

## Concepts of Life and Death in Shakespeare's 'Hamlet'

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**Abstract.** No Dane of flesh and bone has been written so devoutly about as Hamlet, which is why he has lived the fate of only a few literary heroes who exist independently of texts and theatre. The tragic hero has become a metaphor in himself, which is why I will attempt to read and interpret *Hamlet* through the prism of conceptual metaphor theory. My prime interest will be invested in metaphorical representations of life and death perceived as target domains in the process of mapping. It is preoccupation with these abstract notions that gives somber color to the play, defines its mood of nihilism and disillusionment. *Hamlet* is the play with a high number of references to life, death, the afterlife, and human purpose so that metaphorical linguistic expressions that deal with these themes become corpus for the analysis in this paper. Conceptual metaphor analysis will reveal profound meanings of the selected lines, which are to be found beneath the level of language and syntax, in the sphere where conceptualization of the abstract occurs. Conceptual metaphor analysis may also help us get closer to Shakespeare the man since his unlimited consciousness is, at least to some extent, translated into Hamlet.

**Keywords:** *Hamlet*; Conceptual Metaphor; Metaphorical Linguistic Expression; Life; Death; Target Domain.

### [es] Conceptos de vida y muerte en 'Hamlet' de Shakespeare

**Resumen.** Ningún danés de carne y hueso ha sido escrito con tanta devoción como Hamlet, por eso ha vivido el destino de unos pocos héroes literarios que existen independientemente de los textos y el teatro. Esto significa que el héroe trágico se ha convertido en una metáfora en sí mismo. En este trabajo, intentaré leer e interpretar a Hamlet a través del prisma de la teoría de la metáfora conceptual, donde mi principal interés estará invertido en representaciones metafóricas de la vida y la muerte percibidas como dominios meta en el proceso de mapeo. Es la preocupación por estas nociones abstractas lo que le da un color sombrío a la obra, lo que define su estado de ánimo de nihilismo y desilusión con el mundo. *Hamlet* es una obra de teatro con un alto número de referencias a la vida, la muerte, el más allá y el propósito humano, por lo que las expresiones lingüísticas metafóricas que tratan estos temas se convierten en el corpus para el análisis en este artículo. El análisis de la metáfora conceptual revelará el significado profundo de la obra que se encuentra debajo del nivel del lenguaje y la sintaxis, donde ocurre la conceptualización de lo abstracto. El análisis de la metáfora conceptual también puede ayudarnos a acercarnos más a Shakespeare en sí, ya que su conciencia ilimitada está, al menos en cierta medida, trasladada a Hamlet.

**Palabras clave:** *Hamlet*; metáfora conceptual; expresión lingüística metafórica; vida; muerte; dominio meta.

**Summary.** 1. Introduction. 2. Conceptual metaphor analysis – life and death as target domains in *Hamlet*. 3. Conclusions of Conceptual metaphor analysis in *Hamlet*. 4. Written sources and bibliographical references.

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### 1. Introduction

Hamlet is an example par excellence of a fully rounded dramatic characterisation. His possession of the depth of interiority and consciousness of subjectivity are manifested in numerous soliloquies where he contemplates life, death, human purpose, and the afterlife. Shake-

speare excessively thinks about these abstract notions in *Hamlet*. He tries to grasp and understand them through immense mental and cognitive activities, the result of which is the dramatic text ridden with symbols and metaphorical representations of the abstract. Metaphorical linguistic expressions that talk about life, death, and human purpose are numerous, which makes these ab-

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stract ideas the core of the play's contemplative dimension. This calls for an in-depth analysis of metaphorical representations of life, death, the afterlife, and human purpose, the significance of which has become obvious to literary scholars. They no longer focus on the syntax, structure of the plot, or theatrical devices to comprehend characters and events in the play. Cognitive science has gained a strong appeal among literary scholars recently, not only because it enables a proper comprehension of psychologically complex characters and philosophically profound themes, but also because it "restores literary study to the prestige and authority it has lost in recent times"<sup>2</sup>.

Ever since Lakoff and Johnson published their epochal work *Metaphors We Live By*, literary scholars have become concerned with how individual authors use metaphor in their work, with how they develop metaphorical patterns as part of their perception and style. In recent years, literary scholars are becoming more and more influenced by conceptual metaphor theory, and they have started to treat conceptual metaphor as a representation of an author's world view. In this sense, metaphor ceased to be a mere property of style and ornamental language, and it has come to be perceived as a primary tool for understanding the world and man within that world. "Metaphor is a tool so ordinary that we use it unconsciously and automatically, with so little effort that we hardly notice it"<sup>3</sup>. It is precisely thanks to metaphor that great poets can speak to us. Writers and poets use the same mode of thinking as we all do, but imagination and creativity allow them to make use of conventional metaphors by extending, elaborating, questioning, and combining them<sup>4</sup>.

Margaret Freeman, for example, argued that Emily Dickinson's poetry is dominated by LIFE IS A VOYAGE IN SPACE conceptual metaphor, which was out of line with dominant metaphors normally used for conceptualizing life<sup>5</sup>. As another example of metaphor analysis approach to literature, Crisp argued that the usage of image metaphors was the main characteristic of Imagist poetry that we recognize in Ezra Pound and T. E. Hulme<sup>6</sup>. Lodge described the transition of Virginia Woolf's novels towards experimentation and modernism as a transition from a metonymic to a metaphoric style<sup>7</sup>. Freeman<sup>8</sup> noticed that Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is pervaded by metaphorical linguistic expressions that draw on the source domains PATHS and CONTAINERS. It is his work that inspires

this research given the fact that LIFE and DEATH represent recurrent target domains in *Hamlet*. Attempts at comprehending and explaining these abstractions lead towards the creation of soliloquies and dialogues of enormous psychological and philosophical strength. Metaphorical linguistic expressions that are to be analyzed from the stance of conceptual metaphor theory are extracted from the play based on the criterion of the theme that they address. In this case, I will identify and compile the lines that tackle questions of life, death, the afterlife, and human purpose since it is hypothesized that conceptualization of these abstract notions determines characters, the plot and general atmosphere.

