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Revenge and love in Hamlet
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Stránka pro původní formulář k zadání práce

Prohlašuji, že jsem práci vypracovala samostatně s použitím uvedené literatury a zdrojů informací.

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ABSTRACT

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Supervisor: PhDr. Magdaléna Potočňáková, Ph.D.

This undergraduate thesis is focused on William Shakespeare's tragedy Hamlet, the Prince of Denmark. It will focus on two aspects of the play - revenge and love and therefore it will be divided into two big chapters.

Each chapter will focus on one of the two aspects with the aim being to analyse and describe them as well as the relationships among the characters and their reasons for doing what they did.

First chapter is concerned with revenge and divided into two parts first aims to analyse Hamlet's reasons for revenge and the second is more concerned with Laertes's reasons for revenge.

The second chapter is focused on the aspect of love, in the first part of the chapter I will discuss whether there is any possibility of romantic love between Gertrude and Hamlet, in the second part I will focus on relationship between Hamlet and Ophelia.

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INTRODUCTION

The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, often shortened to just Hamlet, is probably one of Shakespeare's most famous plays. It tells a story about prince Hamlet whose father and king has been murdered. Of course Hamlet is devastated by the death of his king and father and he wants to avenge his death by killing the murderer.

Hamlet has to find out who is the murderer, he also has to prove him or her guilty, overcome his indecisiveness, and as if it was not enough he also has to renounce his love, literally give up his only chance at love, and also dirty his own hands and become murderer. In the end Hamlet has to murder is his uncle.

The play that, at first reading, seems to be concerned only with hate and desire for revenge is also concerned with love and its different forms and almost nothing is as it seems to be.

There are many questions we can ask while reading this play. Why would Claudius murder the king? Why would Hamlet feel such a desire to revenge the king's death? Why would he choose revenge over his only chance at love? Why would the queen marry again? Why would Hamlet pretend madness? What are Laertes' reasons for revenge? Why would a young beautiful Ophelia become mad and practically commit suicide?

Even after such a long time this play interests many people. My thesis will focus on the revenge and love as they could be considered complete opposites and yet you can choose to revenge somebody out of love. It will focus on Hamlet and Laertes' revenge, shortly also on Fortinbras'. The other part of this thesis will focus on love, love of Hamlet and Gertrude and whether Hamlet feels sexual desire for his mother. It will also be concerned with the relationship between Hamlet and Ophelia, whether their feelings are true or not. It will also focus on the reasons behind Ophelia's madness.

1. Revenge

1.1. Hamlet's Revenge

“This is certain, that a man that studieth revenge, keeps his own wounds green, which otherwise would heal, and do well.”

– Francis Bacon, On Revenge

When it comes to revenge Hamlet is following his father's order to avenge his murder. Revenge may be an ancient concept belonging to time of Ancient Rome or Greece and even before when people often used the concept of “an eye for an eye” and the revenge fell to the children and family of the murdered person.

“At first, crimes, which later were looked upon as offenses against the state, were merely private affairs. Thus murder was only a private offense against the victim and his surviving kinsmen. “(Hyde, 1918)

But apart from this order Hamlet is also for the most part guided by his feelings – love for his mother, and father, and Ophelia, and hate for Claudius, and sense of responsibility for the revenge, and also disgust caused by the sudden marriage of his mother and uncle.

According to Hilský (2010, p.463) the play also plays with the Elizabethan thought of “King's Two Bodies”. State was seen as social organism “Body” or “Body Politics” and this “Body” was represented by the king, but it was different from his real human body. The king's human body was imperfect because it was mortal, while the mystic body the “Body Politics” was perfect and perceived as immortal and as a set of the king's laws and decisions. Thus the king might have been present even after his death, through the laws he established.

That might be one of the reasons why Hamlet is so troubled; he may not see the ghost only as his father, but also as a reminder of the law and thus Hamlet feels even stronger obligations. But at the same time, his father's orders go not just against the political laws but also against the Church.

But with the thought of the “King's Two Bodies” a question comes, of whether the revenge is really necessary, since even when the king is dead, he still lives through the laws and orders he made. And we might now think that Hamlet is

not revenging his king but his father. That would be even stronger reason for him to find the courage to go against the laws and the Church. He does not do it “only” for the king but for his beloved and admired father, someone who was more important to him than a king could be.

“REVENGE is a kind of wild justice; which the more man’s nature runs to, the more ought law to weed it out. For as for the first wrong, it doth but offend the law; but the revenge of that wrong, putteth the law out of office.” (Bacon, 1597)

According to this, we could say that the king’s murder offends the law, but it can still be punished, but revenge completely disregards the law and its power to punish, its right to punish. Therefore we could say that for Hamlet no punishment given by the law will ever be enough to punish the murder of his father, not the king but his father. But Hamlet is again in conflict, whether to disregard what the Ghost tells him and keep in mind the laws that make his father immortal as a king, or listen to the Ghost and disregard the laws completely. Bacon also states that “that which is past is gone, and irrevocable; and wise men have enough to do, with things present and to come; therefore they do but trifle with themselves, that labour in past matters” (Bacon, 1597)

But Hamlet is bound to the past not only by the pain he feels but also by the Ghost whom he will see and who will command him. Hamlet’s curse is also his too strong and depressive feelings, inability to accept what has happened and that he can’t change it. He is unable to adapt to changes however quick they may be. His mourning for his father may be the reason why he believes the ghost is real and it being in “arms” may lead Hamlet to think something is wrong and in his mind it may be the death of his father and his mother and uncle’s marriage. And readers or viewers may later connect it with the outcome of the whole play, the action that will end in real blood bath.

HAMLET

My father’s spirit in arms! all is not well...

Till then sit still, my soul. Foul deeds will rise,

Though all the earth o’erwhelm them, to men’s eyes.

Act I, Scene II, 255-258

Maybe Hamlet also wants to believe that the Ghost is real because it may justify the crimes he is supposed to commit or wants to commit, it might be easier for him to believe that the order to commit those crimes comes from the Ghost of his late father rather than it being Hamlet's own wish.

Hamlet, like many others, wants to justify his deeds and as Hilský states (2010, p. 467) many philosophers attempted to do the same, for example Calvin defended the right of lower class for revolt and other philosophers said that state officials and especially princes and nobility had right to revolt against king whose care of state and people is insufficient and unsatisfactory. And Hamlet's revenge could be interpreted as a revolt because Claudius took the power by killing the previous king and instead of ruling and mourning the late king he organizes pompous celebrations to celebrate his marriage to Gertrude.

Demanding life for life or an eye for an eye was also traditional in Ancient Greece and it evolved with the change of the idea of afterlife.

The later Greek custom of demanding a life for a life... has been explained as the result of the change in ideas of the hereafter...developed after Homer's time and which attributed a far greater activity to the dead. Now the souls carried below a longing for revenge and...annoy its slayer and incite its kinsmen to avenge it. This idea is a myth common to the folklore of many peoples. (Hyde, 1918)

Hilský (2010, p.473) also states, that in Elizabethan time, people believed in the catholic concept that ghosts are souls of dead who for some reason came back to earth. Hamlet might have believed in similar things and the afterlife and this might have strengthened his belief that the Ghost is real and commands him. We might not know to what extent the Ghost is or is not real or to what extent Hamlet believes it to be real. But as mentioned previously it might well be Hamlet's attempt to justify what he is about to do and thus make it easier for him to carry out the commands. The Ghost is something his sad melancholic mind created to help him with what he was going through but maybe he believes too strongly that it is real.

GHOST

Let not the royal bed of Denmark be

A couch for .. damned incest.

But, howsoever thou pursuest this act,

Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive

Against thy mother aught: leave her to heaven...

