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Hamlet Shakespeare Essay

The tragedy of Hamlet sets it apart from other Shakespearian tragedies because his other heroes are full of valor and swiftness, whereas, on the other hand, Hamlet is shown as a tragic hero who possesses all the knacks of a good intellectual being. He is far from being responsive as other Shakespearian heroes because he thinks a lot that it nearly drives him to the point of insanity (Keegan 166). His tragic flaw is his overthinking habit delays his response and action at many important points. Had it not been for his tragic flaw, he would have avenged his father’s murder earlier. However, his delayed response also reflects the uncertainty of truth and Hamlet may be buying time to be sure of the old hamlet's murderer. *The Murder of Gonzago* can be seen as an attempt at unmasking the real culprit behind the murder since all other tricks of Hamlet finding his father’s killer go in vain. In this essay, the enactment, *The Murder of Gonzago* is contrasted against the actions of characters in the play. The play-acting fails to capture the real sentiments of characters such as Ophelia, Gertrude and Claudius whereas their behavior captures their state of oblivion and vulnerabilities.

Hamlet can be seen surrounded by enemies and conspiracy theories that all his attempts to find the murderer of his father do not prove sufficient. Likewise, through this technique of play within a play, the hidden agendas of multiple characters become evident. In the same manner, there prevails an uncertainty when it comes to the female characters of this play. For instance, when it comes to the character portrayal of Gertrude and Ophelia in *The Murder of Gonzago*, Hamlet’s suspicion against them becomes evident. For instance, Claudius’s reaction shows that he is the murderer of his brother but Gertrude remains in a state of oblivion. Similarly, Ophelia drives herself into madness because of Hamlet’s humiliation towards him. Before the play, Hamlet speaks these dialogues to show his utter disdain towards the opposite sex “Lady shall I lie in your lap?” ….. “did you think I meant country matters?” “That’s a fair thought to lie between maid’s legs” (3.2. 119-125). These remarks state that his hatred towards women is based on his mother’s second marriage with Claudius. He time and again uses such remarks to derogate Ophelia because he faces a hard time to believe in women again. In the same manner, he asks his mother during the play-acting that if she likes this scene to which she replies “Lady doth protest too much” (3.2. 254). Gertrude’s attitude makes her appear as a practical person and her choice of remarrying does not mean that she has to forever mourn her husband’s murder. She is oblivious to the involvement of Claudius in the murder of her late husband because she does not remain aloof from Hamlet and his doubtful state. Ophelia is Polonius’s daughter nonetheless but she does not deserve to be illtreated by Hamlet. For instance, he asks her “Get thee to a nunnery” or that if he could get to view the actions of her and her supposed lover, he would have enacted them (3.2. 131). In act 1, scene 5, he says “ O most pernicious woman!/ O, villain, villain, smiling, damned villain!” (1.5. 112). This signifies his lack of trust in women and their faithfulness. Besides, Hamlet is driven by the ghost’s anger towards Gertrude and he thinks low of his mother not based on his observation, rather he trusts the opinion of his late father’s ghost.

The character of Claudius, in the Mousetrap, aptly portrays his hidden intentions of keeping the control over his thrown and reign people for a prolonged period. It also helps hamlet in testing the authenticity of his dead father’s ghost. However, Claudius's loyalty to Gertrude gets exposed through this play-acting that he does not love her, instead, he is only interested in keeping Gertrude and her son away from the state affairs of his kingdom (Hamlet). The sole purpose behind this staged play can be to assess the guilt of Gertrude in plotting the murder of her husband with his brother. However, the alarmed feelings of Gertrude, when Claudius stops the play signify that she was a faithful wife to her late husband and even in her second marriage, she is trying to bridge the gaps between both her son and husband. This paly also serves as a revelation for Claudius that Hamlet now knows about the murderer of his late father and he can pose a life threat to him. As his dialogues reveal his fears “When sorrows come, they come not single spies, / But in battalions” (4.4. 84). Claudius’s honest thoughts in his soliloquies reveal that he admits his sins and is somewhat ashamed of his behavior.

In Shakespearean plays, murdering someone was considered equal to disrupting the natural balance because King was given the status of God’s representative on earth (Bremaud 165). The humanistic and guilty side of his character cannot be captured in the play-acting because it captures his evil actions or his villain side. He is a villain nonetheless but he still takes responsibility for his actions whereas, on the other hand, Hamlet keeps on procrastinating and averts the thoughts of avenging his father’s murder (Madness 51). When Claudius leaves the play in the middle and summons Hamlet, the dialogues he speaks to Rosencrantz & Guildenstern reveal his true nature “ My wit’s deceased” “Sir, I lack advancement” “Do you think I am easier to be played on than a pipe?” (3.2. 380). He can be misled by the apparition initially, but the reaction of Claudius makes it evident that the latter fears the judgment of his ministers and his wife. Likewise, it also induces God’s fear in him because his acts of tyranny will lead him to hell and Hamlet refrains from killing him while praying because he wants Claudius to suffer. For instance, “My crown, mine own ambition and my queen/ May one be pardon'd and retain the offence?” ( 3.3. 56-58). In this soliloquy, Claudius can be seen confessing his guilt and at the same time, he does not want to restrain himself from his advantageous position of Denmark’s ruler.

Last but not least, the play-acting serves as a tool for hamlet to find Claudius guilty but his suspicions against his mother can be based around his resentments. He insults Ophelia too because he accuses her of spying on him for Polonius. The play-acting does not capture the vulnerable side of Claudius because neither the ghost nor Hamlet are aware of it. Moreover, the play-acting fails to capture the love of both Gertrude and Ophelia for Hamlet.

# Works Cited

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