

“Can You Make no Use of Nothing?” Madness, Heroism, Power in William Shakespeare’s *King Lear*

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Abstract

The originality of Shakespeare's *King Lear* lies in the formulation of a mad personality that goes beyond its stock and stereotypical role. Shakespeare seems intent on a portrayal of madness that conveys the complication of the individuality of the hero. In an ambivalent way, madness is implemented as the driving force of conflict and its ultimate outcome or end. In its subversion of the accepted and standard roles of characterization and heroism, Lear's madness becomes the central totalizing theme in the play that overthrows the very hierarchies of power in the English Renaissance drama. The personality of Lear is imbued with power, insight, growth and distinctiveness only when he gets mad. The necessary abstraction needed in heroes, and their removal and estrangement from reality, and the existence apart from their institutionally defined roles are, also, essential characteristics of heroism and located only in King Lear's madness. In this paper madness is treated as a powerful force for it is conscious, self-determined and heroic.

Introduction

In *Madness and Civilization: a History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, Michel Foucault (1969) traces the history of madness in civilization, indicating that it has been negatively viewed throughout history. Madness has been taken as a “Paradoxical manifestation of non-being,” “the absence of work;” it has become “nothing” and “a moment of silence” (quoted in Louis McNay 1994, 38). Such a conception rests on a negative attitude to the mentally ill persons. It has been very difficult to know what madness constitutes because it has been seen as an “empty category” (38) with no meaning. Foucault believes, also, that “madness has been construed as sloth, animality and finally reduced to the silence of non-being” (38). Such a definition has been revised in the Shakespearean drama. Particularly, in imposing a new conceptuality, assemblage and production of the mad character, Shakespeare defines madness in *King Lear* as a vital force that circulates throughout the specific cultural and historical discourses of the English Renaissance drama. Madness is manifested in the personality of King Lear imbuing him with dynamic and heroic features and

preventing him from becoming a passive object. Madness in this play presents an unlike definition of heroism that has been imposed in the classical drama. When Kent insistently demands “see better Lear” (I, i, 158), Lear’s madness becomes a valuable tool that enables him to carry out this heavy task all throughout the play. Lear's mental disorder, for Shakespeare, does not indicate a negative aspect in the play; it is rather recognized as a meaningful constituent because it generates a new conceptuality of power and authority in the cultural and dramatic discourses of the English Renaissance drama.

In his book *Foucault: A Critical Foundation* (1994), Louis Mcnay explains that the modern philosophy is caught within the confused “sleep of dialectics and cannot begin to comprehend the singular and fleeting moment of transgression” (49). He claims that our style of thought and language are hampered by “dialectical logic” and so the act of transgression remains an “unspoken potentiality.” The liberation from a dominant notion of rationality, thus, is the only way to liberate an act of transgression. In light of this, the search for an act of transgression in a work of art forms an important constituent which must be sought within a discourse that defines transgression as an “anti-essentialist manner signifying nothing in itself except the need permanently to push experience to its limit to discover new ways of being”(46).

It is argued in this paper that in placing madness and insanity at the heart of truth, and in finding different perspectives of reality from within discourses of unreason, madness in William Shakespeare's *King Lear* can be seen as an act of transgression that can impose new conceptuality of power. Shakespeare's dramatization of heroism incorporated within the domain of the fantastic and the unnatural may present a threat to the English Renaissance rationality. This is enhanced by presenting a figure of authority and law, a divine figure, as a mad person. Having the status of a wise man- not only of juridical and moral influence, but also of a mythical and folkloric force- King Lear embodies the real and the fantastic, the human and the inhuman and the natural and the unnatural. The function of his madness has become to transcend, reverse, upset and to break the well-established order of truth and judgment in his culture.