Act I, Scene V, 82-86

Hyde (1918) also states that in ancient cultures it was believed that if not avenged the soul of a slain man would turn into fury and anger that would turn against its relatives. Thus we might say that Hamlet might have also believed that the Ghost is reminder of something similar and that, if he does not avenge his father, it would cause more pain for the family. If we connect this to what Hilský (2010) says about the catholic thought of ghost, as mentioned above, we have the reason for the ghost's return or for Hamlet's mind to create the ghost. Maybe Laertes also believes in the afterlife and wants to give his father peace by revenging him sooner than it will cause more pain to his own family

Bacon says "The most tolerable sort of revenge is, for those wrongs which there are no law to remedy; but then let a man take heed, the revenge be such as there is no law to punish; else a man's enemy is still beforehand, and it is two for one". (Bacon, 1597)

Hamlet may also believe that there is no law which could punish the murder of his father and the incest (that is the marriage of Gertrude and Claudius). As mentioned in his eyes the punishment given by the law might be unsatisfactory for how wrong the crimes were, and therefore he decides to carry out the revenge, and as mentioned above the Ghost might just justify what he wants to do. And to conceal his real intentions and plans Hamlet starts to act as if he is mad and insane. Hamlet devices a plan to prove, that Claudius is guilty and for this purpose Hamlet uses the players and the play.

But before that Hamlet wants to hear one monologue from the player, one that will maybe let us see what he will do for the first time.

HAMLET

.. Where he speaks of

Priam's slaughter..

FIRST PLAYER

.. Unequal match,

Pyrrhus at Priam drives; in rage strikes wide..

So as painted tyrant, Pyrrhus stood....

With less remorse than Pyrrhus' bleeding sword

Now falls on Priam...

Act II, Scene II, 442, 465-466, 474, 485-486

For us, this monologue could reflect the murder of the late king Hamlet by Claudius but also of what Hamlet is about to do. Hilský (2010, p.510) reminds us about the Greek tragedy according to which Priamos killed Pyrrhus' father Achilles. And thus Hamlet may also see not only what Claudius has done, but also what he will do – his revenge.

HAMLET

... That I, the son of a dear father murdered,

Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell...

.... I'll have these players

Play something like the murder of my father

Before my uncle: I'll observe his looks..

Act II, Scene II, 578-579, 588-590

But there is still Claudius who knows that he has to be careful around Hamlet because Hamlet has support of the people and he is also the son of the dead king and since the new king Claudius wants to keep the power as long as possible. Claudius needs to know about everything that might be happening around him, especially if it concerns Hamlet. Therefore Claudius spies on Hamlet while he speaks with Ophelia, because he wants to know if the madness was really caused by the love.

KING CLAUDIUS

Love! His affections do not that way tend;
Nor what he spake, though it lacked from a little,
Was not like madness. There's something in his soul...
Will be some danger: which for to prevent,
I have in quick determination
.....he shall with speed to England..
Act III, Scene I, 164-166, 169-171

Claudius, being clever, observes Hamlet closely and sees what a reader or viewer can see too, that is that Hamlet's behaviour, even though it sometimes seems insane and sometimes his words do not seem to make sense, is a bit different from what you would really expect from an insane man, as if he is acting and sometimes trying too hard to seem crazy. A crazy man would not prepare a play like Hamlet did- that is something Claudius also knows. But before Claudius sends Hamlet away he will have to watch the play and see what he did and Hamlet will do to him and Hilský (2010) calls this effect "mirror" and it truly is a mirror.

PLAYER KING

Faith, I must leave thee, love, and shortly too;
.... and haply one as kind
For husband shalt thou—

PLAYER QUEEN

Such love must needs be treason in my breast:
..None wed the second but who killed the first.

PLAYER KING

I do believe you think what now you speak;
But what we do determine oft we break.
Purpose is but slave to memory....
So think thou wilt no second husband wed;
But die thy thoughts when thy first lord is dead.
Act III, Scene II, 168 - 172, 173 - 175, 181 - 183, 209 210

The play of course has one main purpose, to prove Claudius guilty, but it also points to Gertrude. It conveys what Hamlet probably thinks about the sudden marriage; to him it is incest, something Hilský (2010) mentions too. When the Player Queen says “a second time I kill my husband dead, when second husband kisses me in bed” it means that Hamlet believes that her marrying Claudius and sleeping with him in one bed is almost the same thing since she promised to be faithful wife to his father and then married the late king’s brother. But the speech of Player King proves that Hamlet actually believes she loved his father but that something caused her to forget her promise to him and marry again. Gertrude’s reasons are unclear, we may only ask if she knew about Claudius’ plan, or if she had any part in it or whether Claudius persuaded her. We might also ask whether she was afraid that Claudius could try to kill her and her son too, and by marrying Claudius she wanted to save herself and her son. If so that would mean she also considered Claudius enemy but thought about it and listened to the saying “keep your friends close and your enemies closer”.

KING CLAUDIUS

What do you call the play?

HAMLET

The Mouse-trap....

LUCIANUS

Thoughts black, hands apt, drugs fit, and time agreeing...

Pours poison into the sleeper’s ears

Act III, Scene II, 230-231, 249-254

The play Hamlet used is about the murder of duke Gonzago who was murdered around 1592 and left a widow named Hippolyta and a daughter named Caterina (Bollough, 1935). This is similar to king Hamlet’s situation – being murdered and leaving behind a widow and in this case a son. The difference is that Gonzago was murdered by his nephew Rudolfo and not by his brother, like the king Hamlet. (ibid) This actually might lead us to believe that the play is not there only to prove Claudius guilty but as a mirror, which as mentioned, Hilský (2010) also discusses. Claudius realises what he did and also that Hamlet knows about his crime. Hamlet realises that the Ghost did not lie to him and because Gonzago was

murdered by his nephew, he also sees himself in the character, because he has to do similar thing – kill the king and sees himself as a murderer not much different from Claudius, however noble his reasons might be. Hamlet therefore might question whether he will not be in the same position as Claudius – a murderer, a sinner, who obtained the throne by murdering the king. Claudius also sees into future and sees what might happen to him if he will not act quickly and does not send Hamlet away and shaken Claudius leaves the room and goes to pray to his own room.

CLAUDIUS

My offence is rank it smells to heaven;
It hath the primal eldest curse upon,
A brother's murder ...
In the corrupted currents of this world
Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice,
And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself
Buys out the law: but 'tis not so above;
There is not shuffling, there the action lies
In his true nature....

Act III, Scene III, 37-39, 58-63

This prayer is probably the longest monologue that Claudius has, but is it really a prayer? It may look like it, Claudius may be regretting what he did especially after he saw how awful it was and from Hamlet's hiding point it may even look like he is praying. But it is more of a regretting over his inability to pray to heaven for forgiveness because what he did was one of the most foul things he could have done and as Claudius says "what form of prayer can serve my turn? 'Forgive me my foul murder'?". Claudius goes so far as to call what he did a "the primal eldest curse" and even if there was something he could do to purify his soul, the "curse" cannot be taken off because he is "still possess'd of those effects" and those "effects" are the crown he got, the wife of his brother, and ambition.

HAMLET

... Now he is praying;
And now I'll do't. And so he goes to heaven;
And so I am revenged...
A villain kills my father; and for that,
I, his sole son, do this same villain send
To heaven.
O, this is hire and salary, not revenge.
Act III, Scene III,73-80

As Hilský (2010, p.514) also points out, Hamlet as opposed to the audience, does not hear what Claudius is saying, because from his hiding point he can only see Claudius who looks as if he is really praying. That is the reason why Hamlet changes his mind about killing Claudius because he would “take him in the purging of his soul” which would enable Claudius to enter the heaven but Hamlet wants him to suffer after his death, suffer for what he did and so he decides to take him “when he is drunk.. or in the incestuous pleasure of his bed.. Then trip him” because then and only then Claudius will not get his absolution, but he will leave world full of his sins like Hamlet’s father who was murdered “grossly, full of bread” and without absolution. And as Hilský (ibid, p.515) further points out, there is probably another reason why Claudius is not killed now. If Hamlet were to kill Claudius now the tragedy would end with revenge, the evil would be punished and Hamlet would be just another avenger and not the most famous tragic hero, because a hero like that just has to die.

