

Research on the Disease Writing in Shakespeare's Plays

Shutao Zhou^{1, a}

¹College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Heilongjiang Bayi Agricultural University, Daqing, 163319, China

^aCorresponding author's email: zhsht139@163.com

Abstract

There are a lot of disease writings in Shakespeare's plays. On the one hand, disease writing is the inherent requirement of Shakespeare's drama creation, and on the other hand, it is also a cultural metaphor for the social background. From the diseases described in Shakespeare's plays, readers can not only see the physical conditions and the causes of personalities, but also get a glimpse of the social reality and human morality of that era. This paper analyzes the common phenomenon of disease writing in Shakespeare's plays, explore the cultural connotation and aesthetic value, and recognize and reflect on the social consciousness and cultural concept of disease writing in Shakespeare's plays.

Keywords

Shakespeare's plays; Disease writing; Cultural metaphor.

1. Introduction

Disease writing is very common in Shakespeare's plays. Throughout all of Shakespeare's plays, it can be found that the characters in the plays have certain morbid characteristics either physically or mentally. Shakespeare's description of diseases is a description of the physical breakdown of the characters, which makes his plays more artistically appealing and plot tension. To explore the disease writing in Shakespeare's plays from the perspective of literary research in the new era, it is hoped to find the relationship between Shakespeare's plays and the background of the times, interpret the cultural metaphors hidden behind Shakespeare's plays, and explore the humanistic values and social psychological conditions of the times.

2. Function of Disease Writing in Shakespeare's Plays

Shakespeare is a famous playwright in the Renaissance period. He was once praised the soul of the times by the contemporary writer Ben Jonson, and considered by Marx to be the greatest dramatic genius of mankind[1]. In the 37 plays he created in his lifetime, Shakespeare deeply reflected the social life and the style of the times in Britain at that time. Disease description is mainly concentrated in the second stage of Shakespeare's drama creation, that is, the period from 1600 to 1608. The tragedy plays during this stage include the tragic works Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, The Tragedy of Macbeth, Antony and Cleopatra and so on, and comedy plays include Measure for Measure and All's Well That Ends Well and so on. This stage was in the late period of Elizabeth's reign, and the United Kingdom was deeply in the chaos of social contradictions. People's lives were constantly struggling in a dark social environment, and the overall social atmosphere was dark and depressing. During this period, Shakespeare's dramatic works revolved around emotions such as death, despair, confusion and unease, and his plays were filled with references to diseases.

Disease writing in Shakespeare's plays is the need for characterization. Crazy characters are the most classic images in Shakespeare's plays. In his four major tragedies, there are portrayals of

crazy characters. These madmen are usually indulged in the truth they pursue, without reason at all, and they are rejected in modern society and considered paranoiacs like the mad Prince Hamlet, the mad King Lear, the mad Lady Macbeth, and Othello on the verge of collapse. In the play, the crazy words and deeds and irrational limbs of these characters make the audience intuitively feel the characteristics of these people, which makes the whole play burst into a strong tension.

Disease writing in Shakespeare's plays is an indictment of British society. The phenomenon of disease in literature is usually associated with the society and environment at that time. The simplest use is to describe the disease of the characters as a metaphor for the crisis of the country. We usually think that people's health comes from the balance of the body, and the arrival of disease means the imbalance of body organs. In *The Tragedy of Macbeth*, the Scottish general Macbeth is taught by witches and gradually becomes a traitor from a hero. There is no doubt that the mad Macbeth is a character who goes from normal to destruction. His life development is also synchronized with the development of society. His rebellion is synchronized with the war and death of the whole society, and his collapse is synchronized with the disorder of the whole country.

