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DIPLOMA THESIS

TOPIC: Characters, conflicts, and themes in William Shakespeare's "Hamlet"

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Declaration

I declare that I worked on my thesis on my own – pursuing the Academic Honesty Statement’s principles in word and spirit – and used the sources mentioned in the Bibliography.
1. Introduction

William Shakespeare is known worldwide as the greatest English writer of all times. His work has been praised by other authors, teachers, students, actors, readers etc. for centuries. He has created identities which people are very fond of and with whom they have grown up with. His beautiful sense of writing and the ability to capture the hearts of many upcoming generations is unquestionable. Shakespeare goes through the main themes of what a man encounters during lifetime as delicately and plainly brings them into the surface. Being so, everyone is happy to refer to him as the author who provides a deeper understanding of the human preoccupations. Tragedies are the ones which remain the most appreciated and commented of his work, with Hamlet being the crucial story based on which have been aroused many ideas and questions. Shakespeare's "Hamlet" reveals the personalities of the human nature in many controversial manners having gained an important position in the world's literature.

My desire for choosing this topic as my diploma thesis is based on the greatness which this drama is known of. I was moved by its themes, motifs and characters in which I'm going to provide an analysis which reflects the reality of the play. Hamlet is about a young man, Prince of Denmark, who is returned from university to find out that his father was dead, his mother married to his uncle and later on hunted by King Hamlet's ghost which obsesses Hamlet with the idea of his father being murdered by his own brother. Since that moment all the traits and struggles of humans are tested.

In this diploma thesis I will be concentrated on the features of the major characters of the play as I will also talk about the main themes and conflicts which characterize this Shakespeare's masterpiece.

The methodology used in this paper is the deductive one. This was an appropriate method which helped me on conducting specific data out of general ones which were useful to my research. This diploma paper will be divided in 6 sections, initially providing some biographical information on Shakespeare, elaborating his life and work. Then there will be a discussion on
Hamlet's creation, development and future of it as a play. The main discussion will include the characters of Hamlet, Ghost, Claudius, Gertrude and Ophelia and their evolution through the play. In addition, there will be also notes about the conflicts and themes of Hamlet resonating in the motifs which lead to different actions of different characters concluding with a personal overview concerning "Hamlet". For this diploma thesis I will consult some relevant books and numerous studies on Shakespeare's "Hamlet" and some of the main ones are: (Foster.B "Bloom's Shakespeare through ages" 2008) a book which includes many famous authors' point of views. Then “What happens in Hamlet” by Dover Wilson. J which provides insights from characters of Hamlet. “Masks of Hamlet” by Rosenberg Marvin also is a helpful source that clarifies the insights of the story.

Foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratefulness to my advisor Prof. Lirak Karjagdiu for the continuous support of my Bachelor thesis, being an inspirational role model and having had the considerable commitment, patience and great knowledge to have a final draft that suits the proper standards. The guidance he offered helped me in all the time of writing this thesis. Besides my advisor, I would like to thank the rest of the academic staff in the faculty for being the ones to lead in our bright path.

1.1 Life and work of the author

a) Life

William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in April 1564. His father was John Shakespeare, a glover and merchant of leather goods as his mother was Mary Arden, daughter of a landlord. The first record of his life is his christening of the marriage with Anne Hathaway in 1582 in the church at Temple Grafton, near Stratford. Even though at that time, the celebration of the couple's eternal love could be documented only with a declaration of the contracting parties
in the presence of witnesses therefore England required neither a priest or church. Shakespeare and Anne's first child was Susanna, born in May 1583 and in 1585, they had also twins, Hamnet and Judith.

There is no record found for the seven years after the birth of the twins. It is supposed that in 1592 he was in London working as an actor. He was already an appreciated playwright as he was considered “an upstart crow” by his contemporary Robert Greene in A Groatsworth of Wit. Shakespeare is believed to have been associated with the famous and successful troupe, the Lord Chamberlain’s Men. Shakespeare played a vital role, financially and otherwise, in the construction their theater, which was occupied sometime before May 16, 1599. He acted there and undoubtedly he became the troupe’s most important playwright. Many famous actors were part of the theatre, who inspired the creation of some of the Shakespeare's characters, such as Hamlet and Lear, clowns and fools, too.

He was widely valued and enjoyed magnificent reputation and prestige. He made frequent visits to London, enjoying and attending events at the royal court, directing rehearsals, and also dealing with other business matters. Shakespeare's popularity was also associated to the Queen Elizabeth as his plays were often performed for her. Even after her death, the new king, James I required Shakespeare's association to be his official theatre company, named King's Men. A surprising fact is that Shakespeare played small roles in the theatre. In 1599, the Globe theatre was established by Shakespeare and his friends. Because of the Puritanism there was a change in London's artistic situation which served Shakespeare as one of the reasons to leave London after 1612.