After making this decision Hamlet goes to his mother and what happens there sets reasons for another kind of revenge in this play.

Hamlet while talking to his mother discovers a spy – Lord Polonius – and thinking it is his uncle Claudius, he draws a sword and kills the spy. But right after that, he discovers it was Polonius, Claudius’ right-hand man and blind follower and also Laertes and Ophelia’s father. And Laertes will become the next avenger (and Claudius will later use this opportunity and use Laertes as a tool to get rid of Hamlet).

Polonius is one of the people killed by Hamlet but Polonius death is actually an accident; if he meant to kill someone at the moment, it was Claudius, and

Polonius's death is the first to dirty Hamlet's hands (another will be Laertes and we could say Hamlet is partly responsible for Ophelia's death too). The irony is that Polonius himself ordered Reynaldo to spy on his son Laertes while he is Paris and while ordering this to Reynaldo he shows him that one good way to spy is hiding behind something, for example a curtain, without even knowing that he will be killed while doing the same thing, as Goddard (1955) points out.

It is this murder that also pulls Hamlet into the dirt of the world of that time, world that is corrupted and everyone can get dirty even if they do not want to (world that is similar to our). Hamlet wanted to do what he might have thought was right but in the process got tangled into the mechanism and scheming of the dirty world that he so despised and which Claudius represented in Hamlet's eyes. And Hamlet knows that what he did was bad and even puts it on similar level to what Claudius did or to Claudius and Gertrude's marriage.

But because Polonius was not the one Hamlet was supposed to murder the Ghost comes to remind him of what he has to do.

GHOST

Do not forget: this visitation

Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose...

Act III, Scene IV, 113-114

He comes not only after Hamlet killed Polonius but also after he had the chance to kill Claudius but did not do it. It is as if the Ghost, the dead king saw it and thought he had to remind his son of his promise as if he felt Hamlet questioned his deeds and what he is supposed to do in future, and as if Hamlet through the Ghost wants to remind himself of what he is supposed to do, what he wants to do.

HAMLET

I do repent: but heaven hath pleased it so,

..... and will answer well

The death I gave him..

I must be cruel, only to be kind:

Thus bad begins and worse remains behind..

Act III, Scene IV, 179, 182-185

Hamlet regrets killing Polonius but he also says that it might have been punishment for Polonius, who had no right to spy and that he brought it on himself. As opposed to Claudius, Hamlet says that he will take responsibility for Polonius' death and that it might also be punishment for him (maybe for plotting Claudius' death).

When Hamlet says “ thus bad begins and worse remains behind” it is as if he is saying that bad things will only cause new evil however we try to undo them or punish them and that even in the process of carrying out the punishment we may produce new evil. It is as if Shakespeare says that the play started with one evil deed which in the end was cause for many other bad deeds and deaths of many people involved or not – as if to say evil is hard to punish and it will somehow always produce just another evil even if we might think that we are doing the right thing. Hamlet accepts that evil is in everybody and that it is impossible to live life without doing something bad.

Claudius after hearing about the events feels even more threatened and needs to find Hamlet and to find him he sends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. When they find Hamlet, they talk with him and try to make Hamlet tell them what happened and where is Polonius's body.

HAMLET

The body is with the king, but the king is not with

The body. The king is a thing ----

Act IV, Scene II, 26-27

This could lead us back to the idea about the king's two bodies – one that is Body Politic that was the state and political mechanism that the king represented and this body was perfect in the sense that it would not die as opposed to the human body which in this sense was imperfect. Hamlet here means that the body of the king is dead but that the king really is not dead or in the body that he became the laws and thus immortal.

Hamlet becomes more and more dangerous and the need to get rid of him is stronger and more urgent. But Claudius needs to be careful, because as he himself says, Hamlet is loved by people and in their eyes nothing Hamlet could do, could

possibly be bad. When Claudius questions Hamlet about the body of Polonius what he hears again makes it even clearer that Hamlet poses a threat and is clever rather than crazy.

HAMLET

Not where he eats, but where he is eaten: certain
Convocation of politic worms are e'en at him.
.....we fat all
Creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for
Maggots: your fat king and your lean beggar is but
Variable service, two dishes, but to one table;
That's the end
Act IV, Scene III, 22-28

The “convocation of politic worms” refers to the politics and society of the kingdom and probably Claudius himself where “you either kill, and eat or you are eaten” where you have to pay attention and even use dirty means to get what you want and where sometimes people behave worse than lesser animals. And it is kind of ironic since Polonius, under Claudius order, behaved like worm and spied on everyone and brought information to the king, but in the end ended up being eaten by just worms. And if Polonius was “a worm” then the biggest worm in politics is Claudius. Claudius knows that in many ways Hamlet is a threat for him and he has to find a way to get rid of Hamlet, quietly so no one will actually know what he is doing and he hopes that not even Hamlet himself will notice it and will believe it is for his own “good”.

KING CLAUDIUS

Hamlet, this deed, for thine especial safety---
---- must send thee hence
With fiery quickness: therefore prepare thyself;
The bark is ready, and the wind at help...
Act IV, Scene III, 44, 46-48

1.2 Laertes and Fortinbras

But in the play Hamlet is not the only one who seeks revenge – Laertes will seek it after learning about his father’s murder. Fortinbras’ reasons for what he does are mostly unclear but compared to Hamlet (and Laertes) he seems more calculating and less under the influence of his emotions, because his desire is to reclaim what once belonged to Norway.

But despite not knowing much about Fortinbras we could point out one thing and that is that as opposed to Hamlet Fortinbras goes against his father’s wish and even against the agreement that his father had with the late king Hamlet.

HORATIO

At least, the whisper goes so. Our last king,

....

Did slay this Fortinbras; who by a sealed compact,

...

Did forfeit, with his life, all those his lands

Which he stood seized of, to the conqueror:

Act I, Scene I, 82, 88, 90-91

Fortinbras comes and simply wants to go through the country so he can get to Poland. Fortinbras is another case of revenge in the play, and we can see how different he is from Hamlet and Laertes. Fortinbras is cold and calculating and true leader of the new era. He will not let old costumes to stop him from obtaining what he wants. But strangely his deeds do not seem strange to anyone and no one questions his reasons for crossing Denmark, not even Claudius who should be careful since Fortinbras is a prince from another kingdom and has an army with him. But maybe Hamlet poses much bigger threat to Claudius because Hamlet has favour of the people and love of his mother.

PRINCE FORTINBRAS

... From me greet the Danish king;
Tell him that.. Fortinbras
Claims the conveyance of a promised march
Over his kingdom
Act IV, Scene IV, 1-4

When Hamlet hears that Fortinbras and his army go to Poland to get just a small patch of land and he compares himself to Fortinbras- Hamlet the son of the dead king, with mother who married so quickly and even married Claudius, who was considered her brother, and Fortinbras, also a son of the king but strong enough to lead army in the war even for a little piece of land.

HAMLET

How all occasions do inform against me,
And spur my dull revenge! What is a man...
... a beast no more.
....Witness this army of such mass and charge
Led by a delicate and tender prince,
Whose spirit with divine ambition puffed...
.....Rightly to be great
Is not to stir without great argument,
But greatly to find quarrel in a straw
When honour's at the stake. How stand I then,
..... O from this time forth,
My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth!
Act IV, Scene IV, 32-35, 47-49, 53-56, 65-66

Compared to Fortinbras Hamlet, even in his own eyes, seems like indecisive man, always questioning if the moment or ways to get something are right. Hamlet sees a strong prince, followed by his men, who go to fight in his name and probably know they will die. Fortinbras is someone who makes a decision and stands for it and fights for it be it a small meaningless patch of land. He is ambitious and

certainly can persuade people to follow him, which would make him a great politician.

