

## ANALYSIS OF SHAKESPEARE'S HAMLET

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*Abstract:*

The tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, is undoubtedly one of the most renowned and influential works in the canon of Western literature. Composed by the incomparable William Shakespeare in the early 17th century, this masterpiece of dramatic art has captivated audiences and scholars alike for centuries, inspiring countless interpretations and critical analyses. At the heart of this iconic play lies the complex and tortured figure of Prince Hamlet, whose quest to avenge his father's murder and restore the rightful order to the kingdom of Denmark propels the narrative forward with a profound psychological intensity. In this article, we will provide information about Hamlet and its creation.

*Key words:* creation, writing style, western literature, narrative form, audiences.

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Introduction: Of greatest concern to Hamlet throughout the play is his mother's behaviors, and it is her he blames for his father's death. He is first shown to be in deep despair and even contemplates suicide: "O that this too solid flesh would melt". A possible reason for Hamlet's depression at this time is revealed to us by Ophelia, who explains that he has been upset by their recent break up, at this point Hamlet cannot admit to Ophelia that there is a deeper reason for his current state of mind. A sudden sense of responsibility occurs when Hamlet is informed by the ghost of his father about his murder and to seek revenge upon Claudius. This news greatly influences Hamlet and sets the tone for his quest, which has shifted emphasis from concern over his mother's "lust", to the righting of an incestuous wrong and a fundamental duty to avenge his father's death.

Background of Hamlet

This complex play is set in Denmark in the medieval past and portrays the story of the regicide of the King of Denmark, King Hamlet, by his brother Claudius who then marries Queen Gertrude. The Ghost of King Hamlet requests Prince Hamlet, his son, to avenge his death to which he obliges. The play then portrays the psychological mind of Hamlet, his apparent insanity, his relationship and subsequent rejection of Ophelia, and culminates in his demise and the ensuing tragedy. The actual basis for this story is taken from the medieval Danish chronicle written by Saxo Grammaticus entitled *Historiae Danicae*. The story is also reflected in popular Elizabethan folklore, the most famous example being the story of the wicked uncle who poisons his brother while at his nap and seduces his niece. An earlier play, now lost, *Ur-Hamlet*, was written by Thomas Kyd, and it is believed that a later copy of Hamlet, as referred to, 'an old play' by Ben Johnson and other contemporary sources, is somewhat of a reworking of the original text.

The text of Hamlet contains approximately 4000 lines and can be divided into two different types of content. The first represents an early form of play in which the actual theme is difficult to uncover, the language used is difficult to understand, and the characters

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are superficial. The second type of Hamlet is representative of the work Shakespeare wanted to write, always with the audience in mind. This is the form of Hamlet that is more commonly used and is accepted by the majority as the true rendering of the play. Over the years, due to its immense popularity on the public stage, the 'second of Hamlet' has been cut and still is cut for acting times. "Each time a cut is made the play becomes more mysterious," said T.S. Eliot. This enigmatic character of the play arguably falls into the definition of 'art' given by T.S. Eliot - "an escape from emotion and not a representation of it."

#### Significance of Hamlet in Shakespeare's works

The general consensus proposes that Hamlet is Shakespeare's most intriguing tragedy. Othello, Macbeth, and King Lear have been plentifully studied in all points of view, yet when we come to Hamlet there appears to be a special, inexhaustible quality about it. Critics have accredited to it various forms of greatness, and have spoken of it in many and diverse terms. This is due to the text helping to unravel the enigma that is Hamlet. The significance of Hamlet to William Shakespeare's career is profound. Although it was written around 1602, it was only published in 1603; so, a significant amount of literature in the play was considered an accomplishment in his later years.

An increasing number of references to Shakespeare's use of earlier works to form the basis of new plays are teaching us to think of the playwright as a man much concerned with the literary activities of his own, as someone who took the ideas of other men and transformed them into a new art form. In this respect, Hamlet serves as a primary index to Shakespeare's mind, a revealing and needlessly perplexing document to how the playwright got his ideas and how he worked them into imaginative and creative forms. In respect to the narrative of the play, the tale about the Prince of Denmark was a well-known bit of folklore and had assumed a detectable position in Elizabethan popular. Various references to it are found in the literature of the time and before it as the hero who feigns madness in order to get the opportune revenge is a posthumously heroic and romantic figure. This picture of the Danish prince is similar to the one in Saxo grammarian's story and it is with a comprehending of it is an earlier play written by Thomas Kyd called Ur-Hamlet that many critics have contended. Nonetheless, the most convincing evidence that Shakespeare's immediate source was a version of the Hamlet story, now lost, which Kyd in 1589-1590 wrote for Lord Chamberlain's men survives in a plot situation of King his sons and his brother. Shakespeare's dramatic art was evolving from chronicle play and a variety of the Elizabethan histories in which the English people as a whole had shown great interest in his Roman tragedies, to tragi-comedy and tragedy of a more profound and universal nature. Hamlet, motivated from a more vivid and less complex sense of the providence of a special nation, was a transitional figure marking the culmination of its author's effort to write a master tragedy. Thus, Hamlet has become his best-known play all over the world.

