

Reflections on Early Modern Understanding of Affects in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: Humors, Bodies and Passions in the Player's Hecuba Speech

Shakespeare'in *Hamlet* Oyununda Erken Modern Dönemin Duygu Anlayışı: Oyuncunun Hecuba Konuşmasında Mizaçlar, Bedenler ve Tutkular

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Abstract

Considered to be affective mediums exercising powers changing the humoral balances of bodies, theatre plays have been severely attacked on the grounds that they provoke strong emotions by early modern critics such as Stephen Gosson and Philip Stubbes in the Shakespearean period. According to Stephen Gosson, for instance, due to their emotional and physiological impact theatre performances weakened and undermined audiences' capacities to reason and judge; and thus, needed to be prohibited altogether. This study provides a detailed analysis of the Hecuba speech (II, ii) in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Through the Player's and Hamlet's reactions to the Hecuba-speech, it will discuss the characters' attitudes towards theatre and comment on early modern theatre debates. The study will further discuss William Shakespeare's stand on the affective potential of theatre in times when theatre plays have been considered contagious and altering the balance between minds, passions and bodies.

Keywords: theatre, emotions, humors, passions, Hecuba, Hamlet

Öz

Duyguların bedensel mizacın dengelerini değiştirebilen güçleri dikkate alındığında, Shakespeare döneminde tiyatro oyunları, Stephen Gosson ve Philip Stubbes gibi erken modern eleştirmenler tarafından ciddi biçimde saldırıya uğramıştır. Stephen Gosson'a göre, duygusal ve fizyolojik etkileri yüzünden tiyatro gösterileri, seyircinin rasyonel düşünme yetisini ve değerlendirme kapasitesini zayıflatarak baltalamaktadır ve bu nedenle yasaklanmalıdır. Bu makale, Shakespeare'in *Hamlet* oyunundaki Perde I, sahne ii'de geçen oyuncunun dikkate değer konuşması üzerine ilginç bir araştırmadır. Oyuncunun Hecuba üzerine konuşması ve Hamlet'in buna reaksiyonu (tepkisi) yoluyla, bu çalışma sadece karakterlerin tiyatroya yönelik tavırlarını tartışmakla kalmayarak, aynı zamanda erken modern tiyatro üzerindeki fikir çekişmelerini ve tiyatronun insanın bedeni, zihni ve tutkuları arasındaki dengeyi değiştirerek yozlaştırdığı düşüncesinin yaygın olduğu bir zamanda Shakespeare'in tiyatro sanatının duygusal potansiyel gücünün arkasında dimdik duruşunu tartışmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: tiyatro, duygular, mizaçlar, tutkular, Hecuba, Hamlet

The early modern perception of passions as closely related to the bodily humors¹ and actively engaging in contagious transmissions contributed to the early modern debates on the affective quality of theatre. The belief that alteration of the humoral body was possible by the emotions stimulated at theatre performances, led to the formation of different sentiments towards plays. Not only literary critics, but also audiences, playwrights and players were aware of the emotional and physiological impact of performances. Thus, the often discussed question was not whether theatre was influential, but the degree and manner of its affective consequences, namely, the ability to move the audiences. On the one hand, Stephen Gosson, one of the critics with the strongest anti-theatrical discourses as well as others such as Philip Stubbes, attacked the very essence of theatre and argued that it was a source of evil and corruption. In his *Plays Confuted in Five Actions* (1582), Gosson, for example, refers to the emotional appeal in drama as weakening and undermining reason and healthy judgement. On the other hand, scholars such as the pro-theatre critic and poet Philip Sidney, who in his “Defence of Poetry” (1595) ambitiously points at the social and moral worth of drama and literature, supported the idea that when properly employed, because of its affective means, theatre could contribute to the development of a modern society (with high ethical standards). This study focuses on one particular scene in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, in which the Player performs the Hecuba-speech and Hamlet delivers one of his famous soliloquies. It discusses how the “passionate speech” reflects and comments on the general sentiments towards theatre in the context of the early modern understanding of passions; how it affects the Player and Hamlet as well as what it suggests about Shakespeare’s views on the emotional impact of plays at a time when theatre was fiercely criticised and attacked.

