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MELANCHOLY, HYSTERIA AND MADNESS IN SHAKESPEARE'S TRAGEDIES *HAMLET*, *MACBETH* AND *KING LEAR* THROUGH THE PSYCHOANALYTICAL PRISM OF JULIA KRISTEVA

Abstract

The two most prominent mental disorders in Renaissance were madness and melancholy. However, the insufficient familiarity with its symptoms and causes bore not only the Renaissance's fascination but also the distinction between madness, melancholy, hysteria, bewitchment, anger or rashness. The Renaissance theatre tried to stage this popular topic despite its scanty props. Shakespeare was familiar with the then living notions and thus used a number of symptoms to present the chaos madness aroused. Still, the most obvious symptom for Shakespeare was the fragmented and incoherent speech of his mad characters. This pattern can be connected to Julia Kristeva's modern theory of an asymbolic and melancholic language depicted in her book *Black Sun* (1989). Despite a significant time distance between Shakespeare's tragedies and Julia Kristeva's theory, the aim of this paper is to show that Kristeva's theory of an asymbolic, incoherent speech can be applied to the speech of Shakespeare's mad characters, namely Ophelia, Hamlet, lady Macbeth, king Lear and Edgar.

Key words: madness, melancholy, Renaissance, Shakespeare, fragmented and incoherent speech, Julia Kristeva

Introduction

The history of madness is as old as civilization itself, as is the endeavor to try to perceive it. The Bible perhaps contains the earliest reflections on madness with the prominent characters of Saul and Nebuchadnezzar being punished by madness for their disobedience. The Greeks and Romans were interested in explaining madness and its accompanying disorders in a medical and scientific way, and tried to move away from the illogical and unreasonably founded explanations of madness. In the Middle Ages, madness was perceived as an intersection of divine possession, god-like punishment for a sin and a medically untreatable disease. Renaissance madness was an extensive notion encompassing a wide range of symptoms. Moreover, it proved to be a challenging and controversial topic as the period was marked by a myriad of mental and psychological conditions with no clear distinctions between their varying and numerous symptoms and causes. The Renaissance became fascinated with madness and tried to distinguish between madness, melancholy (both natural and spiritual), hysteria, bewitchment, anger or rashness. Despite an attempt to identify and differentiate these disorders, they were unexplainable for the common Renaissance man.

The bared Renaissance stage, which did not offer a spacious usage of stage properties, exploited the well-known and recognizable symptoms of madness such as the disturbed visual appearance of the insane individual or various physical manifestations such as epilepsy, headaches or convulsions. In this respect, although insufficiently elaborated, the language of mad characters proves to be extremely important as it makes the symptoms of madness more evident.

As he was a man familiar with the then living notions, Shakespeare dramatized madness through a number of symptoms, but mostly through language i.e. speech. For him, language was inseparable from madness. In other words, it was, far more than any other symptom, the first and the most obvious indicator of a mental disturbance. Language seems to reflect the chaotic and frustrated world(s) of the play(s). Complete chaos is achieved without any spectacular stage effects but

rather through a syntactically broken language. Thus the language or, in Shakespearian terms, the speech, proves to be the first witness to any mad character's fragmentation, i.e. transformation from a relatively sane individual into a mad one. It seems justifiable to assert that "linguistic disorders express social disorders" (Leverenz, 1978: 303).

However, it is useful to know that while analyzing or discussing the language of Shakespeare's mad characters, we need to have in mind its theatrical function – it is the language of the stage and no matter how exaggerated it may seem, it needs to be such. In the Renaissance's narrowed space of misunderstanding and misrepresenting diverse mental disorders, Shakespeare characterizes his mentally unstable characters mostly through an uncontrollable and disturbing language. Thus, the aim of this paper is to analyze the language(s), or to be more precise, the speech of several mad characters, namely Ophelia, Hamlet, Lady Macbeth, Lear and Edgar / Poor Tom, taking into consideration the existing views of madness in the Renaissance and combining them with Kristeva's theory.

1. Kristevan Fragmented and Monotonous Speech and Shakespeare's Female Characters – Ophelia and Lady Macbeth

In analyzing the language/speech of Shakespeare's melancholic and mad characters, this paper applies Julia Kristeva's ideas on the symbiosis of language and madness. Although there is a considerable time distance between the inception of Shakespeare's tragedies and Kristeva's work, Kristeva's modern ideas about the fragmented and monotonous speech of the depressed and melancholic can be applied to Shakespearian heroes. Kristevan ideas prove to be relevant to the analysis ascertaining the same monotonous linguistic pattern in Shakespeare and Kristeva. However, in the course of the analysis, the ideas of Carol Thomas Neely shall also be considered. Anticipating Kristeva, Neely discusses Shakespeare's illustration of the mad characters' speech and emphasises language, characterized by fragmentation, obsession, repetition and what

she calls “quotation”, “bracketing” or “italicization”, as the most important and obvious symptom of a person’s madness. Neely claims that the madness represented in Shakespeare’s plays (*King Lear*, *Hamlet*, and *Macbeth*) was constructed mostly through the fragmented speech of the mad characters. Although it is difficult to define this speech, it is “both something and nothing, both coherent and incoherent” (Neely, 1991: 323) and it is left to readers and viewers to construct it into the language of sanity.

