



Insanity In Shakespeare's Great Tragedies

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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with the theme of insanity in the four major tragedies of Shakespeare: **Hamlet, Othello, King Lear** and **Macbeth**. Its main purpose is to show that the heroes of these tragedies display very individual characteristics which are adaptable to the modern ideas of R. D. Laing about madness. Departing from the Medieval and Renaissance theories on the subject, these work analyses mainly three aspects in each tragedy: the therapeutic function of insanity, the fact that the heroes are always able to recover from it, and the idea that the society where madness appears is itself usually "mad" and corrupt. The whole body of this paper aims at pointing out the universality of Shakespeare's genius, since the themes which he had so skillfully treated in his tragedies are still being discussed today in the light of contemporary theories.

Key wards -Hamlet, King Lear, Othello Macbeth, Madness, Sanity.

Introduction

The main focus of this paper is on the role of women in the major tragedies of Shakespeare. These major tragedies are: Hamlet; Othello; King Lear; Macbeth. Without the women's struggle against the patriarchal system, the men would not be able to recognize and fight against the evil forces within their society. The female characters are aware of the patriarchal system they live in and act within it to the best of their ability.

In brief, each woman's person field of mindfulness permits her to act as the agent of the denouncement within the tragedy. Even those ladies with restricted or conflicting mindfulness of their substances play a critical portion in uncovering the sullied deeds of the blameworthy. Whereas Gertrude and Ophelia may not continuously be mindful of the critical circumstances that encompass them, both move the adjust of control from Claudius's hands to Hamlet's. The penances of both ladies give Village with the opportunity to rebuff Claudius for his crimes. In a comparable mold, the conflicting recognitions of Desdemona and Emilia give Othello with the implies to reveal Iago's noxious nature. In standing up for one another, the ladies lose their lives; in any case, their expiation clears the way for Iago's discipline. With a more noteworthy field of mindfulness, the ladies of Lord Lear and Macbeth contribute to the downfall of the debasement within the patriarchy. Cordelia and Woman Macduff directly stand up to the patriarchal disregard of the ladylike. Other, whereas Goneril, Regan, and Woman Macbeth reflect the require for ladies to give up their womanliness in arrange to Benarwiold specialist in their lives. Even in spite of the fact that these alarm females kick the bucket as a result of their positions, their activities make the fundamental components for the denouncement within the tragedies to happen. In spite of the fact that the most female characters die in Shakespeare's major tragedies, their passing's do not make them any less vital than their male partners. Other than permitting the male heroes to fulfill their parts to the most noteworthy degree conceivable, the ladies merit major consideration since they challenge the patriarchal restrictions forced on their existence. In endeavoring to resist a world that supplies small chance for headway, the female characters of the major tragedies produce trust for ladies that did not exist already

Two of the main factors to which we owe the tremendous popularity of Shakespeare's work are his treatment of universal themes and his skillful portrayal of human characters. It is the aim of this dissertation to study characters and contrasts in characters as they are depicted in the four major tragedies of Shakespeare: Hamlet, Othello, King Lear and Macbeth. The theme chosen as a connecting link among them is madness. Sanity, as it is explored in Shakespeare's tragedies, is a fascinating theme. Indeed, it must have fascinated Shakespeare too, because it appears recurrently in the poet's work, even outside the tragedies. It is symptomatic, for instance, in *Midsummer Night's Drama*, that Theseus should address the lovers with a speech where the madman, the lover and the poet are said to be "of imagination all compact." It is also very important, and of particular interest for this dissertation, that lovers and madmen should, in Theseus words, "apprehend more than cold reason ever comprehends" (V.i). It is as if Shakespeare put madness together with love and poetry in a level above that of mere rationality.

In the tragedies, however, things are left less explicit, and it is my purpose here to try to clear them up. Each of then four tragedies to be studied in this dissertation has at least one mad character among its "dramatis personae." And I say "at least" because, besides the heroes, there are also secondary characters who display traits of madness. In Hamlet there is Ophelia, whose sweet lunacy sharply contrasts with the hero's feigned and bitter madness. Othello is maddened by the machiavellian, sadistic Iago, whose "motiveless malignity" Is, as we shall see later, a proof of his own peculiar kind of

madness. King Lear also presents to us two mad characters, Lear and Edgar, the former truly and desperately mad, and the latter, like Hamlet, just pretending to be insane. As for Macbeth, there can be no doubt that both the hero and Lady Macbeth are also, in a way, mad. Each of the four tragedies will be fully discussed in later in this paper.