The Early Modern period’s general understanding of emotions needs to be firstly discussed in order to better grasp the early modern idea of metaphorical and literary ‘contagious’ theatre and approach the Player’s Hecuba-speech in the light of the humoral model of passions. Katharine A. Craik and Tanya Pollard in their “Introduction: Imagining Audiences” in *Shakespearean Sensations* (2013) and Gail Kern Paster in his “Introduction” to *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (2004) have suggested that the revival of both medical and philosophical ancient Greek texts played a significant role in the formation of the early modern material perception of passions. According to the predominant Galenic medical theory the well-being of the body and the soul was dependent upon the humoral balance. The course of the humors was subject to change. The body, open to the internal alterations of the bodily fluids, was also under the influences of the outer world. Among the factors that determined the change in the quantity and flow of the humoral liquids were passions. Thomas

¹ Humors in the Early Modern period were perceived as “the four defining fluids that coursed through the body, [and] were simultaneously literal substances and affective dispositions. They were also both innate and subject to change [...] The six non-naturals that could interfere with one’s humoral balance were air, food and drink, exercise and rest, sleep and wakefulness, retention and evacuation of wastes, and perturbations of the mind, or emotions” (Craik and Pollard 5).

Wright in *The Passions of the Mind* (1604) defines passions and affections as “perturbations of the mind” of which no one can be ignorant (Wright par. 2). They applied to everyone and everything and were not necessarily governed by rational judgement; on the contrary they were almost always associated with the irrational appetites and unhealthy excesses. Passions were also thought to be embodied forces causing internal humoral changes often through the subject’s experience of the social environment. Imagination, which was believed to be the faculty strongly responsible for the evocation of emotions, stood behind the assumption that literature in general was capable of influencing the humoral balance of readers, audiences, players who encountered the literary texts and performances. The subject’s sensual experience formed the bridge between the macro-microcosmic relationships of the individual with the world and partially expressed one aspect of the early modern philosophy of connectedness among body, soul and world. The inter- (between, among) and intra- (from within) macro- and micro-relations, in which everything living and non-living mattered and exercised forceful potential to move and change, were characteristic for the time. The idea of the transmissibility of emotions was more than metaphorical. Passions, in the age of Shakespeare, were often viewed as contagious ‘viruses’ affecting the physical and spiritual well-being of individuals.

The Player’s recitation of the “passionate speech” telling the story of Achilles’ revengeful son Pyrrhus and the mournful Trojan queen Hecuba reflects the common contagious model of emotions both in Hellenic and early modern times. Once Pyrrhus is to strike Priam, the city of Troy (or depending on the interpretation, the royal castle¹) is not indifferent:

Pyrrhus at Priam drives, in rage strikes wide,
 But with the whiff and wind of his fell sword
 The’unnerved father falls. Then senseless Ilium
 Seeming to feel this blow, with a hideous crash
 Takes prisoner Pyrrhus’ ear. For lo, his sword
 Which was declining on the milky head
 Of reverend Priam seemed i’th’ air to stick.
 So as a painted tyrant Pyrrhus stood
 Like a neutral to his will and matter,
 Did nothing. (II, ii, 497-507)

Though described as “senseless,” Ilium is emotionally moved by the horrifying sight of murder. The transmissibility of passions works as much on microcosmic as on macrocosmic level. Pyrrhus’ anger and “rage” affect the city and as a response Troy “[t]akes prisoner Pyrrhus’ ear.” Approached in the context of the early modern humoral theory, the choice of the ‘ear’ does not seem to be coincidental. Passions, commonly viewed as maladies, were believed to spread via the senses. The sensorial encounters were held responsible for the physical and emotional changes. In the light of the perception that there was not a clear-cut division between the realms of the body and mind and that the alterations of the one caused alterations in the other, the undertaken action by the city can be read as blocking the attacker’s auditory experience and thus causing

interruption in the process of accumulation and circulation of negative passions such as wrath through the body. Ilium's intervention has visible consequences. It results in the freezing of the Greek warrior who for a moment stood "as a painted tyrant." Nevertheless, similar to what happens in nature when the dreadful storm is preceded by the "silence in the heavens" and by the speechlessness of the winds before it gains power, the Player recites that it is not long before the "roused vengeance" of the Greek "sets him new a-work":

But as we often see against some storm
A silence in the heavens, the rack stand still,
The bold winds speechless and the orb below
As hush as death, anon the dreadful thunder
Doth rend the region, so after Pyrrhus's pause
A roused vengeance sets him new a-work
And never did the Cyclops' hammers fall
On Mars's armour, forged for proof eterne,
With less remorse than Pyrrhus' bleeding sword
Now falls on Priam. (II, ii, 508-517)

Although the story, the Player tells, is from the distanced Hellenic past, Shakespeare's use of it reflects the early modern understanding of affective relations between the individual and the natural world and their inter- and intra-dependences. Not only the microcosmic mirrors the macrocosmic, as Pyrrhus's moment of silence and tremendous rage reflect the thunder's course in nature, but also the flow of emotions has the potential to produce effects on every level. The fury of Achilles' son activates Troy's reaction which consequently leads to different affective readjustments. Shakespeare's choice of the particular ancient tragic example represents how the humoral model of dynamic emotions has become a model for living in the world in early modern times.

