

The Psychology of Hamlet

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Shakespeare's *Hamlet* ominously begins with Horatio and Marcellus discussing the appearance of a ghostly apparition that strangely resembles the King of Denmark. As the play unfolds, we learn that it is, in fact, the ghost of Hamlet Sr., the King of Denmark. Immediately, the play begins with a sense of foreboding danger for all of those involved who have a direct connection with his son Hamlet, the prince of Denmark, with the exception of Horatio, Marcellus, and Fortinbras, Hamlet's closest friends.

After his initial attempt to communicate with the ghost, Horatio is the only one who is aware of this foreboding danger when he states: "In what particular thought to work I know not/But in the gross and scope of my opinion/This bodes some strange eruption to our state" (Hamlet 1.1.66-68). Even though he has this sense of forewarning, Horatio consciously understands that he must tell Hamlet, the prince of Denmark, that he has seen the apparition of Hamlet's deceased father. However, even before Hamlet's own encounter with his dead father's ghost, he experiences conflict with himself and those around him. He expresses resentment towards his mother Gertrude and displays a passive aggressive anger towards Claudius, the brother of his dead father. When Horatio tells Hamlet, that he has seen the ghostly vision of the King of Denmark, Hamlet exhibits no fear. Horatio, however, is fearful. When the ghost appears to Hamlet, Horatio, and Marcellus, Hamlet follows the ghost in an effort to speak to his dead father. Instead, Horatio stands back and says:

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What if it tempt you toward the flood, my lord,
 Or to the dreadful summit of the cliff
 That beetles o'er his base into the sea,
 And there assume some other horrible form
 Which might deprive your sovereignty of reason
 And draw you into madness? Think of it
 (Hamlet 1.4.50-55).

Horatio's words appear prophetic and revelatory as we discover later in the play that Hamlet's life begins to unravel as a direct result of his own meeting with the ghost. Even Marcellus warns Hamlet not to follow the ghost. Yet, Hamlet ignores both of their warnings. Instead, Hamlet speaks to his father's ghost as if he were speaking to God. However, the question remains: Would murder be justified in God's eyes, that is, if a ghostly apparition can be likened to a god? Hamlet's own feelings about Claudius are contingent with his father's ghost when the ghost says: "Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast" (Hamlet 1.5.42). When Hamlet is told that his father was murdered at the hands of his brother Claudius, Hamlet proclaims: "O my prophetic soul! Mine uncle?" (Hamlet 1.5.41) The words of the ghost resonate with Hamlet's own assessment of Claudius's character, thereby justifying and perpetuating the anger and hostility that Hamlet feels. Hamlet's perception of Claudius is a product of his unconscious. In *Kierkegaard in Post/Modernity*, the authors Matusik and Westphal define judgment and the moralistic element of the unconscious as it pertains to Hamlet.

That unconscious is what I choose not to recognize or intentionally fail to perceive. It is hardly possible for such an analysis not to impinge on our moral and religious concerns, since the motivation for such self-obscuring activity will surely relate to what we value and disvalue as persons, what we find admirable and noble, or base and ignoble (78).

In one sense, Hamlet's unconscious thoughts and feelings about Claudius have become translated as something real and palpable. Yet, it is disturbing that the ghost of Hamlet's father compels Hamlet to avenge his murder through the murder of Claudius. It is as though Hamlet's first encounter with the ghost has caused him to become an outward expression of an awakened consciousness that should remain buried and laid to rest along with the spirit of his dead father.

It appears as though Hamlet becomes somewhat possessed by this spirit, for it is through his introduction to this menacing spirit that Hamlet's own excursion into madness begins. It is a journey through which Hamlet becomes obsessed with his unconscious conflicts and the loyalty to his father who urges him to avenge his murder.

In *Shakespeare and the Natural Condition*, Bush explores the dichotomy of nature as it pertains to Shakespeare.

Nature is an order and continuance that has two aspects: it is an idea of natural law, and the fact of natural things. Nature means both the unchanging natural principle of the world, the preserving cause of all things and the changing face of the world, all things that have life and shall have end (4).

