

How does Shakespeare use language to explore the concept of madness in the play Hamlet?

Hamlet's erratic behaviour oscillates between such extreme mind-sets from depression to elated joy, in such a dramatic way that many debate his sanity. Shakespeare captured the essences of Hamlet's madness through the incomprehensible morals of Hamlet's soliloquies, this showcases the complex and vivid language Shakespeare uses to portray an ambiguous idea and explore the notion of madness in the character of Hamlet. Shakespeare uses an extensive range of vocabulary to portray the theme of madness by carefully selecting appropriate words that show Hamlet in a different light.

Throughout the play Hamlet is portrayed as an extremely emotion teenager, the events after the death of Hamlet's father affected him in a 'snowball effect' way, each event is affecting him more, this boxed his anger and confusion, so inevitably his emotions build up. Hamlet is unable to voice his frustration, he is inwardly thinking, therefore the pent up anger is reflection back and he is effectively self destructing. This is evident when Hamlet refers to the fact that he is unable to 'Give [his] thoughts to tongue'. This depressive state leads him to thinking in a bias perspective, it is a possibility that this makes him act crazy. Hamlet describes the world's uses as being 'stale, flat, and unprofitable' this shows Hamlet's misanthropic side, this is due to his highly intellectual mind and his insightful view on reality. The word 'stale' implies a world that is past its 'sell-by-date' that it is useless now to him. This word is particularly strong as it shows Hamlet as a pessimistic person, a person mad with anger. We can see clearly that Hamlet is not in control of his action to the extent that when Hamlet says 'What's this, a rat? I'll bet a buck he's a dead rat now'

Contrary to this, some debate that Hamlet merely 'feigning' madness and not actually insane, this is evident when Hamlet says 'my father's brother; but no more like my Father Than I to Hercules' this moment of clarity is him stepping out of the 'mad' character and his perspective has shifted into one of which is non bias. By likening his father to his brother he is seeing clearly the similarities and differences therefore he is in his right mind. One of Hamlet's most famous quotes shows his opinion how he believes that 'Frailty thy name is woman' this quote is a direct thought from Hamlet's mind that must be intact and controlled to be enabled to produce this extreme comment. The emphasis of the word 'frailty' implies a sense of vulnerability, this type of language is very suggestive to the fact that women were deemed a lesser to men. Indicating the sense of surrounding Hamlet had, therefore he must have been connected to the world.

Ultimately I feel that Hamlet is neither truly mad nor 'feigning' madness, his consistent mood swings and contradictory arguments seem to be too convincing and convenient, this shows his intelligence. A possibility is that he is acting crazy in order to make Claudius feel uneasy around him to see the reaction as some form of a game. Or if Hamlet is to act in an inappropriate manner they would not look too far into it, and blame it on the lack of his rationality. This is showing how cunning Hamlet is and is portrayed through the language Shakespeare has used. Shakespeare intelligently structure his writing to make Hamlet look either sane or insane,

however it is up to the reader to decipher the answer. Shakespeare used language in order to represent an idea about Hamlet however it was up to the reader to manipulate and experiment.