Unlike many English Renaissance dramatists who have produced madness in minor characters - like the characters of the clown or the fool, in which the focus is less on personality than on performance- madness in William Shakespeare's *King Lear* is intended basically to reflect the ongoing conflict in the hero, Lear. More explicitly, whereas the madman is presented in repeating roles and situations and is dramatized as someone lacking knowledge and insight and cannot develop or change, Lear's character is dramatized as a protagonist whose madness has not been cast in the same mold. Madness in *King Lear* presents a new conceptuality of heroism as it authorizes and empowers him to

perform unusual functions and unconventional and individual traits. It is intended basically to reflect the complication of the individuality of the hero, Lear. Thus, the personality of King Lear is complicated because he is allowed through madness to go beyond the stereotypical role relegated to the mad man in the English Renaissance drama. Conversely speaking, in many instances in the play, madness shows how Lear's clarity in vision was limited when he was a wise man and king. On the whole, Lear's failure in mind is intended to provide his personality with the growing insight, newness and development necessary for the well-established definition of heroism in the English Renaissance tragedy.

More clearly, the English Renaissance drama shows how ostensibly mad characters, like clowns and fools, stay flat as long as they exhibit conventional and un-individual traits and perform their intended functions; they are intended basically to produce dramatic comic effects or scenes with comic relief. They are, also, dramatized to possess no attitude and behavior except that of their type because they seem to have been cast in the same role. Lear's individualistic traits, however, complicates the character of the mad in the Renaissance drama as it makes him go beyond such a flat role. Heroism is specifically associated with Lear's madness which- as made into a complex component with multiple facets and functions- subverts such a stereotypical role. Thus, a portrayal of madness depicting the central configuration and complication of the individuality of the protagonist depends on the incorporation of two basic elements: "reversal" and "recognition", two terms determined by Aristotle as necessary elements in a tragedy (Jessica Dunkel 2003). Relying on such elements, Lear's madness can be seen as forming a complex and multiform process that violates the "unspoken potentiality" of the mad in the Renaissance culture.

“In nothing am I chang'd”: Employment an Element of "Reversal" in the Portrayal of Madness in *King Lear*

An element of "reversal" is essential in the portrayal of madness in King Lear as it forms an unsettling force against the traditional and negative representation of madness in the English Renaissance tragedy. The natural incorporation of mental disorder in Lear’s personality is in itself disrupting because it is considered a reversal to or a violation not only of the divine authority of the king in the English Renaissance society, but also of the figure of the father, deemed the supreme authority of blood and kinship in Medieval cultures. In its ability to transform the psyche of an old man from ignorance and delusion into knowledge and apprehension, madness is presented as a disruptive force that transcends the fixed conceptuality of power and authority in the English Renaissance culture. Shakespeare makes Lear's madness transcend its fixated and engrossed (fool/clown) model when he allows "Lear's progressing

madness to be paired with his recognition of truth" (Jessica Dunckel 2003). Speaking generally, in finding new dimensions of truth and reality in that dark region of doubt and fear, in Lear's disordered mind, Shakespeare widens new perspectives of madness and art in the world literature.

An element of reversal is also significant to the characterization of the individuality of Lear. Madness achieves heroism in the play because it shows the inherent and distinctive aspects of Lear's personality, his "singularity of vision", his individuality, "tragi flaws" and humanity, the necessary abstraction of conflict and the noncompliant or subverted materialization of his experience. An element of reversal is also significant to the plot because Lear's distinctive traits are primarily defined and presented in a complex discourse of madness with complicated and contradictory aspects and functions. Such a dramatization of insanity and madness invents a story with a defiant new line of plot and heroism that deconstructs the existing conceptuality of power and authority in the English dramatic text. This line of plot- that traces the history of Lear's madness and reflects basically on its capacity to destabilize and subvert the role of the mad in the English drama, will be presented in the next part of discussion.

