Feminism In Hamlet And Oedipus The King

Gender roles are an essential role in society. Those roles have been set in society since the beginning of time. The phase gender is socially formed and divides society to categorize men and women. For centuries, women have fought to get equal rights, and today, they are still fighting for equal civil rights. From the right to vote for birth control, women have always been trying to show their own independence in order to gain their freedom of rights. As time goes by, while development has achieved, there is still room to improvement. However, the evolution of women's rights and the role of women has been shown in history and literature, to be used to illustrate the progression throughout the centuries. In the plays Hamlet and Oedipus the King, gender roles are revealed through symbolism, imagery, and theme to reveal the social norms of the time.

Feminism plays a big role in Hamlet and Oedipus the King. Gender discrimination is strong in the plays, and the author reveals that theme with the use of symbolism in both plays. With the character Jocasta, Sophocles creates a female version of Oedipus and uses her to reveal the oppression of women by conflicting her and Oedipus' relationships and counteraction to the revelation. From the play Oedipus the King, Sophocles emphasize Jocasta's susceptibility and supportive nature in order to women as frail, devoted, and attentive wives and mothers to simplify the essential trait of self-assertion. The same goes to William Shakespeare's Hamlet. Shakespeare creates characters that impacts Hamlet the most; those are his girlfriend Ophelia and his mother Gertrude. Shakespeare's written clearly show his thoughts about Ophelia from Hamlet. Ophelia is a character filled with passion and influence, as her father is a type of person who is possessive towards his children. Gertrude is another woman from Hamlet who represent as a weak-minded, defenseless character who has no control over what she does, even though she's the Queen of Denmark.

Both plays share the attention on a tragic paradox in the domino theory that led up to ritual of purification, but the plot of Hamlet makes a much more sophisticated character than that of the classic tragedy of Oedipus the King. Both of them share a similar theme for the play which is regicide and self- destruction. Oedipus set in the time setting on the age of Greek gods from the Thebes antique time. As for Hamlet, it was set in the country of Denmark in a time where the Catholicism was very powerful. Oedipus pray to the Greek Gods while Hamlet prays to his own ancient God that reflected through his responses. All the time during the play Hamlet was uncertain to become a murderer.

Due to both of the time period, it slightly made the men on those ancient time to be more dominance towards women, this made that feminism was less concern as the men were leading most of the time. Perspectives towards women have been set in one level during the time period, they believe that women should be the ones that stay home and raise the offspring. There were some similarities also a few differences in both plays. Both plays set in different time settings. Also, the plots were pretty much diverse. Oedipus wanted to save his home and soon found out about his birth parents as for Hamlet, he tried his best to vindicate his father by killing the current king who took away the throne. Both have amazing life lessons to learn for the audiences and marvelous literature characters and will always noteworthy for the next generation to come.

Shakespeare's uses imagery to create a map for the readers to feel the depth of Hamlet's life experiences. As Hamlet looking for the explanation to his inquiries like, "to be, or not to be," (Shakespeare, III, I, 58) the readers soon felt Hamlet's difficulty from the author. Shakespeare uses so many imageries to describe Hamlet's emotional thoughts, making the readers feel the feelings that Hamlet is feeling, just like when Hamlet feels his mother has betrayed his father. Hamlet even mentioned his mother's new delusion: "she would hang on him/ as if increase of appetite had grown/ By what it fed on," (Shakespeare, I, ii, 143-145). Shakespeare value imagery to describe the consequences of betrayal, rather than simply talk about how Hamlet feels when he is betrayed. By doing so, the readers will have a clear understanding of the theme, it is for the readers to recognize the play's significance.

