

SHAKESPEARE'S USE OF MADNESS

511



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PREFACE

Madness in its various stages was a common dramatic subject during the Elizabethan period, and Shakespeare was no exception to the list of dramatists who dared to portray insanity on the stage. His ability to delve into the mind of man and display the emotions therein is evidence of his knowledge of psychology. Whether he chose to present a character as the sufferer of extreme passion or as the victim of complete madness, he was able to portray the psychic aspects of the human mind.

His use of madness in his plays forms a kind of arch; i.e., his early plays seem to move up the arch of madness with the depictions of passions, malcontents, and feigned madness as shown in Richard III, Titus Andronicus, Hamlet, and Othello. By the time he begins King Lear, he is at the center, expressing madness in its most extreme state. He descends the arch with such plays as Macbeth, Timon of Athens, and The Winter's Tale. This interest was probably evoked by the rise and fall of the popularity of madness as a subject for the Elizabethan dramatists. Whatever the cause, Shakespeare used the Elizabethan concept of madness, with its fools

and malcontents to express some of man's most universal ideas on the corruption of humanity.

In this study I have examined a group of his plays in an attempt to determine the relationship of his use of madness and the Elizabethan concept of madness.

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CHAPTER I

ELIZABETHAN MADNESS: THE INSANE, THE FOOL AND THE MALCONTENT

Elizabethans understood madness or insanity to be a disease of both mind and body because of the interrelationship of the two. They believed that the humor could arouse the passions and that the passions could cause disruptions in the humors.¹ They explained that the basic functions of the body were controlled by the humors and that the mind was controlled by the passions.² When only the mind was afflicted, the Elizabethans used the term, passion. There were four basic humor classifications: e. g., (1) phlegmatic, (2) melancholy, (3) sanguine, (4) choleric. One or more of these were believed to be dominant in each individual, producing within him certain character traits, as follows:

Phlegmatic: slothful, given to bodily pleasures, idle, dull of wit, heavy, slow; loves food and drink; stature--short, fat; hair--soft, yellow, straight.

¹Lily B. Campbell, Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes, p. 101.

²Ruth Anderson, Elizabethan Psychology and Shakespeare's Plays, p. 32.

Melancholic: hard to please, obstinate, suspicious, sorrowful, given to fearful thoughts.

Sanguine: cheerful, courageous, kind, ingenious, keen of wit.

Choleric: easily provoked, given to treachery, vehement in action, fierce in assailing, but inconstant in sustaining the assault; inclined to envy, pride, prodigality, wealth; stature--tall, lean; hair--crisp, hard; subject to evil passions and dreadful dreams.³

These four humors were believed to correspond to the natural elements of water, earth, air, and fire. Earth and water were considered to be dull elements; whereas air and fire were thought of as being "light and swift."⁴ Because the humors were believed to be seated in the liver, lungs, heart, and kidneys, Elizabethans also felt that life evolved around these four organs.⁵ Anyone finding a humor out of order tried to correct it as soon as possible by whatever means necessary.

Since the "passions" could imbalance the humors, they, too, gave the Elizabethans great concern, and four general kinds of passions cited earlier by Cicero were still in effect:

Distress: newly formed belief of present evil, including depression and shrinking of the soul.

Delight: newly formed belief of present good arousing rapture.

Fear: conviction of threatening evil which to the afflicted person seems insupportable.

³Ibid., p. 33.

⁴Loc. cit.

⁵Lawrence Babb, Elizabethan Malady, p. 6.

Lust: belief in prospective good, good in the sense that the individual considers its possession advantageous.⁶

Passion, being a controller of the mind and seated in the heart, had a tremendous effect upon the beliefs, the emotions, and the imaginations of an individual. Generally, the effects of passion were a temporary loss of reason, an inability to determine self-direction, an obvious discord in the humors, diseases, and an uneasiness of the conscience.⁷ Drunkenness and fevers were also believed to be the causes of passions.⁸ Under these circumstances, man believed he had no control over his reasoning powers or his will, because passion overruled both and blanketed understanding so that his judgment was poor. Passion could persuade the will to do sinful things and bring tragedy to innocent individuals, as well as to the guilty.⁹ If passion became strong enough to take control of an individual's ability to reason, it could cause him to will and to do cruel things.¹⁰ Thus, without the force

⁶Marcus, Cicero, Tusculan Disputations, IV, vii, 14-15; 343.

⁷Quoted in Lily Campbell, Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes, p. 78.

⁸Ibid., p. 81.

⁹Loc. cit.

¹⁰Hardin Craig, "Shakespeare's Depictions of Passions," PQ, LV (October, 1925), 292.

of passion, many tragic actions could not take place, because the individual could act only as long as the passion lasted. Often, the passion could be urged onward until it was strong enough to last throughout the specific activity.¹¹

The Elizabethans believed that the imagination or memory of something, either good or bad, could also cause a disturbance of the heart and humors. If these imaginations were extremely strong and caused bad humors to arise in the body, things that one would ordinarily see and hear would be lost in the mass confusion emanating from the humors and the ill-informed heart.¹² They believed that often the distorted objects focused in the mind would remain there, causing the individual to ponder them, thereby leading to a more serious state of passion called melancholy or madness.¹³ Du Laurens relates that

. . . the imaginations of melancholic persons are troubled in three ways: by nature (constitutions of the body); by the mind (by some violent passion they have given themselves); and by the intercourse or meddling of evil angels, which cause them often times to foretell and forge very strange things in their imaginations.¹⁴

¹¹Loc. cit.

¹²Robert Burton, Anatomy of Melancholy, p. 219.

¹³Ibid., p. 220.

¹⁴Quoted in Theodore Spencer, Shakespeare and the Nature of Man, p. 99.

Consequently, the Elizabethans looked upon passion as powerful and dangerous and commonly referred to it as ". . . the enemy in the human heart which overcomes man."¹⁵

Another Elizabethan view of passion explains it as the result of physiological conditions that cloud or interfere with the normal operations of the soul, thus affecting both mind and body.¹⁶ William Perkins suggests the idea that

. . . melancholike passions are where the bodie is unsound, and the reason, senses, memorie, dulled and troubled Melancholike passions are removed by phisicke, diet, musicke, and such like Melancholike passions rise onely of mere imaginations strongly received in the brain . . . these passions are breeding and come by little and little¹⁷

Individuals in a melancholic state of passion were considered by Elizabethans to be one step away from a state of madness. Some early concepts of madness even suggest that it evolves from a loss of reason during the heat of passion, or from extreme imaginings that affect the brain, or that it might be brought on by long arduous meditation or deep thought, and, finally, they believed that fond imagining may cause the mind to lose its logical

¹⁵Craig, op. cit., p. 289.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 292.

¹⁷Quoted in Thomas Sidney, "The Elizabethan Idea of Melancholy," MLN, LVI (April, 1941), 261-262.

order.¹⁸ They observed that when one was suffering from madness, he saw the world in a different light, because the well-organized, ordered, and logical pattern of life became deranged and illogical. Things no longer focused in the same way as when the mind was reasoning properly. Moreover, persons who were emotionally upset were thought to be pushed easily over the brink into madness by some "external physical shock or imitation" of another individual.¹⁹ Hysteria, causing suffocation, was another physical symptom of madness, and tobacco was said to be of some use in bringing about a certain amount of relief.²⁰ An irregular or rapid pulse was also referred to as a physical symptom of madness.²¹ Burton points out, however, that madness is a fierce raging with no fever and a far more frenzied state than melancholy. He warns that, in this condition, one is extremely angry and rash, and his actions, gestures, and looks are highly passionate.²² Melancholy, he further states, comes and goes, no matter

¹⁸Anderson, op. cit., pp. 104-105.

¹⁹Richard Moulton, Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist, p. 214.

²⁰Winfred Overholser, "Shakespeare's Psychiatry-- and After," SQ, X (Summer, 1959), 356.

²¹Ibid., p. 344.

²²Burton, op. cit., p. 122.

what the occasion may be: it could be ". . . sorrow, need, sickness, trouble, fear, grief, passion . . . discontent, or thought which would cause anguish, dulness, or heaviness."²³

Harrison indicates that there were four kinds of madness: e. g., Monia, Melancholia, Frenisis, and Demoniacus.²⁴ Monia or mania causes one to believe that he is divine and can perform supernatural feats, or "conjure or create" things as God. One so affected assumes that he can do many things that are impossible for man. The melancholic madman is always afraid, always dreading one thing or another. He never feels that he is doing well, and he always fears that his body, or soul, or both, are in danger at all times. Because of this constant fear, he moves from one place to another. Frenisis is the kind of madness that accompanies a fever, during which the individual rages and talks, not knowing what he says. Moreover, one suffering from demoniacus madness is supposedly possessed by the devil and can do a great deal of harm and evil under the power of "evil spirits."²⁵

²³Ibid., p. 125.

²⁴John Harrison, "The Convention of Heart and Tongue and the Meaning of Measure for Measure," SQ, V (January, 1954), 3-4.

²⁵Loc. cit.

The Elizabethans also knew madness as it was associated with "disordered imagination."²⁶ Whether there was conflict ". . . between reason and will, reason and passion, or sense and will," imagination was generally the hub of discord.²⁷ Madness, no matter which kind or state, was usually propagated by both external and internal forces.²⁸

With his knowledge of the Elizabethans and their concepts of madness in its various stages, Shakespeare develops two types of characters, the fool and the malcontent, who help to promote the presentation of his understanding of human nature, humanity, and society.²⁹ The characteristics of the fool and the malcontent were well known to Elizabethan audiences, having had contact with these kinds of individuals from time to time. Consequently, Shakespeare was able to criticize and comment upon this society through these fools and malcontents without injuring his own reputation. As Soellner explains,

²⁶Murray Bundy, "Shakespeare and Elizabethan Psychology," JEGP, XXIII (October, 1924), 523.

²⁷Loc. cit.

²⁸C. F. Menninger, "The Insanity of Hamlet," Menninger Quarterly, VI (Winter, 1952), 2.

²⁹William Empson, "The Fool in Lear," Sewanee Review, LVII (January-March, 1949), 177.

"Shakespeare created the fool to criticize a mad world from a mad point of view, a kind of wise fool off-key."³⁰ The madness of the fool, or court fool as he was sometimes called, was termed a "professional madness." Moulton notes that the idea of professional madness originated in the ancient cultures and was based upon three aspects. First, people found pleasure in watching the mentally and physically handicapped individuals who were named in accordance with their deformity. Such names as "Varsus the bandy-legged" and "Balbus the stammerer" are examples. The fun of watching the natural fools or idiots became so popular that the normal individuals began impersonations. Secondly, the ancients felt there was a connection between insanity and wisdom and believed that the idiot could understand more than the sane. Thirdly, wit was considered an intellectual sport. It made no difference what the jokes were as long as they were "smart" and sustained for some time.³¹ The fool, natural and professional, was expected to embody all three of these aspects.

Although all Elizabethan fools had certain basic characteristics, Douce considers only a select kind of

³⁰Rolf Soellner, "Hang Up Philosophy: Shakespeare and the Limits of Knowledge," MLQ, XXIII (December, 1962), 146-147.

³¹Richard Moulton, Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist, pp. 217-219.

fools. For example, some were expected to perform specific kinds of foolery; others were so specified as fools because of their particular character. The general domestic fool was an idiot or natural fool who was "silly, cunning, and sarcastic" and who served in the Elizabethan households.³² He was imitated by mentally normal individuals who were called "artificial fools." The court fool depicted in the dramas is the artificial type. It was his duty to sing, dance, and jest for the entertainment of his master and his master's guests.³³ An intelligent and witty country fellow would often be employed as a clown. Moreover, all of the fools were not male; there were some female fools who were usually idiots. For the public entertainments and parades, the "city" or "corporation" fool performed. Taverns and brothels retained what was called the "tavern" fool for their customers' amusement. The fool who appeared in the ancient theatrical mysteries and moralities was usually presented as an enemy of the devil,³⁴ but this type disappeared from the stage at the end of the sixteenth century.³⁵ Moreover, death was

³²Francis Douce, Illustrations of Shakespeare, I, 303.

³³Ibid., p. 304.

³⁴Robert Goldsmith, Wise Fools in Shakespeare, p. 17.

³⁵Douce, op. cit., p. 305.

frequently the adversary of the fool in the dumb shows,³⁶ and death and the fool were associated in some of Shakespeare's plays.³⁷ The fools in the Whitsun ales and Morris dance were domestic fools who wore more bells on their clothing than usual. The mountebank or Merry Andrew fool was simply a public clown.³⁸

Although these various fools usually wore costumes to fit their particular occupations, most of the costumes were slight variations upon the dress of the domestic fool.³⁹ One such costume consisted of a multicolored coat fastened with a belt. The coat usually had bells attached to the skirt and at the elbows. The stockings and pants were hooked together. Sometimes, each stocking was of a different color.⁴⁰ A hood, comparable to that of a monk, covered the head and part of the shoulders and breast. The hood was sometimes ornamented with asses' ears, a cock's head, or cockscomb or crest.⁴¹ A second type of garment sometimes used by the fool was very much

³⁶Grigor Kozintosez, Shakespeare: Time and Conscience, p. 81.