In the course of analysis, the phrases given in small caps<sup>9</sup> will mean that the wording exactly like this is not to be found in *Hamlet*. These are conceptual metaphors that represent basic modes of thought, which serve as a unique sort of foundation upon which more complex and profound meanings are manifested. This means that we try to understand LIFE in terms of another less complex, physical, and delineated concept such as JOURNEY. In Kövecses<sup>10</sup>, we learn that the concept that we try to understand (in this particular case LIFE) is called "the target domain", and the concept closer to our experiential basis that we use with the purpose of understanding the abstract notion in question (in this case JOURNEY) is called "the source domain". The process of mapping that goes on between the source and target domains is rather easy to understand here. LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor is employed by all of us, and all the time. On daily bases we hear linguistic expressions such as *the baby is on the way, we go ahead with our plans, we get sidetracked, we do things in a roundabout way, and we work our ways around obstacles*<sup>11</sup>. These metaphors come from ordinary language, and we experience no difficulties in using or understanding them in our interlocutor's discourse. However, the majority of Macbeth's ambition is built upon JOURNEY or PATH conceptual metaphor. According to Semino & Steen, metaphorical linguistic expressions found in literature are more creative, novel, original, striking, rich, complex, and thus more difficult to immediately detect, which is why their analysis entails time and effort<sup>12</sup>.

In inspecting metaphorical linguistic expressions in *Macbeth* and in identifying conceptual metaphors upon which they are manifested, Donald Freeman noticed that PATH and CONTAINER source domains build the dramatic language of *Macbeth* from the beginning to the end<sup>13</sup>. Metaphors based on CONTAINER as the source domain demonstrate the truth about human nature through the characters of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, which brings into focus humoral theory of the time. On the other hand, PATH as a source domain in metaphors isolated from the play puts emphasis on Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's ambition to become king and queen of Scotland, and it

<sup>2</sup> Edward Pechter, "Character Criticism, the cognitive turn, and the problem of Shakespeare studies", *Shakespeare Studies* 42 (2014): 196-229.

<sup>3</sup> George Lakoff and Mark Turner, *More Than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 11.

<sup>4</sup> Extending, Elaboration, Questioning, and Combining of conceptual metaphors are found in Zoltan Kövecses, *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> Elena Semino and Gerard Steen, "Metaphor in Literature", in *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*, ed. R. W. Gibbs Jr. (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 232-246.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Crisp, "Imagism's Metaphor: A Test Case", *Language and Literature* 5 (1996): 79-92.

<sup>7</sup> Semino and Steen, "Metaphor in Literature", 232-246.

<sup>8</sup> Donald Freeman, "Catching the Nearest Way: Macbeth and Cognitive Metaphor", *Journal of Pragmatics* 24, no. 6 (1995): 689-708.

<sup>9</sup> LIFE IS A JOURNEY, for example.

<sup>10</sup> Zoltan Kövecses, *Metaphors of Anger, Pride, and Love: a lexical approach to the structure of concepts* (Amsterdam: J. Benjamins Pub. Co, 1986), 6.

<sup>11</sup> Lakoff and Turner, *More Than Cool Reason*, 3.

<sup>12</sup> Semino and Steen, "Metaphor in Literature", 233.

<sup>13</sup> Freeman, "Catching the Nearest Way", 689.

gives prominence to the imperial theme. Freeman's rather successful attempt at reading *Macbeth* from the perspective of cognitive science and conceptual metaphor theory has served as inspiration for this paper, in which I will focus on the target domains that seem to represent the cognitive and contemplative core of *Hamlet*.

Greenblatt also talks about Shakespeare's obsession with death and the afterlife that we notice in the play. He believes that to some extent it can be traced back to personal experiences of sadness because metaphorical linguistic expressions about life, death, the afterlife, and human purpose seem to have emerged from personal loss, grief, and disillusion by realities of life<sup>14</sup>. Sometime in 1596, Shakespeare's only son, Hamnet, died. When this great poet was fourteen years old, his seven-year-old sister Anne died as well. In Shakespeare's time, death was a familiar experience, and it did not happen out of sight; it happened all the time, and in everyone's home. In his article "The Death of Hamnet and the Making of Hamlet", Greenblatt also says that, unlike Ben Johnson for example, Shakespeare did not write elegies that would give relief to feelings of sorrow over death of children and the innocent<sup>15</sup>. Frequent exposure to the sight of death in the era of extremely high mortality rates must have given rise to emotions of sadness and episodes of depression, and to a specific feeling of universal injustice where man is seen as powerless in front of the grand designs of life and death. Metaphorical linguistic expressions in *Hamlet* that discuss life, death, the afterlife, and human purpose undoubtedly show that Shakespeare perfected means to represent inwardness that was ripening inside of him over a period of time.

## 2. Conceptual metaphor analysis – life & death as target domains in *Hamlet*

Hamlet is an existentialist, a pessimist, and a nihilist. He is weary of life and he longs for death. He meditates on suicide and realizes that it is fear which prevents the action, not a sacred duty or a profound religious feeling. Contemplating human purpose, death, life, and the possibility of afterlife is an immediate cause of inaction for Hamlet.

To be, or not to be, that is the question:  
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles  
And by opposing end them. To die—to sleep,  
No more; and by a sleep to say we end  
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks  
That flesh is heir to: 'tis a consummation  
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep;  
To sleep, perchance to dream—ay, there's the rub:  
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,  
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,  
Must give us pause—there's the respect

That makes calamity of so long life.  
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,  
Th'oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,  
The pangs of dispriz'd love, the law's delay,  
The insolence of office, and the spurns  
That patient merit of th'unworthy takes,  
When he himself might his quietus make  
With a bare bodkin? Who would fardels bear,  
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,  
But that the dread of something after death,  
The undiscover'd country, from whose bourn  
No traveller returns, puzzles the will,  
And makes us rather bear those ills we have  
Than fly to others that we know not of?  
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,  
And thus the native hue of resolution  
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,  
And enterprises of great pitch and moment  
With this regard their currents turn awry  
And lose the name of action.  
(*Hamlet*, III, 1, 55-87)

The soliloquy form act three scene one is among the most famous passages in Western literature. It delivers a myth of presence through the question, "to be, or not to be". Real presence and absence are often addressed in Shakespeare's tragedies, but they reach meditative culmination in *Hamlet*. Critics have offered countless explanations for these lines, most often reaching the conclusion that Hamlet is contemplating suicide. To continue to exist is only passively to bear misfortunes and troubles of life. If we decide to be more active, it will ironically lead into self-annihilation. The conceptual metaphor that builds the meaning and justifies this interpretation is LIVING IS EXISTENCE and DEATH IS NON-EXISTENCE. The verb *to be* refers to being, to existence, and thus to life. When we negate this verb, it refers to not being, to non-existence, and therefore to death. We see this as an elaboration of a more basic conceptual metaphor BEING ALIVE IS BEING HERE<sup>16</sup>.

