



Psychological Analysis of the of the Main Characters in the Tragedy "King Lear" by U. Shakespeare

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Abstract: The following article briefly analyzes the psychoanalytic features of the main characters in one of the most prominent classic plays - the tragedy "King Lear" by U. Shakespeare. The article provides a new insight into well-renowned characters, their unconscious motives and desires, giving the readers deeper understanding of their behavior and deeds.

Keywords: U. Shakespeare, King Lear, image, psychology, psychoanalytic analysis, symbol, characteristic traits.

INTRODUCTION

The tragedy "King Lear" is one of the most profound socio-psychological works of world drama. In Shakespeare's tragedy, the story of ungrateful and cruel children served as the basis for a psychological, social and philosophical tragedy that paints a picture of injustice, cruelty, and greed prevailing in society.

"King Lear", according to critics, is more read than staged. The work is rich in events, but the main place in it is occupied by the philosophical reflections of the characters. Each character, created by the author with mastery and truth, has its own characteristic - an inner world. Each character has his own personal tragedy. Shakespeare, more than any other element of life, was concerned with highlighting human behavior and character traits. His main goal was to illuminate the dark side of humanity and penetrate the heart of human nature.

The protagonist of the play, King Lear, is portrayed as a strong and self-confident king in the first scenes. However, at the same time, he is selfish and blind, so he loses his crown, power, honor and his children. His mind is as aware of reality as it can be while it is going crazy. King Lear's pride and arrogance, his inability to see the truth, his haste and tendency to make decisive decisions lead to a tragic rebuke.

Shakespeare introduces King Lear as a volatile and unsteady character. From the first scenes Lear himself recognizes his own fragile psychological state:

KING LEAR: O, let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven!

Keep me in temper; I would not be mad. [1; Act I, scene V, 67]

Within Lear's introductory lines it is obvious that the King has great admiration for himself as he asks his three daughters, Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia, to verbally express their love of him so as to divide his kingdom properly. Initially, it can be interpreted simply as an arrogant request, but only a few lines later, we see that this need for admiration is much deeper than just arrogance. After his eldest daughters finish their speeches expressing their profound love for their father and he grants them rule, he calls upon Cordelia, his youngest. Her response to her father is different: because she is not married yet, unlike her sisters, she loves her father wholeheartedly and she does not feel like her

sisters were entirely truthful, Lear becomes unhinged and not only degrades Cordelia, but banishes her from his kingdom and removes her birthright:

KING LEAR: *Be as well neighbored, pitied, and relieved
As though my sometime daughter.* [1; Act I, scene I,15]

It is here it becomes clear that King Lear suffers from Narcissism, he loves himself and want others to love only him, he lacks empathy and needs admiration of others.

The prominent playwright, essayist and critic A. Murphy in the magazine “Adventurer” called the reason for the madness of King Lear - his transition to the “simple title of a man”, the loss of his former greatness.

The Shakespearean critic J. Wharton, who experienced a strong shock while reading King Lear, in his excited essays refuses to discuss this tragedy "in the cold terms of criticism." The critic is sensitive to the "emotional orchestration" of each episode. He emphasizes, first of all, the psychological accuracy of Lear's remarks, their naturalness and sincerity, and refers to those that are most often cited by modern criticism, Shakespeare scholars of the second half of the 20th century. In particular, he rightly draws attention to episode IV of act, in which Lear, seeing Kent in stocks, exclaims:

KING LEAR: *O me, my heart, my rising heart! —
but down.* [1; Act II, scene 4, 105]

This single sentence, writes Wharton, very eloquently describes the "inexpressible anguish of the hero," the "terrible clash of opposing feelings" experienced by him. [10; 410-417]

Central to Wharton's essays is the analysis of Shakespeare's psychological skill in portraying Lear's madness, surpassing, in the critic's opinion, "Euripides himself" with his Orestes. This analysis is based on the idea that the "absurd" clichés of abstract classic criticism are inapplicable to Shakespeare's works. It is easy to declare that Lear's insanity is "depicted in a very natural and pompous manner," the critic asserts. But in this case, readers will not see the “secret mental movements” of the hero, which change from replica to replica and, therefore, should be considered in detail, based on the text of the work.

According to Coppelia Kahn's psychoanalytical analysis in “The Absent Mother in King Lear”, King Lear's asking his daughters to praise him signifies his thirst for maternal love.

