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OPHELIA AND GERTRUDE: VICTIMIZED WOMEN IN *HAMLET*

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Abstract

Hamlet, the most significant play both in English and world literature, is a masterpiece of Shakespeare who is famous as the most well-known poet and dramatist. His masterpiece *Hamlet* was possibly written in the first period of the 17th century, but the source of *Hamlet* is *Amleth* (a revenge tale) which was published in the 16th century. However, because of Shakespeare's genius, *Hamlet*, instead of *Amleth*, has become the source or subject for many studies and works going on the present since the 17th century. Even though people do not take place in academic life, and do not read Shakespeare, they have knowledge about *Hamlet* in one way or another. *Hamlet* has taken place in their daily language and has been used to speak out for specific worldviews. In this play, it is easily observed that most of critics and scholars give full attention to Hamlet himself, but Hamlet is not just an attractive character in this tragedy. We can focus on characters of *Hamlet* that are victimized/ marginalized by the other, 'important' characters. Two victimized/ marginalized women characters are involved in Shakespeare's play. These women characters are Gertrude and Ophelia. They should be regarded as important for their very detailed positions, and by the help of these women characters; the play has raised in value. The purpose of this paper is to explain the power of males' effects over these characters, and analyse victimized Gertrude's and Ophelia's characteristic features.

Keywords: Shakespeare, Hamlet, Ophelia, Gertrude, Victimized Women and Feminism.

1. Introduction

It is believed that *Hamlet*, the most significant play both in English and world literature, is a masterpiece of Shakespeare who is famous as the most well-known poet and dramatist. Shakespeare, a time-honoured and magnificent playwright wrote great tragedies and comedies observing social relations, historical periods and humanity. It is a fact that Shakespeare is the most cited writer in the literature, which causes his plays to be translated into different languages around the world. From past to the present, Shakespeare's works have been performed everywhere and will be performed in the future. His masterpiece *Hamlet* was possibly written in the first period of the 17th century, but the source of *Hamlet* is *Amleth* (a revenge tale) which was published in the 16th century. However, because of Shakespeare's genius *Hamlet*, instead of *Amleth*, has become the source or subject for many studies and works going on the present since the 17th century.

Even though people do not take place in academic life, and do not read Shakespeare, they have knowledge about *Hamlet* in one way or another. *Hamlet* has taken place in their daily language and has been used to speak out for specific worldviews. *Hamlet* represents contemporary Shakespeare. "An ideal Hamlet would be one most true to Shakespeare and most modern at the same time. Is this possible? I do not know. But we can only appraise any Shakespearean production by asking how much there is of Shakespeare in it, and how much of us" (Kott, 1964: 57). To understand not only past but also today's modern society, it is very important to analyse critical and cultural reactions of Shakespeare and his plays.

2. Analysis of *Hamlet*

Shakespeare's most significant play "*Hamlet* is at once the most expensive and the most reticent of Shakespeare's tragedies: full of digression and contradiction, amplification and ellipsis" (McAlindon, 1991: 102). This Shakespeare play mainly consists of tragedy, revenge and victimization of women. In general, Hamlet has tried to kill his uncle (Claudius), and tried to take revenge for his father's death (King Hamlet). When we have analysed the plot, it seems that the play actually goes around Hamlet's intention to murder Claudius because Hamlet believes that Claudius has killed the King Hamlet. After the death of King Hamlet, we come across a little change in the ceremony of enthronement. The change is that Gertrude (Hamlet's mother and victimized woman) marries Claudius which results in Claudius' getting the throne instead of King Hamlet.

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As the plot proceeds, we observe that Hamlet accidentally murders Polonius because Polonius is behind the curtains as Hamlet discussing with Gertrude. Actually, Hamlet acts without thinking while killing the person who is behind the curtains because Hamlet presumes that the person behind the curtain is Claudius whom he basically wants to murder vengefully, so he murders Polonius (person behind the curtain). Polonius is Ophelia's father. Ophelia is crucial, the other victimized and silent woman character, and is the lover of Hamlet or we have presumed as love in the play. At the end of the play, not only Gertrude Hamlet's mother dies because she drinks the poisoned wine (prepared by male) by mistake, but also Polonius, Laertes, Claudius and Hamlet ('powerful males') have been food for worms.

