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HAMLET'S WOMEN AS MAJOR IMPETUSES FOR HIS ABNORMAL CONDUCT

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Abstract

William Shakespeare is no doubt one of the most distinguished playwrights in Western literary canon. Therefore, his works have not only been appealing to academics around the world, but also to a wide range of avid readers because of the universality of his themes, characters, stories and conflicts. Amongst his renowned works, on the other hand, *Hamlet* has been subject to different critical debates due to his protagonist's problematical mind-set and the role of Hamlet's beloved women in the formation of such mental health state. When look at this perspective, the quest for Hamlet's central problem has always been and will probably be an interesting topic for literary circles. As a result of the King's loss and Hamlet's interaction with the ghost, Hamlet's extreme emotional reactions have mainly revolved around his mother, Gertrude and his love, Ophelia. His love, hate, passions and last for revenge have all contributed to the self-destructive disposition of Hamlet and problematic structure of his psychology. Thus his psychological projection has been upon the female characters around him. In this regard, this article aims to focus on the women in Hamlet's life and to discuss how these characters have functioned as main catalysts for Hamlet's aberrant behaviours.

Keywords: Shakespeare, Hamlet, Gertrude, Ophelia, Psychological Criticism, Self-destructive Disposition.

1. Introduction

Having been analysed and commented upon from almost every conceivable angle, both psychologically and academically, William Shakespeare's renowned work, *Hamlet*, which reveals the tragedy of a Danish Prince whose uncle usurped his father's kingdom unrightfully and married his mother, is still open to different interpretations and discussions. In a discussion of *Hamlet*, one may infer that the underlying structure of the play is based on familiar mythological motifs. *Hamlet* derives from the Oedipus and Orestes myths, which focus upon the problems both mythological heroes encounter while trying to control their passions, and dealing with the consequences of their failures. An understanding of why Hamlet's emotional stability is undermined can be explained by comparing his conflicts to those of his mythological predecessors.

Sigmund Freud and Ernest Jones discuss Hamlet's character, and relate his passions to Oedipus as the former has difficulty avenging his father's death and is anxious about his mother's sexual life. On the other hand, Gilbert Murray and Jan Kott suggest that Orestes is closer to the character of Hamlet. Thus, with these two opposing views Shakespeare's *Hamlet* gains importance through psychoanalytic and archetypal analysis, and a synthesis of the oedipal and the oresteian interpretations alludes to the play's lasting appeal.

There are many theories about Hamlet's central problem. At the end of the fifteenth century Shakespeare critics and audiences thought that Shakespeare's plays possibly reflected his own life. This means that Hamlet's central problem was also a reflection of Shakespeare's problem with life. In this case, if the play illustrates Shakespeare's conflicts and passions through the character of Hamlet, the play can be the most fundamental source for understanding Shakespeare's mentality. But, if this conclusion is implausible one can suggest that Hamlet's passions reflect every man's conflicting emotions.

Throughout the play Hamlet is a problematic character. He is ambivalent about his actions and his strong passions reveal his sophisticated mentality. Hamlet's comprehension of reality is weakened as the woman he once loved is forced to go against him. He distrusts his own senses and values. Thus, he creates his own world, which he does not want to abandon. Yet, the causes of Hamlet's depression and self-destructive disposition are not given clearly throughout the play. Instead Shakespeare depicts the narcissistic blow and loss of confidence Hamlet suffers because of his disillusionment with his mother. The theme of *Hamlet* focuses on the revenge psychology and the existential dilemmas brought upon the hero because of his inability to choose between life and death. Moreover Hamlet's self-destructive disposition is based on his relationships to the women in his life.

Among Shakespeare's tragedies, *Hamlet* is probably his most famous problematic play. Hamlet's character and actions reflect his conflicting emotions that force him to behave in an indecisive manner. Consequently, Hamlet has been a popular subject of literary criticism. There are many passions that cause

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Hamlet to be a problematic character, such as his conflicting feelings of love, hate, revenge and sexual desire. These can, therefore, be assessed as indicative of Hamlet's self-destructive dispositions that originate because of his relationships with both Ophelia and Gertrude.

This study is divided into four sections. Focussing on his relationships with Ophelia and Gertrude by referring to John Lee and Theodore Spencer, the first section will discuss Hamlet's conflicting emotions. The second section will refer to the concepts of love and hate as discussed by Theodore Lidz, G. Wilson Knight, and Bernard J. Paris. The following section will again discuss Theodore Lidz's, Bernard J. Paris', G. Wilson Knight's and Michael Mangan's views on the theme of revenge as an illustration of Hamlet's self-destructive disposition. The next section will discuss Sigmund Freud's, Bernard J. Paris', Ernest Jones', Richard Waugaman's and André Green's views on Hamlet's sexual desire. Examples from the play will be given in order to support the main arguments. The conclusion summarizes the main arguments of this study.

