

UDC 821.111

IMAGES OF FATHER AND MOTHER IN W. SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS «ROMEO AND JULIET» AND «KING LEAR»: THE SPECIFICS OF INTERPRETATION

Ahmed Madlool Challab AL-BDAIRI
(Yanka Kupala State University of Grodno)

The article examines the specifics of the interpretation of the images of father and mother in the tragedies of W. Shakespeare «Romeo and Juliet» (1597) and «King Lear» (1604) in cultural-historical, psychological and psychoanalytic contexts, traces the features of the formation and development of these characters, identifies the factors that led to the author's concept of the categories of fatherhood and motherhood. In the plays of W. Shakespeare, there are many characters of father and mother, as in «Romeo and Juliet» and «King Lear», but the paradox is that none of them is the ideal of a good father / mother. Lord Capulet and King Lear are the decision makers who sacrifice true sense of fatherhood for their own arrogance and pride. This paradox is due to the disharmonious, «crisis» features of the late Renaissance, with its inherent tragic discord between the world and personality.

Keywords: literary image, interpretation, W. Shakespeare, father, mother, «Romeo and Juliet», «King Lear».

Introduction. Despite more than two hundred years history of the development of European Shakespeare studies, the importance of studying the literary heritage of W. Shakespeare is still very high. Modern foreign and Belarusian Shakespeare studies are developing very actively in various directions: from clarification of significant moments in Shakespeare's biography to the study of certain aspects of the poetics of Shakespeare's works (for example, system of characters, chronotope, features of artistic language, etc.). Close attention is paid to the characterization and rethinking of famous Shakespearean characters in the context of the most relevant areas of modern literary criticism (such as psychopoetics, gender studies, narratology, literary anthropology, etc.).

So, for example, in the monograph by A.C. Bradley [3] the specificity of the poetics of Shakespeare's tragedies is considered: the author emphasizes the integrity of Shakespeare's artistic world, and also reveals the playwright's innovation in relation to the previous literary tradition. The main features of the development of a dramatic plot in the plays of W. Shakespeare are analyzed in the works of E.A.J. Honigmann [5] and N. Grene [7] in a broad cultural-historical context. The patterns of character dynamics in Shakespeare's mature tragedies are revealed in the fundamental monograph by P. Sadowski [4]. The article by F. Bennett [1] presents the characteristics of Lord Capulet in the socio-ethical aspect. In the work of H. Bloom [6] the images of Shakespeare's tragic characters are considered from a psychological point of view.

Images of father and mother are relevant for almost all Shakespeare's plays. The relationship «father – mother» has not only a plot-forming significance, but it also reflects the author's philosophical and aesthetic position. However, in modern Belarusian and foreign literary studies there are no scientific works in which the «father – mother» relationship in Shakespeare's plays would be considered comprehensively, as well as from the point of view of various literary methods.

Meanwhile, the image of father / mother character plays a very significant role in Shakespearean drama and serves both as a means of characterization and as a literary technique with the help of which serious social problems are discussed. Moreover, the images of father and mother in Shakespeare's drama provide an audience with a universal insight into the deep nature of human being in general and family structure in particular.

At the same time, the images of father and mother in the plays of W. Shakespeare have a very high interpretive potential and can be considered from different points of view (in biographical, sociological, cultural, historical, psychological aspects). This will not only reveal the structure of these images, but will also provide an opportunity to clarify the author's concept of the world and man, reflected in the plays of W. Shakespeare. The combination of these factors determines the **relevance of our research**.

The main purpose of this article is to find out the peculiarities of the interpretation of the images of father and mother in W. Shakespeare's plays «Romeo and Juliet» and «King Lear».

The choice of the research material is due to the significance of the images of the father and mother in these plays of W. Shakespeare both in the plot-forming and in the problem-thematic aspect.

The novelty of the article is determined by a new approach to the study of father / mother images in these plays by William Shakespeare, which is based on a comprehensive, multidimensional study of literary images in cultural, historical, psychological and psychoanalytic contexts.

During the research, the following **methods** were used: cultural-historical and psychological method with elements of psychoanalysis.