Tracing the development of Lear's mental history, thus, has become a very significant act especially as it incorporates the central configuration and conflict within the hero. Many different suggestions have been given on the account of Lear's madness. Some critics suggest that Lear's first act of dividing the kingdom according to a verbal announcement of love, followed by banishing Cordelia and Kent, is an insane act (Marvin Rosenberg 1972). Others see that he is, at first, a man of a stable mind but of extreme vanity; under the influence of uncontrolled passion, his weak mind begins to lose its sanity (John Bucknill 1969). Extreme passion ungoverned and undisciplined by reason, a fundamental trait of mad characters, could be found to be behind the disorder of Lear's mental state.

Most critics choose that fearful moment in Act III, iv when Poor Tom appears, to be at the point in which Lear breaks into madness. However, Lear's madness, climaxed by a harsh tempest in the mind and a severe unconsciousness in the same scene, cannot be reduced to one rigid end or phrased in pure medical terms as loss of mind. Nor a Renaissance model of the fixed personality of the mad is sufficient to dramatize Lear's mental disorder in the tempest scene.

Madness in *King Lear* complicates the insanity of an old man as it makes Lear's mind wander and go aimlessly around through a rather complex and progressive process. The progression of madness (or the development of Lear's mental breakdown) is dramatized through the earlier hints and fears of madness articulated by Lear and other characters: Kent's "when Lear is mad" (I. iv. 146),

Lear’s “notion weakens” (I, iv, 236), “beat at this gate” (I, iv, 280), “let me not mad” (I, v, 47), “O, Fool, I shall go mad” (II, iv, 288), “my wits begin to turn” (III, ii, 67). Unreasoning in *King Lear*, thus, is assembled through a process that places Lear’s mentality under the impact of a number of successive emotional and psychological shocks. Lear’s mind is afflicted by the ingratitude of daughters and the realization that his world proceeds disorderly. Under the grip of mental confusion, he is further increasingly and successively afflicted by a mind that cannot accept a breach in natural and biological relations.

Lear uses the occasion of Cordelia’s betrothal to declare his intention of dividing the kingdom. A political act is strongly connected with the law of love and attachment. His need for the appearances of love is presented in his statement, “which of you shall we say doth love us” (I, I, 51). Whereas he is delighted by the false language of Goneril and Regan, he is deeply upset by Cordelia’s silent definition of love. He shows a conception of love, which is rejected by Cordelia whose response was “nothing” to the bargain carried by, “What can you say to draw A third more opulent than your sisters”? (I, i, 85-86). What Cordelia considers “true” (I, i, 107), Lear considers “untender” (I, i, 106) and as she believes in “love and be silent” (I, i, 62-63), he believes that “[n]othing will come out of nothing” (I, i, 96). In the first scene, King Lear cannot see clearly, he is mentally confused and cannot realize that silence can be more than “nothing;” a term that could constitute his reality. From the very beginning, at Cordelia’s definition of love, Lear ends “a stranger” to his “heart” and mind. He is tormented, and “cut to th’ brains” (IV, vi, 193) by what he sees as unreturned love and ingratitude. What begins as a love test becomes a technique that is skillfully used to develop and reorganize the mental structure of the hero.

Mental disorder might have been enhanced by some other personal features of Lear’s character. Self-attachment, false judgment, self-love and self-delusion are some features of Lear’s personality in the first scene. Self-attachment is meaningful in this regard; it explains his determined withdrawal from the world of power and sanity. Foucault, (1965), as well some other psychologists, considers that self-attachment is the first sign of madness. Maybe, it is because Lear is so attached to the self that he accepts error as truth, lies as reality, ugliness as beauty and virtue. His insistence on hearing a declaration of verbal love by his daughters and making it the essence for a very somber political decision show how Lear’s need of love is more than that for power. Lear’s personality shows how these two are in conflict and cannot be compromised in his structure of mind. However, such an act shows how Lear’s humanity surpasses the rigidity of power and the formality presented through the crown and the throne.