In this play, it is easily observed that most of critics and scholars give full attention to Hamlet himself, but Hamlet is not just an attractive character in this tragedy. We can focus on characters of *Hamlet* that are victimized/ marginalized by the other, 'important' characters. Two victimized/ marginalized women characters are involved in Shakespeare's play. These women characters are Gertrude and Ophelia. They should be regarded as important for their very detailed positions, and by the help of these women characters; the play has raised in value. The purpose of this paper is to explain the power of males' effects over these characters, and analyse Gertrude's and Ophelia's characteristic features. I will also try to explain how they are tried to be shown as weak and how they are victimized in their society. Unfortunately; they have to show several types of weaknesses and obeisance in varied degrees in the play.

3. Ophelia: Victimized Women

Ophelia, a charming young woman, is the daughter of Polonius, the Lord Chamberlain of Claudius' court. Ophelia, an outstanding female character, is valuable to the royal family of Elsinore, but she cannot behave as she wants; the royal family restricted her actions, attitudes, emotions and thoughts because of women's roles shaped by the patriarchal society in her time. At this time; women are held under suppression of males' power and this suppression both affect their public rights and personal lives. And here, it is clear that Ophelia and all the women in Elsinore live in a patriarchal society.

The patriarchy is set up in order to place dominance over females by the males. Catherine Belsey explains that woman is defined only "vis-à-vis man" (1985: ix). Linda Bamber notes "the feminine as a principle of Otherness...unlike external to the Self, who is male" (1982: 4). Annie Leclerc describes "woman is valuable in so far as she permits man to fulfil his being as man" (1980: 79). Living in a patriarchy causes many problems for Ophelia as the plot for Hamlet plays out. Romanska defines Ophelia's situation as "dead yet sexually available" (2005: 486). That situation brings Ophelia in the most correctly embodying sense. In this patriarchal society Ophelia:

was either the fair Ophelia, chaste treasure, or ministering angel, having all the qualities appropriate for an ideal, innocent, young virgin or, because of her madness, she was described as a physically, psychologically, and morally weak young woman that again classified her as typically feminine (Teker, 2006: 113).

Hamlet refers Ophelia's weakness as saying her "frail" in the play: "The fair Ophelia—Nymph, in thy orisons/ Be all my sins remembered" (III.i.88-89). It refers to a feminine description and shows a negative connotation. Ophelia represents a common view of femininity. "Ophelia, it would seem, wholly at the mercy of the male figures throughout her life, is certainly a victim figure" (Das, 2012: 38). Ophelia does not deal with anything except men's rules; she does not have alternative thoughts. She does not have alternative voices. She does not know how to decide on her own. She echoes what said to her. "She expresses acquiescence, uncertainty and obeisance; she utters half lines" (Fischer, 1990: 2). Because of Hamlet's voice and soliloquies, Ophelia has less powerful voices, and we do not hear Ophelia. A feminist critic Lee R. Edwards points out that "it is impossible to reconstruct Ophelia's biography from the text: we can imagine Hamlet's story without Ophelia, but Ophelia literally has no story without Hamlet" (1979: 36).

Ophelia is not able to build her self-hood; her singularity and her language. Her self-hood and her speech are forbidden by the males. To hear Ophelia, you must solve suppression of Ophelia's voice when compared to Hamlet's strong voices and her father Polonius' speeches so "hearing Ophelia requires a new set of critical ears" (Fischer, 1990: 3). Hearing Ophelia represents otherness in the play because her utterances are not free; she does not know how to think, what to think and how to use her language. Her expectations are determined by the males' rules in her society. The men around her are the main influences. Compared to Hamlet, Ophelia is a lack of creatures. She or the other women in Elizabethan period represent nothing:

I think nothing, my lord.
That's a fair thought to lie between maids' legs.
What's my lord?
Nothing (III.ii.116-19).

In *Hamlet* "nothing" symbolizes Ophelia and women who have nothing for male visual system. It represents "the horror of having nothing to see" (Irigaray, 1982: 101). Her life has no meaning.