³⁷Douce, op. cit., p. 305.

³⁸Loc. cit.

³⁹Loc. cit.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 318.

⁴¹Goldsmith, op. cit., pp. 2-3.

like the first, the difference being that the fabric, usually velvet, was more expensive. The coat was usually fringed with yellow, alluded to as the fool's color.⁴² The hood worn with this attire was decorated with bells or a feather and a cockscomb. Often, the fool sported a shaved head.⁴³ Attached to his coat would be a squirrel or fox tail. The "natural" or idiot fool sometimes wore a sheep or calf's skin. Sometimes, a fool would add a wallet or large purse to his belt.⁴⁴

On most occasions the fool carried a "bauble," a short stick bearing the effigy of a fool's head, a doll, or a puppet.⁴⁵ At other times, he would carry a skin bag or bladder filled with air, sand, or peas.⁴⁶ The fool who participated in the morris dance was expected to use his bauble to keep the spectators from crowding the dancers, to amuse the crowd with some trick, or to collect money from the crowd.⁴⁷ Just as the soldier carried a sword to protect himself, the fool always carried a bauble. It was his shield against any rare individual

⁴²Douce, op. cit., p. 305.

⁴³Goldsmith, op. cit., p. 2.

⁴⁴Douce, op. cit., pp. 321-322.

⁴⁵Loc. cit.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 319.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 481.

who dared strike a fool.⁴⁸ Although he might be angry, offended, or insulted, an individual was considered to be a coward if he struck a fool. Even though the fool was usually dressed in some "motley" costume, some dressed as ordinary household servants. Other fools had the motley costume to wear only on occasions when they were entertaining.⁴⁹ For the remainder of the time, they dressed as regular servants.

The fool was a familiar personage in the household of kings, dukes, and noblemen. It was his duty to entertain his master and the court.⁵⁰ He was also responsible for giving his master a "sense of self-importance."⁵¹ In Shakespeare's Twelfth Night, Viola speaks of the duty of fools:

This fellow is wise enough to play the fool;
 And to that well craves a kind of wit:
 He must observe their mood on whom he jests,
 The quality of person, and the time,
 And, like the haggard, check at every feather
 That comes before his eye. This is a practice
 As full of labour as a wise man's art:
 But wise men, folly-fall'n, quite taint their wit.⁵²
 (III.i.66-74)

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 319.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 324.

⁵⁰Frederick Warde, The Fools of Shakespeare, p. 15.

⁵¹Goldsmith, op. cit., p. 48.

⁵²This and following quotations from the plays are taken from Hardin Craig (ed.), The Complete Works of Shakespeare.

The fool was allowed to do and say many things that even the members of his master's family and closest friends would never dare. At times, he would even make his master the butt of jokes. In his idiotic manner, he could tell his master about the affairs of the household that no other member would consider revealing for fear that the master would punish him severely.⁵³ If he were offended by someone, even by his master, the fool would often concentrate his jests and crude remarks upon that individual. For this reason and because they feared him, even when the fool had himself caused offense, few people ever tried to get revenge.⁵⁴ However, he did not always succeed with this kind of conduct. A whipping was the usual form of his punishment, rare though it was. If he spoke offensively in the presence of a lady, he would be harshly disciplined.⁵⁵

On the other hand, the fool was at liberty to voice his approval or disapproval of anything or anyone at any time. Being free to use any level of language in which to express himself, he sometimes used "uncouth and obscene language."⁵⁶ Sometimes, he spoke his mind

⁵³Douce, op. cit., p. 331.

⁵⁴Loc. cit.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 314.

⁵⁶Goldsmith, op. cit., p. 33.

in what may have appeared to be riddles as far as the sane were concerned, because they could not see reality as clearly as could the fool. Regardless of the method or language used, however, the fool nearly always spoke the truth,⁵⁷ even though it may have been camouflaged by the fool's nonsense and meaningless folly.⁵⁸ Some of his privileges are described by Jacques in Shakespeare's As You Like It:

To blow on whom I please; for so fools have;
 And they that are galled with my folly,
 They most must laugh. And why, sir, must they so?
 The 'why' is plain as the way to parish church:
 He that a fool doth very wisely hit
 Doth very foolishly, although he smart,
 The wise man's folly is anatomized
 Even by the squandering glances of the fool.
 (II.vii.47-61)

Although the fool had certain privileges, his life was not always ". . . romantic and beautiful. Sometimes, he was dirty, greedy, and heartless."⁵⁹ He was a lonely man for much of the time, because clowns and madmen were outcasts.⁶⁰ He had no real, human place in society. His was looked upon as an amusing form of madness that maintained itself by foolishness.

⁵⁷Enid Welsford, The Fool, p. 267.

⁵⁸Moulton, op. cit., p. 220.

⁵⁹Welsford, op. cit., p. 332.

⁶⁰Kozintosez, op. cit., p. 83.

Shakespeare created and developed the characters of many fools in his plays, most of which fall into two categories: e. g., comic or tragic. The comic fool was especially effective as the speaker of sanity, and he brought out the latent humor of the wise. The tragic fool had the same characteristics of the comic fool with the additional trait of causing a problem when he spoke wisely.⁶¹ The fool in King Lear embraces both categories. As a comic, he helps Lear see the truth. When Lear meets Gloucester, he has gained the ". . . wit, penetration, and repartee of the fool."⁶² The problem posed by the fool was that of moral relationship. Goldsmith further characterizes the fool in King Lear as having five wits: e. g., fantasy, imagination, common sense, loyalty, and memory.⁶³ The fool shows a weakness in judgment and seems to lack worldly wisdom in some instances, but these are few.⁶⁴ Although he may not have known as much about the world as others, he shows Lear what love and patience mean.⁶⁵ He tries to warn Lear against going to Regan's

⁶¹Welsford, op. cit., p. 253.

⁶²Ibid., p. 264.

⁶³Goldsmith, op. cit., p. 64.

⁶⁴Welsford, op. cit., p. 256.

⁶⁵Goldsmith, op. cit., p. 67.

Castle after leaving Goneril's, because he fears that the king will be hurt, again:

Shalt see thy other daughter will use thee kindly;
for though she's as like this as a crab's like an
apple, yet I can tell what I can tell She
will taste as like this crab does to a crab.

(King Lear, I.v.15-17; 18)

However, Lear, beside himself with anger, would not listen to his fool. Thus, he himself is fast becoming the foolish one. The fool tells him: "Thou wouldst make a good fool." (I.iv.41) Lear not only makes a "good fool," but also reaches a far more extreme state of mind--that of insanity.

Moreover, the fool and Lear are "companions in misfortune."⁶⁶ When Lear is turned away by his inconsiderate daughters, the fool tries to continue in his duty to his master, but caring for Lear as he does, he cannot be as happy, amusing, or entertaining as before. As he tries to be amusing, he points out the meaning of what Lear has done. He follows Lear as a shadow and tells him of the condition and state of things.⁶⁷ Actually, he becomes Lear's "alter ego, his externalized conscience."⁶⁸ He speaks Lear's innermost thoughts. He serves to bridge

⁶⁶Kozintosez, op. cit., p. 81.

⁶⁷Loc. cit.

⁶⁸Goldsmith, op. cit., p. 67.

the chasm that Lear makes between himself and his daughter, Cordelia, whom he has banished. After she has departed, Lear calls impatiently for his fool. The fool comes to Lear, who is paying Kent for punishing a follower of Cordelia and offers to hire Kent as his fool. When asked to explain himself, the fool does so with much truth intermixed with humor, as follows:

Why, for taking one's part that's out of favour:
 nay, an thou canst not smile as the wind sits,
 thou'lt catch cold shortly: there, take my coxcomb:
 why this fellow has banished two on's daughters,
 and did the third a blessing against his will; if
 thou follow him, thou must needs wear my coxcomb.
 (I.iv.111-115)

Lear pays little attention to the fool's comment, however, thinking it only folly.

Faithfully, the fool follows Lear when Goneril refuses to keep the king and his retinue. The fool tries to keep Lear's mind from concentrating upon the wrong done to Cordelia and Goneril's ingratitude by singing nonsense songs, being witty, telling riddles, or making puns.⁶⁹ Here, the old order of the protector (Lear) and the protected (the fool) has been reversed. The comic fool watches the tragic king lose all--land, home, daughters, servants, title, and sanity. The fool has to summon all of his wisdom, imagination, and loyalty to stop the

⁶⁹Warde, op. cit., p. 229.

flood of sorrow, ingratitude, dishonor, and disloyalty that sweeps turbulently over the heart of his former protector. Ward relates,

Thus is the comedy brought into such close relation with the great sorrows of life that it is transformed to the deepest tragedy. Combination and contrast! Majesty and motley! A king and a fool! Reverence and folly! Weakness protecting strength! A clown defending a scepter, and a bauble shielding a crown
⁷⁰

However, the turbulence of passion and anguish that dashes Lear's heart to pieces cannot be stemmed by the fool's wit and folly. As Lear wanders about the countryside, aimlessly, he becomes the fool. His fool speaks with the understanding of a wise man when he says:

That lord that counsell'd thee
 To give away thy land,
 Come place him here by me,
 Do thou for him stand:
 The sweet and bitter fool
 Will presently appear;
 The one in motley here,
 The other found out there.
 (I.iv.154-161)

Without mental stability and wealth, the king becomes the fool--a social reject with no "private axe to grind."⁷¹ In this state of poverty, the king learns to speak the truth.

⁷⁰Loc. cit.

⁷¹Welsford, op. cit., p. 264.

Unlike the fool in King Lear (often classified as a natural fool), Touchstone in As You Like It is identified as a clown in the dramatis personae. Still further, he is not surrounded by an extreme condition of disorder and madness. He is Shakespeare's first presentation of a ". . . professional court fool as a medium of wit and humor."⁷² Douce refers to him as an artificial fool called a natural fool.⁷³ Celia in As You Like It speaks of him as ". . . Nature's; who perceiveth our natural wits too dull for our whetstone" (I.ii.54-56) He is the witty or allowed (domestic) fool belonging to Duke Frederick's brother, who has been banished from his dukedom by Frederick. It is clear that Touchstone's wisdom, wit, knowledge (of the court, especially), and ability to observe make him more than an ordinary clown.⁷⁴ Before releasing his flashes of wit, he always takes note of the disposition of the individual whom he has planned to humor, to make certain that his wit suited his intended victim's attitude.⁷⁵ His skill in the art

⁷²Quoted in Hardin Craig (ed.), The Complete Works of Shakespeare, p. 588.

⁷³Douce, op. cit., p. 293.

⁷⁴Warde, op. cit., p. 48.

⁷⁵Goldsmith, op. cit., p. 48.

of foolery is shown in his repartees with Jaques, the shepherd, and Orlando. Touchstone is also endowed with a serious nature that makes him aware of the love he has for the shepherdess and of Jaques' melancholy and self-pity. Consequently, he is a "touchstone or test" of the values of men and manners, a mouthpiece to criticize contemporary literary trends, and by "occasional tartness," he relieves the play of potential monotony. He is also a commentator who struggles against the "melancholy Jaques," termed the "self-constituted critic of society."⁷⁶ Critical though he is, Touchstone is not cynical and bitter like Jaques. Rather, he is sympathetic and impartial in his judgments, because, like the fool in King Lear, he has no "private axe to grind."⁷⁷ Like any other fool, however, he has privileges and duties to perform. For example, it is his prerogative to strike out at all existence with his jests and humor and have his aggravated victims cheer him. When duty calls, he must project wit and wisdom in the same breath with folly and sustain the act until his master is satisfied.⁷⁸ Much of his humor comes through his ability to reason deductively on sound principles and

⁷⁶Welsford, op. cit., pp. 249-250.

⁷⁷Loc. cit.

⁷⁸Moulton, op. cit., p. 301.

to draw definite conclusions.⁷⁹ His conversation with Corin, the shepherd, is a good example of his logic:

Touch. Truly, thou art damned, like an ill-roasted egg all on one side.

Corin. For not being at court? Your reason.

Touch. Why, if thou never wast at court, thou never sawest good manners; if thou never sawest good manners, then thy manners must be wicked; and wickedness is sin, sin is damnation. Thou art in a parlous state shepherd.