3. Aesthetic Value and Cultural Significance of Disease Writing in Shakespeare's Plays

3.1. Aesthetic Value

Shakespeare's plays portray disease as the core element of the play in detail during the creation process, guide the public to adjust the observation perspective and entry point of disease phenomenon, promote the transformation of the observation methods and aesthetic orientation of the audience and readers, eliminate the dogmatism of literature, and display the ideological connotation of disease cultural phenomenon in a panoramic manner [2]. The unique description of the disease phenomenon in the plays reflects Shakespeare's understanding of good and evil as well as the concept of beauty and ugliness. Through the description of the change of the mental state and life style of the characters caused by the diseases, it shows the ugliness of the diseases and the helplessness of the patients, which gives people a strong psychological impact and artistic baptism. At the same time, Shakespeare used delicate contrast techniques to show the sick life style and emotions of the characters in the plays, and the detailed description of the ugly image of the sick human body reflects the fear of cruel fate and plague and other diseases in the social mainstream cultural consciousness, creating a more reliable motive force and a specific cultural background for the further development of the plot. Shakespeare described various disease phenomena in the process of literary creation, grasped the real life state of pathological characters, emphasized the ideological theme of various drama genres and the basic personality characteristics of characters, and the "uncertainty" and "absurdity" of disease phenomena are important components of Shakespeare's writing style. The disease writing reflects the unique aesthetic significance of Shakespeare's plays. This disease phenomenon with research value and aesthetic significance is described as the main feature of Shakespeare's works.

3.2. Cultural Significance

Shakespeare lived in an era in which British society changed from prosperity to decline. In this era, the rapid development of human technology began to eliminate the ethics and morality of the old society and the rules and order of the old aristocracy. Diseases were bred arbitrarily in this uncontrolled society. From the writing of diseases in Shakespeare's plays, we can not only see the struggle of human nature in the turbulent social environment, but also see people's cognition of the law of development of themselves and society in the struggle[3]. From the

perspective of the former, the idea of humanism was on the rise in 16th century Britain, where people were encouraged to explore the unknown nature and their own destiny. But in a disordered society, knowledge and bewilderment are like twin brothers. When you look out, you can only see a fog, but when you close your eyes, you can see the purest darkness. From the latter point of view, the Middle Ages was an era when theocracy began to decline and social ideas began to germinate freely. Religious ideas still had a weak impact on people's lives, and science began to gradually open people's minds. It can be said that at this stage of society, people's thinking was always free between sensibility and rationality. Shakespeare's disease writing was not only the use of this social psychology, but also the reflection of this social psychology. It accurately grasped the social public's fear and aversion to disease in the ignorant era, and tried to bring the audience back to the theocracy era whose name had not yet been opened, in which people's feelings and cognition of the natural phenomenon of disease were more simple [4]. In the first act of King Henry IV, for example, Shakespeare said of a stroke through the mouth of the protagonist Falstaff: "It is a paralysis of blood, and stings and confusion strike the brain in waves." This sentence not only shows Falstaff's straightforward character and the background of the times are also pointed out. The audience can quickly resonate with this kind of "chaos" and "stinging", causing the audience's fear of stroke.

4. Social Metaphor of Disease Writing in Shakespeare's Plays

4.1. Disease Writing and Social and Humanistic Awareness

The disease phenomenon is not only a description of the characters, but also a reflection of the historical background and social consciousness, which is the general knowledge of literary creation. In Shakespeare's plays, different characters have completely different cultural backgrounds, different attitudes and ideas about diseases, and different levels of cognition and acceptance of diseases. In Shakespeare's plays, two kinds of diseases are mainly depicted. One is the disease that has a bad effect on people's body, and the other is the disease that has a strong impact on people's spirit. Compared with the former, the latter has more uncertainty and absurdity. Mental diseases will affect the characters' views and ways of thinking about the outside world from different directions, and finally affect the characters' behavior. In Shakespeare's writings, the behavior motivation of characters usually originates from the fear and aversion to disease and death, and disease not only erodes people's body, but also erodes people's nerves. When the fear and aversion to disease reach the peak, more serious diseases will break out[5]. At the same time, the diseases are also related to the background of the times and echoed the theme of the play, making it easier for the audience to view the world and their own basic logic from the characters in the play. Take King Henry IV as an example, in which the character Northumberland said, "My hands and feet have been weakened by the pain of disease, and now, provoked by the pain, I show unprecedented courage." From his monologue, the audience can see the suffering brought to him by the disease, and also feel his courage to transcend suffering, and even the energy that suffering brings to him. It is through such monologues that Shakespeare showed the courage of the characters to duel with diseases, and praised the simple humanistic spirit of being brave to fight with the suffering.

