



A PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY OF MADNESS IN HAMLET AND MACBETH

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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with the theme of madness in two of Shakespeare's plays, Hamlet and Macbeth. Its main purpose is to show that the heroes of these tragedies display very individual characteristics which are about madness. Departing from the Medieval and Renaissance theories on the subject, this work analyses mainly psychological aspects in each play. 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. It is the aim of this paper to study characters and contrasts in characters as they are depicted in the tragedies. Madness is a fascinating theme as it is explored in Shakespeare's tragedies. Madmen in Shakespeare's tragedies are individualized beings who do not conform to one and the same model. They are all psychologically individualized.

KEYWORDS :**INTRODUCTION:**

Two of the main factors to which we owe the popularity of Shakespeare's work are his treatment of global themes and his brilliant portrayal of human characters. It is the aim of this paper to study characters and contrasts in characters as they are depicted in the two plays of Shakespeare: Hamlet and Macbeth. The theme chosen as a connecting link among them is madness. Madness as a theme must have fascinated Shakespeare because it appears recurrently in his tragedies, however, things are left less clear, and it is my purpose here to try to clear them up. Each of the two tragedies to be studied in this paper has at least one mad character and there are also secondary characters who display traits of madness. In Hamlet there is Ophelia, whose sweet lunacy sharply contrasts with the hero's bitter madness. As for Macbeth, there can be no doubt that both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are also mad. From a "psychological viewpoint" I intend to discuss some analyses of Shakespeare's tragedies from psychological or psychoanalytical points of view. A vigorous impulse was given by Freud's theories of psychoanalysis, and much has been written about Shakespeare's heroes on the basis of these theories. Freud is still followed in modern psychoanalysis, but more recent studies have been developed.

It has been said that madness is a sickness of civilization, of the cities. Probably this is not always so, but there is a great deal of truth in it. Michel Foucault is a psychiatrist who shares this view in our time. His work "Madness and Civilization" offers a historical view of madness from the Middle Ages until the seventeenth century, the age of reason. Shakespeare had investigated such problems, he was a genius of his time, foreseeing the kinds of troubles and anxieties which would be afflicting men in our modern world.

Madness in Shakespeare's Time

In the Middle Ages until the Renaissance, man's dispute with madness was a dramatic debate in which he confronted the secret powers of the world, the experience of madness was clouded by images of the Will of God, of the Beast and the Metamorphosis, and of all the secrets of knowledge. The Bible was filled with instances of possession by evil. People were supposed to have been seized by the Devil after a deliberate pact with him. The "witch-hunt" became a well-known in the Middle Ages. Towards the end of the medieval era, another method of treating madmen began to develop. The custom of exclusion had already been used during the Middle period as an effective way of dealing with mad and other sick people. They were expelled from their cities and forbidden any kind of social contact. In the time of the Renaissance, this kind of treatment was also assigned to criminals and madmen. Exclusion took different forms which had the purpose of rendering the cities

free from their mad citizens. madness cure was a religious ritual with gesturing, incantation, prayer and even scourging which were used to relieve man sufferings. This belief persisted in the Renaissance. A delightful but horrible method of effecting exclusion was "embarkation." Madmen were put on a ship which supposed to take them away. These were the famous Ships of fools, a very common presence in the landscape of the Renaissance. One of the reasons for this practice was the belief, long established in the European mind, that water and madness had an affinity for each other; the sea was restless like the madman's mind, and its mysteries were compared to the deep labyrinths of his mad knowledge. Once put on a ship, the madman was not return, but the ship presumably befitted him, because it was believed that water could purify him. It has been said that poetry, love and madness were all linked in the minds of Renaissance people. During the medieval period and the fifteenth century, the theme of death had haunted the imagination of the European people. In the early Renaissance madness replaces death and comes to the front. It presents itself as a new, great spectacle to be watched in the public whipping sessions at market places, in prisons, hospitals. Madness becomes a symbol of mockery and menace. Some people thought that an aquatic element which caused the relationship between water and madness.

Psychological View

The central image in Hamlet is death, the hero's soul is sick to death. He has undergone all loss of purpose, melancholy, and disgust. Shakespeare purposefully set his hero on the knife edge between madness and sanity, for Hamlet's behavior, though it certainly tends towards madness, but the abnormality of extreme melancholy and cynicism. In Macbeth, on the contrary, the one image around which the whole tragedy seems to revolve is fear. Ambition is the passion that determines the action, but fear pervades the whole play. There are also images of blood, darkness, sleep, chaos, but fear is the major one from which all the others spring. Ernest Jones, Freud's friend and biographer, was the first great name in the psychological school of criticism. He applies the technique of psychoanalysis to Hamlet's delay, following the Oedipus-complex theory. On general lines, He argued that Hamlet, in his infancy, had developed a deep resentment for having to share his mother's affection even with his father, whom he saw as a rival. So he had always wanted to take his father's place, but Claudius's crime, however, and his marriage to his mother put these desires once more into action in Hamlet's mind, and he immediately identified with his uncle who had accomplished what he himself would like to have done. But Claudius was at the same time a rival, the hated image of the stepfather, replacing the late King in Gertrude's affection. Willing to kill Claudius to put him out of the way, and also to avenge his father, but feeling at the same time that he would thus destroy himself