In this case, natural law represents the struggle between good and evil from a post-conventional morality standpoint. Though Claudius was morally wrong for murdering his brother Hamlet, is it not just as morally reprehensible to commit murder in an act of revenge? When contemplating Claudius's murder of his brother Hamlet Sr., it carries with it the seeds of Original Sin resulting in the murder of Abel by his brother Cain. A passage in Hamlet offers a reflection into Hamlet Sr.'s life. It refers to his inability to attain redemption before his murder when the ghost speaks of being "cut off even in the blossoms of my sin" (Hamlet 1.5.76). This suggests that the King of Denmark died in a state of impurity and was not given a chance to repent and ask God for forgiveness of his sins. We can conclude and interpret that there is a continuity through which the impurity carried over into Hamlet Sr.'s afterlife, thus perpetuating a cycle through which his son would also fall victim through the sins of the Father.

Although no reference is made to any particular sin, we can conclude that the ghost is questionable, if not treacherous and menacing.

The presence of the ghost itself as a restless spirit represents conflicts with nature, or rather, a disruption of the natural order of things. Hamlet's thoughts about Claudius become fully realized and distorted simultaneously. Seeing the ghost interrupts and somewhat impairs Hamlet's reason and logic.

One of the most disturbing aspects of Hamlet is his inability to accept the loss of his father. This is one of many inconsistencies throughout the play. Hamlet's failure to accept his father's death is parallel to a disharmony incongruent with the natural order of things. Yet, the presence of the ghost does provide a bridge between the natural world and the spiritual world. The ghost becomes both a symbolic and literal representation of an epiphany or awakening. In *Compromise Formations: Current Directions in Psychoanalytic Criticism*, Camden's interpretation alludes to the fact that the ghost that Hamlet sees is a clear indicator and predictor of the past and the future.

"The ghosts of the past become, rather than tormentors, a reassuring sign of the persistence of memory, a confirmation of one's power to grieve over lost objects" (21). Furthermore, it is through Hamlet's introduction to his father's ghost that he becomes cognizant of his own consciousness and unconsciousness. Hamlet believes that his father's ghost is evidence of God and the soul. Yet, what is being asked of him challenges his own faith. After his encounter with the ghost, he states: "O cursed spite/That ever I was born to set it right!" (Hamlet 1.5.189-190) There is a strong parallel between the plight of Hamlet and the plight of Orestes.

In Orestes, there is a conflict, the central one, between right and wrong, unresolvable because Orestes has done both right to avenge his father and wrong to kill his mother. He did so at the behest of a god, an act that mobilizes still another conflict, the one between men and gods, a perplexing one because a god can do no wrong (Cook, 83).

The only difference in *Hamlet* is that Hamlet is aware that the ghost of his father is merely a revelation. He has an innate knowledge of right and wrong, good and evil, which explains why he is hesitant to murder Claudius. He vacillates due to his own moral code in the midst of a spiritual and psychological crisis that he undergoes. The psychological crisis that I'm referring to is the Oedipal complex. Lacan makes reference to the Oedipal complex in the context of Hegel's dialectic in *Phenomenology of Mind* of the withdrawn contemplative "beautiful soul" (663-67, 675-76, 795). This concept is a concrete example of Hamlet's plight as it is explored in Lacan's *Ecrit: A Selection*. Lacan maintains: "the beautiful soul denounces the perceived disorder of the world around him without recognizing that this disorder is a reflection of his own inner state" (171-73, 281, 292, 415). In Act 2 Scene 2 of *Hamlet*, Hamlet speaks to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who are sent for by Claudius and Gertrude.

Both Claudius and Gertrude are perceptive in their awareness of Hamlet's disorder with the world around him as they observe a transformation or breakdown of sorts in Hamlet. Gertrude is uncomfortably aware of the cause when she says: "I doubt it is no other but the main – His father's death and our o'er hasty marriage" (Hamlet 2.2.56-57). Perhaps, Gertrude herself is keenly aware of Hamlet's Oedipal conflicts. Hamlet's Oedipal complex is evident in one particular passage in Act 2 Scene 2 in which he is speaking to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Rosencrantz says: "Why then your ambition makes it one; 'tis too narrow for your mind" (Hamlet 2.2.254-255). Hamlet replies: "O God, I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams" (Hamlet 2.2.256-258). In response, Guildenstern states: "Which dreams indeed are ambition, for the very substance of the ambitious is merely the shadow of a dream" (Hamlet 2.2.259-261). Hamlet responds: "A dream itself is but a shadow" (Hamlet 2.2.262).