And this makes Hamlet realise that he needs to decide and truly do something and he swears that “from this time forth my thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth!” he swears that he will either complete the revenge or become a worthless disappointment to his father and even to himself.

Another avenger is Laertes. Laertes does not follow the orders of his father but is actually being manipulated by Claudius who again shows his skills in manipulation and using people. He does not only use Polonius’ death to persuade Laertes but also the madness of his sister, and as Camden (1964) points out that might be the reason why he mentions that the cause of her madness was her father’s death, rather than the love for Hamlet, so that Laertes thirst for revenge grows even stronger.

Claudius is clever, and so he tells Laertes when asked why he did not do anything that of course it was because of Gertrude who loves her son too much and will be greatly hurt if something happens to Hamlet and that of course he could not live with himself if he saw her pain over Hamlet and his deeds. And he also mentions the people whose favour Hamlet also has and this might also fuel Laertes’ thirst for revenge even more because this will make Hamlet almost untouchable and impossible to be punished because of the favour of people and his high status, almost as if he can do anything and escape even if his deed is vile.

KING CLAUDIUS

O, for two special reasons....

.....The queen his mother

Lives almost by his looks; and for myself...

She is conjunctive to my life and soul,

That, as the star moves not but in his sphere,

I could not but by her. The other motive...

Is the great love the general gender bear him ...

Act IV, Scene VII, 9, 11-12, 14-16,18

When persuading Laertes to follow his orders, Claudius says: “will you be ruled by me?” and Laertes answers: “I will be ruled”. Those are strong words but

they suit Claudius and the situation very well. Laertes is easy to be manipulated and overruled by words if used the right way especially by someone who knows what and how to say it. Claudius is a politician who does not shy away from using dirty means to get whatever he desires and he is very good at manipulation and wordplays. Using the word “rule” shows how much he wants to have control and power over everything that is happening and Laertes’ answer tells us that he easily became Claudius’ new puppet in the play that should lead to ridding Claudius of Hamlet. And Laertes even goes so far as saying “I might be the organ” offering his services to Claudius eagerly and not knowing he got himself caught in Claudius’ web.

Claudius devices a plan for Laertes to fight with Hamlet and to make sure Hamlet will die the rapier will be dipped in poison so even if Hamlet’s wounds are small they will still be mortal.

LAERTES

I will do it...

I bought an unction of a mountebank,

So mortal that, but a dip a knife in it,

....no cataplasm so rare.....

Can save the thing from death...

Act IV, Scene VII, 139, 141-145

Claudius never played fairly in the political game especially when he wanted to gain something, so we should not be surprised by the plan. We would not be surprised if it was Claudius who persuaded Laertes to use poison because, he used poison to rid himself of the late king Hamlet.

But it might be surprising that it was Laertes who bought the poison. Maybe it shows how eager he was to avenge his father and he wanted to make sure he really kills Hamlet. The other reason might be that he knows that there might not be any other way he might win in a duel against Hamlet; he might know that Hamlet’s abilities far exceed his own. Other reason might be, as mentioned further above in text, that he might want to act quick because he believes that the longer the revenge will take him the bigger is the chance the death of his father will cause more pain for the family, for that his soul will return from afterlife.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

... So fast they follow; your sister's drowned, Laertes

Act IV, Scene VII, 164

If we believed the Homeric and Platonic thought of not avenged soul turning against its family, as it is described by Hyde (1918), we might believe that maybe Ophelia's death might be the result of Polonius' soul turning against his family.

From the text itself we know that she fell into the brook from a willow tree and that she made no move to save her own life. Her death is often said to be caused by her madness which was caused by her father's death and by the complicated relationship between her and the prince and the rude harsh words he had said to her.

Because Laertes does not know about the depth of Ophelia's feelings for Hamlet, he believes that the cause of her madness was the death of their father, which adds another reason why he could believe that in a way Polonius' soul caused her madness as a way to show its anger about not being avenged – in other words Laertes believes the cause of her madness and death were caused by their father's death.

Ophelia's death only adds more fuel to the anger and hater in Laertes and his desire to avenge his father and now his sister grows so much that when he sees Hamlet on the graveyard he attacks him.

LAERTES

The devil take thy soul!

Act V, Scene I, 254

Others have to separate Laertes from Hamlet and it is only a wonder that Laertes did not try to kill Hamlet right there and maybe he would attempt it if it were not for others who separated them, and especially, for Claudius who reminds Laertes about their plan.

CLAUDIUS

Strengthen your patience in our last night's speech,
We will put the matter to present push...

Act V, Scene I, 291 -292

When they leave the graveyard, in another scene we can see how Hamlet retells the story of his sudden departure from Denmark and his arrival to Horatio. When he does that, we can finally see the duel between Hamlet and Laertes and maybe because Claudius knows Hamlet is very skilled, he also puts a poison into cup of wine intended for Hamlet to make sure he really dies in case Laertes will not be able to strike him with his poisoned rapier. But things do not go as planned for Claudius. Instead of Hamlet, Gertrude drinks the wine and just before she is dead, Laertes wounds Hamlet with a poisoned rapier and just a moment later they exchange the rapiers and Hamlet, without knowing it, takes the poisoned one, and wounds Laertes with it.

LAERTES

I am just kill'd with my own treachery.

Act V, Scene II, 315

That is what Laertes says and that is what actually killed him, it might have been the poison but in reality it was the treachery of his unfair behaviour during the duel and that he had agreed to Claudius' plan. He is killed with poison he bought himself.

In an attempt to clear himself, Laertes in his dying moment tells Hamlet "the treacherous instrument is in thy hand...the king's to blame". And finally Claudius' gets a taste of his own medicine so to speak, in more than one sense.

HAMLET

Here, thou incestuous, murderous, damned Dane,

Drink off this potion. Is thy union here?

Follow my mother.

Act V, Scene II, 333- 335

Claudius dies with the pain of seeing his plan fall to pieces, seeing his love die and loses everything. And that is not all. He dies as a sinner, without absolution, that is something Hamlet wanted for him as revenge for the murder of his father.

Claudius does not only have to drink the real poison but taste the bitterness of his treachery.

In this awful scene, full of death, we can see a true love of a friend who would, out of his honour, follow his beloved prince to death even if it meant committing suicide; but Hamlet stops him.

HAMLET

... O good Horatio, what a wounded name,
Things standing thus unknown, shall live behind me!
If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart..
In this world draw thy breath in pain,
Too tell my story.

Act V, Scene II , 352-357

Hamlet accepts his death and the bad in every human but wants people to know of his story and what caused all the pain and death, maybe to warn other people.

Here we might remember Hamlet's previous words "Thus bad begins and worse remains behind" the first evil was the death of Hamlet's father and that set to motion all of the other things and what has begun with one death, ended with deaths of many other people– Polonius, poor Ophelia, Laertes who was used by Claudius, Claudius himself, Gertrude, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and of course Hamlet.

The only survivors are Fortinbras, who will in the end get what he wants even though not the way he imagined getting it, and Horatio who is the only one able to tell the whole tragedy of one Danish Prince.

The last words of Hamlet and the role Horatio plays in this may remind us of lines from Shakespeare's Sonnet 18. (Mabillard, Shakespear-online.com, 2014)

"So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this and this gives life to thee."

Horatio is the only true friend the only bearer of truth in the play and what he will tell the world will be as accurate retelling of the true story as it can be. He was the one who fought with the old king Hamlet, stayed true friend to the prince, swore to keep the ghost a secret and was his confidant.

As long as his words are heard, the story of the Danish Prince will live and so will the true story.

Sadly enough it was revenge and its consequences that have led Laertes to realise the mistake he made when he used the poison to kill Hamlet. It was revenge that made it possible for them to reconcile and forgive one another and, what more, it almost seems like a kind of absolution. The only one who gained anything from this was Fortinbras who even got Hamlet's voice. Maybe it was because he did not want to kill a murderer of his father, maybe he knew it was a consequence of war, but he just wanted to get back a land, a property, something that he could get back, but neither Hamlet nor Laertes did not realise that no amount of effort will bring their loved ones back.

