

"How successful was Claudius likely to be as a replacement for Hamlet Senior?" In what ways does Shakespeare present the central antagonist to Hamlet in this play?

It is argued among many critics that Claudius, no matter what his redeeming features may be within his psychological make-up, his failure to be a replacement as a father, Monarch and Courtier, are testament to the fact that he could never actually replace Hamlet Senior. Counteracting this viewpoint, though the court fails to be a place where justice overthrows all else, and becomes what can only be described as a "slaughter house", Claudius committed regicide for the reason that he was sure of what he wanted, which was to be everything that his brother was; a husband, father and Monarch. Having his desires fulfilled before his very eyes, Claudius would automatically look for qualities he possesses which are parallel to 'Old Hamlet's', in order to gain respect from Hamlet. These qualities to a certain extent already exist through his character's trait as a natural leader whereby he uses his skilled opportunism and his bold plotting;

"Now must your conscience my acquittance seal, and you must put me in your heart for friend"

These traits of character could be taught to Hamlet and Claudius could therefore succeed as a father figure. However, to succeed as a father figure Claudius would have to be supportive of his "son", which he is not, as we see him unsympathetically tell Hamlet to;

"throw to earth this unprevailing woe"

It is evident that Hamlet sees his father as the epitome of Kingship;

"Th' imperial jointress to this warlike state"

thus in order to come to a conclusion as to whether Claudius really was likely to be successful as a replacement for Hamlet Senior, I will pinpoint events which demonstrate where Claudius successfully and unsuccessfully conforms to the role of Hamlet Senior. In doing this I will also examine the context in which "Hamlet" was written, and the aims of Shakespeare within this Metaphysical period. This will provide me with a springboard into looking at whether Hamlet's tragic downfall occurred because one of the indications was the unlikelihood of Claudius being a successful replacement, because it will allow me to examine how far the reasons for Hamlet Junior wanting to avenge his father derive from his anger that Claudius cannot replace his father.

The events before the play enable me to extrapolate that Claudius was highly envious of his brother, for having a son a wife and a throne;

"We pray you throw to earth this unprevailing woe, and think of us as of a father, for let the world take note you are the most immediate to our throne; and with no less nobility of love than that which dearest father bears his son, do I impart toward you."(Act I sc.ii)

As a consequence of fulfilling his deep, obsessive, envious desire, he was bound to make the most of it and thus do his utmost to be loved as much as Hamlet Senior was loved. The role of Hamlet Senior as a father was to lead his son. As Claudius attempts to take over Hamlet's role as a father, Claudius has many qualities which may appear desirable and admirable to Hamlet, although he would never mention this to Claudius considering the context of the "incestuous" situation between Claudius and Gertrude. Claudius could teach Hamlet to feel more secure and confident in himself as Claudius is a bold plotter and a skilled opportunist;

"If he be now returned, as checking at his voyage, and that he means no more to undertake it, I will work him to an exploit, now ripe in my device, under which he shall not choose but fall. And for his death no wind of blame shall breathe but even his mother shall uncharge the practise, and call it an accident."(Act IV sc.vii)

Though these traits may have seemed odious to an Elizabethan audience, this is a trait which Hamlet, to an extent, would desire, as he himself is a protagonist and deeply resents his flaw of the inability to act, making endless self-comparisons and always self-dramatising;

"My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth."(Act IV.sc. iv)

Though this may be true, it must be recognised that these traits were only admirable to Hamlet to the extent that he desires the ability not to have scruples about the outcome, but to act, when honour is at stake, because these are the exact qualities which Hamlet calls into question when he sees them in Fortinbras;

"Two thousand souls and twenty thousand ducats will not debate the question of this straw. This is th' impostune of much wealth and peace, that inward breaks, and shows no cause without why the man dies."

Claudius is consequentially not the epitome of failure where a paternal guide is a requisite in the eyes of Hamlet. This having been stated, the moment Hamlet Senior dies, Hamlet expects to be closer to his mother in their time of grievance. However, Claudius intercepts Hamlet's expected closeness to his mother, which Hamlet is not likely to forgive Claudius for. Hamlet is unlikely to forgive Claudius not only because of the nature of the hurt he has caused Hamlet, but also because part of Hamlet's psychological make-up is to stick to his tribal values which derive from Leviticus in the Old Testament;

"An eye for an eye."