The second half of the Player's speech telling of Hecuba's despair, different from the first which has drawn attention to the auditory experience in relation to emotions, shifts the focus to the visual. The five senses were not believed to be equally valuable for the processes of circulation of affects in the Hellenic and Early Modern periods. Two of them, hearing and sight, seemed to be of utmost importance especially in regard to theatre and imagination and Shakespeare has cunningly made use of them in various situations connected with the physiological and psychological changes of living and non-living bodies throughout *Hamlet*. For instance, another notable example of Shakespeare's use of 'ears' in *Hamlet*, is the scene in which the "The Murder of Gonzago" is staged. The scene shows how the ear is both the faculty through which words, stimulating the imagination and passions, enter the body and how it becomes literary the organ in which the poison killing the sovereign is poured. Furthermore, in this particular scene, in addition to the auditory experience of King Claudius, the visual experience of the staged performance is what changes his mood and makes him leave. The play he has seen, as Hamlet later on learns from Guildenstern, has made him choleric. Ears and eyes, in early modern times,

were the two faculties that became the medium through which the affective “maladies” were able to enter bodies and cause real physical/emotional changes. Nevertheless, although both were valued, the ability to see in comparison with hearing seemed to be more instrumental in affective transmissions. In the subdivision “How passions seduce the will,” Thomas Wright emphasizes the significance of the ‘eye’ as an organ playing a vital role for the exchange of emotions and their effects on the body, soul and mind (Wright, par. 20). The Player, who is moved to tears while reciting to Hamlet, often refers to what would have happened and how everyone and everything would have been moved by the *sight* of the poor Trojan queen:

Who this had seen, with tongue in venom steeped,
 ‘Gainst Fortune’s state would treason have pronounced.
 But if gods themselves did see her then,
 When she saw Pyrrhus make malicious sport
 In mincing with his sword her husband limbs,
 The instant burst of clamour that she made
 (Unless things mortal move them not at all)
 Would have made milch the burning eyes of heaven
 And passion in the gods. (II, ii, 535-544)

The cause – effect relationship of passions is remarkably built around the visual. The queen is affected by the sight of King Priam’s savage slaughter. Moreover, the audience is told that whoever sees her devastation brought about by the spectacle of the Trojan king’s murder, would not be able to remain unmoved, even the gods would get emotional and the sun and stars would cry. The contagion of passions is said to reach everyone and everything that *witnesses* the crime. Though the scene is recited and not performed and thus neither the Player nor Hamlet and the others literary see the extremely upsetting sight, Polonius tells that the Player has changed colour and “has tears in’s eyes” (II, ii, 545). Art, especially literature, was and still is believed to have the potential to fire imagination and activate emotional responses. As it has been already suggested, the Shakespearean generation shared the ancient Greek worldview of connectedness and dynamics of bodily forces on microcosmic and macrocosmic levels as well as the assumption that poetry fired the imagination and vice versa. Derived from the Greek word *poiēsis* (creation, productive activity), poetry, was closely linked with creativity. It should be noted that in Hellenic and early modern times poetry and plays were not perceived as so different. Katharine A. Craik and Tanya Pollard suggest in the “Introduction: Imagining audiences” that they were thought to be much more alike and that they “shared a conceptual and discursive vocabulary” (8). The workings of imagination have also been a widely discussed philosophical theme throughout centuries and the assumption that imagination is the formation of images in the mind or soul (or both dependent on the period), which is not entirely governed by reason, was plausible in early modern times. Craik and Pollard tell how Aquinas’ understanding of the sensitive soul contributed to the approach to imagination and its link with the senses and the body (5). As there was no doubt that the humoral body was under the influence of external experience which was

mainly processed and accumulated via the senses, imagination - the faculty that made individuals see images “in the mind’s eye” Shakespeare also cunningly uses the phrase when referring to Hamlet’s imagination (I, ii, 193) – was thought to be “most closely allied to sensory appetite” (Craik and Pollard 5), and more precisely linked with the sense of sight. The Player, under the impact of the spoken words and their highly probable visualisation, cannot remain unimpressed and he “has tears in’s eyes” (II, ii, 458) as “the burning eyes of heaven” (II, ii, 455) would have had, have they seen Hecuba.