However, more essential to our analysis of the mad characters’ language is the theory of Julia Kristeva, a professor of linguistics and a psychoanalyst. In her work, *Black Sun*, she offers a historical, psychoanalytical and literary overview of melancholia and depression, starting from a Freudian standpoint. Melancholia is classified as a “linguistic malady” denoting language as essential to the analysis itself. According to this theory, the language of the melancholic fragments, losing its symbolic power and plunges into a state Kristeva refers to as *asymbolia* or, in other words, loss of speech and meaning. To be more precise, it represents an inability to translate, metaphorize or use language meaningfully. Kristevan melancholic language is inarticulate, monotonous and repetitive. While discussing the melancholic, depressive speech Kristeva classifies it as nothing: “The depressed speak of nothing, they have nothing to speak of: glued to the Thing (Res), they are without objects. That total and unsignifiable Thing is insignificant – it is a mere Nothing, their Nothing, Death” (Kristeva, 1989: 52). Although Kristeva considers this speech to be meaningless and absurd, she asserts, “nevertheless, if depressive speech avoids sentential signification its meaning has not completely run dry. It occasionally hides in the tone of the voice, which one must learn to understand in order to decipher the meaning of affect” (Kristeva, 1989: 55).

Although *Hamlet* is often classified as one of Shakespeare’s most frequently written about plays as well as being “the most frustrating of Shakespeare’s plays precisely because it is the one most specifically about frustration” (Leverenz, 1978: 307), it still seems that not enough has been said of the play’s language. This paper shall attempt to analyze

the speech of the main characters, Hamlet and Ophelia namely, from Kristeva's point of view, illustrating its features and enumerating its differences. Hamlet and Ophelia's speech is, most often, understood as chaotic and as frustrated as the world of the play itself is. Otherwise functioning as doubles, the insane speech they display is not liable to comparison mostly due to the fact that Hamlet feigns madness or as he himself says: "As I, perchance, hereafter shall think it meet / To put an antic disposition on" (*Hamlet*, I, v. 172 – 173). His madness is a part of a cunningly devised plan while Ophelia's madness is a consequence of circumstances. She suffers from what was termed in the Renaissance as "the mother" or female hysteria, ritualizing in her speech different life events; love, courting, marriage, mourning, funeral and maturation. On the other hand, although always contrasted to Ophelia's real madness, Hamlet's feigned mad speech lacks the broken and incoherent quality that Ophelia's speech possesses. Although both of them are frustrated, Ophelia's mad speech, in comparison to Hamlet's, is a witty amalgam of allusions and enigmas. The unshaped speech, far more than any other characteristic, reflects her madness. One of the most recognizable Renaissance traits of a madwoman was her appearance on the stage with her hair down. Ophelia appears as such in Act IV, scene v: "enters Ophelia, distracted, with her hair downe" (IV, v. 22). However, it is the very speech that transforms her from an obedient daughter and lover to a young woman shattered with madness. It alienates her from the chaotic reality of the play and situates her in a completely new, lunatic realm. Moreover, it is the most evident indicator of her madness because "Ophelia's madness is represented almost entirely through fragmentary, communal, and thematically coherent quoted discourse" (Neely, 1991: 324).

Ophelia's speech has often been classified as either meaningful or meaningless. Carroll Camden refuses to "botch up" Ophelia's words, dismissing them as meaningless and states that "to derive intelligent meaning from them would be to group ourselves with others who remark her ramblings and 'botch the words up to fit their own thoughts'" (Camden, 1964: 251) while "we should probably make little or nothing of

Ophelia's non sequiturs in this scene" (Camden, 1964: 251). Peter J. Seng considers that "Ophelia's mad songs reflect, if only darkly, the entire major issues of the play" (Dane, 1998: 4). However, to follow either one of these interpretations means to incline towards the first or the second extreme. For the sake of truth, it seems difficult to derive any sensible meaning out of Ophelia's mad speech because it is a discourse assembled of quotations, i.e. popular folk ballads and legends, greetings and farewells, even routine pieties. Still, her "mad ramblings reflect the schism between appearance and reality, between what 'seems' versus what 'is'" (Camden, 1964: 252). Kristeva defines depressed speech as slow, with a slackened rhythm, monotonous intonations, and long and frequent silences. (cf. Kristeva, 1989: 34) Ophelia's mad language seems to fit into the Kristevan definition of asymbolic speech although its meaning can be discerned with difficulty. Under the superficial nothingness of her speech, the meaning can be seen. In comparison to Hamlet, whose mad speech is artificial and leaves the reader puzzling as to whether Hamlet is truly mad or is simply feigning madness, Ophelia is undoubtedly mad. She could not be called a melancholic but rather instantly mad – even her speech bears witness to this. The essential question to be answered here is: Can any meaning be derived out of Ophelia's speech or not? Is it something or nothing? This paper argues that it is asymbolic to a degree. It is incomprehensible and incoherent on the levels of its vague meaning and sentential *signification*, as Kristeva would put it, as well as on the level of inarticulate voices and sounds. The depressed sentences lack meaning and logic, and are devoid of rationality. On the other hand, the very speech of the depressed seems infallible when and while addressing a certain person.

