

Jaques - Shakespeare's Joke Against Cynicism

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Abstract

This article aims in delving deep into the character of Jaques and about his extreme cynicism. It brings out negative attitude of Jaques towards life because of his melancholy nature . He spends his time finding food for his melancholy nature . He spends his time finding food for melancholy and finding it on every side , he lives in a perpetual stage of self-compliancy. This article also exposes that Jaques is a bundle of inconsistencies . He behaves like a cynic exposing and employing his melancholy against others .

Keywords

cynicism , melancholy , morose , pessimist , pungent , jolting joke.

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The sunny sky of the Forest of Arden in Shakespeare's 'As You Like It's a pitch dark patch of a weeping cloud. This melancholy cloud is none else but the sneering jeering Jaques whose shady words drizzle and drench the shimmering atmosphere around.

Jaques 's cosmos is centered on concentrated cynicism . His eyes miserably miss the roses and frantically and unflinchingly focus on bruising brambles and threatening thorns , his ears remain unprone to the melodies of the nature and listen only to the melancholy maroon of the lifeless leaves of yearning yew trees in this global graveyard , as the world appears to Jaques . To him, the world is a stage and all the men and women are merely players with their entrances and exits. So far so good, rather so far so bad , but Jacques can't stop there , he stoops and stooping down to such a depth of darkness and drudgery that even the babbling of a baby appears to him the muling and puking in the nurse's arms , the bright-faced schoolboy merely a cripple , a creeping sulky slow snail, the passion pulsating lover merely a frittering fiery furnace , the ambitious mature man merely a rat racer , after a bubble-reputation.

Aren't Jaques 's eyes jaundiced to the joys of life, his ears deafened to the charming chirpings of Nature, his heart hardened towards anything soft, suave and sweet, his mind unopen to cheeriness and muffled with expressionless , joyless and meaningless melancholy ? By Jove , I would like to shoot Jaques, if I ever had the misfortune to encounter him or the like of him . Nincompoop Jacket of an eccentric. And even Shakespeare is surely laughing at him in sleeves, or out of sleeves , when he portrays this lack-luster laggard . To think or even to imagine that Jacques is the mouthpiece of Shakespeare would be the grossest injustice to Shakespeare , the artist , Shakespeare the dramatist , Shakespeare the poet; and it would be the rudest remark against Shakespeare , the man who was in love with every aspect, every phase and every streak of colorful hues in the radiant rainbow of life. Life to Jaques would be death to any lover of life and worse than death to a poetic person like Shakespeare . Jaques is jinx , Jaques is junk , Jaques is afraid , afraid of life and I am really afraid of coming in contact with the marooned morose like him.

In Act IV , Scene I, the melancholy of Jaques can be clearly seen as Rosalind gives a piece of her mind to the melancholy of Jaques who is no less charmed by her than the rest of the characters . She tells him that he should not be so full of melancholy as he claims to be , for it is unhealthy to be so . Jaques declares that his wide traveling has made him sad and thoughtful and Rosalind replies that she would never care to travel if by so doing she becomes sad . Jaques has nothing to say and goes away sadder than he arrived.

Jaques is a prince among cynics . So thoroughly cynical is he that he happens to be hardly more than a bubble of zero watts under the starlit sky of Arden which even a cynic, like Swift , would like to switch off , Jaques is a pungent pill of pessimism which even a pessimist like Hardy would refuse to swallow even in the darkest of moods , Jaques is a brusque statue of lead which has an incorrigible optimism like Browning would like to knock down and blow into pieces like the splinters of a shell . The audience of the jet-aged would hardly have the patience to listen to the chilly, silly, soulless sermons of Jaques.

The unjigglingdumbbells of Jaques utter a hush-hush unhealthy philosophy of life instructing us to tread upon the unpleasant precarious path of denunciation , doom and decay betraying faith in life and earmarking an era of escape from life and its joys . Jaques is of morose nature . Life has no rosy charm for him . He is not happy with human life. Moroseness is in his blood and veins . He hates society and shuns its pressure . Morbidity has become his habit as ‘ As I can suck melancholy out of a song as a weasel sucks eggs. Jaques is a strange creation of Shakespeare. His character is as much controversy as that of Hamlet . There is great diversity of opinions about him . Hazlitt says ‘ Jaques is the only purely contemplative character in Shakespeare’ . Another critic calls him a misanthrope broadly distinguished from the common misanthrope . Cowden Clarke says “He is a mere lip-deep moralizer a dealer in morale percepts, a morality monger” . Magnin remarks : “Jaques is nothing more than an idle gentleman given to musing and making invectives against the affairs of the world which are more remarkable for the poetry of the style and expression than the pungency of the satire”.

Verity , however, holds that everything about Jaques breathes the spirit of weariness and discounted unrest.

Probably the aptest remark about Jaques is made by Stanley Wood. According to him, the character of Jaques proves to us that a life of retirement and pastoral simplicity will not contain all people alike. There are some who are of such nature that they are doomed to be dissatisfied in whatever condition of life they may be . Perfect happiness and contentment only come from within .

Jaques in his youth has been a pleasure seeker and egoist . He has wandered in Venice , the city of pleasure of the age , and the many and different observations of his wanderings have wrapped in a most humorous sadness . He finds evil in everything as contrasted to the banished duke who sees good in everything.

The right place for Jacques is a joyless jail and not the open-air fragment forest of Arden -where he puffs out the sootiest of smoke in the midst of the emerald green glory of Nature. He is a bane in the bountiful world of Arden , a crazy crow in

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midst of cuckoos , nightingales , swans and peacocks . Jaques is an owl amidst cocks and hawks , a bat among butterflies . Jaques 's jet-black philosophy is no philosophy , but a jerking , jolting jargon which only Jaques can convey and only Jaques can comprehend . His vision is myopic , his voice is chaotic , his thinking merely inking of a silver sheet. Jaques is Shakespeare 's jolting joke against cynics and cynicism.

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