of MANNER in that he does not give Othello a clear-cut explanation. The second underlined part again violates the maxim of QUANTITY, this time giving more information than necessary. These maxim violations can be explained, and the discourse made coherent, by inferring an appropriate implicature: that is, "He had in mind something concerning Cassio and Desdemona." The loyal general, Othello, here loyal again to Grice's Cooperative Principle, cooperatively attempts to maintain the coherence of the discourse.

2.4. VIOLATION STAGE 2

'What dost thou think?': violations of maxims of QUANTITY and MANNER

In the exchange (3) below, Iago again flouts the two maxims of QUANTITY and MANNER, the latter of which requires us to avoid ambiguity and speak clearly:

- (3) OTHELLO: Indeed? Ay, indeed. Discern'st thou aught in that?
 Is he not honest?
 IAGO: Honest, my lord?
 OTHELLO: Honest? Ay, honest.
 IAGO: My lord, for aught I know.
 OTHELLO: **What dost thou think?**
 IAGO: Think, my lord? (*Othello* 3.3.102–108)

2.5. VIOLATION STAGE 3

'What dost thou mean?': violation of maxim of MANNER

Othello's concern about "what is said" in VIOLATION STAGE 1 develops into concern about "what is meant" here.⁵ The underlined extracts in the exchange below violate the maxim of MANNER, which urges the speaker to speak clearly:

- (4) IAGO: I do beseech you,
 Though I perchance am vicious in my guess

– As I confess it is my nature's plague
 To spy into abuses, and oft my jealousy
 Shapes faults that are not – that your wisdom
 From one that so imperfectly conceits
 Would take no notice, nor build yourself a trouble
 Out of his scattering and unsure observance:
 It were not for your quiet nor your good
 Nor for my manhood, honesty and wisdom
 To let you know my thoughts.

OTHELLO: Zounds! **What dost thou mean?**

IAGO: Good name in man and woman, dear my lord,
 Is the immediate jewel of their souls:
 Who steals my purse steals trash – 'tis something – nothing.
 'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands –
 But he that filches from me my good name
 Robs me of that which not enriches him
 And makes me poor indeed.

OTHELLO: By heaven, I'll know thy thoughts! (*Othello* 3.3.148–164)

Othello became ruined not because of Iago's "downright lie," but because of the groundless Ghost Implicature that Iago intentionally led him to believe. Othello created a false reality and ruined himself.

2.6. *Into the world of false being*

These three stages represented in the three exchanges can be diagrammed as in Figure 2 below. Following the progress of the play from top left to bottom right, this diagram shows Othello's fall into a worse situation.

Figure 2 illustrates the way in which Othello's simple one-utterance-with-one-meaning life is mediated by the Ghost Implicature into a life of implicature, a world of one utterance with multiple meanings. Reflecting the pragmatic meaning, mediations are manifested in the gradual changes in the form of his questions:

"What dost thou say?" (utterance with single meaning) → "What dost thou think?" (secondary meaning comes into being) → "What dost thou mean?" (secondary meaning is accepted)

Notice that in the end Othello becomes a good user of implicature to Desdemona. He says "Have you prayed tonight, Desdemona?" (5.2.25), implying that she should be ready to die. On the other hand, Desdemona is still living in the world of utterance with a single meaning (World of +BEING). The discourse theme of 'innocence' presented earlier in the story becomes mediated through the stages of doubt into the discourse theme of death.