In Act IV, scene v, Horatio seems to be puzzled by Ophelia's mad speech; it seems to be nothing, utterly meaningless and yet it has meaning enough:

*Her speech is nothing,
Yet the unshaped use of it doth move
The hearers to collection. They aim at it,
And botch the words up fit to their own thoughts
Which, as her winks and nods and gestures*

*yield them,
Indeed would make one think there might be
thought.*

(Hamlet IV, v. 8 – 13)

The thus-far silenced Ophelia gets a chance to speak after Horatio asserts: “twere good she were spoken with; for she may strew / Dangerous conjectures in ill-breeding minds” (*Hamlet* IV, v. 16 – 17). Ironically, the harmless maid becomes a serious public threat. She enters the room distracted and playfully remarks: “Where is the beauteous majesty of Denmark?” (*Hamlet* IV, v. 23), only to continue with her disjointed songs. These seem to have a multi-leveled meaning, simultaneously aimed at Gertrude, her anti-mother figure: “How should I your true-love know / from another one?” (*Hamlet* IV, v. 25), at Polonius, as her father: “He is dead and gone, lady / he is dead and gone; / At his head a grass-green turf, / At his heels a stone” (IV, v. 25), at Claudius, as the lustful usurper of his brother’s wife and kingdom:

*To-morrow is Saint Valentine’s day,
All in the morningbetime,
And I a maid at your window,
To be your Valentine.
Then up he rose, and donn’d his clothes,
And dupt the chamber-door,
Let in the maid, that out a maid
Never departed more,*

(Hamlet IV, v. 29 – 32)

and finally at Hamlet, as her lover:

*Young men will do’t, if they come to’t;
By cock, they are to blame.
Quoth she, before you tumbled me,
You promised me to wed.
He answers:
So would I ha’ done, by yonder sum,
An thou hadst not come to my bed.*

(Hamlet IV, v. 59 – 65).

Ophelia continues with her distracted, fragmented speech in the presence of the king, the queen and her brother, Laertes. The song of lamentation refers to her father but seems to be more musical than the

previous ones: “They bore him barefaced on the bier; / Hey non nonny, nonny, hey nonny” (*Hamlet* IV, v. 163 – 164), or “You must sing, Down a-down, an you call him / a-down-a. O how the wheel becomes it! It is the / false steward, that stole his master’s daughter” (IV, v. 169 – 171). It is followed by the distribution of flowers, which, according to Gabrielle Dane, is itself very symbolic because they symbolize funeral flowers given to those who will die shortly afterwards, including herself. Earlier in the play, in reply to the king’s question, although seemingly meaningless, Ophelia answers ingeniously: “Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be. God be at your table!” (*Hamlet* IV, v. 42 – 43). As Carroll Camden asserts, “knowing what we are but not what we may become wonderfully expresses both Ophelia’s former concern over Hamlet’s condition and her own distressing state” (Camden, 1964: 251). It is also interesting to note that the forcibly silenced Ophelia, when mad, requests to be heard and interrupts the Queen twice: “Say you? nay, pray you, mark” (*Hamlet* IV, v. 27), “Pray you, mark” (*Hamlet* IV, v. 33) and the King once: “Pray you. Let’s have no words of this;” (*Hamlet* IV, v. 43).

Ophelia’s fragmented discourse is patched together by parts of folk tales, songs, formulas, greetings, farewells and other random devices, forming her eclectically mad speech and, in a way, ritualizing madness. It lacks sentential *signification* but it is not completely devoid of meaning and function. The chaotic speech undoubtedly acted as a breakthrough from the multitudinous patriarchal voices and “despite its derangement and inconsistency Ophelia’s mad language not only draws people’s attention but is also rich in meanings” (Chen, 2011: 13).

Another play that offers an insight into Shakespeare’s world of hysterical females is *Macbeth*. Although it is most often defined as a play about ambition, Lily Bess Campbell keenly asserts that it is a play about fear as equally as it is a play about ambition. It is the fear that acts as a catalyst to the action because “from the murder of Duncan onward, it is not ambition but fear that terrorizes its victims into action” (Campbell, 1930: 223). However, central to the analysis of speech in Kristevan

terms, is the character of Lady Macbeth, Shakespeare's first female somnambulistic character.

In order to understand the importance somnambulism has in the play, it is essential to comprehend Shakespeare's perception of it and the perception of it in the Renaissance. Shakespeare, most frequently, associates insomnia with unbearable ethical and political responsibility, i.e. with the characters' inability to cope with their political identities. The greater the responsibility, the more arduous the state of insomnia is. Like the case with other psychological and mental conditions, the Renaissance understanding of it was indistinct. It was regarded either as a divine, prophetic state or, as some regarded it, a mistaken performance during baptism because of which the somnambulists were frequently referred to as the "ill-baptized." This interpretation went hand in hand with the understanding of Lady Macbeth as a motherless witch, a term that later developed into that of a female hysteric (Joanna Levin). Although *hysterica passio* was never mentioned in the play, somnambulism was one of its most prominent features.

Lady Macbeth is the second female character liable to the analysis of fragmented language due to the fact that she is also, like Ophelia, a victim of female hysteria. Not only because both of them are women, but also because their diagnoses share many similarities, can Ophelia and Lady Macbeth be compared. First of all, they are women and experience madness or female hysteria in Renaissance terms. Secondly, both of them end their lives in suicide. Finally and most importantly, they share a fragmented speech, lacking meaning. Similar to Ophelia, one of the most characteristic features of Lady Macbeth's mental disorder is her speech. It is hysterical and unconscious and shows a succumbing of a fragile female body to illness. As Kristeva sums up, "the dead language they speak, which foreshadows their suicide, conceals a Thing buried alive" (Kristeva, 1989: 53). Lady Macbeth first appears in the fifth scene of the first act when she reads her husband's letter describing his encounter with the three witches. Thus, it is Macbeth who stirs the ambitious obsession "and it is this obsession which furnishes the keynote to the evolution of the mental disease of Lady Macbeth, finally dominating

