

Why Hamlet Slaughtered Himself Redefining the Confusion and Ambiguity in the Issue of Killing and Committing Suicide in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*

Serdar ALIÇ*

Abstract

The terms "killing" and "committing suicide" have always been a matter of question in the world of literature since the beginning of human life on earth. These issue has also taken part in Shakespeare's works repeatedly. Shakespeare questioned the reasons of these in terms of the dilemma between nature and nurture. In *Hamlet* he revisits these concepts and casts doubts about the nature of human beings while they are capable of taking each other's or own lives. In this paper, how Hamlet character is centralized for these sort of killings by making mistakes and how he sacrificed himself for the sake of his believes will be discussed thoroughly. This clarification of the details about this seminal work should be regarded as a reflection of reshaping Shakespeare reality from another perspective.

Keywords: Hamlet, Ambiguity, Suicide

*"What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason!
How infinite in faculty! In form and moving
how express and admirable! In action how like
an angel! In apprehension how like a god! The
beauty of the world, the paragon of animals!"*

Hamlet (Act II, Sc. II).

While reading *Hamlet*, the thing firstly covers the reader is the story of a prince who loses his King father, and after he finds out who kills his father, he wants to take the revenge of his father. Simply, this is the main sequence of the events and the plot is, basically this. But the interesting thing in this play of Shakespeare is, after reading so many articles or essays on *Hamlet* the reader can't change this image so much. *Hamlet* is not only a play but it is also a saga named as "Amleth" in Denmark. In this play, as Bloom mentions, Amleth is "tough, warlike, but as cunning in the attempted manipulation of his scholarly son as he was in fending off his enemies." In spite of the fact that whether Amleth was real hero in the history or not is not clear and known, Amleth and their tragic lives can be seen in many different nations and places in terms of corruption and immorality of the systems and also intrigues in them.

On the other hand, in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* we encounter the classic tragedy in a natural way of presenting. Eventually, "he is- as the representative of reality- not actual

but ideal" (Claude, p. 6). The story takes place in Denmark in 16th century and Hamlet is surrounded by the rules invaded him and surrounded him due to his prince identity. He encounters his father's ghost and learns who killed him (he is not sure that the ghost tells the truth.) But he feels that he needs revenge. This revenge idea is strengthened by his mother's quick marriage. He not only loses his mother whom he loves incestuously but also he loses the throne against his uncle, King Claudius. Despite he has strong and important reasons to take his revenge immediately and also these reasons snarl him in the edges of self-slaughter or in other words suicide. In the play, to kill someone and to commit a suicide goes together till the end for several reasons and also this leads us results shaped by Shakespeare.

At first, it seems that Hamlet, as the protagonist of the play, shows lack of courage to kill his uncle, the murderer of his father. So, he adjusts a play by doing necessary arrangements and in this play in which the death scene of his father will be performed, he will decide if his uncle is guilty or not. Unluckily, his thoughtful situation and undetermined mood bring him other deaths that he has never planned. In the play, the passionate Laertes and the revengeful prince Fortinbras are the opposite characters to make Hamlet's edges in action more sharpened. Firstly Hamlet shares the same destiny with the other prince, Fortinbras. They are both the princes that have lost their fathers and are full of revenge. They both have the power to take this revenge but there are handicaps in front of them. For Hamlet the most important and the biggest handicap is his confusion and irregular mood. But the searching mood Hamlet cannot stop with this gratifying view of death (Moody, p. 33). In contrast to this, Fortinbras, different from Hamlet, has handicaps originated from people not from himself. While Hamlet goes down with his irregular decisions Fortinbras rises through the end of the play. Fortinbras who seems to be the most successful in achieving his mission, and is in fact, the only character in *Hamlet* who does so and remains alive is not present in most parts of the play but at the end he has a great entrance with a success. So one of the causes of Hamlet's confusion is his thoughtful and undetermined mind and as a result of this he comes to a worse position against one of the other major characters that can be compared to

* Vice Dean, Faculty of Business Management, International Black Sea University, Tbilisi, Georgia.
E-mail: salic@ibsu.edu.ge

him in terms of differences and also similarities.

Secondly, Hamlet makes a mistake and this also effects his decisions or the position he can't take decisions. This also leads him the confusion in between killing and committing suicide. He kills the father of his love. And this also brings him to the same point with Laertes who is another major character of the play. Laertes and Hamlet have also differences and similarities in this in betweenness. Laertes has also lost his father and he returns home to take his revenge. Again different from Hamlet, he is so decisive and he says;

"How came he dead? I'll not be juggl'd with.
 To hell, allegiance! Vows, to the blackest devil!
 Conscience and grace, to the profoundest pit!
 I dare damnation. To this point I stand,
 That both the worlds I give to negligence,
 Let come what comes; only I'll be reveng'd
 Most thoroughly for my father."

(Act 4 Scene 5)

But on the other hand he decides before he estimates or tries to see the consequences whilst Hamlet evaluates all the steps of his decisions. Different from Laertes, Hamlet has an anxiety of being noble every time and he says;

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 "

(Act 3 Scene 1)

As a precise result of this Hamlet decides nothing and when he is to kill his uncle while he is praying the thing that stops him are not only the religious ideas but also this being noble anxiety.

Shakespeare gives the reader Hamlet as a guide to read the confusions in his mind and find an end. In this interesting setting, universal values and psychological evaluations appear. The world has been more interested in this than in any other play, and in Hamlet than in any other figure of drama for three centuries, and it is consequence of the strength and universality of that interest that the design to find a psychological explanation arises (Claude, p. 15). The ambiguity in Hamlet's mind and in his decisions have a psychological background and this is also another reason why he comes to the edges of killing and committing suicide. Psychology and psychological effects lead him to this confusion. In concrete side of the life, he has lost his father and also his mother, he has lost the throne and at the end he has also lost her lover and her country. As these have physical effects and results, they also have psychological effects and results.

In it is most popular soliloquy, Hamlet says "to be or not to be" (Act 3 Scene 1) when he says this he was in a great agony and he was considering the suicide. But at the end he can't decide which one to choose because, actually, there are no formulations like this; "to be or not to be" for already living man. There is no choice for a man "being or not being". In Logic, only an unborn babe could have such a choice. The real question before Hamlet was negative; it was "To die or not to die". Entry into a state of being can be optional. And even that has definite limits (Mazuri, p. 3). So as a result, the choice is at the point of dying or not dying and killing and not killing. All the questions and the conflicts around Hamlet is not the intersections of being and existing but they are the

points where die and kill terms mix together.

In conclusion, Hamlet has an ambiguous identity in between killing and dying because of his noble anxiety, religious and psychological situation and emotional. And the results of this are, apparently, Hamlet's death and the lesson can be inferred by the readers for their own lives. As it is also said in the play;

"What is a man,
 If his chief good and market of his time
 Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more.
 Sure, He that made us with such large discourse,
 Looking before and after, gave us not
 That capability and god-like reason
 To fust in us unus'd."

Act 4 Sc 4

"To be, or not to be: that is the question". Hamlet (Act III, Sc. I).

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