

**University of al-Qadisiya
College of Education
Department of English**

**REALITY AND ILLUSION IN
SHAKESPEARE'S *HAMLET* AND
PIRANDELLO'S *HENRY IV***

**SUBMITTED BY
Assist. Lect. HIND AHMED KAREEM**

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ABSTRACT

Reality and illusion are two contrasted themes that have been tackled by a large number of dramatists all over the world through different literary ages for these two themes are related largely to Man's life, nature and behaviour. Reality is related to life with all its advantages and disadvantages whereas illusion means the adaptation with falseness of reality when reality becomes too painful to bear. This research is an attempt to show the elaboration of these two themes in two plays, one by the Renaissance English dramatist William Shakespeare *Hamlet* (1602), and the other by the Modern Italian playwright Luigi Pirandello *Henry IV* (1922). It is believed that there are certain affinities in the treatment of reality and illusion in the two plays despite the elapse of time and space between the two. This research, however, falls into two sections and a conclusion.

The first section serves as an introduction to the literary careers of Shakespeare (1564-1616) and Pirandello (1867-1936) through showing the different experiences in life that affected the literary careers of both. Moreover, this section also functions as an introduction to *Hamlet* and *Henry IV*, viewing the affinities and the discrepancies between the two plays in matters of themes and techniques tackled in both.

The second section is dedicated to the analysis of reality and illusion in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Pirandello's *Henry IV* through showing the thematic and technical treatment in the two plays as far as reality and illusion are concerned.

Finally, this research ends with a conclusion that aims at summing up the major findings the study has arrived at.

SECTION ONE INTRODUCTION

Human behavior has always been a confusing mystery to man through different age. To understand man's actions and reactions, his ability to live two lives at the same time one is real and the other is illusionary, has always demanded a sort of analysis and treatment that can guarantee the understanding of this questionable mystery. Since drama has the capacity to present and deal at the same time with man's actions, nature and behaviour through analyzing the relationship of human character to human action, these themes have been the controlling themes in the plays of a large number of dramatist allover the world and in different literary ages. Those dramatists attempted different interpretations and showed different sides of human personality. One of those dramatists is William Shakespeare (1564-1616) who is considered the world's first dramatist due to his way of presenting real life on stage throughout showing different sides of human nature and behaviour, by presenting men who are offended by the hardiness of their realities. Othello, for example, is the representation of a man who suffers racial discrimination the matter that affect his actions greatly leading him to his and Desdemona's tragic end(s). On the other side stands Macbeth who is destroyed by his ambition on the one hand and the greedy bloody nature of his wife on the other. Above all stands Hamlet whose confusing nature is based on his sorrowful knowledge of his father's arranged murder. That's why he searches a refuge from bitter reality to the world of illusion through clinging to madness. Such escapement makes Hamlet's actions turn in a closed circle which he doesn't get rid off except by his own death.

Such theme, the mixture of reality and illusion through feigning madness, is also tackled by another playwright that is Luigi Pirandello (1867- 1936) in his play *Henry IV* (1922), but this time the perfume of the play is not Elizabethan nor English rather it is a Modern Italian one. Pirandello is best distinguished

not merely for his understanding of the nature of Man, rather; he is best known for his contribution to Modern literature and Modern thought. In *Henry IV*, Pirandello attempts to present a modern man who searches an escape from the world of reality to illusion by claiming madness. Henry IV has taken himself to be the German emperor Henry IV who lived in eleventh century. As a result, everything around him is made to imitate the real emperor's life and everybody around Henry IV is living this illusion with him as a means to protect him from the outside world. Unlike Hamlet, however, Henry IV chooses to stay in this closed circle forever after he commits a murder and this is the condition of most of Pirandello's heroes whom, symbolically, are representing the Modern Man who is defeated by reality.¹