and overgrowing her entire personality” (Coriat, 1921: 37). Not until she receives the letter telling her of the witches’ prophecy does Lady Macbeth daydream and plot about becoming a queen. She clings to the idea firmly and is subsequently driven into hysteria when the plan seems to decay. Undoubtedly, it is her ambition that leads her into hysteria. However, in distinction to Ophelia and according to the opinion of Coriat, it could be said that Lady Macbeth’s character was made up out of two different personalities: the first one appearing in her normal, waking state and the other appearing in the somnambulistic, sleeping state. Thus her character was verging between two types of consciousness, the conscious and the unconscious state. According to the oscillations of her mental states, her language oscillates, as well. When conscious, her speech can be defined as sharp, determined, even violent, seductive and manipulative. This is best seen in her powerful soliloquies, especially the first:

*Come, you 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 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! Come to my woman’s breasts,
And take my milk for gall, you murdering min-
isters,
Where verin your sightless substances
You wait on nature’s mischief...*

(Macbeth I, v. 44 – 53).

This seems to be the very moment when Lady Macbeth adopts features of violence and evil, and continues to speak in the same tone. Her speech is lucid and sharp. Even more so, she does not seem to be only childless but also seems to lack motherly instincts. This is evident in the scene where we witness Macbeth’s cowardice: “Prithee, peace:/ I dare do all that may become a man; / Who dares do more is none” (*Macbeth* I, vii, 45 – 47) and Lady Macbeth answers, comparing him to herself:

*What beast was't, then,
 That made you break that enterprise to me?
 When you durst do it, then you were a man;
 And, to be more than what you were, you would
 Be so much more the man. [...]
 I have given suck, and know
 how tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:
 I would, while it was smiling in my face,
 Have pluckt my nipple from his boneless gums,
 And dasht the brains out, had I so sworn as you
 Have done to this.*

(*Macbeth* I, vii. 48 – 51, 54 – 59)

This classifies her not only as determined but also cruel. Still, *Macbeth* hesitates: “If we should fail?” (*Macbeth* I, vii, 58), but she does not: “We fail: / But screw your courage to the sticking place, / And we’ll not fail” (*Macbeth* I, vii, 59 – 61).

However, Lady *Macbeth*’s speech is liable to the Kristevan definition of an empty speech in the same degree as *Ophelia*’s speech is. Its meaning has not completely run dry and it is fragmented, unconscious and uncoordinated. Her speech precisely denotes the transition from the conscious to the unconscious, somnambulistic state. As has already been mentioned, *Macbeth* is more a play about fear than about ambition and although it seems to be the opposite, Lady *Macbeth* shows features of cowardice. She is a victim of her mind, plotting ambitious plans for which she considers she has the will and the power to put into practice. Nevertheless, it proves to be different. Due to the constant repression of cowardice, crime and fear of failure she starts to suffer from somnambulism which “is one of the most marked forms of this splitting of consciousness, and that it is most liable to occur in the disease hysteria, which is in itself a form of mental dissociation” (Coriat, 1921: 18). The doctor refers to this state with a certain wonder referring to it as *slumbery agitation*: “A great perturbation in nature, - to receive at / once the benefit of sleep, and do the effects of / watching!” (*Macbeth* IV, iii, 9 – 11). According to the doctor and the gentlewoman, who act as witnesses to her state, her eyes are open but her senses are shut. Moreover, she frantically and repeatedly rubs her hands as a part of “an accustom’d

action” (*Macbeth* V, i, 28). It is significant to note that Lady Macbeth first appears in the fifth scene of the first act of the play as a powerful, fearless, ambitious woman, best known for her famous soliloquies. In the first scene of the fifth act, she appears as a somnambulist, her speech lacking the previous sharpness and determination. Referring to an imaginary spot: “Yet here’s a spot” (*Macbeth* V, i, 31), she continues with her speech. At this point it is still, although with difficulty, possible to discern that she is referring to the spot on her hand, Macbeth’s cowardice and the murder:

*Out, damned spot! Out, I say! –One, two; why, then ‘tis time to do’t. –Hell is murky! – Fie, my lord, fie! A soldier, and afeard? What need we fear
who knows it, when none can call our power to
account? – Yet who would have thought the old
man to have had so much blood in him?*

(*Macbeth* V, i, 35 – 40).

Then she refers to the thane of Fife who had a wife, asking: “What, will these hands ne’er be clean?” (*Macbeth* V, i, 43), apparently dismissing all hallucinations: “No more / o’that, my lord, no more o’ that: you mar all with /this starting” (*Macbeth* V, i, 43 – 44) only to continue in the same tone: “Here’s the smell of the blood still: all the perfumes / of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. / Oh, oh, oh!” (*Macbeth* V, I, 48 – 50) Her fragmented speech is made up of different reminiscences with an overtone of remorse, which is obvious in the next line: “Wash your hands, put on your nightgown; look / not so pale: - I tell you yet again; Banquo’s / buried; he cannot come out on’s grave” (*Macbeth* V, I, 59 – 61). Her memory is chaotic with images of crimes coming before her eyes and this chaos is evident in her speech. The complete disintegration of her character happens in her last line, abounding in repetition: “to bed, to bed; there’s knocking at the gate: / come, come, come, come, give me your hand: / what’s done cannot be undone: to bed, to bed, to bed” (*Macbeth* V, i, 63 – 65). The symmetry between the fifth scene of the first act and the first scene of the fifth act is probably intentional as such in order to emphasize the asymmetry of Lady Macbeth’s character.