Shakespeare further elaborates on the relationship between literature, imagination, the senses vision and audition, emotions and bodies in the first few lines of Hamlet’s soliloquy following the Player and the others’ departure. The prince contemplates on how the Player got emotionally and physically affected by a fictitious story which does not relate to him at all:

Is it not monstrous that this player here,
But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
Could force his soul so to his own conceit
That from her working all the visage wanned
– Tears in his eyes, distraction in his aspect,
A broken voice, and his whole function suiting
With forms to his conceit – and all for nothing –
For Hecuba? (II, ii, 578-585)

Hamlet, impressed by the Player’s passionate reaction to Hecuba’s drama, gives a brief overview of how passions work in the early modern humoral body. The tragedy of the Trojan queen is a beautiful instance of human imagination, an effective piece of “poetry,” which has the power to force the Player’s soul (imagination) and consequently change his humoral balance. The transformative potential of the play is remarkable. The Player shows real physical signs of sadness and grief. Both his body and soul, moved by and through imagination (by the play and through the human ability to imagine), undertake visible emotional and bodily changes. The symptoms he experiences match the passions he seems to feel. Stirred by pure fiction, the transmissibility and affective power of passions is at work. Hamlet continues this line of thought, but this time wonders what the Player, who shows strong emotions for “nothing,” would have done if he really had the reasons for passionate grief and anger:

What’s Hecuba to him, or he to her,
That he should weep for her? What would he do
Had he the motive and that for passion
That I have? He would drown the stage with tears
And cleave the general ear with horrid speech,
Make mad the guilty and appal the free,
Confound the ignorant and amaze indeed
The very faculty of eyes and ears. (II, ii, 586-593)

The Prince of Denmark touches upon one of the major themes in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* – the one of being/having and seeming/pretending. The theme of appearance and reality is to be further discussed in the essay later on, but for the present moment it is important to emphasize that Hamlet, in this particular instance, differentiates between the two and views “having” more important than the Player's imagined causes for grief. If the Player had Hamlet's motive, the prince imagines him flooding the stage with *cries* and with appalling words tearing apart the listeners' *ears*. The reference to the senses gets more apparent when Hamlet acknowledges that the Player's rage would affect by the attack on the visual and auditory. Hamlet draws a vivid picture of the circulations of negative affects in which the transmission of emotions happens via the faculties of eyes and ears. The imagined sight of the grieving and revengeful Player as well as his horrid speech would move, “amaze indeed” so much that it would “damage” whoever encounters them.

An alternative way to approach the Player's altered physical and psychological state of emotion, is to think of him as a trained professional whose skill to inhabit and control the passions, as Evelyn Tribble comments in “Affective Contagion on the Early Modern Stage,” “is best demonstrated through the art of action – gestures and movements which capture emotion, transform it, and carry it to the audience through purposeful and meaningful movements of the body” (202). Thus, a possible interpretation of the Player's changes of complexion, voice, gestures and others is to think of him in the context of training and professional labour, which then makes the discussion of what reality is and what appears/seems to be real in the play necessary. Almost from the very beginning of *Hamlet*, the relationship between performance and authenticity is questioned and Shakespeare does not make clear distinctions; on the contrary, he playfully complicates their relation. Similar to the instance in which Hamlet differentiates between the Player and himself, according to who has and who seems to have emotions for either real or fictional reasons, the scene in which Hamlet philosophizes on what “seems” and what “is” in Act One Scene Two is a notable example dealing with the topic of appearance versus reality. “‘Seems,’ madam? Nay, it is. I know not ‘seems’” (I, ii, 79), he tells his mother that the grief he experiences is real and claims to know the difference:

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. (I, ii, 85-89)

Hamlet acknowledges that there are actions that can be played, but there are also ones “within” – more than plays. Though Hamlet insists on his awareness of that which is ‘within’ and that which is faked, the ambiguity between ‘reality’ and “show” sharpens when the prince most asserts the authentic internal nature of his sorrows. Often when he does so, he vigorously *performs* his own sadness in front of the eyes of others. Shakespeare makes it difficult for both characters within the play and audience to see and recognize when passions are sincerely

felt or faked or whether they are both felt and faked. A possible way to interpret the Player's emotional outburst after the recitation of the Hecuba-speech, is to think that in the act of performance (pretending to live through the drama) he really gets affected. He is a trained player, who knows how to pretend experiencing a wide range of feelings, but because of the physical changes and his appearance in the eyes of others it is hard to claim that he has not been really moved by the tragedy of the Trojan queen. Either only performed or truly felt or both, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* reflects how the circulation of affects in the Galenic humoral system is a process that includes sense perception (with stronger emphasis on eyes and ears) and imagination on microcosmic and macrocosmic levels.