Ophelia (nothing) represents weak, silent and passive woman. To Shakespeare, she needs men. Her life has no direction without a man. Ophelia's brother Laertes and her father Polonius treat her as a child who does not have self-awareness, understanding and nervousness about the ways of the world. "As Polonius speaks his truisms to Laertes, so Laertes gives his platitudinous wisdom to Ophelia, establishing a chain of cultural dissemination and control" (Fischer, 1990: 4). Ophelia accepts this platitudinous as accepting Laertes' advice:

Farewell, Ophelia; and remember well
What I have said to you (I.iii.84-85).
Tis in my memory lock'd,
And you yourself shall keep the key of it (I. iii.86-87).

Laertes plans Ophelia's actions. On the other hand, Ophelia explains her father about the conversations related with Laertes and her dialogues. Dialogues with her father consist of more obeisance; "so please you...my lord...I do not know, my lord, what should I think...I shall obey, my lord" (I.iii. 89-135 passim).

She is also a passive object of Hamlet's actions. "Hamlet holds her wrist; stares at her face; shakes her arm; nods; sighs; leaves while staring at her still" (Fischer, 1990: 5). Also; in the line "he (Hamlet) lets me go" (II.i.94) shows another male permission and obedience. This Hamlet's treatment shows Ophelia's absence and weakness. She is like a silent observer when she meets with Hamlet, Polonius and Laertes. "With regard to her father and brother, the two direct ruling male forces in her life, Ophelia is also very much a victim" (Das, 2012: 38). She admits everything without questioning Polonius' and Laertes' cases against chasing a relationship to Hamlet. However, she goes on believing Hamlet in every condition even about the Hamlet's madness. Ophelia blames herself when hamlet behaves as a mad. Her lines reflect her deep and open grief: "And I of ladies, most deject and wretched/ That sucked honey of his music vows/ O woe is me" (III.i.155-60). Ophelia still believes men and feels guilty herself and male's hegemony keeps going with her father's persistence in his dialogues: "But Yet I do believe/ The origin and commencement of this grief/ Sprung from neglected love" (III.i.176-78).

Ophelia is encircled by Polonius, Laertes and Hamlet. However, all these three men vanish because Laertes walks away, Hamlet kills Polonius, and both Polonius and Hamlet leave her, so she cannot make any decisions, she does not have any choices apart from behaving according to rules of three men. We know well that even her love is directed by her father, brother and Hamlet. She cannot "understand that she is a play thing in the hands of" (Rahman, 2006: 33) these men. She is unaware of the nature of her own feelings; these feelings are developing without getting permission from Ophelia, so she does not have the strength to control them. "That Ophelia lets others construct her is obvious" (Finkelstein, 1997: 6). Without any protest, she allows herself to be used by these three men. She is silent and is deprived of her language, for that reason she must use body language to communicate with people in Elsinore. Ophelia forms different types to break her silence as loading meanings to flowers and singing obscene songs. These are types of modifying and abstracting form of speech. Elaine Showalter explains the image of singing Ophelia as "a potent and obsessive figure in our cultural mythology" (Showalter, 1994: 221).

Ophelia's songs also represent female madness. Ophelia's madness is more depressing and unexpected when compared to Hamlet. Her madness consists the loss of her father:

He is dead and gone, lady,
He is dead and gone;
At his head a grass-green thurf,
At his heels a stone (IV.v. 29-32).

Hamlet's betrayal:

How should I your true love know
From another one?
By this cockle hat and staff,
And his sandal shoon (IV.v. 24-27).

and Hamlet's treatment:

Alack, and fie for shame!
Young men will do't, if they come to't;
By cock, they are to blame.
Quoth she, before you tumbled me,
You promised me to wed (IV.v. 58-62).

Madness gives Ophelia a chance for breaking the rules of society, social restraints, and inner feelings, but at the same time it shows loss of Ophelia's life; it shows Ophelia's victimization that her society connives at; "her madness has exactly the same effect that can be produced by the spectacle of real insanity, if brought before us; we feel inclined to turn away, and veil our eyes in reverential pity, and too painful sympathy" (Vanderlyn, 1903: 92). Her isolation is going on even her death. Her death is only announced and commented. We cannot see or experience her death and her funeral. On the other hand, because of conflict emotions and illogical behaviours, we can come to the conclusion that she committed suicide. Because of conflicts, Ophelia's actions in the play causing to her death support suicide. However, there can be confusion that if Ophelia wants to kill herself, she can poison herself because it is faster and easier way.

