

# The challenge of hamlet



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The challenge of Hamlet The scene that we take as a starting point of discussion belongs to the moment in which Claudius and Gertrude make their marriage official for the whole kingdom. In his speech he explains that, although the mourning and the sorrow of the former king's death, it was a festive day. But Hamlet didn't agree pretty much with that. Actually he is set apart dressed in black clothes. This image represents his opposition to the system.

To begin with, as Barker said, " Claudius's opening disquisition on the haste with which his marriage to Gertrude has followed on the death of the former king her husband, by way of a nicely turned contrast between mourning and celebration, manages to sound at once sorrowing and festive" (1984: 158). According to canon law, that marriage was incestuous due to that Claudius was Gertrude's brother-in-law. So, technically, they were members of the same family. But in the whole kingdom, the only one who seems to appreciate that is Hamlet. The rest of the people in the court don't have any problem with that.

In addition, he knows that he achieved the role of king by means of usurpation. That is what he meant when he said " I am too much i'th'sun" (I. ii, 67), because he could see clearly what was happening. That usurpation means that, if Claudius and Gertrude have a son, that baby would deprive Hamlet of his lawful succession to the kingdom. Clearly, it is as Jardine explains in one of her articles: " Hamlet's excessive emotion is focused on Gertrude's sexual relations with Claudius" (1996: 39). It is because of that treason that he rejects any close familiarity with Claudius and refuses to recognize his absolute authority.

Then, knowing that the king is illegitimate, he started to question Providentialism. That doctrine stated that people must obey the figure of the king, because he was elected by God. But Claudius was not elected by God; he was just a usurper of the throne. Therefore, if the king is illegitimate, what should he do? He promises to his dead father that he will revenge his murder and, as a result, he tries to find an alternative definition of his identity by challenging and killing the king, becoming a threat to the sovereign. However, he always delays the action.

Even when he returns from England, he turns into a totally providentialist man and obeys the king, maybe because after his accidental murder of Polonius he feels that he has gone too far and caused too much pain. It is not until the last act of the play that he finally becomes a man of action and kills Claudius in his dying moment. But he just killed him because he realized that Claudius plot his death with Laertes's help and that he also caused the poisoning of the queen. Then, full of anger, he didn't think -because he didn't have time to that-; he just acted.

Finally, he accepts Fortinbras as the new king of Denmark. Here we can appreciate a contradiction: Hamlet chooses him as an illegitimate king because he was not a member of his family. Nevertheless, Fortinbras believed in Providentialism and since the beginning wanted to recover Denmark because, initially, those lands belonged to his father. So, he thought that he was the really legitimate king after all. Summing up, after the challenge and the threat that Hamlet supposed to the structure of power and to Providentialism, there is a return to order when the king dies and the throne is occupied by a providentialist king.

So, his challenge is not successful because Providentialism remains. In conclusion, as happens in every tragedy, we have a final containment with a return of the harmony and of Providentialism at the end of the play.

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