Ghost Implicature as a mediator in *Othello*

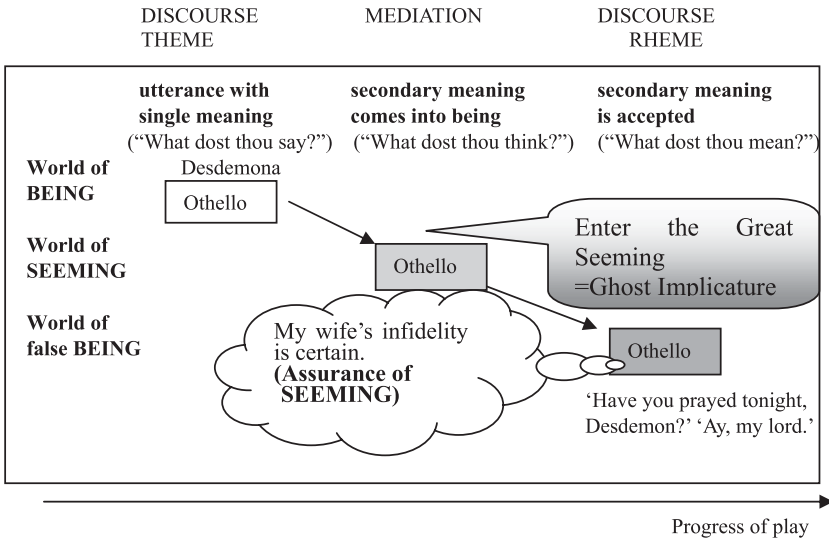


Figure 2. *The Being-Seeming structure in Othello*⁶

3. Two Ghosts as a mediator in *Hamlet* and the infinite image effect of the two facing mirrors

In both *Othello* and *Hamlet*, there appears a ghost as a mediator. In *Hamlet*, the ghost creates an infinite image effect of two facing mirrors due to the double world of doubt as represented below. While in *Othello* it is Iago who creates the world of SEEMING, in *Hamlet* it is the "Ghost" who first introduces Hamlet to the world of SEEMING, and then Hamlet himself introduces Claudius to this world of doubt. Figure 3 below represents this double world of SEEMING.

Figure 3 shows Hamlet being mediated into the dubious world through three stages:

"Seems, (madam?) (Nay,) it is. (I know) not seems" (1.2) (utterance that states X is X) → "To be, or not to be" (3.1) (utterance that states whether X is Y or not is uncertain) → "If't be so" . . . "But let it be. (Horatio, I am dead)" (5.2) (utterance that states X is Y)

In *Hamlet*, the eponymous hero into whose ear a ghost pours poisonous words that are impossible to prove has common ground with Othello, into whose ear Iago also pours poisonous words; and Hamlet, in turn, also parallels the Ghost and Iago in that the prince provides Claudius with the poisonous impression

Two ghosts as a mediator in *Hamlet* and the effect of two facing mirrors

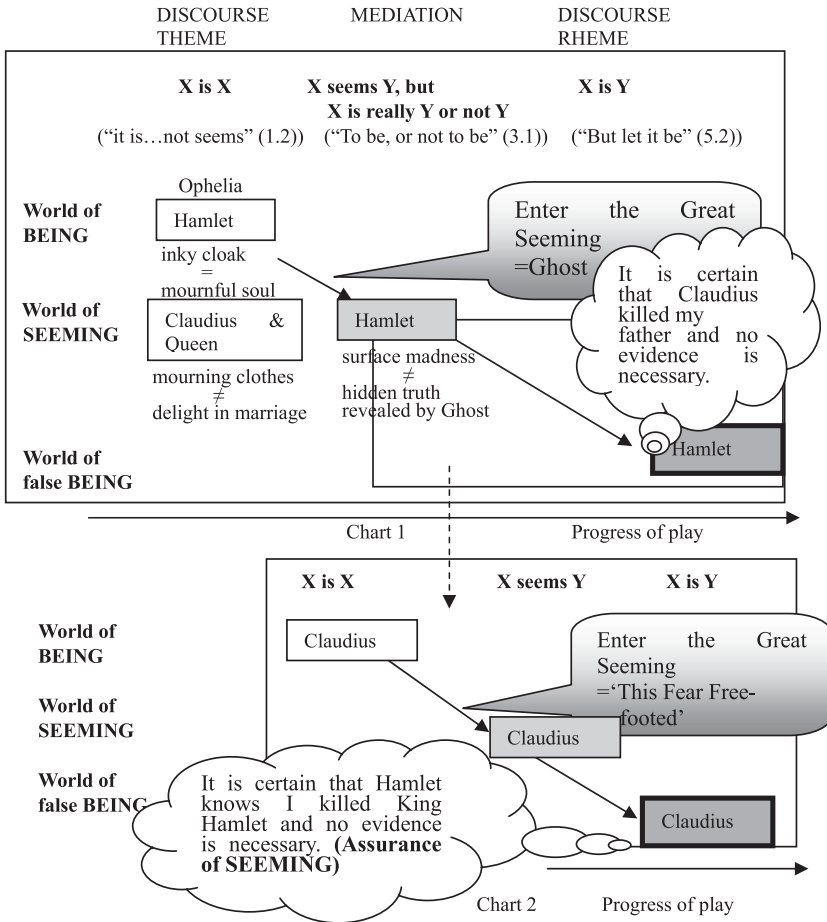


Figure 3. *The Being-Seeming structure in Hamlet*

that he knows the hidden truth. This is impossible for Claudius to prove, just as it is impossible to prove the Ghost's or Iago's words. By transferring Hamlet from the first textual world of "appearance is as appearance is," through the stages of doubt (the world of SEEMING), into the world of conviction in which "appearance needs no proof," Shakespeare challenges the audience's intelligence and the religious, moral and legal codes of the time.⁷