(III.ii.41-44)

Touchstone may again be compared with the fool in King Lear in that his loyalty to his master's daughter overwhelms his fear of being punished by Duke Frederick. Consequently, he leaves the court when Celia does. He endures the hardship of the trip to Arden, because he wants to stay with Celia. At the end of the journey, he says, "Ay, now am I in Arden; the more fool I; When I was at home, I was in a better place; but travellers must be content." (II.iv.15-17) But he makes himself comfortable in his new surroundings and continues with his privileges and duties. One of his privileges, the liberty to vent his exasperations, is envied by the melancholy Jaques, who, after hearing Touchstone rail in "good set terms," wants to become a motley fool. "O that I were a fool! / I am ambitious for a motley coat." (II.vii.43-44) Touchstone performs his last duty

⁷⁹Warde, op. cit., p. 48.

in the final scene when he must "nominate the degrees of the lie." In so doing, he criticizes the book of manners: "O sir, we quarrel in print, by the book as you have books for good manners." (V.iv.93-94) Praising Touchstone, the duke replies, "He uses his folly like a stalking horse and under the presentation of that he shoots his wit." (V.iv.111-112)

Feste in Twelfth Night is another of Shakespeare's clowns who is classified as a domestic or hired fool.⁸⁰ His master refers to him as an "allowed" fool or Feste, the jester. Feste is very amusing in jest and comforting in song. He embodies most of the characteristics of the court-clown. He uses some self mockery and makes good use of his art of foolery, but he does not care to be called a fool.⁸¹ Nevertheless, he is a fool who sees farther and is wiser than his betters.⁸² Having a certain amount of independence, he develops his own personality and initiates and directs much of the activity of his mistress' household.⁸³ He uses his wit and foolery to

⁸⁰Douce, op. cit., pp. 118-119.

⁸¹Goldsmith, op. cit., p. 52.

⁸²Welsford, op. cit., pp. 251-252.

⁸³Mary Hyde, Playwriting for Elizabethans, 1600-1605, p. 61.

escape punishment by his mistress and always manages to gain her approval, again. She has ordered the fool to be taken away; Feste indicates that she is referring to herself. He, then, challenges her to let him prove she is a fool:

Clo. Good madonna, why mournest thou?
 Oli. Good fool, for my brother's death.
 Clo. I think his soul is in hell, Madonna.
 Oli. I know his soul is in heaven, fool.
 Clo. The more fool, madonna, to mourn for your brother's soul being in heaven. Take away the fool, gentlemen.
 (Twelfth Night, I.v.72-79)

She is delighted with him and defends him when the steward takes offense at Feste's liberty with his mistress.

A "corruptor of words," the fool speaks with "the faculty of wit, the province of the fool, and the prevalence of folly."⁸⁴

Let her hang me: he that is hanged in this world needs to fear no colours Well, God give them wisdom that have it; and those that are fools, let them use their talents Many a good hanging prevents a bad marriage.
 (I.v.11-14)

Feste, the jester, injects into his folly epigrams of truths from time to time. When he has sung for the duke and the duke has given him money, he shrewdly persuades the duke to give him more:

⁸⁴Warde, op. cit., p. 101.

Duke. I'll pay thy pleasure then.
 Feste. Truly, sir, and the pleasure will be paid,
 one time or another.
 (II.iv.71-72)

When he is accused by Viola of having been at the count's palace, he quickly replies, "Foolery, sir, does walk about the orb like the sun, it shines everywhere." (III.i.43-44)

Feste is not so much the critic of his environment as he is "a ring-leader, a merry-companion, a Lord of Misrule."⁸⁵ Feste, the clown, the jester, the minstrel, as the other clowns and fools of Shakespeare, uses his wit and wisdom to point out the fact that the fool sees events from the viewpoint of a sage; he is the wisest who is thought the most unwise.⁸⁶ The Elizabethans knew that he represented an image outside of the play. He was shown as a molester of kings, wealthy men, and death. The fool is a solver of problems, an arbitrator between audience and play, and a comedian for the present time and place. He moves easily from reality to imagination. Imagination contrasts the fool with the tragic hero.⁸⁷ The fool is also contrasted with the malcontent. Even though they both serve as social critics, the malcontent

⁸⁵Welsford, op. cit., p. 251.

⁸⁶Kozintosez, op. cit., p. 81.

⁸⁷Welsford, op. cit., p. xii.

is a severe cynical critic; whereas the fool is a witty and humorous individual.

The Elizabethan malcontent was characteristically an individual with a combination melancholic and choleric temperament. Malcontent and melancholy were terms used interchangeably to depict one who was gaunt, sunken-eyed, slow, remote, fearful, and sorrowful without cause. He never encouraged conversation; he was very uneasy and distrustful. When he came out of his deep meditative mood, he was severely critical, and his actions often became violent. He preferred seclusion to companionship. He was highly imaginative and dreamed of things peculiar and threatening which would sometimes possess his mind and manipulate his actions indefinitely. Elizabethan doctors believed that high fevers and melancholic temperament could cause the imagination to produce such ridiculous fancies.⁸⁸ Malcontents were discontented "melancholics," because (1) they were melancholic travelers who had become unhappy and disillusioned with their own country or environment because their compatriots did not realize and honor the abilities they claimed to possess, and (2) they often disapproved of the established political system and set

⁸⁸Oscar J. Campbell, Shakespeare's Satire, p. 50.

out to revolutionize it.⁸⁹ They maliciously criticized their contemporaries for not recognizing the great intellect that was being wasted.

The dress of the malcontent, like that of the fool, was usually distinguishing. He usually dressed in a black outfit. His hat that never had a band would be pulled down around his eyes to shade his face. He seldom wore belts, garters, and spurs. He wore his coat carelessly about him. In addition to his eye-catching costume, he assumed a distinct pose and manner of walking. When standing, he folded his arms and bowed his head to give the impression that he was engaged in deep thought. He walked slowly and leisurely.⁹⁰ Although there are some overlapping characteristics, Babb presents four general types of malcontents, as follows: primary malcontent, melancholy villain, melancholy cynic, and melancholy scholar. The latter three were those usually depicted in the drama.⁹¹ The primary malcontent--melancholy traveler and imitator--resented the world's neglect of his superior abilities; called attention to his intellect and tragic situation by various mannerisms; snarled at the world, because it had not perceived and rewarded his talents

⁸⁹Babb, op. cit., p. 75.

⁹⁰Loc. cit.

⁹¹Ibid., pp. 77-78.

and self-improvements; promoted political unrest; and became more disappointed and frustrated in his melancholy. People often made light of him and laughed at his ". . . stupidity, mental derangement, and inclination to treachery."⁹² His face was dark or obscured. He spoke in sad solemn tones and was not exempt from making vulgar comments. He considered that the human race was not good enough to be associated with, so he secluded himself. Sometimes he was poor. Always, he was shrewd, ambitious, and villainous.⁹³ Malvolio in Twelfth Night is ambitious and considers himself better than those around him. He is also laughed at for his "stupidity" and referred to as being "sad and civil."

The melancholy villain was associated with criminal violence and looked upon as dangerous, because melancholy sometimes gave one a superior intelligence that could be used for evil purposes. Sometimes, he would pretend to be more melancholy than he really was for the purpose of protection, as well as to gain an opportunity to speak or observe as he might not have been allowed to do under other circumstances. He could spy and plot for personal gain, or to get revenge.⁹⁴ Titus in Shakespeare's Titus

⁹²Loc. cit.

⁹³Ibid., p. 85.

⁹⁴Ibid., pp. 74-75.

Andronicus is an example of one who pretended to be melancholy in order to avenge the shame of his daughter:

"I know them all though they suppose me mad, / And will o'rreach them in their own devices" (V.ii.142-143)

The melancholy cynic, on the other hand, was ". . . disheveled, gruff, and prone to moping in corners."⁹⁵

When spoken to, he might burst into a rage against human nature, sin, and vanity. He was comparable to the fool in that both were regarded as irresponsible and amusing. However, the cynic was unable to make any decisive movements on his own, but he could be guided.⁹⁶ He was not a deceptive person but was sincere and honest and spoke whatever was on his mind. Stupidity and vice he hated in any man.⁹⁷ He felt that his unfortunate situation had been caused by man's stupidity. Hence, Jaques in As You Like It is an excellent example of the cynic. His pessimistic philosophy, his constant verbal abuse of the court and great ladies, and his laughing at humanity's existence so characterize him as a cynic. What he thinks of the world is revealed in his request that the duke make him a fool:

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 91.

⁹⁶Robert Reed, Bedlam on the Jacobean Stage, pp. 110-111.

⁹⁷Babb, op. cit., p. 92.

Invest me in motley; give me leave
 To speak my mind, and I will through and through
 Cleanse the foul body of the infected world,
 If they will patiently receive my medicine.
 (II.vii.58-61)

He comments upon the world, again, when he tries to
 match wits with Orlando: ". . . and we two will rail
 against our mistress, the world, and all our misery."

(III.ii.293-294) Jaques's melancholy, indeed, is vented
 upon the court, the landowners, and the city as he
 moralizes upon a dying deer:

. . . thou makest a testament
 As worldlings do, giving thy sum of more
 To that which had too much: . . .
 Left and abandon'd of his velvet friends
 . . . thus misery doth part the flux of company
 Sweep on, you fat and greasy citizens;
 'Tis just the fashion: wherefore do you look
 Upon that poor and broken bankrupt there?
 (II.i.47-57)

Moreover, he enjoys his melancholy, when he says, "I can
 suck melancholy out of a song as a weasel sucks eggs
 I do love it better than laughing." (II.v.13;
 IV.i.3) But he ridicules it whenever it is praised by
 someone else:

I have neither the scholar's melancholy, which is
 emulation, nor the musician's which is fantastical,
 nor the courtier's, which is proud, nor the soldier's,
 which is ambitious, nor the lawyer's which is nice,
 nor the lover's which is all these: but it is a
 melancholy of mine own, compounded of many simples,
 extracted from many objects, and indeed the sundry
 contemplation of my many travels, in which my often
 rumination wraps me in most humourous sadness.
 (IV.i.10-20)

When the old duke and his retinue return to court, Jaques elects to remain in the forest, in solitude, as is the way of the malcontent.

A fourth type of malcontent is the melancholy scholar, who was expected to be melancholy as a sign of his "intellectual and imaginative capability."⁹⁸ He was usually ". . . poor, ill-nourished, frustrated, and neglected."⁹⁹ Too much mental labor was deemed unhealthy. Usually, he was silent, but when he did speak, his thoughts were extravagant and satirical. He lacked many of the social graces. Since malcontents felt that mankind was guided by evil, they took a great pleasure in destroying anything that mankind deemed good.¹⁰⁰ In their frustrated and disillusioned minds, they felt that evil and sin should overrule the good in man. The malcontent often disclaimed some of the problems, attitudes, and corruptions of the moral, political, and social world. By using this character to vocalize his feelings, an author could reveal his ideas without being direct. For example, the words of the cynic, Jaques, express this idea:

What woman in the city do I name,
When that I say the city-woman bears
The cost of princes on unworthy shoulders?

⁹⁸Ibid., p. 100.

⁹⁹Loc. cit.

¹⁰⁰Campbell, op. cit., p. 162.

Who can come in and say that I mean her,
When such a one as she, such is her neighbor?
(As You Like It, II.vii.74-78)

Expressing his opinion of humanity through the fools and malcontents, Shakespeare apparently received no repercussions from the humorous and contemptuous criticisms that he made. The members of his audience accepted his comments, because they were acquainted with the traits of these characters. This foolery added wit and humor to the long dull plays. Shakespeare also used fools and malcontents as foils for one another, as well as for other characters in the plays. The criticisms of the witty fool, the cynical malcontent, and the raving madman were Shakespeare's admonitions to a degenerate society.

CHAPTER II

ELIZABETHAN MADNESS: SHAKESPEARE'S HEROES

It is well known that Shakespeare had a basic understanding of the principles of the psychology of madness, although he did not demonstrate it very much in his early plays. Most of the plays containing evidence of this psychology were written after 1600.¹⁰¹ His use of madness forms a kind of arch. That is, his early plays seem to move upward along the arch with their depictions of passions, malcontents, and feigned madness as in Richard III, Titus Andronicus, Hamlet, and Othello. By the time he begins to write King Lear, he is at the peak of the arch, expressing madness in its most extreme state. Then, he begins to descend the arch with such plays as Macbeth, Timon of Athens, and The Winter's Tale. However, it is not known if he used these ideas simply because they represented a popular dramatic subject or because he was well acquainted with the subject.¹⁰² Orwell suggests that he used madness as a means of

¹⁰¹Hardin Craig, The Enchanted Glass, p. 126.

¹⁰²Loc. cit.

expressing an opinion without being considered improper. This opinion he places in the mouths of ". . . buffoons, villains, lunatics, or persons who are shamming insanity or in a state of violent hysteria."¹⁰³ For example, the social criticism in King Lear is voiced by the fool, by Edgar when he feigns madness, by Edmund as he executes his plan to become king, or by Lear when he is raving mad. It is significant that his major sane characters never express this kind of critical commentary upon society.

He also employs madness for the sake of the movement of the plot and to symbolize the "futility of human efforts." For example, madness is important to the plot in Macbeth and King Lear. It is a medium of spectacle in the presentation of the fools, clowns, and malcontents. It symbolizes human disillusionment in Hamlet,¹⁰⁴ and it expresses the constant shifting of man's society in King Lear and Timon of Athens.¹⁰⁵

In his understanding of human passions and their effect upon the actions of an individual, Shakespeare often deals in opposites: e. g., love-hate; love-hatred of jealousy; fear-courage. His heroes give in to passion,

¹⁰³Quoted in Muir, op. cit., p. 31.

