

The single persona of ophelia and gertrude

[Literature](#), [British Literature](#)



Zoe Alternate Ms. Herring AP English 5 November 2013 The Single Persona of Aphelia and Gertrude According to Shakespeare, Elisions did not require more than two women, let alone two unique women. On a larger scale, the society in which Shakespeare wrote agreed that most women were indistinguishable: women in general did not hold positions of prominence and did not demand recognition. In all of Shakespearean plays, a meager 126 female characters develop; of these, Aphelia and Gertrude play minor roles in Shakespearean Hamlet, having a mere 169 lines and 128 lines respectively.

Being the only two females in the play, and with Shakespearean lack of knowledge that women could have varying personalities, Aphelia and Gertrude manage to possess many similar characteristics. In fact, they are so similar that one could argue, if convinced an Oedipus-complex exists, there is no need for two separate characters. Through their relationships and circumstances, interactions and dialogue, Shakespeare portrays Aphelia and Gertrude as parallel characters. Women during the Renaissance, and even women during any time period prior to the sass, were submissive and loyal.

Aphelia and Gertrude are no exceptions to this stereotype; they passively listen and, without question, obey their superiors. As Alerter accuses Hamlet of false love, Aphelia agrees saying, " I shall the effect of this good lesson keep" (1. 3. 44). Soon afterward, Polonium demands that Aphelia avoid Hamlet, and Aphelia is obedient: " I shall obey, my lord" (1. 3. 136). Even in Alerter' questioning of Hamlet's feelings, Aphelia admits that, as a woman, she should not have her own thoughts: " I do not know, my lord, what I should think" (1. . 104). She repeats this degrading fact saying, " I think

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nothing, my lord" (3. . 107) when Hamlet asks what she thought he meant in mentioning a virgin's legs. In 2. 2 lines 110-113, as Polonium attempts to raise his popularity among the court, he reads a personal letter from Hamlet to Aphelia, while Aphelia, surely embarrassed, sits back with no argument. The same acquiescence lies within Queen Gertrude. In 2. 2 lines 19-26, Gertrude repeats, only more succinctly, what Claudia has already said, proving her lack of original thought.

When Claudia orders her to leave the court, Gertrude says, " I shall obey you" (3. 1. 38), maintaining her proper wifely status. To please her new Cubans, Gertrude endeavors to placate Hamlet's mournful mind and persuade him to " let [his] eye look like a friend on Denmark" (1. 2. 69), so that the Danish citizens may think all is well with the new political structure. Just as Aphelia holds a willingness to bow to Alerter and Polonium, Gertrude yields to Claudia every time except once right before her demise, which will be subsequently analyzed further.

They are both " made malleable by [their] sense of duty and by [their] nature as well" (Magnums 1). Regardless of their wrongful obedience to their respective superiors, both Aphelia ND Gertrude truly love Hamlet. The only two women in the play have a very intimate relationship with the protagonist, one being his mother and the other his love interest. The love is made certain when Hamlet, truthfully or not, retracts his previous affection toward Aphelia; yet, she still replies, " Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so" and " I was the more deceived" (3. . 118-122), revealing her broken heart. Gertrude love, whether her relationship with Hamlet includes an

Oedipus-complex or not, proves sincere as she calls to Hamlet just before her untimely death: " O my dear Hamlet! (5. 2. 312). Neither female character can stand to have the connection between their familial and friendly bonds amputated. Ophelia can see that Hamlet's madness has generated a break between her father's wishes and Hamlet's, and, distressed by the apparent severed bonds, pleads for help, " Heavenly powers, restore him! " (3. 1 . 142).

Gertrude, in the midst of a barrage of verbal accusations, strives to conserve the filial bond; she refers to Hamlet as " sweet Hamlet" (3. 4. 98) and, in an effort to stop his attack, says, " O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain" (3. 4. 158). She needs his approval and therefore asks, " What shall I do? " (3. 4. 184). According to David Abnegation's interpretation, the priority of Ophelia and Gertrude is familial harmony, motivating their actions throughout the play. Nonetheless, due to their blind and steadfast allegiance, Ophelia and Gertrude cannot help but act treacherously against Hamlet despite their deep love for him.

Consequently, when Polonius devises a scheme to unearth the backstops of Hamlet's madness, he commands Ophelia, " Walk you here... ' Read on this book/ That show of such an exercise may color/ Your loneliness" (3. 1. 3-47). She immediately follows along so that Hamlet may suppose her alone when he happens upon her. Of course, Hamlet the keen prince he is, senses her betrayal. When Hamlet asks the whereabouts of Polonius, Ophelia answers with a lie, " At home, my lord" (3. 1 . 132). Gertrude also refuses to take

sides in the war between Claudia and Hamlet. She agrees to Polonium's ploy to spy on Hamlet by saying, "I'll warrant you.