#### Purpose of the Analysis

To begin with, the main character, Prince Hamlet, provides the starting point for the reader's understanding of the play, which explores the human elusiveness. It is through Hamlet's struggle to resolve his internal dilemmas and to avenge the murder of his father that the reader can see the depth of human complexity. In dealing with his problems and issues, Hamlet feigns madness, which later serves to console the reader as to whether he is truly mad or if this is just a ruse that helps him to accomplish his goal. Other characters' attempts to spy on him provide the reader with a sense of dramatic irony and thus further the reader's involvement in the play. Also, it is through Hamlet's continuous introspective attitude that he begins to reflect the reader's own thoughts and emotions: from brief

discontent to humor and then to melancholic contemplation. These features are what allow Hamlet's internal and external actions to resonate with readers of every era.

Through the prism of Hamlet's introspective soliloquies and turbulent actions, Shakespeare delves into the most profound and vexing questions of human existence – the nature of truth and deception, the relationship between thought and action, the agonizing struggle between moral duty and personal desire. The young prince's inner turmoil, catalyzed by the revelation of his uncle Claudius' fratricide and his mother Gertrude's hasty remarriage, forms the central dramatic conflict that drives the play's relentless progression towards its tragic denouement. Hamlet's famous soliloquies, with their eloquent musings on the meaning of life, the fear of death, and the nature of revenge, have become touchstones of Western literature, encapsulating the universal human experience of grappling with existential uncertainty and moral quandaries.

Beyond the psychological depth of its protagonist, Hamlet also functions as a profound meditation on the nature of power, corruption, and the fragility of the social order. The play's examination of the corrupting influence of political machinations and the perversion of justice presents a bleak and unsettling vision of a world in which the moral foundations of society have been irrevocably undermined. The ghost of Hamlet's father, which appears to the young prince and demands vengeance, serves as a potent symbol of the supernatural forces that disrupt the natural order and plunge the kingdom into chaos. Hamlet's own indecision and procrastination in carrying out his filial duty further compound the sense of moral and political disintegration that pervades the play.

Moreover, Hamlet's complex relationship with the female characters in the play – his mother Gertrude and his lover Ophelia – adds an additional layer of psychological and thematic depth to the work. Hamlet's intense feelings of betrayal and disgust towards Gertrude's hasty remarriage, which he perceives as a betrayal of his father's memory, are intertwined with his own Oedipal desires and his inability to reconcile his love for his mother with his revulsion at her actions. Similarly, Hamlet's treatment of Ophelia, whom he professes to love but ultimately rejects and drives to madness and suicide, reflects the play's broader exploration of the fraught dynamics between the genders and the ways in which patriarchal power structures can oppress and subjugate women.

Throughout the play, Shakespeare's masterful command of language and his unparalleled insight into the human condition are on full display. The richness and complexity of Hamlet's soliloquies, with their poetic eloquence and philosophical depth, have cemented the play's status as a touchstone of Western literature and have inspired countless scholars, artists, and thinkers to grapple with its profound and enduring themes. The play's enduring relevance and its ability to speak to the universal human experience of grappling with existential uncertainty, moral dilemmas, and the corrupting influence of power have ensured its place as one of the most influential and widely studied works in the canon of world literature.

#### Conclusion

In conclusion, Shakespeare's Hamlet stands as a towering achievement of dramatic art, a work that delves into the most profound and vexing questions of human existence with unparalleled depth and complexity. Through the prism of its troubled protagonist's inner turmoil and the broader social and political upheaval that engulfs the kingdom of Denmark, the play offers a profound and unsettling meditation on the nature of truth, the corrupting influence of power, and the agonizing struggle between moral duty and personal desire. The enduring legacy of Hamlet, with its iconic characters, unforgettable soliloquies, and timeless themes, is a testament to the unparalleled genius of William Shakespeare and the enduring power of great literature to illuminate the human experience.

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