Chart 1 above, the first box diagram, represents the world of Hamlet, to whom the Ghost delivers a message that is impossible to prove. It is when

trapped in this world of SEEMING, that Hamlet utters the famous “To be or not to be” phrase. In Chart 2, on the other hand, Hamlet himself acts as Ghost for Claudius; that is, Hamlet appears before Claudius as the provider of a dubious world. At a certain point in Chart 1, Chart 2 enters, and the two worlds develop in parallel till the final, feud scene like two facing mirrors – the mirror of Hamlet and the mirror of Claudius. And these two facing mirrors give an infinite number of reflections.

3.1. *Two implications in Figure 3*

Figure 3 has two implications. The first implication is the effect of two facing mirrors and the infinite number of reflections which the framework has.

3.1.1. *First implication: two facing mirrors and the infinite number of reflections.*

For Claudius to know that Hamlet knows of his crime, he has to draw evidence from Hamlet. Hamlet, on the other hand, has no clear evidence of Claudius's crime and he cannot say anything clearly about it. Even in Elizabethan times, a confession made by a Ghost was not received in evidence. The Ghost's confession could be sufficient to sustain a conviction if accompanied by other proofs that Claudius committed the offence, for example, Claudius's voluntary confession. But Claudius does not need to confess as long as Hamlet does not hold clear evidence of his crime. In this context, it is noteworthy that Hamlet does not hear Claudius's confession in the Prayer Scene after the Play-within-the Play, even though he enters when Claudius is confessing. The lines in question run as follows:

- (5) KING: ‘Forgive me my foul murder?’
 That cannot be, since I am still possess'd
 Of those effects for which I did the murder –
 My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen.
 May one be pardon'd and retain th'offence?
 [*He kneels.*]
 :
Enter HAMLET.
 HAMLET: Now might I do it pat, now a is a-praying.
 And now I'll do't. [*Draws his sword.*]
 And so a goes to heaven;
 And so am I reveng'd. That would be scann'd:
 A villain kills my father, and for that
 I, his sole son, do this same villain send
 To heaven.
 Why, this is hire and salary, not revenge. (*Hamlet* 3.3.52–79)

While Hamlet sees Claudius making confession, importantly, he shows no interest in the content of the confession. At this stage, Hamlet is already convinced

of Claudius's crime, though he has obtained no direct evidence. That is, Hamlet and Claudius are both in the Seeming-to-Seeming world, or in limbo, and it is now impossible for either side to draw out direct evidence from the other side. With both sides trying in vain to know what the other knows, and becoming confident about the other's knowledge of the truth, the story develops to the feud scene.

3.1.2. *Second implication: audience's readiness is all: audience is cheated.*

The second implication is that the audience's readiness is all. Ultimately the audience is deceived into believing that Hamlet avenges his father's murder. All of the elements in this play can be said to be arranged to ready the audience to accept Hamlet's vengeance upon Claudius. In the Prayer Scene (ACT 3, SCENE 3), Claudius confesses his murder of King Hamlet, but Hamlet does not hear it. However, the audience has already been fully prepared to assume Claudius's guilt through the revelation of the Ghost and the player king's similar confession in the Gonzago play.⁸ In the prayer scene, the audience is now given sufficient grounds to believe who killed King Hamlet and who is to be avenged. In addition, people in the audience who knew the content of Ur-Hamlet and other revenge tragedies of the time were fully expecting vengeance to be taken. In addition to the building of expectation of Hamlet's vengeance, in the Play-within-the-Play Scene, the audience also becomes confident about Hamlet's conviction regarding Claudius's crime. Through these sorts of "shared knowledge," the audience believes that Hamlet has achieved his vengeance in the feud scene when he kills Claudius. In reality, however, Hamlet dies without any clear evidence that Claudius murdered King Hamlet, and Claudius dies without knowing that Hamlet knows that he murdered the king.

Also in *Hamlet*, the author's discourse theme presented in the form of INNOCENCE earlier in the play becomes mediated through the three stages of SEEMING into a rhematic comment on the theme; that is, INNOCENCE ultimately faces RUIN.