¹⁰⁴Reed, op. cit., p. 74.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 82.

lose their reasoning power, and delude themselves.¹⁰⁶

For example, Lear's anger leads him into destroying his kingdom. Macbeth's ambition, fear, and guilt cost him his life. Othello's jealousy is the power that impels him in an act of vengeance to kill his wife. Shakespeare also feels that if one is able to maintain an outward expression of control, he can control his inner passion.¹⁰⁷

Lady Macbeth expresses this attitude to Macbeth when she says to him, ". . . Sleek o'er your rugged looks."
(III.ii.27)

In some of his characters, Shakespeare also plants more than one passion. King Lear, for instance, runs the gauntlet of all the passions, and Macbeth is the victim of several passions. Regardless of the number or kinds of passion that afflict a character, the individual nearly always has a greater understanding of himself and of life than he had before he was so possessed.

Fear, as a passion, causes the downfall of Shakespeare's first real villain as shown in Richard III (1592-1593). Richard is endowed with all of the characteristics of the melancholy villain. He hates the world and all of the people in it; he is cynical; he hates his

¹⁰⁶Craig, op. cit., p. 234.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 128.

own physical body; he takes great pleasure in using his shrewd intellect to bring pain to others; he is ambitious; and he is feared and hated by others. Successful in most of his schemes, he is finally overpowered by the ghosts of his victims and by fear. He does not pretend to be anything except a villain.¹⁰⁸ From the beginning, villainy is his sole intention. Being deformed, he knows he is difficult to look at and makes people cringe when he appears. Keeping his handicap in mind, he decides to develop a diabolical character and a personality to go along with his repulsive physical features:¹⁰⁹

But I, that am not shaped for sportive tricks
 Nor made to court an amorous looking-glass; . . .
 Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
 Deform'd, unfinish'd, sent before my time
 Into this breathing world, scarce half made up, . . .
 . . . since I cannot prove a lover . . .
 I am determined to prove a villain
 And hate the idle pleasure of these days.
 Plots have I laid, inductions dangerous,
 By drunken prophecies, libels and dreams.
 (I.i.13-14; 18-20; 28-32)

His ability to deceive others¹¹⁰ and to see himself as others see him is helpful to him in his sinister plans

¹⁰⁸Moulton, op. cit., p. 91.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., p. 92.

¹¹⁰William Shakespeare, King Richard the Third (Bookelovers Edition), p. 11.

to gain the throne.¹¹¹ His brother, Clarence, is the first example of one who is deceived by him:

To set my brother Clarence and the king
 In deadly hate the one against the other:
 And if King Edward be as true and just
 As I am subtle, false and treacherous
 This day should Clarence closely be mew'd up
 (I.i.34-38)

Astute at blaming others for what he has done, Richard is quick to accuse the queen and her relatives of sending Clarence to the Tower:¹¹² "I think there's no man secure / But the queen's kindred" (I.i.71-72) Richard gloats, cynically, with the success he is having. "Simple, plain, Clarence! I do love thee so, / That I will shortly send thy soul to heaven" (I.i.119-120)

Using his ingenuity and clever tactics with words, he flatters the grieving Anne into saying that she will marry him.¹¹³ Promising to repent of his villainous ways, he leaves, laughing at her and at all humanity for such gullibility:¹¹⁴

Was ever woman in this humour woo'd?
 Was ever woman in this humour won?

¹¹¹E. E. Stoll, Shakespeare Studies, p. 346.

¹¹²Robert Heilman, This Great Stage, p. 62.

¹¹³Judge A. Goll, "Criminal Types in Shakespeare," Journal of Criminal Law, XXX (June, 1939), 29-30.

¹¹⁴Wolfgang Clemens, A Commentary on Shakespeare's Richard III, p. 35.

I'll have her; but I will not keep her long
 To take her in heart's extremest hate,
 With curses in her mouth, tears in her eyes . . .
 And I nothing to back my suit at all,
 But the plain devil and dissembling looks,
 And yet to win her, all the world to nothing!
 Ha!

(I.ii.228-233; 237-238)

He compliments himself on putting his evil upon the heads of others, playing the part of a saint when he is, in reality, the devil in disguise:¹¹⁵

I do the wrong, and first begin to brawl.
 The secret mischiefs that I set abroad
 I lay unto the grievous charge of others
 But then I sigh, and, with a piece of scripture,
 Tell them that God bids us do good for evil:
 And thus I clothe my naked villainy
 With old odd ends of stolen holy writ;
 And seem a saint, when most I play the devil.

(I.iii.324-326; 334-338)

Such moments as these are most happy for Richard, because his evil is victorious over the good. Whenever he can bring about disharmony and make people forget the good that is in them, he is exuberant. He thinks that they deserve their treatment, because they are "stupid."¹¹⁶ He uses every situation that presents itself as a possibility to advance himself toward his goal.¹¹⁷ He does not think in terms of what is good or evil, but always

¹¹⁵Aerol Arnold, "The Recapitulation Dream in Richard III and Macbeth," SQ, VI (Winter, 1955), 53.

¹¹⁶Goll, op. cit., p. 31.

¹¹⁷Moulton, op. cit., p. 99.

considers which mode of evil will best suit the situation.¹¹⁸

When he realizes that he will have to face Richmond, his thoughts of evil are thwarted by fear which causes him to expect action from orders that have not been given. He becomes short-tempered and physically abuses the messenger who brings him news of Richmond's progress.¹¹⁹ He is afraid, because he knows that he is alone and that everybody hates him for his cruel and evil actions.

Regardless of his loneliness or fear, Richard goes to the battlefield prepared to fight with Richmond. The evening before the battle, Richard's sleep is interrupted by his dream that he is visited by his murder victims, who bring him evil tidings of the forthcoming battle. He becomes afraid. Awaking suddenly, he begins to speak of the love he has for himself and the sins that he has committed.¹²⁰ He blames his conscience that he buried long before for his dreaming of such horror:

O coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me! . . .
 What do I fear? myself? there's none else by:
 Richard loves Richard; that is, I am I.

¹¹⁸Ibid., p. 91.

¹¹⁹Fred Smith, "The Relation of Macbeth and Richard the Third," PMLA, XL (December, 1945), 1009.

¹²⁰Heilman, op. cit., p. 68.

Is there a murderer here? No. Yes, I am;
 Then fly. What, from myself?
 . . . I rather hate myself
 For hateful deeds committed by myself!
 I am a villain: Yet I lie, I am not
 My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
 And every tongue brings in a several tale,
 And every tale condemns me for a villain.
 (V.iii.179; 182-185; 190-193)

His further efforts to flatter and encourage himself are vain. Fear invades his villainous mind, and he realizes that the wrongs he did will be vindicated.¹²¹ Ambition causes him to murder to get the throne, and fear now makes him murder to keep the crown.¹²²

From the subject of Richard's villainous ambition, Shakespeare moves to the treatment of a more extreme state of madness depicted for the first time in Titus Andronicus (1593-1594). Titus's madness, like that of Hamlet, was feigned, but Shakespeare treats it as if it were real. Hamlet and Titus are also alike in that both men are driven by grief into feigning madness to avenge the wrongs perpetrated upon them and their loved ones. Knowing that madmen are usually ignored by or amusing to the public, Titus decides to feign madness so that he can observe and hear many things that will aid his purpose, which, as a sane person, he would not be able to do.

¹²¹Arnold, op. cit., p. 57.

¹²²Lily B. Campbell, Shakespeare's Histories, p. 308.

Feigning madness and planning revenge bring him some relief from the grief that has caused his melancholy.¹²³ Most people feel, as Titus wants them to, that he is mad and that they should "feed his humour kindly" until they find some "careful remedy." He remarks, "I know them all, though they suppose me mad, / And will o'rreach them in their own devices" (V.ii.142-143) His feigned madness works for him, since even his enemies feel that he is too mad to try to take revenge.¹²⁴ Driven by grief into a state of melancholy, he exposes the fallen nature of man by pretending to be more mad than he really is.¹²⁵

Shakespeare continues to exploit the theme of family revenge and feigned madness based upon the grief from the loss of loved ones in Hamlet (1600-1601). Hamlet's mental condition has been diagnosed as that of a malcontent, a melancholic, and a madman (real and feigned) and partakes of some of the characteristics of all of these. Some critics portray him as melancholic; others show him as

¹²³Joseph Bolton, "Titus Andronicus: Shakespeare at Thirty," SP, XXX (April, 1933), 217.

¹²⁴Babb, op. cit., p. 91.

¹²⁵A. C. Hamilton, "Titus Andronicus: The Form of Shakespearian Tragedy," SQ, XIV (Summer, 1963), 210.

a malcontent.¹²⁶ Actually, it appears that the terms--melancholy, malcontent, and madness--are so overlapping in connotations and often even used interchangeably that it is difficult for one to distinguish between them. However, the indefinite use of melancholy and malcontent by the Elizabethans indicates that each was a case of deranged mentality, sometimes curable by medicine; at other times, hopeless. Madness was considered to be the most extreme case of mental delusion.

Edgar indicates that there are four main ideas expressed in relation to Hamlet's mental state: (1) it was feigned; (2) it was a combination of feigned and real madness; (3) it was a good representation of Shakespeare's ability to "portray" a true form of insanity, and (4) it represents the Oedipus complex.¹²⁷ Most literary critics agree with the first interpretation; most psychologists agree with the third, and only a few individuals

¹²⁶G. Wilson Knight, The Wheel of Fire, p. 45; Weston Babcock, Hamlet, A Comedy of Errors, p. 38 and Lawrence Babb, Elizabethan Malady, p. 100 speak of Hamlet as a melancholic. Edgar Stoll, "Shakespeare, Marston, and the Malcontent Type," MP, III (January, 1906), 294; James Street, "A New Hamlet Query," Poet Lore, XX (December, 1909), 469 and Oscar Campbell, Shakespeare's Satire, p. 50 present Hamlet as a malcontent.

¹²⁷Irving Edgar, "Shakespeare's Psychopathological Knowledge: A Study in Criticism and Interpretation," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, XXX (April-June, 1935-1936), 70-71.

agree with the second and fourth ideas.¹²⁸ Hamlet's madness, real or imaginary, does two things: e. g., it keeps the play moving, and it gives Hamlet some consolation in his grief over the sudden death of his father and the hasty marriage of his mother to his uncle.¹²⁹ It is also used as a cover as Hamlet plans to avenge the death of his father.¹³⁰ As the plan takes shape in his mind, Hamlet mocks and scorns his mother, the new king, and his love for Ophelia. This verbal abuse is a means of releasing his emotions.

Since he cannot make himself perform any action toward avenging his father's death until he gains a sufficient "head of passion," he has to find relief by some other means. He has doubts about the plan of action to take. His mind is uncertain. He feels a sense of guilt whenever he thinks of action, because he acknowledges a tinge of disparity in himself, as well as in those around him.¹³¹ His unconscious moves away from his grief but the conscious

¹²⁸Ibid., pp. 73-74.

¹²⁹Claude Williamson, "Hamlet," International Journal of Ethics, XXXIII (October, 1922), 94-95.

¹³⁰Kenneth Myrick, "Kittredge on Hamlet," SQ, XV (Spring, 1965), 222.

¹³¹Maynard Mack, King Lear in Our Time, pp. 89-90.

keeps prodding him for not carrying out the action.¹³²

His inner sufferings are expressed in the first soliloquy after Claudius has insisted that he ". . . throw to earth / This unprevailing woe." (I.ii.106) Alone, Hamlet says,

O, that this too too sullied flesh would melt,
 Thaw and resolve itself into a dew!
 Or that the Everlasting had not fixed
 His cannon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! God!
 How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable,
 Seem to me all the uses of this world!
 Fie on't! ah fie! 'tis as an unweeded garden,
 That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature
 Possess it merely
 (I.ii.129-137)

Thus, he comments upon the world as though it were dark and evil, with no good in it at all. He speaks as one suffering from a depressed state of melancholy. Life is disgusting for him.¹³³

As sick as he is with grief, he is given the responsibility of avenging his father's death. The task adds to the turmoil in Hamlet's mind.¹³⁴ Finally, he decides ". . . to put an antic disposition on," (I.v.172) to pretend madness so that he can fulfill his commandment without being deterred by anyone.

¹³²Williamson, op. cit., p. 99.

¹³³Hardin Craig, "The Ethics of King Lear," PQ, IV (April, 1925), 108.

¹³⁴G. Wilson Knight, The Wheel of Fire, pp. 20-21.

Mentally attired in his new disposition, Hamlet, as well as everyone else, thinks and speaks of his condition as being a malady.¹³⁵ He is highly frustrated and turns his frustrations on nearly everyone he meets. Like any individual suffering from mental instability, Hamlet is given sympathetic treatment in spite of his ungentlemanly actions, as for example, his visit to Ophelia ". . . with his doublet all unbraced; / No hat upon his head; his stockings foul'd, / Ungarter'd, and down-gyved to his ancle." (II.i.78-80) Although grief is the base of Hamlet's mental state, the events surrounding the death of his father have plunged him into despair. He speaks like a melancholy cynic about life's baneful beginnings:

For if the sun breeds maggots in a dead dog, being
 a god kissing carrion,--Have you a daughter? . . .
 Let her not walk i' the sun: conception is a
 blessing: but not as your daughter may conceive.
 (II.ii.181-182; 184-185)

He also voices his disgust with the physical body of man.¹³⁶

. . . Old men have grey beards, that their faces
 are wrinkled, their eyes purging thick amber and
 plumtree gum . . . together with most weak hams
 (II.ii.199-201)

In his distraught mind, Hamlet is sick of the world and its horrid heartless affairs. He is without interest

¹³⁵E. E. Stoll, "Shakespeare, Marston, and the Malcontent," MP, III (January, 1906), 288.