As a consequence of Hamlet not being able to forgive Claudius, Claudius does not gain the respect which Hamlet Senior gained from his son;

"Now to my word; it is Adieu, adieu, remember me. I have sworn't."(Act I sc.v)

Hamlet, knows that he cannot confide and trust in Claudius, neither as a father or as a King. Hamlet makes issues of the fact that Claudius cannot conform to the "paternal role" of Hamlet Senior after having killed him, also making issues of the fact that Claudius would also fail to be a successful replacement as a husband. Hamlet realises that these two brothers carry opposing characteristics, so it is therefore extremely difficult to suggest that Claudius can ever be a total replacement for Hamlet Senior;

"My father's brother, but no more like my father than I to Hercules."

This quote in context may actually suggest that Hamlet Junior and Claudius could have had an affinity, perhaps, if they were brothers, as the quote suggests that Claudius could not have had the possibility of becoming Hamlet Senior, because of their difference in age. However, this suggests that Claudius and Hamlet did not have much of an age gap, and could therefore have got on, just as they most probably did before Claudius stole Hamlet's security; his father, mother, crown and hopes. There is no evidence to suggest that they did not have an affinity as uncle and nephew before the tables turned after "the deed" was committed. The very reason why Hamlet feels so inadequate is because of the massive political, personal and parental image of his late father. As a consequence of which, if Claudius had been himself, as before, a brother figure; "Hercules", then perhaps Hamlet would have had no reason to want to avenge Claudius. In Hamlet's eyes no one can replace his father. Hamlet needed Claudius' affinity as a brother, someone he could relate to, after the death of his father, not someone who would dictate to him. An example of what could have been between Hamlet and Claudius, is the relationship between Hamlet and Horatio.

Hamlet knows he can trust Horatio, as Horatio is not trying to dominate him. Hamlet recognises that Horatio is merely content with his friendship, whereas Claudius attempts to overpower Hamlet as a replacement father;

"For your intent in going back to school in Wittenberg, it is most retrograde to our desire; and we beseech you, bend you to remain here in the cheer and comfort of our eye, our chiefest courtier, cousin and our son."(Act I sc.ii)

Hamlet can therefore confide in Horatio as a friend, which is what he needed;

"As you are friends, scholars, and soldiers, Give me one poor request."(Act I sc.v)
Hamlet at this point, knew that his father was gone, and he knew that no-one could ever replace him, and he was not looking for a replacement.

Hamlet realises that Hamlet Senior represented structure for him, through him being able to depend on his father, and also left Hamlet without worry about his mother being neglected. This is not to say that Claudius neglected Gertrude, however Hamlet could never see that Claudius would be able to take care of Gertrude better than his late father, as Claudius' devious and calculating character has already been demonstrated to Hamlet;

"Now must your conscience my acquittance seal"

Hamlet can therefore never fully trust Claudius. Consequentially, Claudius can never, for Hamlet, replace Hamlet Senior's role as a father successfully;

"So excellent a King, that waste this Hyperion to a Satyr, so loving to my mother...."(Act I sc.ii)

Hamlet, later, in Act III sc.(iv) reflects and compares what his father **was** to what his uncle **is**;

".....the counterfeit presentment of two brothers. See what a grace was seated on this brow.....Where every God did seem to set his seal to give the world assurance of a man. This was your husband. Look you now what follows: Here is your husband like a mildewed ear, blasting his wholesome brother. Have you eyes?.... You cannot call it love for at your age the hey-day in the blood is tame,and what judgement would step from this to this?"

Hamlet fulfils his aim within this soliloquy, to shame his mother;

"Thou turn'st my eyes into my very soul and there I see such black and grained spots."

We see here the sheer hatred which Hamlet bears for Claudius. A central reason for Hamlet bearing hatred for Claudius derives not solely from the "incestuous" deed which Claudius committed, but because Hamlet had had his heart and mind set on becoming King;

"popped in between election and my hopes."

Claudius, however, interfered and inflicted on Hamlet Junior a **real**, and not a **supposed** wrong, when Claudius stole Hamlet Junior's crown and married his mother. As a consequence of which, without Hamlet even knowing whether the murder of his father was really committed by Claudius, he has rights to want to avenge Claudius, because he took away from Hamlet;

"my hopes"

Which results in Claudius not likely to be a successful replacement for Hamlet Senior, as the role which he desires to play, as Hamlet's father;

"With no less nobility of love than that which dearest father bears his son, do I impart toward you."

can therefore not be possible, as the trust which should be present between father and son, as is present between Hamlet Senior and Hamlet Junior;

"Now to my word;.....I have sworn't."

is not present between Claudius and Hamlet Junior.