Hamlet sees suicide as noble resistance which will not end life's problems by solving them. Instead, we can be dignified in choosing not to exist and not to face troubles of life any more. In FORTUNE IS OPPONENT metaphor, fortune uses slings and arrows as weapons to hurt us, to inflict wounds, cause pain, and ultimately kill us. Fortune is a cruel opponent because it is much more powerful than we are, has weapons while we stand in front of it bare-chested, left to its mercy and whims. The fight against this opponent is an attempt to be in charge of our own destiny, to regain control over determinism, which is a pointless and disheartening struggle in Hamlet's view. In terms of metaphorical mapping, winning is succeeding in maintaining control over our own lives and circumstances in which we find ourselves. It is foolish of man to hope for victory against fortune because the opponent surpasses human capacities. Losing to the opponent is getting into a state where we have no con-

<sup>14</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, "The Death of Hamnet and the Making of Hamlet", *The New York Review*, October 21, 2004 Issue.

<sup>15</sup> Greenblatt, "The Death of Hamnet...".

<sup>16</sup> *International Encyclopaedia of Linguistics*, s.v. "Metaphor and Semantics" by George Lakoff.

trol over life and events in it<sup>17</sup>. In this soliloquy, Hamlet is more melancholic and nihilistic than ever because he has gained a deeper understanding of life through personal misfortune. Suicide seemed like a dignified way to end an unfair battle, to surrender without losing, but further brooding over the subject made Hamlet change his mind. In the end, he concluded that the only possible response to the power of fortune is to act like a stoic. This assumes enduring familiar misfortunes in a dignified way – oppressor’s wrong, pangs of despised love, the law’s delay, the insolence of office to name a few.

“To be, or not to be” is one of the most impersonal soliloquies in Hamlet’s discourse. “Not once does he say ‘I’ in his speech, and his words turn into philosophical meditation”<sup>18</sup>. The lack of personal perspective is noticed by Bloom<sup>19</sup> as well. Hamlet does not mention his murdered father, his murderous uncle, and his adulterous mother, in which he demonstrates that he is not a traditional avenger. He is a Renaissance philosopher who tries to understand bleak truths of existence and make peace with them through comprehension.

Another instantly obvious conceptual metaphor is DEATH IS SLEEP. This metaphor directly connects death to rest, with corpse corresponding to the body of a sleeper<sup>20</sup>. If we want to expand this conceptual metaphor, then we can say that experience of the soul after death corresponds to our mental experience while we dream<sup>21</sup>. Hiding some aspects of source and target domains in the process of mapping while emphasizing others is obvious in DEATH IS SLEEP metaphor. While from sleep we wake up, death is a particular sort of sleep from which we never awake. It is rather easy, meditates Hamlet, to end the suffering of life by simply going to a never-ending sleep. For a moment, he seems to have found a solution to end troubles of life. The only thing it takes is “a bare bodkin” (III, 1, 75) and death starts to sound like something that we should welcome. His outlook takes a sudden shift because Hamlet realizes that “there’s the rub” (III, 1, 64) in the solution he has devised. Suicide does not seem so appealing once we remember that death is unfamiliar and mysterious. The shift in outlook happens because Hamlet suddenly becomes aware of the hidden aspects in the target domain that do not participate in the mapping process because they are inconsistent with the metaphor. It was comforting to think that you could end the misery of humanity by seeing death through the prism of sleep. The question - what dreams in death may look like - is somewhat disturbing, and it clearly differentiates sleep from death. The appropriateness of conceptual metaphor DEATH IS SLEEP is brought under scrutiny. Maybe in the sleep of death there are no dreams at all since dreams come from our daily experiences of colors, sounds, and images, all of which disappear in non-existence.

Another option is that dreams in the sleep of death may acquire the shape of nightmares, which is something the ghost already hints at when he says that he could tell a tale about the afterlife “whose lightest word would harrow up thy soul” (I, 4, 15-16). The fact that we do not know what happens after death makes Hamlet think twice about suicide. After inspecting the domains of sleep and death, Hamlet’s speech begins to suggest that suicide may be a counterintuitive act.

The familiarity of sleep and mystery of death bring into focus the afterlife and final judgement, the aspects neglected in the soothing conceptual metaphor DEATH IS SLEEP. The new outlook that the monologue takes is a direct result of fear that the unknown and unfamiliar evoke in human nature. The conclusion that Hamlet reaches is that people tolerate calamities in this world because what comes in the afterlife may be even worse and more intolerable. When Hamlet says that “conscience does make cowards of us all” (III, 1, 83), by conscience he means rational thinking which all human beings are capable of, and which causes anxieties about the unknown and afterlife.

Metaphors are ways of seeing not only into things and concepts, but also into creative human consciousness and how it works. “To be, or not to be” is created by hero’s relying on sleep and dreams to contemplate death and suicide. In musing on how fearful dreaming in death may be, Hamlet questions the appropriateness of DEATH IS SLEEP metaphor. He eventually opts for life and reconciliation with the circumstances over suicide in moments of despair. Dying as the act of shuffling off “mortal coil” (III, 1, 67) is one of the best-known uses of LIFE IS BONDAGE metaphor. Mortal coil represents bonds that tie the soul to the body, and shuffling off the coil is setting yourself free from earthly imprisonment through death or suicide. LIFE IS BURDEN is in accordance with LIFE IS BONDAGE in tone and mood. Both metaphors make death appear desirable since life is too difficult to bear. These two metaphors explain how we came to perceive death as a positive thing via conceptual metaphor DEATH IS DELIVERANCE. We recognize LIFE IS BURDEN metaphor when Hamlet talks about “fardels” that we bear while we “grunt and sweat under a weary life” (III, 1, 76-77). He also refers to “ills” of this world, to “whips and scorns of time” (III, 1, 70) as something that we can only quietly tolerate as conditions inherent to human existence. LIFE IS BURDEN is coherent with LIFE IS A JOURNEY. If we are supposed to carry a heavy burden throughout the journey of our life, then the longer we live, the more we suffer and toil. Problems and troubles in life are seen as burdens that weigh us down, which is why our progress on the journey of life is slow and difficult. We can expand this conceptual metaphor to introduce family and friends into the mapping process, and we will understand them as support without which it would be impossible to carry the burden on our own<sup>22</sup>.

LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor is superimposed to DEATH IS DEPARTURE. In the famous monologue, Hamlet refers to death as “the undiscover’d country” (III, 1, 79) from

<sup>17</sup> Mapping process in OPPONENT conceptual metaphor explained in Kovecses, *Metaphors of anger...*, 22-23.

<sup>18</sup> Michael Davies, *Hamlet: Character Studies* (London: Continuum, 2008), 60.