The Hellenic perception of tragedy as a literary genre that had to arouse pity and fear (developed under the influence of Aristotle's *Poetics*) was adopted in the Early Modern period. Good players were believed to engage with the audience in a way that enabled them to capture their ears and eyes and consequently alter their opinions. Tragedy was expected to move bodies and minds. The effects it could have on the audiences had been widely discussed by the literary critics at the time. Many anti-theatre thinkers such as Stephen Gosson who developed their argumentations around this assumption viewed theatre as a potential evil that lingered throughout centuries from pagan times and endangered the emotional and physical well-being of Christians. He claimed that "[t]he beholding of troubles and miserable slaughters that are in tragedies drive [audiences] to immoderate sorrow, heaviness, womanish weeping and mourning, whereby [audiences] become lovers of dumps [melancholy] and lamentation, both enemies to fortitude" (95). The very themes of tragedies according to Gosson were problematic. Their impact became reason for immoderate feelings, which endangered the healthy humoral balance of bodies. Shakespeare must have been familiar with the anti-theatrical sentiments of the period; he might have even been familiar with Gosson's sharp criticism on plays. Approaching Hamlet's soliloquy, right after the Player's recitation of the Hecuba-drama, in the light of the early modern debates on theatre's ability to influence, gives room for interpretations of Shakespeare's possible stands on theatre in the middle of the fierce discussions of its affective powers.

The early modern tragic hero Hamlet contrasts his own incapability to express passions with the Player's highly emotional response to Hecuba's grief. While the Player expresses his feelings towards the Trojan queen's suffering both physically and emotionally, Hamlet complains of his inability to act his passion although his causes, different from the Player's, are real. The Prince of Denmark, annoyed by his incapacity to perform his grief and anger, calls himself offending epithets:

Yet I,
A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak
Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause,
And can say nothing. No, not for a king
[...]

Who calls me villain, breaks my pate across,
Plucks off my beard and blows it in my face
[...]
Why, what an ass am I: this is most brave,
That I, the son of a dear murdered,
Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,
Must like a whore unpack my heart with words
And fall a-cursing like a very drab. (II, ii, 593- 615)

Hamlet seems to point at physiological dispositions which prevent him from acting as passionately as he believes is proper to his cause. He blames himself for being stuck in emotional paralysis – a murdered king, his father, needs to be revenged, but the prince angrily confesses that the only thing he does is empty talking. Hamlet curses himself for being “unpregnant of [his] cause,” suggesting exactly the dilemma he is in: he has the motive and he is in an emotional pain, but he cannot perform the passions in his soul as the Player does for Hecuba. Nevertheless, there seems to be inconsistency between the claim of passivity and his highly passionate soliloquy. Not having the same physical and emotional reaction to Hecuba’s suffering, does not mean that the tragic protagonist is not under the influence of the play. Had he not been affected by the Player’s recitation, Hamlet would not have been so scrupulous towards himself and would not have questioned his own being, movements and speech. The Prince of Denmark’s monologue exposes his affective response to what the Player’s recitation made and at the same time did not make him feel. In fact, on a closer examination of Hamlet’s expectation from a tragedy, “the passionate speech” seems to have reached its purpose:

Hum, I have heard
That guilty creatures sitting at a play
Have by the very cunning of the scene
Been stuck so to the soul that presently
They have proclaimed their malefactions. (II, ii, 617-621)

He expects plays to do exactly what the Hecuba-speech has “done” to him – the revelation of the weaknesses and guilt in wrong-doers. The Player’s lines have triggered an emotional questioning of Hamlet’s own melancholic condition. Hamlet points at his use of inadequate language and actions instead of taking action and being revengeful to his uncle, the King.

For the sake of this study, it is important to consider in what ways the interpretation of Hamlet’s soliloquy relates to Gosson’s attacks on theatre. On the one hand, Shakespeare appears to reject the critic’s statements that the common theme of tragedies always moves around murders, slaughters or revenge stories, which consequently lead to alterations in bodies and souls often expressed in the excess of emotions such as the excess of grief and sadness in melancholia. Gosson’s criticism applies almost word by word to what have been discussed in the scenes of Shakespeare’s tragedy. The player’s Hecuba speech is itself a fiction about revenge, murder and emotional excess as well as Hamlet’s soliloquy- the prince is melancholic because of his inability to avenge his father’s