¹³⁶Knight, op. cit., p. 24.

in human affairs.¹³⁷ To him, Denmark is a prison ". . . many confines, wards, and dungeons, . . . being one of the worst." (II.ii.251) Nature is unclean and evil:¹³⁸

. . . the earth seems to me a sterile promontory, this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'er hanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, it appears no other to me than a foul pestilent congregation of vapours And yet, what is this quintessence of dust? man delights not me: no, nor woman neither (II.ii.309-314; 321-323)

Hamlet cannot see the good, the light, the joy in life. For him, there is only the unclean, the foul, the evil, and the darkness.¹³⁹

Although it was commonly believed that the "dictates of the conscience" came directly from God, Hamlet's reason and reality keep fighting his conscience, which repeatedly reminds him of his unfinished task.¹⁴⁰ He even doubts the credibility of the ghost. Thus, he is torn by two strong forces: e. g., his desire to obey the ghost, and his power to reason. To reason is man's most important function in the order of nature, and Hamlet and his mother have violated the standards of reason--his mother, by her hasty marriage after the death of the king; and Hamlet,

¹³⁷James Street, "A New Hamlet Query," Poet Lore, XX (November, 1909), 476.

¹³⁸Knight, op. cit., p. 25.

¹³⁹Ibid., p. 31.

¹⁴⁰Reed, op. cit., p. 183.

by his procrastination in avenging his father's death. His mother's marriage and his ability to act give more impetus to his belief that man has no more meaning than the basest animal.¹⁴¹

Hamlet's main hurdle is to arouse his passion to a degree that will allow him to carry out his deed.¹⁴² In the process, he forces his will to carry out the commands of his passion and imagination, rather than those of his reason.¹⁴³ With madness as his timepiece, he tries to pick and choose the correct time and procedure with which to kill his father's murderer. He is certain that he does not want to take revenge on Claudius ". . . in the purging of his soul, / When he is fit and seasoned for passage" (III.iii.85-86), but

When he is drunk asleep, or in his rage,
Or in the incestuous pleasure of his bed;
At gaming, swearing, or about some act
That has no relish of salvation in 't;
Then trip him, that his heels may kick at heaven,
And that his soul may be as damn'd and black
As hell, whereto it goes.
(III.iii.90-95)

Hamlet is able to surprise the king in an act with no "relish of salvation in't," one that has been initiated

¹⁴¹Theodore Spencer, "Hamlet and the Nature of Reality," ELH, V (December, 1928), 268.

¹⁴²Charles McDonald, "Decorum, Ethos, Pathos, in the Heroes of Elizabethan Tragedy," JEGP, LXI (April, 1962), 342.

¹⁴³Bundy, op. cit., p. 457.

by the king himself in order to kill Hamlet.¹⁴⁴ When Hamlet realizes that the king has planned his death and has mistakenly given Gertrude the poisoned wine, his passions, "irrational and unpredictable," take command of the situation, and he murders the king with the instrument intended for himself.¹⁴⁵

The chain of events--the murder of his father, the hasty marriage of his mother, the loss of the right to the throne--cast Hamlet into a state of

. . . endless reasoning and hesitating--constant urging and solicitation of the mind to act, and as constant an escape from action; ceaseless reproaches from himself for sloth and negligence while the whole energy of his resolution evaporates in these reproaches.¹⁴⁶

Through uncertain Hamlet, Shakespeare expresses the main purpose for existence. He further indicates that man's mind operates on a strict balance of the imagination and the intellect. If the balance is tipped too much toward the imaginative side, man becomes meditative, unreasonable, and usually unable to act, except upon impulses.¹⁴⁷

Hamlet, therefore, illustrates the subjection of human

¹⁴⁴Anderson, op. cit., p. 168.

¹⁴⁵McDonald, op. cit., p. 346.

¹⁴⁶Samuel T. Coleridge, Notes and Lectures upon Shakespeare, p. 8.

¹⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 10-11.

aims to fortune, human weakness, and instability of purpose.¹⁴⁸ Hamlet sees people as being criminal, shallow, glittering, and pompish--"humanity and its failings."¹⁴⁹ Prior to his brooding and grief, he is able to understand the distortions in society. Afterwards, he has to become a malcontent and vent his disgust of mankind before he can realize that he must accept the condition of man's state of being.¹⁵⁰

Differing from Hamlet and Titus, Shakespeare's Angelo in Measure for Measure (1604-1605) feigns stoicism, but he finds his effort thwarted by passionate lust. His passions and humors are imbalanced, causing him to allow passion to overrule reason. The idea of appearance and reality is personified in Angelo. For example, he appears to be a stoic--incorruptible--amid all the vice in the city, yet deep within, he is like all the other men.¹⁵¹ He has lustful desires that he wishes to fulfill and resorts to the baseness of bribery in an attempt to accomplish his goal. Angelo is considered to be "merciless,

¹⁴⁸Mack, op. cit., p. 94.

¹⁴⁹Knight, op. cit., p. 38.

¹⁵⁰Mack, op. cit., p. 94.

¹⁵¹Spencer, op. cit., pp. 122-123.

self-righteous without cause, knavish, caustic, hypocritical."¹⁵² Shakespeare observes that

. . . Lord Angelo is precise,
 Stands at guard with envy; scarce confesses
 That his blood flows, or that his appetite
 Is more to bread than stone;
 (I.iii.50-53)

Angelo is a representative of strict justice and is accustomed to seeing action after a decision has been made.¹⁵³ His decision to enforce an old law forbidding extra-marital sexual relationships marks the beginning of his downfall. When Isabella, sister of his first condemned offender of the law, comes to plead for her brother's life, Angelo realizes that his lust is aroused by her purity and virtue.

What's this, what's this? Is this her fault or mine?
 . . . it is I
 That, lying by the violet in the sun,
 Do as the carrion does, not as the flower,
 Corrupt with virtuous season.
 . . . Having waste ground enough,
 Should we desire to raze the sanctuary
 And pitch our evils there? . . .
 Dost thou desire her foully for those things
 That make her good?
 (II.ii.162; 171; 174-175)

Puritanical Angelo is beaten by his conscience for desiring Isabella, because he feels toward her the same kind of

¹⁵²W. D. Smith, "More Light on Measure for Measure," MLQ, XXIII (December, 1962), 318.

¹⁵³Ibid., p. 320.

passion for which her brother has been sentenced, by him, to death. He has fought against his desires for a long period of time until Isabella's beauty overwhelms him.¹⁵⁴ Upon trying to reason logically and to state his problem, he is successful, but this reasoning does not stop his giving his "sensual race the rein."¹⁵⁵ He argues with his will as much as he argues with Isabella:

When I would pray and think, I think and pray
 To several subjects. Heaven hath my empty words;
 Whilst my invention, hearing not my tongue,
 Anchors on Isabel
 Why does my blood thus muster to my heart,
 Making it both unable for itself,
 And dispossessing all my other parts
 Of necessary fitness?
 (II.iv.1-4; 20-23)

There is a distinct disagreement between his passion and his reason. As he argues with Isabella, knowing that her conscience will not permit her to go against its dictation, he tries to make her understand that the sin that they commit will not be held against them,¹⁵⁶ as ". . . [their] compell'd sins / Stand more for number than for accompt." (II.iv.57-58)

¹⁵⁴Fred Sochateff, Shakespeare: Lectures on Five Plays, IV, 21.

¹⁵⁵W. M. Dodds, "The Character of Angelo," MLR, XLI (July, 1946), 253.

¹⁵⁶Loc. cit.

The opportunity to gain pleasure from staining Isabella's virtues and chastity has pushed Angelo to the point of lying, seduction, and almost to committing murder. His attempted seduction marks the breakdown of the barriers that have been concealing him in his strict moral code. His long denied passion arises and becomes dominant over his will. Relieved of his passion, he is "rehabilitated," and his mental faculties are balanced with reality.¹⁵⁷

In Othello (1604-1605), Shakespeare depicts a different kind of passion--jealousy. Othello, a soldier with many outstanding virtues is destroyed by jealousy, but he has always believed that jealousy is a passion of which he is devoid. Actually, he is the victim of several kinds of jealousy--e. g., honor, pleasure, passion, and property.¹⁵⁸

Othello is not a man who can ease his mind by thinking; rather, he has to do it by knowing. Since Iago is a thinker, it is his thinking that moves Othello from his "tranquil" state to that of doubt and thought.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷Edward Hart, "A Mixed Consort: Leontes, Angelo, Helena," SQ, XV (Winter, 1964), 78.

¹⁵⁸Campbell, Tragic Heroes, p. 150.

¹⁵⁹Paul Jorgensen, "'Perplex'd in the Extreme:' The Role of Thought in Othello," SQ, XV (Spring, 1964), 268.

It is difficult, frustrating, and confusing to shift from a habit of knowing to that of thinking. Iago gives him the germ of jealousy, and it is then that Othello's thoughts submit to the minute information that has been planted in his mind. He swears vengeance on his wife and throws himself into a frenzied rage.

He knows that passion can dissolve reason, and he is afraid that, once this passion takes control, reason might never return to its rightful place. Knowing the danger of passion makes him cautious of his emotions when he finds Cassio fighting in the street:

My blood begins my safer guides to rule;
 And passion, having my best judgement collied,
 Assays to lead the way: if I once stir,
 Or do but lift this arm, the best of you
 Shall sink in my rebuke.
 (II.iii.204-209)

Uncontrolled passion is to be avoided by Othello, for once he releases it, he forgets everything and everybody, bringing calamity to all.¹⁶⁰ Othello claims that he is not the least bit jealous:

Think'st thou I'd make a life of jealousy,
 To follow still the changes of the moon
 With fresh suspicions?
 . . . 'Tis not to make me jealous
 To say my wife is fair, feeds well, loves company,
 Is free of speech, sings, plays, and dances well . . .
 . . . No . . .
 I'll see before I doubt; when I doubt, prove;

¹⁶⁰Franklin Dickey, Not Wisely, But Too Well, p. 15.

And on proof, there is no more but this,
 Away at once with love or jealousy!
 (III.iii.177-197; 183-185; 189-192)

In spite of this idealistic statement, his suspicions have been aroused. Jealousy begins to seep into his mind. He thinks of Desdemona as his property, and he feels that he must have all or none of her. "I had rather be a toad, / And live upon the vapour of a dungeon, / Than to keep a corner in the thing I love." (III.iii.270-273) He begins to doubt the relationship between Desdemona and himself. Since he believes in and trusts Iago, he wonders why "honest Iago" should relate any exaggerations to him: "I think my wife honest, and think she is not; / I think thou [Iago] art just and think thou art not. / I'll have some proof." (III.iii.385-387) When he begins to torture himself with thoughts of Desdemona's love affair and the probable loss of her love, he becomes the slave of passion on the verge of madness, forgetting all except his ruined wife, his honor, and his reputation.¹⁶¹ Furnished by "honest Iago" with false proof of Desdemona's infidelity, Othello's world is destroyed by passions, jealousy leads to anger, anger to revenge. He swears vengeance in a prayer and vows to rid the world of such a "fair devil:"

¹⁶¹Campbell, Tragic Heroes, pp. 165-166.

I'll tear her to pieces
 Arise, black vengeance, from thy hollow cell!
 Yield up, O love, thy crown and hearted throne
 To tyrannous hate! Swell, bosom with thy fraught,
 For 'tis of aspics' tongues! . . .
 O, blood, blood, blood! . . .
 Even so my bloody thoughts, with violent pace,
 Shall ne'er look back, ne'er ebb to humble love,
 Till that a capable and wide revenge
 Swallow them up
 Damn her, lewd minx! O, damn her!
 . . . I will withdraw,
 To furnish me with some swift means of death
 For the fair devil.

(III.iii.446-449; 451; 457-460; 476-479)

Idealistic Othello cannot control his emotions when things do not follow the ideal pattern. When he is told of Desdemona's supposed love affair, his passion becomes so intense that he feels death is the only answer.¹⁶² He is convinced that she has to die before she can cause more evil.

Elizabethans considered unchecked sexual jealousy the most dangerous passion.¹⁶³ Fact and reason were like toys tossed in the wind. Othello, whose judgment is rapid and obstinate, and his imagination powerful, is powerless when his jealous passion reigns supreme over all of his other elements.¹⁶⁴ His madness has taken

¹⁶²Jordan Hoover, "Dramatic Illusion in Othello," SQ, I (July, 1950), 148.

¹⁶³Harley Granville-Barker, Prefaces to Shakespeare, II, 113.