Main part. The roles of a father and mother, regardless of culture, religion, class, age, race, type, or nationality, are to love and understand their children with all their hearts. They should be influential teachers in their child's school of life. One of the most significant and common roles played by father and mother is the role of educator and guardian, but these roles are rare in the dramatic world of Shakespeare.

«Romeo and Juliet». Lord Capulet: Father. Lord Capulet is the father of the young Juliet in Shakespeare's «Romeo and Juliet» that reflects the tragedy of «two star-crossed» lovers. He has a very charming nature as it is reflected

in the party scene at the beginning of the play when he stands as a great host in his warm welcomes of his guests: «My praise and welcome on their pleasure stay» (I, ii, 38). He really looks as a sociable person who gains the admiration and respect of the surrounding people.

It seems that Shakespeare did his best to portray Lord Capulet as the typical father of that period. He opens this play as a loving father who loves his only daughter Juliet so much: «Earth hath swallow'd all my hopes but she» (I, ii, 27). She is so precious, that he is not ready to lose her because of an inappropriate marriage.

But the caring father, «my child is yet a stranger in this world» (I, ii, 8) and a protector who is proud of his beautiful daughter, «the earth hath swallowed all my hopes but she» (I, ii, 27) is transformed into opposite nature. He is no longer a man of peace and virtue. Lord Capulet gradually loses his heart and soul and becomes «an object» without human sense and mercy [1].

Lord Capulet is a very complex character who contradicts his former soft nature with a completely new dissatisfied action in relation to Juliet's refusal to arrange a wedding with Paris. He is the manager who has to control the choice and preparations for his daughter's marriage. Actually, this is a common behavior in Shakespeare's patriarchal society. He is the «intended father» who fulfills his rights and duties and does only what he considers his main role, for which he was born. Now he rejects his daughter's opinion and imposes his intention as decision-maker [1]. Lord Capulet appears as a very cruel father who forgets his own previous peaceful nature and thoughtful decision, «I love my daughter so much, / she is intelligent enough to make her own decisions, / I just make sure they're good» (I, ii, 14–17).

In fact, Lord Capulet goes seriously mad and threatens to disown his daughter Juliet and throw her out into the street if she refuses to marry Paris:

...hang thee, young baggage! Disobedient wretch!
I tell thee what: get thee to church o' Thursday,
Or never after look me in the face.
Speak not. Reply not. Do not answer (III, v, 160–4).

These lines show how Lord Capulet does not stay as a lovely father for a long: he transforms into «a domineering» father. His response to Juliet's disobedience is so rigid and austere to the extent that she begins to see him as a «tyrant» and not a gentle father [1].

Lord Capulet can be described as a «monster parent» who shows an excessively protective style in his treatment with his children's lives [2, p. 38]. But in Shakespeare's time, parents are responsible for arranging their children's marriages at young ages and also plan their futures. Unfortunately, Lord Capulet fails to protect his family and his anger over Juliet's refusal of marriage triggers her expulsion from the family and further leads to her death, the only refuge she finds.

Thus, Lord Capulet, an endostatic character, ends the play mourning the death of his daughter:
Death, that hath ta'en her hence to make me wail,
Ties up my tongue, and will not let me speak (IV, v, 268–9).

Lady Capulet: Mother. Lady Capulet is the mother of young Juliet in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. This is a static character that does not change in the play, but reveals itself in the course of the development of the action.

Lady Capulet does not love or treat her daughter the way a mother should. She has been estranged from Juliet since her infancy, as she asks her nurse to take care of her and breastfeed her. This behavior is typical of the wealthy families of Elizabethan times. Lady Capulet is rather timid and selfish in the sense that she is too careful not to ruin her relationship with her husband Lord Capulet, a smooth, good and safe relationship, because of her daughter. She does not pay attention to the grief of her daughter, who does not want to marry Paris.