murder by killing the new king, his uncle. However, Shakespeare's highly probable consensus with Gosson on the general topic of plays and the nature of emotional responses which theatre has believed to have the potential to trigger, does not mean that the early modern playwright completely shared with Stephen Gosson the same feelings towards theatre. In Gosson's *Plays Confuted in Five Actions*, it is clear that the critic does not differentiate between audiences and the degree and manner of their passions triggered by performances; according to him all are alike and similarly in danger because of plays' affect upon the crowds. Shakespeare has a different approach to the relation between performance – players and audiences. For the playwright, playgoers seem to be affected according to their backgrounds and personal histories. For example, Hamlet's comments on the "passionate speech," which he wants the Player to recite, demonstrate that there has been a huge variety of opinions on the quality of the play. For the general public, Hamlet says:

'twas caviary to the general. But it was (as I received it, and others whose judgements in such matters cried in the top of mine, an excellent play, well digested in the scenes, set down with as much modesty and cunning. I remember one said there were no sallies in the lines to make the matter savoury nor no matter in the phrase that might indict the author of affection, but called it an honest method. (II, ii, 461-469)

Hamlet describes how the same play can trigger different responses according to the audiences' familiarity with theatre criticism, tastes and preferences. He differentiates among the general public, himself and others whose judgements he believes to be more precise and thorough. Shakespeare also contrasts Polonius' (whose understanding of theatre seems to belong to the "general public" able to distinguish between genres ("tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical" (II, ii, 421) and having some knowledge of what is a good accent and discretion (II, ii, 492) in a play) with Hamlet's knowledge and understanding of performance art and demonstrates how for different individuals the same play can trigger unlike responses. The Player's recitation of the scene, in which Pyrrhus murders Priam, the killer of his father Achilles, makes Polonius protest at its length. "This is too long" (II, ii, 523) utters Polonius further emphasizing his boredom with the recitation; quite the contrary Hamlet wants the Player to "say on" and criticises Polonius by stating that "he's for a jig, or a tale of bawdry, or he sleeps" (II, ii, 525), which points at Polonius' untrained palate and suggests that his opinion cannot be a criterion for measurement of how good a tragedy is.

Moreover, Shakespeare demonstrates that audiences are not moved alike by the very same play because of the differences in their historical background. Everyone has their pre-history before experiencing any performance. The fact that there are different playgoers with different pre-formed views and pasts is a factor that cannot be ignored. The Player, for example, is affected according to his background and occupation, Hamlet is himself differently living through the passionate speech and he expects his uncle to react in a particular way to the performance to be soon staged. In the instance of the Player, it is significant to

think of him as a professional trained to transmit emotions through the right use of his voice, facial expressions and gestures. Further, it should not be missed that the Hecuba's drama is not something new that the Player encounters, but a speech he has practiced and knows by heart. Thus, Pyrrhus' anger and Hecuba's grief are not new to him, he is not surprised neither by the way the characters react nor by the way they feel. Nevertheless, Shakespeare does not suggest that because of his occupation, the Player's feelings are faked at the moment of recitation. On the contrary, his physical and emotional bodily alterations can be interpreted in the context of extreme emotionality caused by highly developed imaginative powers. The tragedy itself and the way he experiences it can be considered in the context of what the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle expects the tragic play to do – to emotionally move the audience to such a degree that it will make them experience catharsis. The shedding of tears, within this line of thought, can be approached as a symptom of the very process of purgation. Humors, thought to be liquids circulating in the human body, were believed to reach the state of balance only by accumulating or throwing away the emotional excess. The Player's flood of tears can be viewed as the very process of cleansing and getting rid of the unnecessary in the form of the liquid coming out of eyes. Shakespeare does not apparently give any clues about how real the Player's passions are; the playwright leaves it to the audience to decide.

The way Hamlet expects his uncle to feel when confronted with the play "The Murder of Gonzago" also depends on various factors such as the Prince of Denmark's and the new King's pre-histories and peculiar features of character. The sudden death of the prince's father, King Hamlet, the hasty marriage of his mother, Gertrude and the story the Ghost reveals him in addition to the emotional input and other internal and external factors, have made the tragic protagonist believe that King Claudius is responsible for the death of his brother. However, Hamlet's reflective complex nature also makes him doubt the authenticity of the Ghost's tale as well as his interpretation of what might have happened to his father. Thus, under the influence of the Player's performance, the prince comes up with the idea of testing the new King by using the emotional properties of a tragedy. Hamlet believes that staging the murder of a king by his wife and brother, would have a strong impact on his uncle Claudius. In other words, Hamlet believes that Claudius' past deeds will make impossible for the new King of Denmark to hide his guilty "conscience" (II, ii, 634). Thus, the effects the staged play is supposed to have on Claudius are predicted in accordance with his imagined past deeds.