When we think drowning in the brook is a difficult way to commit suicide we can say that she may not be killed herself. Because women have no value and have no importance in a patriarchal society, women must die or go mad. Because of Ophelia's madness, she is probably seen as dangerous, and it is a strong possibility that her patriarchal society gives her death decree. This patriarchal society gives decision instead of Ophelia and is determined to victimize.

In the play; we hear the best speeches about Ophelia when she is dead. She is viewed as an ideal woman after her death. Ophelia is a ruled woman, and she is totally subject to her society. Although her potential obstinacy dazzles "through at the beginning of the play, when we learn that Ophelia has entertained Hamlet without parental confirmation, this is muted very quickly by Polonius and Laertes, the double voice of the patriarchy, telling her that she is naive and that her behaviour is unsuitable" (Das, 2012: 39). Polonius and Laertes think that it is compulsory to warn Ophelia's innocence, so they warn her about sagacity, morality and behaviour. We think that Polonius and Laertes try to protect Ophelia, but they actually try to protect the reputation of their family. We only know how must be her fate shaped by male society.

Polonius and Laertes have persuaded Ophelia that she has been wrong about Hamlet's love. She believes that Polonius and Laertes certainly decide best and shows her compliance saying "I shall obey, my lord" (I.iii.136). In here, "Shakespeare shows, however, that it is this obedience of Ophelia that leads to her own destruction, and illustrates that when the guiding male is like the cynical Polonius or the unperceptive Laertes, the fate of the subordinate female is considerably threatened" (Das, 2012: 39). Ophelia has to learn to behave according to customs of her society. She has followed her father and brother's power unconsciously since her childhood. Also, Ophelia can never feel her love; her love, as her life, has been forbidden by the males. Power of patriarchy steals her pure love from her like her life and victimizes her for the sake of canons of society.

4. Gertrude: Victimized Women

In this part of my paper, I will concentrate on the other important woman character, Gertrude. "None of the critics of course has failed to see Gertrude as vital to the action of the play; she is the mother of the hero, the widow of the Ghost, and the wife of the current King of Denmark" (Heilbrun, 2013: 201). Gertrude is the mother of Hamlet, and she is the previous wife of the early King Hamlet; she has acted a crucial role in the play. Although Gertrude has limited speech throughout the play, she has been studied by many critics and scholars. Many studies and researches related with Gertrude are mainly about her sexism and against relationship between Hamlet and his mother. Gertrude has always something to say, but she almost never speaks, and she almost never has an opportunity to protect herself against the indictments and descriptions about her. She is described in an unfavourable and inconvenient way. Like Ophelia, Gertrude is represented as the other and unknown figure. "The words of other characters both affect negatively and make awry our interpretations about her character and choices" (Graf, 2013:16) but "the essential Gertrude can be properly recognized from an analysis of the words she herself speaks-rather than the things said about her by the ghost and by Hamlet" (Sharon, 1996: 89). Though her lines are few, Gertrude is dealt with many times during the play, particularly by Hamlet and by her former husband, King Hamlet (the Ghost).

Gertrude is usually described as a sensuous woman. She is described as she does not have any well behaved woman features among her contemporaries. Although she does not play a part in any place and does not have any responsibilities in the death of King Hamlet ("The critics are agreed that Gertrude was not a party to the late King's murder and indeed knew nothing of it") (Heilbrun, 2013: 201), Gertrude is seen as the source of the problems which comes up in Denmark. "This belief is so wide that it is often accepted without question, without further inquiry into why exactly Gertrude is understood in this way" (Graf, 2013: 16).

We cannot say that "we find evidence of her sexuality or her betrayal of her husband in her words" (16-17). Her own words should be taken into consideration because she is shown as a guilty in a patriarchal

society. On the other hand, this society considers that Gertrude is guilty of not exactly grieving Hamlet but getting married with Claudius. And in the play, she is tried to view as a guilty because of the two unreliable characters' (Hamlet and the Ghost) expressions and actions. These unreliable characters try to form "an image of Gertrude which is sensuous and disloyal" (17). We see Hamlet's and the Ghost's descriptions for Gertrude as saying "wanton widow and lustful woman". We see negative stereotypes of woman.