Piotr Sadowski terms her as one of Shakespeare's endodynamic female characters who proves to be extremely passive from act III onwards in terms of plot development and from whom one would expect "hardened mercilessness or insanity and paranoia, realistically expected in extreme endodynamics," but instead "we have a disintegration of personality caused by what looks like the long-stifled voice of conscience and pity" (Sadowski, 2010: 167).

2. The Peculiar Case of King Lear

Lear's madness is not only a peculiar case but "Shakespeare's own contribution to the original plot" (Mehl, 1986: 179). Namely, Shakespeare's main source was *The True Chronicle Historie of King Leir and his three daughters* printed in 1605 and written somewhat earlier. This play did not include Lear's madness or the Gloucester subplot. They were added by Shakespeare, for whom madness appeared to have been a challenging topic. Lear is an aged monarch and a father, but also a victim of feminine hysteria / *hysterica passio*, which was primarily, although not specifically, understood as a feminine disease. In such a context, it is interesting to regard his speech, especially if one takes into consideration the fact that *King Lear*, more than any other Shakespeare play, is a play about chaos. "*King Lear* is unique in Shakespeare's canon as a study of chaos, a chaos which is total and which includes irrationality. Furthermore, the confusion between reality and illusion in Lear is particularly close to deceit and deception" (Holly, 1973: 178). It is also one of Shakespeare's tragedies most concerned with language. The language, in turn, is as incoherent and chaotic as the world of the play is. It "ranges in this play from the richly complex to the shockingly simple" (Synder, 1982: 450).

The first instance in which the importance of language is evident is its use for purposes of flattery. This is an appropriate language device Lear's two elder daughters use to gain their father's sympathy, and a device which his youngest daughter Cordelia lacks and thus is banished from the kingdom. This was an act which, in turn, acted as a catalyst, among others, for Lear's madness. At the very beginning of the play, he

is metaphorically referred to as mad by Kent: "...be Kent unmannerly / When Lear is mad" (*King Lear* I, I, 144 – 145) and continues to identify himself as such. In Act II, scene iv, he refers to his state as hysteria: "Oh how this Mother swells up toward my heart! / Hist(e)rica passio, downe thou climbing sorrow, / Thy element's below" (*King Lear* II, iv, 55 – 57). Interestingly he himself refers to the disease as hysteria and *the mother*. This is interesting even more so because "there is no literal mother in *King Lear*" (Kahn, 1986: 242) and her absence is definitely felt in the play's patriarchal world. However, unlike Ophelia or Lady Macbeth who had lost the ties to reality and temporarily wavered somewhere between sanity and madness, Lear stubbornly holds to the crumbs of sanity left. That is why he says: "O let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven! / Keep me in temper: I would not be mad!" (*King Lear* I, v, 46 – 47), but he gradually sinks into the abyss of hysteria demolishing the apparent patriarchal bonds. His madness is most evident in the third and the fourth act. We can experience Lear's full theatrical manner and fragmentation in these acts simply because "the third and fourth acts of *King Lear* extend the expressive potential of the Elizabethan stage in an unprecedented manner and confront the spectator with an intensity of stark isolation and human bestiality that seems hardly bearable" (Mehl, 1986: 92). Lear is completely bared as a character in these acts, and we witness his collapse. He is first seen as mad in his famous soliloquy in act III, after he is rejected by both Goneril and Regan: "Blow, winds, and cracks your cheeks! Rage! / blow! / You cataracts and hurricanes, spout / Till you have drenched out steeples, drown'd the / cocks!" (*King Lear* III, ii, 38 – 40). Lear invokes the power of the elements such as fire, wind, rain or thunder and, similar to Lady Macbeth, unleashes the forces of evil that will later swoop down on him:

*Rumble thy bellyful! Spit, fire! pout, rain!
Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters:
[...]
here I stand, your slave,
A poor, infirm, weak, and despised old man: -
But yet I call you servile ministers,
That have with two pernicious daughters join'd*

*Your high – engender'd battles 'gainst a head
So old and white as this! O! O! 'tis foul!*
(King Lear III, ii, 51 – 61)

His speech is similar to that of Ophelia because “the construction of Lear’s mad discourse, like that of Ophelia’s, involves fragmentation, formula, depersonalization, the intersection of communal voices, and secularized rituals” (Neely, 1991: 334). The meeting with Edgar was a turning-point for Lear. After that, his speech completely fragmented: “Make no noise, make no noise; draw the curtains: / so, so, so: we’ll go to supper i’the morning: so, so, / so” (*King Lear* III, vi, 82 – 84). A later stage direction in the text depicts Lear entering, “fantastically drest with wild flowers” (*King Lear* III, vi). It is difficult to discern to whom Lear is referring: “There’s your / press-money. That fellow handles his bow like a crow-keeper: draw me a clothier’s yard,” (*King Lear* III, vi, 86 – 87) and whom he is warning:

*– Look, / look, a mouse! Peace, peace; -this piece of
toasted cheese will do’t. – There’s my gauntlet;
I’ll prove it on a giant. –Bring up the brown bills.
-o, well flown, bird! – I’the clout, I’the clout:
hewgh! – Give the word.”*
(King Lear III, vi, 88 – 93)