In presenting those protagonists, Hamlet and Henry IV as escapists from reality, both dramatists, Shakespeare and Pirandello, seem to be affected by their own views and experiences in life since each one of them belongs to a different age and a different nation. As far as Shakespeare is concerned, he was born on April 1564 at Stratford-on-Avon where his father was a shopkeeper. Shakespeare had two sisters and three brothers. His mother owned a land, so the family was sometimes in good circumstances and sometimes in need. Shakespeare got his education in the Free Grammar School at Stratford but he was forced to leave his study unfinished when he was at the age of thirteen for his family had serious financial troubles.² Due to these troubles and also his early marriage at the age of eighteen from a lady who was eight years his senior, Shakespeare's life as a young man seemed to be crippled by these hard experiences.³ He managed, however, to leave Stratford at the age twenty one and moved to London where he seemed to be fascinated by the world of drama that was greatly flourishing at that time: "Shakespeare joined the theatres as it entered its great period, a time of general, intellectual firmament, cultural confidence and linguistic exuberance"⁴. He joined the Chamberlain's Company and in addition to his work as an actor, Shakespeare "was employed in re-modeling and fitting up for the stage sundry old

plays"⁵. This world would certainly give Shakespeare a practical insight into the needs of stage productions and what is necessary to create dramatic effect, the matter that is genuinely reflected in the plays Shakespeare started to write for the company. Between the years 1587-1611, Shakespeare introduced about thirty seven plays of tragedies, comedies and histories each of which gained remarkable success especially his great tragedies *Julius Caesar* (1599) *Hamlet* (1602), *Othello* (1604), *Macbeth* (1606) and *King Lear* (1606). Thus Shakespeare's reputation as a gifted dramatist started to flourish the matter that is attributed to:

The strength in Shakespeare's plays [which] lies in the absorbing stories they tell, in their wealth of complex characters, and in the eloquent speech – vivid, forceful and at the same time lyric- that the playwright puts on his characters' lips.⁶

Moreover, Shakespeare is not distinguished by using Latin or any other aspects of classical concepts of drama that other Elizabethan dramatists were using frequently, rather; he is best distinguished for his ability in drawing the conflict of human mind. Such conflict is attributed to the fact that the Elizabethan age has been a great age of changes in social, religious and political levels of life. Different movements, theories (e.g. humanism, Machiavellianism, capitalism etc.) and important discoveries around the world started to change Man's life, beliefs and attitudes towards himself and towards the world he lives. Affected by these changes, Man started to think of his condition in life, whether he is ordinary Man whose fate is controlled by god or he is the superman who might have a god-like power. In most of his plays Shakespeare has been able to project such conflict inside Man on stage through treating different themes and ideas that are related to Man's life:

Shakespeare is pre-eminently a great creator of characters. So extensive was his knowledge of human nature. He was able to project himself into the minds of an infinite variety of men and women. He succeeded in presenting them real as life through his plays.⁷

It is thus Shakespeare's tragedies and tragic heroes gained special importance in the writings of many writers and critics for reading Shakespeare's plays means to meet unprecedented range and variety of situations and behaviour which can give a vivid picture to the inner life of Man. In his great tragedies, especially *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth* and *King Lear*, Shakespeare is presenting characters that have problems with their own realities. Those heroes cannot find any satisfaction in their realities, thus, as a solution to their problems, they choose to sink in the world of illusion. Some literary critics attribute the tragic greatness and clear human vision of these plays to the view that these plays are written in certain period of Shakespeare's life between the years 1601-1608 which are dominated by Shakespeare's showing of "superbly and disturbingly a profound dissatisfaction with life"⁸, the matter that is directly reflected on Shakespeare's heroes' that are presented as troubled by their realities and they intend to have much in common with the world of illusion. Consequently, they all fell victims to their suffering and conflict in life.

Such dissatisfaction with life has been also the prime motivator to Luigi Pirandello's drama that is affected by his personal agony in life. According to Pirandello the man and the artist are closely related, what the artist feels is directly reflected on his artistic productions. Born in Girgenti- Sicily in 1867, the primitive atmosphere was deeply found to inspire a sensitive boy like Luigi with the sense of inevitability in life. This sort of life is largely found in the works of Pirandello, the mature artist who has been able to portray the stoic passiveness in Sicilian men and

women who are caught in that changeless existence. The main characters in Pirandello's life were his parents, his wife and his three children. Pirandello's father was a business man whose behaviour shows great violence which required a mixture of patience and suffering from the mother's side whose life was similar to slavery. Pirandello's interest in art and artistic career started as he was sixteen years old when he started writing poetry.⁹ In this early age, Pirandello showed a great hatred to rhetoric. He started to develop his own concept to be a realist or more specifically a naturalist.¹⁰ His literary productions thus started to deal with the presentation of life as it is and not as it is supposed to be. This early naturalistic tendency is flourished in the University of Rome where Pirandello completed his education to receive his B.A. degree in Italian Arts and later on at the German University of Bonn where he got his M.A. degree in Italian Literature. In addition to poetry, Pirandello introduced a large number of novels and short stories but he is best known for the sort of drama that he has presented to Italian and international stage which is directly responsible for flourishing the literary career of Pirandello in Italy and different regions of the world.¹¹