2. Conflicting Emotions

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is dramatically powerful because of a strong emphasis on the multiple interactions among the characters. Hamlet's conflicting emotions focus on his relationships with Ophelia and Gertrude and are the causes of his self-destructive dispositions. Hamlet's world view, therefore, changes because of his conflicts with his lover and his mother. As a tragic character, Hamlet is unconsciously in tune with his emotions and this leads him to reveal his suppressed feelings towards the females in his life. His mother, Queen Gertrude, marries his uncle, of whom Hamlet does not approve from the very beginning, while another woman in his life, Ophelia, his only love, rejects him and does not return his affections. Hamlet alters after his mother's second marriage to his uncle, Claudius. Therefore, in a way, Hamlet's feelings towards his mother and Ophelia are determined by Gertrude's actions.

Hamlet's character is dominated by conflicting emotions. He is melancholic and a perfectionist, he is indecisive and inactive, a romantic whose life is complicated with constant dilemmas which he cannot easily solve. To begin with, one of the reasons behind his dilemma is because he has experienced rejection from his one and true love Ophelia. Ophelia rejects Hamlet's love because her brother and father tell her to do so. Laertes does not believe Hamlet is really in love with her, "For Hamlet and the trifling of his favour, hold it a fashion and a toy in blood, ...sweet not lasting" (I.iii.5-8). He orders Ophelia to act against her nature and not fall in love with Hamlet. Her father, Polonius, also advises her to avoid Hamlet as much as she can, "From this time be scanner of your maiden presence" (I.iii.120-121) and she remarks that she will do what is asked, "I shall obey my lord" (I.iii.136). This rejection by Ophelia hurts Hamlet a lot, although he does not reveal it and take it into consideration much.

Another reason behind Hamlet's melancholic actions and conflicting emotions is his mother's betrayal of his dead father. Hamlet believes that his mother married with his uncle, Claudius in haste and this was an unforgivable betrayal against his father, Old King Hamlet. In his *Shakespeare's Hamlet and the Controversies of Self*, John Lee makes a comparison between Gertrude's relationships with Claudius and Old Hamlet. According to Lee, Hamlet tries to construct his identity and his character while in the process of creating a personality. Lee states that Gertrude acts in a way that arouses conflicting emotions in Hamlet's mind (2000:180). In Hamlet's mind, Gertrude, "followed my poor father's body like Niobe all teares" (I.ii.148-149). In addition, Hamlet also treats his mother in a harsh manner because she married Claudius quickly, "O God, a beast that wants discourse of Reason would have mourn'd longer" (I.ii.150-151). Theodore Spencer also suggests that Hamlet discovers Gertrude's lust and thinks that his uncle and new father is not worthy of his position (1938:264). This is why he treats Gertrude as a guilty mother because of her hasty marriage to his uncle immediately after his father's death.

Hamlet's indecisive and inactive disposition causes him to destroy his life and the lives of Ophelia and Gertrude. For Hamlet, nothing is simple; everything in his life raises questions for him, which absolutely need to be answered. He is constantly in a dilemma to act or not to act, or in his words, "To be or, not to be; that is the question" (III.i.56). Hamlet's general feeling of dilemmas is not about what decisions he should make; but rather whether he will be able to make any decisions at all in any dilemmas he faces. His actions draw an indecisive, inactive, passive and romantic individual. An example of his indecisive character is that Hamlet did not marry or even propose Ophelia when he had the chance to, but rather ordered her not to love him.

Hamlet has a perfectionist nature, which he cannot avoid. He questions everything in his life to make sure everything runs smoothly. He acts as if he has to think about every action, prepare for a consequent reaction and also prepare for subsequent consequences. The plan he plots to feign madness is created because of his perfectionist nature, so that he may not be found guilty, since he is a prince coming from a royal family. Hamlet is a man of thought but he cannot act easily; in other words, he is a thinker not a

doer. As a result, this creates conflicting emotions for Hamlet, who is a man of profound thoughts, and it is very hard for him to undertake rapid and unreasoned action, such as revenge.

Hamlet's trick of acting mad is also because of his conflicting emotions. He spent so much time pretending to be mad that he started to believe that he is really insane. For example Hamlet really loses control when he sees his father's ghost in his mother's chamber. The thing that proves his insanity is that in the past whenever the ghost appeared, someone else saw it as well as Hamlet; this time his mother did not and could not see it. On the other hand, from the very beginning of his simulation of being mad, his uncle Claudius did not believe him, and he always sensed that there is something going on in a secret manner, "Was not like madness. There is something in his soul" (III.i.165). From this statement it is clear that Claudius does not believe that Hamlet is insane. Samuel Johnson also comments about Hamlet's madness as follows, "...Of the feigned madness of Hamlet there appears no adequate cause, for he does nothing which he might have done... He plays the mad man most, when he treats Ophelia with so much rudeness, which seems to be useless and wanton cruelty" (2011:311). Hamlet took the madness game so seriously that apart from helping him with his cause, it, in a way, prevented him from achieving his true aim. To put it another way, he "hoist with his own petard" (III.iv.209). That is to say that his conflicting emotions cause him to get trapped in his own trick designed to deceive his enemies. The reason of his failure is that he could not balance the exact amount of his emotions to be a fake-mad. T.S. Eliot joins the discussion from a different point of view, "The 'madness' of Hamlet lay to Shakespeare's hand; in the earlier play a simple ruse and to the end, we may presume, understood as a ruse by the audience. For Shakespeare it is less than madness and more than feigned" (1964:50). In other words, Eliot suggests that Hamlet's madness was a small trick at the beginning; later it turned out to be more than just that. For Eliot it is not fully and plainly madness.