<sup>19</sup> Harold Bloom, *Bloom’s Shakespeare Through the Ages: Hamlet* (New York: Bloom’s Literary Criticism, 2008), 28.

<sup>20</sup> Lakoff and Turner, “More Than Cool Reason”, 18.

<sup>21</sup> Lakoff and Turner, 19.

<sup>22</sup> Lakoff and Turner, 24-25.



which travelers do not return. There is a set of correspondences that characterize LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor. The traveler is the person who lives the life. The purposes that a person has in life are his or her destinations. The moment when we are born is when we begin our journey, and it finishes once we die<sup>23</sup>. DEATH IS DEPARTURE metaphor facilitates understanding death as a particular kind of departure, a one-way kind. Again, being aware of the difference between journeys, departures, and death makes us less resolute to see suicide as a way of putting end to calamities of this world. The lack of knowledge in terms of what happens after death, or where the soul goes after we “shuffle off this mortal coil”, makes room for conceptualizing death as some undiscovered region. We cannot learn anything about this place until we see and visit it for ourselves, which fits the spirit of Elizabethan era of discoveries. European explorers set foot on previously unknown land, they established new trading routes, and crossed the borders of what was safe, familiar, and known. Still, people or their accounts made it back to England where knowledge and new insights were shared, doubt and fear removed. This led to the shrinking of unexplored lands on the world map at the time. In this atmosphere of accumulating knowledge and expanding borders of the familiar, it seems appropriate that Hamlet would compare and contrast risky and adventurous journeys in the physical world to obscure and transcendental journeys of the soul. However, contemplating death in this way is contrary to Hamlet’s own experience. The ghost, whom Hamlet saw and communicated with, is the traveler who has returned from the land of the dead, and this break from the things we normally expect and know about dying accounts for the bizarre in the play. From what the text tells us, our after-death experience depends on the manner of our departure from this world, as we can learn from the lines that follow.

Thus was I, sleeping, by a brother’s hand  
Of life, of crown, of queen at once dispatched,  
Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin,  
Unhousell’d, disappointed, unaneled;  
No reckoning made, but sent to my account  
With all my imperfections on my head.  
(*Hamlet*, I, 5, 74-79)

Shakespeare was not a theologian, but a psychologist and a philosopher. He may be referring to certain Christian doctrines regarding sin and punishment in the afterlife for offenses committed in this life, but this is not the main point of the lines. In almost any theology, the souls of the damned are damned by their own choice to go on with a particular frustrated desire. The ghost of Hamlet’s father is sad but also hungry, and so are the ghosts in Dante’s *Inferno*. “They are all hungry for the life they once had, and when they left this world, their desires were still not entirely satisfied”<sup>24</sup>.

In PEOPLE ARE PLANTS metaphor, gradual withering corresponds to old age. Death is conceptualized as harvest, and it brings to mind the image of a reaper. Reaper, as an agent who takes life, may refer to a murderer who executes a swift and violent death. A murder represented through PEOPLE ARE PLANTS metaphor stresses the interruption of a natural cycle of going through stages from seeds and young sprouts towards blossoming, withering, and harvesting. The ghost itself refers to the assassination of the former king as “most unnatural” and “strange” (I, 5, 24, 26). In accordance with this conceptual metaphor is also the correspondence between fertile soil that feeds the plant and the world of hedonism that feeds man. If one indulges in food, drinking, and other pleasures of the flesh, his sins will blossom like a flower full of nutrients and juices that the plant slurps from the ground. “Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin” (I, 5, 76) is not a simple metaphor. The ghost of Hamlet’s father does not only indicate that his sins were at their most developed and untreated condition at the time of his violent death, but we also learn that humans are sinful, and that nature itself constitutes a condition of sin. According to Luther, as long as we live in this world, we will inevitably have to sin<sup>25</sup>. That is why the ghost refers to “foul crimes” committed in his “days of nature”. The concept of inherent sinfulness is also recognized in the Christ’s sacrifice on the cross for the salvation of humanity<sup>26</sup>. However, the apparition is roaming the earth not only because of unrepentant sins, but also because of rage, bitterness, and immense sadness over injustice inflicted against the crowned head. Apparently, king Hamlet was not ready to part with his earthly life that he enjoyed due to his position and status, his queen’s love, and easiness with which he used to bridge the gap between desire and satisfaction. His imperial ego is now left only with desires, and the ghost who wanders between the worlds is stripped of all means to satisfy them. We understand the depth of the ghost’s rage as being cut off from life by a reaper in the form of his “incestuous” brother “with traitorous gifts” (I, 5, 42, 43). The former king needs to make peace with the fact that he will never again feel the omnipotence of desire, which is a state short of his status and rank. Only Hamlet can quench the thirst of the ghost to a certain extent by seeking revenge since the anger of the ghost stems from the fact that his murderer enjoys his favorable earthly life.

Hamlet answers that he will seek revenge “with wings as swift as meditation or the thoughts of love” (I, 5, 27-28). He pledges that he will execute revenge with highest urgency by relying on a basic conceptual metaphor TIME MOVES, or more precisely TIME FLIES. The swiftness of his bloody act will only match the swiftness of meditation or thoughts of love, which is a metaphor in itself strange enough. The selected source domains are paradoxical given the fact that THOUGHT and EMOTION are supposed to explain the necessity for fast retribution. Meditation and love do not only refer to rapidity, but they also intensify “the soul’s passionate longing for

<sup>23</sup> Lakoff and Turner, 11.

<sup>24</sup> Norman Austin, *Meaning and Being in Myth* (USA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989), 163.

<sup>25</sup> Austin, *Meaning and Being in Myth*, 163.

<sup>26</sup> Charles Hassel Jr., *Shakespeare’s Religious Language: A Dictionary* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 322.

God or for the beloved”<sup>27</sup>. Hamlet’s metaphor is strange because it introduces “subjective resistance into the desired immediacy”<sup>28</sup>.

After all, meditation and love are inward experiences. They are prolonged, extended, and quite removed from murderous actions that they are seeking to evoke<sup>29</sup>. Bloom also commentates on this metaphor as revelatory of Hamlet’s character of a lover and scholar, who is most likely to delay in performing the brutal task entrusted to him<sup>30</sup>.