In all his plays, Pirandello shows different portraits of human inner life that is tormented by feelings of emptiness and hate to all that is related to the complexities of modern life as it is affected by the newly shocking theories and tendencies (e.g. Marxism, Existentialism, Communism, etc.) as well as the two world's wars which turned Man into no more than a human beast who cannot control his own life:

The outstanding characteristic Pirandello's thought is that of being constantly close to life. Life has always been envisaged by him in terms of man's existence on this planet. In fact, his drama centers around the consideration of what happens to a human being endowed

with instinct and reason, sentiment
and intellect.¹²

To Pirandello, life is enveloped with sadness and Man in turn must stand the sad and pitiful spectacle of the tragedy of being a human and to be the victim of the hard experiences found in life. Pirandello himself has been a victim of his own bitter experiences because of his wife's mental illness, his two son's participation in war and his daughter's attempt of suicide. Due to all these horrible circumstances, Pirandello started to feel himself being no more than a poor man who is crushed down without even the least consolation. He started to envy the mad man who is able to shout of what he wants, who can reveal his weird thoughts and strange feelings freely.¹³ As a result, Pirandello's drama give great space to that tormented inner life that weaves inside him or as he calls it the dissolution of the ego. Through such torture Pirandello has been able to learn the comforting power of illusion which is according to him is more real than reality itself.¹⁴ Thus Pirandello's drama is the drama of ideas that is based on a single underlying concept that life lies beyond the reach of reason and is only reflected through Man's spontaneous actions and instincts. Yet, as Man is gifted with reason, he cannot live instinctively like a beast, nor can he accept an existence which is constantly changing. In sequence, Man chooses his second and only choice, to dive deep in a world of illusion, a world which is made by him and not imposed on him. Therefore; all Pirandello's characters are presented as attempting to fulfill their own self-seeking role in life, to find their own reality, but they find themselves entrapped and defeated by this life which in turn is always changing to enable them to see their defects.¹⁵ As such, those characters choose to live in the world of illusion as their own and only choice. In his play *Six Characters in Search for an Author* (1921), Pirandello sees human life as theatrical one, viewing the same attitude of Shakespeare that this world is only a stage on which human beings perform their roles so what those characters are living is only the illusion of life and not life itself in which they loose

their own human identity and turn to whatsoever this illusion wants them to be.¹⁶

Henceforth, reality and illusion are not restricted to Shakespeare's age only nor to Pirandello's age only, rather, they are related to Man's own life, his continuous conflict and his inability to fulfill a consolation with his sore reality. Both Shakespeare and Pirandello are only transcribing such reality through showing their own views and outlooks to people of their ages and nations, portraying Man's actions and reactions in a world which is beyond his control although he is the superior creature in it. Both dramatists intended to present stories that are real as life, to give a true reflection of life and the reality of Man, but this reality is turned to be no more than the illusion of life and not life itself.

NOTES

¹ Herbert C. Heffner, "Pirandello and the Nature of Man", *Modern Drama: Essays in Criticism*, Travis Bogard and William I. Oliver (eds.), (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp.266-267.

² W. Turner (ed.), *William Shakespeare: Julius Caesar*, (New Delhi: S. Chand & Co. CPVT. LTD, 1974), p.vii.

³ Julia Markus and Paul Jordan (intro.), *William Shakespeare: Hamlet*, (London: Longman Group UK Limited, 1999), p.iv.

⁴ Michael Alexander, *A History of English Literature*, (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 2000), p.107.

⁵ Turner, p.viii.

⁶ , "Shakespeare, William", *The Columbia Encyclopedia, the Sixth edition2001*, www.bartleby.com, 11-4-2004.

⁷ L.C. Knights, "How Many Children had Lady Macbeth", *Modern Shakespearean Criticism: Essays on Style, Dramaturgy, and the Major Plays*, Alvin B. Kernan (ed.), (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1970), p.45.