A theme that arouses questions and creates conflicting emotions in Hamlet's mind is the theme of 'appearance versus reality.' People around him have changed their previous identities and that situation is problematic for Hamlet. His mother, Gertrude, is now his aunt. On the other hand Claudius, once his uncle, is now his father. But Hamlet never accepts Claudius as a father or fatherly figure. He hates Claudius for the reason that he has murdered Hamlet's father and married his mother Gertrude. In addition the theme of appearance versus reality is illustrated through Ophelia's understanding of Hamlet's character. Theodore Spencer states that Ophelia sees Hamlet as a noble man who had "the courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword" (1938:263). According to Spencer, Hamlet was an ideal man at the beginning of the play. When the play opens, it is clearly realized that Hamlet fits into the criteria of the Prince of Denmark. Yet, towards the end of the play, Hamlet's dilemma forces him to act as a mad person and loses control.

3. The Concept of Love and Hate

In *Hamlet*, Shakespeare presents a young man's nature that involves both love and hate. Hamlet mingles good and evil in his actions, because according to him, evil has been spreading rapidly over Denmark. That is why, he is stuck in between the concept of love and hate which is identified by his relationships with Ophelia and Gertrude. The relationships between Ophelia and Hamlet as well as Gertrude and Hamlet are by far the most revealing aspects of the play. Moreover, Hamlet's emotional conflicts force him to treat the females in his life violently. In fact, he has a well-organized vision of life concerning his relationships with Ophelia and Gertrude. However, here the problem in Hamlet's failure occurs because of his unbalanced treatment towards his lover and his beloved mother.

Firstly, in analysing Ophelia's character, one can infer that she is gentle, loving and beautiful. She is loyal to her family and most importantly, she is obedient to her father, which brings about her downfall. Hamlet's love for Ophelia and Ophelia's love for Hamlet are evident. Yet, Ophelia's obedience to her father and brother must come first. She is very fond of her father because she has no mother. That is why, as Theodore Lidz states, Ophelia tries to fill the gap in her father's life (1990:15). This means that there is a triangular relationship between husband, wife and daughter. Therefore, Ophelia has conflicting emotions towards her father and lover. In this case, Hamlet seems to be a rival for Polonius and this prevents Hamlet from expressing his love to Ophelia. In addition, throughout the play, Hamlet and Ophelia can never wed although they are both in love with each other, because both Hamlet and Ophelia face dilemmas. The Ghost forces Hamlet to kill Claudius in order to avenge his father's murder. Hamlet accuses Claudius of killing his father and Gertrude for marrying Claudius. Ophelia's dilemma is derived from her strong obedience to her father and her inability to accept Polonius' murder. These two characters, Hamlet and Ophelia share a love for each other, but their irrational behaviours ultimately destroy their lives and their love transforms into hatred.

Ophelia refuses Hamlet's love just because Polonius and Laertes warn her not to believe in Hamlet's words. Although the audience is informed that Hamlet and Ophelia are in love, commands of Polonius,

Laertes and the Ghost destroy their love relationship. According to Laertes, Ophelia should not believe in Hamlet's advances and criticizes Hamlet's actions as "A violet in the youth of primy nature, forward, not permanent, sweet, not lasting" (I.iii.7-8). Polonius also warns his daughter and persuades Ophelia to reject Hamlet's love by saying:

I would not, in plain terms, from this time forth,
Have you so slander any moment's leisure,
As to give words or talk with the Lord Hamlet (I.iii.132-134).

In obedience to her father, Ophelia refuses Hamlet's love and this causes Hamlet to become suspicious about Ophelia's honesty.

Hamlet, because of the Ghost's negative effects on his thoughts about his mother and Claudius, destroys his life. The Ghost implies that Gertrude was unfaithful when King Hamlet lived by saying that:

But virtue, as it never will be mov'd,
Though lewdness court it in a shape of heaven,
So lust, though to a radiant angel link'd,
Will sate itself in a celestial bed,
And prey on garbage. (I.v.53-57)

Consequently, as Theodore Lidz states, when Hamlet learns about Gertrude's behaviour, he replaces Gertrude with Ophelia in his affection (1990:56). One may therefore infer that Gertrude's actions are shaped in Hamlet's mind and he categorizes all females as dishonest and immoral people. This causes Hamlet to doubt Ophelia's love for him and he insults her by remarking:

I have heard of your paintings too, well enough. God hath given you one face, and you make yourself another. You jig, you amble, and you lisp; you nickname God's creatures, and make your wantonness your ignorance. Go to, I'll no more on't, it hath made me mad. I say we will have no marriages. Those that are married already, all but one shall live; the rest shall keep as they are. To a nunnery, go (III.i.143-150).