Shakespeare died April, 1616 in Stratford where he retired. Shakespeare was buried in the chancel of the Holy Trinity two days after his death.

His commemorations include statues and memorials around the world such as the funeral monuments in Southwark Cathedral and Poets’ Corner in Westminster Abbey. (Foster.B "Bloom's Shakespeare through ages" 2008)
b) Work

In his early age, Shakespeare did not push himself into to tragedies therefore in 1593 he started to create sonnets then there were published narrative, mythological-erotic poetry, such as Venus and Adonis and The Rape of Lucrece, being both dedicated to the earl of Southampton. By 1598 Shakespeare had written some of his most famous works, Romeo and Juliet, The Comedy of Errors, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, The Merchant of Venice, Two Gentlemen of Verona, and Love’s Labour’s Lost, as well as his historical plays Richard II, Richard III, Henry IV, and King John. Later on he wrote his romantic comedies As You Like It, Twelfth Night, and Much Ado About Nothing, as well as Henry V, the last of his history plays in the Prince Hal series. The next 10 years he wrote the famous tragedies, "Hamlet" (first printing, 1603), "Macbeth", "Othello", "King Lear", and Antony and Cleopatra. During the Puritanism period Shakespeare wrote The Tempest and Henry VIII, then he wrote the “tragicomedies,” Pericles, Cymbeline, and The Winter’s Tale. The last ones were thought to be a reflection of Shakespeare’s personal issues even though we do not possess any evidence which imply such problems.

During his lifetime, Shakespeare's documented works are 37 plays listed as comedies, tragedies, and histories as also he wrote 154 renowned love sonnets. He remains a unique author for his poems, too. Shakespeare was the one to give importance to romance as a theme for tragedy. His work had a great impact in later literature created by his contemporaries.

Shakespeare's last manuscripts were published in 1623 by his King Men's friends, John Hemings and Henry Condell regarded as authentic works of his, the First Folio.

Ben Jonson's poem about Shakespeare was included there as he being considered a great author himself gives his regards to Shakespeare's uniqueness and revolutionary turn in literature. Jonson compares Shakespeare to Greek and Latin writers admitting that his success goes beyond theirs. Johnson states "Triumph, my Britain, thou hast one to show / To whom all scenes of Europe homage owe. / He was not of an age, but for all time!

This author is the one who precedes the future appreciation for Shakespeare of many others to come. Taking the lead in the world as an exceptional writer, making England proud of its accomplished figure.
1.2 Relevant information about "Hamlet"

One tragedy with which the whole world has been dazzled with is Shakespeare's "Hamlet". By the time that we're introduced to the play we're astonished by the explication of human confrontations being discussed in this brilliant piece. According to A.C. Bradley, "Hamlet" gives an insight to the human's soul infinity and its affinity to punish what limits that.

Considering the fact that we're faced with paradoxical acts, unexpected situations and controversial reactions, there is aroused a great deal of argumentations. There is also the statement of Anne Barton which considers Hamlet in the eyes of the audience to be a hero of one kind since he is a rare protagonist for whom is shared fondness and admiration throughout the whole play while Angus Fletcher emphasizes the mastery of Shakespeare's language as he is aware that there is nothing which Shakespeare cannot put into words mostly being fascinated by the figures used in Hamlet. (Foster.B "Bloom's Shakespeare through ages" 2008)

Hamlet is divided in five acts starting with the first one which includes Hamlet return to Elsinore, the encounter with the surprising news and the meeting with his father's ghost. The second act is related to Ophelia, the dear lady to Hamlet whom he seems to be strangely in love with, also Hamlet's friends visit Elsinore who inform him about the actors of the theatre being in town and that's the time when Claudius learns about Hamlet's supposed mission.

The third act starts with the observation on Hamlet by the king and Polonius, Ophelia's father. Spying on Ophelia and Hamlet's conversation, Claudius is convinced about the attitude of his stepson. The friendship with Horatio becomes visible.

Here it is decided that he would be sent to London after the theatrical show which threatens Claudius as this is accompanied with an emotional part found also in the third act since here takes place the conversation between Hamlet and his mother loaded with accusations and the murder of Polonius. The famous quote "To be or not to be" by Hamlet referring to the afterlife gives an insight to the beliefs and thoughts of his obsessed with another world where he trusts to exist.