However, Richard Levin labels Hamlet and the Ghost as "unreliable narrators" in his article, "*Gertrude's Elusive Libido and Shakespeare's Unreliable Narrators.*" In his article; Levin tries to point out that many characters in Shakespeare's try to show themselves as trustworthy for that reason people rely on what they say and behave as they want. Richard Levin states, "... dramatic characters ... should be regarded as representations of real individuals who possess personalities and what we now call inferiority, which involves agendas, emotions, and even internal conflicts that can affect the reliability of the statements they make" (2008: 312, qtd in Graf, 2013: 17-18). Levin indicates that the expressions of both Hamlet and Ghost should not be taken into consideration because they are unreliable expressions (Graf, 2013: 18). Gertrude's guilt has been shaped by both her second husband and her depressed son's utterances in the play.

In the play, we can see that the Ghost (King Hamlet) concentrates much more on the deprivation of Gertrude rather than concentrating on the deprivation of throne of Denmark. "The Ghost's grievance obviously is Gertrude's adultery, and his agenda is ... to explain it in a way that will completely condemn her role and Claudius's and valorize his own ..." (Levin, 2008: 309). In the play, the Ghost tries to show Gertrude as bad as possible. Though the Ghost tells Hamlet:

Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive
Against thy mother aught: leave her to heaven
And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge
To prick and sting her. (I.v.85-88)

It can be analysed that the Ghost appears much concerned with Gertrude herself. The Ghost has expressed his feelings about Gertrude in his lines and sees this marriage as a betrayal and even he has claimed that marriage of Gertrude and Claudius is incest and unfaithful. The Ghost directly blames Gertrude instead of Claudius. Hamlet accuses Gertrude, too. Hamlet states that "she cannot state her relationship with Claudius is love because she is too old" (Graf, 2013:22) to fall in love with a man. Hamlet cannot accept and cannot feel his mother's feelings because his mother should not have these strong emotions to fall in love with a man.

Although Hamlet detests Claudius, he has put the blame on Gertrude because of her faults against the Ghost. Hamlet appears to blame Gertrude instead of Claudius. The lines in the play "A bloody deed-almost as bad, good mother, / as kill a king and marry with his brother" (III.iv.27-28) reflect Hamlet's implied accusation, but Gertrude immediately replies "As kill a king!" (III.iv.28). In here, looking her lines, we can easily notice that Gertrude has no knowledge about Claudius' responsibility for the first husband's death, so there is no guilt on her own. For this concept; Janet Adelman mentions in *Suffocating Mothers* "... For Claudius's crime is nearly absent here: in Hamlet's accusation, Claudius becomes the passive victim of Gertrude's sexual will; she becomes the active murderer" (1992: 25). When Gertrude has been condemned for a crime which Hamlet cannot even be certain that she has been personally involved in, we can state that Hamlet is no longer a reliable narrator. We can see Hamlet's feelings and behaviours in all extents, for that reason we can no longer accept his sayings as real in full.

Both the Ghost and Hamlet proposes prejudiced perceptions for Gertrude's guilty. Apart from the Ghost and Hamlet, Gertrude has also been confirmed as guilty because of general canons in her time. According to these canons, the lament period (lament for the death of King Hamlet) should continue half a year. And also; these canons accept that a widow has to wear lament clothes two years after death, and she cannot take place in society for at least one year for that reason Gertrude is seen as guilty in the play in this period. However woman has still been seen as guilty in the contemporary world. "Gertrude is guilty of not appropriately lamenting her dead husband, King Hamlet, but at the same time, she is also guilty of theoretically taking away Hamlet's heirship: the command of Denmark. Because Gertrude has married Claudius, who is the king of Denmark, Hamlet cannot get the kingdom directly" (Graf, 2013: 27). Instead of this; the kingdom will pass the heir of Claudius and Gertrude's unification. "Gertrude is dowager queen during Hamlet's minority; in tail male the kingdom passes to Hamlet. But if Hamlet remains unmarried and childless ... , then Claudius (his father's brother) and his offspring are next in line of succession to the throne of Denmark" (Jardine, 1989: 92). We can say that the law of inheritance directs Gertrude's guilt.