Hamlet, on the other hand, defines his mother as, "...most pernicious woman!" (I.v.105). Hamlet foretells of his doubts with this proclamation. Throughout the play, Hamlet is a strong character. However, this statement is a reflection of weakness. More importantly, his mother's hasty marriage has caused him to retrieve from Gertrude and his destruction stems from his inability to accept Claudius as father and new king. All these causes force him not to be able to interact with the people around him. Therefore, this estrangement makes him psychologically feel lonely and fills him with hatred. Gertrude is a most interesting character to be analysed. It is clear that there is a division in loyalty. She is loyal to her new husband, yet she has a natural bond with Hamlet that any mother shares with her son. It is clear that she has a deep affection for her son as Claudius observes, "The Queen, his mother, lives almost by his looks" (IV.vii.11-12).

Even though Hamlet possesses many harsh feelings towards his mother and her marriage to Claudius, he respects Gertrude. When Gertrude requests that Hamlet remain in Denmark, instead of returning to school, he obeys his mother's request, "I shall in all my best obey you, madam" (I.ii.120). Hamlet's desire to stay may have also been a desire to find out the reason behind his mother's hasty marriage. "Frailty, thy name is woman" (I.ii.146) sums up his view of Gertrude's actions. Hamlet perceives Gertrude as a mother who is morally weak by describing her as being 'frail'. Therefore, he reveals his hatred towards Gertrude by insulting her with his words:

Hamlet: Nay, but to live
In the rank sweat of an enseamed bed,
Stew'd in corruption, honeying and making love
Over the nasty sty! __

Queen: O speak to me no more.
These words like daggers enter in mine ears.
No more, sweet Hamlet (III.iv.91-96).

Hamlet's conflicting emotions fuelled by his father's death cause him not to be able to understand himself. He both accepts romantic values, by falling in love with Ophelia and demanding her affections towards himself, and also denies these values by rejecting to marry Ophelia. G. Wilson Knight asserts that:

Love in his mind, has become synonymous with sex and sex with uncleanness. Therefore beauty is dangerous and unclean. Sick of the world, of man, Hamlet denies the reality of his past romance: "I loved you not." This statement alone fits coherently into his diseased mind, and so it is, to him, the truth. He cannot have loved, since love is unreal: If it were real, there would be meaning passion, purpose in existence. These things are gone and love must go too (1993:25).

The conflict between love and hate in Hamlet's mind forces him to destroy his inner feelings towards Ophelia and Gertrude. At the opening of the play, Hamlet's mourning is presented to the audience and he needs love and affection from his mother, Gertrude and from Ophelia, with whom Hamlet is romantically in love. However, Hamlet feels himself to be a rejected person because of Gertrude's marriage to Claudius. As Bernard J. Paris observes, "Because of his identification with his father, Hamlet feels Gertrude's preference for Claudius as a rejection of himself. He gains evident relief when he moves her to self-detestation and repentance and gains her promise of loyalty to him rather than to Claudius" (1991:40).

Hamlet is disgusted with himself and the people around him because of his repressed feelings and his bitterness. When he cannot express his harsh feelings to his mother and Claudius, he wants to escape from Denmark and tries to isolate himself from the outer world. Yet, these reasons cause him to be caught between his conflicting emotions and this is enough for Hamlet to reveal his self-destructive nature.

4. Revenge

One of the causes behind Hamlet's self-destructive disposition is that he accepts his mission of revenge which is ordered to him by his father's ghost. In addition, inner conflicts caused by philosophical ruminations about the meaning of 'love and life' also force him to take revenge from Claudius, Gertrude and even Ophelia. The anger he feels because of his father's death causes him to make up his mind that he is going to take revenge from his uncle. Hamlet puts on his self-destructive disposition after he encounters his father's ghost. But there is a question that comes to mind: Has Hamlet deceived himself or not? His need to take revenge is caused because of his deep mourning for Old King Hamlet. Therefore, on the one hand Hamlet tries to destroy his parents' lives as they lose their nobility by being the murderer. On the other hand, he destroys his life as he blames himself for the hatred he feels, that is mixed with his love for his father. There is a psychological loss in Hamlet's mind in which he plans to bring justice by taking his revenge.