The fourth act deals with the situation created after Polonius's death, the advantage taken by Claudius to have Laertes (Polonius's son) against Hamlet considering the fact that the impact of the father's death, Ophelia goes into madness and drowns which is an act described by Gertrude
in the play. In the meantime Claudius and Laertes with the news of Hamlet's return prepare a
duel in which his death is planned.
The final act of Hamlet describes the major characters' death included here Claudius, Gertrude,
Hamlet and Laertes. The truth is revealed and Hamlet's friend, Horatio is left responsible to live
and tell the world what happened in the kingdom of Denmark. (Shakespeare: "Hamlet"

"Hamlet" as a highly appreciated play which resists time takes the tragic hero to a journey which
interferes with his nature and also with the personalities of each character. The play is based on
the actions which accord with the situation the young boy, Hamlet encounters by the time he
departs Germany (where he was studying) to come back home, in Elsinore.
The confrontation between the characters brings remarkable reactions as there are presented
complexities and norms which society is preoccupied with.
The idea of having Hamlet's father back as a ghost gives hope throughout the play so that the
truth finds a way to be revealed even though it is unimaginable for the ones whose wish
completed. The consequences of Claudius's act reflect in the future of the kingdom considering
the fact that he tries to establish success in false basis. Making people trust his reign is a tough
task which becomes even more suspicious by the time that the diseased King Hamlet's wife,
Gertrude agrees to marry Claudius in a short period of time after her husband dies. It is this
moment that Hamlet's involvement in his father's death becomes obvious since he is assured that
it was all arranged.
The course of the events, most of the time leads to a desire of anticipation since the resolution of
each situation is brought in a different progress. Hamlet is the personification of a man whose
father's figure is very important and being trapped in a ruthless complot of his mother and uncle
creates confusion in his perceptions about life considering himself surrounded with lies,
betrayals and evil. The noble nature of his undergoes through an enormous transformation
especially after the encounter with his dead father's ghost. The feeling of revenge is unavoidable
as it impacts the character development. The solutions were first limited and the emotional
outbursts made Hamlet question if his judgments were sane as he is faced with a defeat by his
mother's decision making it gradually become an obstacle to his further actions. Hamlet's
character is judged in entirely different manners but everyone agrees to the point that he remains
judged and misunderstood. His urge for revenge mostly harms him considering the fact that he becomes the cause of many deaths and unpleasant situations for his surroundings.

The contrast of the situations from the moment that Hamlet's friends visit Elsinore with the request of his worried mother and father in law until the play insinuated and arranged by Hamlet in reciting a specific part about Priam reaches its peak of the play's attitude, Hamlet's point is elsewhere. Since everyone would be interested to hear a piece of the Trojan story, he takes advantage of the situation to convey his message:

Aroused vengeance sets him new to a-work,
And never did the Cyclops’ hammers fall
On Mars’s armor, forged for proof eterne,
With less remorse than Pyrrhus’ bleeding sword
Now falls on Priam.

An overly discussed verse of “Hamlet”, considered a parody for the other playwrights once but also one which according to critics felt different from what Shakespeare usually makes us fall in love with. John Dryden makes it sound like it was there when Shakespeare wasn't the genius we're used to hear instead it was an ill sequence of the play. On the other hand, there is Swinburne for which critics allow such a style to a limit:

“The minor transformation of style in the inner play, made solely with the evident view of marking the distinction between its duly artificial forms of speech and the duly natural forms of speech passing between the spectators”.

The theatrical show later on is a precedence for the upcoming storm which finds all the characters in unpredictable situations. (Bloom.H "Bloom's Shakespeare through ages")
2. The principle characters in "Hamlet":

2.1 Hamlet

Hamlet is the protagonist which goes beyond Shakespearian frames. He is a dynamic character since his attitudes throughout the play change. In comparison to the other heroes of Shakespeare, Hamlet does not turn himself to an infuriating figure, on the contrary having so many poisoned thoughts, he still maintains to keep a balanced self which transmits a hope message. As part of the audience, Hamlet for us is a human being which deals with a lot of difficulties related to the confrontation with his surroundings. According to Elliot, the efforts of his to represent himself dedicated to the purpose and not affected by the causes imposing a Stoic attitude gives signals that he might be deceived by Stoicism itself and it is unknown for us to what level is that responsible. As the influence of Roman philosophy is noticed in the play, Hamlet seems to be a creation based on some of Seneca's characteristics. They both see death as a process to be admired since they valued the people who weren't entitled to anything considering the fear of it, natural ('the fear of going to the underworld is equaled by the fear of going nowhere') far from the illusion of high status people. ((Foster.B "Bloom's Shakespeare through ages" pg117)