Claudius has spoiled the holy act of crossing over for the former king. Old king Hamlet was “sent to his account” (I, 5, 78) before he was prepared for the final judgement, and unwilling to part with his life. In DEATH IS DEPARTURE metaphor, we go to our account at the end of life’s journey as part of the final destination design that we learn to accept and prepare for towards the end of life. This refers to circumstances when death comes due to natural causes. If we are sent to our account mid-through life’s journey, if we skip many destinations that are our purposes, and if we find ourselves at the point of departure before we are supposed to reach it, the metaphor does no longer refer to death, but to murder. When the ghost says that the murderer sent him to final account “with all my imperfections on my head” (I, 5, 79), we understand that crossing over has been exceptionally difficult for old king Hamlet because of the conceptual metaphor SIN IS BURDEN. Troubles, problems, and suffering weigh us down on the journey in life, and sins burden us on our journey in the afterlife. The ghost relies on PEOPLE ARE PLANTS (to be cut off from life) and DEATH IS DEPARTURE (to be sent to final account) to reveal that Hamlet’s father was deprived of life, crown, and his queen in the act of a gruesome murder that Claudius tried to masquerade as natural and inevitable death. This could be qualified as one of the main concerns of the play – what things seem to be, and what they actually are. Queen Gertrude observes that Hamlet’s father’s death “seems” so particular to him, to which Hamlet objects, “Seems, madam! nay, it is” (I, 2, 76).

But you must know, your father lost a father;  
That father lost, lost his; and the survivor bound,  
In filial obligation, for some term  
To do obsequious sorrow  
(*Hamlet*, I, 2, 89-92)

Even though *Hamlet* is a play about death, how to conceptualize it, accept it, and deal with it, it is more specifically a play about the death of a father and king. To lose a father because he loses his life is a perception of things in which we can identify LIFE IS A PRECIOUS POSSESSION metaphor. Death is understood as the loss of a precious possession - we lose life, and we lose the person we love. When Claudius points out that sons have lost their fathers to death since the beginning of time,

he is trying to hide regicide and fratricide behind natural order of things such as passing away and generations succeeding one another. He assigns all the agency to inevitable and natural death, and distances himself from the action in which king Hamlet’s life was taken. Claudius assigned something as unnatural as killing a king, a father, and a brother to something as natural and common in theme as death of fathers and mourning of their sons. Disguising a murder as natural death would make his crime almost a perfect one had it not been for the ghost who rebelled against this villainy from beyond the grave. In Renaissance, there was a widespread belief that kings were anointed by god. Any attempt to jeopardize the life of an anointed king was perceived as a direct opposition to god’s will, and it usually led to chaos in all spheres of political and social life. Claudius is a weak individual and a weak king. When compared to his virtuous brother, he is like a satyr to Hyperion. He has committed the most heinous of all crimes – he has killed a lawful and good king, and his own brother. We are immediately aware that nothing good may come out of what qualifies as a fratricide and regicide at the same time. The bloodshed at the end of the play and the arrival of a foreign ruler can be said to match the gravity of the offence. Horatio foresaw this utter disaster when he made comparisons between the armed ghost of the dead king and the death of Julius Caesar.

In the most high and palmy state of Rome,  
A little ere the mightiest Julius fell,  
The graves stood tenantless, and the sheeted dead  
Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets:  
As, stars with trains of fire, and dews of blood,  
Disasters in the sun; and the moist star,  
Upon whose influence Neptune’s empire stands,  
Was sick almost to doomsday with eclipse.  
(*Hamlet*, I, 1, 114-121)

The scenario from Rome can easily be translated to Denmark, according to Horatio, because the apparition of the former king of Denmark in his armor “bodes some strange eruption in our state” (I, 1, 69). Regicide disturbs natural order because everything in this world stands in the relation of mutual interconnectedness. The microcosm of man corresponds to the organization of a state, which again corresponds to the organization of the universe<sup>31</sup>. The position that the sun has in the universe is the position that the king holds within a state. From this cosmology, dominated by the idea of order and interconnectedness, we understand the importance of a monarch in preserving order and stability. Killing a king disrupts the order established by god, and results in unnatural events among people, in nature, and in the universe<sup>32</sup>.

Shakespeare uses strong imagery to create the atmosphere of suspense and horror that will match the gravity of man disturbing natural order. When Horatio says that

<sup>27</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001), 295.

<sup>28</sup> Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory*, 295.

<sup>29</sup> Greenblatt, 295.

<sup>30</sup> Bloom, *Bloom’s Shakespeare...*, 8.

<sup>31</sup> Veselin Kostic, *Šekspirov život i svet* (Beograd: Naučna Knjiga, 1978); Eustice M. W. Tylliard, *The Elizabethan World Picture* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1944).

<sup>32</sup> Tylliard, *The Elizabethan World Picture*.

graves were tenantless in Rome, without mentioning the word house, we understand graves as final resting places in which bodies dwell for eternity. Lakoff and Turner refer to this imagery<sup>33</sup>, which leads towards comprehending the dead as tenants who leave their eternal houses and create horror images of corpses and ghosts wandering around the city. In *Hamlet*, the speech of Horatio serves the purpose to signal the cause for anxiety over the general condition of the nation. By starting *in medias res*, this speech indicates the unsettled state of Denmark. Old king Hamlet is dead, and threats come from a young and aggressive Norwegian prince Fortinbras. The mentioning of the dead leaving their eternal houses in the state of Rome prepares for the most significant encounter in the play – the one between Hamlet and the ghost of his father.

Why thy canonized bones, hearsed in death,  
Have burst their cerements; why the sepulcher,  
Wherein we saw thee quietly interred,  
Hath oped his ponderous and marble jaws  
To cast thee up again.  
(*Hamlet*, I, 4, 50-55)

There are many possible final locations for our body and the soul, which makes conceptual metaphor DEATH IS GOING TO A FINAL DESTINATION an exceptionally rich one due to the power of options. This refers to the options that we have when it comes to selecting the details that we want to include in the mapping process between source and target domains<sup>34</sup>. In this particular metaphorical expression, there is reference to circular arrangement of things, with our journey ending exactly where it started. We literary come from our mother's womb and we come from earth<sup>35</sup>. Dying is going back into the womb of the earth. Symbolically, this is the grand return to the place from which we originate. Old king Hamlet did not go to his final resting place to complete the circle of life because his death did not come as a logical sequence of life events. It was untimely and unnatural, and the idea here is that death devoured him while he was off guard. This helps us picture the assassinated king's grave as a monster with marble jaws, from whose womb he has been cast up to become the messenger of crime and seek justice.

In order to understand why Hamlet hesitates in fulfilling the ghost's request, we also need to understand the concept of the apparition that emerges at the very beginning of the play. According to Frye<sup>36</sup>, protestants accepted the existence of three worlds: the earth where we live our present lives, and after death there were only heaven and hell. Protestants generally agreed that departed humans could not return to earth from heaven or hell, and they generally agreed that there was no such a place as purgatory<sup>37</sup>. Basic protestant doctrine did not accept the possibility of "legitimate ghosts". On the oth-

er hand, Catholics believed that any ghost could be a devil in disguise who came from hell to cause destruction on earth. The belief in the existence of purgatory, as intermediate state between this world and the afterlife, could conceive ghosts coming back in Catholicism, and it was possible to grant them some legitimacy<sup>38</sup>.