⁸ Harley Granville-Barker, "Prefaces to Shakespeare", *Critics on Shakespeare Since 1904: Readings in Literary Criticism*, W.T. Andrews (ed.), (New Delhi: University of the West Indies, 1996), p.60-61.

⁹ Domenico Vittorini, *The Drama of Luigi Pirandello*, (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1935), pp. 12-13.

¹⁰ Pirandello began his career as a writer in the Italian School of naturalism known as "Verism" which though it differed somewhat from northern naturalism owed its essential tenets to much the same cluster of scientific and philosophic ideas but both schools share their refusal to Rhetorical traditional patterns of Petrarch. In his early poems, Pirandello attacks the usage of words that are worn out and which, according to Pirandello, are only attempting to hide Man's thoughts behind the fake use of words. Heffner, p.266.

¹¹ "Luigi Pirandello", [www. imagi-nation.com](http://www.imagi-nation.com),20-3-2005.

¹² Vittorini, p.37.

¹³ J.L. Stayn, *Modern Drama in Theory and Practice: Symbolism, Surrealism and the Absurd*, Vol.3, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p.77.

¹⁴ Heffner, p.255.

¹⁵ Herbert Brunstien, "Pirandello's Drama of Revolt", *Pirandello: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Glanco Cambon (ed.), (Yale: Yale University Press, 1972), p.107.

¹⁶ Raymond Williams, *Drama from Ibsen to Eliot*, (London: Raymond Williams, 1964), pp. 106-9.

SECTION TWO

ILLUSION AS THE ONLY REFUGE FROM REALITY

Reality and illusion are two contrasted themes, but for the man who searches a refuge from his sore reality those contrasted themes are turned to be two faces of the same coin. Reality means life with all its advantages and disadvantages, whereas illusion represents the adaptation with the falseness of reality when reality becomes too painful to bear. Thus illusion becomes so attached to reality that without reality there is no existence for illusion and without illusion there are no comforting powers to Man that enable him to precede in life. It is for this complicated relationship between reality and illusion that these two themes are treated and applied in a number of plays throughout various ages since drama is primarily concerned with

presenting an imitation of life on stage. Despite the elapse of time between Shakespeare and Pirandello, both dramatists have treated the discrepancies and affinities between reality and illusion in a number of their plays, relating those two themes to changes that repeatedly occur in Man's life and his inability to communicate with reality. In Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Pirandello's *Henry IV*, the two dramatists are presenting two protagonists, Hamlet and Henry IV who are sharing a number of common features since both are acting out of sorrow and misery due to their offence by their own realities. As a result, they suffer a psychological disturbance of conflicting moods that lead both to behave in a strange, sometimes mad, manner, showing at the same time a restriction to the world of illusion. As far as *Hamlet* is concerned, the play starts with presenting Hamlet's reality as a young man whose father, king Hamlet, has passed two months ago and his mother has married her brother-in-law two weeks later. Therefore, Hamlet appears as a man who cannot find any consolation in reality neither with himself nor with the people surrounding him. He cannot even hide his inner feelings and his clear realization that what is a catastrophe to him does not concern anybody else. He seems to be obsessed by the contrast found in people's behaviour, more specifically his mother and his uncle's behaviour who are according to Hamlet no more than incestuous creatures that get benefit of his father's sudden death. He attempts to alert his mother to witness his sadness and to feel the sadness that weaves inside him, expressing to her the wide gap between being sad and seem sad, or more specifically, between real and illusionary sadness:

Seems, madam! Nay, it is; I know not
seems.

'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good
mother,
Nor the customary suits of solemn black
Nor windy suspiration of forc'd breath,
No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
Nor the dejected haviour of the visage,
Together with all forms, moods, shapes
of grief,

That can denote me truly. These, indeed,
seem;
For they are actions that a man might
play;
But I have that within which passes
show-
These but the trappings and the suits of
woe.¹