Indeed, Lady Capulet never cares about Juliet's feelings and needs, and she treats her in a very cold formal manner, to the point that she knows nothing about her daily routine and how Juliet spends her free time. All she knows is her ownership of Juliet since she is her biological mother. «Nanny, where is my daughter? / Call her to me (I, iii, 4–5). A passive mother, Lady Capulet behaves unwisely because she does not bring up the subject of love for Juliet at the right time and in the right manner. She tries to pass on her past experience of being married at a young age to her daughter Juliet, and this is in keeping with the norms of the society of that time: «I was your mother much upon these years / that you are now a made» (I, iii, 72–73).

Lady Capulet believes that it is very good for Juliet to marry Paris at this age, even if there is no love relationship between them. Lady Capulet is a pragmatist, and she thinks that everything in this life is a matter of agreement and consent, and even the concepts of love and marriage are explained in connection with wealth and status. Such attitudes prove her materialistic nature and at the same time confirm her passivity, which in Shakespeare's age is described as a loyalty to her husband. She takes her husband's side and describes her daughter as a foolish girl if she thinks of turning down such a chance, and assures Lord Capulet that Juliet will thank him for such good news:

Ay, sir; but she will none, she gives you thanks.
I would the fool were married to her grave! (III, v, 139–140)

Hearing such words, Lord Capulet becomes furious and loses control of himself. So, Juliet is in great fear and she begs her mother to postpone the wedding:

O sweet my mother, cast me not away.
Delay this marriage for a month, a week,
Or, if you do not, make the bridal bed
In that dim monument where Tybalt lies (III, v, 198–201).

Juliet is very upset and informs her mother that she would rather die than marry Paris, but, unfortunately, the mother pays no attention to such warning and answers her with such cold and passive words that supposed not to be said by a loving mother:

Talk not to me, for'll not speak a word
Do as thou wilt, for I have done with thee (III, v, 203).

She leaves Juliet without any help and asks the nanny to help her pick up clothes and jewelry that she is going to wear to the wedding feast. It is noteworthy, that the Nurse is the opposite character of Lady Capulet. She is an active and complex character whose intervention in the action makes the play more interesting. She is ready to do anything for the satisfaction and happiness of Juliet, but this does not mean that she always does the right things. It is the Nurse who helps Juliet to make such a bold decision to marry Romeo and meet her tragic end. In fact, both the Lady and the Nurse are responsible for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet. The Nurse is busy only with how to secretly satisfy Juliet's needs. While the jealous Lady Capulet spends her time watching Lord Capulet, who may be stalking another woman.

Ay, you have been a mouse-hunt in your time;
But I will watch you from such watching now». (IV, iv, 11–12)

But she never looks after her daughter well. Lady Capulet is a static character whose ineffectual voice of motherhood is heard loudly at Juliet's death as she cries out:

O me, O me! My child, my only life
Revive, look up, or I will die with thee!
Help, help! Call help... (IV, v, 19–21)

«*King Lear*». *King Lear: Father*. King Lear is the protagonist of W. Shakespeare's tragedy «King Lear» and he is described by A. C. Bradley as «a man more sinned against than sinning, but almost wholly as a sufferer, hardly at all as an agent» [3, p. 231].

The first appearance of Lear indicates his being as an old man whose mind and rationality fail as his age falls. It is irrational behavior of making the division of the whole kingdom depending on the declarations of love from his three daughters. It is really a «dark purpose» that expresses unjustifiably folly act.

Meantime we shall express our darker purpose.
Give me the map there. Know that we have divided
In three our kingdom, and 'tis our fast intent
To shake all cares and business from our age,
Conferring them on younger strengths, while we
Unburdened crawl toward death (I, I, 33–38).

Lear acts like «a despot» and highly enjoys being flattered; he seems to be a blind man with no reasonable sight.

The absence of the plausible and rational account for the magnitude of this first fault that is committed in the opening scene, turns Lear to be described as «an almost godlike figure privileged to make arbitrary and consequential decisions affecting the future of the realm» [4, p. 221]. Linking the future of the whole kingdom with love test of his daughters diagnoses him as «the sinner who violates his responsibility towards God» [4, p. 222], since he is the god-like figure in his kingdom and his family as well. Moreover, it is unjust to dismiss the youngest and honest daughter, Cordelia since she fails to express her feelings to father in love competition. While the other daughters, Goneril and Regan who deceive the father by sentimental and too much words of love, get the largest share of the wealth.

