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Hamlet, Unfold Yourself

**Introduction**

Identity crisis is considered one of major psychological issues in the contemporary world. Scholars believe that it was never an issue of gravity before this era, but the way William Shakespeare treats the matter of identity crisis shows that there could have been people who went through this crisis during Shakespearean era. Modern novelists are the one who attempt to reveal the internal conflicts of their characters and use “stream of consciousness” technique to reveal their inner selves that can better explain the causes behind their particular actions. Shakespeare uses soliloquies for the same purpose and expose his characters with soliloquies. Hamlet is an identical tragedy character of Shakespeare who were not able to be understood (as much as we) if there were no soliloquies in the play. *Hamlet* (1609) is one of Shakespearean masterpieces where his *tragic hero* is going through some kind of identity crisis. His soliloquies reveal that despite knowing his socio-political introduction Hamlet is haunted by internal conflicts and he is struggling with his inner self to take an action that can be the best of all. The audience learns that Hamlet attempts to unfold his personality before taking reaching denouement, but his personality remains unobvious ,,. This idea of identity is one of the thematic threads that makes the play a masterpiece of complexity and mystery.

**Body**

Very opening of the play reveals the idea of identity when Francisco asks Barnardo to reveal his identity: “Nay answer me, stand and unfold yourself” (Shakespeare, William. N.p). Shakespeare’s artistic language gives another charisma to his plays. He uses the word ‘unfold’ instead of ‘identify’ to ask about the character’s identity. Modern scholars believe that identity crisis occurs when a person does not know the purpose of his/her life and feels no contentment in his/her daily routine. The characters of Hamlet have no issue of identity and they are contended with their daily routine. The sudden death of late King Hamlet has caused some unrest among people and the staff of palace, but everyone is doing well considering it as a divine decree. Prince Hamlet is a genius, literate, and courageous character who has recently returned from Paris where he was away for university education. Prince Hamlet also behaves normal until Royal guards Barnardo and Marcellus confront a new character. This new character appears suddenly before them, but he does not reveal his identity although Barnardo attempts to identify the character: “In the same figure like the King that’s dead” (Shakespeare, William. N.p). Barnardo stresses upon Horatio, Hamlet’s attendant and friend, to note the appearance of the new character in the 58th line of Act-I, Scene-I: “Looks it not like the King? Mark it Horatio” (Shakespeare, William. N.p). A new appeared character who looks like the late King Hamlet but who does not reveal his true identity has sowed the seed of uncertainty among the guards of the palace that would lead to chaos. This encounter has stirred Horatio: “Most like: it harrows me with fear and wonder” (Shakespeare, William. N.p). A mystery caused by this character prevails and every character is stirred by its appearance who has not introduced himself, but everyone is attempting to identify him. Marcellus says in the 75th line of the same Act: “ Is it not like the King?”, whom Horatio replies, “As thou art to thyself (as you are like you)” (Shakespeare, William. N.p).

The real identity crises start when Hamlet learns about this character. The character appears in the form of his father’s ghost and makes a *revelation*. As Aristotle says that tragic hero starts to fall after a revelation that obliges him to enquire something and that results into a *discovery*. The discovery actually leads the tragic hero to destruction. The ghost reveals that he has come to tell him that he was killed by his mother Gertrude, and his uncle King Claudius. This revelation causes internal unrest in Hamlet that is revealed in the first soliloquy of Hamlet in Act-I, Scene-II:

“Oh, that this too too solid flesh will melt, Thaw and a resolve into a dew: Or that the everlasting has not fix’d his canon ‘gainst self slaughter. O God O God! How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable seems to me all the uses of this world!”

This soliloquy reveals that an internal conflict has descended upon Hamlet that would keep increasing until the total destruction arrives. Hamlet continues to explore about the revelation. He uses many tricks and one of the most prominent tricks of Hamlet is to read Claudius’ face expressions after playing an act before him. This act mimics the scene of the late King’s murder that is told by the ghost. Finally, Hamlet learns after play that his uncle has actually killed his father with the help of Queen Gertrude, his mother. This *discovery* causes catastrophe in Hamlet’s inner self, but conflicts start that causes him to lose his real self. A famous soliloquy reveals **Hamlet’s internal conflict in the best way:**

“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 heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks

That flesh is heir to: 'tis a consummation

Devoutly to be wish'd. 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.

For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,

Th'oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,

The pangs of dispriz'd love, the law's delay,

The insolence of office, and the spurns

That patient merit of th'unworthy takes,

When he himself might his quietus make

With a bare bodkin? Who would fardels bear,

To grunt and sweat under a weary life,

But that the dread of something after death,

The undiscovere'd country, from whose bourn

No traveller returns, puzzles the will,

And makes us rather bear those ills we have

Than fly to others that we know not of?

Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,

And thus the native hue of resolution

Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,

And enterprises of great pitch and moment

With this regard their currents turn awry

And lose the name of action.”

This soliloquy reveals that Hamlet has lost his real self and he cannot stabilize his inner self. Moreover, Hamlet’s soliloquies show that Hamlet has lost his identity.

**Conclusion**

Shakespeare’s masterpiece Hamlet is an ideal example of identity crisis that is much familiar phenomenon today than it was in past. Hamlet has lost his identity after a revelation made by the ghost of his father. His soliloquies show that all the destruction that follow where he kills King Claudius, Queen Gertrude, and dies himself is the result of that internal destruction that descended upon him after he lost his identity after a basset murder of his father King Hamlet.

**Cited Works**

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