4. **A case of comedy: Ghost Love as a mediator in *A Midsummer Night's Dream***

What about the case of comedy? In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shakespeare uses the same technique as in the above tragedies: Ghost Love as a mediator. Is the communicatively dynamic structure of *Othello* and *Hamlet* also applicable to Shakespeare's comedies? In this section, I will touch upon only *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. This story also clearly has a similar tripartite structure.

What Figure 4 represents is this: Only Hermia and Lysander return from State (3) to State (1), left above; Helena and Demetrius fall into State (4), into

Ghost love as a mediator in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

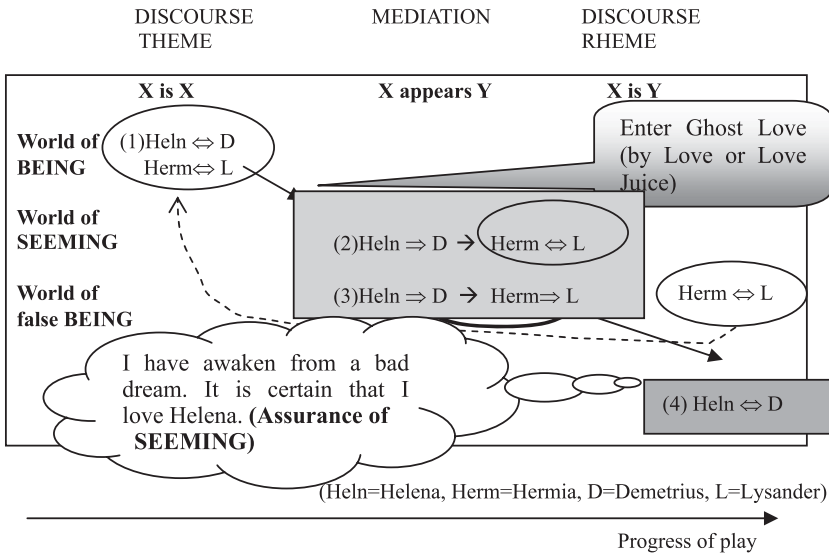


Figure 4. Love-sick / love-awakened relations of the four Athenian lovers

the bottom-right corner. Demetrius seemingly returned to the original state in which he loved Helena; however, this is the effect of “love juice.” Though the story ends happily, Demetrius alone does not know that he has been in the false world.

In *The Myth of Deliverance*, Northrop Frye rightly argues that in Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*, Helen and Cressida are not real ghosts, but the embodiments of ghost-like illusion (1993: 63). Greek Helen is actually in Troy; and Trojan Cressida, who seems to belong to Trojan Troilus, also seems to belong to Diomedes in the Greek camp. Cleopatra in *Antony and Cleopatra*, according to Frye, is also like a ghost.

The world of Ghost Love, or the world of SEEMING, in the box in the center of the charts, is, therefore, obviously serving the role of mediation, transforming the first stage of the story world which I name discourse theme into the last stage which I call discourse rHEME, or author’s comment upon the discourse theme.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, whether it is Keen’s “story world” or Paul Werth’s “text world” (Werth 1999), the TEXT WORLD has a specific mind-style based on the

addresser-oriented, communicative dynamism, called “textual function.” The TEXT WORLD is not a static collection of linguistic features, whether socio-linguistic or cognitive. In *Othello*, Shakespeare presented the innocent state of Othello as the discourse theme, which is, through the mediating stages of Ghost-like, false pragmatic implications, commented upon in the discourse rheme as being worth facing death for. In *Hamlet*, with the work of the Ghost’s unprovable claim, Hamlet is mediated through the same stages of SEEMING into the world of seeming vengeance. In *Othello*, Iago’s claim was presented to the audience as false. In *Hamlet*, however, Claudius’s crime was presented as true through Claudius’s confession (though this does NOT mean that the Ghost’s claim was true).