According to patriarchal canons, Gertrude's role to Hamlet is to defend his heirship, to protect Hamlet until he can get the kingdom but Gertrude decides to marry Claudius because she believes the love

and instead of Hamlet, she chooses to create a new heirship with her husband. This explains Hamlet's anger and his obsession with Gertrude's sexuality (Graf, 2013: 28). In here Ruth Stevenson points out that "Hamlet's disgust of his mother's sexuality may not be the consequence of his mother's lewdness but the result of his apprehensions concerning his mother's giving birth to a new heir; this implies that it is the possibility of loss of kingship which has enraged Hamlet" (2002: 448). Hamlet thinks that Gertrude betrays him because her mother can breed a new inheritor for kingship. To Hamlet, Gertrude is responsible for ignoring her son completely on the side of her new husband.

Considering the ideas of patriarchy, we can understand that Hamlet is not only disappointed about being disregarded and theoretically dislocated on the throne, but he is also annoyed that his mother can have power over his future/male future. Because it is accepted that women generally should be passive and guilty. "Whether she has knowingly or unwittingly been draw [sic] into Claudius's plot, she is guilty by virtue of her power to disrupt the patriarchal power structure in spite of her actual passivity" (Jardine, 1989: 93). Gertrude's situation gives her possibility to alter the heritage of the authority in Denmark, and this situation provides her an amazing power. By the help of this power she can be a danger to males in her society however, the society does not allow Gertrude to use her power.

On the other hand, it is important to take Gertrude's marriage which is called incest in her time. "Notoriously, Henry VIII's marriage to his dead brother Arthur's widow, Catherine of Aragon, was incestuous under the Levitical tables of affinity" (Jardine, 1989: 40). Like this marriage, the Gertrude's marriage with Claudius is accepted incestuous according to canons. Jardine explains this marriage "in marrying Claudius, Gertrude was marrying her brother-in-law; and, according to [canon law], such a marriage was indeed incestuous and prohibited" (1989: 39).

However, Gertrude's marriage may not be thought as an incestuous marriage because only the unreliable narrators the Ghost and Hamlet call this marriage as incest.

Because Gertrude does not have many lines, male characters in the play describe her and shape her behaviours. These characters are especially Hamlet, Claudius, and the Ghost. As Richard Levin expresses in his article: "... while many (male) critics have accepted without question Hamlet's and the Ghost's statements about Gertrude's lustful nature, she herself never gives us any sign of it" (2008: 322). Gertrude is often misjudged because of the actions and words of other characters.

We always criticize Gertrude through the interpretations of other characters. Linda Charnes, for instance, contends; "Gertrude is not an utterly lecherous character, yet Hamlet magnifies the evilness of his mother's lechery, for he can only attain the status of a classical hero if moral turpitude and vice spread throughout the play from Claudius to Gertrude and then to Ophelia" (2006: 63). Thoughts about Gertrude, according to Kinney "inferred from the other characters' impressions of her, for her lines in the play do not yield an aura of immorality" (2002: 41). She does not have any opportunity to identify herself. "Unfortunately for her, Gertrude is the victim of a bad press ... since she and her libido are constructed for us by the two men who have grievances against her ... while she herself is given no opportunity to testify on her own behalf" (Levin, 2008: 323).

We must trust Gertrude and her actions. We must describe Gertrude with her own lines, in place of the lines of others. "If we evaluate her based on only what the male characters say about her, we will have only an inaccurate picture of her" (Rahman, 2006: 6). Gertrude should only be analysed under her own circumstances. To do this, Gertrude should be gotten rid of shadow of principle characters. Abigail L. Montgomery explains "Gertrude's death, life and overall importance to the play have been minimized dramatically and critically, perhaps more so than those of any other principal character in *Hamlet*" (2009: 99). Gertrude should be analysed briefly and freely because contrary to many beliefs she has ability to direct play; to introduce characters in the tragedy. At this point, we totally should be agree with Montgomery who points out "Gertrude is thoroughly developed, autonomous, morally responsible and accountable self, a true participant in Hamlet's tragedy; she is also an accomplished analyst, interpreter, and shaper of the play's dramatic reality" (2009: 101).