Consequently, when the ghost of the dead king appears to Hamlet and communicates to him "the secrets of [his] prison house"(I, v, 18), revealing the identity of his murderer and the task of revenge imposed on Hamlet, Hamlet seems to be shocked by this new reality, a reality that is based on illusion. Such illusion raises a question about the validity of the information the ghost is transforming and whether this ghost does have a reliable knowledge of its death or it is itself deluded. The answer of this question is not so that easy because the existence of ghosts is something mysterious in the Renaissance age since ghosts are related to a vague world which people have great interest in but they cannot find any real answers to it. As such, the ghost of Hamlet's father represents a misleading fantasy which creates a sense of indecisiveness inside hamlet despite the fact that Hamlet swears to his father's ghost to forget all types of knowledge he used to nourish himself with and to dedicate himself to the cause of revenge:²

But bear me stiffly up. Remember thee!
Ay, thou poor ghost, whilst memory holds a
seat
In this distracted globe. Remember thee!
Yea, from the table of my memory
I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
All saws of books, all forms, all pressures
past,
That youth and observation copied there,
And thy commandment all alone shall live
Within the book and volume of my brain,
Unmix'd with baser matters.

(I, v, 101-110)

Hamlet's powerful words threatening of revenge makes his personality appears as a man of action as a one who is totally convinced of his cause, but these words turn to be no more than illusionary promises. After all Hamlet is an educated man and the graduate of Wittenberg, but at the same time he has a fixed responsibility towards his father's murder. In other words, Hamlet's feelings show to a great extent a mixture of responsibility and uncertainty. He considers himself responsible towards revenging his father's murder. At the same time he cannot get a reliable knowledge of the identity of the murderer depending on the ghost's information the matter which leads Hamlet to feel lost in a world which contains no reason. A world that is "weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable"(I, v, 135) to Hamlet in all its uses:

Hamlet's anguish comes from the inner conflict of spirit who wants to understand the ultimate significance of human actions, especially his own, before acting in a world empty, so far as we can see, from a significant value. He has looked at life in Elsinore and has disgusted by what he sees, and we can sympathize with that because Elsinore is, thanks to the actions of particular people, an evil place.³

Hamlet's astonishment against the world is greatly headed towards the filthy incestuous crime of Gertrude and Claudius as well the one who kills his brother so as to be himself a king. Thus Hamlet decides his next move is "to put an antic disposition on" (I, v, 190), to indulge himself in a world of illusions as his only means to discover the reality of his father's murderer, and to unmask all the evil faces surrounding him.⁴ Hamlet's madness is first seen and described by Ophelia when Hamlet comes into her closet in a very strange form:

..., With his doublet all unbrac'd,

No hat upon his head, his stockings
fouled,
Ungart'ed and down-gyved to his ankle;
Pale as his shirt, his knees knocking each
other,
And with a look so piteous in purport
As if he had been loosed out of hell
To speak of horrors- he comes before
me.

(II, i, 84-90)

Such appearance and behaviour belong to a madman who is sinking deep in his own illusions. Still, Hamlet's soliloquies and speeches reveal another fact, "they are meant to strip (other characters) of their fine appearances and to show them up their true natures"⁵. Hamlet intends after all to dress himself up a madman's cunning in order to undress all the false appearances of characters around him and to reveal the illusionary roles they perform in front of him so that they can hide their true ugly personalities for Hamlet is having the qualifications of being a seer who is able to read the real personalities of other characters. He sees for example in Claudius "a bloody bawdy villain", in Polonius "a fish-monger" and in Guildenstern and Rosencrantz "tedious old fools". He also advises his mother to assume a virtue she doesn't possess and to abandon her incestuous nature and be pure again. Such views contain a number of facts that are greatly related to the realities of those characters as a whole. At the same time these views show a man with an intellectual mind who is aware of everybody around him rather than a mind of a madman. This fact is reinforced by Hamlet's ironical speech to his mother to tell Claudius " that I essentially am not in madness / But mad in craft" (III, iv, 206-207). Such confession reveal Hamlet's desire to feign madness either because he is after investigating the reality of his father's death or to escape the responsibility of revenge by retreating into the security of insanity.