GONERIL:
Sir, I love you more than word can wield the matter,
Dearer than eyesight, space, and liberty,
Beyond what can be valued, rich or rare,
No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honor;
As much as child e'er loved, or father found;
A love that makes breath poor, and speech unable.
Beyond all manner of so much I love you.

.....
REGAN:
I am made of that self-mettle as my sister
And prize me at her worth. In my true heart
I find she names my very deed of love;
Only she comes too short, that I profess
Myself an enemy to all other joys
Which the most precious square of sense possesses,
And find I am alone felicitate
In your dear Highness' love (I, i, 60–67, 76–84).

The developed sequence of the dramatic action that follows the test of love completes the description of Lear's absurd personality. He is not just a sinner whose deliberate illogical decisions lead to horrible chaos, but he also becomes the most sadistic person [5, p. 104].

Dramatically, Shakespeare was a very successful artist who gives special flavor to his play by the significance of the age of the central character (Lear) or other ones. Actually, when the audience sees King Lear as an old man (about eighty) they expect to find a supremely wise and heroic action that matches his origin and position as an experienced man of an advanced age, but they have been shocked by the act of absurdity. Lear, as it is stated by Harold Bloom, shows «the universal image of the unwisdom and destructiveness of paternal love» [6, p. 510].

Lear, as a static character, believes in the ancient conventions of the patriarchal family. He thinks that when his daughters publicly demonstrate their affection and love for their father, they will be legally obliged to fulfill their filial obedience, loyalty and take care of him in old age. In other words, he thinks that by such an act he will preserve the authoritarian right and power of his reign.

Lear fails to realize that the children must love their father for his own being and not for certain gift or reward. So, Lear's test of love is not a real revelation of filial love, but «a public drama of [his] love-auction» [7, p. 152].

More about the reality of Lear's love test is stated by Piotr Sadowski: «Lear's love test is in fact a version of the old feudal custom of public oath of loyalty given by a vassal to the lord as an acknowledgment of mutual obligations, whose violation incurred public shame and disgrace» [4, p. 224].

In brief, Lear appears as an autocratic person who tries to treat his private issues as the political affairs that are run by a tyrannical ruler. The consequence of such static features and perceiving other people as too honest is a disaster that is followed by the translation of power. He decides to give Cordelia nothing, as she answers him with «nothing, my lord» (I, I, 87), and he is too cruel and unjust in his speech.

Lear misunderstand Cordelia's silence and interprets it as a lack of feeling, and the absence of words leads to the absence of reward: «nothing will come of nothing» (I, I, 90) So, the most beloved daughter, Cordelia has been dismissed, deprived and disinherited:

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 (I, I, 114–17).

After the end of this court scene, the action of the play takes a negative turn, so the actual power has been derived away from Lear's title of the king. But as he spent all his life in kingship and an extremely conservative static person, Lear does not have any psychological flexibility that would allow him to accept and bear any new role. He never finds himself other than a king (I, I, 295). So, the destruction of Lear's self-image as a king leads to his madness. The theft of his own power, wealth and authority causes a painful destruction of Lear's personal ego, which leads to a tragic fall in the perception of his personality both in the public world and in the private one. Mad Lear is described as «a very foolish, fool old man» (IV, vii, 60). Such an end is expected in any rival between a static character (Lear) and an endodynamic figure like Goneril, Regan and Cornwall.

Lear's anguish and dilemma are further intensified as he falls into an identity crisis. He begins to ask himself questions about his own being, because he is unable to define his present his current status. With great anger, he directed the following question to Oswald: «Who am I, sir?». Lear is now suffering from a big gap that has separated him from his own ego / identity: he no longer identifies with the royal persona in which he has spent his entire life:

Does any here know me? This is not Lear.
Does Lear walk thus, speak thus? Where are his eyes?
Either his notion weakens, his discernings
Are lethargied – Ha! Waking? «Tis not so.
Who is it that can tell me who I am?» (I, v, 216–21)

Lear becomes just a substance for his former persona. He becomes, as the Fool says «a shadow» (I, iv, 222). Lear himself realizes his own folly nature during the first act of humiliation by his daughter Goneril. He emphasizes his identity as a fool: «Beat at this gate that let thy folly in / And thy dear judgment out» (I, v, 263–64). He asks the help of heaven to save him from mental isolation (madness): «O let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven!» (I, v, 43). The destruction of Lear's personality developed until it led to the death of his social identity as a king.

