

In Hamlet, Shakespeare takes us to the limit of portraying human minds at work. The Tragedy of Hamlet is a play essentially about making up a human mind and that's how it touches upon the idea of madness.

4 In the play, we have Hamlet who is either mad or pretends to be mad, there's Ophelia who truly gives in to madness, loses her mind and we have Laertes who under the duress loses his reason. In Hamlet, Polonius sees the madness for love and says to Ophelia, "mad for thy love?". After the ecstasy of love, it is the grief which turns him towards madness which he can't notice by himself i.e. when the gravedigger tells him that Hamlet was sent to England because he was mad, he cries out, "how came he mad?". It is Polonius who labels Hamlet as mad repeatedly. He says to Gertrude that "your noble son is mad.". Claudius notes Hamlet's greatness and at the same time utters that "madness in great ones must not go unwatched." In the end, Hamlet's mother is also unable to understand him and cries out, "alas, he's mad!" So, the play meditates on the error of judging madness on the surface. Hamlet says that "I essentially am not in madness, but mad in craft." Madness can also be a pretention. Because of the powerful forces which Hamlet was confronting, madness becomes his tool to navigate through all those.

At the same time, in Ophelia one may notice the true effects of madness. It is caused by the murder of her father by her own lover or the loss of Hamlet's love for her or maybe both. This can be the very reason to assign some madness to Laertes under the human minds