I am thy father's spirit;  
Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night,  
And for the day confined to fast in fires,  
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature  
Are burnt and purged away. But that I am forbid  
To tell thee the secrets of my prison-house.  
(*Hamlet*, I, 4, 9-14)

Of what substance or nature is the ghost? Is it trustworthy? The play asks numerous questions about the origin of our knowledge, and most importantly about death and the afterlife<sup>39</sup>. Skepticism is a thread that goes through numerous Shakespeare's plays, with *Hamlet* being one of the most striking examples of this. The bard was caught up in the period of religious upheaval in which the Protestant Reformation challenged Catholicism so that the source of divine authority was very much doubted<sup>40</sup>. This doubt is recognized in *Hamlet*, who is torn between relying on what he has learnt about god's ways and depending on church dogma. The flames mentioned as the ghost reveals itself to Hamlet are not the flames of eternal torment in hell. Their purpose is to render through punishment for earthly sins. The ordeal that the ghost is going through is a temporary state, not a permanent one, and this is what differentiates purgatory from hell. Therefore, the best interpretation of the apparition is that it is a Catholic spirit to whom a temporary release from purgatory was granted<sup>41</sup>. The ghost insinuates to Hamlet that it has come from a realm similar to Catholic purgatory because it is unreconciled with its current situation. It craves justice for the unnatural crime that old king Hamlet suffered in life, and also because his murderer deprived him of proper departure that would make crossing to the other side less traumatic. The experiences of the ghost in the afterlife are based on conceptual metaphors DEATH IS A JOURNEY and DEATH IS DEPARTURE. This departure apparently has a direction. The ghost *descends* into purgatory, which is something we know by means of Hamlet's observation that the ghost was cast "up" again, among the living. This means that he currently dwells in the area that is closer to hell than to heaven. The knowledge about the ghost's current stage on his journey in the afterlife is also verified when Hamlet refers to him as an "old mole" (I, 5, 160), and "this fellow in the cellarage" (I, 5, 151).

A person who dies embarks on a journey, which refers to experiences of the soul in the afterlife. The final destination of the journey varies among different religious traditions, but Christians see heaven as the final

<sup>33</sup> Lakoff & Turner, *More than Cool Reason*, 7.

<sup>34</sup> Lakoff & Turner, 64.

<sup>35</sup> Lakoff & Turner, 14.

<sup>36</sup> Roland M. Frye, *The Renaissance Hamlet: Issues and Responses in 1600* (New York: Princeton Legacy Library, 1984), 17.

<sup>37</sup> Frye, *The Renaissance Hamlet*..., 19.

<sup>38</sup> Frye, 19.

<sup>39</sup> Bloom, *Bloom's Shakespeare*..., 6.

<sup>40</sup> Colin McGinn, *Shakespeare's Philosophy: Discovering the Meaning Behind the Plays* (USA: Harper Collins, 2009).

<sup>41</sup> Frye, *The Renaissance Hamlet*..., 21.



destination. The power of options is not the only thing that makes DEATH IS DEPARTURE an exceptionally rich conceptual metaphor. There is also the power to structure, which can be exemplified by Greek mythology, where the ferryman Charon (or Kharon) carries the dead from the shore of the river Styx to the underworld<sup>42</sup>. In Christian tradition, the journey towards heaven is not always an easy one. Purgatory, as one of the stages on the journey towards heaven as the ultimate dwelling place, is described as a cellar. It is dark, claustrophobic, and airless.

In his dictionary of *Shakespeare's Religious Language*, Chris Hassel says that the ghost of Hamlet's father probably speaks about purgatory when he refers to his "prison-house". He also associates purgatory with Roman Catholic belief, and describes it as a place in which those who died unrepentant are cleansed of sin<sup>43</sup>. In the words of the ghost himself, purgatory is a place where he is kept against his will, tortured, and where he serves the sentence for his sins until he renders. Unreconciled with his current situation, and convinced that the ordeal of the afterlife could have been avoided had he had the chance to depart from this world properly, the ghost does not return from hell but from purgatory to tell the truth, demand justice, and to evoke horror of the supernatural that matches regicide.

As we are told in the text of the play, Hamlet was educated at Wittenberg, one of the first and most famous protestant universities that Martin Luther himself attended. In his discourse, Hamlet never refers to purgatory, only to heaven and hell, and when he refers to death as "the country from whose bourn no traveler returns" (III, 1, 78-79), he denies the ghost as a spirit who came back. Hamlet's perspective of the afterlife is that of a Protestant. The ghost, on the other hand, goes into the heart of Roman Catholic system of belief when he mentions that he was sent to his account "unhousell'd", "unaneled", and with "no reckoning made" (I, 5, 77-78). Also, the ghost clearly refers to purgatory when he says that he currently dwells in the place where his sins of earthly life are "burnt and purged away" (I, 4, 13). Horatio asks the ghost "if there be any good thing to be done, that may thee do ease" (I, 1, 132-133), and in this question he also acknowledges the ghost as part of the Catholic tradition. Mortuary endowments, indulgencies, masses, and prayers are undoubtedly parts of the Roman Catholic system of alleviating pains of the souls in purgatory. Good things done by the living could lessen the time that the souls had to spend in purgatory before passing into the bliss of heaven<sup>44</sup>. It was not possible to alleviate the pain of the souls in hell because their suffering is for eternity<sup>45</sup>.

Hamlet and the ghost conceptualize death through metaphors DEATH IS A JOURNEY, DEATH IS DEPARTURE, and DEATH IS GOING TO A FINAL DESTINATION. Because they represent different religious traditions, the ideas about stages of this journey and experiences of the soul in the

afterlife may differ. This is why Hamlet struggles to accept legitimacy of the ghost and take his words as tokens of truth. The-play-within-the-play, *The Mousetrap*, has confirmed the ghost's account of the unnatural crime, so Hamlet's hesitation is no longer sustained by the struggle to interpret the ghost. On learning more about people's nature, their appetites, and corruption in all spheres of life, Hamlet becomes disillusioned, pessimistic, and reconciled in front of fate and higher order of things. The following lines are representative of his disillusionment, and he points out how dramatically human purpose changes after death.

