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Blurred Lines: Grey Zone Politics in William Shakespeare's *The Tragical History of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*

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Abstract

Sitting on the throne of Shakespeare's plays, Hamlet is undeniably ahead of its time. It presents the readers with historicised records of political endeavours in Denmark, which above all other things meant the world to Hamlet. Without it, he is reduced to shambles. Within the Danish court, he manoeuvres prisoned in a discourse that he created exploiting a religious construction: purgatory. For a thought-provoking construction like purgatory, in which unseen characters with power dwell, new stages are erected. For these, numerous plays are rewritten. Instead of religion as a commodity traded for the sole purpose to maintain the grip on power, contemporary power dynamics make use of new privileged constructions. With a high rate of similarity, currently, there are new Hamlets. Each suggests that the world would be corrupt without them. Unable to resist the rain of disinformation, their followers are purged and fed with new knowledge and truth to join the cause. Taking all these under the spotlight, this study aims to offer an upside-down perspective on power relations in Hamlet suggesting parallels between the historicized world of Denmark and the contemporary landscape of Anglo-American power dynamics. Just as Hamlet manipulated the privileged term of purgatory reinforced by the story of the ghost to further his own agenda within the Danish court, leaders of these countries or the power behind them have also discovered similar methods to sway opinions and control outcomes in their favour. In a world where new Hamlets continue to emerge, readers are prompted to question the intricate tapestry of power relations, its construction, and its impact on individuals and societies within the Anglo-American context.

Keywords: Hamlet, Grey Zone Politics, Anglo-American Policies, Propaganda

1. A Concept of Purgatorial Discourse

A man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a king, and
eat of the fish that hath fed of that worm.
(Hamlet, IV, iii, 25-26)

The inspiration for this study stems from the thought-provoking exploration of purgatory in Stephen Greenblatt's (2013) work, *Hamlet in Purgatory*, which adds a new layer of meaning to the term. By fusing the concept of purgatory with the realm of politics and manipulation, the writer aims to shed light on a fresh perspective that may initially seem perplexing. Traditionally associated with religious connotations, the term purgatory carries a weighty significance in both the realms of *Hamlet* and contemporary society. It serves as a metaphorical barrier between heaven and hell, signifying a place of uncertainty and transition. In his book, Greenblatt reveals meticulously researched details of a religious practice once adopted by different churches. Although this practice seems to have transformed since antiquity, it remained a matter of debate during Shakespeare's time. Yet, it is instrumental in exploring and understanding the rivalry between two major sects of Christianity. During those times, while Catholics were eager to rely on "the church's spiritual power to remit punishment due to sin", Protestants pursued a belief that salvation could only be achieved by purification through grace (Greenblatt, 2013, p. 261). A conclusion that Greenblatt's book might offer could answer the question of how these religious sects had exploited their subjects through the practices for the dead that their churches prescribed for years. Nevertheless, the majority of the book is dedicated to the meanings embedded in the legendary ghost. His fascination with the ghost of Hamlet's father urges Greenblatt to look for the traces of ghosts and their meanings in history. What is more, he clarifies that "My goal was not to understand the theology behind the ghost; still less, to determine whether it was "Catholic" or "Protestant." (p. 4). Rather than what, he was much more interested in why and how. Trying to do so, just as Greenblatt's quest for understanding the reasons behind why Shakespeare utilized such a vivid character, Hamlet's quest for seeking answers to his father's controversial death is guided by a supernatural being.

In the case of a politician like Hamlet, strategically positioning oneself in the purgatorial realm can be seen as a calculated move to maintain a safe and advantageous

position. After all, the place a politician stands holds certain qualities and implications. However, choosing sides without explicitly committing to a particular stance reflects the inherent nature of grey zone politics. Hamlet's ability to navigate power dynamics without openly exposing his true intentions solidifies his place in history as a master strategist. It serves as a testament to his cunning and foresight in wielding power while keeping his true motivations hidden via the stories of the ghost.

The ghost bears traces of a hidden message from the socio-cultural fabric of Renaissance society. Greenblatt (2013) asserts that "Hamlet immeasurably intensifies a sense of the weirdness of the theatre, its proximity to certain experiences that had been organized and exploited by religious institutions and rituals" (p. 253). Dangerous and provocative as it may seem, he unravels a topic most could not readily dare to question. He tries to explain the complexity of how perilous his attempt to topple the conventional interpretations of what a ghost is. He recounts an encounter he had when he was in Berlin. The person he met was an Islamicist maintaining the hardships of being a rational thinker and speaker because of all the definitions imposed on individuals. Greenblatt (2013) agrees but also adds that "I found myself thinking, and not for the first time, how slyly amusing and acute Plato was in the Ion in pointing to the tension between the work of the rational philosopher and the work of the rhapsode or, let us say, the literary critic" (p. 5). As he claims, creating meanings anew requires dismantling layers of timeless knowledge structured and coded into the genes of critics. Then, re-evaluating dissected parts with new bases adds unfamiliar perspectives to the critic's mind. After all, knowledge is the fruit of thought. However, thought is chained by the thinker's identity. Definitions are always restrained. To quote Hamlet, "there is nothing either good / or bad but thinking makes it so" (II, ii, 239-240).

