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Title: Parallelism in Shakespeare's Hamlet

Parallelism is a literary device generally employed in literary works as well as ordinary conversation. This device has been used by many authors in their literary pieces to impress upon readers and to covey certain lessons and meanings. In addition, it allows the writers and readers to maintain a steadiness in their speech and to maintain a flow of ideas. Parallelism is also employed as a tool of persuasion. In one of the masterpieces by William Shakespeare, Hamlet, the technique of parallelism has been used by Shakespeare to reveal the truth about characters. For instance, a contract has been created between Laertes and Fortinbras to showcase the qualities they possess. Besides, parallelism can be found among King Claudius and Polonius in terms of the guidance they provide to Laertes. Hamlet's soliloquies unearth his suicidal thoughts and intentions, alongside revealing his unwillingness to live. Laertes and Fortinbras also show some parallelism as both are foils to Hamlet. In the play Hamlet, parallelism is found between the characters of play Hamlet to deliver some vital themes and ideas of the play.

The tragedy of Hamlet is a deconstruction of the "revenge play," as well as an exploration of humankind's pondering of one's mortality. This is mainly clear in Hamlet's famous "To Be or Not to Be” soliloquy, and the gravedigger scene towards the end of the play. The connection between characters of Hamlet has always been analyzed by many literary critics since it delivers the key meaning of Shakespeare’s play. The characters Laertes and Fortinbras are very important, and they are the most parallel characters along with Hamlet. They are used by Shakespeare to compare the emotions and actions of Hamlet, as uncovered by many literary critics. Three men, Hamlet, Laertes, and Fortinbras are put into similar situations; all have to take vengeance of their father’s death. The only difference between these characters is the way each of the plans their vengeance and comes to woe of their father’s demise.

The two main characters of the play share many similarities with the protagonist, Hamlet. However, they react differently as compared to Hamlet. Hamlet considers Fortinbras to be a natural soldier and wishes to be like him. However, he often envisages his morals. He questions what is correct and what is not. Hamlet spends too much time considering revenge; on the contrary Fortinbras is setting the army. Hamlet finally decides it is better to act on the plan rather than debating. He finally says, “Rightly to be great is not to stir without great argument, But greatly to find quarrel in a straw When honor's at stake" (Shakespeare). Hamlet's foil motivates him to move ahead with his plans. Hamlet's other foil, Laertes, hears about the demise of his father comes back to Denmark. Hamlet to Laertes, "I'll be your foil, Laertes: in mine ignorance you skill shall, like a star I' the darkest nightstick fiery off indeed" (Shakespeare). Hamlet is familiar with the fact that one day he will be compared with Laertes, and he will outshine him due to his audacity. Hamlet thinks both of his foils, Laertes and Fortinbras are much better than him in skills and capabilities. Unlike him, they demonstrated bravery and tenacity on the death of their fathers. This is an example of parallelism Shakespeare created in his play.

Other characters that show parallelism throughout the play are, Polonius and King Claudius, as they give similar advice to Laertes. Despite having many conflicts, they are shown as similar in many ways. Polonius advises Laertes to be true to himself before he leaves for France. He says, “This above all: to thine own self be true, and it must follow as the night the day." Here he is advising Laertes not to rely on his own ambiguous nature and be aware of the home he tells about himself. Furthermore, his advice to Laertes is to observe others keenly and not to be dishonest with himself. Similar advice is given to Laertes by King Claudius. He says, "Make a choice of whom your wisest friends you will. And they shall hear and judge 'twixt you and me. If by direct or by collateral hand. They find us touched; we will our kingdom give, our crown, our life, and all that we can ours" (Shakespeare). King Claudius also tells Laertes to select his wisest friends to tell him what is right. If he is the one responsible for the killing of Polonius, he will compensate Laertes with whatever he owns. Nonetheless, if he is declared innocent by Laertes's wisest friends, he will do anything to help Laertes taking revenge for his father's death. Here parallelism is employed by Shakespeare to show the associations between their morals. Other examples of this literary device can be found in Hamlet's soliloquies.

"To be or not to be" is one of the most celebrated soliloquies from the play Hamlet. In all of the soliloquies, Hamlet reveals his feelings about how unworthy is his life. He uncovers his desire to commit suicide, and he is in a catch twenty-two situation as Hamlet is not able to kill King Claudius. Either way, there is no way for him to run away or hide; he has to kill someone. His dialogues show his frustration, "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” (Shakespeare). Hamlet contemplates what is better, the patient endurance of wrong or its daring disapproval. Hamlet thinks about life and death, about being alive and being dead, and also compressions both the situations. He thinks death is a perfect end to this life of misery, but again the life after death diverts his attentions and changes the direction of his thinking. He says, “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?” (Shakespeare). The proposition that life after death could be worse stops Hamlet. Besides, his conscience also warns him from making a mistake as he says, "Conscience does make cowards of us all." This exposes the truth about Hamlet's character; he wants to be free like Laertes and Fortinbras and wants to act upon his wrath rather than procrastinating it. The parallelism here is the way suicidal thoughts links with his true nature; it is not evident that he is unloyal to himself unless faced with a dilemma.

To conclude, William Shakespeare has used the device of parallelism in the tragedy of Hamlet to uncover some truths about the characters. Three characters are shown very similarly to each other, Hamlet, Laertes, and Fortinbras. Fathers of all have been killed; however, unlike Hamlet, the other two take quick actions. In addition, similarities amongst King Claudius and Polonius is also shown by the way they guide Laertes. They connect by having parallel values and morals. Hamlet’s soliloquies reveal his true nature and his thoughts about himself. Though he is full of rage but fears about life after death, this motivates Hamlet to continue his sufferings, his plan of taking revenge for his father's death, and being untrue to himself.

**Works Cited**

Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*. Simon and Schuster, 2003.