Fear me not" (3. 4. 7), allowing Polonium to take cover behind her curtains. Again, Hamlet discovers the betrayal, killing Polonium in the process. Shortly after, notwithstanding Hamlet's recent attack and her ostensible promise, Gertrude defends Claudia's throne cursing the "false Danish dogs" (4. 5. 108) when the Messenger reports that the crowd wants Alerter as king.

Furthermore, Claudia deduces that Gertrude will concur with Hamlet's need to be shipped to England and includes her in his plot to rid Denmark of Hamlet: "Come, Gertrude, we'll call up our friends/ And let them know... Hat we mean to do" (4. 1. 38-39). She does not contend. But Gertrude even now holds onto the love for her son and begs the crowd in the cemetery to be patient, "For love of God, forbear him" (5. . 259). After Hamlet and Alerter brawl in Aphelion's grave, the fickle Gertrude endeavors to convince the multitude that Hamlet's fit, even though Hamlet clearly mourns Aphelion's death, is in reality "mere madness" (5. 1. 271-275). Aphelia and Gertrude fluctuate between their alliance to Hamlet and to the court, and, in the throes, move with duplicity against Hamlet.

These innumerable and sundry breaches of faith trigger Hamlet's abandonment of the goodness in humanity, especially womankind. The ones who should love him the most are the ones contributing to Hamlet's degrading mental state. Yet, being tender of heart and still submissive, both women "are forced into uncharacteristic vices," unaware of their evil guides (Pennington). Hamlet's hatred goes so far as to dub frailty a woman in

1. 2. Aphelia and Gertrude are made into products of a "stereotypic wanton sexuality" (Wellness 1).

Hamlet displays his disgust toward the sexuality of women in saying, "The power of beauty will... Transform/honesty from what it is to a bawd" (3. 1. 113-114). Hamlet denounces women as two-faced and promiscuous saying, "God has given you one face and you make yourselves another... And make our wantonness your ignorance" (3. 1. 143-146). His anger builds until he commences separate assaults on the two female characters. During his meeting with Aphelia, he spits several insults on her. Hamlet bids Aphelia, "Get thee to a nunnery" (3. 1. 123).

He additionally advises that if Aphelia must marry, she should "marry a fool, for wise men know well enough what monsters [she] makes of them" (3. 1. 139-140). Later, in the course of his climactic talk with his mother, Hamlet accuses Gertrude of "such a deed/As from the body of contraction plucks/The very soul, and sweet religion makes/ A rhapsody of words" (3. 4. 46-49). Both women are much too delicate to take on Hamlet's harsh words, and they crumble in the presence of his disgust. A final correlation between Hamlet's female characters is their closing exits.

As the plays only females decay, it is evident that a factor to their degeneration is their lack of independence. Neither woman ever speaks without being prior spoken to with the exception of 4. 5. Aphelion's reason finally collapses, and her songs spill out as if they were the liquid madness sloshing in her head. After Alerter Journeys to France and Aphelia agrees to avoid Hamlet in 1. , Aphelia remains without any confidant. She is "an

isolated figure in a patriarchal world" (Magnums 1), even more so in the wake of her father's slaughter. Gertrude can relate.

Claudia, her only confidant, has been forbidden by Hamlet, and her own son abhors her. These women retain little strength to act of their own will. Even their own deaths occur accidentally, the fault of fated chain reactions.

Aphelia, in an effort to commitsuicide, falls into a body of water and drowns. Her only attempt to do something for herself is pulverize, Shakespearean way of keeping femininity helpless. As Gertrude recounts Aphelion's passing, she mentions that in falling from the branch, Aphelia continues "snatches of old lauds/As one incapable of her own distress" (4. . 176-177). Perhaps Aphelia knows how to swim, but indeed does decide for herself to let the water take her. Comparably, Gertrude is killed by a poison meant for the protagonist. Perchance she knows what Claudia has planned; some of Gertrude last words are defiant against Claudia, potentially proving her want of death to come as soon as possible and her own decision to make that happen. Claudia weakly calls on Gertrude to replace Hamlet's poisoned drink; however, Gertrude replies, "I will, my lord, I pray you, pardon me" (5. 2. 287).

Their deaths can be argued as accidental or premeditated; nevertheless, Gertrude and Aphelia maintain irrefutably passive qualities throughout the play, which are conducive to their individual endings. The Queen of Denmark and a fool's daughter, although endowed with separate names and kinsmen, possess stark and tangible similarities. Both temperaments are comprised of a complaint nature, unintentional treachery, a tender heart, and

dependency. Ophelia and Gertrude can effortlessly be labeled parallel characters on account of Shakespearean alacrity to conform to societal views of women.