¹⁶⁴Spencer, Shakespeare and the Nature of Man, p. 130.

possession of him, and not until his mad deed has been accomplished does he realize that he has been insane and that he has killed his wife for no reason at all.¹⁶⁵

When he reflects upon what he has done during the time in which he was possessed by his passion, he thinks ". . . of one that loved not wisely but too well; / Of one not easily jealous, but being wrought, / Perplex'd in the extreme" (V.ii.344-346)

Othello, who is "not easily jealous," has been the victim of a passion inflicted by "honest Iago," who knew that once a passion was started, it would fuel itself. Othello's heated passion causes him to destroy himself and the person he most loved. Had there been time and had he been suffering from some mental disorder, Othello might have been able to reach a state of clarity before disaster struck.¹⁶⁶

Unlike Othello, Lear does gain an understanding of himself and society as a result of his madness. In King Lear (1605-1606) Shakespeare uses madness to show man's loss of identity, his failure to understand reality, his inclination toward moral sin, and his endless struggle

¹⁶⁵Granville-Barker, op. cit., p. 120.

¹⁶⁶Heilman, This Great Stage, p. 191.

with the laws of nature.¹⁶⁷ Lear's madness is a symbol of a disorganized, frustrated world in which one's aims in life are never reached. It also stands for disunion in nature.¹⁶⁸ King Lear, unlike Hamlet, actually reaches an extreme state of madness. Several factors are involved in Lear's progress to madness in its extremity: (1) he gives up his kingship and control of his lands; (2) he banishes his youngest and favorite daughter; (3) he allows the flattery of his older daughters to affect his judgment; (4) he becomes angry when he can no longer act and live like the king; (5) he grieves over the loss of his youngest daughter and his injustice to himself; (6) he is shocked and angry at the treatment he receives from his older daughters; (7) he is a choleric old man. Basically, he is a passionate, imaginative person. As the "stiff pompous" king, he could not release many of his emotions indiscreetly.¹⁶⁹ After relinquishing his kingship, he becomes an ordinary man, unbound by the trappings of the title of king. He rediscovers his full power of emotion. He finds that he can cry, have pity, and feel ashamed.¹⁷⁰ Anger, he had always been able to vent. Moreover, anger

¹⁶⁷Ibid., p. 173.

¹⁶⁸Ibid., p. 174.

¹⁶⁹Paul Jorgensen, Lear's Self-Discovery, p. 36.

¹⁷⁰Loc. cit.

is usually followed by vengeance which merges into madness.¹⁷¹ Some of the problems which kindle Lear's anger are old age, self-love, injured self-esteem, pride, revenge, and ingratitude. His anger makes him the producer of deeds both evil and foolish.¹⁷²

Kent, trying to "come between the dragon [Lear] and his wrath" at Cordelia, gives the first hint of Lear's madness. ". . . be Kent unmannerly, / When Lear is mad . . . / When majesty stoops to folly, Reverse thy doom; . . . check / This hideous rashness" (I.i.146-153) Lear's choleric disposition, jealousy, and love of flattery combine to make him hostile to any advice.¹⁷³

Lear turns a deaf ear to the fool, as well as to Kent. He feels proud of the transaction he has made and thinks that his daughters want him. However, the fool reminds him repeatedly:

. . . ever since thou madest thy daughters thy mother:
for when thou gavest them the rod, and put'st down
thine own breeches,
Then they for sudden joy did weep,
And I for sorrow sung,
That such a king should play bo-peep,
And go the fools among.
(I.iv.188-194)

¹⁷¹Campbell, Tragic Heroes, p. 177.

¹⁷²Ibid., p. 204.

¹⁷³J. M. Draper, "Old Age of Lear," JEGP, XXXIX (October, 1940), 553.

Goneril also alludes to Lear's not being in his right mind when she approaches him about the conduct of his fool and his knight: "Put away / These dispositions that of late transform you / From what you rightly are." (I.iv.242-243) In replying to her suggestion that he dismiss a portion of his retinue, Lear flies into a rage and curses her:

Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend,
 More hideous when thou show'st thee in a child
 Than the sea-monster! . . .
 . . . I am ashamed
 That thou hast power to shake my manhood thus;
 That these hot tears, which break from me perforce,
 Should make thee worth them. Blasts and fogs upon
 thee!
 The untended woundings of a father's curse
 Pierce every sense about thee! . . .
 (I.iv.281-283; 317-322)

During his railing at Goneril, he turns his mind to thoughts of Cordelia and to the cruelty he has dealt her: "O most small fault / How ugly didst thou in Cordelia show!" (I.iv.288-289) Then, he begins to feel guilty about her banishment: "I did her wrong . . ." (I.v.24)

The fool continues to tell Lear that Regan does not want him and his company, but Lear is occupied with his foolish actions. For the first time, he mentions that his disposition might be turning into madness:¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴Madeleine Doran, "Elements in the Composition of King Lear," SP, XXX (January, 1933), 56.

"O, let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven! / Keep me in temper: I would not be mad." (I.v.50-51) When Lear reaches Regan's home and finds Kent in the stocks, he bursts into angry rage. His "hysterica passio" rises but is countered by a real struggle for patience in his interview with Regan. As he goes into the gathering storm, Lear utters what proves to be a prophecy:¹⁷⁵

. . . touch me with noble anger,
 And let not women's weapons, water-drops,
 Stain my man's cheeks! . . .
 I will have such revenges on you both,
 That all the world shall--I will do such things--
 What they are, yet I know not; but they shall be
 The terrors of the earth.
 (II.iv.279-285)

He struggles on in the storm with the fool, "who labours to outjest his heart-struck injuries." (III.i.16-17)

Kent, again, speaks of the king's "unnatural and bemadding sorrow." (III.i.38)

The storm in nature and that in Lear's mind are almost one.¹⁷⁶ After his invocation to divine justice, he wishes for his destruction and the avenging of his daughters' ingratitude:

. . . then let fall
 Your horrible pleasure; here I stand, your slave,

¹⁷⁵Josephine Bennett, "The Storm Within: The Madness of Lear," SQ, XIII (Spring, 1962), 140.

¹⁷⁶Catherine Dunn, "The Storm in Lear," SQ, III (October, 1952), 322.

A poor, infirm, weak and despised old man.
 But yet I call you servile ministers,
 That will with two pernicious daughters join'd
 Your high-engender'd battles 'gainst a head
 So old and white as this
 (III.ii.17-24)

As Kent urges him toward shelter, Lear remarks, "my wits begin to turn." His wits may be turned, but he speaks to his fool kindly, expressing concern for him: "Come on, my boy; how dost, my boy? art cold?" (III.ii.69) Reaching the hovel, he refuses to enter. It becomes apparent that he is using the storm of nature and physical misery to counter and control the storm within his mind and to fight his grief and rage. The prospect of shelter threatens to destroy the balance.¹⁷⁷ He tries to explain that he feels less pain from the storm than from his broken heart.

It was believed that water was nature's gift to man to cure any ailment and in its purest form was considered a "universal remedy."¹⁷⁸ It was also believed that one passion could destroy or dispel another.¹⁷⁹ These may have been two reasons for Lear's strong desire to remain in the storm.

¹⁷⁷Bennett, op. cit., p. 141.

¹⁷⁸Michel Foucault, Madness and Civilization, pp. 166-167.

¹⁷⁹Hardin Craig, (ed.), Complete Works of Shakespeare, p. 1000.

Thou think'st 'tis much that this contentious storm
 Invades us to the skin: so 'tis to thee;
 But where the greater malady is fix'd,
 The lesser is scarce felt.
 When the mind's free,
 The body's delicate: the tempest in my mind
 Doth from my senses take all feeling else
 Save from what beats there. Filial ingratitude!
 (III.iv.5-8; 11-14)

Lear's mind is swaying on the edge of madness, yet he is conscious of his physical pain as well as that of those who are with him. He feels "self-pity, bitter hate" and an intense desire to avenge the affliction brought on him by his ungrateful daughters.¹⁸⁰ Pitying the fool and madmen with him and blaming himself, he appears to be sane. He is again the royal king whose duty it is to care for others.¹⁸¹ His benevolence terminates with the entrance of Edgar, whom he associates with Bedlam and himself. Now, Lear's sanity vanishes, and his raving madness takes control. He struggles against madness, because he does not wish to be unable to think and learn. If he becomes insane, he will lose his identity. He will no longer be in control of himself or anybody else. The resistance of the mad passion is too much for Lear. Giving rein to his madness brings him emotional relief and a greater insight into himself, man, and

¹⁸⁰Bennett, op. cit., p. 141.

¹⁸¹Loc. cit.

society.¹⁸² Overcome by his madness, he is less concerned about who or what he is than before he lost control.¹⁸³ Through his madness, Lear learns that clothes do not make mankind any better than other animals in the Chain of Being. ". . . unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art. Off, off, you lendings!" (III.iv.113-115) He removes his clothes, symbolical of his losing his hold on the pomposity of the civilized world and society.

Lear's greater understanding of reality is indicated in his supposition that Edgar is a "learned Theban," a "noble philosopher," and a "good Athenian." He has deluded himself into thinking that he is among the learned, the just. From them he would be able to bring about the true justice that his daughters deserved. This state of delusion leads him into the mock trial of Goneril and Regan. The three madmen, Lear, the fool, Edgar, are to convict the "she wolves." Lear is to pass judgment on his daughters and injustice; the fool and Edgar are judges. The fool asks the questions, and madman Lear gives the indictment.¹⁸⁴ Corruption and injustice are his charges.

¹⁸²Jorgensen, op. cit., p. 78.

¹⁸³Ibid., p. 108.

¹⁸⁴Kozintsez, op. cit., p. 87.

Mad though they are, Lear, Edgar, and the fool are comparable to the three wisemen, and Lear shows the most justice in his maddest condition.¹⁸⁵

Afterwards, he roams about the woods and garlands himself with flowers, the symbols of the termination and instigation of madness:

Crown'd with rank fumiter and furrow-weeds,
With burdocks, hemlock, nettles, and cuckoo-flowers,
Darnel, and all the idle weeds that grow
In our sustaining corn.
(IV.iv.3-6)

The fumitory weed is considered to be good medicine for the liver, spleen, and the choleric and melancholy humors.¹⁸⁶ Darnel is a poisonous weed causing more adverse effects than good, but gives relief from such things as sores, gangrene, leprosy.¹⁸⁷ Hemlock, like darnel, is noxious and benumbs the nerve center.¹⁸⁸ Burdock, sometimes called Happy-major, is also good for ulcers and sores.¹⁸⁹ It is sometimes used as a symbol of trouble

¹⁸⁵Heilman, This Great Stage, p. 148.

¹⁸⁶Nicholas Culpeper, Culpeper's Complete Herbal, pp. 156-157.

¹⁸⁷Ibid., pp. 114-115.

¹⁸⁸Margaret Freeman, Herbs for the Mediaval Household, p. 24.

¹⁸⁹Culpeper, op. cit., pp. 69-70.

or urgency.¹⁹⁰ As an antidote to hemlock or other poisoning, and as a remedy for exposure, nettles is very effective.¹⁹¹ One of its less pleasing virtues is that it is associated with malice and defamation.¹⁹² The cuckoo-flowers are a remedy for "poison, plague, and phlegm."¹⁹³ This garland indicates that Lear recognizes the source of his madness and wants to be relieved of it. It also shows the difference between the most revered attire in England and the most disdained.¹⁹⁴

Dressed in his wild flowers, Lear meets Gloucester who reminds him of his royalty. Speaking like a member of royalty, he launches into a tirade on sight, sex, smell, clothes, and justice. He expresses his knowledge of the destruction, political and domestic, that has occurred in his state, pointing out that the rich are not unlike the criminal in their evil ways:¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁰Ernst and Johanna Lehner, Folklore and Symbolism of Flowers, Plants, and Trees, p. 112.

¹⁹¹Culpeper, op. cit., p. 250.

¹⁹²Lehner, op. cit., p. 122.

¹⁹³Culpeper, op. cit., p. 106.

¹⁹⁴Edmund Blunden, "The Madness of Lear," The Nation and Athenaeum, XLIII (July, 1928), 459.

¹⁹⁵Craig, Complete Works of Shakespeare, p. 1009.

They flattered me like a dog; . . .
 To say 'ay' and 'no' to everything that I said! . . .
 I found 'em, there I smelt 'em out.
 Let copulation thrive; for Gloucester's bastard son
 Was kinder to his father than my daughters
 Got 'tween the lawful sheets
 There's hell, there's darkness, there's the sulphurous
 pit,
 Burning, scalding, stench, consumption; . . .
 (IV.vi.97-98; 104-106; 130-131)

When Gloucester asks to kiss his hand, Lear replies,
 "Let me wipe it first; it smells of mortality." (IV.vi.35)

In his final mad utterance, continuing with the
 themes of clothing and authority and the falsity they
 hide, Lear says, . . .

There thou mightst behold the great image of authority:
 a dog's obeyed in office.
 Thou rascal beadle, hold thy bloody hand!
 Why dost thou lash that whore? Stripe thine own back;
 Thou hotly lust'st to see her in that kind
 For which thou whipp'st her. The usurer hangs the
 cozener.
 Through tatter'd clothes small vices do appear;
 Robes and furr'd gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold,
 And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks;
 Arm it in rags, a pigmy's straw does pierce it.
 (IV.vi.161-170)

The condition of Lear's world is critical, because it
 is ruled by a degenerate people.¹⁹⁶ Lear sees an "ugly
 and deceptive" world and the vast human capacity for
 evil.¹⁹⁷ He also feels distinct remorse for the

¹⁹⁶Ibid., p. 1010.