Hamlet is considered to be a revenge tragedy. At the beginning of the play, Hamlet is in deep mourning because of his father's death. As Theodore Lidz underlines, that mourning has two aspects revealing a sophisticated psychological process:

One aspect concerns the mourner's heightened identification with the deceased; in a sense, the mourner unconsciously attempts to keep the deceased alive by becoming like him, by incorporating the deceased into his own self. Insofar as the mourner fails to live up to the idealized model of the mourned person, he punishes himself by self-derogation. The mourner also unconsciously blames and punishes himself (1990:48).

The quote above explains why Hamlet decides to play the avenger's role. Hamlet's deep mourning is centred on his desire to punish not only his father's murderer but also himself. Thus, he reveals his desire to show his rage as an avenger.

At the beginning of the play, Hamlet exposes his mental suffering and his pain due to the loss of his father. Before his father's death, Hamlet is an idealistic man and he is proud of giving importance to manly honour and loyalty. Bernard J. Paris suggests that:

Before his father's death, Hamlet is a man who strives hard to be good, who believes in the nobility of human nature, and who expects virtue to be rewarded, on earth and in the hereafter. He values love, dutifulness, and constancy, shuns pride, ambition, and revenge, and has a religious dread of sin... He tends to equate fair appearances with inner virtue, and he is proud of his mother's beauty, his father's distinction, and his own good looks (1991:36).

There several are similarities between Hamlet's and his father's character. As the king of Denmark, Hamlet's father also strives to be good, loving and ambitious. "He was a man; take him for all in all: I shall not look upon his like again" (I.ii.187-188). In that case, it is important to claim that Hamlet identifies himself with his father and he has taken his father as a model for himself. That is why, he suffers from his deep mourning for his father and he wants to take revenge against Claudius, "O villain, villain, smiling damned villain! That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain... So, uncle, there you are. Now to my world... I have sworn't" (I.v.106-112). Hamlet's identification with his father also leads him to punish his mother, because he feels to be betrayed by Gertrude on his father's behalf. His emotional disturbance forces him to admit:

That it should come to this!

But two months dead – nay, not so much, not two –
 So excellent a king, that was to this
 Hyperion to a satyr, so loving to my mother
 That he might not beteem the winds of heaven
 Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth,
 Must I remember? Why, she would hang on him
 As if increase of appetite had grown
 By what it fed on; and yet, within a month –
 Let me not think on't – Frailty, thy name is woman – (I.ii.137-146)

Hamlet blames Gertrude because of her marriage to Claudius. He qualifies Gertrude as a disloyal wife and he criticizes that she defiles his father's memory by her hasty marriage. As Bernard J. Paris claims, Hamlet is also "...disgusted with life, longs for death. And is seething with repressed hostility. He has been traumatized by a devastating experience" (1991:36). Of course Hamlet's longing for death is not only for himself, but it is also aiming to save Gertrude's soul by taking his revenge from Gertrude. Hamlet's bitterness towards his mother conveys another significant cause of his self-destructive disposition. In Hamlet's famous first soliloquy he reveals:

... Within a month:
 Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears
 Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,
 She married. Oh, most wicked speed, to post
 Which such dexterity to incestuous sheets!
 It is not, nor it cannot come to good;
 But break my heart, for I must hold my tongue! (I.ii.153-159)

In Theodore Lidz's point of view, on the other hand, the primary reason for Hamlet's mourning is not the loss of his father but the loss of his mother because she was the most important person from whom Hamlet received affection when he was a child (1990:51). Lidz adds that she, the person who 'lives mostly by his looks' (IV.vii.12), has now turned faithless both to his father and to Hamlet, whose identification with the late king had just been heightened by the process of internalization (1990:51). Thus, he decides to punish his mother by his suicide.

Joining this discussion, G. Wilson Knight notes Hamlet suffers for two reasons, "He suffers from misery at his father's death and agony at this mother's quick forgetfulness: such callousness is infidelity, and so impurity, and, since Claudius is the brother of the king, incest" (1993:18). Hamlet's suffering from such pain causes him to retrieve from his sick soul. Knight avers that Hamlet's soul is sick by stating, "The symptoms are, horror at the fact of death and an equal detestation of life, a sense of uncleanness and evil in the things of nature: a disgust at the physical body of man; bitterness, cynicism, hate. It tends towards insanity" (1993:23). Hamlet is overpowered with feelings of evil, but in the play he uses his madness as a defence mechanism. He just acts mad in order not to be blamed by his new parents and Ophelia.

As well as longing for death, Hamlet also longs to escape from his mission that is given to him by his father's ghost, because he is not able to express his anger towards his parents. His conflicting emotions force him to be ambivalent and he fails in acting. Hamlet's failure in acting causes him to think that he is becoming disloyal. Therefore, he feels himself destroyed and he is filled with self-hatred. There are two ways to escape from revengeful feelings: one is to concentrate on his romantic love and the other is to commit suicide. Yet, the problem is that Hamlet cannot decide whether he is an avenger or not. Bernard J. Paris claims, "He is prompted to his revenge by the codes of martial and manly honour of loyalty, duty, and service..." (1991:42).