Similarly, it is the same self-attachment that blinds him to Cordelia's genuine and honest love and forces him to accept Regan and Goneril's flattery and lies as real. Lear's high consciousness of his ordeal and the inability to overcome the pain caused by it, is apparent in the revealing moments of agony and anger when he says that the mere truth of his displeasure and disappointment at Cordelia's ingratitude is that, "[he] lov'd her most and thought to set [his] rest on her kind nursery" (I, i, 123-124). Furthermore, it is the same quality of self-attachment that makes him condemn Cordelia with "a self concerned" obsession in saying, "Hadst not been born than not t'have pleased me better" (I, i, 233-234).

Whether insanity is an affliction of the intellectual or the emotional part of man's nature is further investigated by John Bucknill (1969). In discussing the major causes of insanity, the writer suggests that sudden emotional changes are important factors. These changes might be expressed in an exaggerated form of passion or desire. He stresses the claim that the disorder of the intellectual faculties is not as primary and essential as the disorder of the emotional faculties. The writer concludes that no state of the reasoning faculty can, by itself, be the cause or condition of madness, congenital idiocy and acquired dementia being alone excepted. The corollary of this is that emotional disturbance is the cause and condition of insanity. (168)

It is understood that excessive passion has become a disease as the writer stresses the idea that "exaggerated passion, perverted affection, enfeebled judgment" (ibid), all combine to form a mental illness. However, whether this is considered a mental disease or not, "madness or nothing" (ibid) is not the central issue for Shakespeare in *King Lear*. What is significant is the establishment of emotional disturbance as the cause and condition of further complex psychological developmental phases and moral decisions in Lear's personality.

Shakespeare's dramatization of madness makes it meaningful to consider how violation of the structure of the human mind comes through another violation of the natural and biological order of relations. He traces this violation deliberately in the development of Lear's failing mentality. Lear's rash response to Cordelia's "nothing" ceases to be a sign of an authoritative act; it is rather considered as a mental deviation that reacts against Cordelia's violation of the natural order of things. Though this violation results in the animal frenzied aspect of Lear's madness in subsequent scenes, it is constructed as a means to restructure Lear's mind throughout the play. Part of the complexity of Lear's failing mentality is his inability to conceptualize that some natural relations are embedded and disguised with power and authoritative aspects. Lear sees all power relations as embodied within a network of biological ties and thus he becomes blind to the ways they are conceived of and operate in life.

Additionally, Lear's love test might be indicative of what Ingham Adrian (1996) calls "unnatural melancholy" that could be seen as the grounds of Lear's wandering mind. In this regard, Robert Burton's analysis of *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) relates that much like Hamlet, King Lear's melancholic state is driven by "fear and sorrow," "suspicion and discomfort." Lear's test is not intended to make him hold one form of power; one that cannot be granted through the authority he has as a king- as some critics argue- but it is perhaps an endeavor to obtain the intimacy of private and personal relations in order to overcome that sense of melancholy. From this perspective, madness is constructed through Lear's complicated and failing vision of power and filial relations which is connected with his limitation and shortsightedness as a human being and an authoritative figure. This has, also, been achieved in Lear's realization that his reality is located in the simple meaning of Cordelia's "nothing." It will be shown next that "nothing" has become one more way to reverse or invalidate the role of the mad in the English drama.

One way of restructuring Lear's mind is in finding a meaning for "nothing;" a heavy task that has been carried out in Lear's mind all throughout the play. The world of King Lear introduces us to a new conception of "nothing." Right from the beginning "nothing will come out of nothing" (I, i, 96) is recognized by a number of characters. However, it is Kent who attempts first to destabilize Lear's understanding of "nothing." He could transcend Cordelia's literal, impassionate and unembroidered meaning of "nothing" to another world of sight, emotion and intuition in initiating "see better Lear" (I, i, 157). Furthermore, Edgar believes in the effective power of nothing in saying "[i]n nothing am I chang'd" (IV, vi, 6-7). Also in saying "that's something yet: Edgar I nothing am" (II, iii, 21) it seems that Edgar finds his identity in this "nothing;" one that has no substance or importance, a nonentity. It is meaningful in this regard to realize that whatever changes happen to Lear's personality were through Cordelia's "nothing;" an idea that is very basic for the development and growth of Lear's personality. It is through "[i]n nothing am I chang'd" that heroism is also brought about and underlined in different characters in the play. The fool also manifests an understanding and awareness of the power of nothing. For John Reibetanz (1979) "Edgar and the Fool seemed to recognize the power of nothing, and they chose folly and madness instead" (107). In teaching Lear a speech, the Fool inquires, "can you make no use of nothing" (126). Ironically, he establishes ten commandments to which Kent and Lear respond with a clear emphasis on meaning as constituted in "nothing",