Even though Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are unaware of Hamlet's plight, they comment on Hamlet's somber mood with rather profound insights. Rosencrantz refers to Hamlet's ambition in suggesting that it is the cause of his despair. Perhaps, he is not wrong in his speculation. Perhaps, if Gertrude had not married Claudius, Hamlet himself would be crowned the King of Denmark. This ambition and lust for power and equality with his mother and Claudius for that matter is an echoing reminiscent of King Oedipus. When Hamlet replies "were it not that I have bad dreams," it appears as though he is referring to his encounter with the ghost. One wonders why he does not mention the appearance of the ghost to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Perhaps, they would think Hamlet has gone mad. The image of the dream is significant, however, in that dreams often foretell and divine both the past and the future. Since Hamlet is analogizing a dream to a shadow, perhaps this is Hamlet's comparison of a dream to his father's haunting spirit. "In being able to dream about something previously forgotten, we are making contact with a dissociated past and, as a result, learning to live" (Camden, 20). When Hamlet states: "A dream itself is but a shadow," this comparison is relevant to Hamlet's encounter with the ghost in that Hamlet is simultaneously confronting the past and his unconscious. The image of the shadow is conducive to the presence of something from the past or something coming out of the darkness. Similarly, his father's ghost follows him incessantly as a stern reminder of the knowledge of his murder and ultimately, of Hamlet's own fate.

While Gertrude attributes this transformation in Hamlet to her "o'er hasty marriage to Claudius," Polonius attributes Hamlet's initial display of madness to his love for Ophelia. Perhaps, Polonius is projecting his own feelings in his love for Ophelia. While Gertrude is vaguely aware of Hamlet's Oedipal desires, Ophelia is blissfully unaware. After seeing the ghost, the prince of Denmark begins to treat Ophelia coldly. Lacan, Miller, & Hulbert offer their explanation in their discussion and analysis of the dichotomies within the Oedipal complex. "There is something mysterious about the fantasy; indeed, it's ambiguous and paradoxical. It is on one hand the end-term of desire, and on the other hand, if we approach it from one of its aspects, it's actually located in the conscious" (14). This explains Hamlet's magnetism toward and ultimately, his contempt for Ophelia. In his complex feelings toward his mother, he begins to see a parallel between his mother and Ophelia. He is disgusted with Ophelia's dependency and obedience to her father and brother. His love/hate relationship with his mother is mirrored in his treatment of Ophelia. Hamlet is angry with his mother as he emphatically proclaims: "Frailty, thy name is woman" (Hamlet 1.2.146). He senses a similar frailty and vulnerability in Ophelia from which he begins to express disdain. One of the most perplexing dynamics in human relationships is our conscious and unconscious desire to be intimate with someone who reminds us of our mother or father.

One explanation of Hamlet's cruel treatment of Ophelia is not the theory of Freud, but the revised feminist version which retains the Freudian ideology, but in relation to the adult male psyche that has filtered down, in a more distorted form.

The general idea seems to be that men, because of difficulties in their infantile experience with mothering grow up with an unconscious but overpowering fear and hatred of femininity, both in women and in themselves, which they try to repress by certain defense mechanisms, including an obsessive need to idealize or degrade women and to control them (Levin, 47).

The play subtly hints that Hamlet's mother was adulterous while Hamlet's father was alive. This bears some reflection considering the root of his hatred towards his mother and himself. This may also explain his bitter treatment of Ophelia. Perhaps, treating Ophelia coldly was a defense mechanism Hamlet acquired in protecting himself from the same hurt, rejection, and betrayal his own father may have suffered from when he was alive.

This would certainly explain his devotion to his father, as well as a determination not to create a pattern of falling in love with an unfaithful partner like his mother.