As a character, Lear finds a new self-image that is based on a humble sense of being. He is no longer a king, but «a poor, infirm, weak and despised old man» (III, ii, 20). He becomes the same as «basest beggar» (II, ii, 453). Now Lear is aware of his own new being and enters a new stage of self-analysis and self-discovery. His great calamity grants him a therapeutic perspective and turns him to be «the pattern of all patience» (III, ii, 37). He cannot resist such calamity and the wickedness of his daughters deprives him of a human being and turns him into «the thing itself» (III, iv, 105). Lear goes on in such a heavy night's harsh sleep until he is woken up by his daughter's greeting:

CORDELIA:
How does my royal Lord?
How fares your majesty? (IV, vii, 44)

Cordelia with these questions, accompanied by kneeling down, brings her father back to life again. This meeting reestablishes the «father – daughter» bond and revives the former love between them. A new beginning is initiated between two static characters: Lear and Cordelia. Now, Lear, a powerless and weak old man asks for his daughter's help as well as her forgiveness, «pray you now, forget and / forgive; I am old and foolish» (IV, vii, 83–84).

After a long period of suffering, loss and grief, Lear who appears at the end of the play as an exostatic character, restores his lovely daughter, Cordelia, but it was too late. Shortly after the reconciliation, Lear has been shocked by the news of Cordelia's death. Unable to resist any other collapse, Lear welcomes his fatal end (death) out of a mental breakdown which is an unconventional tragic end in a Shakespearean drama.

Queen Lear: Mother. As for the evaluation of mother character in «King Lear», Queen Lear or Lady Lear is an **absent character**, whose absence is one of the main causes of the tragedy that occurred in the play. None of the characters in the play assesses her role in the birth of three girls. Her absence, in our opinion, is conceived by W. Shakespeare as C. Kahn perceives and explains it: «the role of the mother in childbirth is overshadowed by the paternal one, which is used to assert male prerogative and male power» [8, p. 245].

Nothing is mentioned about Lear's experiences as a husband, and even the daughters show no interest in their absent mother. She is completely erased from memory and is only the subject of unjust hatred on the part of her husband and daughters.

It is true that Queen Lear is absent from the play, but the effect of her absence is really present. The omission of her character has great dramatic significance. The physical absence of the mother, Queen Lear, makes the whole play covered with a patriarchal environment. The absence of a material figure in the family structure leads to the disappearance of a counterweight to the authority of the father figure. The absence of a sexual partner of Lear causes suffering to all the characters of «King Lear», called the «tragedy of masculinity». The daughters react in a high masculine style because of his powerful and dispassionate treatment, which proves that he was an authoritative ruler, but not a wonderful father. But the main one, who is strongly influenced by the absence of a mother (and in relation to himself, the spouse) – this is King Lear, who is fully aware of the threat of old age.

Actually, one of the well-known aspects of old age is the return to childhood. An old man is like a child who is looking for a mother to take care of him. And Lear's days are numbered, so he is looking for a mother figure to feed him. Lear himself admits that after he curses Cordelia, he needs her «childish kindness». He needs love, and his search for a daughter-mother was the main reason for his plan to test the extent of his daughters' love, as he hopes that publicly «destroying» their love will be a serious obligation to fulfill their filial duty. So, when Cordelia refuted his hopes of expressing his motherly love, his furious and painful reaction to the sense of loss is revealed. And his childhood need for a mother is again reflected when he wakes up and sees Cordelia. He cries about his shame in front of his daughter-mother. Even in his denial of Cordelia's death, there is a kind of revelation about his childhood attempts to accept the loss of his mother. He is not ready to lose a material figure that could satisfy all his needs. So, shortly after the loss of his daughter-mother, Lear loses his life. In fact, the absence of a mother in Shakespeare's play leads to a tragic end for both father and daughters.