Kent. This is nothing, Fool
Fool. Then 'tis like the breath of an unfee'd law
Yer, you gave me nothing for't. Can you make no
use of nothing, uuncle?
Lear. Why, no, boy, nothing can be made out of
nothing. (I, iv, 124-128)

Furthermore, like Lear's progressing mentality, "nothing" acquires different features and attributes all throughout the play. In Lear's discovery that he is reduced to "nothing," he shifts to the maddening contemplation of Man's reality, which turns to be "nothing" itself. What is in question, first, is filial ingratitude presented by Cordellia's "nothing" and later by the brutal acts of Regan and Goneril. In subsequent scenes, as obvious in the changes taking place in Lear's mind, "nothing" is no longer considered a response to filial ingratitude, failure of father-daughter relationship; it is rather experienced mentally by Lear as an extended form of truth and reality. On the effect of "nothing" on Lear's personality, Mathilda Hills (1976) adds that Lear's emphatic negation of love in "I'll not love" is the first of a series mental contemplation which culminates in Lear's answers to his question, "Who is it that can tell me who I am" (I, iv, 238). Ingratitude strikes most deeply into Lear's mind and heart, but there is something more than ungratefulness that would cause the drop in the mental state of King Lear. For Edwin Muir (1942), this "something" is Goneril and Regan's attitude to power, which is based on their approach to life in general.

Lear's frame of mind governs and is governed by his individuality. It is intricate and complicates the simplified conception of madness in the Renaissance drama. On the one hand, the inner and outer forces that madden him determine the structure and line of his conflict, and on the other, those same forces can be seen as a reflection of the complexity and contradictory nature of his mentality. This might add a contradictory aspect to Lear's character, when we realize that aggression replaces his humanity and becomes part of his reaction to his surroundings. Rosenberg comments that "Lear's madness issues from the very sources of his character: if it has moments of the wise, sweet and pathetic, it is mainly aggressively erotic and hostile, sadistic: he would punish, 'knife into flesh, kill, kill, kill'" (212). Lear's mind, assaulted by a strong sense of incomprehension, disorder, doubt and rejection, combined with a powerful need for love and clarity, breaks out into madness in critical moments of body and mental limitations and blindness.

During those moments of feverish madness and insanity, Lear's mind, though freed from reason and wisdom and from the order that organizes them,

remains gravitating about its own structure, in Edgar’s words “matter and impertinency mixed, Reason in madness!” (IV, vi, 174-175). In the liberation of the mind of meaning, Lear’s world becomes so burdened with contradictory signs, illusions and allusions. It is now free of the old order of things and begins to form a new structure of its own. It is significant that this structure, which is in a progressive process of establishing new terms, could form a typical and nonconforming perceptions of truth. This is one more form of recognition of the power of madness in the play. In IV, iv, when Lear enters mad and is crowned with weeds and flowers, madness is actually articulated as a powerful force that acts feverishly on the mind of the hero. Those sensitive moments of madness culminates in his contemplation over the reality of Man, which is found, again, in a conception of nullity as intended mainly “to see the things thou dost not” (IV, vi, 172). Lear's mind contemplates a meaning of life that is found in the power of nothingness.