According to Muller, "the Oedipal resolution brings about a transition from the imaginary identification with the phallus and the dual relation with the mother to the symbolic identification with the father's name in a pluralized relation with a place in a structured kin network" (150). It appears as though Hamlet is verbalizing an attempt to resolve the Oedipal complex when he says: "You are welcome. But my uncle-father and aunt-mother are deceived" (Hamlet 2.2.377-378). Perhaps, he is obsessing over the incestuous nature of his mother and uncle's relationship and is trying to make light of it on the surface, while inwardly struggling for his own identity. This clustering of familial relations also implies the ambiguous nature of family ideologically. In using the words "uncle" and "aunt" before the words "father" and "mother," Hamlet is negating both paternal and maternal figures simultaneously. Perhaps, he is employing this language to make avenging his father's murder easier for him.

As Hamlet hesitates, he tries to redirect his moral compass in getting into Claudius's conscience and consciousness with the idea of the play entitled "The Mousetrap." It appears as though the play is symbolic of Hamlet's struggle with his own guilt and sense of morality. Also, the play is parallel with Hamlet's own thoughts and actions, for it is by this time that Hamlet is feigning madness. According to Empson, "Hamlet is incessantly 'acting a part' and so for that matter are most of the other characters; the main theme of the tragedy is his self-consciousness or his failure to understand himself; the parallels to the stage are central to the thought" (67). In Hamlet's famous soliloquy "To be or not to be," Hamlet is burdened by the act of avenging his father's murder. Empson's argument of Hamlet "incessantly acting a part" in a cosmic and universal sense would follow that Hamlet is not only asking himself the question of whether to live or die; he is asking himself whether to act or not to act in the murder of Claudius. The only way out of this moral dilemma is to take his own life so that he doesn't have to act.

Yet, he contemplates the repercussions of committing suicide and their implications in the afterlife. He has a fear of the unknown and chooses not to act in killing himself, or Claudius for that matter.

Even though Hamlet is feigning madness and “acting a part” it is also fair to suggest that Hamlet also suffers from his own grief in mourning the loss of his father. In Freud’s seminal essay, “Mourning and Melancholia” (1917), Freud’s definition of melancholia, which is called depression includes various characteristics. “These characteristics include: a profoundly painful objection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of the self regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revilings, and culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment” (14:244). The characteristics of self-reproaching and self-reviling are apparent in Act 2 Scene 2 in which Hamlet verbally berates himself in the following passages:

“O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!” (Hamlet 2.2.552)

“Yet, I,

A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak

Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause,

And can say nothing-no, not for a king

Upon whose property and most dear life

A damned defeat was made. Am I coward?” (Hamlet 2.2.568-573)

“But I am pigeon-livered and lack gall

To make oppression bitter, or ere this

I should ‘a’ fatted all the region kites (Hamlet 2.2.579-581).

“Why, what an ass am I? Ay, sure this is most brave,

That I, the son of the dear murdered,

Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,

Must, like a whore, unpack my heart with words” (Hamlet 2.2.585-588).

The aforementioned passages herald Hamlet’s plot to launch an attack on Claudius’s conscience.

Hamlet’s self-loathing acts as a catalyst and is perhaps the only way that Hamlet can be moved to action. His self-reproaching behavior manifests a subtle determinism to avoid inner conflicts, and project a more focused attention on the weaknesses and shortcomings of others. “In depression, dissatisfaction with the ego on moral grounds is the most outstanding feature” (Freud, 248). This is solidified in Hamlet’s plot to make Claudius aware of the nature of his character. Another symptom of Hamlet’s depression includes his loss of the capacity to love.

"Freud observes that the loss of an object deprives the individual of the love necessary for growth and nurture" (Camden, 169). For Hamlet, he has suffered two losses: (1) the loss of his father and (2) the loss of his mother's attention since she now lavishes her attention and affection on Claudius. As a direct result of this, Hamlet loses his capacity to love Ophelia. This accounts for his coldness and cruel treatment of her. "Freud viewed depression as arising from hostile feelings initially directed towards parents. These hostile feelings then turn inward, producing feelings of guilt and unworthiness" (Camden, 169). This supports the previous argument in relation to the projecting or mirroring of relationships from Hamlet's relationship with his mother to the relationship between Hamlet and Ophelia. This also explains Hamlet's self-loathing in reference to his failure to execute Claudius's murder. A chief characteristic of depression are thoughts about suicide.