According to Bucknill the humbleness is a quality possessed by the character and it is present in its deep state. Hamlet becomes a familiar figure for us otherwise considered "an old friend" since Hazlitt also notes that he is the one "whom we read of in our youth and whom we seem almost to remember in our after years." "Hamlet is a name ; his speeches and sayings but the idle coinage of the poet's brain. What then, are they not real? They are as real as our own thoughts. Their reality is in the reader's mind. It is we who are Hamlet." The impact of Hamlet's way of thinking gives us the opportunity to explore through our perceptions the solutions and the insights of a situation that captures us from the beginning. Hamlet's struggles can easily relate to the feelings that accompany him and us in certain moments and his manner of expressing himself releases all the possible emotions that we can have, too. The "creature" Hamlet offers us his being, letting us in his greatest fears which bring us even closer to him, so much that we barely can distinguish
him from us. The involvement of the audience is made in an irrational way because it is obvious that it is not the intention of the character but it is its effect.

Many critics argued also for the age of Hamlet, trying to give us a mirror of his actions through his options that he could have as a young boy, being nearly 20 years old. McKellen, a young man who had the role of Hamlet once resonated that "Hamlet should be 18 - a kid- otherwise his behavior is inexcusable" including here also Kingsley: "It is the greatest part for a young actor-there are so many beautiful mysteries locked in there about boyhood becoming manhood that coincide with any young man's development - it's a visceral experience - the performance must be a gut experience, not a wholly intellectual one." Observing Hamlet viewing this aspect, we can also say that what they do in another specter, is justifying the actions of a young man under any kind of circumstance taking into account the motifs which lead to thinking certain solutions for the problems. The critical age of transition, when a boy becomes a man, is a process by which it is expected that they become conscious of their actions, their opinions now are based on an objective observation and manage their instincts of acting immediately, but still there is where beauty of the character remains.

On the other hand, Hamlet most imposed state is madness caused by the fundamental emotion of a son protecting his mother, in this case a tone of sadness towards an ashamed mother. This subject is handled in different ways by many critics. Hamlet is lead by his thoughts which are a prolongation of his decisions. But it all was initialized with the death of his father. Hamlet's grief seems to intensify his ideas later on, acting strangely and making everyone doubt his sanity. His ideals ceased to be by the time that the trustful figures he had imagined were no longer the ones he thought of. He was alone in the equation of life. The feeling of having no one to turn to made him believe that everything which was just came from the above and justice was on his hands only. (Foster.B "Bloom's Shakespeare through ages")

The most cited part of Hamlet's soliloquy remains:

To be, or not to be? That is the question—
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And, by opposing, end them? To die, to sleep—
No more—and by a sleep to say we end
The heartache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to—’tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished! To die, to sleep.
To sleep, perchance to dream—ay, there’s the rub,
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause. There’s the respect
That makes calamity of so long life. (Shakespeare, "Hamlet" Act 3,Scene1)

Hamlet at this point is devastated. The famous question of his "to be or not to be" reflects his instability since he believes that there is nothing left for him to look forward to. It is difficult for him to trust there is a reason to live for and he tries to invent the feelings he would have had if he had found himself in another world. He points out the imagery benefits that we think we have during our life on earth envisioning several key ideas on why we keep ourselves guessing when all we have got is trouble and hardships. He desires to go beyond them and picture himself as a free man of those uncertain emotions. But still, thinking of the completion of that dream he would have as a dead man, he remains unsure of the other challenges he might run into. Yet, stays faithful to his thoughts, considering that there would be the place where he would find calmness and peace.

2.2 Claudius

Claudius is the antagonist character of the play. He is the one to oppose Hamlet since it seems that he interferes with his plans, therefore he constantly dedicates himself in ruining Hamlet, feeling endangered that one day, the truth might come into light by Hamlet's suspicions. He craves power and he is able to fight for that at any price. Being a great charmer, he is a leader who convinces everyone for his good intentions related to the front. By marrying Gertrude, he insists on doing in it for the sake of the country and the beneficence of the Danish population. He tries to make an impression in showing off the kindness there is in him and the great sadness he
suffered bearing his brother memory. The favor he believes is making is praised by everyone all who were present.

Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother’s death
The memory be green, and that it us befitted
To bear our hearts in grief and our whole kingdom
To be contracted in one brow of woe,
Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature
That we with wisest sorrow think on him
Together with remembrance of ourselves.