However, Lear does not seem to be completely distant from reality. There are references to his ungrateful daughters: “Let copulation thrive: for Gloster’s bastard son / Was kinder to his father than my daughters / got’tween the lawful sheets” (*King Lear* IV, vi, 114 – 116). He also refers to the lack of soldiers, i.e. Goneril’s demand to reduce their number: “To’t luxury, pell-mell! For I lack soldiers.” (*King Lear* IV, vi, 117). He perceives women as lecherous:

*Down from the waist they are Centarus,
Though women all above:
But to the girdle do the gods inherit,
Beneath is all the fiend’s;
There’s hell, there’s darkness, there’s the sulphurous pit,
burning, scalding, stench, consumption; - fie, fie, / fie!
pah, pah!*
(King Lear IV, vi, 124 – 130)

Lear experienced what Kristeva calls noncommunicable grief with a desire for an avenging or liberating death, or both as it seems in Lear's case. It must not be forgotten that Lear was a king, a moral and authoritative vertical whose downfall was not expected. The play, on the contrary, illustrates a total collapse of his kingly authority not only in emotional, mental and bodily characteristics but in verbal ones, as well. Suffering from filial ingratitude, he is at the same time a melancholic, a madman and a narcissist. Lear is obsessed and transmits sadness and doubt through his every word, question or conclusion. Thus his speech is not only repetitive and monotonous but also full of rage and dissatisfaction. More than communicating meaning, he communicates emotion.

3. Not Liable to Definition – the Feigned Madness of Hamlet and Edgar / Poor Tom

To speak only of Ophelia's mad language and neglect Hamlet's is incomplete due to the fact that they act as doubles. However, Hamlet and Ophelia's language is not liable to complete comparison due to the fact that Hamlet feigns madness and Ophelia does not. Ophelia's madness is not only her own – it is also Hamlet's, whereas Hamlet's madness is only his. She is Hamlet's mad double, and there is a considerable contrast between the natural and feigned form, but Hamlet's madness, "caused purportedly by Claudius' usurpation of the throne and by his father's commandment, it manifests itself in social criticism, and it is viewed as politically dangerous" (Neely, 1991: 326). In terms of the play, *Hamlet* is an improved version of Thomas Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*. His feigned madness is also a borrowed convention and his mad speech is not only a theatrical device but it is also a form of criticism directed towards his mother, Claudius, Polonius and, least at Ophelia. Hamlet is the maddest after meeting the ghost of his father and his speech is most similar to Ophelia's (C. T. Neely). Dieter Mehl concludes when writing about Hamlet and his father's ghost: "no other Elizabethan ghost is introduced with so much suspense and genuine sensation" (Mehl, 1986: 35). Although he was previously warned by Horatio to be cautious because the apparition might make him mad,

Hamlet neglects the warning: "Which might deprive your sovereignty of reason, / And draw you into madness? think of it" (*Hamlet* I, iv, 72 – 73). After having met the ghost, he admits his plan to Horatio: "Here, as before, never, so help you mercy, / How strange or odd soe'er I bear myself, -/ As I, perchance, hereafter shall think meet / To put an antic disposition on" (I, v, 169 – 172). Hamlet warns Horatio on how to coordinate his expectations and wonder and asks him to swear not to tell anyone:

*That you, at such times seeing me, never shall,
With arms encumber'd thus, or this head-shake,
Or by pronouncing of some doubtful phrase,
(...)
Or such ambiguous giving out, to note
That you know aught of me: - this not to do,
So grace and mercy at your most need help you,
Swear!*

(*Hamlet* I, v, 173 – 175, 178 – 181)

Ophelia is the first one to witness his madness when he enters her room. She describes his appearance to her father

*- with his doublet all unbraced,
No hat upon his head; his stockings foul'd,
Ungarter'd, and down-gyved to his ancle;
Pale as his shirt; his knees knocking each other;
And with a look so piteous in purport
As if he had been loosed out of hell
To speak of horrors, - he comes before me.*

(*Hamlet* II, I, 76 – 82)

Hamlet truly seems to be mad – his appearance tells us so but to this point in the play we have still not heard him speak. Polonius tells the news to the queen: "I will be brief: - your noble son is mad: / Mad call I it; for, to define true madness, / What is't but to be nothing else but mad?" (*Hamlet* II, ii, 92 – 95) However, very soon he discovers that although Hamlet is mad, "yet there is method in't" (*Hamlet* II, ii, 206). There seems to be not only method but logic in it as well. Regardless of this, the king and the queen do not believe Hamlet is mad until acts III and IV. In the first scene of the third act, the king asks of his servants Rosencratz and Guildenstern to explain the cause of Hamlet's madness because they were previously

sent to check on Hamlet's state: "And can you, by no drift of circumstance, / Get from him why he puts on this confusion, / Grating so harshly all his days of quiet / With turbulent and dangerous lunacy" (*Hamlet* III, I, 1 – 4). Thus he correctly defines Hamlet's state as confusion, and immediately after Guildenstern defines it as "crafty madness" (*Hamlet* I, III, 8). Interestingly, in disbelieving Hamlet's madness the king connects it firstly to speech: "Nor what he spake, though it lackt form a little, / Was not like madness" (*Hamlet* III, ii, 166 – 167). It is full of puns and riddles assigned to exact people at the exact moment. There is a considerable number of these assigned to Polonius: "Ay, sir, to be honest, as this world goes, is to be / one man pickt out of ten thousand" (*Hamlet* II, ii, 181 – 182), or when Polonius tells him he will leave, Hamlet replies: "You cannot, sir, take from me any thing that I / will more willingly part withal.-except my life, except my life, except my life" (*Hamlet* II, ii, 217 – 219). This is especially evident in the puns referring to Ophelia.