Thoughts governed and shaped through the filter of Catholicism define purgatory as an interim destination where sins are purged away. The dead must be cleansed of the sins that weren't remitted before entering the realm of the afterlife. Purified souls step into heaven to reach an exalted joy upon a face-to-face meeting with God. Gerald O'Collins (2008), in his *Catholicism: A Very Short Introduction* claims that "With death, the history of each person assumes its complete, irreversible character, and is 'judged' by God in what came to be called the particular judgement" (p. 66). As in O'Collins' portrayal of the circular journey of each person, histories belong to the realm of the living. Its pages are divinely sealed upon death. In

the afterlife, the one and only judge is God. His particular judgement can only be delivered by Him. On the other hand, according to Protestants, catholic clergy seems to have swindled mourning followers of their sect by selling false hope claiming that they have the power to affect the flow of events that are going to take place in the afterlife. O'Collins (2008) continues in regard to this claim that "the official church granted 'indulgences', or remissions of punishment in purgatory, for sinners who had repented of their sins but had died without making full satisfaction for the harm they had caused" (p. 37). The money that was gathered via the trade of indulgences helped, with the order of the Pope, pay the building expenses of the new St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Graham Tomlin (2004), in *the Blackwell Companion to Protestantism*, identifies the term indulgence as "certificates issued by the church which remitted punishments imposed as part of the penitential system" (p. 43). Moreover, he adds that "indulgences had begun to be applied not only to the church's 'temporal' punishments but to the punishments to be endured in purgatory as well" (p. 43). Foucault (1997), too, comments on the Church's pastoral power. He witnesses a change in their objectives. He criticizes that "It was a question no longer of leading people to their salvation in the next world but, rather, ensuring it in this world. And in this context, the word "salvation" takes on different meanings" (p. 334). Using an instrument of trade and profit in matters beyond human touch was, for some, a shock. Martin Luther opposed the idea and found himself among the pioneers of Protestantism. Indulgences left him outraged and furious. Much to people's regret, the ritual endured for quite some time. The attention that it received from Greenblatt proves it to be an issue worth reconsidering because power invests heavily in lucrative businesses.

The concept of *purgatory*, from here on, could be taken as a new metaphor for global politics, particularly among major powers like the U.S.A., Russia or China. Although a solid meaning for the term itself is still unavailable in dealing with issues in international relations, Lyle J. Morris et al. (2019) propose eight crucial characteristics of grey zone activities which could be categorized under "the threshold for a military response, gradual unfolding, lack of attributability, extensive legal and political justifications, avoidance of vital or existential threats, coercive leverage through escalation risk, emphasis on nonmilitary tools, and targeting specific vulnerabilities" (pp. 8-11). The propositions clarify that the grey zone is a commonly visited place by powers to run covert operations so as to destabilize an opponent. Leaving armed and open conflict as the last resort, these operations are tailored for specific

purposes. Either by a state figure or by anyone with influence on society, the image of the rival centre of power is repeatedly attacked. Therefore, the grey zone could be deemed as a cauldron specifically forged for power politics. Hamlet manoeuvres within his 'grey zone' solely to regain what he reckons has been stolen from him most villainously. Thus, this concept of purgatory as a grey zone can undoubtedly be applied to modern-day world politics. In this area, superpowers often, without immediately resorting to armed conflict just like in the monarchies of Shakespeare, negotiate or broker deals to secure their gains. Highly confidential strategies and tactics are employed to gain the upper hand. By doing so, while dealing with even two opposing states, the potential damage is minimized as the grey zone acts as a buffer.

In short, following the footsteps of Greenblatt, the focus will be on how Anglo-American policies and Hamlet's tactics draw a parallel. Catholic Church purifies sinners in purgatory reaching from the realm of living to grant them a safe passage to paradise despite furious opposition by the Protestants. The conflict for power between the two left ill-informed followers segregated and abused as well. Hamlet's actions resemble the conflict between the Churches. He too utilizes a character from purgatory to persuade the readers that a Denmark without a new Hamlet would be corrupt. He spreads false consciousness through his covert ops. He sells salvation. Hamlet's discourse becomes his ideology. As Slavoj Zizék (2019) asserts in his *Sublime Object of Ideology* that "The very concept of ideology implies a kind of basic, constitutive naiveté: the misrecognition of its own presuppositions, of its own effective conditions, a distance, a divergence between so-called social reality and our distorted representation, our false consciousness of it" (p. 24). The theory behind ideologies is generally perfectly organized. However, its implications might suggest the opposite. Since the dawn of the twentieth century, those with political power in Anglo-American states have implemented an updated version of the Hamlet-esque political manoeuvring. With the advent of the two world wars and the subsequent Cold War period, the use of power politics and the associated propaganda tools has risen dramatically; the goal of these tools has often been to entrap people into a duality of beliefs and thought processes just like in *Hamlet*. Despite this, the ultimate power tends to remain in the grey area, with those in the upper levels of power controlling the narrative to their own advantage. It is this ability to remain in the shadows yet still have a deep influence on the actions of the masses that has allowed political power to remain in the same hands for centuries.