We cannot even tell the basis in which he calls himself a king, He is constantly referred by Hamlet as a killer and deceiver, a person who takes advantage of the situation and someone who takes for granted, something that doesn't belong to him. Claudius hypocrisy seems to have no limits as he persuade his people around of the mercy that he shows on his cousin, Hamlet wishing him good luck in the recuperation in England. The rivalry which accompanies them during the play allows us to have a crystal clear picture through their plans and complots. (Davies.M "Hamlet character studies" page 78,80,86)

2.3 Gertrude

Gertrude is considered to be a flat character in "Hamlet" since she is a character whose traits do not change during the development of the occasions. Otherwise her role is very prominent. She is the lady which is rumored to be only a woman who wants to offer satisfaction to herself but it is not only that what she represents in the play. According to Bradley Gertrude is a generous woman and she isn't another accomplice in the murder of her husband. She is innocent and all she desires is to feel joy and happiness. The real preoccupation of hers is the opinion of her son about her marriage and the grief to which Hamlet dedicates himself throughout all play without
taking into consideration his mother's concern in treating Ophelia and dragging himself out of that situation once and for all. Therefore she is a woman who appreciates youth and doesn't want anything to do with age and destroyed beauty. On the other hand, she is not the woman who is lost in lust and because of this, it is sometimes impossible to recognize the woman who is hidden behind the curtain of incestuous marriage. She is strong, clever and caring, these being qualities that aren't brought into light (Heilbrun. C 2006, The character of Hamlet's Mother pg 201-203). The pure heart of Gertrude is obvious when she reveals Claudius the reason which explains Hamlet's grief claiming that they both should aware of the fact that he is touched by the new situation he found in his house and not any other supposition he might have had.

I doubt it is no other than the main
His father's death and our o'er-hasty marriage(II,ii.56-57)
Another part where she shows her concern towards her son and his wellness is the way she speaks to Ophelia:

And for your part, Ophelia, I do wish
That your good beauties be the happy cause
Of Hamlet's wildness. So shall I hope your virtues
Will bring him to his wonted way again,
To both your honors. (III.i.38-42)

It is her wish that the salvation of her son is to be found in Ophelia's love. The blindness that had captured him, she hopes to find an end, when appearing in front of her. Therefore, Gertrude's intentions remain ones that belong to a mother who wants a bright future for a son leaving behind the disappointment he lives into!
2.4 Ophelia

Another woman in "Hamlet" which is considered more than a flat character is Ophelia. She is the daughter of Polonius, and Laertes' sister. But the attention of the audience mostly falls over the relationship she has with Hamlet which becomes the cause to her happenings. Being a woman at that period of time had them served many problems since they had to obey rules which fitted the patriarchal system. According to many point of views Ophelia is described as the fragile image of a female as one of the states: “Ophelia, it would seem, wholly at the mercy of the male figures throughout her life, is certainly a victim figure” (Das, 2012: 38) This is a character which is left in the mercy of the ones who surround her. Her mistake is in trusting males in finding her solutions. She becomes dependent to the others' opinions over her deeds. Her life is meaningless without the presence of men in her life. It's what she reflects throughout the play and that remains the vice of hers. Gertrude is the one who at least tries to make her life less miserable but the dominance of her impossible thoughts is inevitable. She cannot carry herself with pride, she doesn't know how. (The Journal of International Social Research,(2015) Ophelia and Gertrude: victimized women in "Hamlet", pg 165-166) Ophelia is the typical female of Elizabethan period, an oppressed lady whose own ideas are never right but always influenced as she demonstrates in her speech:

I think nothing, my lord.
That’s a fair thought to lie between maids’ legs.
What’s my lord?
Nothing (Act 3, scene II.116-19)

Ophelia is the representative of no control over herself. It reflects “the horror of having nothing to see” (Irigaray, 1982: 101). From the beginning, it is imposed that the woman must always remain under the shadow of men. They resemble weak and deplorable creatures. It is a shame to see Ophelia being used for the interest of Polonius, Laertes and Claudius. On the other hand, Hamlet's insistence not to reveal his feelings for her keeps her taking bad decisions. The rancor on his mother's behavior makes Hamlet frown in Ophelia without offering her a sane explanation. It's her that suffers Hamlet's judgment on women's profound desires which are to be ashamed of according to him. Even though, she doesn't show any kind of disobedience towards him and her actions which intent only the improvement of their relationship cannot stop the
accusations of Hamlet referring her intellect as a woman. This situation is what leads Ophelia to madness as it is hard for her to bare the challenges she is exposed to, also having experienced her father's death, being her beloved, the man who murders him.

2.5 Polonius

Polonius is a character which displays trouble during the play but remains a good man, referred so by Gertrude. He is the closest to Hamlet's uncle, Claudius and he holds a significant position at court. Polonius is a static character since he remains the same from the beginning until the end. Polonius is father of Ophelia and Laertes. Hamlet wasn't fond of him since he was one of the responsible people in Ophelia's life for her misfortune. It is him who Hamlet blames for using her. (Feingold.M "Hamlet" 1984, page 20) Polonius seems a character who calculates all that he does. He coldly develop his children's character giving them advices which do not serve well them.

