

Shakespeare: frailty is thy woman

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In Hamlet and Othello, Shakespeare criticizes the feminine issues that were present in his time, bringing awareness to the standard roles and ideal expectations of women by characterizing them in a space of being obedient and powerless. As women are portrayed as having ideal feminine values such as chastity and passiveness, the frailty of women is also brought to the surface. On the other hand, Shakespeare also seems to be suggesting that internal destruction is generated in the sense that both Othello and Hamlet have the idea that women should have feminine values, but they both create an image in their own minds while also having the effect of destroying them.

As misogyny emerges as a response to men dealing with their own shortcomings in which they can't live up, they also project their own sense of weakness.

In Hamlet's first soliloquy, we are introduced to Hamlet's growing sense of and disgust as result of two negative events as he introduces how he wishes death upon himself stating, O, that this too solid flesh would melt, Thaw and resolve itself into a dew!, giving reason that he may be suffering from depression (1. 2. 129-130). As the soliloquy moves along, we begin to see depression lead to bitterness as he states, O, God! A beast, that wants discourse of reason, would have mourned longer-married with my uncle as this illustrates his disgust on the matter being that he thinks Gertrude has ruined his father's memory (1. 2. 150-151). As Hamlet is not only disappointed about his mothers choices, he is aware that It is not nor it cannot come to good: But break, my heart; for I must hold my tongue, as he feels himself becoming more and more powerless (1. 2. 158-159).

Focusing more on Hamlet's general thoughts on women and the treatment in which he projects over them, he makes it clear that women are separated into two categories; virgin and whore. The placement of women in this category is proclaimed when he tells Ophelia, Get thee to a nunnery! Why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners? and then continues on to say For wise men know well enough what monsters you make of them. To a nunnery go, and quickly too, exemplifying his degrading thoughts on women in which he projects on Ophelia (3. 1. 119-136). The repetition of Get thee to a nunnery is mentioned multiple times as his way of making it clear that is under the impression that all humans are corrupt and they destroy everything. As Hamlet's tone comes off destructive, he insists that Ophelia's life is corrupted with sins and that seeking for marriage is revolting to Hamlet's offense. Being that Hamlet already experienced betrayal with within his relationship with his mother, he worries that Ophelia will follow down the same negative path.

As Hamlet seeks to discover the truth of women as a whole, he mentions, Frality is thy name is woman, in which that statement conveys a lack of humanity and also seems to rename the word frailty to woman, which is interesting because it not only represents one woman, but all women. The feeling of resentment he has towards the female species is due to his experience with his mother which may have caused him to harshly reject Ophelia stating, I did love once you once as it shows that his mother, Gertrude, had an impact on the way he feels towards women and also proves himself as contradicting, being that he claims Ophelia is a liar but he also lies to her. Hamlet has seemed to lose faith in women altogether. This

also notions at the idea that misogyny emerges as a way for him to distract himself from dealing with his own insecurities.

Based on the expectations set up earlier in the play, such intense sadness would be considered uncharacteristic of a man, especially one that is a future heir to the throne. One may think that Hamlet would be strong and valiant, however, his feminine expressions and emotions come unexpected. Not only does Hamlet express femininity by revealing emotions and crying, but he also announces his masculinity with the line, To be or not to be: that is the question: Whether tis nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, or to take arms against a sea of troubles, and by opposing end them? proving that Hamlet does not consider himself stereotypically manly or strong. As he struggles with facing his troubles and accepting his wrongs, or bringing them to an end, it is made clear that death is something that he contemplates over. As he comes to the conclusion, Thus conscience does make cowards of us all, he thinks on the right decision to make regarding his afterlife if he chooses death.

Hamlet seems to only take action once women are dead as he confronts death within Ophelia. His experience dealing with pain and self-conflict worsens as he begins to believe that he is really insane. As he tricks Ophelia into believing he is insane, it causes Ophelia to commit suicide. As Hamlet's mental decline leads him to believe he has gone crazy, it allows the interpretation of him having to be careful when throwing the word insanity on women, as he very well became the part.