Hamlet's only way of escaping from being an avenger is to believe in his pure love, Ophelia. He reckons that he is able to exclude his revengeful thoughts by repressing them under his love relationship with Ophelia. However, in the period of Hamlet's need for sympathy and a sense of belonging, Ophelia rejects him. He becomes angry at Ophelia's withdrawal. Ophelia leaves him alone when he really needs affection. According to Hamlet, Ophelia's behaviour is also a sign of betrayal towards himself. Thus, he associates Ophelia's infidelity to him with Gertrude's disloyalty to his father's memory and is filled with aggression and feelings of revenge. As a result, he also rejects Ophelia's love:

Hamlet: That if you be honest and fair, your honesty should admit no discourse to your beauty.

Ophelia: Could beauty, my lord, have better commerce than with honesty?

Hamlet: Ay, truly; for the power of beauty will sooner transform honesty from what it is to a bawd than the force of honesty can translate beauty into his likeness. This was sometime a paradox, but now the time gives it proof. I did love you once.

Ophelia: Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.

Hamlet: You should not have believed me; for virtue cannot so inoculate our old stock but we shall relish of it. I loved you not (III.i.107-119).

With his words, it is clearly understood that he denies Ophelia's romantic love. According to G. Wilson Knight, Hamlet denies the existence of romantic values because in his mind love refers to sex and sex refers to uncleanness (1993:25). Therefore, according to Hamlet, love brings danger. Consequently, he becomes cruel to Ophelia and wants to take revenge from her. He becomes partly responsible for Ophelia's madness and even her death.

Finally, as Michael Mangan states, there is irony in Hamlet's passions, "The irony is that Hamlet has, in a sense, become Claudius" (1991:141). In order to take his father's revenge from the villain, Claudius, Hamlet becomes the villain and the avenger. Therefore, his revengeful feelings, are conflicted and he begins to destroy himself and the lives of the innocent people around him. His strong desire to kill Claudius leads him to be conflicted with his repressed feelings some of which Hamlet is aware of. He models himself after his father and he knows that there is something rotten in his soul. Thus, he becomes the victim of his sick soul.

5. Sexual Desire

In attempting to find a cause for Hamlet's self-destructive disposition, Sigmund Freud analyses Hamlet's mind and claims that Hamlet is suffering from repressed feelings. He treats Hamlet as a subject of psychoanalysis. For him, Hamlet is a psychopathic character because of his problematic nature. According to Freud, there is a conflict between impulse and repression in Hamlet's instincts, thus demonstrating the Oedipus complex. His contention is that Hamlet is unable to act and get his revenge from his uncle, because he suffers from the Oedipus complex. In Freudian theory, the prince of Denmark has sexual feelings for his mother; therefore he cannot destroy Claudius who shows a lust that Hamlet is unable to reveal. In Hamlet's understanding, having sexual desire for anyone or being a lustful person is a sin; one that is shared by both Hamlet and Claudius. Thus, Hamlet fails in justifying getting his revenge from his uncle.

The complexities of Hamlet's interactions with Ophelia and Gertrude are mainly based on his psychological growth. That is why, the determination of his sexual identity and his unconscious sexual desire for his mother can be assessed as one of the causes behind Hamlet's self-destructive disposition.

According to Sigmund Freud, the stories of Oedipus Rex and Hamlet have the same underlying theme. In each story, the character of the prince is caught in the Oedipus complex. In *Hamlet*, the character of the prince is corrupted by his sexual desire. Freud refers to Oedipus Rex as the basis of Hamlet's character, "Being in love with one parent and hating the other are among the essential constituents of the stock of physical impulses which is formed at that time (childhood) and which is of such importance in determining the symptoms of later neurosis" (1953:294). In this sense, Hamlet acts on the feelings he has for Gertrude. He represses his feelings for his mother and thinks that when he kills his father, he can also kill the embodiment of his own repressed wishes. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud mentions that, "Hamlet represents the type of man whose power of direct action is paralyzed by an excessive development of his intellect" (1953:298).

Hamlet relates Gertrude's hasty remarriage to her guilty sexuality. He is disgusted with his mother as she destroys Hamlet's understanding of moral standards. On the other hand, Hamlet feels that his repressed feelings are also destroyed because of Gertrude's guilty sexuality: "O shame, where is thy blush? Rebellious hell, If you canst mutine in a matron's bones, To flaming youth let virtue be as wax And melt in her own fire; proclaim no shame..." (III.iv.81-85). Bernard J. Paris argues that Hamlet's nobility is wounded, because his mother rejected Hamlet's sexual desire by marrying Claudius and her behaviour prevents him from finding a faithful mate:

His mother's guilt undermines his lofty conception of women, shatters his confidence in fair appearances and diminishes his hope of finding for himself a pure, faithful, loving wife. His distrust of her increases his sense of alienation and makes him feel all the more an outcast in the world. His hostility makes him afraid of his own violent impulses. He would hate himself if he acted out his rage and violated his taboos against filial impiety (1991:38).