¹⁹⁷Heilman, This Great Stage., p. 199.

transgressions he has committed and secreted.¹⁹⁸ Being a self-centered, self-idealized individual, Lear had not yet learned to understand and recognize truth in his own little world.¹⁹⁹ Truth hurts, but Lear can neither see nor express the truth, until he is mad.²⁰⁰ Venting his anger upon his daughters and nature drives him to madness, and through madness, he gains an understanding. Truth costs him his sanity. Ranting and raving, he expresses his newly-learned truths in a paradoxical language of "riddle and curses." The world he hoped for does not exist.²⁰¹ This is a disordered world exempt of justice and morality, a "stage of fools." Chastity, love, gratitude, and sincerity no longer abide in society,²⁰² Lear's madness is an exhibition of the dissonance perpetrated within him.²⁰³

Unlike Lear, whose madness and passion brings him knowledge and understanding, Macbeth's passion and desire

¹⁹⁸Sholom Kahn, "Enter Lear Mad," SQ, VIII (Summer, 1957), 327.

¹⁹⁹Kozintsez, op. cit., p. 63.

²⁰⁰Betty Stuart, "Truth and Tragedy in King Lear," SQ, XVIII (Spring, 1967), 175.

²⁰¹Ibid., p. 176.

²⁰²Anderson, op. cit., p. 106.

²⁰³Heilman, This Great Stage, p. 195.

for the kingship force him to reject more and more knowledge of himself and the evil deeds he performs. Macbeth's determination to follow the course he has started, regardless of the pangs of his conscience, and Lady Macbeth's strength and encouragement, drive him on, farther and farther into "deep damnation."²⁰⁴ Always, he has to have Lady Macbeth to speed him on into his bloody deeds, but never before he "apostrophizes and soliloquizes" on night (darkness) and murder. His problem is to get as far away from himself and his capabilities as possible.²⁰⁵ Shakespeare uses Macbeth (1605-1606) to depict evil as the medium which brings chaos to nature's orderliness and destroys, from the beginning, the meaning of life. This elusive medium acts by addressing itself to those emotions in man which would cause him to ". . . set a lesser good above a greater one."²⁰⁶

Macbeth is the symbol of the willful struggle of man to defy the laws of nature. He goes against these laws and the laws of God. Differing from Shakespeare's other distraught heroes, he knows from the beginning just what

²⁰⁴Robert Heilman, "'Twere Best not Know Myself: Othello, Lear, Macbeth," SQ, XV (Spring, 1964), 94-95.

²⁰⁵Ibid., p. 97.

²⁰⁶Irving Ribner, "Macbeth: The Pattern of Idea and Action," SQ, X (Spring, 1959), 151.

he has planned to do.²⁰⁷ He depends upon his will to live to overpower his imagination, but his imagination "betrays his will." The evil deeds of his calculated murder become fixed images in his mind and confuse and unsettle it. Thoughts of these images make it more and more difficult for him to understand the natural laws of life.²⁰⁸ Consumed in fear, he imagines that the earth and stones speak:

. . . Thou sure and firm-set earth,
Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear
Thy very stones prate of my whereabouts,
And take the present horror from the time,
Which now suits with it
(II.i.56-60)

After he has committed the murder of Duncan, he realizes that life is departing from him, piece by piece. The permanently blood-stained hands are an ever-present ghost in his mind:²⁰⁹

Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red.
(II.ii.60-63)

Macbeth is a gory play. Macbeth's murders and the sight of so much blood are two of the causes for his

²⁰⁷Ibid., p. 150.

²⁰⁸John Arthos, "The Naïve Imagination and Destruction of Macbeth," ELH, XIV (June, 1947), 120-121.

²⁰⁹Ibid., p. 122.

losing his sanity. One of the "foulest and most indelible stains" is innocent, sacred, life-giving blood that sticks to one's hands.²¹⁰ Macbeth's conscience realizes that the blood stains cannot be removed, but he chooses to ignore its warnings. He not only has a conscience that pains him, but his humor complexion is choleric, having characteristics of the melancholic. Thus, he is naturally subject to evil passions, dreadful dreams, and fearful thoughts. He tends toward ". . . brooding, abstraction, profound reverie, bordering upon a trance."²¹¹

Haunted by a fear of being punished for evil doings, restlessness, and wretchedness, in much of his action he has to be guided by Lady Macbeth, who understands that one's passion often has to be impelled or incited to the desired height in order for one to perform the action. Hence, it is not unusual for her to encourage the faint-hearted Macbeth in such a manner as, "We fail! / But screw your courage to the sticking place, / And we'll not fail." (I.vii.56-58) She, too, nerves herself to carry out the horrid executions:

²¹⁰William Blissett, "The Secret'st Man of Blood: A Dramatic Irony in Macbeth," SQ, X (Summer, 1959), 399.

²¹¹O. W. Firkins, "The Character of Macbeth," Sewanee Review, XVIII (October, 1910), 419.

. . . Come, you evil spirits
 That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
 And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full
 Of direst cruelty! Make thick my blood;
 Stop the access and passage to remorse,
 That no compunctious visitings of nature
 Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
 The effect and it.
 (I.v.41-48)

Macbeth and Lady Macbeth illustrate another common belief of the Elizabethans; e. g., that control of the outward appearance is control of the inner passion. Lady Macbeth on several occasions has to remind Macbeth of this precept:

Gentle my Lord, sleek o'er your rugged looks . . .
 . . . O, these flaws and starts,
 Imposters to true fear, and would well become
 A woman's story at a winter's fire,
 Authorized by her grandam. Shame itself!
 Why do you make such faces? When all's done,
 You look but on a stool.
 (III.ii.27-28; III.iv.60-68)

He expresses the same idea to a servant boy:

The devil damn thee black, thou cream-faced loon!
 Where got'st thou that goose look? . . .
 Go, prick thy face, and over-red thy fear,
 Thou lily-liver'd boy
 . . . those linen cheeks of thine
 Are counsellors to fear.
 (V.iii.11-12; 16-19)

Their passionate fear and ambition are their downfalls. Ambition causes their actions to begin, but fear, in addition to the aid of the imagination, causes the tragedy and brings about the fall of the action.²¹² Macbeth illustrates this idea in the following passage:

²¹²Bundy, op. cit., p. 533.

. . . Present fear
 Are less than horrible imaginings:
 My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,
 Shakes so my single state of man that function
 Is smother'd in surmise, and nothing is
 But what is not.
 (I.iii.137-142)

Macbeth tries to find a justification for the murdering of Duncan, but the conclusion he reaches is that of "ambition." His disorganized imagination is the mother of his "crime and destruction." Even when his conscience fights against his crimes, he will console it with the thought of "fearing personal punishment." On the other hand, Lady Macbeth appeals to him on the basis of his personal pride.²¹³ Finally, his conscience relents in his desire to kill and propels him into more "bloody deeds."

The two main aspects of Macbeth's attempts to fulfill his ambition are manifest in his inability to understand why he is being prompted to these things and in his fear of the dreadful action that he is being pushed into committing.²¹⁴ Macbeth's ambition appears to have been given impetus by the supernatural in the appearance of the witches and in their predictions.²¹⁵ Although their

²¹³Knight, op. cit., pp. 136-137.

²¹⁴Ibid., p. 164.

²¹⁵Campbell, Tragic Heroes, p. 214.

prophecies are unnatural and a portion of them have been fulfilled, Macbeth is still apprehensive about their reliability:

This supernatural soliciting
 Cannot be ill, cannot be good: if ill,
 Why hath it given me earnest of success,
 Commencing in a truth? I amthane of Cawdor:
 If good, why do I yield to that suggestion
 Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair
 And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
 Against the use of nature.
 (I.iii.130-137)

When Malcolm becomes prince, Macbeth's ambition flares, again:

The Prince of Cumberland! that is a step
 In which I must fall down, or else o'erleap,
 For in my way it lies.
 (I.iv.48-50)

With fear in mind, Macbeth prepares to remove Duncan, the next obstacle in his ambitious steps toward the kingship. In spite of his fear of "even-handed justice" and mortal and immortal retribution, he allows ambition's passion to overpower his reasoning. Lady Macbeth's encouragement is also instrumental. Macbeth admires her courage as she plans Duncan's death, but he finds himself running head-on into a wall of fear. The vision of the bloody dagger makes him think like a melancholy man, and he questions what he sees before him:²¹⁶

²¹⁶Ibid., pp. 219-220.

Is this a dagger which I see before me, . . .
 . . . Come, let me clutch thee.
 I have thee not, and yet I see thee still,
 Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible
 To feeling as to sight? or art thou but
 A dagger of the mind, a false creation
 And such an instrument I was to use.
 (II.i.32-37; 44)

He imagines darkness, horrible dreams, sleepless nights, witches, and murder. Nevertheless, he murders Duncan, whose death engulfs all in fear, including Lady Macbeth, who warns: "These deeds must not be thought / After these ways: so, it will make us mad." (II.ii.34-35)

After Banquo's death, Macbeth lapses into a melancholic mood, keeps to himself, envies the dead, and thinks of deep darkness, fearing what might result from his having murdered Duncan and having killed Banquo:

But let the frame of things disjoint, both the worlds
 suffer,
 Ere we will eat our meal in fear and sleep
 In the affliction of these terrible dreams
 That shake us nightly: better be with the dead,
 Whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace
 Than on the tortures of the mind to lie
 in restless ecstasy.
 (III.ii.16-22)

He is so overcome by fear at the sight of Banquo's ghost that he forgets himself and speaks of blood and murders, thus revealing both guilt and fear:²¹⁷

Blood hath been shed ere now . . .
 Avaunt! and quit my sight! let the earth hide thee!

²¹⁷Campbell, Tragic Heroes, pp. 227-228.

Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold; . . .
 When now I think you can behold such sights,
 And keep the natural ruby of your cheeks,
 When mine is blanch'd with fear

. . . I am in blood
 (III.iv.75; 94-95; 114-116; 136)

His passion has taken rule of him; his reason is suspended.

Passion, melancholy, ambition, fear, imagination, all combined, bring forth the fall of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. Lady Macbeth's madness compels her to take her own life; Macbeth's fury forces him to walk directly to his destruction by the forces of Macduff. Each knows the consequences of willfully provoking and performing acts of murder. They know the effects of fear and imagination but push the knowledge into the recesses of their minds, reasoning that to show no fear is to know no fear.

Shakespeare presents Lady Macbeth as an accessory to the crimes of Macbeth. She is his inspiration, reassurance, and confidante along his bloody path toward the throne of Scotland. It is Macbeth who has learned that he is to become the king, and he wants to hurry the process. When he becomes apprehensive about going through with his plans, Lady Macbeth gives him the spirit he needs. She becomes ambitious, too; not so much for herself as for Macbeth.²¹⁸ She understands him and his

²¹⁸J. A. Goll, "Criminal Types in Shakespeare," Journal of Criminal Law, XXIX (May, 1939), 661.

natural instincts and knows that her assistance will be necessary in his progress to the throne. Moreover, his success will be her success. To make his dream come true, she doubles her strength.²¹⁹ She is willing to maintain mental discipline and complete self-control.²²⁰ Having conquered her will and gained control of any natural feminine traits that may cause her to falter in this venture, she prays to the spirits to "unsex" her:

. . . Come you spirits
 That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
 And fill me from crown to the toe top-full
 Of direst cruelty! make thick my blood;
 Stop up the access and passage to remorse,
 That no compunctious visitings of nature
 Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
 The effect and it!
 (I.iv.41-48)

This is her means of nerving herself.²²¹ She feels that she must be melancholic to contend with the crimes she and Macbeth are planning. Praying that the spirits will "make thick [her] blood," she hopes to escape her conscience.²²² She eventually dispenses with her conscience and lets her desire to aid her husband rule all of her

²¹⁹Ibid., p. 663.

²²⁰Moulton, op. cit., p. 155.

²²¹Craig, "Shakespeare's Depiction of Passion," p. 292.

²²²Paul Kocher, "Lady Macbeth and the Doctor," SQ, V (Autumn, 1954), 348.

actions and thoughts.²²³ As they prepare for Duncan's arrival, she says to Macbeth, ". . . look up clear / To alter favour ever is to fear: / Leave all the rest to me." (I.v.73-75) As she proceeds with the plan, she drinks wine to build up her own courage that appears to be even more brazen than Macbeth's. When Macbeth becomes faint-hearted and wants to give up the plan, she mocks him and questions his bravery, thus using all of her powers to make him finish what he has begun:²²⁴

Was the hope drunk
Wherein you dress'd yourself? hath it slept since?
And wakes it now, to look so green and pale
At what it did so freely? From this time
Such I account my love. Art thou afeard
To be the same in thine own act and valour
As thou art in desire?
(I.vii.36-41)

She goes farther in her encouragement to tell him that, if she had made such plans, she would have carried them out, even if it meant tearing her baby from her breast and dashing its brains out. She becomes disgusted with Macbeth's fear and tries to prove her bravery to him:²²⁵

Infirm of purpose!
Give me the daggers: the sleeping and the dead
Are but as pictures: 'tis the eye of childhood
That fears a painted devil
(II.ii.53-56)

²²³Quoted in the Variorum Edition of Macbeth, p. 451.