KING LEAR: *Which of you shall we say doth love us most?
That we our largest bounty may extend
Where nature doth with merit challenge.* [1; Act I, scene I,11]

When Lear, who did not receive enough love from his mother, demanded this love from his daughters, the youngest daughter's rejection of this offer was a real emotional blow for the king. Only Cordelia's death frees the king from his fantasies. [2;45-47]

KING LEAR: *Here I disclaim all my paternal care,
Propinquity, and property of blood,
And as a stranger to my heart and me
Hold thee from this forever.* [1; Act I, scene I,15]

Lear displays an emotional disposition and disconnection to his mother in stating that “*I would divorce me from thy mother’s tomb*” [1; Act II, Scene IV, 107]. This extreme representation of an absent mother figure infers an objectification and introjection on Lear’s part – he displays an aggressive attitude towards the mother figure. [5; 3-576]

The mother is talked about but never present throughout the play. This objectification and introjection of the mother leads to a number of serious conceptual and social consequences. Gloucester crudely sexualizes the mother figure in conversation with Kent when stating that his

mistress “grew round-wombed” [1; Act I, Scene I, 5] through “breeding” [1; Act I, Scene I, 5] and that there was “good sport” [1; Act I, Scene I, 5] at his legitimate son’s conception.

The founder of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, while analyzing the tragedy of "King Lear" in his work "The Theme of the Three Caskets", describes the image of Cordelia as a symbol of death. Therefore, Lear's attitude towards his daughter represents his attitude towards death, which he does not want to acknowledge. The king cannot accept that life is mortal. The death of Cordelia in the last sad scenes of the play was an important point for Freud, because it was only at that point that the king realized that he was not immortal and could come to terms with the idea of the inevitability of death. It is unlikely that Shakespeare had a specific reason for condemning Cordelia to death, as she does not die in any other version of King Lear. [3;69-73]

KING LEAR: *Howl, howl, howl, howl! O, you are men of stones:
Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so
That heaven's vault should crack. She's gone for ever!
I know when one is dead, and when one lives; [1; Act V, scene III, 255]*

Because of Lear’s acutely inappropriate internalization and objectification of Cordelia he is unable to accept her death in claiming that

KING LEAR: *This feather stirs; she lives. If it be so,
It is a chance which does redeem all sorrows
That ever I have felt [1; Act V, Scene III, 257]*

Lear’s inability to mature beyond his primitive mental states and his demanding need for the fulfilment of his incestuous desires initiated and fueled his decline into madness and fatalistic fate. His fate had been determined by his abuse of his privilege as a father and as a king – this had devastating consequences for his family and the kingdom. He cannot move beyond his splitting mental state nor can he assimilate the good and bad of one person into a holistic view. Lear’s only reaction is that of anger when his desires are not being fulfilled. [7;24-25]

Frequently, Lear's mood swings momentarily: in scene IV of the third act, reflections on the unnaturalness of his daughter's ingratitude are replaced by impotent threats to absent offenders, then complaints about his bitter lot follow, ending with "apostrophe" to Goneril and Regan, a gentle reminder of the generosity and kindness shown towards them.

Psychologist Harold Bloom focuses on the character of Edmund. According to him, "Edmund is the most original character of Shakespeare." Edmund is not as hypocritical as other negative characters, and his cunning is driven only by reason. There is no passion and emotion in him, he has never loved anyone and will not. From this point of view, this is an unrepeatable character of Shakespeare.

EDMUND: *For that I am some twelve or fourteen moon-shines
Lag of a brother? Why bastard? wherefore base?
When my dimensions are as well compact,
My mind as generous, and my shape as true,
As honest madam's issue? [1; Act I, scene II, 29]*

The reason for Edmund's behavior is the illegitimacy of the conception of the son, who felt second-class and tried to gain a position in society by any means.

According to Blum, Lear has entered into "nothing" to a certain extent, the fact that the word "nothing" is used thirty-four times in the tragedy is an example. When Lear tried to show his presence to his daughters through his intense emotions: anger, hatred, sadness, he became a nobody. [4;21-26]

KING LEAR: *Nothing will come of nothing. Speak again! [1; Act I, scene I, 13]*

FOOL: Can you make use of nothing, nuncle?

LEAR: Why, no, boy, nothing can be made out of nothing. [1; Act I, scene IV, 51]

In conclusion, it should be noted that psychoanalytical analysis provides a deeper understanding of Shakespeare's tragedy "King Lear". Tragedy is about the contradictions in human nature as well as the difference between the path of the mind and the path of the soul. These contradictions lead to tragedy. While Lear was a character with a sick heart, Edmund was a "mentally ill" character. This article psychologically analyzed the internal contradictions that led the main characters to tragedy.

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