This is most evident in Hamlet's soliloquy "To be or not to be."

One of the most interesting dynamics within "To be or not to be" takes place at the end of Hamlet's soliloquy. It is an ominous foreshadowing that Hamlet sees Ophelia and begins to speak to her immediately following his deep meditation into the mysteries of death. It is ironic that after his contemplation of suicide, the first person he sees is Ophelia who coincidentally, takes her own life later in the play. It is as though Hamlet's own feelings of despair, frustration, and self-loathing are mystically transferred to Ophelia. This transference of negative energy results in her own death rather than the death of Hamlet. Shortly thereafter, she is the one who suffers two losses as well: (1) the loss of her father, Polonius and (2) the loss of Hamlet's affections. One explanation of Ophelia's suicide is offered by Pipher. She argues:

When Ophelia falls in love with Hamlet, she lives only for his approval. She has no inner direction; rather she struggles to meet the demands of Hamlet and her father. Her value is determined utterly by their approval. Ophelia is torn apart by the efforts to please. When Hamlet spurns her because she is an obedient daughter, she goes mad with grief. Dressed in elegant clothes that weigh her down, she drowns in a stream filled with flowers" (20).

It is a dark and psychological means of self-assertion that Ophelia displays through taking her own life.

To take one's own life is considered a selfish act, one in which Ophelia lacks fear or hesitation in pondering the mysteries of her own existence and death. It is also noteworthy that Ophelia dies in a stream filled with flowers suggesting her state of being at the time of her death. Ophelia remained chaste and obedient and died in a state of purity and virginal innocence.

Hamlet struggles, however, in his search for purity. When Hamlet speaks to the Players, he tells them to put on a play so that he will have the inward satisfaction of knowing that Claudius feels guilty.

In this way, Hamlet is also trying to release himself from his own unconscious desires and guilt by projecting them on to Claudius. "Hamlet tells the Players that the purpose of playing is to hold the mirror up to nature; a play makes nature known to itself" (Bush, 10). Yet, the concept of holding up a mirror is to see one's reflection. Hamlet is unconsciously aware of his own self-righteousness and hypocrisy, yet is more than willing to exploit Claudius. On a subconscious level, "catching the conscience of the King" entails Hamlet confronting his own conscience. It is interesting that Hamlet needs verification of guilt as justification for murdering Claudius and chooses not to kill Claudius while he is praying, since prayer signifies repentance. This would also signify Claudius's own fear of death and the afterlife since he murdered his brother and married his brother's wife. In that moment of prayer, Hamlet is reminded of his own fear of death and the afterlife. While Claudius is deep in prayer, it reminds Hamlet of his own guilt. Hamlet would prefer to murder Claudius while Claudius is in a state of impurity, for example, "when he is drunk, asleep, or in his rage, / Or in th' incestuous pleasures of his bed, / At gaming, swearing, or about some act / That has no relish of salvation in't" (Hamlet 3.3.89-92). Hamlet is obsessed with the sexual relationship between Claudius and his mother Gertrude.

When Hamlet does decide to commit the act of murder, he does not hesitate in murdering Polonius, whom he thinks is Claudius in Gertrude's bedchamber. The fact that Hamlet does not bother to look at the person he is murdering suggests that he is reluctant to commit the act of murder. Also, the fact that he commits murder in Gertrude's bedchamber may indicate that Hamlet exhibited sexual jealousy. Oddly, when Hamlet discovers that he has murdered Polonius and not Claudius, he has no remorse whatsoever.