²²⁴Moulton, op. cit., p. 160.

²²⁵Goll, op. cit., p. 165.

She reminds him that thinking of their crimes will drive them mad.

Since Macbeth's conscience had not been completely beaten, however, he isolates himself and broods over his outrageous murders. Lady Macbeth, on the other hand, has tucked the whole matter into the back of her mind, but she is concerned at seeing him in this condition and tries to console him, urging him to forget the matter:²²⁶

. . . why do you keep alone,
Of sorriest fancies your companions making,
Using those thoughts which should indeed have died
With them they think on? Things without any remedy
Should be without regard: What's done is done
(III.ii.8-12)

Her task becomes that of hiding Macbeth's fear and mental agony to the best of her ability.²²⁷ Unfortunately, her best is lacking, because Macbeth, seeing the ghost at the banquet table, is completely distraught with fear, and nothing she does is enough to quiet him. She tries to defend and excuse his actions:

Sit, worthy friends: my lord is often thus,
And hath been from his youth: pray you, keep seat;
The fit is momentary; upon a thought
He will again be well: if much you note him,
You shall offend him and extend his passion.
(III.iv.53-57)

²²⁶ Loc. cit.

²²⁷ Ibid., p. 166.

In spite of her efforts to reassure her husband and the guests, Macbeth is too overcome with fear to be restrained and continues to speak of the blood and the dead.

Unable to get Macbeth to rid himself of his fears, Lady Macbeth is overwhelmed with thoughts of his anguish and the irrational horrors she has encouraged and helped him commit.²²⁸ Reason and conscience return under the strain and confront her in her dreams with all of the horrible deeds in which she has been involved.²²⁹ Her conscience takes vengeance upon her.²³⁰ She finds her sins too heavy and wants to be free of fear and guilt.²³¹ Her conscience and the recognition of the terrible sins she and Macbeth have committed and have kept secret cause her to walk and talk in her sleep and to relive that portion of her life that includes their ambitious steps toward the throne.²³² All the bloody deeds that had been performed are revealed:²³³

. . . What need we fear who knows it, when none can call our power to account?--yet who would have thought

²²⁸Loc. cit.

²²⁹Moulton, op. cit., p. 166.

²³⁰Dorothy Johnson, "The Perfect Wife," London Mercury, XI (November, 1924), 49.

²³¹Arnold, op. cit., p. 61.

²³²Kocher, op. cit., p. 348.

²³³Arnold, op. cit., p. 59.

the old man had so much blood in him What,
will these hands ne'er be clean? . . . Here's the
smell of the blood still: all the perfumes of
Arabia will not sweeten this little hand
Wash your hands, put on your nightgown;
Look not so pale

(V.i.42-44; 57-58; 69-71)

She wants to be mentally cleansed of her bloody sins,
so she washes her hands, physically.²³⁴ She loses the
boldness that has commandeered her into the conspiracy
with Macbeth. Her former femininity returns and, with it,
the desire to rid herself of all the horror that has
recently encompassed her.²³⁵ As a last resort, Macbeth's
"fiend-like queen" commits suicide.

Man's lust for wealth and power is depicted again
in Shakespeare's Timon of Athens (1607-1608). Whereas,
Macbeth's ambition drove him to murder for power, Timon's
friends drive him from his home for wealth. This thirst
for wealth causes Timon's personality to change. Timon
should be classified as a malcontent, rather than a mad-
man, because of his disillusionment, disgust, and sub-
sequent railing against humanity. He is a man who has
loved all humanity, generously giving of himself and
his wealth to the love and beauty of mankind.²³⁶ When

²³⁴Norman Holland, "Freud of Shakespeare," PMLA,
LXXV (June, 1960), 168.

²³⁵Johnson, op. cit., p. 49.

²³⁶Knight, op. cit., p. 244.

his wealth is gone, his friends leave him. His loss of wealth and friends makes him hate man with the same intensity that formerly he has loved man. Consequently, he has been called Shakespeare's most furious malcontent.²³⁷

Prior to his leaving the city, Timon invites his "so-called friends" to a banquet of warm water which he throws into their faces as he denounces them for their thanklessness:

Live loathed and long,
 Most smiling, smooth, detested parasites,
 Courteous destroyers, affable wolves, meek bears,
 You fools of fortune, trencher-friends, time's flies,
 Cap and knee slaves, vapours, and minute-jacks!
 Of man and beast the infinite malady
 Crust you quite o'er!
 (III.vi.103-109)

Outside the city walls, as he prepares to leave Athens, he attacks the city and mankind, the social and moral catastrophe:

. . . sink Athens! henceforth hated be
 Of Timon, man, and all humanity! . . .
 . . . Matrons, turn incontinent!
 Obedience fail in children! slaves and fools,
 Pluck the grave wrinkled senate from the bench,
 And minister in their steads! to general filths
 Convert o' the instant, green virginity,
 Do 't in your parents' eyes! bankrupts, hold
 . . . fast; . . .
 . . . Piety and fear,
 Religion to the gods, peace, justice, truth,
 Domestic awe, night-rest, and neighborhood,
 Instruction, manners, mysteries, and trades,
 Degrees, observances, customs, and laws,

²³⁷Campbell, Shakespeare's Satire, p. 168.

Decline to your confounding contraries,
 And let confusion live!
 (III.vi.114-115; IV.i.3-10; 15-21)

Timon, then, moves into a cave and raves against society. He hates himself for being a ". . . semblable of man and all feasts, societies, and throngs of men." (IV.iii.21-22) Any order, social, physical, or political, brings down his hatred:²³⁸

Consumptions sow
 In hollow bones of man! strike their sharp shins
 And mar men's spurring. Crack the lawyer's voice
 . . . hoar the flamen
 That scolds against the quality of flesh
 And not believes himself: down with the nose,
 Down with it flat; take the bridge quite away
 Of him that, his particular to foresee.
 (IV.iii.151-159)

Because he becomes melancholic after his downfall, he is constantly reprimanded by his court fool, Apemantu, who has previously been the melancholic. Actually, the two seem to exchange dispositions. The fool has been the one who tells Timon about his parasitic friends. Now, in Timon's cave, they spiritedly express their disgust.²³⁹ Timon, discontented and disgusted with life, expresses his feelings whenever anyone visits him, regardless of his purpose. He has no desire to improve anyone

²³⁸ Knight, op. cit., p. 245.

²³⁹ Babb, op. cit., p. 95.

or anything. To him, the wealth of man symbolizes greed.²⁴⁰ Gold is the goal toward which men fight, work, and flatter. Even in death, Timon cannot reconcile himself to the world and its troubles, its deceptions;²⁴¹ "I am sick of this false world, and will love naught." (IV.iii.75) No amount of pleading by his friends can make him try to live in this "deceptive world." For him, life without love, friendship, and loyalty, is nothing. He is convinced that death is the only way for man to escape from the world's chaos.

As Timon's friends cannot make him believe in the good in the world, Leontes in The Winter's Tale (1610-1611) cannot be convinced that it is his imagination that has made him distrust his wife and friend. Jealous passion brings grief to the heart of Leontes as it did to Othello. Unlike Othello, however, Leontes lives to be forgiven for his wrongs. Furthermore, Leontes' jealousy was caused by his own imagination; Othello's was sparked by the villainous Iago.

Leontes allows his imagination and intense jealousy to pick up words and phrases with little or no meaning

²⁴⁰Knight, op. cit., p. 257.

²⁴¹Campbell, Shakespeare's Satire, p. 193.

and thrust them upon his mind, causing mass confusion.²⁴²

Small, friendly gestures by Polixenes and Hermione are interpreted by Leontes' imaginative mind as having sexual overtones:

How she holds up the neb, the bill to him!
 And arms her with the boldness of a wife
 To her allowing husband! . . .
 (I.ii.180-183)

Even the conversation between Leontes and his servant, Camillo, is a source of phrases that kindle Leontes' passion. For example, he thinks of his wife's infidelity, while Camillo is speaking of other matters. He imagines that people are whispering about him and accuses the faithful Camillo of dishonesty. Camillo warns Leontes to ". . . be cured / Of this diseased opinion and betimes; / For 'tis most dangerous" (I.ii.296-297), but this warning goes unheeded by Leontes, who continues to express his unfounded judgment of his wife's actions. After the interview with Camillo, Leontes is certain that he has the knowledge he needs. He thinks he sees things that are not in reality.²⁴³ His mind has blinded to reason by his jealous passion and illustrative imagination. No amount of persuasion can change his passion-ruled mind.

²⁴²Hart, op. cit., p. 78.

²⁴³Ibid., p. 78.

He refuses to listen to anyone who tries to convince him of his mistake. He trusts no one, not even Apollo. All are "traitors" and "liars" as far as he is concerned. Only after the death of his son does he realize the wrong that he has committed. His jealous passion had possessed him to the extent that he has defied Apollo's oracle. Shame and remorse flood him as he apologizes to all. His sanity and reason return, and the unmotivated jealousy is resolved.²⁴⁴

Jealousy, anger, fear, lust, and grief were the passions that caused conflict in the minds of Shakespeare's heroes. Some of them were even engulfed by more than one of these passions, which added more power to the emotional outbursts. Lear, for example, was the victim of both anger and grief which were strong enough to drive him to extreme madness. As a contrast to Lear's outbursts, Leontes, afflicted with jealousy that was created by his own imagination, is subdued by his jealous passion for only a short time. Still others were so distraught by their passions that they could not face life, or they felt that to contend with man's corruption would be too difficult. Therefore, they took their own lives or caused

²⁴⁴Donald Goodfellow, Lovers Meeting: Discussions of Five Plays by Shakespeare VIII, p. 73.

someone else to do so. Yet, it is through these heroes that Shakespeare points out many of the universal virtues and vices of mankind.

CHAPTER III

ELIZABETHAN MADNESS: SHAKESPEARE'S PATTERN

Shakespeare's portrayal of the fools, malcontents, and madmen not only illustrates the Elizabethan concept of madness, but provides him with a medium through which he can voice his opinion of the gross hypocrisy of humanity. He points out the moral, social, political and domestic ills that plague the world. Through the speeches and actions of his mentally disturbed characters, he is able to exploit many things that would not have been accepted by other means. He can express his opinion about any problem or conduct without specifically directing the statements to any one person or group of persons. Knowing well the Elizabethan concept of psychology, Shakespeare never hesitated to make use of it to make his point. He knew that his audiences had observed madness in many forms, that they understood the treatment of mental maladies, and that they also knew that fools, malcontents, and madmen were often the wisest men who speak the truth. These types of characters are usually assigned speeches that express Shakespeare's opinion upon an issue.

He also reveals that the state of madness is a process through which one reaches the deepest understanding of himself and humanity.²⁴⁵ The madman, unbound by social, moral, or political mores, is free to make a critical study of mankind, observing the corruption and disorder that causes his confusion, disparity, and finally, destruction. His demented state gives him the liberty to express himself, to tell others what he has learned through his experience with madness.

Shakespeare's depiction of madness varies during his career. The early period, prior to the 1600's, is void of any real madness. Grief-stricken Titus uses madness only as a cloak with which to shield himself from any harm or suspicion as he plans revenge. Villainous Richard III is a malcontent who strikes at the world, because he abhors his own physical body and in his deranged thinking feels that his deformity is the result of man's stupidity. Neither of these two characters reaches an emotional state extreme enough to cause his mind to revert to a normal emotional status.

During the middle period, between 1600-1610, Shakespeare appears to reach his zenith in the portrayal of madness. Beginning with Hamlet, who, like Titus,

²⁴⁵Heilman, op. cit., p. 92.

is grieving and uses madness as a disguise while planning revenge, Shakespeare allots more time for the decline of a character's mental state, thus developing psychological aspects more fully than in his early period. Lear is Shakespeare's most highly developed presentation of this type. He shows Lear's emotional progress from a state of wrathful anger to one of raving madness. Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, and Timon are unstable, but none reaches the height of Lear's madness.

Shakespeare's later period is comparable to his first insofar that it lacks characters who are suffering from extreme dementia. Most are victims of a passion-ruled reason that renders them hopelessly unaware of anything more than what the imagination reflects. For example, Leontes is one whose imagination is the cause of his passion and grief. Most of the plays in this period have fairy-tale endings in deep contrast to the endings of the plays of the middle period that end in the tragic death of both the guilty and the innocent as the result of madness.

Psychological insight and an understanding of humanity are evident in most of Shakespeare's plays. In some, he delves more deeply into the motivation of his characters and details their emotions more fully than in others, but always he handles his knowledge of the workings of

the mind with a skill unsurpassed by his contemporaries. Regardless of the reason, the popularity of the subject, or the development of his knowledge of the workings of the mind, he exemplifies much variety in his depictions of madness.

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