Such conceptuality of life is intensified in the famous storm scene when Lear reconsiders his past sin, when “he did her wrong” (I, v, 24). He admits that he is “a man [m]ore sinn’d against than sinning” (III, ii, 59-60). In this scene, a considerable change underlines his growing personality. His madness makes him realize the misery of the “poor naked wretches” (III, iv, 28) and the “houseless heads” (30). And as Lear “exposes [himself] to feel what wretches feel” (34), his madness is turned into a force with which he could purify his sin and atone for his guilt. He becomes a new Lear as the “self-centeredness” in his personality is replaced by the “other-centeredness.” This redemptive aspect of Lear’s mentality is not inconsistent with his attempt to understand the complicated inner self.

“Reason not the need”: Recognition of Madness and the Necessity of Rational Madness in *King Lear*

An element of "recognition" is, also, essential in addressing the idea of madness in *King Lear*. Whereas mental illness has been viewed negatively throughout history- being ranked in the Middle Ages in the hierarchy of vices, and simplified later as the failure of a normal psychological organ- madness in *King Lear* is not defined in such a simplified and negative way. Lear's madness is recognized as a meaningful and functional element. Shakespeare allows Lear's madness to be paired with an element of recognition which is fundamentally related to the prevalence of Lear's mad personality in the play. This is, in part, due to Shakespeare's ability in portraying unconventional behavior, a peculiarity of madness in the midst of organized and well-established institutions (Nathan Pinsky 2110). Lear's ability to recognize truth through his deviation into madness is a basic characteristic of his individuality and is considered a serious attempt to destabilize a commonly accepted European history that deems madness as an empty category without an 'other'. According to Shakespeare's

dramatization, madness in Lear's character cannot be defined as "the other of reason." The most evocative and meaningful utterances were said by both the fool and Lear, the mad. It is in madness that Lear realizes his first false judgment in saying that, "Thorough tatter'd clothes [small] vices do appear; Robes and furr'd gowns hide all. [Plate sin] with Gold. (IV, iv, 165-167).

Recognition of madness, also, means that the growth and development of Lear's individuality and the completion of his tragedy depend on the incorporation of an element of meaningful lunacy in his personality. This is only achieved through an endless deviation into a sense of loss and unreasoning. For Buckinll madness, surprisingly and meaningfully, is found to be the reason behind Lear's intellectual vigor and eloquence. It is emphasized that in the very scenes where Lear's madness reaches its climax, his speeches were featured as the most eloquent, lucid and convincing. Shakespeare "had studied mental disease too closely not to have observed the frequent concurrence of reason and unreason; or the facile transition from one state to the other" (Buckinll, 197). In the utmost absurdities of his mad scenes, it can be noticed how Lear's madness resembles- and to a certain extent- transcends the levelheaded part of his mind. Drawing a line between reason and madness has become a very tough task for the reader.

The recognition of madness is, also, brought about through Lear's consciousness of his loss of mind the idea that makes one more important feature of Lear's mental illness. It has been found that the mentally ill patients do not recognize their mental states. Lear's madness raises significant issues regarding the meaning of the consciousness of the mentally ill people. Specifically, it is significant to examine the extent to which Lear initiates, accepts and, or rejects his mental state. Lear's awareness of his mental state is significant because it makes him travel around sense and nonsense. The half-mad mind is brought closer to the other part through this consciousness. His disturbed mind is entirely obsessed with images of the past. It relates such images to the new experiences of body, time and space and to every aspect of his life, past and present. Lear's awareness of his mentally state being begins at an earlier stage in the play, and makes him plead not to be mad. End of Act I, scene v, Lear, recalls his past experiences, a sense of guilt that he "did her wrong," another sense of fear made him pray for heaven not to make him mad and to keep him in "temper": "O' let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven! Keep me in temper, I would not be mad (I, v, 46-47).