Alexander died, Alexander was buried,  
Alexander returneth into dust, the dust is earth:  
of earth we make loam; and why of that loam,  
whereto he was converted, might they not stop  
a beer barrel?  
Imperious Caesar, dead and turn'd to clay,  
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away:  
O, that that earth, which kept the world in awe  
Should patch a wall t'expel the winter's flaw!  
(*Hamlet*, V, 1, 182-190)

We encounter the idea of circular arrangement of things throughout the play. Thinking about life and death as of beginnings and endings that eventually meet in the same location gives rise to the general feeling of meaninglessness and nihilism. Hamlet mentions Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar, but he is at the same time thinking about his father, who was also a king, about himself who is of royal blood, and he is thinking about every man. Even if he avenges his father's death and punishes the wicked murderer, it restores no meaning into life and death.

His father will inevitably turn into dust, just like corpses of other great men will. DEATH IS GOING TO A FINAL DESTINATION metaphor is expended towards Christian tradition in the lines analyzed. God "formed the man out of the dust of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life"<sup>46</sup>. He also said to Adam, "you are dust, and to dust you shall return"<sup>47</sup>. *Hamlet* is the most insistent of all Shakespeare's plays on connecting our body to earth because disintegration returns the body to the element from which it came in the first place, which is something that queen Gertrude hints at in the lines that follow.

Do not for ever with thy vailed lids  
Seek for they noble father in the dust.  
Thy know'st 'tis common, - all that live must  
Die,  
Passing through nature to eternity.  
(*Hamlet*, I, 2, 70-73)

When Gertrude intervenes in the dialogue between Claudius and Hamlet, she suggests that LIFE IS A JOURNEY or that LIFE IS PILGRIMAGE TO HEAVEN. In this conceptual

<sup>42</sup> Lakoff and Turner, *More than Cool Reason*, 4.

<sup>43</sup> Hassel, *Shakespeare's Religious Language*, 264.

<sup>44</sup> Frye, *The Renaissance Hamlet*..., 22.

<sup>45</sup> Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory*..., 38.

<sup>46</sup> Genesis 2, 7.

<sup>47</sup> Genesis 3, 19.



metaphor, she connects life to nature, and death to eternity. The ghost does the same thing when he talks about sins that he committed in his “days of nature”, which are days of life in this earthly world. It is common knowledge that everyone has to take this path of going through nature, which is going through life, and then everyone must die and return into dust. Conceptual metaphor DEATH IS A JOURNEY means that there are some stages that the soul and body must go through in order to attain eternity in heaven, decomposition and turning into dust being some of them. The idea that the soul of the deceased reaches heaven as its final destination, and dwells into eternity at the place where everyone will meet again and rejoice, usually has soothing and comforting effects on mourners in Christian tradition. However, immortality of the soul, which reaches heaven as its final destination, does not put ease to Hamlet’s mind. He does not conceptualize heaven in terms of “God’s omnipotence, his providential agency, or his dispensing of eternal justice and mercy”<sup>48</sup>. Firstly, Hamlet is mainly focused on the matters of the flesh and corruption in moral and physical sense, which diminishes even the greatest of men. Secondly, if his father’s death were of natural causes, Hamlet would probably be able to see the comforting side of it through metaphors DEATH IS A JOURNEY, DEATH IS DEPARTURE, and DEATH IS GOING TO A FINAL DESTINATION. This means that he would be able to perceive heaven as the final destination of the soul and grave as an eternal house of the body.

Preoccupation with decadence and decay is expressed directly through the question addressed to a gravedigger, “How long will a man lie i’th’earth ere he rot?” (V, 1, 170) This is a process well established. It takes eight to nine years, and even individuals as outstanding as Julius Caesar and Alexander the Great are subject to decomposition and turning into dust, loam, and clay. The purpose of man is as basic and simple as completing the cycle in which he comes into being from dust, and he goes into non-being, into dust again. There are no exceptions in this great order of things, where social status and rank become completely insignificant. The dust into which Alexander the Great and Caesar turn into will be used in the same way as dust of any other man – to plug a hole in a beer barrel or patch up a wall. The graveyard scene, or more precisely the lines inspired by the sight of Yorick’s skull, explain Hamlet’s reluctance to undertake action as a result of nihilism and meaninglessness of our existence. Why to make grand plans and designs when the circle closes at the point where kings, beggars, lawyers, buyers of land, and courtiers are all the same, and when the whole humanity will in the end be used for the basic purpose of plugging a hole?

Yorick’s skull is probably the most famous theatric prop of all time. It has become a visual shorthand for the entire *Hamlet*<sup>49</sup>. When Hamlet and Horatio see gravediggers throwing skulls from a grave, the lightness with which they do their job spurs Hamlet’s meditation on inevitability and universality of death, in which the concept of infinity starts to sound rather hollow.

The skull triggers some profound contemplation for Hamlet. It emphasizes the fact that the brain is rotten and gone, with rational thinking and cognition entirely disappearing in hollowness. The rottenness and decay that Hamlet refers to in relation to human body after death are literal representations of inner psychological and cognitive corruption<sup>50</sup>. The previous focus on the cognition of life and death is replaced with the focus on biological processes, such as decay and digestion, and on legal matters that define life and death<sup>51</sup>.

Hamlet marvels over the fact that even the most powerful of kings, such as Alexander the Great or Julius Caesar, eventually resemble other dead bodies and the skull in front of him<sup>52</sup>. Life, death, suicide, and the question of purpose resonate throughout this scene, and throughout the play. After thinking about these themes excessively, Hamlet has cleared his mind of illusions. In the next scene, he is not prepared only to kill but to die as well. By the end of act four scene three, Hamlet recites some of the wittiest and most morbid lines about death and human condition, most of which are at the expense of Polonius’s corpse.

Not where he eats, but where he is eaten: a certain convocation of politic worms are e’en at him.

Your worm is your only emperor for diet: we fat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for maggots: your fat king and your lean beggar is but variable service, — two dishes, but to one table: that’s the end.

(*Hamlet*, IV, 3, 21-27)

There is much talk about death in the play, and there are many dead bodies on stage. When Claudius asks Hamlet where Polonius’s corpse is, he answers simply, “At supper (IV, 3, 19)”. Food, meals, and nutrition are source domains that have been with us since the beginning of humanity. As a result, we use these source domains quite often to understand less clearly delineated and abstract concepts<sup>53</sup>. However, Hamlet does not use food and dishes that people eat to explain something that we struggle to understand by referring to taste, smell, ingredients, process of cooking, recipes, and many other elements that make up this source domain. Instead, and unconventionally enough, man is food eaten by maggots and worms. There is a feast, but not the one where man enjoys versatile meals; it is a feast where people are eaten to remind us of the end to which all flesh must come. Shakespeare relies on conceptual metaphors PEOPLE ARE FOOD and HUMAN BODIES ARE FOOD. When Hamlet says that Polonius is “At supper”, he develops a sort of word play. He plays with the metaphor around Polonius’ dead body because he wants us to think about the process of putrefaction. The lines are about biological processes of decaying, which are the same for all human bodies after death. This trivializes all the pompous concepts such as importance and higher purpose.