During the play, additional imagery is used to mention more in-depth of deception, Hamlet cries about his mother's poor decision to remarry, especially remarry his own uncle. He mentioned her judgment was foolish and criticize her impulsive choice to his own father' as he mentioned that "eyes without feeling, feeling without sight,/ears without hands or eyes,/ smelling sans all," (Shakespeare, III, iv, 80-83). Shakespeare's use imagery to let the reader feel the lifestyles of the generation to be a more intimate situation, hence presenting the level of Hamlet's madness can be really precise. During Laertes speech of Ophelia's madness at the end of the play, the imagery was used by the author again. For Sophocles, he uses darkness type of imagery to create a way for Oedipus to be way above all other men, making her as equal as other men. He also used another character development, using the light versus darkness imagery is when Oedipus promises to Creon, and that "I will shed light on this darkness" (Oedipus the King. 2). Creon told Oedipus that their land's curse will be demolished when Laius' killer is terminated. (Oedipus the King. 3) In this way Sophocles could paint a better picture for his readers.

Symbolism means an aesthetic and iambic expression or style using metaphorical images and incidental ideas to express esoteric ideas, emotions, and states of mind. Feminism in both plays is something that has been pointed out throughout the play. According to Rachel Bowlby who wrote 'Generation' about gender roles and feminism in Oedipus the King. Feminism, sexuality, and gender has been out there since the early sixteenth century. Bowlby was intrigued when after years went by, in 1950, feminism, sexuality and gender still portray as a huge issue back then. Bowlby also points out that "Gender did not even exist; it was a purely grammatical term, which had yet to be extended to suggest the socially sexed being of every human him and her." (Bowlby 7-8).

Feminism has been playing a big role in both plays, the female characters of both plays show the power of women that stood beside Hamlet and Oedipus. Gertrude, the mother of Hamlet, symbolize the type of women who is weak-minded that can't stood up for her family even for herself, just like Oedipus birth mother. Jocasta. For Ophelia, Hamlet's girlfriend has been fighting hard for the relationship that she had with Hamlet because she loved him even until the day Hamlet rejected her love and left her nothing. Both plays show that there are major 2 types of women that represents society: the type of woman who does nothing for herself, while another one is doing her best on what she wants. Being weak minded and strong minded could change a person perspective and actions in life, compare Gertrude in Hamlet who is weak-minded and selfish, all she do is to stay quiet and do things that she think that it won't harm herself while for the strong-minded Ophelia, she selflessness and her strong-minded helps her to move forward, even though at last she doesn't get the man she want, at least she fought for him before.

Shakespeare uses flowers to symbolize Ophelia when she starts to lose her mind. She gave away flowers to everybody she sees. She gave each flower, start to describe what it stands for and then to the next. The flowers show several appearances as she says that rosemary is for reminiscence, pansy for thinking and many more. Ophelia also let out her betrayal pain that she felt by giving those flowers and explain what they represent which is pretty creepy. Her father's assassination and Hamlet's insult takes a huge impact on her, which makes the flowers symbolize her inner anxiety and also her adherence. She talks directly about the symbolic meaning, but what's also crucial is who are the ones that getting them. It also shows how crazy she is. Shakespeare also uses Gravedigger to symbolize something about Ophelia after her death. Although there were two gravediggers, one of them is not only a good player of words but also a good philosopher. His reaction towards the questions asked by Hamlet shows that he knows how death makes all equal in the graveyard. When digging Ophelia's grave, they also point out to Hamlet that it doesn't care about someone that loves him committed suicide. Their presence manifests that deaths make everyone equal despite their positions in life.

Feminism show a lot of connections between the male leads in both plays. Each personalities established different type of ways to help both Hamlet and Oedipus the King. Without feminism, both male lead may not even gone successful at some point in their lives. Linking the both of the characters' desire to admit the truth and correct the executioners, Oedipus and Hamlet established several ways to conduct the investigation of the questions they have in their mind. The mixture of their aggressive personality and doubting personality of the other lead made both of them successfully achieve their goals. However, the fate still foretell a tragic end to both of them, then expose the truth and concluded their life journey effort. In the end, Oedipus and Hamlet crumbled by the harshness of their own built catastrophe.