Conclusion. So, Lord Capulet and King Lear are two father characters whose images are transformed into their opposites through dynamic development in the course of action. Both are driven by their materialistic nature to assume the role of a manager who has every right to design and control his daughter's future. Lord Capulet and King Lear are tyrannical fathers whose cruel fatherhood and irrational behavior are motivated by the inconclusive voice of the motherhood of their passive and static partners: a weak mother, Lady Capulet, and an absent one, Queen Lear.

«Romeo and Juliet» and «King Lear» are unique plays for the skillful dramatization of a non-standard tragic ending, showing the destructiveness of father's love by unreasonable decisions.

In the plays of W. Shakespeare, a wide variety of images of father and mother are presented, but almost all of these characters do not correspond to the ideas of true fatherhood and motherhood. This fact is due to the disharmonic, «crisis» features of the late Renaissance and reflects the tragedy of the human personality of the transitional era, the discord of man with the world, society and himself.

REFERENCES

1. Bennett, F. Was Lord Capulet a Good Father? [Electronic resource] / F. Bennett. – URL: <https://newyorkessays.com/essay-was-lord-capulet-a-good-father/>. – Date of access: 30.05.2022.
2. Guggenheim, M. What's Wrong With Children's Rights / M. Guggenheim. – London : Harvard University Press, 2005. – 320 p.
3. Bradley, A. C. Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on «Hamlet», «Othello», «King Lear», «Macbeth» / A. C. Bradley. – London : Penguin Books, 1991. – 480 p.
4. Sadowski, P. Dynamism of Character in Shakespeare's Mature Tragedies / P. Sadowski. – London : Rosemont Publishing, Printing Corp, 2003. – 327 p.
5. Honigmann, E. A. J. Shakespeare, Seven Tragedies: The Dramatist's Manipulation of Response / E. A. J. Honigmann. – London ; New York : The Macmillan Press ; Harper and Row, 1976. – 215 p.
6. Bloom, H. Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human / H. Bloom. – London : Fourth Estate, 1998. – 746 p.
7. Grene, N. Shakespeare's Tragic Imagination / N. Grene. – Dublin : Palgrave Macmillan, a division of Macmillan Publishers Limited, 1992. – 309 p.
8. Play & Culture Studies: Diversions and Divergences in Field of Play / ed.: S. Reifel. – Austin : Greenwood Publishing Group ; Ablex Publishing Cooperation, 1998. – Vol. 1. – 286 p.

THE SOURCE OF EXAMPLES

Shakespeare, W. The Complete Works of William Shakespeare / W. Shakespeare. – Oxford : Wordsworth Editions, 1996. – 1245 p.

Поступила 15.04.2022

**ОБРАЗЫ ОТЦА И МАТЕРИ В ПЬЕСАХ У. ШЕКСПИРА «РОМЕО И ДЖУЛЬЕТТА»
И «КОРОЛЬ ЛИР»: СПЕЦИФИКА ИНТЕРПРЕТАЦИИ**

Ахмед Мадлул Чаллаб АЛЬ-БДАЙРИ

В статье рассматривается специфика интерпретации образов отца и матери в трагедиях У. Шекспира «Ромео и Джульетта» (1597) и «Король Лир» (1604) в культурно-историческом, психологическом и психоаналитическом контекстах, прослеживаются особенности формирования и развития этих персонажей, выявляются факторы, обусловившие авторскую концепцию категорий отцовства и материнства. В пьесах У. Шекспира представлено множество образов отца и матери, как в «Ромео и Джульетте» и «Короле Лире», но парадокс состоит в том, что ни один из них не является идеалом хорошего отца / матери. Так, лорд Капулетти и король Лир – лица, принимающие решения, которые жертвуют истинным чувством отцовства ради собственного высокомерия и гордыни. Этот парадокс обусловлен дисгармоничными, «кризисными» чертами позднего Возрождения, с присущим ему трагическим разладом между миром и личностью.

Ключевые слова: *литературный образ, интерпретация, У. Шекспир, отец, мать, «Ромео и Джульетта», «Король Лир».*