Such strategy that mixes reality and illusion is also seen followed by Pirandello's protagonist Henry IV who is described

by Pirandello as his own Modern Hamlet. In *Henry IV* Pirandello shows his main conception of about human personality and the role performed by Man in life. Henry IV is a man who is destroyed by the tragic misfortunes of life. One day, twenty years ago and during a masquerade in which he has been in disguise as the German Emperor of the eleventh century Henry IV, Henry IV suffers an injury at the back of his head at the hands of a jealous rival that leaves him temporarily unconscious. Upon waking up, Henry IV suffers an unbalanced state in which he believes himself to be the German Emperor Henry IV.⁶ Consequently, his wealthy sister places him in an old castle where every body humours his illusion and makes it come true. He has attendants to play to play the roles of confidential counselors and he receives ambassadors of foreign countries. After twelve years of the accident, the injured man recovers his sanity but he continuous feigning madness for he prefers this world of illusion to the real world in which he has lost the woman he loved. He has lived all these years in his illusionary world of the eleventh century isolated from the real world of the twentieth century "the world of love and hate, of grow old and die"⁷. The only relation that Henry IV is having with modern life is two modern oil paintings. One of them represents him as Henry IV and the other represents Countess Matilda, his beloved or the wife of the Emperor Henry IV in Henry's illusionary world. According to Henry IV, the two paintings are images that reflect a clear mirror of an indefinite vague past which after the fall ceased to possess life and become frozen in the idea that he is Henry IV.⁸

The breaking point in Henry's illusions occurs as he is visited by his old friends in an attempt to make him recover his sanity (which he actually did eight years ago) in order that his nephew Di Nolle can marry his fiancé after being released from the responsibility of his uncle. Those old friends are Donna Matilda (his beloved), Frida (her daughter and Di Nolle fiancé) accompanied by a Doctor and a middle aged gentleman Belcredi, the one who is responsible for the tragic accident

happened to Henry IV. They all come in disguise as historical figures of the eleventh century.

These disguise suggest the illusionary roles that those characters are attaching to themselves. In other words, those characters, especially Matilda and Belcredi, represent the ghosts of Henry IV's past who show up to him in order to wake Henry IV's mind to a reality that is so hard to him and which he has spent twelve years escaping from. Such idea is reinforced by Henry IV's speech to his rival Belcredi as his enemy Peter Damian as Henry IV states that: "Life flows from us and the man of yesterday stands before us the men of today immobilized in such a hideous form that we cannot bear to look at" ⁹. Such speech cannot be a speech of a madman for it is impossible for a true madman to feel intuitively the presence of a mortal enemy and to be so sensitive to the atmosphere created by those who did him wrong in the past.¹⁰ In seeing both Matilda and Belcredi, Henry IV recollects all the painful past. After twelve years of living in illusions, Henry IV is suddenly seized by the reasons of his tragedy standing in front of him and want to destroy his present illusionary world as they destroyed his real world twenty years ago. Thus Henry IV's only choice is to practice a madman's cunning on them by pretending madness while he is exposing the realities of each one of them:

It's convenient for everybody to insist that certain people are mad, so they can be shut up. Do you know why? Because it is impossible to hear them speak! What shall I say of these people who've just gone away? One is a whore, another a libertine, another a swindler...don't you think so?

(Act II, P.33)

Henry IV's speech reveals a conscious self-deception which Man forces on himself because without it, he cannot stand the painful situation he is caught in. This is attributed to the fact that

Henry IV is "a typical Pirandellian character ... for he is a man distressed, with a mobile eyes, tense and unable to relieve that tension, for fear his whole being moral and physical, may disintegrate"¹¹. There are periods in Henry IV's life in which he has been so unsatisfied by his mask of madness, but he is ready to endure this suffering of illusion better than bearing the realities of himself and everybody around him. He calls his illusionary life as Henry IV as a dream that becomes a part of his life. A dream that has stolen the best years of his life and turned it into a nightmare that is hunting his days but he cannot get rid off it:

[My hair] went grey here as Henry IV., Do you understand? And I never knew it! I perceived it all of a sudden, one day, when I opened my eyes; and I was terrified because I understood at once that not only had my hair gone grey, but that I was all grey, inside, that everything had fallen to pieces, that everything was finished.

(Act III, p. 39)

Henry IV's conflict of mind reaches its climax when he exposes his reality to his servants after Matilda, Belcredi and the Doctor go off stage calling them:

Buffoons, buffoons! One can play any tune on them! And that other fellow...Pietro Damiani!... caught him out perfectly! He's afraid to appear before me again (Moves up and down excitedly while saying this; the sees Berthold, and points him out to the other three valets). Oh, look at this imbecile watching me with his mouth wide open! (Shakes him). Don't you understand? Don't you see, idiot, how I treat them, how I play the fool with them, make them appear before me just as I wish? Miserable,

frightened clowns that they are! And you (addressing the valets) are amazed that I tear off their ridiculous masks now, just as if it wasn't I who had made them mask themselves to satisfy this taste of mine for playing the madman!