Neither the Player performing the Hecuba-speech and the monarch of Denmark or Hamlet are divorced from their pasts when in one way or another they experience theatre performances. Hamlet's decision to craft a cunning plan which will reveal the truth about his uncle as well as the passionate soliloquy right after the Player's recitation are expressions of the prince's emotional response to Hecuba's drama, which is predetermined by his prior experience. When it comes to the "passionate speech," it is important to stress that Hamlet is the one to choose the play for the Player. His choice, it can be argued, is not coincidental. The ancient tragedy develops around two major themes: rage fired

by the will to revenge and grief for a dead husband. The emotions and the thematic subjects of the play are closely related to Hamlet's own feelings and concerns. Further they fulfil his passionate desires – to avenge his father's murder and to have a grieving mother after the death of King Hamlet as the performance is expected to serve as a mirror to Claudius' past fratricide. Approaching the prince's monologue considering the fact that the play is of his choice, sheds lights on his anger of the inability to shed tears and show his passions in the way the Player does. Though Hamlet claims to have heard or/and viewed the tragedy only once on stage (II, ii, 458-459), the drama which Aeneas tells to Dido about Achilles' son Pyrrhus, the Trojan king Priam and his wife Hecuba is well known to Hamlet. His ability to partially recite it when having encountered it visually and auditorily only once or twice is remarkable and shows the power of Hamlet's memory. Similar to the Player, neither the experience of the characters nor the way the action develops is unfamiliar to Hamlet. However, different from him, he is incapable to feel the Aristotelian cathartic show of emotions that would be able to calm and comfort his troubled soul afterwards. Evelyn Tribble comments on how tragedies differently affect audiences by saying that “[h]uman beings are not pre-existing rational-bounded individuals suddenly and mysteriously infected with affects; rather, humans are inherently social and permeable, liable to consciously and unconsciously imitate and entertain; moreover, they come to particular places and events with pre-formed conceptions of the affective exchanges they might expect” (201-202). Although both Hamlet and the Player are almost equally familiar with the Hecuba-speech, they experience it in completely unlike ways because of their predispositions to the play. Thematically and emotionally the story is so much related with the prince, that he cannot perform his passions and feelings to the extent of purgation.

Stephen Gosson not only perceives audiences as semi-minded people equally and similarly endangered by plays, but also defends the idea that passions, especially stimulated by performances, cannot coincide in any way with a healthy reasonable soul:

[t]ragedies and comedies stir up affections, and affections are naturally planted in that part of the mind that is common to us with brute *beasts*. [...] But the poets that write plays, and they that present them upon the stage, study to make our affections overflow, whereby they draw the bridle from that part of the mind that should ever be curbed, from running on ahead: which is manifested treason to our souls, and delivereth them captive to the devil. (105, my italics)

Before drawing attention to how Shakespeare shows that passions stirred by plays could be efficient and used for good means, it is interesting to elaborate on the idea of the bestial with regard to emotions. Gosson is not the only one to suggest that passions are what humans share with animals. Thomas Wright defines affects in his *The Passions of the Mind* as “[t]hose actions [...] which are common with us and beasts” (par. 2). Animals, since Hellenic times have been often considered as lower in rank than humans. Lacking the ability to speak,

which was essentially linked with reason and consciousness, animality has been for a long time viewed as dangerous, irrational and unpredictable, something to be rejected, feared of, something that do not belong to the civilized world of humans. The anthropocentric perception of animal-human relationship was common for the Early Modern period. Thus, it is not a surprise that passions used interchangeably with words and phrases such as “maladies,” “sources of the soul” and “perturbations of the mind,” were seen in Shakespearean dramatic texts, in which moderation was a virtue for humans, whereas excessive and strong feelings were what people shared with beasts. Considered in the context of correlation between the two, Hamlet’s correction of the first line of his recitation of the play might offer Shakespeare’s brief commentary on the connection between “beasts” and “emotions”:

The rugged Pyrrhus like the Hyrcanian beast...
 – ‘Tis not so. It begins with Pyrrhus.
 The rugged Pyrrhus, he whose sable arms,
 Black as his purpose, did the night resemble (II, ii, 475-478)

What Hamlet changes is the second half of the line he firstly recites. “The rugged Pyrrhus” remains the same, but the Greek warrior is not anymore called a “Hyrcanian beast.” In fact, although many epithets linking Achilles’ son with blackness, night, blood, horror, and others are used in the Hecuba-speech, he is not called any animal names. This is remarkable when the micro-macrocosmic view of the Hellenic and early modern universe is considered and when there are examples in which Pyrrhus is likened to the natural forces such as storms. Although the Greek character is depicted as highly emotional and under the influence of strong passions, Shakespeare does not leave room for his linkage with ‘bestiality’ and thus, in *Hamlet* in particular, keeps his distance from Gosson and the similar minded anti-theatre critics for whom passions were not much than inhuman evil forces.

