
Summary: Concept Of Mental Illness and Madness Throughout Shakespeare's Plays

In the 1500s, psychological disorders had been discovered and grasped the attention of writer, William Shakespeare. It had been noted that Shakespeare was "obsessed" with the concept of mental illness and madness. Throughout his written plays, he acknowledges mental illnesses in stories like Hamlet and Macbeth, but it can also be found in other stories, one of his most popular writes, Romeo and Juliet. Romeo and Juliet is a tragedy of two lovers who commit the act of suicide which ultimately brings both of their feuding families together. Over the course of the story, Romeo seems to have a mental illness known as Borderline Identity Disorder (BPD). This mental disorder impacts emotions along with symptoms such as: Fear of abandonment, mood swings, explosive anger, feelings of emptiness, self-destructive behaviors, and instability.

In the beginning of Romeo and Juliet, Romeo shows his feelings of emptiness, mood swings, and thoughts of suicide. When his first lover, Capulet Rosaline feels the opposite towards him, Romeo describes love as "too rough," "to rude," and "too rowdy" when he converses with his friend Mercutio. Later throughout the story, he falls in love with Capulet Juliet, in which his thoughts of love suddenly changes and he'd die in the hands of her love. The actions of Romeo also relate to another of Shakespeare's written plays, A Midsummer Night's Dream, expressed by main character Theseus, in which he says: "Lovers and madmen have such seething brains, such shaping fantasies, that apprehend more than cool reason ever comprehends. The lunatic, the lover and the poet are of imagination all combat." Throughout Shakespeare's writing, mental illnesses such as: Dementia, OCD, psychosis, bipolar disorder, depression, and mania have all been found.

In comparison with Romeo's death by suicide, Othello, the main character in Shakespeare's play, Othello, commits suicide after murdering his lover. Romeo's behavior is also noticed by family members, especially his father, a Montague, in which he says: "... and private in his chambers pens himself.. shuts up his windows, locks fair daylight out... unless good counsel may the cause remove..." . These actions caused by Romeo give the readers a hint of his feelings of depression and emptiness. Romeo's mood swings and explosive anger is also seen when Capulet, Tybalt and Mercutio fight. When Romeo tries to stop the fight between the two, Tybalt stabs Mercutio under Romeo's arm. Filled with rage, Romeo begins a combat of his own with Tybalt, in which Tybalt is murdered and Romeo is exiled out of Verona by the Prince.

It is seen that Romeo goes through madness when his friend Mercutio dies in which can be connected with Shakespeare's other stories, Hamlet being one. According to owlcation.com when describing Hamlet and Ophelia, "The madness displayed by each of these characters is driven, in part, by the deaths of their fathers." As said before, Shakespeare was fascinated in mental illnesses and madness, which is expressed through his writing. Romeo shows mental disorders that have been written by Shakespeare upon other characters in his plays. Romeo's actions of explosive anger, mood swings, suicidal tendencies and depression all lead up to BPD. Although BPD was not officially a personality disorder or even a discovery at all in the 1500s, it was still linked to psychosis and neurosis, which is shown in Shakespeare's other writings. Depression was also a mental illness that wasn't found during the 1500s, but Melancholy was around that time frame.

It is also noted that Romeo spoke of death after each sentence spoken of love. This reflects a factor of BPD known as suicide. Even before Romeo met Juliet, his thoughts of suicide still lingered and he was willing to give it all up for he felt that of loneliness and abandonment. Not only was Shakespeare one of greatest writers in history, he also dug deep into the psychological era of his characters. It could also be possible that not only the characters of Shakespeare had these disorders, but Shakespeare may have had these disorders which allowed him to reflect it throughout his stories. Overall, Shakespeare's plays all contribute to each other reflecting mental disorders, in this case, Romeo's diagnosis could be BPD.

eduzaurus.com