(Act II, p.32)

As a result, madness to Hamlet and Henry IV is only a role through which they can live two lives at the same time and to achieve two aims as well. The first aim is to expose all false and fake appearances dressed by those who surround them, to make those characters see their own realities, to make them take off all the beautiful masks they wear. Hamlet has achieved this goal by his "Mouse Trap", the play within play that he prepares to see the reaction of Claudius. Through the play, the illusionary performance of Lucianus who pours poison into the ear of the player king reflects the real character of Claudius as a corrupt politician whose major weapon is his capability to exploit others by his skilful use of language which resembles very much a poison poured in the ear. This poison is the same poison that kills Hamlet at the end after he actually revenges his father.¹²

Henry IV on the other hand is also containing a play within play, but the play this time is not intended by the protagonist to entrap his antagonist, rather it is intended for Henry IV himself. As the Doctor decides to make Henry IV wake up from his illusions by making Frida and Di Nolli pretending to be the live images of Matilda and Henry IV in front of Henry IV. By deciding such plan, the Doctor wants Henry IV to realize the fact of the passing of time, to give Henry IV a shock so as to wake up to reality and recover sanity. This matter is not welcomed by Henry IV who decides to secure his world of illusion by killing Belcredi, the only one who believes that Henry IV is not a madman.¹³ As he commits such an action, Henry IV uses his valets for protection so that he can stay safe in his castle of illusion and can escape the legal consequences of his action, stating that "here together...here together...forever...forever" (Act III, P. 42).

Moreover, the second aim that both Hamlet and Henry IV are using madness for is that they intend to escape from a reality that is imposed on them, to escape their own responsibilities in life. This is attributed to the fact that Hamlet and Henry IV are men of inaction. They face certain dilemmas in life but they

both choose to retreat and to live in their own illusions instead of taking a serious action. Hamlet keeps on postponing the act of revenge until it destroys his whole life and Henry cries demanding to "let me live wholly and freely my miserable life" (Act II, P. 22). Both choose not to take any actual and effective steps in their lives and the result is both catastrophes as Hamlet is killed by Claudius at the hands of Laertes and Henry IV chooses to continue his life as a madman to the rest of his life after he kills Belcredi.

In presenting such protagonists, Shakespeare and Pirandello intend after all to raise a question about the nature of Man and the role played by him in life. The two dramatists conclude that life is cruel and has no reason and that Man, in order to relieve himself from the burden of reality; he forces on himself a mask of conscious self-deception. The result is that reality and life are defeated whereas illusion and form remain. Such procedure is playing a constant part in Man's life turning him into no more than a prisoner in a world whose reality and illusion are having a fair share in it and both are controlling his life making of him only an actor on the stage of the world.

NOTES

¹ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Julia Markus and Paul Jordan (intro.), (London: Longman Group UK Limited, 1999), (Act I, Scene. 2, lines: 78-85). All references to the play are taken from this edition, henceforth; all subsequent references will be parenthetically cited within the text.

² ,"*Hamlet*: Themes, Motifs & Symbols", www.Sparknotes.com,25-1-2008.

³ Ian Johnston, "Studies in Shakespeare: Introductory Lecture on Shakespeare's *Hamlet*", www.malo.bc.ca.,12-12-2004.

⁴ Harry Levin, "The Antic Disposition", (no p, no d.), pp.123-124.

⁵ Wolfgang H. Clemen, "The Imagery of *Hamlet*", (no p., 1951), p.67.

⁶ Stark Young, "The Pirandello Play", *Pirandello: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Glanco Cambon (ed.), (Yale: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 13.

⁷ Herbert Brunstien, "Pirandello's Drama of Revolt", *Pirandello: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Glanco Cambon (ed.), (Yale: Yale University Press, 1972), p.117.

⁸ Domenico Vittorini, *The Drama of Luigi Pirandello*, (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1935), p.150.

⁹ Luigi Pirandello, *Henry IV*, Edward Storer (trans.), (New York: E.P.Dotton, 1922), Act I, p.21. All references to the play are taken from this edition, henceforth; all subsequent references will be parenthetically cited within the text.