Hamlet is still haunted by the image of his father. By this time, Gertrude is convinced that Hamlet has gone mad since she is unable to see or hear the ghost of her dead husband. She is not alone in her assessment of Hamlet's behavior. After murdering Polonius, Hamlet even tells his mother: "Good night

- but go not to mine uncle's bed./Assume a virtue if you have it not./Refrain tonight,/And that shall lend a kind of easiness/To the next abstinence" (Hamlet 3.4.150-154). One wonders why Hamlet is so irrationally intrigued by their intimate relations. More importantly, why does Hamlet kill Polonius, instead of Claudius? Before murdering Polonius, Hamlet was hesitant to the point of procrastinating the crime of murder. Did Hamlet sense on a subconscious level that the act of murder would implicate the murder and death of those close to him and could he have avoided this destruction and his own demise any other way? If Hamlet had indeed heeded the warnings of Horatio and Marcellus by not following the ghost, would he have lived? Even if he had not listened to the ghost's commands, would it have altered the fate of Hamlet and the lives of those around him? These questions bear consideration and discussion. In many of Shakespeare's works, detachment is often synonymous with wisdom. Horatio and Marcellus were detached in their meeting with the ghostly apparition and lived as a result of that detachment. Could Hamlet have resolved his conflicts internally? Furthermore, had he not been told by the ghost about his father's murder at the hands of Claudius, would Hamlet have committed the act of murder by his own will? Since the play is fraught with Freudian metaphor, we can conclude that the Oedipal conflict is a powerful motif in Hamlet's consciousness.

Freud's revised structural theory of the mind, the well-known 'id, ego, superego' view emerged because Freud became aware that anxiety was not simply the result of the repression of instinctual material, but was often a signal or anticipation that instinctual material was not being adequately repressed. Anxiety here is not primarily a consequent of the damming up of instinctual material, but a consequence of the leaking of such material into consciousness. To deal with this phenomenon, Freud postulated the existence of unconscious elements in the ego, as well as in the superego, the moralistic element of the psyche which punishes the individual for forbidden instinctual desires" (Matustik & Westphal, 79).

This offers some explanation as to the reason for Hamlet's reluctance to kill Claudius.

The Freudian id is synonymous with the will to die or engage in acts of aggression or aggressive behavior.

The unconscious elements of Hamlet's ego and superego do not permit Hamlet to kill Claudius or himself for that matter. Also, it has been suggested elsewhere that the murder of Claudius is tantamount to the murder of Hamlet's natural father. This argument is similarly expressed in Marc Shell's *Children of the Earth* and is equally maintained in Bloom's *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*. My argument differs in that Claudius is simply a father figure, rather than Hamlet's natural father. With the murder of Hamlet's father, Hamlet is still searching for a father figure. Claudius is the closest thing to a father figure he has. This may explain why Hamlet murdered Polonius instead of Claudius. It would also follow that anxiety would not ensue or become apparent through the murder of Polonius, since Polonius is not Hamlet's father or even a father figure to Hamlet. If Hamlet had never encountered the spirit of his dead father, perhaps he would have further delayed Claudius's murder.

Hamlet's anxiety was heightened through his introduction to the ghost. As a result, his instinctual unconscious drives surfaced into conscious awareness. The purpose of the superego is to serve as a conscience. Although some literary critics, such as Albert Cook, attribute Hamlet's guilt and fear of the unknown to theological constraints and religious doctrine, it is rather, Hamlet's superego that prevents him from murdering Claudius and himself. The argument of theological constraints does not provide a sufficient or thorough explanation of Hamlet's ability to murder Polonius and Laertes without guilt or remorse. Nor does Hamlet grieve or mourn the loss of his beloved Ophelia. All evidence would indicate the contrary.

One interpretation in terms of ego psychology is offered by Anna Freud in *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense*. She explains that the passive is converted to the active. "By impersonating the Aggressor, assuming his attributes or imitating his aggression, the child transforms himself from the person threatened into the person who makes the threat" (113). This would certainly explain Hamlet's lack of remorse in murdering Polonius. Perhaps, Hamlet needed to initially murder someone who was irrelevant to his revenge plot so that, in paraphrasing Hamlet, it would "lend a kind of easiness to the next" act of murder. It was no accident that Hamlet used those same words in advising his mother to refrain from sexual intimacy with Claudius.

