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Critical Climactic Culminations (of Hamlet) Hamlet's readers and critics have continuously pondered and incessantly debated the what the actual climax of the play could be. The many points in which Hamlet's internal battle to ascertain himself into a position of determination in avenging his father's death befuddle Shakespeare's audience. There are numerous points which could be asserted as the true climax, but which can be considered ultimately veritable? " That is the question. " We must ask ourselves this when assessing the claimed climax's authenticity. Webster's dictionary defines a climax as (1) the turning point at which the conflict begins to resolve itself for better or worse, or as (2) the final and most exciting event in a series of events. The interpretation of climax's meaning plays a tremendous role in identifying the turning point. It doesn't take much reasoning to cogitate the fact that more than one assertion for a climax can be presented if more than one interpretation of what that even means is amidst the minds of the assertor. There are various possibilities for what can be understood as the climax in Hamlet, the internal play that Hamlet's dispositions, Hamlet's hesitancy at within his first opportunity to kill Claudius, and when Hamlet mistakenly murders Polonius in place of the king. One of the possible climaxes is definitely the play that Hamlet plans in order to see if any visible guilt is retracted from the king upon seeing it. In this scene Hamlet confirms to himself that King Claudius is guilty of his father, King Hamlet's, murder. Because the play causes Claudius to have to leave upon seeing one of the actors kill his own brother in search of power, it becomes exceedingly evident that he did the same in actuality and cannot bare being reminded of

the sin. The significance of the scene essentially lies within Hamlet's confirmation of Claudius's depravity. It is arguable that this sudden realization is the moment in which Hamlet seals his resoluteness in attaining revenge upon Claudius. When assessing the play within the play as a possible climax we must also consider all the possible actions that can be made by the characters, specifically Hamlet and Claudius at this point. Yes the verification of Claudius's guilt undoubtedly leads to Hamlet's progression of a lust for revenge, yet no real physical progression has been made which forbids Hamlet's withdrawal of the revenge scheme. Claudius is inadvertently suspicious of Hamlet's knowledge of his dark unlamented secret. This of course leads to Claudius's desire for Hamlet to be sent off to England with his words " I like him not, nor stands it safe with us to let his madness range. Therefore prepare you. I commission will forthwith dispatch, and he to England shall along with you. " (Shakespeare 163). Yet Claudius's response isn't as intense as may be deemed at first glance. Hamlet still had the power after the incident to relinquish his desire to avenge his father and move on without the having to deal with difficulty of going against Claudius. If Hamlet were to do this he and the rest of the play's characters would have a chance at happier lives than the actual events that preceded them. Yet another possible climax is when Hamlet gets his first real opportunity to kill Claudius. Hamlet find Claudius in the middle of what appears to be repentance through prayer. Claudius speaks aloud his thoughts on how terrible the murdering of his brother was on his part. Essentially Claudius is defenseless at this point, and Hamlet has an open opportunity to kill him, thus fulfilling his sought revenge. Hamlet hesitates " And am I then revenged to take him

in the purging of his soul, when he is fit and seasoned for his passage? No. Up sword, and know thou a more horrid hent. When he is drunk asleep, or in his rage" (Shakespeare 167). Hamlet chooses not to kill Claudius because he finds Claudius in the middle of prayer. He believes if he were to kill him now his soul would be saved and sent to heaven. This of course would be hardly fitting as revenge considering the same was not done so for King Hamlet. The murder is delayed. The irony is right after Hamlet leaves Claudius admits " My words fly up, my thoughts remain below; words without thoughts never to heaven go. " showing that he doesn't mean the prayer or penitence he just uttered, and so if Hamlet had killed him then and there the deed would have been carried out most dexterously. The potential for a climax of the scene in which Hamlet's first opportunity to kill Claudius arises is definitely of high magnitude, however the deed simply doesn't happen. No real change or progression is made from the scene and though it had great potential to be quite climactic and even end the tragedy, it wasn't and it didn't. Hamlet walks away leaving Claudius oblivious of his presence and Hamlet's momentary power of killing him with ease. Yet again when assessed there's an equal opportunity for the the desire for vengeance to be abandoned, and for the characters to lead more promising lives than what awaits them if the events continue to procedurally move onwards. This is true on Claudius's end as well as Hamlet's because up to this point Claudius has no desire or intention of wanting Hamlet dead, because he does not yet feel as though Hamlet is a serious source of danger, yet again illustrating irony. The final possible climax of the play arises when Hamlet speaks to his mother in private and his father's ghost appears before him. While Hamlet and