Polonius keeps an eye on the relationship of Hamlet and Ophelia. He is a two faced character who behaves differently with the king and also with his daughter. To complete his interests and Claudius' interests, too.

Come, go with me: I will go seek the king.
This is the very ecstasy of love,
Whose violent property fordoes itself
And leads the will to desperate undertakings
As oft as any passion under heaven
That does afflict our natures. I am sorry. (Shakespeare.W, "Hamlet", Act II, scene 1 page 39)

After the confession of Ophelia about her love for Hamlet, all he cares about is if she undertook her actions according to what he told her to. He tries to console her for the reaction Hamlet has had when they had a discussion. All he is worried for, is a confession to the king about what happened so that the sanity of Hamlet could be put in question.
Therefore the relationship between Hamlet and Ophelia becomes toxic and neither of them can find support and peace in each other's arms having in between so many enemies and poisoned thoughts.

3. Main conflicts in "Hamlet"

3.1 The internal conflicts in "Hamlet"

a) The internal conflict regarding Hamlet uncertainty about taking action

Shakespeare is the responsible one to reveal some of the darkest secrets of human mentality. His intention in offering the audience the privilege of becoming familiar with the mysteries of life shows us the testing of human's ability to understand the whole drama. The implication of many antagonist thoughts approves the audience concern. But that's where all the beauty relies on because if there wouldn't be such features of Hamlet, a composure of firmness and vulnerability in just one character, we wouldn't have been served a hero of greatness. The inability of his to provide a decent approach regarding the situation tempted him all along. Being a man of virtues, he was convinced that revenge was the best solution but having problems in finding the right timing and the facts itself made him fear the development of the story. He was a victim of his own mind, incapable in fighting with the extremes of his actions, without giving himself time to contemplate. No one was able to trust Hamlet's judgment anymore. He was left in agony, torturing himself all the time about the right thing that was to be done. But hoping for the evidence to be found so that he (Foster.B "Bloom's Shakespeare through ages" 2008, page 152, 233-234)

"Upon whose property and most dear life
A damned defeat was made. Am I a coward?" (Act 2, scene 2,529-530)

"But I am pigeon-livered and lack gall
To make oppression bitter, or ere this" (Act 2, scene 2, 538-539)

Abuses me to damn me. I’ll have grounds
More relative than this. The play’s the thing
Wherein I’ll catch the conscience of the king. (Act 2, Scene 2, lines 565-568)

b) Hamlet's internal conflict related to the love for his mother and Ophelia

Hamlet's disappointment with his mother ruins his picture of ever having had a family of his own. He lives the tragedy of his father so badly, to come home and see the new, happy couple with the attempt to make others believe in the lie of Claudius' kind intentions. Hamlet's pain impacts a lot his very opinion about women reaching to the extent of calling his mother "beast" considering her act so inhuman.

O God, a beast that wants a discourse of reason
Would have mourned longer...(Act 1, scene 1, 156-157)

Being so revolted with Gertrude, his conviction about Ophelia is badly impacted. His terrifying idea on women is suffered by the poor Ophelia who cannot find her right path because of the confusing influence. (Bamber.L Comic Women, "Tragic Men: Study of Gender and Genre in Shakespeare" Stanford university press pg 71-72)

But deep down, the cause of his pain is his immense love for his mother and the disagreement of her betraying him.

I have heard of your paintings too, well enough.
God has given you one face and you make yourselves another.
You jig and 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 more marriages. (Act 3, Scene I, 145-150)

In these lines, it is obviously showed the attitude of Hamlet towards women. He rejects Ophelia in an awful way even though he is madly in love with her but his anger keeps him blind in viewing the reason which would bring happiness to his soul. As a matter of fact he humiliates her, throwing into her face the words which make Ophelia miserable. He believes her a two faced woman just like all the others. He is able to fight against his own feelings just to hurt her and ruin her illusions.
4. Themes in "Hamlet"

4.1 Justice and revenge

The situation with which we're confronted with after being introduced to the death of King Hamlet is his son's plan for revenge. Having had a discussion with the ghost of his father, Hamlet is found in a difficult position making it hard for him to decide whether his reasoning has a fact based thinking or if it is only a harmful thought. For Hamlet, it is a punishment to have such responsibility upon his shoulders asking himself constantly about the truth related to his father's death. The confusion created in his mind is immense and it is in a way a companion throughout all the play. Hamlet's dilemma in bringing Claudius to justice or making justice happen by himself is a tough position he remains in. His experience with the evil in his country gives him the incentive of taking the responsibility of trying to put each and everyone at their place even though at first it is hard for him to get adapted to the uncertain surroundings. The issues of revenge are a concern to Laertes and Fortinbras for different reasons as they are found in quiescence, too. (Feingold.M: William Shakepeare's "Hamlet" New York.)