Shakespeare described Iago as the perfect murderer beyond the law; on the other hand, he depicted Hamlet as the perfect avenger beyond legal, ethical, or religious accusations. That is, Hamlet’s act cannot be called ‘vengeance’, because his act of killing Claudius is not based on any evidence of Claudius’s guilt; therefore, Hamlet cannot be accused of taking personal vengeance, which was against the Elizabethan religious and moral codes. However, the feelings of the audience, believing that Hamlet avenged his father’s murder, were satisfied. Religiously speaking, at that time, it was believed that vengeance belonged to God, and it is also a matter of fact that Elizabethan England had established legal systems for crimes that did not allow personal vengeance to be carried out. However, people’s sentiment sought vengeance and retribution. Shakespeare, satisfying these various social codes, seems to have presented an intellectual challenge to the intellectual classes in society.⁹

In addition to the above-mentioned general framework, Shakespeare’s story world provided the audience with other challenging topics. Can the Ghost’s words be used as substantial evidence in a court of law? Is Hamlet guilty of mistakenly killing Polonius? Is Hamlet responsible for causing Ophelia to commit suicide? Does Hamlet’s killing of Laertes with a poisoned sword without knowing the truth constitute the offence of murder? Is Claudius responsible when Gertrude mistakenly drinks poisoned wine? All these legal questions that occur in the world of SEEMING provided long-lasting topics of discussion among the audience during and after the play, making the play everlastingly popular. This meant the success of the play.

Kansai Gaidai University

Notes

Correspondence address: skikuchi@kansai-gaidai.ac.jp

1. An earlier version of this article, “Iago, the murderer; Hamlet, the avenger: How ‘Ghost Implicature’ or ‘a ghost’ mediates their success,” was delivered at the International Conference

- to Mark the 75th Anniversary of the English Department, Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade (*ellsii75*), 10 December 2004 and published in the conference proceedings edited by Rasulić et al., *Proceedings of English language and literature studies: interfaces and integrations*, 371–383.
2. *OED*'s definition of "lie" is also cited for reference:
lie *sb.*¹ **1.a.** An act or instance of lying; a false statement made with intent to deceive; a criminal falsehood; lie *v.*² **1. intr.** To tell a lie or lies; to utter falsehood; to speak falsely. (*OED*¹)
 3. Muir (1991 [1958]: 257) wrongly stresses the importance of soliloquies in his search for Iago's true motive: "But very naturally he does not tell the fool Roderigo that he has another and deeper motive, one that is revealed in his first soliloquy: . . ." What is important about various motives revealed in Iago's soliloquies lies in their variety in the stage of SEEMING, not in a particular motive.
 4. All text citations of Shakespeare's works are from *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, ed. Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson and David Scott Kastan (London: Thomson Learning, 1998).
 5. Widdowson (1982: 43) and Coulthard (1977: 177) are both correct when they say that Iago gradually specifies his accusations. Coulthard argues: "Iago . . . gradually becomes more specific in his accusations until he can warn: Look to your wife, observe her well with Cassio" (3.3.200). The last, most specific remark by Iago was, if we extend Agatha Christie's view, only one of the "clumsiest of devices" that Shakespeare used to make Iago's guilt clear.
 6. The three stages at the top line and the three stages at the left-hand side vertical column stand for the same thing, but I employed this formation because this better depicts the developments of story and time.
 7. In the light of this "Being–Seeming–false Being" grand design, we can better appreciate the profound shades of meaning of a *be*-verb and a *seem*-verb in the following lines: (1) OPHELIA: He rais'd a sigh so piteous and profound / As it did *seem* to shatter all his bulk / And end his being . . . / He *seem'd* to find his way without his eyes, . . . (*Hamlet* 2.1.94–98); (2) POLONIUS: That he *is* mad 'tis true; 'tis true 'tis pity; / And pity 'tis 'tis true. (*Hamlet* 2.2.97–98); (3) ANTONY: Did this in Caesar *seem* ambitious? . . . Which he did thrice refuse: *Was* this ambitious? . . . (4th PLEBEIAN) Therefore 'tis certain he *was* not ambitious. (*Julius Caesar* 3.2.91–114) (italics mine).
 8. Wilson (1937: 140) raises the question of why the Ghost's story and the Gonzago story are parallel. The parallelism here is prepared by Shakespeare only to ready the audience to assume Claudius's guilt. Far from being parallel, whether Claudius actually killed King Hamlet by pouring poison into his ear as described in the Ghost's and the Gonzago story is not clear at all because it is not mentioned in Claudius's confession.
 9. As Barton (1980 [1929]) points out, Shakespeare's audience had more interest in legal matters than a present-day one. Based on the audience's "readiness," Shakespeare created plays full of legal concerns. As Eliot (1964) argues, the audience appreciated the play at various levels, and as the play has been the most popular among Shakespeare's works, *Hamlet* can be said to be "a success" contrary to a remark in Eliot (1997: 81–87).

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