Paralleling the wrong Claudius inflicted on Hamlet Junior, is the wrong also, which Hamlet feels Claudius has committed on the people of Denmark, as he feels that the people have got a bad King through deception. Throughout "Hamlet" Shakespeare makes issues about which characteristics would make for a "good" King. Through Hamlet's decision of passing the crown to Fortinbras at the end of the play, we see that Shakespeare suggests that a King needs to be a man of war;

"Young Fortinbras, with conquest come from Poland, to th' ambassadors of England gives this warlike volley"(Act V sc. ii)

It can be said from a certain perspective that Claudius, however efficient a Monarch he might have been, wouldn't have made a "good" King. Evidence to support this theory derive from, for example Branagh's making of the film of "Hamlet", where he presented Hamlet Senior as an ideal figurehead for the court of Elsinore by displaying him as a statue dominating the castle of Elsinore, therefore respected by the Court. The fact that this statue was destroyed by Fortinbras, is in itself language, spoken without words. Here, words are not necessary, it is evident that Branagh has realised through his reading of Hamlet, that the destruction of this figurehead was bound to have repercussions, considering so many people in the Court of Elsinore respected Hamlet Senior. The reasons behind this theory are because Shakespeare's presentation of the Court of Elsinore is very much one of hypocrisy behind the Court, not least is the hypocrisy which arises from

Claudius' character. As Hamlet remarks, Claudius manages to carry on leading the life of a King, just as if the events of the previous month had ceased to exist, which is extremely hypocritical of him;

"within a month-.....O most wicked speed, to post with such dexterity to incestuous sheets."

As a result of this Claudius is not likely to be a good replacement for Hamlet Senior because one thing that Hamlet Senior was not, was a hypocrite. He ruled his Court justly, and gained the respect of many people, not least of all his son. Hamlet Senior also kept public and private life separate, whereas Claudius intermingles the public life of the Court with the private life of his newly found "family". Perhaps the epitome of this is where he uses his powers as Monarch in order to get rid of Hamlet, because he feels that Hamlet is encroaching on his private business;

"I like him not, nor stands it safe with us to let his madness range, therefore prepare you; I your commission will forthwith dispatch, and he to England shall along with you." Claudius also epitomises the rottenness which Hamlet sees in Denmark, because as Claudius demonstrates when he is in the public eye;

"We know that he knows his inner rottenness" (critical essay by Kenneth McLeish)
Hamlet will therefore further disrespect Claudius, which, will destroy Claudius' status both as a father and as a Monarch. Claudius will therefore not fulfil his desire to;

"Make himself 'every inch a King' (to borrow Lear's phrase about himself)" (critical essay by Kenneth McLeish)

Another of Hamlet Senior's roles was as a Courtier, therefore, a main area to consider when determining whether Claudius would have been a likely successful replacement for Hamlet Senior is to explore what Hamlet Senior represented, not only to his son, and to Gertrude, but also what he meant to the Court of Elsinore. It is important to consider what the Court of Elsinore thought of Hamlet Senior, as it is supposedly their lives that he should have cared for, as his role as King also involved making decisions for dynastic reasons, to protect his Empire. A Courtier is also what Hamlet feels he has lost. He feels that the peak of the pyramid has gone, and has been replaced by Claudius who will make the pyramid crumble;

"Nothing but to show you how a king may go a progress through the guts of a beggar." Hamlet plays with words here, getting the point across that Claudius can never be as good a Monarch and Courtier as his father, as carried out his work through Polonius, and now that Polonius is dead, he has nowhere to turn, he will therefore crumble, dragging the Court down with him. This is true of all Royal families within Elizabethan times, considering that Parliament did not exist in taking decisions for the Court of Elsinore. Therefore, if a crisis hits the Royal family, it undermines the State, and will overthrow the dynasty.