projected in his uncle, Hamlet thus refrained from action and delayed. Jones thus classifies Hamlet within the category of psycho neurotics, "driven by the 'unconscious part of his mind,' divided by an internal conflict. He had two impossible alternatives: either to ignore the Ghost's call for revenge and abandon his duty, or to kill his mother's husband, which, besides being equivalent to the original murder, also meant destroying the deepest part of his personality projected in Claudius. This what renders Hamlet paralyzed and makes him delay. In Shakespeare's tragedies, madness is always related to death and murder. The playwright's treatment of the theme applies more to the dark and tragic experience of madness of the fifteenth century than to critical and moral approach which developed in his own epoch. Thus the madman was compared to animals and beasts, the lowest forms of creation. It is the animal that exists in the madman that reveals to man his own truth and inaccessible limits of knowledge in his innocent idiocy, already possesses. This is where madness and folly sync, both madman and fool share that forbidden kind of knowledge enclosed within itself, like a crystal ball which they proudly hold as the prize of their insight. Madness and folly had been linked since the old morality plays of the Middle Ages, where they represented Vice. Madness in the Renaissance was treated in a way which is different from any other period. The Neo-Classical Age's experience of madness was radically different and opened the way for our modern theories. But, in Shakespeare's time, madness was still linked to folly and vice, to dreams and illusions and to tragedy and comedy. Madness was life and death, morality and sin. Elizabethans believed in a perfectly divided and ordered universe, and that they desperately feared any disruption of this order. Chaos was therefore an abnormality, a threat to be avoided at all costs. Madness occupied a very special place in the imagination of the Renaissance. The madman was the lowest form of human life, immediately below him were animals and beasts, to which he was compared. This obsession is clearly seen in Shakespeare's tragedies. For instance, Chaos in Hamlet begins with Claudius' crime, both murdering his king and brother and with his marriage to the queen. Macbeth is certainly the tragedy where chaos is most visible. Macbeth's crime unseats the play from its proper order. An important proof that madness and chaos do not always have a direct cause and consequence relationship, where chaos is most visible, madness is not so spectacular as it is in Hamlet.

Hamlet and Macbeth Madness

Shakespeare's heroes, are never truly psychotic, for they evidently experienced themselves as real and complete. But their condition is drawn so near the psychotic type especially in the middle of the plays that one can't realize the difference. Hamlet is a good example of this. The most important question asked about Hamlet's madness is "Is Hamlet really mad?". In other words, does he use his madness as a cover for his plan of revenge, or as a way of criticizing society?. As Hamlet's character is complex, so his madness is also a mixture of various different factors. It can be seen as a mask for a plan. Hamlet himself seems to admit this when he proposes the oath after the "ghost scene."

As per chance, hereafter shall think it meet To put an antic disposition on— (I.v.171-72)

There is a great difference between being into madness on the one hand and acting it on another. This explain why Hamlet's madness differs from Ophelia's. She falls helplessly into madness, as one falls into a deep darkness, whereas Hamlet "dives" into it. He deliberately chooses this way. Ophelia, being weaker than him, is not able to win the battle against the social and family pressures upon her, and so her mind gives way to madness. Madness itself is a way of relieving personal suffering. Hamlet has acquired the capacity of pulling free from his madness. Thus, Hamlet becomes finally able to create harmony in a sick society, preparing the way for that inevitable restoration of order which Hamlet himself foresees and welcomes. Hamlet knows that there are painful discrepancies between his aspirations and his accomplishments. His own inner self is divided and he is heartbroken. Madness is a way of comprehending and

partially relieving personal suffering. Hamlet have seen what he has seen and acquired the capacity of pulling free from his madness. Hamlet becomes finally able to heal, to cleanse and to create harmony in a sick society, preparing Macbeth's madness is the result of an uncontrolled ambition, stimulated by the hero's desire for the infinite. Macbeth longs for power and freedom and security that could be found beyond the boundaries of common human morality and beyond good and evil. Macbeth also longs for the infinite, but the means he has chosen to obtain it sharply contradicts the essence of his longing. In the Elizabethan terminology He has altered the processes of nature and he has broken the chain of being.

CONCLUSION

This paper has dealt with the theme of madness as it is depicted in two of Shakespeare tragedies. An analysis based on Elizabethan knowledge and criticism, Shakespeare's heroes are psychologically individualized. They display specific characteristics in their mental derangements. For example, Hamlet is a manic depressive type, driving his melancholy from his Oedipal complex. Macbeth is a megalomaniac and a paranoiac. None of the heroes becomes truly psychotic. They are all able to be free from madness through tragic recognition. It is clear that Shakespeare's deep insight into human nature enabled him to transcend his own time. The Elizabethans believed that cosmological disorder had a relationship with all kinds of abnormalities in human behavior. Madness was the most important one. They saw madness as a symbol of the universal chaos that change the natural order of the chain of human being. In Elizabethan drama and Shakespearean in specific, madness is never accidental, it is employed either to mock or to point something out.

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