There, whereas dissecting and comparing Shakespeare's frantic characters to each other, I will be attempting fundamentally to find on the off chance that there's a design in their madness. Are Shakespeare's crazy people mentally individualized, or simply the casualties of cosmological clutter? Is there a few equation that will fit them all, or can we recognize in each case a distinctive and specific kind of madness? This can be planning to be the most concern of this thesis, but I am moreover fascinated by inquiring a few other questions. How does franticness come to be in each character? Which results does it bring forward? Is franticness basically awful for a individual? Which shapes can it accept? Is it redress to think of crazy people as individuals totally void of reason and feeling? Can a completely levelheaded and calm individual be frantic in a few way? Can an enthusiastic and wild eyed individual who acts like a crazy person be said to be some way or another sane? Can franticness work as a prepare of refinement or as treatment for other disasters?

The answer to such questions will be given throughout this dissertation, and they will be studied against the background of the Elizabethan world. Madness, its causes and manifestations, and also its relationship to Cosmology and Folly were subjects which fascinated both the Medieval and the Renaissance man. Chapter two provides a discussion of these themes. It will also be important here to analyse the mad characters of the tragedies as citizens of particular societies. Each of the four plays is set in a different country, in a different kind of environment: Denmark, Venice, Ancient Britain and Scotland. Does this fact have any influence upon the characters' madness, or are these different societies only a shadow of the environment of Elizabethan England? Is a presumably good and healthy society which marginalizes madmen so good and healthy as it seems?

It has been said that franticness may be a sickness of civilization, of the cities. Probably typically not continuously so, but there could be an awesome bargain of truth in it. Michel Foucault and R.D. Laing are two therapists who share this see in our time. M. Foucault's *Franticness and Civilization* offers a verifiable see of franticness from the Center Ages until the seventeenth century, the age of reason, when there's a move from the humanist involvement of franticness to our possess involvement. Dr. Laing's work contests the regular suspicion almost typicality with a radical and challenging see of the mental ailment in our society. Shakespeare had as of now examined such issues; he was a virtuoso living ahead of his possess time, anticipating, so to talk, the sorts of inconveniences and tensions which would be besetting men in our cutting edge world. Therefore, this paper will be trying to relate Laing's thoughts to the investigations of Shakespeare's tragedies, talking about such issues against the foundation of Elizabethan convictions

The central picture in *Villa* is, for Knight, passing; the hero's soul is debilitated to death. He has experienced all misfortune of reason, despairing, and disgust. Hamlet is commanded to recuperate and make concordance within the spoiled state of Denmark; but "great cannot come from fiendish," Knight says. Hamlet's own state of being isn't agreeable itself; he has held talk with passing, he has seen through humankind, and what he saw made him cynic-sick. Shakespeare intentionally set his legend on the knife-edge between franticness and rational soundness, for Hamlet's conduct, in spite of the fact that it certainly tends towards franticness, is but the anomaly of extraordinary despairing and criticism.

As for **Othello**, Knight talks basically in terms of dialect and imagery. Thus, Othello's respectable and courageous qualities, as well as his soldiers hip, are reflected in his speeches. As Iago's plot picks up impact upon him, Othello's intellect collapses beneath the extraordinary of anguish, and his discourse quickly savages. When he raves and falls to the ground, his dialect, so to talk, goes with him; he gets to be revolting, idiotic. Thus, Knight emphasizes this sharp dualism between pictures of magnificence and offensiveness, between verse and hasty dialect, respectability and ineptitude.

In **Macbeth**, on the opposite, the one picture around which the entire catastrophe appears to spin is that of fear. Ambitions the enthusiasm that determines the activity, but fear invades the complete play. There are too pictures of blood, darkness, sleep, chaos, and so on, but fear is the major one from which all the others spring. The fear that deadens everybody else in the play, inclinations Macbeth to the choice of fiendish. He is, like Village, melancholic, and his despairing, settled on something negative, however effective, plans the method by which his mental state powers him to activities of blood and annihilation.

Knight's discussion of King Lear leads him to talk about naturalistic images. Lear, a selfish, high-tempered and autocratic old man who is, at the same time, childish, foolish, but very human, revolts at the thought of his daughters' injustice and tries to become part of the natural world. Therefore, he joins the company of beggars and madmen, and his unbearable pain gives way to pitiful insanity. This is exactly what Knight defines as madness: it is "the breaking of that which differentiates man from beast," "the disjoining of mind by the tug of two conflicting principles" forcing in different directions, till the reason snaps

Conclusion:

It would be unusual to conversation approximately franticness without any specify of the shapes it can expect and the pictures related with it. The "modern" critics have made a difference me in this assignment with their treatment of the plays which concentrates primarily on angles of dialect, structure and symbolism. Each catastrophe creates a distinctive set of pictures to which franticness can be related:

pictures of passing, chaos, kill and blood; pictures of mammoths and wild life; pictures of the extraordinary, apparitions and witches; pictures of blamelessness, habit and disuse, and numerous others. If we compare this symbolism to the madness of Shakespeare's characters, we are going certainly discover numerous connections

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