This responsible and autonomous character must not be only scrutinized grounded on her communications with the male characters around her because their expressions and judgements affect our view of Gertrude in a negative way (Graf, 2013:36). Adelman explains the different aspect about Gertrude: "the Gertrude we see is not quite the Gertrude [the men] see. And when we see her in herself, apart from their characterizations of her, we tend to see a woman more muddled than actively wicked; even her famous sensuality is less apparent than her conflicted solicitude both for her new husband and for her son" (1992: 15). For we cannot trust the Ghost, Hamlet and Hamlet's uncle because of parallel reasons like the other

males and their unreliabilities, we must trust Gertrude, we must believe her. We must not think that Gertrude is a sexual villain who marries quickly again because she is gravitated to Claudius.

We can observe Gertrude's developed responsibility to her son because she struggles to protect her son as a mother; and tries to talk with her son. While trying to talk with Hamlet, we witness Gertrude's independence in the backroom scene (Gertrude and Hamlet) because she shapes her choices in the following parts of the play. About this private scene Jardine explains:

... Gertrude embarks on her audience with her son in the full knowledge that they are deliberately overheard. . . . by summoning her son to her most private quarters she formally signals to him that their meeting will be in the strictest confidence. Here, then, are grounds for accusations of betrayal: from the outset Gertrude connives in misleading Hamlet... (1989: 150).

In this explanation, Gertrude invites her son to her personal place, to her autonomous place. Gertrude tries to demonstrate the place which is visited only by her and hardly by Claudius, her husband. This place also has a different importance that Gertrude promises Hamlet to tell lies her husband Claudius: "Be thou assured, if words be made of breath/ And breath of life, I have no life to breathe/ What thou hast said to me" (III.iv.190-192). In here; we see Gertrude's own decision and this decision represents her ability to make choices and carry out promises, a feature of a character that is free and honest. Because of Gertrude's lines, we can mention that Gertrude is able to take her decisions by herself, and therefore, we can say she is an independent moral being, but the men around her do not want to accept this independence (Graf, 2013: 40). Gertrude has to be subject to the men around her.

Apart from Gertrude's morality and freedom, Gertrude is a reliable narrator because the duty of explanation of Ophelia's death is given to Gertrude by Shakespeare in the play:

And, mermaid-like, a while they bore her up;
Which time she chanted snatches of old tunes;
As one in capable of her own distress,
Or like a creature native and indued
Unto that element: but long it could not be
Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,
Pull'd the poor wretch from her melodious lay,
To muddy death (IV.vii. 174-81).

With these lines, Shakespeare gives Gertrude an important responsibility. About this point, Montgomery gives an explanation: "Given both her active and interpretive contributions to several of the play's key moments, Shakespeare plainly trusts Gertrude with the responsibility of shaping and analysing the plot--so should we" (2009: 106). Contrary to many critics' thoughts, we can say that Shakespeare trusts his woman character. On the other hand, Gertrude is a queen like Elizabeth and Shakespeare respects and trusts to Elizabeth so much, so Shakespeare respects Gertrude, too. We can say that Gertrude tries to reflect her status in her society also she is a responsible and reliable narrator. Contrary to what is believed (lustful, wanton) contrary to males' struggles to victimize Gertrude, she tries to demonstrate us that she is a strong and confidential woman.

When we come to the final scene, which Gertrude has kept her promise to Hamlet and is on the side of her son; we witness that Gertrude takes the poisoned drink instead of Hamlet; "Here, Hamlet, take my napkin; rub thy brows./ The Queen carouses to thy fortune" (V.ii.274-275). And Gertrude drinks in spite of Claudius' warning "Gertrude, do not drink," (V.ii.277), because she wants to protect her son as a mother and in here it is very crucial to express that Gertrude has made her own choice without listening a man. Unfortunately, Gertrude's death occurs quickly in the scene, and her death is quickly overshadowed by the men enclosing her. In here, we can look at Montgomery's explanation: "Gertrude is literally surrounded (and perhaps drowned out, depending on staging) by men and male death; Laertes comments on the justice of his own death wound before Hamlet has the chance to ask after his own mother" (2009: 111).