Horatio not only serves as an insight into Hamlet's humane characteristics, but also, Horatio manages to speak for the whole of the Court of Elsinore when he says;

"...in which our valiant Hamlet-for so this side of our known world esteemed him."
We can trust what Horatio believes is true for the rest of the court, as Shakespeare presents Horatio as an upright citizen and a true friend. The events of the end of the play are testament to this as they demonstrate that on hearing Hamlet's request to restore honour to his name by telling the true story, Horatio agrees to satisfy Hamlet's wishes, making a speech to Fortinbras;

"Let me speak to the yet unknowing world how these things came about..."
Hamlet respects Horatio's opinion, and knows himself that his father is valiant and was much respected. This idealistic image which the Court has of Hamlet Senior is bound to set the values on which they will judge Claudius. However, Claudius can never compare to what Fortinbras was seen as in this respect, as Claudius is not a "Tribe leader", like Hamlet Senior;

"Hamlet.... did slay this Fortinbras, who by a sealed compact, well ratified by law and heraldry, did forfeit with his life, all those his lands which he stood seized of to the conqueror."(Act I sc.i)

and also like Hamlet Junior. His decisions are not made for dynastic reasons, but rather for selfish and calculating reasons;

"To bear all smooth and even, this sudden sending him away must seem deliberate pause. Diseases desperate grown by desperate appliance are relieved, or not at all."(Act IV sc. iii)

We see from the beginning of the play that Hamlet recognises the corruption present in Claudius, which was not present in Hamlet Senior. Hamlet infers this from the fact that Claudius holds drunken parties, solely on the basis that he will gain friends to aid his own purposes, thus buying friendship;

"The kettle drum and trumpet thus bray out the triumph of his pledge."
Hamlet here, not only attacks the fact that Claudius gains friendship in the wrong way, but also the fact that Claudius is diminishing the reputation of the Court, by giving it a 'bad' name through it's drinking habits;

"They clepe us drunkards, and with swinish phrase soil our addition."
As Hamlet suggests, there is plenty of corruption within the Court, which he believes is caused by Claudius. Part of Hamlet Senior's role was being a good father, and therefore gaining the trust of his son. Claudius therefore does not conform to this role in this respect and is unlikely to be a successful replacement, if taking Hamlet's predominantly subjective viewpoint, where he only occasionally takes an objective view of Claudius, through looking through the eyes of the Court of Elsinore, where it may be considered therefore that Hamlet takes public revenge for a state crime. However, Hamlet is quite a self-absorbed

character, which Shakespeare demonstrates through Hamlet's wallowing in self-pity, using a monosyllabic listing technique in order to portray Hamlet in a negative light as a selfish and subjective character;

"I do not know why yet I live to say 'This thing's to do', Sith I have cause and will, and strength, and means"

Hamlet considers Claudius to be creating corruption in the Court not only because of the points previously mentioned, but also because Hamlet disagrees with Claudius' timing of holding a party. Hamlet is distressed that Claudius is holding a party under the circumstances present, these circumstances being that his father has just died, and Hamlet has lost the crown which he believed was rightfully his. The fact that Hamlet believes that Claudius has "stolen" the crown, is evident through the political rhetoric used by Shakespeare;

"...sometime sister..."

Hamlet constantly compares Claudius' inability to conform to his father's role as a man of war with as much vengeance that he uses to speak of his anger at the fact that Claudius has definitively "stolen" the crown, being a "proper" man. Shakespeare shows us through the language used, Hamlet's contrast in opinion of the two brothers, using soft consonants and assonance to portray the awe felt by Hamlet and also by the rest of the Court when considering Hamlet Senior;

"A was a man"

and using hard consonants to compare the two men and to metaphorically represent through the language, the "hard" nature of Claudius, saying that Claudius was rather a;

"Pestilential collection of evil."

conforming appropriately to McLeish's criticism of Claudius;

"alternately swaggering and cringing but always evil"

through the corruption he creates within the Court, and thus, conforming to the analogy at the beginning of the play of the serpent representing disease, disguise and mistrust, Claudius meets his end as he is made to drink the poison he created, which is a good technique of symmetry used by Shakespeare. This whole notion of poison and corruption is portrayed by Shakespeare through metaphors. A prime example of this is the;

"Poisoned ring"

of the cup at the end of the dual scene. This punning metaphor represents the poisoned and corrupted marriage rings of Gertrude and Claudius who were bound to death through the

fact that Hamlet did not see in them what he desired to see and feel in an ideal surface for "family" life. Families are where we learn how to feel, and we learn how to feel through genetic inheritance and economic support and survival. As in "King Lear", a family crisis is dealt with, and the ideal surface for family life is perverted. Hamlet is bound to feel resentful of this, and thus the marriage ring is bound to be "poisoned", for an upset in Royal family life involves everyone close to the Monarch, whether through choice or through doom. As a consequence of which Hamlet feels that his "family" life has become a prison. Evidence of this can be found whilst Hamlet is conversing with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern;

"Hamlet:What have you, my good friends deserved at the hands of Fortune, that she sends you to prison hither?