Hamlet: "O Jeptah, judge of Israel, what a treasure

Hadst thou!"

Polonius: "What a treasure had he, my lord?"

Hamlet; "Why, /one fair daughter and no more, The which he loved passing well."

Polonius (aside): "Still on my daughter"

(*Hamlet* II, ii, 409 – 414)

If one assumes that, like the other characters in the play, one is unaware that Hamlet is feigning madness and is thus not really mad, his language would not differ much from Ophelia's or Lady Macbeth's. However, there seems to be a substantial difference. If one submits Hamlet's language to a detailed analysis, there is none of the frailty, disproportion and fragmentation of Ophelia's language. There is too much logic in his speech simply because he is not truly mad. According to Tenney L. Davis, "Hamlet is constantly aware of his own mental processes. More than that, he is aware that he is constantly watching them. He is in the position of a professional philosopher who criticizes his own thoughts while he is thinking them – and confuses it when he reasons in his great soliloquy" (Davis, 1921: 631). If Ophelia is a mad introvert and if her

madness comes out of her inner feelings, then Hamlet is a mad extrovert i.e. his madness is caused by the ill-doings of the exterior world: his uncle's crimes and usurpation of the throne, his mother's disloyalty and the hasty marriage of the two, the impassive acceptance of his father's murder and finally, the hypocrisy of the world. Hamlet's reality was abruptly disarranged and his madness is a consequence of such an act. Thus, Hamlet dons the disguise of a madman (similar to Edgar in *King Lear*) in order to make the intended critique more elusive and more inapprehensible. No matter how mad Hamlet might seem, the element of his sane critique is strong enough to make him and his speech unfit for an analysis through Kristevan fragmented speech.

Another example of feigned madness is found in *King Lear*. The play underlines the distinction between Lear's natural and Edgar's feigned madness, extending the conventions for representing madness. However, most important to our analysis of language proves to be the speech of Edgar, whose feigned madness acts as a counterpart to Lear's natural madness. Edgar chooses the disguise of Poor Tom or Tom O'Bedlam, which is not surprising being that it was a typical Renaissance stereotype of "feigning, lower class con men" (Neely, 1991: 332). Interestingly, previously in the play's Act I, scene ii, Edmund refers to his bastard brother in the following way "– Edgar! Pat / he comes like the catastrophe of the old comedy" (*King Lear* I.ii.137-138), "my cue is villainous melancholy, with a sigh like / Tom O'Bedlam" (*King Lear* I, ii, 139 – 140). He first appears as Poor Tom in Act III, scene iv after having previously decided that he would disguise himself in Act II, scene iii. He gives a direct physical description of the mad state he will assume; of a face grimed with filth, of hair elf in knots – a state he calls *presented nakedness*. He willingly assumes the countenance of a Bedlam beggar saying: "The country gives me proof and precedent / Of Bedlam beggars, who, with roaring voices, / Strike in their numb'd and mortified bare arms / Pins, wooden pricks, nails, sprigs of rosemary" (*King Lear* II, iii, 13 – 16). The most striking detail here is the use of the phrase "roaring voices." Edgar's intentional disguise situates speech, among other discernible characteristics, as one of the distinguishing features of madness. This is not surprising being

that “Edgar’s self-description follows the tradition closely, as he takes on the point with all its theatrical implications –grimaced face, presented nakedness, roaring voice – and disappears into nothing, into Tom’s body” (Carroll, 1987: 435). His disguise is that of a lunatic beggar with an incoherent speech who is first introduced by the Fool: “A spirit, a spirit: he says his name’s poor Tom” (*King Lear* III, iv, 42). The Earl of Kent asks him to come forth and Edgar enters disguised as a madman: “Away! The foul fiend follows me! - / Through the sharp hawthorn blows the cold / wind. / Hum! Go to thy cold bed, and warm thee” (*King Lear* III, I, 45 – 47). As the cause of Lear’s madness was filial ingratitude and assuming the same happened to Edgar, i.e. Poor Tom, Lear asks: “Hast thou given all to thy daughters? / And art thou come to this?” (*King Lear* III, iv, 48 – 49) and Edgar answers: “Who gives anything to poor Tom?” (*King Lear* III, iv, 50). Kent explains that he did not have daughters but Lear disbelieves: “Death, traitor! Nothing could have subdued / nature / To such a lowness but his unkind daughters” (*King Lear* III, iv, 69 – 70).