Gertrude talk and Hamlet reveals his disgust for her "incestuous affair"

Hamlet notices some behind the arras "How now, a rat? Dead for a ducat, dead." he exclaims and stabs Polonius "O, I am slain!" screeches Polonius as he falls dead (Shakespeare 171). Hamlet's father appears before him and speaks to him. Gertrude, who can't see the phantom, thinks Hamlet mad.

This of course is the apodeictic climax of the play. Once Hamlet actually kills Polonius he's begun a chain of events that can no longer be halted. The deed destroys Hamlet's ability to release his inclination toward revenge because he's now murdered an essentially innocent man. The killing of Polonius is what bring Claudius's position of distrust forth. "Thou mayst not coldly set our sovereign process, which imports at full, by letters congruing to that effect, the present death of Hamlet. Do it, England, for like the hectic in my blood he rages, and thou must cure me. Till I know 'tis done, how'er my haps, my joys were ne'er begun." Claudius no longer sees Hamlet as a simple nuisance, he now deems him a very real and dangerous threat.

Polonius's murder makes Claudius believe it is in his best interest for Hamlet to be taken out of the picture. This brings both sides of the chess game into an offensive position, with neither opponent willing to stop before having the other at the mercy of checkmate; death. There's no doubt Polonius's death is the true Climax within Hamlet. This murder is what set every other event in motion, the murder inadvertently created a chain reaction in which death became predetermined, and anyone who became involved in the affair was subject to fall victim to that very fate. Without Hamlet killing Polonius, Laertes wouldn't have gotten involved in the conflict between Hamlet and his uncle. Yet because Hamlet killed Polonius it gave Laertes reason to side with

Claudius in wanting Hamlet dead. In fact, it is because of this event that Laertes and Claudius collaboratively formulate a 'foolproof' plan to murder Hamlet. The wry, incongruous outcome of which derives Hamlet and Laertes to be struck with a poisoned sword begin the deaths of the many characters that fall within this scene. Gertrude unwittingly drinks the poison set apart for Hamlet as an alternative to the blade, and Claudius's full treachery is revealed. Hamlet Kills Claudius before he himself dies, ultimately getting his father's revenge. The biggest reason why Hamlet's murder of Polonius is the true climax of the play is it becomes the moment where Hamlet's actions forbid him from turning his back on the desired revenge. The fall of the not only the malicious and seemingly deserving, but also of the innocent is a constantly detailed iteration within the play. This thematic murder served to move the story line along in a more complicated tragic manner. Though there are arguably more than one possible climax within Hamlet it seems to be that the death of Polonius is the only one that rejected any possibility of ending the acts of revenge on Hamlet's end. Therefore it was followed by a falling action in which a series of spiraling events led to what can only be described as a massacre in the play's final scenes. The only character who appears to left alive is Horatio who Hamlet leaves with the words " tell my story" (Shakespeare 283). Works Cited Cummings, Michael J. " Hamlet." Free Study Guides for Shakespeare and Other Authors. 12 Jan. 2012. Web. 13 Feb. 2012. . Shakespeare, William, Barbara A. Mowat, and Paul Werstine. Hamlet. New York: Washington Square, 2002. Print. " The Tragedy of Hamlet." Hudsonshakespeare. org. 01 Feb. 2012. Web. 14 Feb. 2012. .