Guildenstern: Prison my lord?

Hamlet: Denmark's a prison."

Hamlet here refers strongly to the State and to what he reckons upon, perhaps, as his "so called family" which Claudius has deprived him of. The fact that Hamlet feels he has lost his "real" family through the loss of his father, gives space for the "alternative" members of family to breathe life in the play. Hamlet has three "alternative" families, the first of these being the comradeship of the soldiers, such as Marcellus and Barnardo;

"Marcellus:How is't my noble lord?"(Act I sc.v)

The second family "alternative" transcended upon Hamlet is the friendship which he deeply trusts, that of Horatio. Horatio is an honest and philosophical man whom he can fully trust because he has no association at all with Claudius, Hamlet's "perceived" enemy. Finally, the third family "alternative" for Hamlet is found within the company of Players. We see this because of the language which Hamlet uses. Hamlet talks to the Players with the same amount of affection and the same amount of eloquence as he uses to talk to Yorick;

"You are welcome masters, welcome all."

Hamlet evidently respects the Players through this eloquence, as a sense of awe comes accross through Shakespeare's use of assonance, as came across when Hamlet remembered the nobility and gentillesse of Yorick;

"Alas poor Yorick! I knew him Horatio, a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy; he hath borne me on his back a thousand times, and now how abhorred in my imagination it is- my gorge rises at it. Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft." (Act V sc.i)

This epitomises the direct similarity of feeling towards both Yorick and the Players, in contrast with Claudius. These indirect members of Hamlet's "family" succeed in gaining Hamlet's trust as they do not try to rule his life, as Claudius does, in trying to replace Hamlet Senior's role as Hamlet's father, which as we see through these alternative members of Hamlet's family's success as "family members", is not what Hamlet desires.

Though Hamlet may consider it wise to leave Claudius doomed to failure as a successor, it must not be ignored that Claudius still does have redeeming features, and is not merely a ;

"Damned smiling villain."

Claudius has feelings of conscience about murdering Hamlet's father, his brother, as shown in Act III sc.(iii);

"O my offence is rank, it smells to heaven; it hath the primal eldest curse upon't a brother's murder."

This also helps to build up the humanity which Shakespeare wanted to create for his characters, which would make Claudius more likely to be a "good" King if he is humane. Suggesting therefore, that Claudius does have a humane side, the likelihood that he can replace Hamlet Senior accumulates as Claudius' characteristic becomes parallel to Hamlet Senior's trait of humanity and sensibility.

A stronger argument in supporting Claudius' successful takeover as monarch is that Claudius does actually love Gertrude;

"Gertrude do not drink....(Aside) It is the poisoned cup; it is too late."(Act V. sc. ii)

The fact that he loves Gertrude is important in explaining why Claudius is more likely to be a successful replacement for Hamlet Senior because, Hamlet admired and respected his father because of the devotion and love he showed towards her. Hamlet felt secure so long as his parents loved each other. Hamlet is therefore more likely to respect Claudius if Claudius loves Hamlet's mother. If Claudius thus gains respect from Hamlet, he is therefore more likely to fill Hamlet Senior's role as a father for Hamlet.

Considering still, the amount of respect that Claudius needs to gain in order to be able to replace Hamlet Senior, another of Claudius' redeeming features is his negotiating skills, and also his ability to be an efficient Monarch which are important in gaining respect. Claudius is an efficient Monarch, because although he does not use violence to solve the problems of the Court, as did Hamlet Senior;

"Th' imperial jointress to this warlike state"

Claudius does use his negotiating skills to run the Court of Elsinore, and he uses pawns such as Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to run around for him:

"We don't question, we don't doubt. We perform." (Quote from "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead" by Tom Stoppard)

It is important also, to take into consideration the fact that Claudius likely foresaw himself as a successful replacement to the throne, otherwise he would not have committed regicide, and fratricide. We know this because of the way in which Shakespeare chooses to present Claudius. He chooses to present Claudius as an intelligent and decisive King;

"Arm you I pray to this speedy voyage, for we will fetters put upon this fear which now goes too free-footed."