4.2. Disease Writing and Social Environment Criticism

Shakespeare was a writer who cared about politics and real life. Most of his works showed his thoughts on national politics and social reality. In his works, the whole society is like a serious patient. Some works depict the period when the disease has not yet emerged, some works depict the period when the disease is raging, and some works depict the period when the disease is struggling. Taking The Tragedy of Macbeth as an example, it was first performed in 1606, when England was in a period of impending illness. Everyone could smell the storm

coming, but the dark tide showed peace and tranquility. The protracted war and conflict plunged England into a quagmire. The whole political system was corrupt into a puddle of mud, the bottom people were displaced, and the whole society fell into chaos. In the first act of the play, the whole country was in a similar chaos. Then Macbeth, under the guidance of the witch's prophecy, brutally killed King Duncan and became a betrayal. In the end, Macbeth was killed by Mcduff. In *The Tragedy of Macbeth*, disease images such as "wound", "bleeding" and "chronic illness" intuitively show the disordered state of the entire country. When Mcduff asked England for help, he had a dialogue with Malcolm, "Bleed, Bleed, poor country." Malcolm said, "I think our country is groaning under tyranny, weeping, bleeding, and every day a new scar is added to the old one..." , The disease phenomenon in Shakespeare's plays is a metaphor for British society at that time, a symbol of war, bloodshed and suffering in British society.

5. Modern Value of Disease Writing in Shakespeare's Plays

The phenomenon of disease in Shakespeare's plays is usually integrated with social culture and social awareness. Diseases are used as the core element to lead the audience to explore the influence of diseases on the spirit and behavior of characters, and through diseases, the audience can resonate with the plot and reduce the audience's understanding of the characters. The difficulty of behavior and psychology makes the behavior motivation of the characters and the development of the plot more reasonable. In Shakespeare's plays, both princes and nobles and peddlers and lackeys have accurate stage images, which reflect the characteristics and personality of different characters at different levels by describing the inner monologues and words and deeds of different characters in different sick States, and do a good job of influencing the actions of the characters by their personalities. At the same time, Shakespeare's plays are full of the exploration of humanitarian and philosophical thoughts, and the characters are placed in various special dangers to explore the development and change of people's personality under different circumstances, which improves the depth of thought of the whole play. It is worth noting that the disease phenomenon in Shakespeare's writings is always inextricably linked with social reality, and can subtly reflect the social consciousness in reality. The character image is not rigid and one-sided, and the character and behavior change with the development of the disease, so that the audience can more empathize with the characters, and then understand the behavior of the characters, and avoid the deviation of the character image and behavior from the actual situation, and make the various characters in the play more three-dimensional.

In addition, Shakespeare's plays also provides a template and case reference for later literary creation, and the metaphor of disease phenomenon is an important blueprint for later creations in the theatre and literature. For example, Chinese writer Shi Tiesheng's *I and The Temple of Earth*, Yu Hua's *XU San-guan Selling His Blood*, Russian writer Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, French writer Camus' *La Peste* can all be seen in the authors' creative way of provoking the audience to think through the phenomenon of disease.

6. Conclusion

Shakespeare's plays have a classical and mysterious beauty, and the naked and direct phenomenon of disease in his works can easily arouse people's disgust and fear of disease. The metaphor of the diseases phenomenon is the connection between the world in the plays and the outside world. When the audience watches the characters in the plays, they always follow their perspective to see the society, which lowers the threshold of the audience's cognition and meets the audience's aesthetic needs. The disease writing in Shakespeare's plays also provides a reference template for the literary and artistic creation in the new era.

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