Hamlet has adopted social taboos and tried to live up to his moral standards. That is why, he repressed his lustful feelings and blames his mother for not doing so. Ernest Jones observes that Freud's "Oedipus Complex" is a constructive feature of Hamlet's self-destructive disposition. Jones' theory explains Hamlet's unwillingness to kill his step-father by emphasizing that Claudius has enacted Hamlet's own repressed desire by killing his father and marrying his mother. Yet, as these desires are repressed, Hamlet cannot grasp his own failure (1949:90-91).

Hamlet's emotional oppression is the result of his repressed sexuality. As he identifies himself with his father, Gertrude's choice of Claudius instead of Hamlet appears to be a rejection of himself. Paris

maintains that Claudius symbolizes sexual drives Hamlet represses, "He is what Hamlet is afraid of becoming. Claudius symbolizes his despised self. When Claudius's successes undermines his solution, Hamlet's repression is threatened and he becomes all the more afraid of his forbidden impulses" (1991:40).

Hamlet's own values about sexuality are affected by Claudius's behaviours. Hamlet thinks that not only Claudius but also Gertrude is consumed by sexual passion in their marriage. Therefore, Hamlet is afraid of becoming like Claudius and struggles to get Gertrude away from Claudius. In a way, Hamlet is jealous of his stepfather, because Claudius owns Gertrude's sexuality and Hamlet does not.

Hamlet becomes a misogynist because of his mother's infidelity. Thus, his love for Ophelia is deformed since he has become disillusioned with his mother. When his sexual desire for his mother had dissipated, he focused on his love relationship with Ophelia. At the beginning of the play, Hamlet defines his love for Ophelia as pure love for sure, but his sexual drives forced him to recognize Ophelia's sexual identity. With Ophelia's rejection of Hamlet's love, and his mother's infidelity, Hamlet loses faith in Ophelia, because the disillusionment that is caused by Gertrude's sexual bond with Claudius forces Hamlet to be verbally and physically violent towards Ophelia. From Richard Waugaman's point of view, Hamlet has conflicts about Ophelia's sexuality and he treats Ophelia in a cruel way just because of his anger towards Gertrude. Waugaman suggests that Hamlet reveals his self-destructive disposition in his actions unconsciously as he has conflicts with emotions and repressed feelings (2003:217).

In this case, it is very clear that he projects his negative feelings towards women by choosing Ophelia as the victim. He associates Ophelia with his mother and sees them both as pollutions of his life. Dinko Podrug mentions that the communication between Ophelia and Hamlet is interrupted by suspicion and "...finally, and fatally, the betrayal Hamlet sees in his mother still hobbles and poisons his vision of any woman" (2003:207). Hamlet feels that Gertrude insults his sexuality and now, it is time for him to insult Ophelia's sexuality by rejecting her love. André Green's point of view about Hamlet's defence mechanism to hide his sexual desire is also worth noting. According to Green, Hamlet is in search of a way to resolve his conflict about his wounded feelings for Gertrude and his sexual madness regarding Ophelia. Green states that:

It is a sexual and murderous madness legitimated by final love... The madness that is most secret, the one that is most hidden, even from Hamlet himself, in the final analysis his sexual madness regarding Ophelia, a madness that aims at rendering the other mad, not guilty as in the case of Gertrude whom he wishes would admit her guilt, but mad to the point of suicide (1994:168).

The scenes with Ophelia and Gertrude reveal Hamlet's misogynist leanings. One can sense that he is forced to act as a cruel and violent man towards women in his life because of his disillusioned sexual desire:

Leave wringing of your hands. Peace, sit you down,
And let me wring your heart; for so I shall,
If it be made of penetrable stuff,
If damned custom have not braz'd it so,
That it be proof and bulwark against sense. (III.iv.34-38)

In the closet scene Hamlet is clearly rude towards Gertrude. In fact, he wants to criticize his mother's actions and blames her, as she prefers Claudius rather than himself. Thus, Hamlet is not conscious of his sexual desires as they are repressed. André Green also deals with the translation of Hamlet's disgust with flesh and sexuality:

His disgust with the flesh and with sexuality merely translates his refusal of a femininity that he can neither accept nor integrate and that is going to find expression in an inability to act when the action demanded of him leads him to confront the person who has realized his own desires, the treacherous, a king of "shreds and patches" (1994:170).

Therefore, Hamlet's disgust with all forms of sexual intimacy destroys him and this destruction is imposed on his character and his worldview, as revealed in the following passage:

O that this too too sullied flesh would melt,
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew,
Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter. O God! God!
How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world! (I.ii.129-134)

Hamlet's sexual desire for Gertrude and Ophelia has invaded his soul. He is confused about his sexual impulses and this prevents him from compromising his principles that are mirrored by his nobility. In analysing the causes behind Hamlet's self-destructive disposition, his sexual desire for Gertrude and Ophelia should be taken into consideration to reveal his repressed feelings. Hamlet tries to escape from his

repressed feelings but he cannot resolve his sexual problems, as there is an unconscious communication within himself and his sexual impulses.