Unfortunately, Gertrude is oppressed by the male power enclosing her. She is ignored and astonished. She is often the victim of oppression and surveillance. She cannot be interpreted related with her own utterances. She has been the victim of males' words in the play. Gertrude should not be thought only as a sensual woman without taking into consideration of her sufferings and Hamlet's behaviours. Her society is not aware of her sufferings, her own actions and her own words. Her society makes many interpretations

about Gertrude without needing to ask Gertrude herself. There is more to Gertrude than these sloppy interpretations.

5. Conclusion

In *Hamlet*, Ophelia and Gertrude are tried to direct by the males' powers. These powers are created by Hamlet, Polonius, Laertes, the Ghost and Claudius. We can see that all of them are male, and they can share a common feature named patriarchy. As the play progresses, both Gertrude and Ophelia are tried to weaken by the outer forces that enclose and 'protect' them. These outer forces at the same time corrupt Ophelia and Gertrude's moral senses.

The ultimate sources of exploitation related with Ophelia are Hamlet, Polonius and Laertes. Ophelia passionately loves Hamlet. In here, I want to make a connection about love and give an example of exploitation of Ophelia's love with Shakespeare's most beautiful female characters with Hamlet:

The gentle Desdemona would never have dispatched her household cares in haste, to listen to philosophical speculations, his dark conflicts with his own spirit. Such a woman Portia would have studied him; Juliet would have pitied him; Rosalind would have turned him over with a smile to the melancholy Jaques; Beatrice would have laughed at him outright; Isabel would have reasoned with him; Miranda could but have wondered at him (Vanderlyn, 1903: 93).

However, Ophelia loves Hamlet; with her all purity and innocence she loves Hamlet; she expresses her real feelings, but Hamlet uses Ophelia's feeling in spite of importuning Ophelia with love in the beginning of the play; he could not see Ophelia's innocence and simplicity; he could never see Ophelia as a woman. When Ophelia speaks to Hamlet for expressing herself, he thinks that her utterances poison him so he throws Ophelia to the wolves. These wolves are Polonius and Laertes. They are afraid of Ophelia's innocence, heart, mind, loveliness, purity, simplicity and even her silence.

The ultimate sources of exploitation related with Gertrude are Hamlet, the Ghost and Claudius. The concept of misogyny and hatred of women can be seen in Hamlet and the Ghost against Gertrude. Hamlet and the Ghost become cynical about Gertrude because of her decision to marry Claudius. They try to show special effort to make a connection between female sexuality and moral exploitation. Claudius exploits Gertrude to be more powerful to get the throne. We observe that a man uses a woman's feelings to success his aims; to reach his target.

The descriptions of Ophelia and Gertrude in *Hamlet* illuminated our minds about which situations women have to face in Elizabethan period and how cruel and merciless men can be and how they sacrifice their daughters, sisters and wives. Through this study, we can understand that women are shown as dependent to men. These men use their forces, customs and even religious. These men force Ophelia and Gertrude to do everything whatever they want. Elizabethan society thinks that women are weak so they should follow what the men tell them and obey the men's rules. This characteristic feature (weakness) is significantly represented in the play by women characters in *Hamlet*; Ophelia and Gertrude. The behaviours to women in the play obviously consist of distrust, prejudice, disdain and negative stereotypes. The major negative stereotypes are Hamlet's, Polonius' and the Ghost's perceptions towards Ophelia and Gertrude.

Finally, both Ophelia and Gertrude find themselves in a patriarchal society that is the main reason why they are often torn apart by orders and suggestions proposed by Polonius, Laertes, the Ghost, Claudius and Hamlet. Their personalities are torn to pieces by some commands as the need to obey men's rules and the voice of the heart that belongs to men. It is very sorrowful that when these orders do not succeed or when these orders disappear they do not know what to do, and they are lost in the society. Ophelia goes mad and dies; Gertrude dies because of poison given by a male.

Going mad and death are the only way for them to rescue themselves from patriarchy. They have been supposed to be invisibles although they have a unique place in their societies. They are the victim of their society and male power politics unfortunately; this victimization still goes on in contemporary society. It is an egregious fact that many wives, daughters and sisters are silenced or murdered in today. We witness contemporary Shakespeare and we observe victimization of contemporary Ophelias and Gertrudes.

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