

- 3- T.J.B. Spencer ,” Decline of Hamlet ,” in Hamlet (ed) by J. R.Brown and B. Harris ; (London : Edward Arnold , 1953) , p.188.
- 4- A.C. Bradley , Shakespearean Tragedy (London : Macmillan , 1971) , p.103.
- 5- K. Muir , Shakespeare : Hamlet (London : Edward Arnold , 1963),p57.
- 6- H. Jenkins ed , The Arden Shakespeare: Hamlet (London : Methuen , 1982) , 137.
- 7- Bernard Lott , p. xii.
- 8- Bradley , pp. 105-7.
- 9- J.D. Wilson , What Happens in Hamlet (London : Cambridge Univ . Press, 1976),p.218
- 10- G. Wilson Knight, The Imperial Theme (London : O.U.P., 1931 ; rpt. Methuen , 1985), p.124.
- 11- Bernard Lott , p.L.
- 12 -W. Clemen , The Development of Shakespeare’s Imagery 2nd ed .(London : Methuen , 1951) ,p.117.
- 13- H. Gardner , “Hamlet and the Tragedy of Revenge ,” in Shakespeare: Modern Essays in Criticism , ed, by L.F. Dean , rev. ed (London :O.U.P., 1972),p.225.
- 14- Knight , p.101.

corruption and decay is spread in a more indirect and general way " ¹². Like Hamlet, the sensitive youth is also able to detect the sickness in society but is unable to cure it . Thus , Hamlet is "involved in those tragic dilemmas " , which give his complex and enigmatic character a sort of negative attraction. ¹³

Through an analysis of his character , one can see that Shakespeare's portrayal of the noble hero closely parallels the image of the sensitive youth . Such image is not only related to certain time but it is also related to human spirit, because both Hamlet and all sensitive youth suffer from the same weaknesses . So Hamlet, by his weakness and by his struggle , is the archetype of a sensitive youth image.

Thus, Hamlet's characteristic as a sensitive youth is designated and pointed out clearly by Knight , as "hypersensitive ". This hypersensitivity prevents him from accepting his world because he sees" all life as sullied , smirched , all but unreal " ¹⁴. Finally , Hamlet shows almost a terror that the heavy task of avenging his father has been laid upon him . His sensitive soul revolts from the task , but he accepts it , in spite of the sacrifice it leads to .

NOTES

References to Shakespeare's Hamlet, unless otherwise stated are from New Swan Shakespeare : Hamlet (ed) Bernard Lott (London: Longman Group Ltd. , 1968).

1- Fridrick Heer , Challenge of youth

(Alabama : Univ. of Alabama Press , 1974), p. 7.

2- Howard Jones , Crime in a changing Society

(Middlesex :Penguin Books Ltd ., 1965) ,pp140-7.

which becomes, in fact, a "negative idealism"¹⁰. He tends to become philosophical as he tries to rationalize his inaction:

...there is nothing either good or bad
but thinking makes it so

(II.ii, 247-8)

Things in themselves are neither good nor bad; it is what we think about them which makes them one or the other. Hamlet, thus, is revealed as a sensitive youth whose weaknesses prevent him from gaining command of his situation and fulfilling his moral commitments.

Among all his friends only Horatio pleases him entirely. Hamlet is naturally shrewd and sensitive to outside influences; the company he is with has great effect on his behaviour. He is adept in some fencing for example, and warm and sociable with those who are in sympathy with him. In ordinary terms he is more the scholar than the soldier. Yet when he is put under the stress of affairs he is neither cool nor thoughtful.¹¹ Hamlet, therefore, becomes an embodiment of the conflict he faces, or the embodiment of the sensitive youth caught and struggling in the "unweeded garden" of this world.

... This unweeded garden

That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature
possess it merely

(I.ii, 135-7)

The "garden" of the world is filled to the brim with what is coarse and foul in nature. This image is related to the sickness which Hamlet detects in society, but is unable to cure it. As Clemen remarked, "the atmosphere of

when he is exiled to England with a sealed order of murdering him. In consequence to that all the disasters that follow may be related to his delay, his "mental infirmity", and his too much sensitivity of facing reality which is so difficult to imagine.'

This desire to avoid responsibility is also related to Hamlet's attitude towards fate because when fate opposes him, he will fail and when he succeeds, it would only indicate that his desire acted as an agent of fate, as expressed by the player king:

Our wills and fates do so contrary run
That our desires still are overthrown
Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own.

(III.ii,198-201)

What we wish to happen and what is planned for us by fate are so much at variance with each other. The outcome of "our thoughts" is indeed, not in our hands. Accordingly, Hamlet is so sensitive that he is conscious of this paradox, and it serves to lessen his resolve and his faith in his ability to carry out his plans. Moreover it erodes determination by further uncertainty, despair and irresolution. Meanwhile, searching for a proof of his uncle's guilt for a long time, changes his whole view of life and he finds the greatest difficulty in accepting the new situation.

Finally, Hamlet's inactivity is caused by his oversensitive reaction to the conflict between reality and idealism. His black and white conception of morality would seem to show harmony and concurrence between thought and behaviour, but when Hamlet faces reality, he is unable to translate his purpose into concrete action. Thus, his inactivity is a matter of idealism he believes in,

Hamlet is not feeling easy about his role . He wishes that the task of defeating the wrong at Elsinore had not been thrown upon him . This tells us, that he wishes to escape from the responsibility which he has to carry out . Hamlet's escape from responsibility has been clearly shown in the speech when he hears the story of his father's ghost . He expresses his determination to avenge the murder , yet at the same time he says:

The time is out of joint . _ O cursed spite,
That ever I was born to set it right .