¹⁰ Vittorini, p.151.

¹¹ Ibid, p.152.

¹² E.M.W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's Problem Plays: Hamlet*, (London: Penguin Books, 1950), p.10-11.

¹³ Brunstien, pp.119-120.

CONCLUSION

What is a Man?, this ancient question is uttered by many dramatists through different literary ages including Shakespeare and Pirandello, a two representative dramatists of their ages and nations, wandering the nature of the relationship between Man and life. In *Hamlet* and *Henry IV*, Shakespeare and Pirandello attempt their own answer of this question according to their own assessment of the nature of Man and the conception of reality surrounding him. The two dramatists state the fact that Man's life lies beyond the reach of reason and beyond Man's control that's why Man is always searching for a sort of life which contains reason and he can control at the same time. The two dramatists conclude that life is divided into two parts: one is real, the other is illusionary. The real part represents the sort of life imposed on Man which in turn is always causing his suffering. Whereas the illusionary part of life is related to life created by Man so as to suit his needs and desires in the ideal way of living. Sometimes there is no clear cut line between reality and illusion as Man tries to hide his own reality beyond the mask of illusion, the matter that happens with Hamlet and Henry IV.

Through *Hamlet* and *Henry IV*, Shakespeare and Pirandello are applying their own conception of reality and illusion as the two become two faces of the same coin of life. Hamlet and Henry IV are two protagonists who face dilemmas with realities imposed on them. Dissatisfied with their realities, Hamlet and Henry IV choose to dive deep in a world of illusion as their own and only salvation from a painful reality. Quite significant, through this illusion, the two protagonists become able to realize the

real identities of people surrounding them. This is the state in which illusion turns to be more real than reality itself, and this is the time in which reality becomes the tool of illusion. Thus reality and illusion turn to be no more than roles played by Man in life as his own way to accommodate a consolation with life. This is the philosophy Shakespeare and Pirandello are having a confirm belief in and this is the tendency their drama is presenting in which life turns to be the stage of the world and Man is only an actor on it. An actor whose life is dominated by reality but it is supported by illusion which sometimes turn to be more real than reality itself.

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الخلاصة

الحقيقة والوهم هما موضوعان متضادان تطرق اليهما عددا كبير من المسرحيين في كل انحاء العالم وخلال عصور ادبية مختلفة لارتباط هذين الموضوعين ارتباطا جوهريا بحياة وطبيعة وتصرف الانسان، فالحقيقة تتعلق بالحياة بكل ميزاتها ومساوئها، في حين ان الوهم يرتبط بتبني الجانب الكاذب من الحقيقة عندما تصبح الحقيقة واقعا يصعب احتمالها. يقوم هذا البحث بمحاولة تقصي الكيفية التي يتم فيها بلورة ومعالجة هذين الموضوعين في مسرحيتين، الاولى للمسرحي الأنكليزي في عصر النهضة وليام شكسبير *هاملت* (١٦٠٢)، والأخرى للمسرحي الإيطالي في العصر الحديث لويجي بيرانديلو *هنري الرابع* (١٩٢٢)، اذ يبدو ان هناك ثمة جملة من التقابلات في الموضوعات و التقنيات في كيفية معالجة موضوعي الحقيقة و الوهم في هاتين المسرحيتين على الرغم من التفاوت الزمني والمكاني بينهما.

يقع هذا البحث في فصلين وخاتمة، فالفصل الأول يقوم باعطاء مقدمة عن النتاجات الأدبية لشكسبير (١٥٦٤ - ١٦١٦) و بيرانديلو (١٨٦٧-١٩٣٦) من خلال عرض مختلف تجارب الحياة التي اثرت في بلورة المواهب و النتاجات الأدبية لكلا المسرحيين. كما ان هذا الفصل يقوم بتقديم المسرحيتين *هاملت* و *هنري الرابع* من خلال عرض اوجه التشابه والاختلاف بينهما وذلك بعرض الموضوعات والتقنيات المستخدمة في كليهما. اما الفصل الثاني فهو مخصص لتحليل الحقيقة والوهم في المسرحيتين من خلال تناوله لهذين الموضوعين معالجة موضوعية وتقنية . وأما الخاتمة فكانت عرضاً لأهم النتائج التي خرج بها البحث في هذا الموضوع.