Edgar’s madness, on the contrary, was not encouraged by ungrateful posterity but it was intentional. It was an enterprise very similar, if not identical, to that of Hamlet. If Hamlet put on an antic disposition, Edgar did the same: “While I may scape, / I will preserve myself and am be-thought, / To take the basest and most poorest shape / That ever penury, in contempt of man, / Brought near to beast” (*King Lear* II, iii, 5 – 9). Edgar is as equally persuasive in his madness as Hamlet is. His speech ranges from rhymes: “- Bless thy five wits! – Tom’s / a-cold, - O, do de, do de, do de” (*King Lear* III, iv, 57) and requests: “–Bless thee from / whirlwinds, star-blasting, and taking! Do poor / Tom some charity, whom the foul fiend vexes: - / there could I have him now, -and there, - and / there again, and there” (*King Lear* III, iv, 58 – 61). He also offers various pieces of advice, or in other words, formulaic commandments and proverbial sayings (Neely): “Take heed o’the foul fiend: obey thy parents; keep / thy word justly; swear not; commit not with man’s / sworn spouse; set not thy sweet heart on proud / array. Tom’s a-cold” (*King Lear* III, iv, 78 – 81). Most importantly, he identifies himself as a fallen Christian:

A servingman, proud in heart and mind; that

*curl'd my hair; wore gloves in my cap;
served the lust of my mistresses' heart,
and did the act of darkness with her;
(...)
false of heart, light of ear, bloody of hand; hog in
sloth, fox in stealth, wolf in greediness, dog in
madness, lion in prey."*

(King Lear III, iv, 85 – 87, 92 – 94)

After having identified himself as a sinner and advising Lear on how to avoid lust and “defy the foul fiend” (*King Lear* III, iv, 99) he answers the Earl of Gloster’s question: “What are you there? / Your names?” (*King Lear* III, iv, 129 – 130) by saying:

*Poor Tom; that eats the swimming frog, the toad,
the tadpole, the wall-newt and the water; that in
the fury of his heart, when the foul fiend rages,
eats cow-dung for sallets; swallows the old rat
and the ditch-dog; drinks Tom's food for seven long year.
Beware my follower. – Peace, Smulkin; peace
thou fiend!"*

(King Lear III, iv, 131 – 137)

Obviously repenting his ostensible sins by assuming the speech of a person possessed by demons, the “quotation in his speech is, in effect, quadrupled” (Neely, 1991: 332). This speech is similar to the speech of any other mad character but being that it is feigned, it seems to be multi-functional. It is not only Edgar’s self-identification and victimization, or counterpart to Lear’s madness, but it is also, like Hamlet’s, a critique of contemporary sins projected on oneself. Thus, although Edgar is not the main character his importance is not lessened. According to William C. Carroll, he is “the chief point of contact between Lear and the Gloucester plots” (Carroll, 1987: 427). His disguise helps the reader and the viewer to experience him as mad but his incoherent speech strengthens it even more. By disguising himself as Poor Tom, a stereotypical Renaissance figure present in other Renaissance works as well, Edgar acquires a new identity but he needs to do so because his “purpose is necessarily energetic and ‘creative’: he must bring order out of chaos” (MacLean, 1950: 51). The identity of a madman is acquired by

both Hamlet and Edgar to such a successful degree that if it were not for their initial recognitions of feigning madness, one could easily believe they were genuinely mad.

The essential question we wish to answer here is: to what degree is this speech “mad”? Being that the madness of these two characters is feigned, is it more or less convincing than the speech of those who are truly mad? According to Kristeva, unlike a sane person’s speech, “the speech of the depressed is to them like an alien skin: melancholy persons are foreigners in their maternal tongue” (Kristeva, 1989: 53). Their language is absurd, collapsed, unrecognizable and detached from reality. While trying to define the speech of the depressed, at the very beginning of her work, Kristeva classifies it as repetitive and monotonous, adding:

faced with the impossibility of concatenating, they utter sentences that are interrupted, exhausted, come to a standstill. Even phrases they cannot formulate. A repetitive rhythm, a monotonous melody emerges and dominates the broken logical sequences, changing them into recurring, obsessive litanies. Finally, when that frugal musicality becomes exhausted in its turn, or simply does not succeed in becoming established on account of the pressure of silence, the melancholy person appears to stop cognizing as well as uttering, sinking into the blankness of asymbolia or the excess of an unorderable cognitive chaos. (Kristeva, 1989: 33)

Moreover, she claims that depressive persons “no longer concatenate and, consequently, neither act nor speak” (Kristeva, 1989: 34). Although it is known that Edgar and Hamlet are feigning madness, their fragmented speech does not fall behind that of Ophelia, Lady Macbeth or Lear, at least in its physique. It is far from being unconvincing but in Kristevan terms, it lacks the fundamental characteristics of a mad person’s language: a) they utter interrupted and exhausted sentences but these never cease to be connected to the immediate reality, b) it is not asymbolic— neither Hamlet nor Edgar sink into asymbolia, c) it lacks spontaneous fragmentation because of its disguised logic, d) both Hamlet and Edgar continue to act and to speak after the process of feigning madness is done. They simply do not share the suicidal drive with the depressed and melancholic.

Conclusion

In endeavoring to coordinate Shakespeare's representation of the mad characters' speech and Kristeva's theory, this paper analyzed the speech of the female hysterics, namely, Ophelia and Lady Macbeth, then the peculiar case of King Lear, and finally, Hamlet and Edgar, as those who feigned madness. It tried to apply Kristevan notions of the monotonous and repetitive speech of the depressed to the eclectically fragmented speech of the tragic heroines and heroes.

The chaotic world of Shakespeare's tragedies was deprived of any spectacular stage effects so the chaos had to be represented by something. The strongest representation was language, i.e. speech. It was patched from folk tales, ballads, legends, greetings, farewells, allusions and enigmas. Language proved to have been an immediate symptom of mental dissociation in the same way madness represented an uninvestigated and challenging topic for the Renaissance and as such was a disturbance to the period's harmony. On the other hand, as an unknown field, it was an inspiration to the contemporary Renaissance theater.

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