1.1. Hamlet-esque Manoeuvrings in Grey Zones

Power does not choose sides. It creates all. It does not jeopardize its own existence by simply investing in only one side. In addition to creating and sustaining systems, it also transforms them. It is the centre where the decisions on the definitions of acceptable behaviour, the values that society should nourish, and most importantly who gets to benefit from the existing system are made. As Jonathan Dollimore (2003) asserts, "In proverb and myth, in theology and philosophy, one human discourse after another insists that there are things we should not know" (p. xxxi). As stated in the quotation, various forms of discourse repeatedly teach that any system of thought and knowledge should remain inaccessible to dissident inquiry. As a subject, what can be known is framed under the boundaries of such discourses conveyed through different means. Therefore, with a twist, seeing that Greenblatt's purgatorial evidence in how the church manipulated people to turn them into a means of income, Hamlet's stance in state politics juxtaposed the land of the living and the dead to veil the reality. Roger Shattuck (1996) remarks that "Don't peek. Leave well enough alone. Here is a quandary for believers. Does doubt corrupt or enlighten? Does faith survive best on ignorance or on knowledge? Need we verify all traditional beliefs by rational inquiry?" (p. 6). Such a dilemma forces one to question the nature and similarities between Hamlet's tragedy and contemporary examples of it. So, what's in it for Hamlet? An interpretation of his self-dedication to revenge his father's alleged murder could be that he seeks power which he handed over to his allegedly incestuous uncle with the passing of his father. Another one could be that he's purely doing what he's doing because he is a dutiful son who loved his dearest father. In the play, both interpretations are portrayed. The impact that each could have can only be channelled by the stories of Hamlet. It is Hamlet who informs the readers and audience whom to believe and how to think. However, Hamlet progresses as planned without stepping out of his interim place: his actual purgatory. In there, he marks everyone around as good and evil stripping each and every reader of their own particular judgement under his discourse.

Among the tactics Hamlet uses inside his purgatorial grey zone, the most influential one is propaganda. It is an act of deliberately spreading biased or distorted information to support a political affinity. Essentially, it is manipulation in its purest form. It is aimed at managing the beliefs and attitudes of a collective group. It affects the cognition of certain symbols that are crucial in decision-making processes. It persuades the victims that what they

decide is right and their own idea. As Edwards Bernays (1928) put it, "It is they who pull the wires which control the public mind, who harness old social forces and contrive new ways to bind and guide the world" (p. 10). Unconscious subjects are presented with a truth to be believed in without being given any chance to question it. And stories are captivating apparatuses in this respect. With the help of stories, Hamlet creates a purgatorial prison. In there, he captivates the readers with a history of a ghost. He speaks with the past. The ghost is the tongue of Hamlet's false consciousness. He invents a story basing it on a supernatural character only a few in the play could see. Moreover, out of these people, Hamlet is the one and only human being who can actually speak to the apparition. More interestingly, he could talk with it beyond anyone's sight. Simply, Hamlet's fervent cries and promises to revenge his father's murder could be regarded as slander. Gertrude's lines support the idea that Hamlet's mind is responsible. She tries to calm down Hamlet by saying "This is the very coinage of your brain. /This bodiless creation ecstasy /Is very cunning in" (III, iv, 137-139). Alas, Hamlet is hell-bent on avenging his father's death on groundless accusations against his uncle. He desperately needs an alibi to demonize Claudius.

In the play, Hamlet's power game is in action. James (1964) states that "the power game is said to have its own 'language', its own 'laws', its own 'harsh logic'" (p. 308). As can be inferred from the quotation, this game is self-oriented. Obviously, its subjective approach threatens the opponent by creating suspense, and hatred via the help of stories fed by fellow members in the circle of power. From the circle, Horatio cries "Stay, illusion" (I, i, 128). Oddly, he insists on trying to make the ghost speak by saying "Speak to me. / If thou art privy to thy country's fate" (I, i, 132-133). It is intriguingly unexpected to demand a ghost to speak about the fate of a country as soon as witnessing it. From the moment the play begins, an information feed starts flowing. As the apparition makes itself seen, witnesses flock to gain news from the unknown world about their country. Even though they seem unsure, they go on trying to envisage him as their dead king. First, Marcellus calls him a "thing" (I, i, 21), then a "fantasy" (I, i, 23), and lastly an "apparition" (I, i, 28). Again the same Marcellus names Horatio a "scholar" (I ,i, 42) and Horatio defines it as an "illusion" (I, i, 128). Marcellus' being an officer and Horatio a friend to Hamlet couldn't be a random choice. As they are from the circle of Hamlet, the validity of the information they provide as the curtains open should be questioned. There is an intense process of meaning-making for the ghost. Interestingly, a scholar leads the signification process. Conventionally, ghosts signify fear.

However, here, it is seen as a valid source of information. Hear Barnardo when he says "Sit down awhile, / And let us once again assail your ears, / That are so fortified against our story (I, i, 30-32). Another puzzling statement from Barnardo might signal that this story has already been circulating and people have been whispering about it. If not so, why should their ears be fortified? Is there a reason not to believe in the "story" that he's going to share? What is certain is that the beginning of the play opens with a "game". And that game is initiated by a story.

Ghost and its story blur the perception. Some things remain a secret due to the presentation of this story from the very early stages of the play. Only after a careful reading can a reader unwrap what has been served as a package. For instance, Shigeo Kikuchi (2010) in *Unveiling the dramatic secret of 'Ghost' in Hamlet* claims that the people of England in Elizabethan times had to abide by laws concerning crimes that prohibit personal vengeance. On the other hand, he asserts that "People's sentiment sought vengeance and retribution. Shakespeare, satisfying these various social codes, seems to have presented an intellectual challenge to the intellectual classes in society" (p. 114). Inferring from the quotation, it can be asserted that legally, Hamlet has no right to seek vengeance from his uncle. His move represents a rebellion against the norms of society, thus proving that he seeks power, not vengeance. As in another example, Anselm Haverkamp (2006) in *The Ghost of History* declares the ghost "a liar" and states that "He is a phantom who is not the ghost that he claims to be; it is the ghost in which History takes the stage and presents itself as a phantom full of lies" (p. 173). What he proposes is that histories are nothing but fiction. Ghost's story is a historical design to plot against the new king, which eventually would justify Hamlet's efforts to overthrow Claudius. Karin De Boer (2002) Enter in *the Ghost/Exit the Ghost/Re-Enter the Ghost: Derrida's Reading of Hamlet in Specters of Marx* stresses that "if he killed his uncle - whose marriage also threatened to deprive him of the crown - he would probably be condemned as a traitor himself" (p. 28). Instead, he chose to continue manoeuvring in between since he was quite sure that the story of a supernatural character would not readily be accepted as truth without basing it on solid ground. De Boer (2002) finds Hamlet "akin to the ghost" as he carries the same name as his father (p. 33). What Hamlet fundamentally lacks is the power that his father used to have. For Hamlet, the end of his lineage implies the ruin of Denmark. Although Claudius claims that "As of a father, for let the world take note / You are the most immediate to our throne" (I, ii, 108-109), Hamlet, with the fear of losing it

