

The significance of the manner in which ophelia dies

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There on the pendant boughs her coronet weeds/ Clambering to hang, an envious sliver broke,] When down her weedy trophies and herself/ Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide,] And mermaid-like awhile they bore her up... (line 197-201 , Act 4, Scene 7). Shakespeare, by " letting" Ophelia drowns herself, to some extents alleviates the pain of death and pictures a beautiful Ophelia drowned In water with her beauty minded and preserved.

By comparing Ophelia to a mermaid-like figure, Shakespeare gives unreal characteristics to her death and makes it smoother for Ophelia, whose life has been tragic enough. The fact that Ophelia was suffocated under her own dress and that her feminine clothes made her impossible to swim is a metaphor of women's helplessness at the time being - Ophelia dies without any self- defense or mobility. Shakespeare implies the role of women in society and how being a woman gives Ophelia no chance to react even in death.

At the same time, Ophelia peeps singing: Which time she chanted snatches of old lauds/ As one incapable of her own distress/ Or Like a creature native and endued/ Unto that element. (line 202-205, Act 4, Scene 7). Her chanting reminds audience of her madness In Scene 5 and 6, In which she sings songs about men and death. Audience may identify Ophelia's chanting as a trace of madness, but also her singing on the verge of death portrays a passive let-go of Life - Ophelia clearly has no intention of fighting back or even crying out for help. Compared to Ophelia's conversations with Polonius and Hamlet throughout the play, it is clear that Ophelia never has any voice or reaction to the events of her life - her madness, her destiny and even her

death are caused and retold by others. For several times throughout the play Ophelia is pictured with flowers. At the end of Act 4, Scene 7, her death is again associated with symbolic floral images: Therewith fantastic garlands did she make/ Of cornflowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples/ That liberal shepherds give a grosser name/ But our cold maids do "dead men's fingers" call them. (Lines 193-196, Act 4, Scene 7). Flowers are symbols of Ophelia's tragic life, being a victim of disruptive events mostly caused by men.

Cornflower symbolizes a dream of lover, portraying a dying Ophelia still thinking about Hamlet and his love[1]. Nettles signify her bad luck and tragic destiny; while daisies represent innocent love[2]. The long purples represent Ophelia's loss in love with Hamlet at the same time audience can assume "a grosser name" refers to sexuality[3].

By calling long purples "dead men's fingers", Shakespeare implies the causes of Ophelia's death as her life is destined by men (Hamlet, Polonius and Claudius); reminding audience of the song which she sings earlier: Larded all with sweet flowers/ Which between to the ground did not go/ With true-love showers. (lines 43-45, Act 4, Scene 5). By associating Ophelia's figure with the presence of flowers, Shakespeare also lets audience know about women's beauty and fragility as that of flowers: although women are romantic and pretty outside, they are truly somber and vulnerable indeed.