2. Love

“..love is ever matter of comedies, and now and then of tragedies..”

- Francis Bacon, On Love

Many think that Hamlet is mainly a play about revenge and that is certainly true but in many senses it is a play about love, a great love tragedy. It is a story about the ability to love, to show love, and to follow ones heart but also a play about the inability to do so.

There are many cases and examples of love in the play. There is Ophelia, who truly loves Hamlet, but also her father and brother, and because she is a good daughter she obeys her father and brother and returns all of Hamlet's gifts later on in the play. Then there are Polonius and Laertes, who love Ophelia and that is the reason why they warn her against Hamlet. They both know what young men can be like, especially Laertes, who is also young and they both want to save Ophelia the pain and humiliation should Hamlet's love be false.

There is also Gertrude, who apparently loves her son Hamlet, and who also loved her late husband, and who also seems to love Claudius. We should not forget Hamlet, who loves his friend, his late father, which is one of the reasons why he wants to carry out the revenge, and he also loves his mother. Horatio the only true friend of prince Hamlet shows his true loyal love when he serves the prince and keeps his secrets, and even when he attempts to commit suicide out of love for a friend, out of loyalty and honour.

And, as surprising as it may be, even Claudius shows signs of love and that love is the reason why he does what he does because as Francis Bacon (1597) said in his essay on Revenge “there is no man that doth a wrong got for the wrong's sake; but thereby to purchase himself profit, or pleasure, or honour, or the like.” And profit in a form of power, kingdom, crown and pleasure, in a form of Gertrude are what Claudius loves and he would do anything to keep them.

2.1. Hamlet and Gertrude

Concerning romantic love, many said that there might be romantic relationship between Hamlet and Ophelia, but also romantic relationship between Hamlet and his mother Gertrude.

Many argue that Hamlet's love for his mother has signs of Oedipus or Oedipal Complex, which was described and named by Sigmund Freud but probably known even before, since Freud named it after Oedipus a character from Greek myth, who fell in love with his own mother, and so it would be possible that Shakespeare could somehow, without knowing the name of the complex or this diagnosis, incorporate such thought into his play.

Nancy Burke (1998), in the book "Gender and Envy" states that Oedipus Complex is the first stage that can be recognized in the boys, and in this time a child (a boy) regards his father as rival and would like to get rid of him and take his place as mother's sexual partner, but at the same time the child knows that father is the stronger of the two and thus the boy fears castration (which is an irrational fear). If that was true then since Hamlet's father is dead Hamlet would now have to get rid of his own uncle, who took the place of his father as his mother's sexual partner. We could say that this might be another reason for his desire to kill Claudius.

But at the same time, Hamlet hates the thought of his mother and Claudius being married for simple reason, at that time they were seen as brother and sister by marriage and thus their relationship was seen as an incest, and Hamlet sees it the same way which Hilský (2010) also points out. Thus the thought that Hamlet would want to have any sexual relationship with his mother does not seem as something possible. But we could, to certain extent, consider that he is really fixated on his mother. Hamlet is a child who has already lost one parent and now the mother is the only remaining blood family and thus Hamlet might really be jealous of Claudius and fear that he will lose his mother too. There is also the fact that Oedipus complex rarely ends in real sexual relationship with the parent of opposite sex but rather it ends with neurosis, paedophilia, homosexuality, or the child seeking a partner that resembles their parent.

According to Nordqvist (2014), neurosis is described as long-term mental state during which one can experience depressive mood and suffer from feeling of

guilt, envy, anger, or anxiety, which are stronger than in any other person. This person can even tend to be aggressive, negative and depressive. Those who tend to be neurotic respond badly to what Nordqvist (ibid) calls “environmental stress” and any trivial situation may be very problematic for such people and even lead to despair.

And as we can see, Hamlet clearly has depressive or negative moods and he is aggressive towards his uncle, whom he wants to kill. But as for the sexual desire for his mother, it is more likely that he seeks out another partner whom he thinks might be similar to his mother, and maybe he sees similarities between his mother and Ophelia.

2.2. Hamlet and Ophelia

LAERTES

... Perhaps he loves you now...

... but you must fear,

His greatness weighed, his will is not his own;

For he himself is subject to his birth:

He may not, as unvalued person do,

Carve for himself, for on his choice depends

The safety and health of this whole state..

..... Be wary then; best safety lies in fear;

Youth to itself rebels, though none else near.

Act I, Scene III, 14-21, 43-44

Ophelia may be what Hamlet seeks in love and he may even truly love her but she is young and her brother wants to protect her, her honour, and even honour of their family. Here Laertes states several problems of Hamlet and Ophelia’s relationship. Hamlet is a prince and although it may seem that he can do many things that others cannot do, he simple cannot marry just anyone because as a prince, he has to always think about the kingdom first, and how his choices might affect the country and he is simply too out of reach for someone like Ophelia. Another problem is that there is a lot at stake for Ophelia if she listens to Hamlet’s words too much and will believe him everything. She might lose her own honour and of course she might even

lose her virginity and Hamlet might not marry her, and would ruin her family's name and her. And another problem is her youth; Ophelia is young and inexperienced and she may easily believe someone older who says he loves her and Hamlet is a man, a young man with hot blood so to speak and his promises of love might not be real.

But maybe Laertes and later on Polonius' words might also make Ophelia focus even more on Hamlet's acting and maybe in her mind she might think that if her family attempts to "break them up" then Hamlet's feelings might be actually real.

While Laertes' words seem kind and said in tone that brother might use with his young sister Polonius is harsher.

POLONIUS

... You do not understand yourself so clearly
As it behoves my daughter and your honour.
What is between you? Give me up the truth.
Act I, Scene III, 96-98

Polonius is commanding and does not really seem to care about his young daughter's feelings. He also seems desperate to bring new information to the king and prove his intelligence. The tool to get to new information no one might know is his daughter, who obediently tells him that the prince showed some signs of affection to her. When asking "What is between you?" Polonius probably would like to know if there is actually more than exchange of gifts or romantic feelings; because if the relationship is sexual then it could damage his family's reputation but it could be also very important information which he could present to the king to prove his own intelligence. And maybe he even dreams of marrying his daughter to the prince because that would give him higher social status.

But Ophelia does not seem to understand what her father might be asking.

POLONIUS

Affections! Pooh! You speak like green girl...
Do you believe his tenders, as you call them?
Act I, Scene III, 101-103

Polonius almost laughs at her innocent reply and tells her she speaks like “green girl” someone who truly does not understand the way world and especially man function. But Ophelia truly is young and “green girl”. She tells her father dutifully what Hamlet told her and how she thinks of it, but Polonius warns her.

POLONIUS

When the blood burns, how prodigal the soul
Lends the tongue vows: these blazes, daughter,
Giving more light than heat, extinct in both,
Even in their promise...
You must not take for fire..
Be somewhat scanner of your maiden presence;
Set your entreatments at a higher rate...

Act I, Scene III, 116-122

He tells her that Hamlet is young and he might promise a lot but once he gets what he wants the promises will be forgotten and he will leave her. He is only playing with her feelings but she must not give in, because she does not have the luxury he has to “fool around”. Polonius also advises her to make herself more precious, be less in contact with Hamlet and talk to him less. Polonius actually advises Ophelia to behave like many women might do, to make herself more precious and thus more wanted, to try and attract and seduce him, something Hamlet will accuse her of later on, when talking about the ways in which women behave.

Polonius orders her to stop any contact with Hamlet and return all the gifts. Ophelia, as a good daughter does what her father tells her, and we might only imagine the shock she experienced when Hamlet barged into her chambers. Her mind, a mind of a young girl, might believe that it was her rejection that caused his behaviour and thus she might blame herself for his condition. She runs to her father and instead of telling her it was not her fault Polonius does the exact opposite.