forever, demands it right away. He knows that he is to be banished to Wittenberg. Agreeing with Linda Charnes' claims (2006) in her *Hamlet's Heirs Shakespeare and Politics of a New Millienium* "Prince Hamlet is the namesake of a legitimate king who, despite being dead, refuses to 'give up the ghost' of his power" (p. 18). That's why his physical presence and mind reflect a shadowy and ghostly image. According to Dover Wilson (1951), "the Ghost is the linchpin of Hamlet; remove it and the play falls to pieces" (p. 52). Roy W. Battenhouse (1951) agrees with Wilson (1951) and adds that

> the Ghost in Hamlet does not grieve over his delay; he does not long for God or sorrow for what separates him from God. He longs for revenge. He grieves over the loss not of the divine vision but of his possessions. He also seems to resent having to pay for his sin. (p. 164)

The apparition doesn't seem to fit any religious definitions. It persistently deals with earthly affairs. Vengeful spirits generally represent repressed feelings of the ones that are left behind after a beloved member of the family departs from this world. Therefore, the ghost and its story are entirely Hamlet's propaganda. It's a kind of displacement of Hamlet's repressed desire for power.

Stephen Ratcliffe (1998) in *What Doesn't Happen in "Hamlet": The Ghost's Speech* states that the ghost is the equivalent of "everything the audience does not see performed on the stage of Hamlet (things we only hear about)" (p. 127). It denotes an alternate reality from which a kind of intrusion is made to pave the way to Hamlet's victory. As John F. DeCarlo (2013) puts it in his *Hamlet and the Ghost: A Joint Sense of Time: "*The Ghost represents an intrusion from another world or space-time continuum, alternatively existing and not-existing in the earthly continuum" (p. 9). It disrupts the natural flow of events to provide a second reality which eventually merges with the actual one, which is reified by Hamlet and becomes the absolute truth. Alan L. Ackerman (2001) in *Visualizing Hamlet's Ghost: The Spirit of Modern Subjectivity* states that "What is especially curious in this provocative argument about Hamlet's search for material knowledge is its elision of the spirit, the Ghost as a ghost, who, after all, instructs Hamlet's "soul," and epitomizes betweenness" (p. 121). After a while, the story of the ghost is pushed back and Hamlet becomes the ghost. They become one. His propaganda reigns throughout the entire play. As a character, Hamlet loses his personal traits as a subject and turns into an instrument abused under the spell and ecstasy of power. That is, what makes Hamlet a prince also devours his soul. He oscillates between his ambition and his humanity. Hamlet exploits a significantly religious term and conducts his moves in his newly created purgatory. His purgatory works as an institution. Manipulating

people's sentiments, he aspires to justify his ambitions. It would be suggested that he is more than sure that in power politics, being powerful denotes being right. In his world, the King signifies the utmost power and wealth. That's why he has a single target.

Despite how difficult it may appear to draw seemingly straight comparisons between today's Anglo-American policies and Hamlet's enigmatic character, several aspects of modern politics, in particular, bear the possibility for similarities. For instance, there is an elaborate web of affairs that Hamlet weaves together in his power relations. Acting more like an angler, hiding beneath the sands, he lingers his torch of wisdom in the air to lure his victims into a trap. Set his trap in his grey zone, he impales small fish like Polonius on his hook to catch bigger fish. He is willing to expend all characters that serve his interests. His techniques might vary, but mainly his political ambiguity masks his real intentions. Similar to Hamlet's story of the ghost, global powers often make up stories to justify their aggressive policies that might hold the potential to totally cripple or destroy their opponents. The joint invasion of Iraq in 2003 by the U.S. and English troops could only be initiated by such a grand narrative, which beneath the superficial meanings confesses that it aimed "to perpetuate a favourable global balance of forces" (Callinicos, 2005, p. 593). The last great conflict between the two ended up in millions of deaths and devastation. After the Second World War, the West decided to form an alliance to be able to protect each from any possible danger that might affect the member countries. As one can easily guess, the name is the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, also abbreviated as NATO. The founding purpose of the organization was to repel the Russian expansion after the Second World War. According to the *NATO Handbook* published in 1998 for the fiftieth anniversary, it is explicitly stated that "it offers prospects for cooperation and the furtherance of common goals which could not have been envisaged less than a decade ago" (p. 15). What was Hamlet's common goal? Was it vengeance? Was it a Denmark without corruption? Was it to prevent his mother's marriage to his uncle? Was it to reclaim the crown? Which goal is privileged? Or, was it all about faking one's appearances?

