

Robbins Island, Gael.

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21st November, 1965.

Mrs H. J. Margaret,
Windward,
Drafter Street,
Clarendon, Cape.

Dear Mrs Margaret,

Thank you for your letter dated 17th November which I received on the 19th. And thank you also for the show of the fisherman with which I have already got stuck!

I believe I have already told you that Mullapala has some more remarks to sending the fruit cartons. I have also heard from Mrs Fuller that you have been to see her. I have put you to a lot of trouble indeed and I thank you for the willingness with which you went even beyond what I had expected or ~~was~~ hoped for. It was very kind indeed of you to see Mrs Fuller personally - although she is a Baptist!

I have not yet started on Francis
The Machine: not because I do not know
 him or am not interested, but
 because I am afraid. There is a thin,
 choking pain that runs through Isaac's
 novels - a kind of primal, community
 pain, unaccountable and inescapable - that
 I find difficult to bear. My father and
 Sheila Knight leave me limp with pain. They
 seem to suffer purely, and simply because
 they in themselves their suffering is written
 into the code of their personality. There is
 nothing they can do to avoid it and there
 is nothing their friends can do to help. I
 could not contain their pain and I am
 intellectually unprepared at the moment to
 expose myself to similar suffering.

When we were boys at Graffleinet
 we used to hunt snakes, lizzards,
 butterflies etc for say our Zoo museum.
 Whenever a snake entered a hole our leader
 older and bolder than the rest of us used
 to smoke it out after giving a large blow
 in the ground. I never saw this happen but I
 was assured by the others that when the

snake left in that direction the blade would cut into its soft belly and as it felt the pain it would "push forward more firmly, hoping to escape the pain but merely succeeding to dismember itself. That is how I feel Snow's tragic characters behaving. I should like to hear your comments.

I have read Hamlet over again as well as your article on "The Unrecognized Sense." You have, of course, a much wider and profounder knowledge of Shakespeare than I have and can relate one play to another. You also have practical experience of the theatre and can see the play in your mind. I am, nonetheless, going to give you my impressions for what they worth. Unfortunately I shall not be able to compress the whole of my "essay" into the "regulation" page. I'll be able to continue the discussion in my next letter.

You start off by saying that the idea of vengeance disturbs our modern minds. I wonder if I can agree. I should have

thought that the impatience of audiences with Hamlet stems from his tardiness to exact vengeance. I remember wishing, on the fifth, I think, that when the play was staged somewhere in Italy, an irate member of the audience stood up and said "Hamlet" dead because he would not kill Claudius "in the purgery of his soul". No, I do not think that vengeance poses any difficulty for us.

I agree completely that when Hamlet kills Claudius at the end of the play he does not do so in vengeance. If you say Hamlet does so in a judge, that he is now fully integrated. I have my doubts.

I got the over-all impression that Hamlet did not hate Claudius: he could not hate him. He despised him, perhaps, although even that I would not accept too readily. What is certain is that he has the greatest respect for his father and, in his eyes, no man could have been his father's equal. He loathes and abhors his mother's "overhasty" marriage and would have been even before the lessons of Claudius's guilt.

What baffles him is how his mother could possibly fall for another man - whereas he may be; that she should do so with such incredible haste and with his father's brother increases his disgust. If the Queen feels that the lady "protects her name", Hamlet does not. He believes that this is how his mother would be spoken to by his father. And the ghost's concern for Gertrude does suggest that they ^{was his} ~~is his~~ a devoted couple. He has talks with his mother what Hamlet emphasizes is that he cannot understand why his mother should not feel as strong a repugnance towards Claudius as he does, that she continues to love

In the rank sweat of an unwearied
Stem'd in corruption

He is quite tender with her when he believes she has seen the folly of her ways.

I'll continue from here next time.

Just I do not get the chance again - please let me wish you a blessed and joyful Christmas and a happy New Year with both blessing on you all.

Yours sincerely,
Ch. St. John.

PUBLISHER:

Publisher:- Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand

Location:- Johannesburg

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DOCUMENT DETAILS:

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Document ID:- A2618-Bd1-19

Document Title:- To Mrs Marquard from Robben Island (3 copies, 2 typed)

Author:- R Sobukwe

Document Date:- 21 November 1965