6. Conclusion

The powerfully written tragedy, *Hamlet*, consists of Hamlet's personal problems: by which nearly all of the characters are affected and as a result lose their lives. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is a tragedy of a man who struggles with his emotional conflicts. His problems occur because of his internal conflicts and dilemmas and because of his moral values. Hamlet is a perfectionist who thinks a lot before acting and this prevents him from acting. He constantly searches for the best results that can be achieved, but, in fact, life challenges him and places various obstacles that affect his psychology and emotional stability. That is why, *Hamlet* is not a tragedy of sophisticated philosophy, but its main concern is with defeated thought.

Hamlet's world is made of passions and emotions. In analysing his self-destructive disposition and conflicting emotions, the confrontation between feelings of love and hate, the need for revenge and Hamlet's sexual desires play an important role. Hamlet's dilemma between love and hate is discussed by various critics such as Theodore Lidz, G. Wilson Knight and Bernard J. Paris. Lidz's main concern is about the triangular relationship between husband, wife and son/ daughter. He mentions that both Ophelia and Hamlet try to fill the gap in their father's or mother's lives. Therefore, they are caught in their conflicting emotions and this causes them to destroy their love relationship. In addition, Paris emphasizes the bond between Hamlet's self-destructive disposition and his identification with his father. According to him, Hamlet transforms his notion of love into hate just because he identifies himself with his father and interprets Gertrude's marriage with Claudius as a rejection of himself. Conversely, Knight argues that Hamlet's love relationship with Ophelia is destroyed because of Gertrude's actions. From Knight's point of view, Hamlet associates love with sexuality and sexuality with pollution. Hamlet thus destroys his love relationship as he is disillusioned because of Gertrude's actions.

The need for revenge is one of the causes behind Hamlet's self-destructive disposition as discussed by Theodore Lidz, G. Wilson Knight, Bernard J. Paris and Michael Mangan. Lidz observes that Hamlet makes up his mind to assume the role of an avenger just because of his deep mourning for his father's death. Paris argues that Hamlet longs for death to purify his soul. Knight focuses on Hamlet's rotten soul: Hamlet is repressed with feelings of malevolence and this leads him to ignore the existence of romantic values. Therefore, he seeks to revenge himself against Ophelia by driving her to death. Mangan, on the other hand, qualifies Hamlet's actions as ironic, because Hamlet becomes a part of Claudius while he is trying to take revenge from his stepfather. In order to kill the villain, he plays the role of a villain, which is instrumental to his psychological demise.

On assessing the causes behind Hamlet's self-destructive disposition, it is important to be aware of the fact that Hamlet's strong sexual desire for Ophelia and Gertrude dominates his soul. Sigmund Freud places the cause of Hamlet's self-destructive disposition in the Oedipus complex. According to Freud, Hamlet is a psychopathic character as he reveals his problematic nature clearly throughout the play. Ernest Jones states that the Freudian Oedipus Complex is a constructive feature of Hamlet's self-destructive disposition. Dinko Podrug and Richard Waugaman also treat Hamlet as a subject of psychoanalysis by referring to his anxiety about Ophelia's and Gertrude's sexuality. André Green, on the other hand, associates Hamlet's sexual desire with sexual madness.

As a conclusion to what has been discussed thus far in this study, Hamlet's conflicted concepts of love and hate, his lust for revenge and his sexual desires can all be seen as signs of his self-destructive dispositions. The play mostly deals with the hero's failures and the distortion of his life. In fact, Hamlet searches for a sort of truth in his actions. Yet, his emotional conflicts and disillusionment lead him to act in cruel ways and to destroy his idealistic visions of life. On the other hand, he suffers from repressed sexual feelings. The play does not illustrate Hamlet's psychological movement clearly, but when Hamlet's defences are assessed, his self-destructive disposition becomes obvious. The underlying assumption of Hamlet's problematic nature is hidden in his unconscious communication within himself that reveals his repressed feelings.

Like every individual, Hamlet struggles with the difficulties of life in order to preserve his nobility. Yet, because of his inner conflicts he deals with his problem by reflecting his tension towards the people around him. The ending of the play reveals Hamlet's identification with himself and his destruction of his life. Throughout the play, Hamlet is a sophisticated character. Therefore, the denial of the acceptance of oversimplification destroys Hamlet's understanding of nobility. Shakespeare draws a psychological portrait of a character who experiences life with his anxieties and failures. As a tragic hero, Hamlet is a slave to his passions. Hamlet's inner conflicts and his strong passions, as a result, cause him to destroy himself.

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