Hamlet, in the play, never loses his fake appearance until he reaches the shores of death. He always stays in the shadows. His mood keeps changing. He plots against the king and tries to trap him with a play that he thinks would reveal the crime that he fervently believed in. In fact, his target should have been somebody else. If the origin of his hatred is literally Gertrude's marriage to him, why doesn't he target both? Hamlet, hiding in his grey

zone, fights for power. Similarly, when comparing the conflict between the West and the East, no Horatio is needed to tell the resemblance between the two. Cunning and deceptive as they are, their stages are most like Shakespeare's. Such reasoning confirms that deception is of primary significance among the techniques that politicians generally employ. To restate the quote from Hamlet, "A man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a king and / eat of the fish that hath fed of that worm" (IV, iii, 25-26). Hamlet's political intellect shines in these lines. Grief is his bait. It is a deceptive device he uses when cloaking his plans to regain power, which also keeps him hidden under the black clouds. He is a prime example of the interconnectedness and cyclical nature of power relations in the international arena of politics. It represents the temporary nature of wealth, power and even royalty. In the grand scheme of things, even the lowliest of creatures is a reminder of the fluidity of power. Hence, the states with the upper hand in international politics often cope with constant competition and struggle by implementing a balanced strategy towards their opponents. Although Hamlet's quotation above might claim the opposite, both the cyclical and balanced nature of power relations reveals that power is transitory. Interactions between nations and shifts in the balance make it compulsory to follow a more nuanced and comprehensive stance in order to secure one's position as the authority. Thus, the grey zone in international politics functions as a quasi-arena. States in conflict often engage in this area. Even though they exhibit diplomatic manners in open meetings concealing their truer intentions, power politics never stops pursuing its agenda. Hamlet approves of such a disposition by saying "But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue" (I, ii, 159). The quotation implies that he is well aware of the fact that whenever he loses his fake appearance, he will fail to trap the king and lose his chance to regain the crown.

Political leaders as such generally approach a challenging situation with caution exhibiting ambivalent attitudes. For instance, in recent years, the United Kingdom voted in June 2016 on whether to stay in the European Union or not, which was later publicly known as Brexit. Harold D. Clarke, Matthew Goodwin and Paul Whiteley (2017) provide the drives for a leave vote from such a powerful community in world politics as "public concerns about a perceived loss of national sovereignty to the EU", "an opportunity to vent their deep frustration about their relative deprivation", and "the role of public anxieties over immigration" (p. 5). The prime minister of the time, David Cameron, was named "a gambler" by Clarke et. al. (2017), and they asserted that "Cameron's legacy would soon forever be

associated with the result of the 2016 referendum" (p. 3). His campaign lacked clarity about the consequences and future relationship with the EU. His successors included Theresa May, Boris Johnson, Liz Truss, and Rishi Sunak. In almost six years, England has tried four PMs. The dynamics behind such a storm of change is a study of another field of research. However, it is understandable that public opinion showed clear-cut confusion about whether to stay in the EU or not by ending the polls with a percentage of 51.9. Although campaigned by Cameron to remain a member of the union, the list of concerns supported by the international spheres of power forced public opinion to separate. In a democratic atmosphere, populist choices reigned the polls. Clark et al. (2017) claim that "In a populist era of 'people versus politics', the larger political system is not immune either" (p. 229). Populism has close ties with democracy as both emphasize the power of the common people. However, as Cas Mudde & Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser (2012) asserts that it "considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' and 'the corrupt elite,' and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people" (p. 8). One famous figure associated with populism is the former President of the United States, Donald Trump. His political rhetoric and campaign style appealed to many voters by positioning himself as a champion of the common people against the political establishment. He tapped into grievances and frustrations among certain segments of the population, promising to give power back to the people. What eventually happened is the defeat of Trump since he failed to resist the pressures and demands from a larger political structure which cannot be seen with the naked eye. It can reshape the dynamics of the political system, leading to shifts in policies, electoral outcomes, and public discourse. Therefore, returning to the U.K., out of sheer populism, the issue of immigrant flow from countries that the European Union defines as underdeveloped or developing might be addressed as the chief reason behind the U.K.'s detachment from the union. The discourse was that these immigrants and refugees from various countries, largely of Middle Eastern and African origins, were taking away the jobs and opportunities of UK nationals. Such a disposition of an unwillingness to share access to public services, healthcare and housing generated conflicting opinions and inconsistent policies. Instead of recognising the vital role these people can play in boosting the national economy and society, the leaders saw them as an expandable instrument for a political power struggle, though the Union has fervently adhered to the policies that promote human rights. More remarkably, the current situation is

that the majority of people without adequate income and welfare in their countries owe their insufficiency to whom they are so eagerly trying to seek refuge. A range of factors, including corruption, political instability, war, and poverty; factors that often arise from the actions of those in power on a global scale forced these people to flee their homes to seek a better life elsewhere. Therefore, while addressing the root causes of mass migration, representing oneself as benevolent and a saviour raises scepticism. All the factors mentioned earlier are related to an unseen perpetrator. It is another Hamlet that prepares a stage for a play to construct a poll box with no options to choose other than to guilt and manipulate the opinions against a target. Then, it turns into a matter of perspective whether the success of a nation firmly depends on a leader or not. The question is: Are the leaders led?