In his utmost agony of filial ingratitude, Lear prays also for heaven to give him "patience" and "not to fool him so much" so that he can bear the pain tenderly. He is aware of the pain and hurt that madness will bring, and has already brought, to his confused mind, and so he prays to be touched with "noble

anger” instead. In moments of anger and despair and in his failure to understand the “unnatural” act of his daughters, Lear’s mind wanders between reason and unreason, mindedness and madness. He is not certain which one he needs in order to comfort the tormented soul, but in his utmost incomprehension, he realizes “reason not the need” (II, iv, 264) is more important and chooses madness over “weeping.” Recognition of insanity comes to its climax when Lear chooses to go “mad.” This reflects his utmost agony and his “full of grief,” especially when he invokes madness to march into his body and mind. His “heart Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws” when he decides to lose mind, and ‘go mad’: “or ere I’ll weep. O Fool. I shall go mad! (II, iv, 264-286).

For Bucknill (1970), Lear is conscious of his mental state. The causes behind the madness are also palpable to his disordered mind. He is aware of the forces of madness urging his temper and the structure of the mind, but he struggles and acts against them. Similarly, what is most heroic about mad Lear is his endless struggle against the impulses of unreasoning acting forcefully upon his mind. He never stops questioning those forces even when the sense of the burden of guilt is combined with no understanding of the correct and just order of things. Lear struggles insistently to assume reason in his disordered mind. For example, Lear is made aware of moments when his “wits begin to turn.” More clearly in the storm scene when he is alternately driven by anger and madness, Lear is broken mentally and physically. His mental state is associated with an overwhelming emotional and mental exhaustion. The scene is set within a world of chaos which is a further removal from the world of sanity. Such a development in Lear’s frame of mind makes recognition of madness, together with a notion of responsibility, very significant elements in the analysis of mental disorder.

It is only through madness that Lear breaks down the false morality and appearances of his courtly world and starts to gain new insights and character development. Where his earlier speech is concerned with power, title and formality, the later speech is concerned with Lear’s own humanity and complicated individuality. For Max Byrd “Lear’s experience is purgatorial; madness is both punishment and insight” (1964,7). Whereas madness makes him withdraw from society, it allows him the discovery of the inner self which is only made obtainable through crossing the boundary of reasoning and mindedness.

Shakespeare acts out the complication and heroism in Lear’s character through the development of a disturbed mental state. When he appears a prisoner with Cordelia, Lear is presented with a different mentality. One important feature of the final scene is that there is no insanity in it. Lear speaks and acts as if his mind has never wandered. Instead of the unconsciousness, or the

nothingness that he has been seeking, agony, moral and emotional disturbances characterize Lear's mental state in the death scene. For Bucknill "[t]he weakness of exhaustion has disappeared, and the delusion and incoherency of the preceding excitement has yielded to the good influences with which his daughter... has blamed the wounded soul" (1969, 230). Ironically, Lear's tragedy can be found in the restoration of his mental capacity, or in his inability to evade madness. His tragedy is also determined by his utter awareness that meaning is found in another form of "nothing", specifically, in the "no life" or the death of his beloved Cordelia. Lamenting over the lifeless body of Cordelia, Lear becomes entirely aware of the forces of negation on his life:

No, no, no life!

Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have a life!

And thou no breath at all? Thou'it come no more,

Never, never, never, never, never! (V, iii, 306-309)

It is Lear's preoccupation with certain ideals, true love, real daughter, and the association of truth with inwardness that has become his dilemma. His tragedy can be found in the fact that he is unable to see clearly or to see other perceptions of truth and reality other than his own. It is through Lear's madness that Shakespeare suggests that truth is no longer linked to the accepted universal order of things, but is constructed around an internalized notion of responsibility that requires an endless investigation of the inner self and of one's motives, desires and actions. The introduction of the notions of recognition, responsibility and consciousness of madness leads us, thus, to a subtle change in the perception of insanity in the old people. The fact that Lear's mental state gravitates around madness and reasoning and the implication that Lear is in control of his mental capacity suggest new dimensions of madness and heroism in the world literature.