It is unbearable to feel the pressure of what it is supposed to be done and what actually their expectations are. "Hamlet" is the proof of people struggling with the darkest feelings which invade the soul when the unimaginable happens.

As revenge is considered to have two sides which include the obligation to be full filed and the other one being a cruel act, it is believed to be a desire not to forgive which pushes you forward to complete "that duty". It goes beyond the logical capacity of a man when characters are influenced by the harshness of revenge. (Mercer.P: Hamlet and the Acting of Revenge pg.21-22)
4.2. Destiny and the purpose of life

Destiny is another Shakespeare's objective which is present from the exposure of the ghost imposing the following acts of the characters. "Hamlet" is a demonstration of the inner sentiments related to the purpose of our existence. Sometimes it is hard to think of the destination which is presupposed to exist for everyone who comes to this life. In fact it is an everyday struggle, while the characters find themselves wondering of the intentions of life. As much as it is a blessing being alive, the questions which tempt their mind are linked to the idea whether life is only about suffering or if it is a comfort zone that is expected to be crossed so that there can be discovered the possibility following it. The luxury which allows the characters to believe that they sometimes do not have the total control over their actions is the belief that there exists another force which leads them in their path providing a relief yet making it hard to have certainty on the ideals of life. For Hamlet it is hard to define his anxiety since it gives him different signals all the time. Whether he's dealing with revenge or with his madness, he is constantly trying to find an excuse in another form of resonating so that his deeds would be supported by a guidance. (Feingold.M: William Shakepeare's "Hamlet" pg.30-31) His suffering and that of the other characters' too makes the audience curious if through those harsh feelings they succeed in realizing the secret below the surface as if they were the hunters of the truth taking into consideration the circumstances and the consequences of their actions.

My fate cries out
And makes each petty artery in this body
As hardy as the Nemean lion’s nerve.
Still am I called.—Unhand me, gentlemen.
(I.IV. 86-89)

It is in this moment that Hamlet agrees with the upcoming situations and the challenge he finds himself involved in serving as a definite hallmark of his life. He is trapped in his cage and there is no going back. It is a choice made to obey the duty universe assigned him. Therefore he does not fear what awaits him, as he supposedly does what he should do in terms of the extraordinary bond.
4.3 Madness and Sanity

The mental condition of Hamlet and later on, also, of Ophelia becomes an issue which lets us believe that their gradual development leads to another state. Madness is an issue which marks the other actions that take the characters to the profoundness of their emotions. The uncertainty of Hamlet's attitude confuses the others around him as it is unclear if it is Hamlet to be blamed for the consequences of his actions or if his surroundings were the bad influence to insist to his uncoordinated deeds. Sometimes we're also astounded by the immediate reactions of the character of Hamlet giving us the benefit of doubt for his real state. (Conolly.J: A Study of Hamlet)

The principal doubt in which Hamlet is declared about madness is:

As I, perchance, hereafter may think meet
to put an antic disposition on (Shakespeare: "Hamlet" Act 1, scene 5)

Meanwhile the mental condition of Hamlet is the not easily explained since the effect of Shakespeare’s tricky mind sometimes transmits pretended insanity through the characters and that hard to be differenced the real situation in which Hamlet is. It is a constant duel between the meaning of the words and the actions of the characters.

I am but mad north-west: when the wind is southerly
I know a hawk from a hand-saw. (Act2, Scene II)

In this lines he evidences his ability to be aware of the happenings around him. He remains a decent man and a positive approach but further circumstances are those which interfere the later conclusions. (Conolly.J (1863): A study of Hamlet, London, Edward Moxon & Co., Dover street)
4.4 Women

The women in "Hamlet" are very complicated characters which create intense situations all the time. Their influence is deeply touching for all the characters inside the play, in different aspects but the impact is immense. Gertrude and Ophelia are the ones which are centered during the play. They have an impeccable role in Hamlet's life since all his decisions are underneath connected to the relationship he has with them. The bitterness which accompanies his soul during the play is primal concerned to Gertrude who has "stabbed" him with the act of marriage to the uncle of Hamlet. Therefore being a victim to their own action women suffer the following actions of the male characters. (Feingold.M: William Shakespeare's "Hamlet")