In their own battles of perception and authenticity, political leaders like Hamlet may grapple with public opinion and hidden agendas. Such an interplay between appearance and reality is also evident in Hamlet's response to Gertrude's inquiry into his seemingly excessive mourning. While the context may differ, the notion of leaders being led, or the intricate dance of deceit and authenticity, remains an intriguing question worthy of exploration in both realms. The following lines present a counter-attack by Hamlet to his mother Gertrude when she solemnly tries to seek an answer to the reasons why he has been mourning seemingly more than everyone else:

> GERTRUDE Why seems it so particular with thee?
> HAMLET Seems madam? nay it is, I know not seems.
> 'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,
> Nor customary suits of solemn black,
> Nor windy suspiration of forced 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 (I,ii,75-86)

His looks mask his plans. He might indeed be grieving, however, the overdose in his portrayal of his grief seems unusual. The shows that are displayed after a funeral might as well be found insincere, though the inner self always leaves a loose thread. When pulled with

adequate force, what was woven would unfold rather rapidly. But Hamlet uses his deceit in two ways. Along with an effort to conceal his plan, Hamlet also depicts his disbelief about the behaviours of people within proximity. When his uncle addresses Hamlet as his son, aside, he murmurs "A little more than kin, and less than kind" (I, ii, 65). This line is clear proof that he rejects being a son to his uncle and keeps his undercover fight in his grey zone.

The nature of this affiliation is akin to Turkiye's engagement with Asia and Europe. Anglo-American states often name Turkiye as a bridge between the two, and a powerful ally. However, Huntington (1996), when commenting on Turkiye, claims that "a bridge is an artificial creation connecting two solid entities but is part of neither" (p.149). As stated in the quotation, an implicitly transmitted message could be that Turkiye would never be a partner and she would stand as long as she is attached to their land. Therefore, Hamlet might have thought that if his uncle intervenes in his place in the lineage, then the order is lost and Denmark would be corrupt. However, another interesting contradiction comes from NATO. It defines itself as "the instrument for guaranteeing the security, freedom and independence of its members" (p. 15). The organization offers an ideal world for the ones that are only voluntary to accept "democratic values and the emergence of European democratic institutions" (p. 15). Besides, it claims that "the Alliance helped overcome the adversarial relationship between East and West in a way that has allowed a new, constructive and inclusive security relationship to develop" (p. 15). Even so, recent developments suggest an alternate reality. If what NATO declared was accepted as the absolute truth, akin to the tale of the Ghost, then the reality on the ground would contradict the idealism that was presented by NATO. Within such organizations, affiliations create sub-groups and engage in lobbying and propagandising against one another. In the implementation of such an effort, their actions mirror Hamlet's grey zone tactics. In addition to the changing dynamics of global power, the emergence of new geopolitical actors also jeopardises the traditional East and West paradigm that NATO was designed to address. As the world progresses to be multipolar, the organisation fails to comply with the norms it inaugurated. Controversies surrounding military interventions and alternate alliances raise questions about transparency. In such a pseudo-reality, the lofty ideals of democracy, freedom, welfare, and peace become flexible and are manipulated for maximum advantage.

Recently, Turkiye, a NATO member, has witnessed four real-time wars at her borders. The first one was in Iraq. The US-led coalition powers invaded the country. The motive was to prevent Saddam Hussein from using chemical weapons primarily against his own people. The second was Syria's civil war, which later turned into a battleground for US and Russia against ISIS. The third was between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Only Iraq and Syria do not have any affiliations with NATO. Other nations mentioned earlier are a part of this organization. Neither the U.S. nor Russia has a real-time war on their lands. They struggle for power in the lands of minor fish. NATO soil and their neighbours have become their grey zone. Sadly, it is said that all ended up with a death toll that reaches millions. Nowadays, the fourth war is still hot. Thousands of people had to sacrifice their lives because of a conflict between Ukraine, encouraged by NATO, and Russia, lured by America and its allies. In a recent article, it is reported that more than two hundred thousand lives from both sides had been lost since the war began and millions had to leave their countries (Lock & A.F.P., 2022). Leaders from all over the world hailed both leaders to immediately cease fire and stop the bloodshed. Ironically, frontlines have constantly been reinforced. Endless supplies of weapons were sent to each by their allies. Ukraine and other NATO members in and around Europe today are in the grey zone for superpower conflict. In there, people are purged to have new identities. For a country which has lost its identity as a former Soviet Union republic, Ukraine's plea to be a part of the West was declined. Bolstered with support from the United States, Ukraine has had to endure casualties.

A political figure like Hamlet does not move without a motive. The characters that he addresses in his dialogues exist for a purpose. They all serve his main interests. That's why, while scrutinizing his lines, it is needed to expect the unexpected. Talking with the dead, masquerading himself as a madman, using a theatrical play to deter his uncle the king, and victimizing himself with banishment can be counted among the examples of Hamlet's tools for spreading his discourse. He insistently prioritizes his self-interest through the discourse he creates using these tools. As Alan James (1964) maintains that "States are viewed as scheming and scrambling for power, for all those resources, tangible and intangible, which can be used to prosecute national policy in the international field and, if required, to obstruct the implementation of other States' policies" (p. 308). Maximising state power regardless of the consequences as a survival strategy is consistent with the politics of power-hungry states. In the absence of a higher authority, the self-interest of the States functions to secure an

advantageous position in the international system. Without hesitation, they continually race to gain access to riches and influence to advance their interests. Ironically, one common perception is that power is a critical determinant of the global order. That's why Hamlet continuously feels the urge to replace his uncle and get rid of what he considers corruption.