Moreover, based on the concepts of "reversal" and "recognition," Lear's madness cannot be deemed a passive mental disorder, or a deviation into nonsense, but is rather a meaningful constituent that allows the hero to discover false judgment, moral blindness and shortsighted experiences. On a higher level, madness, itself, can be considered a figurative journey which is presented as the inevitable result of an internal and intricate process that allows one to be placed in a dark region where he is enabled to question the truth of existence. Through a number of psychological changes that had afflicted his mental state, Lear started to reconsider, readjust and reorganize some self-made and constitutionalized concepts.

Conclusion

In Shakespeare's *King Lear*, madness is represented as a complicated and meaningful act. It functions both as a prime mover to the play's moral theme and its line of action and structure. In other words, in connecting madness with the complication of Lear's individuality, his consciousness of his frame of mind, the recognition of its impact on his body and soul and its connection to Lear's clarity of vision and power, are basic features of Lear's mental state, Shakespeare liberates the English medieval conceptuality of madness from a dreadful state of “silence” and nullity two basic characteristics of madness addressed by Foucault (1965) in his analysis of madness and civilization. Moreover, in establishing the linkage between heroism with madness, Shakespeare has de-constituted the structurality of power in the Renaissance tragedy. The “confinement” and “marginalization” of the mad, to adopt Foucault’s terminology, is challenged by Lear’s mental state which is intended to set him free of false and long-established perceptions of life. In doing so Shakespeare enforces a new perception of art and a new power structurality.

Lear’s madness is a unique mental state which must be studied and investigated on its own terms. The idiosyncratic nature of Lear’s mental disorder indicates the author's awareness of the complexity and contradictory state of mental disorder. Madness in Shakespeare’s *King Lear* is not dealt with as a mere biological fact or a simple natural phenomenon; rather, it is dramatized as the product of various psychological, social, political and cultural practices acting upon the mind of the individual and producing such a mental state. Madness in *King Lear* can, thus, be considered as an act of transgression because it suggests that the disorder and imbalance in the order of things, the apprehension and consciousness of the nearness between reason and unreason, together with a sense of fear, guilt and instability, draw one closer to those dark, untrodden and forbidden regions.

Madness does not represent a certain manifestation of unreasoning and deviation, nor it is shown as a biological disorder. The conception of the mad as deviant and “other” is, thus, challenged in Shakespeare’s conception of madness in *Lear*. Unlike the clown, the mad and the fool who are relegated flat positions, king Lear's heroism is located in his madness. King Lear is a hero, whose conflict emerges from a breach of selfhood and whose complicated individuality transgresses the conventional conception of heroism in the Renaissance drama. He is a significant instance of a character that goes beyond its institutional, as well as, its dramatic role in the world of the Renaissance tragedy.

"ألا يمكنك الافادة من العدم؟" الجنون، و البطولة، والقوة في مسرحية ويليام شكسبير الملك لير

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ملخص

تكمن أصالة مسرحية ويليام شكسبير *الملك لير* في تشكيل شخصية جنونية تتعدى حدود دورها النمطي الجامد، ذلك أن شكسبير يصور عن قصد الجنون الذي يظهر تعقيدات الفرد المتمثلة بشخصية البطل. فقد نفذ الجنون بطريقة مركبة بوصفه قوة دافعا للصراع وأحد الأسباب النهائية المحتومة له لقد مثل جنون الملك لير الموضوع المحوري في المسرحية، والذي أطاح بسلم ترتيب السلطة، في واحدة من مسرحيات دراما عصر النهضة الانجليزي. فشخصية الملك لير تصبح مسكونة بالقوة، والبصيرة، والوعي، والتفرد حين يغضب فقط، أما التجرد المقترض في الشخصيات البطولية، وانسلاخهم عن الواقع وعن أدوارهم المؤطرة لهم، فهي خصائص جوهرية للبطولة، وقد تمركزت في الحالة العقلية اللامتزنة للملك لير فحسب. يعامل الجنون في هذا البحث بوصفه قوة نافذة لأنه ناجم عن وعي، وإرادة ذاتية، ورمز للبطولة.

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