OPHELIA

I did repel his fetters and denied

His access to me

POLONIUS

That hath made him mad...

... I feared he did but trifle,

And meant to wreck thee..

Act II, Scene I, 110-115

As Camden (1964) states, that when Polonius told Ophelia when she followed his orders she caused this to Hamlet he actually delivered one of the first blows to her young mind. And it also seems as if he did not care what he might be doing to her when saying this and how she might feel. As if for him she is only a tool to prove to the king that he knows the real cause of Hamlet's mental state. Slowly Hamlet, Polonius, and even Laertes are causing her personality and heart to break and slowly they are causing her to go mad, because she does not fully understand what they are doing and why.

POLONIUS

And I do think... That I have found

The very cause of Hamlet's lunacy.

Act II, Scene II, 47-50

We can see that Polonius cares little about his daughter's feelings and mental when he proudly goes to the king and the queen and says that it was him and him only who found out the cause of the young prince's mental state. But then when the king and the queen want to know what he found out Polonius says that they should first see the ambassadors that Fortinbras had send. Why does Polonius not say what he knows right away? Why does he not present the letter when he is asked to say what he knows?

POLONIUS

That he is mad, tis' true...

.....And now remains

That we find out the cause of this effect...

I have a daughter....

Who, in her duty and obedience....

Hath give me this: now gather, and surmise..

Reads

'To the celestial and my soul's idol, the most
beautified Ophelia'...

In her excellent white bosom...

'Doubt thou the stars are fire;

Doubt that the sun doth move;

Doubt truth to be a liar,

But never doubt I love.

O dear Ophelia, I am ill at these numbers;

I have not art to reckon my groans: but that

I love thee best, believe it. Adieu.

Thine evermore most dear lady, whilst

This machine is to him, HAMLET'.

Act II, Scene II, 99-113, 116-125

Goddard (1955) argues that Polonius might have had this letter from Ophelia and that Hamlet maybe really wrote it, but to prove his point, Polonius might have made a few changes since the letter is really different from the letters Hamlet wrote to Horatio and Claudius. Although it had been written in the style used at that time Ophelia herself says that Hamlet was different he did not like doing things the way everyone did. So Polonius maybe simply needed the time to change the letter but Goddard (ibid) also points out another reason why it might be different from other letters and that is the revenge. Hamlet knew he cannot have both his love and at the same time carry out the revenge so he decided to alienate himself from Ophelia. But would not a letter like that strengthen her belief that his feelings are true? Because he uses sweet words and tells her not to doubt his feelings and she is young and as her father calls her a "green girl" and very naïve.

But the truth is that the letter had been written before the madness act and so Hamlet might have really been courting Ophelia, but when Polonius obtained the letter he altered it to make it sound more passionate, like the letters of that time, only to prove that the prince's love was so strong that the rejection caused him to go mad.

POLONIUS

Lord Hamlet is prince out of thy star;
This must not be; and then I precepts gave her,
That she should lock herself from his resort,
Admit no messengers, receive no tokens.
.Which done, she took the fruits of my advice;
And he, repulsed...
Fell into sadness, then into a fast...
... by this declension
Into the madness wherein now he raves..
Act II, Scene II, 143-152

Polonius must be very proud to present his findings to the king and the queen, otherwise he would just give them the letter or simply told them, but he instead he makes a show of reading the letter and says that he himself told his daughter to stop any contact with the prince and that this caused the prince's madness. He probably strongly believes that Hamlet is mad for love but it seems that Claudius does not fully believe it since he asks "Do you think 'tis this?".

Claudius knows that Hamlet is too clever to be mad because of love, and that there must be something more behind it even if part of Hamlet's behaviour might be influenced by his inability to have love. We could only speculate to what extent is Hamlet's madness pretended but it is clear that Ophelia's madness is real and works as contrast to Hamlet's madness.

Every word of her father and brother, every accusation that she is the cause of Hamlet's madness, every word Hamlet tells her later on and his behaviour cause her to slowly become mad.

Because both Claudius and Polonius desperately want to know what caused Hamlet's behaviour, they arrange for Hamlet to accidentally "run into" Ophelia while they will hide and watch everything.

Every detail of the meeting is arranged and to the toll to gain information is Ophelia.

POLONIUS

To Ophelia

Read on this book;

That show of such exercise may colour

Your loneliness. We are oft to blame in this –

'Tis too much proved – that with devotion's visage

And pious action we do sugar o'er

The devil himself.

KING CLAUDIUS

Aside

The harlot's cheek, beautied with plastering art...

Act III, Scene I, 45-52

It is obvious that Polonius wants Ophelia to look innocent while she is alone so he commands her to read Bible, because that should show just how innocent she is and how devoted to God she is. But at the same he says that sometimes people devote themselves to God and good only to mask their evil – like Ophelia who is used as bait for Hamlet. From what Claudius says we know that she probably wears at least some make up to make herself look prettier, but we do not know if it is on Polonius' orders or if she did this herself to look pretty for someone she truly loves. Polonius and Claudius are so busy using Ophelia that they do not realise how hurt she will be and that they are preparing her for the next blow to her heart. And another hard thing Ophelia has to do is to return Hamlet's letters and gifts.

OPHELIA

How does your honour for this many a day?

Act III, Scene I, 93

Hilský (2010, p. 506) argues about how strange it seems that it is Ophelia who asks this question. And it is true because she was ordered to stop accepting anything from Hamlet so it would be logical for him to ask how she is. It should

seem weird to him that she is behaving that way and he should want to know why she is behaving like that. Hilský (ibid, p.506) also points out that this simple question has two meanings. Firstly it is supposed to sound innocent and should be a signal for Polonius and Claudius that she did as she was told – broke up with Hamlet. Secondly it is for Hamlet to know that she still cares about him and wants to know how he is and why is he behaving strangely lately.

OPHELIA

My Lord, I have remembrances of yours,
That I have longed to re-deliver...

HAMLET

I never gave you aught.

OPHELIA

.. you know right well you did;
And, with them, words of so sweet breath composed
As made things more rich: their perfume lost,
Take these again...
Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.
Act III, Scene I, 94-95, 98-102

She has to do this because she was told to do so, not because she wants to and she probably wants Hamlet to see it and understand it, but instead, Hamlet refuses the returned gifts saying they are not from him.

This must be very hard for her, especially because she knows they are being listened and watched and she knows she cannot let her father and the king know how hurt she is because they have to think that she cut all ties with Hamlet so she cannot tell Hamlet, not even by a hint, what she is feeling.

Hilský (2010, p.506) states that Ophelia's psychological state now is an exact picture of what was called "divided self" and what was once considered as a first sign of Schizophrenia. And the truth is that she is pulled into two personas: one that does what she is told, that is to break up with Hamlet, and the other that does not want to do it, that loves Hamlet but cannot let it be known.

And what Hamlet will say hurt her even more.

HAMLET

Are you honest?

HAMLET

Are you fair?

Act III, Scene I, 104-106

Here by saying: “are you honest” Hamlet may mean “do you speak truthfully with me?” but also “are you a virgin?”. And as opposed to Ophelia he is capable of speaking and using double meanings, so it is possible he asks both these things. He may sense that Polonius and Claudius are preparing something, maybe even try to spy on him and in that case Ophelia would be the perfect tool. So he might actually be asking if they are being spied because just few lines later after the “go to nunnery” speech he also asks where is Ophelia’s father. It is possible that he knows or at least suspects there might be spies somewhere. He might also be asking whether she is still virgin or if she already became a sinner, because later on he will tell her to go to nunnery because then she could not give birth to sinners.

HAMLET

.. I did love you once.

HAMLET

You should not have believed me..

I loved you not.