In parallel, the global concern of climate change has been amplified, with various actors, including celebrities, influencers, and state institutions, highlighting its catastrophic consequences. Administrators have actively pursued measures. It has turned into a new capitalist and globalist discourse originating mainly from Europe and the U.S. Dipesh Chakrabarty's (2017) claim that "globalization and global warming are no doubt connected phenomena, capitalism itself being central to both" suggests new perspectives apart from the imminent doom that awaits humanity if the precautions are not taken immediately (p. 1). That being said, in 2020, the United States of America exited Paris Agreement, which aims to counteract climate change by trying to keep the global temperature rise below two degrees Celsius. The decision by the US to exit the Paris Agreement has cast a shadow over global efforts to combat climate change. However, Lynn Wagner and Jennifer Allan (2020) state that "China pledged to achieve net zero by 2060 during the celebrations of the United Nations' 75th anniversary. Japan announced that it will align with the European Union to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. South Korea has made a similar pledge" (2020, November 4). Although her major rivals pledge to align with the decisions that are taken in the Paris Agreement, the exit of such a colossal power in world politics, which makes up almost a quarter of world economics, creates doubt over the nature of such agreements on a global scale. These agreements might as well aim to slow down the development of rival states by simply selling manipulated data to secure their own interest. In any case, it could be frankly asserted that there is only one absolute purpose, and that is total dominance, just as in the case of Hamlet's made-up motive for the murder of his uncle and the deletion of anything related to him supported by the discourse constructed within the ghost's story:

> Ay thou poor ghost, whiles 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,

Unmixed with baser matter: yes, by heaven! (I ,iv, 96-104)

His distracted globe is his mind which is fixed on murdering his uncle only because he is sitting on his throne. He sees all that is about his uncle as trivial and swears to wipe them off the face of the earth and from the minds. Deep inside, he knows that if his father's lineage ends with him, he will be the one that is going to be forgotten for once and for all. Therefore, he holds on to the story of the ghost produced by his distracted globe. He vows to kill his uncle by saying goodbye to him as in "So uncle, there you are. / Now to my word:/ It is 'Adieu, adieu, remember me. / I have sworn't" (I, iv, 110-112). In addition, he randomly confesses his real motive to Horatio by saying "He that hath killed my king, and whored my mother, / Popped in between th'election and my hopes, /Thrown out his angle for my proper life" (V, ii, 64-66). There are more reasons than normally revealed before to hate Claudius in these sentences. His tongue slip and spills out what was hidden and confesses that Claudius's actions changed the order of succession, which in turn delayed his crowning. In a similar sense, globalization and its discourse on global warming, though strictly warning people to ensure a survivable planet for posterity, might have a second agenda under their sleeves. Forrest Clingerman and Kevin J. O'Brien (2017) see the impacts of climate change as "a new kind of problem", which provocatively suggests that it tends "to embrace the inevitability of apocalyptic change, increasing instability, and an Anthropocene age that calls for new kinds of religion and spirituality" (p. 1). Such a theological change, which would shake the very foundations that nations sit for centuries, in any system is possible if only a threat exists. Just like the corruption in Denmark usurping the order of succession, increasing concerns, regarding the view that climate change is not a temporary or localized problem, are seen as an escalating global challenge that affects the stability of many established states. In fear of an impending inability to meet the needs of the new generations, countries, in political spheres, look for new manoeuvrings to stop or slow down the consumption not of themselves, but of their rivals. Considering the relation between economic growth and the population boom in recent decades, Tim Dyson (2005) states that "what still locks so many people in conditions of material poverty is their reliance upon economies that remain overwhelmingly 'organic' i.e., they have no real access to the energy supplied by fossil fuels" (p. 147). Poor nations already lack access to technologies that could enable them to utilize fossil fuels to accelerate their growth rates both economically and culturally. Therefore, by exiting the Paris

Agreement, it becomes apparent that the global discourse on climate change, global warming, and reducing the burning of fossil fuels may also serve, for the U.S., as a means of preserving dominance over their rivals to main their own economic advantage. In this context, the parallels between Hamlet's motives and the geopolitical dynamics surrounding climate change become even more significant. Just as Hamlet's actions were driven by a desire for power and dominance, the global discourse on climate change may be intertwined with strategic interests and attempts to control the trajectory of international relations.

One of the distinct characteristics of the ghost's story is that it highly reinforces the image of taking the life of King Hamlet unlawfully. In general, every act of murder is inherently classified as a murder and there are no circumstances or exceptions that change this classification. In other words, the act of taking someone's life unlawfully is always considered murder, regardless of the specific details or context surrounding it. Nevertheless, murders in the play should be classified as the ones that occurred on the stage and off the stage. The latter is the one that is assumed to have happened in an imaginary garden with no witnesses at all, which means that it only takes place in the minds of readers. As an exception, it is reinforced with a play. The play poses such a great significance for Hamlet. In one of his dialogues with Polonius, Hamlet minds the players so highly that he commands Polonius as:

> HAMLET 'Tis well, I'll have thee speak out the rest of this soon. - Good
>
> my lord, will you see the players well bestowed ? 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.
>
> POLONIUS My lord, I will use them according to their desert.
>
> HAMLET God's bodkin man, much better. Use every man after his desert, and who shall escape whipping? Use them after your own honour and dignity; the less they deserve, the more merit is in your bounty. Take them in. (II, ii, 479-488)

Hamlet's political mastery once again is at play. He cunningly orders Polonius to take good care of the players, even more than they deserved. He doesn't want any loose ends in his propaganda mission to declare his uncle the King to be a murderer. He demands such an exquisite play that no one could ever unwrite it from the minds of the audience and the tomes of history. Though in the play a king is poisoned, in Denmark, Hamlet's plot has more body counts. What kills Hamlet, Claudius, Gertrude, Ophelia and Laertes is a series of delirious