Hamlet's craziness does not give another chance to the women even though the circumstances can be responsible for each one's actions. Therefore in Hamlet compared to the other Shakespeare's works there is no agreement for the women's explanations or deeds. The conflict remains present throughout all the play and there is no chance for another form of observation. (Bamber.L: Comic Women, Tragic Men: Study of Gender and Genre in Shakespeare)

4.5 Appearance and reality

Another raised matter when considering madness is the appearance which is in front of the audience and the other side of the medal which is hidden under the surface. There are many times in which Hamlet is furious about the personalities which are two faced as he appreciates the sincerity being a quality which characterizes decent people. The problem with many characters stands in the duality of the players. (Feingold.M: William Shakespeare's "Hamlet" pg.31) Questioning the scenes behind, there is found a displaying of numerous issues which follow the characters continuously. Showing the ideal example of the duality is the advice which Polonius gives to his son, Laertes. Unbelievable but true, the lines below are a cold accounting even if he is trying to be a role model to his son, there are other intentions in the background. "And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry. This above all: to thine own self be true, And it must follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false to any man. Farewell, my blessing seasons this in thee!" (Act 1, Scene 3, 83-87)
5. Conclusion

"Hamlet" is a play that resists centuries and it is always an important discussion aroused over it. The composition of the characters and the themes treated in "Hamlet" are regarded as incredibly influential nowadays since they're present in their own way, in a different format.

"Hamlet" is literary known as the most famous play Shakespeare had ever written, considering more than fifty movies having been made since 1900. "Hamlet" characters have been played by eminent actors in all the versions as they're highly praised by the audience including here Ethan Hawke, Laurence Olivier, Kenneth Branagh, David Tennant, Anthony Hopkins, Jude Law etc. "Hamlet" as the best known tragedy has been translated into more than 75 languages and its performance has taken place all around the world.

The enormous fame it possesses offers it the chance to be continuously played and remade because the fascination by it seems unstoppable even for the young generations.

"Hamlet" is known to be a reference to the character of young Hamlet who underestimates the power of anger and blindness leading himself to a dark end. The other main characters such asClaudius, Gertrude, Ophelia and Polonius are also regarded as complicated figures which develop differently during the play being in concordance with Hamlet's initiatives. They all are accomplices in the final tragedy, some to protect their own interests, others being victims to others' insatiable cravings, as also, there are others who think that being servants to the powerful men, they might gain points to become highly ranked people etc.

Therefore, Hamlet as the center of the play cannot be referred as the innocent boy who is hurt by the others, but he is also a guide to the upcoming misfortunes of many people around. He represents the intensity of the urge to get something done at any price. Claudius as the antagonist character proves to be the evil one whose initiative from the very beginning didn't have to do with the wellbeing of his family and the citizens. Gertrude, the character "trapped" by Claudius for specific reasons loses her integrity as a mother forever. She cannot find solutions among the accusations of Hamlet as she remains worried and scared during all the play.

Ophelia is another female character whose development during the play is very confusing. The impact of others in her makes her live a miserable life without being given the chance to be respected for the virtues she had which above all, everything she desires is the love triumph but considering the circumstances she is not allowed to.
Some of the conflicts which are encountered among the characters are the conflicts regarding Hamlet uncertainty about taking action and Hamlet's conflict related to the love for his mother and Ophelia which precisely define the actions of the main characters. Hamlet's trials to have a vision for the future are restless during the play but he cannot find himself being assured of anything. Being so, he lets himself in the fate's mercy. Regarding Hamlet's problems with his mother it is proved that the situation created with her had lead him to numerous misconceptions regarding life being an intense character which causes conflicts and is found in the middle of nowhere many times while he tries to find logical reasoning through the discussions aroused during the play.

Furthermore, there are also the themes which attract the attention of the audience such as: justice and revenge, women, destiny and the purpose of life, madness and sanity, also appearance and reality. Justice and revenge are the main concerns of Hamlet when he returns from Germany. Lucky for him, he is able to manage the situation and make others suffer the respective castigation but the final scene proves the tragedy caused by that attempt. Women as we're introduced throughout the play, are the ones who unconsciously lead the others' actions giving too much space to question their characteristics. Destiny and the purpose of life are treated in such a way that we sometimes believe there is domino game being played. Everyone is affected in their own way as they have it impossible to escape from what it is supposed to happen to them. Madness also defines this play meanwhile it shows the aspects of how people can be tricked by their mind. Related to this appearance is also a key factor which is a mask for the all characters who hide their true self.

Being present even today the prominence of these features to one's life is undeniable as the messages throughout the play are very powerful making all wonder of life's profoundness.
6. Bibliography