Act III, Scene I, 116, 118, 120

Before sending her to nunnery and after refusing to take back the gifts, saying they are not from him, and after asking whether she is “honest” Hamlet contradicts himself. He says he loved her once but then when Ophelia says she believed it he takes it back. It might be him saying that he really loved her and that when she stopped all contact with him she broke his heart. He says he really loved her but he knows that he cannot have her because he needs to carry out the revenge. Maybe Hamlet wants to push Ophelia away to save her because he does not want her to be tangled in all the scheming, but she already is because she has become the tool for her father and for Claudius.

HAMLET

Get thee to a nunnery: why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners?

... I could accuse me of such things that it were better my mother had not borne me: I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious, with more offences at my beck than I have thoughts to put them in...

..What should such fellows as I do crawling between heaven and earth? ..

Believe none of us. Go thy ways to a nunnery.

Act III, Scene I, 122, 124-131

Hamlet is being cruel but he has seen a lot of sins. He knows his father was murdered, he knows his mother married his father's brother, which is actually seen as incest. He also knows he has to carry out the revenge, which is also a sin, and he also believed that his mother loved his father and he believed that when married, a woman will love only that one man and all that is now destroyed. He knows of too many sins and now he believes that all people are actually sinners since the day they are born.

HAMLET

I have heard of your paintings too, well enough; God

Hath given you one face, and you make yourselves another: you jig, you amble, and you lisp, and nick-name God's creatures, and make your wantonness your ignorance. Go to, I'll no more on't; it hath made me mad. I say, we will have no more marriages.

Act III, Scene I, 144-149

Now, after sending her to nunnery, Hamlet insults her, throws in her face the fact that she also wears make up and thus make herself someone she is not and deceives others. Women dance and laugh, give men pet names, use sex but then pretend to be ignorant and innocent. Here he is speaking of Ophelia, his mother also and all women in general, that is how much the sudden marriage between Gertrude and Claudius has affected Hamlet and his view on love, women and marriage. But his words will hurt Ophelia even more, they are the biggest blow she receives and now she is so close to becoming crazy. Now she has all the reasons to believe that

her rejection caused the prince to go mad and she will blame herself, because she is young and does not understand the deeper meaning of his words and actions.

OPHELIA

O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!

...

And I of ladies most deject and wretched,

That sucked the honey of his music vows,

Now see that noble and most sovereign reason...

... out of tune and harsh;

That unmatched form and feature of blown youth

Blasted with ecstasy: O, woe is me,

To have seen what I have seen, see what I see!

Act III, Scene I, 152, 157-169

We can see how miserable Ophelia feels to see Hamlet like this and we might say that she must have truly loved him because she says she is the most “deject and wretched” of all people because she knew what Hamlet was like before and what has become of him now. And as mentioned before she blames herself so her father’s death is the last blow that will break her.

From all he had heard Claudius is sure that Hamlet’s behaviour is not caused by rejection because he understood the double meanings and he heard Hamlet say he is “revengeful “ and “ ambitious” and he probably understood what Hamlet meant when he was speaking about women and he now is sure Hamlet is dangerous. But Polonius still believes it is love; he is desperate to believe it because then he would be the intelligent one who knew it and read the signs correctly.

Later on, during the “play within a play” scene Hamlet makes some sexual comments and hurts Ophelia and confuses her. But Ophelia acts as modest and chaste girl and declines.

HAMLET

Lady, shall I lie in your lap?

HAMLET

I mean my head upon your lap?

HAMLET

Did you think I meant country matters?

HAMLET

That's a fair thought to lie between maids' legs.

Act III, Scene II, 109, 111, 113, 115

We may only argue whether she understands what Hamlet means or whether she only acts like she does not because her father and the king are near, but it might affect her when her love talks to her like that and makes such comments about her.

HAMLET

I could interpret between you and your love, if I

Could see the puppets dallying,

OPHELIA

You are keen, my lord, you are keen.

HAMLET

It would cost you a groaning to take off my edge.

Act III, Scene II, 240-243

Here even Hamlet in a way uses Ophelia, he speaks with her and uses words he should not, makes sexual comments only for Claudius. Because he wants Claudius to believe that he is mad. But what Hamlet all this time does not realise is how much he is hurting Ophelia and that he, even if unintentionally, is also a cause of Ophelia's madness and her death.

When we see Ophelia later, she is already mad and it is also the time when her father is already dead.

OPHELIA

Where is the beauteous majesty of Denmark?

OPHELIA

How should I your true love know

From another one? ..

OPHELIA

He is dead and gone, lady,

He is dead and gone,

At his head a grass-green turf,

At his heels a stone.

Act IV, Scene V, 21, 23-24, 29-32

Ophelia asks about Hamlet because there is no reason why she, even when mad, would call her father “beauteous majesty” because he is not a king or a prince and there is no reason to also call him “beauteous”, so we may assume she is speaking about Hamlet especially when she later talks about love.

When she says “he is dead and gone” she may of course mean her father being dead but at the same time she may be speaking about Hamlet, because she says it right after talking about love. The reason why she thinks Hamlet may be “dead and gone” is because the Hamlet she knew is no longer there; she believes he has gone mad so for her he is dead.

The divided self that Hilský (2010, p.506) mentions, is also visible here, one of the selves thinks about Hamlet, her lost love that has gone crazy and the other self thinks about her father who is now truly “dead and gone”.

OPHELIA

Lord, we know what we are, but know not

What we may be. God be at your table!

Act IV, Scene V, 43-45

We might believe that she is speaking about Hamlet as these words express her concern about Hamlet’s change of behaviour but also her own state. In her mind the only explanation of Hamlet’s behaviour is her rejection of his feelings. But we as readers or viewers know it is probably, at least partly, an act to confuse Claudius.

OPHELIA

Pray you, let's have no words of this; but when they

Ask you what it means, say you this:

Sings

To-morrow is Saint Valentine's Day,

...

And I a maid at your window,

To be your Valentine.

Then up rose, and donned his clothes

...

Let in the maid, that out maid

Never departed more.

Act IV, Scene V, 47-49, 51-53, 55-56

Camden (1964) states that this poem or song expresses her thoughts and feelings for Hamlet and clearly underlines how deep her love probably was because one part of her is constantly thinking about the lost love, but the other is the self that is with the death of her father.

OPHELIA

... But cannot choose but weep, to think they should lay him

I' the cold ground. My brother shall know if it..

Act IV, Scene V, 69-70

Ophelia is throughout the play used almost like a puppet. Her father tells her what to do and then uses her to prove that Hamlet has gone mad because of her rejection. Hamlet in a way uses her too for example during the play within a play scene because he wants Claudius to believe he is mad, maybe even mad for love. And Claudius will use her again when persuading Laertes to do what he says to avenge the death of Polonius. He will say that her madness was caused by the death of her father.

CLAUDIUS

O, this is the poison of deep grief; it springs

All from her father's death....

When sorrows come, they come not single spies

But in battalions. First her father slain:

Next, your son gone....

Act IV, Scene V, 75-80

Claudius speaks first about Ophelia's father and then about Hamlet, maybe because he wants to keep the thought of Polonius's death fresh and at the same time regrets not burying Polonius like he deserved, with honour, because he feels that this might have been the wrong move and now he has to somehow play this so that Laertes will fall into his trap.

LAERTES

Let come what comes; only I'll be revenged

Most thoroughly for my father.

LAERTES

By heaven, thy madness shall be paid by weight..

...

Dear maid, kind sister, sweet Ophelia!

O heavens! Is't possible, a young maid's wits

Should be as moral as an old man's life?

Nature is fine in love....

It sends some precious instance of itself

After the thing it loves.

Act IV, Scene V, 136-137, 157, 159-164

For Laertes, it is easy to believe his sister has gone mad because of their father's death, because he left the country and does not know about the depth of his sister's feelings for the prince, especially since he had warned her against him and believes she listened to him. When Ophelia dies, Laertes' desire to revenge his father's death is even stronger because he believes that Polonius' death caused his sister's madness and later on her death. And really, Hamlet is to be, at least partly,

blamed for what happened to Ophelia, because she was deeply hurt by his words, she was used even by him, and when her father died it was just too much on her.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

There is a willow grows aslant a brook,

....