The inference we are given here is that Claudius realised that there was scope for him to be a successful replacement for Hamlet Senior. The way in which Shakespeare chooses to present characters is very much in line with the other playwrights of his time, within the Metaphysical period. The Metaphysical period was a period of innovation in play writing, where an analysis of the human condition was focused on. Although I have previously stated that some critics believe that Hamlet could never forgive Claudius, which is justified in its own right, other critics claim otherwise as the aims of the playwrights within this period suggested that within human nature is the aspect of sensibility and consequently the tendency of forgiveness. It was therefore more likely that Claudius' sins would be forgiven by Hamlet. Also, within the human condition is the aspect of forgiveness after time, it was therefore a possibility that Hamlet would come to accept Claudius' replacement of his father on the throne. The fact that Hamlet does not come to forgive and accept Claudius as a father defies the object of the question, as I am considering the psychological make-up of the characters and the overall context as opposed to the actual events of the play. The main point is, if this view point were to be argued, Claudius could have been a likely replacement, if only considering the innovative aims of the Metaphysical period in which Shakespeare wrote.

However, if we are to consider the way in which Claudius' "incestuous" deed affected the notion addressed by the Metaphysical period, we may arrive at a different conclusion. Paralleling Aeneas' flaw which was his necessity to fight, which destroyed 'Dido Queen of Carthage', within the play by Christopher Marlowe, as this signalled to her that he did not

love her, so too did Hamlet's flaw of the inability to act on instinct, culminate in his death, and many other characters' death, who were close to him. This aim of the Metaphysical period which addressed the notion of tragedy caused by man's flaws determined that from the start Claudius was not likely to be a successful replacement for Hamlet Senior, as Claudius committed the deed which provided a springboard for the synthesis of the tragedy of Hamlet's flaws, as Hamlet was never completely certain about his plan for vengeance on Claudius.

However, if Shakespeare had not "constructed" the characters to commit the actions they do, and therefore if Claudius had not committed the "incestuous" deed which provided the springboard for the synthesis of the tragedy of Hamlet's flaws, Claudius would consequently not be King, leaving Hamlet to the throne, as he so desperately desired. However, as suggested throughout the play by Shakespeare, Hamlet would not be a "good" replacement for his father because although there are two sides to Hamlet, his "Tribal" side;

"So art thou to revenge, when thou shalt hear"

and his speculative side; his speculative and antagonistic side gets the better of him;

"A thought which quartered hath but one part wisdom, and ever three parts coward-"
(Act IV sc.iv)

which is his fatal flaw as a tragic hero, and as Schiller, a Philosopher in 1760, said;

"He who reflects too much will accomplish little".

Extrapolation of events throughout the play, the context in which the play was written and the innovative aims of Shakespeare lead me to the conclusion that despite the many redeeming features which Claudius bore, as a "good" leader, father and husband, despite also the fact that Claudius presents himself as a better man than Hamlet Senior in the respect that Hamlet Senior truly was the epitome of evil, a real villain, whereby he asks of his son, the impossible. Hamlet manipulates his paternal role, asking his son to take revenge for him, committing the act of murder. In doing so Hamlet Senior is asking his son to commit a crime which he will not only pay debts for in mortal life, but in his afterlife as well. Here, Hamlet Senior can be seen as dooming his son to eternal damnation. If we were to take this as the criteria for judging Claudius, we would see a parallel of evil within them both, however, Shakespeare emphasises Hamlet's resentment of the fact that now that Claudius has taken over as Monarch, Hamlet's ideal of a perfect

"family" life has been perverted. Not only does Hamlet perceive Claudius as evil through the fact that he has "stolen" his crown, and his father, but he also deeply resents the fact that Claudius has taken away from him the possibility to be close to his mother and has fabricated for Hamlet an irretrievable notion of "family life". This notion is epitomised through the fact that absolutely nowhere within the play, is the word "family" used. The only slight exception to this is used within the context of the Polonius family;

"Be thou familiar but by no means vulgar"

But never is the word used in conjunction with the Hamlet family, for Hamlet, the notion of "family" now ceases to exist. The Court of Elsinore have lost a King and Courtier;

"Th' imperial jointress to this warlike state."

So too has Hamlet. As a consequence of which, Claudius, the image of corruption and of disease;

"Most lazar-like, with vile and loathesome crust all my smooth body. Thus I was sleeping, by a brother's hand of life, of crown, of queen, at once dispatched"

can never replace such a highly regarded King. Branagh's statue of Hamlet Senior will never be transfigured into that of Claudius. Hamlet will not let it be so, his tragic downfall will occur through the inspiration from a father once so admired, by all, and also through revenge of what Hamlet perceived as a State crime, the infiltration of the private world into the public world, thus the overthrowing of a dynasty;

"O cursed spite that ever I was born to set it right."