(I.v, 189-90)

Again he says :

Now might I do it pat , now he is praying
And now I'll do't ; and so he goes to heaven;
And so am I revenged – that would be scanned .
A villain kills my father , and , for that,
I ,his sole son , do this same villain send to heaven.

(III.iii,73-8)

This is an indirect excuse for delay , which shows the state of his mind- his failure to bear responsibility of action 8. Although the king is in his hands , yet he will not fulfil his revenge , because if he murders the king is in his hands , yet he will not fulfil his revenge , because if he murders the king while he prays , it means that he sends his soul straight to heaven whereas in the back of his mind , he does not want to do this thing without witnesses or secretly . Thus Hamlet thinks he must wait to catch the king at some vice and then he will kill him . But Hamlet's delay of killing the king finally endangers his freedom,

Hamlet is troubled by the thought that he might be wrong or misled by the ghost of his father who could be a devil:

...The spirit that I have seen
May be the devil, and the devil hath power
T'assume a pleading shape; yea, and perhaps
Out of my weakness and my weakness and my
melancholy
And he is very potent with such spirits
Abuses to damn me. I'll have ground
more relative than this.

(II.ii,573-9)

Obviously from the reasons which he gives, the validity of his thought of revenge is self-doubted⁶. Thus his fear of deception by the devil stems as much from his lack of confidence in himself as it does from his belief in the supernatural "spirits". Then he will search for some other facts or "grounds" because the evidence of the ghost might not be as conclusive as he had first thought. This self-doubt comes from the fact that he is well known as "noble of mind .. in evil world"⁷. He sways. Like any other human being, between reason and emotion. His soliloquies are the fruits of reason in which he relies on settlement for the right action to follow, but they also contain impassioned outbursts which veil the decision of the right action.

The second reason for Hamlet's hesitancy is his desire to avoid responsibility. This desire at first is overshadowed by his decision which is weakened by thought until it loses the name of action. As the play progresses there are two forces, hesitancy and resolution, opposing each other. Finally hesitancy triumphs, which is reflected in his desire to avoid responsibility.

Hamlet's is horrified by the reality of an evil world. He realizes that it is he who must seek to purify it, and when he tries to struggle to purify the world around him of evil, he faces his own weaknesses and shortcomings. He is annoyed by his inability to decide, by his confusion and insecurity, because they show that he is no hero, "but a complex [and] sensitive individual."² He is not brought to harmony with the world of feeling and thought, i. e. too much thinking only, but he is forced to exist in the world of action. Ultimately, his passionate and "delicate feelings" put him on the side of weakness,³ suffering and sometimes he wishes to die as expressed in:

...and by a sleep we and
The heartache and the thousand natural shocks
(III. i, 61-2)

Hamlet is so placed that two forces compel him in different directions at once: "To be or not to be". In the first part, he feels that he must purify and cure Elsinore of its sickness. In the second part, he hesitates, makes excuses and spends hours in contemplation, until he finally loses the opportunity to assume control of the situation. Sometimes the immediate cause of his father's death is that he "relapses into that weariness of life or longing for death."⁴

Through a study of Hamlet's character which is "of extraordinary complexity", one can detect three main reasons which prove that he is so sensitive to be able to make decision.⁵

The first reason is his self-doubt; though Hamlet is sure that his uncle killed his father, he is never really sure of himself. Before the performance of the Mouse-trap play which proves Claudius's guilt beyond all doubt,

sensitive youth. He is placed in a situation where quick judgement as the right or wrong cannot be made so easily that made him uncertain about so many things and situations. The famous questions in the play seem to point out the uncertainty of Hamlet's too much thinking of man:

What apiece of work is a man?... (II,ii,261)
To be or not to be that is the question . (III,i ,56)
Why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners ? (III, i, 122)

The essential predicaments of man such as corruption , greed, hypocrisy and treachery are emphasized on one hand, and Hamlet the young, sensitive and thoughtful man on the other. We notice how Hamlet talks when he is surrounded by such environment:

O God O God
How weary , stale , flat and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world .
(I.ii,132-4)

He remarks further,
Forgive me this my virtue;
For in the fatness of those pursy times
Virtue itself of vice must pardon beg.
(III.153-5)

One finds that in Hamlet's world virtue is so strange and alien that a person must apologize for having it . There is so much wickedness around man that virtue must bow and plead permission from vice if it wants to do some good.

HAMLET: AN ARCHETYPE OF SENSITIVE YOUTH

*Suleiman Yousif Abid

Hamlet :An Archetype of Sensitive Youth

Like all other great plays , Hamlet remains significant and important primarily because it presents ideas that are still similar to the ideas we might face and think of everywhere. This implies that Hamlet is concerned with problems that reflect universal themes. Although most of Shakespeare's tragedies have a universal application and appeal, it is Hamlet which has one of the most direct connection with the dilemma of sensitive youth. The Prince of Denmark finds himself in a world of poison with which he cannot always cope successfully.¹ His whole view of life is changed when he discovers the wrongs and finds the proof of his uncle's guilt .

Hamlet's rejection of the riddles of society has society has turned towards a glorification of the individual , fighting against forces which aim to destroy him. Hamlet's role is the manifestation of a desire to avoid and reject the new situation and to refuse understanding its implications. Though he is thoughtful and human, he has to face the "rotten" and corrupt world around him .

Dealing with Hamlet's problems and their significance , one can see the universality of Shakespeare's themes and ideas which are not only about right or wrong but they reflect clearly problems of

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