The link between sexuality and violence is a prevalent dynamic in Hamlet's consciousness. In Hamlet's case, due to his own lack of sexual intimacy, this cultivates an attitude and environment of sexual jealousy towards Gertrude and Claudius's sexual relationship. Hamlet also expresses disdain and contempt for Ophelia as a prelude to his own inevitable violence and murder.

Perhaps, Hamlet murdered Polonius so that Claudius would see just how formidable and treacherous an opponent Hamlet could be. Freudian metaphor in relation to impersonating the aggressor, as it relates to Claudius, is an evident psychological motivation for murdering Polonius.

Before he murdered Polonius, Hamlet began to mirror the relationship he had with his mother in his treatment of Ophelia. Simultaneously, the complexity of Hamlet's feelings toward Ophelia may have been indirectly expressed in a desire to become closer to her. Just as Claudius murdered Hamlet Sr. to be with Gertrude, Hamlet had murdered Polonius to be with Ophelia. Also, on a subconscious level, the death of the father figure may be something that Hamlet unconsciously wants Ophelia to experience so that they can share a mutual affinity. Perhaps, with the murder of Polonius, Hamlet and Ophelia can have more of an intimate relationship, emotionally as well as sexually.

This would certainly explain Hamlet's lack of guilt and remorse when he discovers that Polonius is murdered instead of Claudius. This argument is supported by Berryman's psychoanalytic hypothesis.

"To kill his uncle with respect to whom he feels 'the jealous detestation of one evildoer towards his successful fellow' is impossible because he cannot be sure as to his mother for killing him; he may simply be disposing of a second rival" (115). In this case, the second rival Hamlet disposes of is Polonius. After all, it is Polonius who tells Ophelia to ward off Hamlet's advances in Act 1 Scene III of *Hamlet*. With Polonius dead, Hamlet can begin to establish more of an intimate relationship with Ophelia.

Unfortunately, the death of the father figure for Ophelia represents a death of the spirit or the will to live.

It is coincidental that immediately following the murder of Polonius, Ophelia commits suicide and Laertes wants to kill Hamlet to avenge his own father's murder. What is intriguing is that the force of the id that Hamlet lacks is somehow strengthened in Ophelia and Laertes. Ophelia takes her own lifewhere Hamlet is unable to. Similarly, upon hearing of the death of his father, Laertes ruthlessly wants his father's murderer dead, while Hamlet is hesitant to murder Claudius. Laertes, himself, can be likened to a shadow or reflection of Hamlet. In certain instances, he is Hamlet's alter ego and what Carl Jung refers to as the *Shadow*. Yet, Laertes also possesses a sensitivity that Hamlet is incapable of expressing. When Hamlet challenges Laertes by criticizing him and insinuating that he was making a spectacle of himself by leaping into the grave at Ophelia's burial, we get to the root of Hamlet's character. Hamlet's inherent weakness is his inability to display emotion and express his true feelings.

In essence, he is afraid to grieve and admit his flaws and shortcomings as he takes no responsibility for his actions. Nor does he express any guilt for his treatment of Ophelia prior to her suicide. Instead, he makes this bewildering statement to Laertes: "I loved Ophelia. Forty thousand brothers/Could not with all their quantity of love/Make up my sum. What will thou do for her?" (Hamlet 5.1.266-268)

From the aforementioned statement, Hamlet is clearly obsessed with incestuous relations. Is the analogy comparing Hamlet's relationship with Ophelia to that of brother and sister, considering it was a non-sexual union or is he implying that the relationship between Laertes and Ophelia was of an incestuous nature? After all, Laertes tells Ophelia to ward off Hamlet's advances and remain pure and virginal as Polonius does in Act I Scene III of *Hamlet*. Similarly, Hamlet demands that his mother refrain from sleeping with Claudius in Act III Scene IV. Hamlet's comparative analogy to that of "forty thousand brothers" is suggestive of Hamlet's own unsettling feelings towards his mother and his fixation with the sexual relationship between his mother and Claudius. It is rather strange that any feeling Hamlet expresses about other characters in the play are always tied to his feelings about Claudius and Gertrude.

Furthermore, it is after he murders Polonius that Hamlet is able to kill Laertes and Claudius as well as send Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to their deaths. It is also after the murder of Polonius that Hamlet becomes desensitized to the feelings of others. This accounts for his treatment of Ophelia.

In Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, he defines the concept of the repetition-compulsion principle. Camden expands on this concept in *Compromise Formations: Current Directions in Psychoanalytic Criticism*. "The repetition-compulsion principle has rich clinical implications, including the need to repeat traumatic experiences for the purpose of mastery. Repetitions may be creative or destructive, depending upon whether they result in working through or acting out conflicts" (166). In *Hamlet* this repetition-compulsion is first achieved through the murder of Polonius, then consequently, through the murder of Laertes. It is ironic that Hamlet replicates the traumatic experience of losing a father for Ophelia and Laertes. Also, it is ironic that the only way that Hamlet can kill Claudius is by confronting his own *Shadow* which takes the physical form and nature of Laertes who is also avenging his father's murder in a violent battle with Hamlet. One of the most complex facets in *Hamlet* is the replication and mirroring of several characters in the play.

The psychoanalytic argument expressed by Berryman supports the fact that Hamlet began to detest Ophelia because of her obedience to Polonius. On a subconscious level, it may have reminded him of Gertrude's submission and obedience to Claudius. The women that were central in Hamlet's life were submissive and obedient to other men. Coincidentally, after the murder of Polonius, Hamlet does not exhibit hesitation or guilt with respect to murder and death in all of its forms. This all becomes played out through various instances of replication and mirroring. This becomes apparent first through the murder of Polonius, then consequently through the suicide of Ophelia. Through a strange twist of fate, this pattern of Hamlet's inability to murder Claudius results in the mirroring of Hamlet through Laertes. The idea of Laertes existing as a shadow or a reflection of Hamlet is most apparent when Hamlet kills Laertes. "In folklore, to lose one's shadow is to be castrated or made infertile. In some languages, the same word does duty for 'soul' and 'shadow' so that images and reflections are also projections of the soul. One's image or double may also be a rival, as son of father, the act of doubling is itself a reflex of the Oedipal theme" (Kermode, 227). The murder of Laertes is a symbolic, metaphysical, and quite literal interpretation of the death of Hamlet, himself. Subsequently, the replication and mirroring of Hamlet represents the ambivalent expression of Hamlet's fate. This suggests that Hamlet was inevitably destined to avenge his father's murder in the final hour before his own death through this complex, most indirect route of his own hesitation and indecision.

According to Bloom, "by the start of Act V, Hamlet no longer needs to remember: the ghost is gone, the mental image of his father has no power" (405). This would indicate that by this time Hamlet is acting on his own will when he murders Laertes and Claudius. Hamlet is also indirectly responsible for the murder of his mother. She mistakenly drinks wine containing poison in a drink that was meant for Hamlet. Perhaps, by this time, Hamlet implicitly knows that Claudius is conspiring to kill him. Interestingly, Hamlet does not kill the one person he expresses the most resentment towards, his own mother. After Hamlet kills Claudius, he says: "Herethou incestuous, murd'rous damned Dane,/Drink off this potion. Is thy union here?/Follow my mother"(Hamlet 5.2.277-279).

The fact that Hamlet kills Claudius when he himself is dying is an extreme example of the repetition-compulsion principle. "Freud linked the repetition-compulsion principle to a metaphysical death instinct, an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things which the living entity has been obliged to abandon under the pressure of external disturbing forces" (Camden, 36). Although in Hamlet's case these disturbing forces arise from an internal instinctual source rather than an external one, since Hamlet is experiencing conscious awareness of unconscious drives as well as guilt and fear of the unknown. It is remarkable that the play ends with Hamlet feeling a sense of victory and finality after the deaths of Gertrude and Claudius who represent the inner torment and imprisonment that Hamlet feels. The play comes full circle when Claudius and Gertrude die of poison just as Hamlet Sr. died of poison when Claudius murdered him. The climax of the play is when Hamlet dies after achieving redemption. The basic premise of the play is not a revenge plot, but rather a means through which order is restored. Hamlet's life was not in vain, for the only way he can resolve his internal conflicts is to seek revenge and die in a state of pride and victory.

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