incantations of Hamlet's ghostly mind. It is this mind that declares that death came to his father utilizing a poison poured from the gates of his ears. Poison as an instrument for the murders works both metaphorically and physically. The real poison actually works in the minds of readers since the ambiguity cannot be totally unveiled. Comparably, just as Hamlet strategically plans the play within the play to expose his uncle's guilt, media in the real world holds the power to shape public perception and control the narrative surrounding events. The U.S., being a dominant global power, has a significant influence over global media platforms and networks. This control allows them to shape narratives, control information flow, and project their own interests and agendas on a global scale. It can lead to the dissemination of information that may not fully unveil the truth, leaving room for interpretation and manipulation. According to Paul E. Rutledge (2020), Trump manipulated the facts by downplaying the spread of COVID-19 and painting a positive portrait of preparedness, even at times deferring to an apparent magic conception that the virus will just disappear. He also aggressively pitched treatments for the symptoms of COVID-19 without following the usual protocols of testing, clinical trials, and controlled experiments. Additionally, Trump and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo have been pressuring the intelligence community to push the narrative that the COVID-19 virus was made in a lab in China, something that Dr. Fauci, who was the chief medical advisor to the president from 2021 to 2022, clearly discredited as false (pp. 3-5). What matters about the war between the Trump administration and the experts in immunology was that even the most powerful country's president is prone to the attacks of the unseen. This war sadly took the lives of many although it was initially claimed to be under control. Rutledge (2020) concludes that "the impact on the federal government's response to COVID-19" resulted "in a loss of American lives that over a 2-month period has surpassed the number of deaths resulting from nearly two decades of war in Vietnam" (p. 5). A lie, a false consciousness, a representation, denial, or propaganda, whatever one might call it, is a war of maintaining power. Hamlet and Trump's stories gave them extra time to lead but took the lives of many.

To conclude, though at first glance, a piteous aura covers the readers' minds seeing that Hamlet damns the incestuous relationship that his mother seems to be willingly involved with his allegedly murderous uncle which eventually led to his father's downfall, one requires a thorough reading to try to grasp an alternative meaning that resides between the lines. His emotional response to his father's death might seem quite humane. However, reading

between the lines, Hamlet confesses that his mind is the decision-maker of his reality. His reasoning that Denmark is a prison, which was ignited by suspicion with no concrete proof at all, coerces him to feel that he is totally stuck in a state governed by an unworthy king who stepped onto the throne by secretly murdering his father. Shakespeare's ghost is vital to the plot. Because it is the main propaganda tool in the play. The realm that it dwells in is the source where new stories are invented. Shakespeare masterfully relieves his readers of command of their minds. Showing great skills at illusion, he serves the ghost as the centre of truth. As the play progresses, it becomes mundane since it is used to divert the attention of the readers, and the players too, from Hamlet's ambition. Primarily, fuelled by Hamlet's desire for power, because he inherently believes that he is the rightful owner of the crown and the throne, the tension in the play is resolved only after the death of all inside the hegemonic sphere. Hamlet once again confesses, even if he is about to die, that his ghostly mind is conquered by the idea of sitting on the throne as in the following lines:

> H A M L E T Oh I die, Horatio,
> The potent poison quite o'ercrows my spirit.
> I cannot live to hear the news from England.
> But I do prophesy th'election lights
> On Fortinbras; he has my dying voice.
> So tell him, with th'occurrents more and less
> Which have solicited - the rest is silence. *Dies* (V,ii,331-337)

Even if he is about to give his last breath, Hamlet thinks of the election. No words about avenging his father spill out of his mouth. He does not imagine the afterlife he got in his holy mission, nor does he dream of uniting with his beloved and glorious father. Yet again, he still finds in himself to behave like a prophet and try to get news from the afterlife. He prophesizes that Fortinbras will be the King. Alas, what remains is his silence. Hamlet's story ends with his death.

One might argue that the realm of world politics is governed by sharp theatrical professionals who possess the ability to manipulate and distort the truth, much like Hamlet. Their actions resemble well-crafted scripts or a series of carefully tailored scenarios. They are predestined, with predefined lines and assigned roles, while the stage itself is meticulously set. These political actors send sealed envelopes, to be opened at precise moments on the predetermined stage, containing messages that conjure up formidable monsters to be vanquished. Within the lines of these letters lie new truths, but each truth exists in a separate

universe, capable of shifting and assuming countless forms and meanings. For instance, in a post-apocalyptic universe, random killing might be deemed a survival necessity, whereas in today's world, murder is universally recognized as a criminal act that demands immediate punishment. In this chaotic world, even privileged notions undergo a reversal. Good becomes evil, and evil becomes good, as dualities repeatedly swap places. Remember Hamlet's famous lines:

> HAMLET Denmark's a prison.
> ROSENCRANTZ Then is the world one.
> HAMLET A goodly one, in which there are many confines, wards, and dungeons; Denmark being one o'th'worst.
> ROSENCRANTZ We think not so my lord.
> HAMLET Why then 'tis none to you, for there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so. To me it is a prison. (II, ii, 234-240)

Shakespeare might be right when he says that this world and all its organisations and leaders confine their subjects in a prison. Hamlet's intricate power struggles in the Danish court and today's global political arena build prisons for societies. In those prisons, subjects are purged, redefined, manipulated and lastly consumed at a supper. Indeed, an undeniable truth remains that no individual on this planet can elude the relentless grip of power. Regardless of one's station in life, power exerts its influence, leaving none untouched by its sway. From the mightiest leaders to the humblest citizens, the whip of power cracks across all realms of society. It knows no boundaries, sparing no soul from its reach. It is an omnipresent force, weaving its intricate web, entangling the lives of all who reside within its grey domain. Power's sway is all-encompassing, a constant reminder of the inherent vulnerability of humanity in the face of its relentless pursuit. Thus, in this intricate dance of power, let alone superpowers like the U.S. and England, every individual becomes entwined, compelled to navigate its treacherous currents, forever subject to its lashes.

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