Moreover, Shakespeare demonstrates that passions can coexist with careful thought and consideration. A notable example of how emotions are not in complete contradiction with reason is Hamlet’s ability to carefully plan the staging of the “trap” play for his uncle, King Claudius. Hamlet is going to add “a speech of dozen lines” to the tragedy of “The Murder of Gonzago” to find the truth about his father’s death:

I’ll have these players
 Play something like the murder of my father
 Before my uncle. I’ll observe his looks,
 I’ll tent him to the quick. If ‘a do blench
 I know my course. The spirit that I have seen
 May be a de’il, and the de’il hath power
 T’assume a pleasing shape. Yea, and perhaps
 Out of my weakness and my melancholy,
 As he is very potent with such spirits,
 Abuses me to damn me! I’ll have grounds
 More relative than this. The play’s the thing

Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King. (II, ii, 623-635)

The truth will come to light through the emotions the play is to stimulate in the murderer. Although tragedies are fictions and belong to the realm of appearances, because they have the potential to make strong impacts on audience, they make the border between reality and appearance porous. The humoral body under the influence of imagination and passions is stuck in-between the two. Passions move to and fro the border via the senses and the imagination and change the humoral balance of bodies. The story of "The Murder of Gonzago" will cause a physical and emotional reaction in King Claudius. Thus, a product of imagination via the senses and the stimulation of the king's own imaginative input, is believed to alter his soul, mind and body in visible ways for others. Hamlet plans to read and interpret the change in his uncle's looks and complexion and judge his deeds according to the physical clues his body produces as an emotional response to the staged performance. The play "The Murder of Gonzago" with the added written lines by Hamlet consequently will become the very means by which the truth about King Hamlet's murder will come to light.

Shakespeare also does not seem to share Stephen Gosson's opinion against theatre performances expressed in the second material cause of his *Plays Confuted in Five Actions*, in which the critic claims that plays are built upon deception; thus they are lies which cannot contribute to any good. The playwright refers to the utmost importance of theatre for his time through Hamlet's words to Polonius: "Do you hear, let them be well used, for they are the abstract and brief chronicles of the time: after your death you were better have a bad epitaph than their ill report while you live" (II, ii, 549-552). In contrast with Gosson's argument, Shakespeare makes Hamlet show how players, symbolically standing for theatre, are in a symbiotic relationship with real life. Performances, similar to the way "The Murder of Gonzago" reflects the crime against King Hamlet, mirror society in its different social, cultural and political aspects. The playwright compares plays with historical records by characterizing them as the "chronicles of the time." Moreover, Hamlet adds weight to performances when he contrasts epitaphs with the 'truths' theatre can speak of. The impressions plays can create, the very nature of their affective means, exceed the influence of the historical, scientific words. In his "An Apology for Poetry," pro-theatre early modern thinker Sir Philip Sidney, in a similar way elevates the art of poetry above history, mathematics and the other natural sciences. His claim is built upon the imaginative and emotional appeal of poetry. None of the other sciences and disciplines has the potential to impress and affect people as much as literature. Approached in the context of Gosson's criticism in regard with his claim that plays are evil fabrications, Shakespeare seems to suggest that theatre is an illusion as much as life is a deception.

Plays (and literature in general) were thought to exercise affective powers which changed the humoral balance of bodies in the Early Modern period. Products of imagination, performances, stimulated the audiences' creative thinking and feelings and caused physical and emotional alterations. Aware of

the affective potential of theatre, theatre critics vigorously discussed its future, how beneficial it was and what kind of dangers it posed. In the light of the Galenic humoral theory of interrelation between minds, passions and bodies in microcosmic and macrocosmic contexts, the study has approached the Hecuba speech (II, ii) in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and analysed in what ways the Player's and Hamlet's reactions to the Hecuba-speech reflect and comment on the theatre debates. Attention has been drawn to the importance of the visual and auditory senses in the process of circulation of affects as well as to the relation of emotions and plays to reason and reality. It has been suggested that in times when playhouses were associated with physical and affective contagion, theatre performances were seen as influential part of the dynamic early modern humoral model of life.

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