There with fantastic garlands did she come

...

Clambering to hang, an envious sliver broke;

When down the weedy trophies and herself

Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide;

.... Awhile they bore her up.....

But long it could not be

Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,

Pulled the poor wretch

To muddy death.

Act IV, Scene VII, 166, 168, 173-176, 180-183

As Camden (1964) says, the rest of Ophelia's tragedy happens off scene and when we hear about her again it is when Gertrude comes to tell us about Ophelia's death, how she drowned. Also the willow that broke under Ophelia was during Shakespeare's time a symbol of unrequited love, which is another sign of the true cause of her madness and death – it was not her father's death but her love for Hamlet. Hilský (2010, p.518) points out that the way Ophelia behaves, especially during the scenes when she sings the songs and gives the flowers to everyone around, is typical picture of "mad woman" during Elizabethan time. We may argue, whether Ophelia committed suicide or not. She fell into the brook but she also made no attempt to save her life and thus drowned and this may be perceived as suicide, but at the same time we might say that she was just too lost in her madness that she might not have even realised what was happening or did not care. But that does not really matter, because just the fact that she made no attempt to save herself does make it seem like a suicide and that means she should not receive a catholic burial but as the gravedigger says "the crown hath sat on her, and finds it Christian burial".

Hamlet comes back just in time to see her burial.

LAERTES

Lay her I' the earth:
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
May violets spring! I tell thee, churlish priest,
A ministering angel shall my sister be,
When thou liest howling.

HAMLET

What , the fair Ophelia!
Act V, Scene I, 233-238

Laertes is clearly hurt by Ophelia's death and he believes her to be so pure that she will become an angel. And Hamlet, who has just return back to Denmark, is more than surprised to hear that the one being buried is Ophelia.

When Gertrude speaks about tossing flowers on Ophelia's wedding bed and hoping that she would be her son's wife it may remind us of Polonius. Polonius' desire to prove that Hamlet is mad because of love might have been caused by his hope that if it is true, his daughter would marry a prince, and he would gain higher standing in society.

LAERTES

O, treble woe
Fall ten times treble on that cursed head,
Whose wicked deed thy most ingenious sense
Deprived thee of! Hold off the earth awhile,
Till I have caught her once more in mine arms..
Act V, Scene I, 241-245

Laertes in his grief reminds us of Hamlet and his part in Ophelia's death, although Laertes means their father's murder and not Ophelia's love for Hamlet.

HAMLET

What is he whose grief
Bear such an emphasis? Whose phrases of sorrow
Conjures the wandering stars, and makes them stand
Like wonder-wounded hearers? This is I,
Hamlet the Dane.
Act V, Scene I, 249-253

Hamlet also jumps into the grave, where Laertes already is with his sister, and as we may notice he does not seem or sound crazy or mad at all. Even though jumping into the grave of Ophelia may seem crazy it is also an act of someone who loved the dead person.

LAERTES

The devil take thy soul!

HAMLET

Why I will fight with him upon this theme
Until my eyelids will no longer wag.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

O my son, what theme?

HAMLET

I loved Ophelia: forty thousand brothers
Could not, with all their quantity of love,
Make up my sum. What wilt thou do for her?
Act V, Scene I, 254, 263-268

This might be for us the proof of Hamlet's love for Ophelia, he not only jumps into the grave, but he would argue and fight with Laertes maybe for the chance to see her for the last time. He is very surprised to see Ophelia dead and even more to hear Laertes curse him as if he is the cause of Ophelia's death, even though he has unintentionally caused it.

His words are very emotional and do not sound like they come from someone who is truly mad, and we might believe that they speak about his true feelings for poor Ophelia.

When thinking about madness, Hilský (2010, p.520) points out that Hamlet's own madness is more or less metaphysical while Ophelia's is real. With Hamlet we never know if he is truly mad or only acting, but with Ophelia we might be sure she is mad.

Ophelia was driven mad because she was made to reject her true love, she had to listen to Hamlet's cruel words and sexual comments, which confused her even more because he refused her when she tried to return his gifts, and, last but not least, her father's death might have been the last blow which caused her to break down. Her personality, mind, and heart were all torn and she paid with her life for not being able to follow her heart and love Hamlet.

We can clearly see that Hamlet loves Gertrude and that he might even be fixated on her, but only because he already lost one parent and she is his only immediate family and his mother, but his love for Gertrude is not a romantic love.

We might not be sure how much he loves Ophelia but he jumps into her grave which might lead us to believe he must have loved her, at least at some point, but he chose to pursue revenge and gave up a chance at love and normal life, probably because he knew that he cannot have both, and in the end this decision, along with others he made, led to his death.

In case of Ophelia we might be sure that she loved Hamlet, but her love was unrequited and unfulfilled, and it definitely was tragic love. Her love for Hamlet was one of the things that caused her madness and in the end her death. We could maybe go as far as to say that her love was partly obsessive, as if she refused to forget Hamlet.

The tragedy of Ophelia's story is not just the fact that she was used by almost everyone like a little puppet but also that her refusal to give up her only love led to her madness and death.

Ophelia's love became a matter of tragedy and a cause of her death.

CONCLUSION

After reading Hamlet several times and after writing this thesis I came to the conclusion, that it is a play about revenge but also about love. Hamlet wants to revenge his father not the king, because his father meant more to him than the king and for the same reason, Hamlet listens to the ghost and does not hurt his mother – he loves her too much. Many people suggested that Hamlet may suffer Oedipus or Oedipal Complex, but based on the research I did I do not think it is so. At that time, even the marriage between Gertrude and Claudius was seen as incest and clearly, Hamlet sees it as incest too, but I think he might be fixated on her. Hamlet is an only child and he really adored his father and looked up to him and after his father's death Hamlet's mother is his only remaining close family.

Both, Hamlet and Laertes had the same reason for their revenge – love for their fathers and maybe they felt that the murderer was out of reach for law, since Claudius killed Hamlet's father and Hamlet killed Laertes' father.

We might also say that in this play “wheels of justice grind slowly but they grind” because even Gertrude is punished for her sin. She pays for the incest she committed with Claudius when she drinks the poisoned wine. Hamlet pays for the deaths he caused, intentionally or not. Laertes pays for attempting to kill Hamlet with poisoned sword.

Ophelia is the only death person who never hurt anyone but still is the one most hurt in the play- she was used by her father to prove he is right to the king, used by Hamlet to show he is really mad, rejected by Hamlet, and ordered to stop contact with her love. All this eventually caused her madness and suicide, even if her suicide might have been unintentional.

We may ask whether Ophelia really loved Hamlet, and whether he loved Ophelia. My conclusion is that she loved him and that the strain of Hamlet's rejection combined with her father's death caused her to become mad.

The irony is that Hamlet wanted to revenge his father out of love for him but to pursue this revenge he gave up his love for Ophelia and the chance for normal life and this decision also led to his death, Ophelia, on the other hand, refused to give up her love for Hamlet and this led to her madness and death.

Hamlet could also be seen as play that shows us what love can do to a person – unrequited love, love for family, being rejected by someone you love or forbidden to love someone – or what person can do because of love.

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Summary in Czech

Předmětem této bakalářské práce byla hra Hamlet, Králevic dánský od Williama Shakespeara a především aspekt pomsty a lásky v této slavné hře.

Práce je rozdělena do dvou hlavních kapitol, jež jsou dále rozdělené na další menší celky. První část práce je zaměřena na pomstu prince Hamlet a druhá část téže kapitoly je zaměřena na pomstu Laerta.

Druhá kapitola je zaměřena na lásku a první její část se zabývá možností romantického vztahu mezi prince Hamletem a jeho matkou Gertrudou a druhá část se zabývá vztahem mezi Ofélií a Hamletem.