Love is a complicated concept in which the emotions between people have such immense power, it overshadows all other feelings.  The perfect example of the complexity of love appears to us in the Shakespearean tragedy Hamlet. Shakespeare portrays love as something that has the potential to raise or destroy families, countries, and even civilizations. It contains the potential to amplify principle emotions such as anger, to the point where even logic loses its grasp on reality. Love is a double-edged sword, in which, one can fall into a deep and dark abyss which is nearly impossible to escape. Hamlet contains a variety of different examples in which the center of the characters emotional turmoil revolves around love. Due to this, the primary tragedy in the play is the madness and power of love.

Ophelia’s love for both her father Polonius and her lover Hamlet was vast. She learned the value of the men who always supported her once they had disappeared from her side. Once Ophelia found out that her father had perished by the hand of her lover, and that her lover had been cast off to England, she noticed the importance of these figures in her life. On top of all this misery, she was to take the burden alone since there was nobody there to comfort her in that time of need. The only comfort she could fine was in the delusional world that she created for herself. With the accumulation of mental stress, anxiety and sleep deprivation, she began to slip into madness. This began the domino effect that lead to her innocent tragic death.

Claudius loved the idea of him being the powerful figure in which everyone must obediently follow and bend to his will. His love for the idea that he could acquire the power, fame, and fortune was potent enough to make him commit his “brother’s, murder” (Hamlet, III, iii, 42), and even marry his brother’s wife Gertrude. Even when he had acquired his desires, Claudius accepted the fact that “In the corrupted currents of this world” (III, iii, 61), he would have to be nefarious in his plan to maintain the throne. In doing so, for the sake of continuing his reign, he would prioritize killing Hamlet as swiftly, and as discreetly as possible.

Lastly, we explore the strong love expressed by Hamlet. The love emitted by Hamlet is profound, because of the strong bond he had with his father. Hamlet’s love for his father not only drove him to insanity but, ultimately, it began his journey to death. When Hamlet first discovered the truth behind his father’s death, he became enraged. “Haste me to know‘t, that I, with wings swift / as meditation or the thoughts of love, / may sweep to my revenge.” (I, vi, 35). Due to his deep love for his father, his hatred increased tenfold, causing him to begin to lose his sense of reality. Yet, Hamlet fell “Into the madness wherein now he raves” (II, ii, 159), because his love for his father was so immense that he considered joining his father in the fiery inferno called hell.

The Shakespearean play Hamlet has been categorized as a tragic play of revenge, when in reality it should be tragedy based on love. It displays the destructive force that love can attain when accompanied with a cocktail of other emotions, and the sorrowful remains of what's left after tragedy hits. It is understandable to see how people came to believe that the principal concept was of revenge, but if picked the play apart to more refined pieces, one can see that the internal structure of the tragedy revolved around the influx and manipulation of love. Shakespeare uses these mechanics to develop his characters individual plot, like Hamlet whose immeasurable quantity of love leads him to his tragic death, and the death of countless other vital characters. Hamlet can be called Shakespeare's experiment on the vile and mystical powers that revolve around love. Love is a concept too complex for the human mind, one that will always be shrouded with mystery.

The Dark Calamity of Love

An Analysis of Tragic Love in Hamlet

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