<sup>50</sup> Mary Crane, *Shakespeare’s Brain: Reading with Cognitive Theory* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 144.

<sup>51</sup> Crane, *Shakespeare’s Brain*..., 143.

<sup>52</sup> Bloom, *Bloom’s Shakespeare*..., 15.

<sup>53</sup> Kovecses, *A Practical Introduction*..., 21.

<sup>48</sup> Hassel, *Shakespeare’s Religious Language*..., 155.

<sup>49</sup> Davies, *Hamlet: Character Studies*..., 38.

A man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a King, and eat of the fish that hath fed on that worm.  
(*Hamlet*, IV, 3, 27-28)

Hamlet extends his views about decay and disintegration that the body is susceptible to in a mock funeral sermon to Polonius. Pythagorean metamorphosis is evoked here, and its effect is seen in the line that “a king may go a progress through the guts of a beggar”. The body goes through stages in a natural biochemical processes. A king may not only be eaten by worms, but consequently by a fish for which the worm serves as a bait. Most disturbingly, a king may be consumed by a beggar in the end. The beggar will also die, and his body will again be consumed and eaten in the natural cycle of food, with the best position in the food chain being granted to worms in “your fat king and your lean beggar is but variable service, - two dishes, but to one table” (IV, 3, 24-25).

Man dominates the *Great Chain of Being* until he dies, with his position being much more superior to that of other forms of life. However, this position dramatically changes in death, which Hamlet is perfectly aware of when he says that “we eat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for maggots” (IV, 3, 23-24).

What is he that builds stronger than either the Mason, the shipwright, or the carpenter?  
(*Hamlet*, V, 1, 43-44)  
a grave-maker: the houses that he makes lasts till doomsday.  
(*Hamlet*, V, 1, 61-63)

When the gravedigger presents the answer to his riddle, our conventional image of a grave is superimposed on our conventional image of a house. The budge of earth is the roof of the house, and the interior of the house is earth. The image of a grave is connected with death, and the image of a house is connected to returning to a place where we belong, and from which we originally come. The superimposition of these images activates connection between death and going home through DEATH IS GOING TO A FINAL DESTINATION metaphor<sup>54</sup>. Because death is inevitable and eternal, gravediggers are shown as ultimate architects whose structures resist the impact of time, natural catastrophes, and human activities. The personages of two gravediggers represent almost a clownish comedy in which their ancient task of grave making is celebrated as “Adam’s profession” (V, 1, 33). The scene at a graveyard inverts many ideas about natural and social order that we hold true during lifetime. The profession of a gravedigger seems more important and more indispensable than that of an architect, a mason, a carpenter, or a ship builder. The houses of earth and dust are great equalizers that make lawyers, politicians, courtiers, great buyers of land all look the same in the eyes of gravediggers, who will provide all the people

with identical eternal houses, regardless of their rank and profession.

Hamlet is a character who thinks thoroughly before staging an action. He is obsessed with death to an extent that he will philosophize himself out of action and into even deeper thoughtfulness, which is most obvious in the prayer scene.

Now might I do it pat, now he is praying;  
And now I’ll do it: - and so he goes to heaven;  
And so am I revenged: - that would be scann’d:  
A villain kills my father; and, for that,  
I, his sole son, do this same villain send  
To heaven.  
O, this is hire and salary, not revenge.  
He took my father grossly, full of bread;  
With all his crimes broad blown, as flush as May;  
And how his audit stands who knows save  
heaven?  
But, in our circumstance and course of thought,  
‘Tis heavy with him: and am I, then revenged,  
To take him in the purging of his soul,  
When he is fit and season’d for his passage?  
No.  
Up, sword; and know thou a more horrid hent:  
When he is drunk, asleep, or in his rage;  
Or in th’ incestuous pleasure of his bed;  
At gaming, swearing; or about some act  
That has no relish of salvation in’t;-  
Then trip him, that his heels may kick at heaven;  
And that his soul may be as damn’d and black  
As hell, whereto it goes.  
(*Hamlet*, III, 3, 73-94)

Hamlet’s decision not to enact revenge draws us into a tricky terrain when it comes to understanding this character. Samuel Johnson could not bear this speech because Hamlet is not satisfied only to take blood for blood, but he also contrives damnation for the man that he would like to punish<sup>55</sup>. De Grazia reminds that this soliloquy was often omitted in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century as too sensitive because of religious matters, and because Hamlet is a tragic hero with whom we are expected to identify in moral and ethical sense<sup>56</sup>. Some commentators from the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century, such as Hazlitt, believed that Hamlet does not truly think what he says<sup>57</sup>. It is definitely certain at this point that Hamlet does not doubt truthfulness of the ghost, nor the guilt of his uncle. External conditions are perfect as well, but Hamlet still decides to spare Claudius.

Bradley also disputes the explanation for procrastination in the prayer scene as given in the idea that Hamlet did not want to attack a defenceless man because the king would have been as defenceless behind the arras as he had been on his knees<sup>58</sup>. Conceptual metaphor analysis stands a good chance of answering the ques-

<sup>55</sup> Davies, *Hamlet: Character Studies*, 16.

<sup>56</sup> Davies, 16.

<sup>57</sup> Davies, 17.

<sup>58</sup> Andrew Cecil Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (London: McMillan, 1914), 137.

<sup>54</sup> Lakoff and Turner, *More than Cool Reason*, 8.

tion whether Hamlet is demonic, weak, or insecure in this situation. DEATH IS DEPARTURE and DEATH IS A JOURNEY are conceptual metaphors that describe death as a movement rather than a passive state. After death, our soul may go to different destinations. Experiences of the soul on the journey in the afterlife depend on how burdened with sin we were when we departed from this world. Consequently, our journey in the afterlife may be light if we travel unburdened, which means that we will reach our final destination in heaven faster and easier. On the other hand, if we carry the burden of sin on our head, or our back, it will weigh us down towards purgatory, which is a stage in the afterlife where we are supposed to get rid of the burden of sin through punishment so that we can ascend towards heaven lightly. Worst case scenario is being pulled down into hell due to burden of sin too heavy to be purged away in the fires of purgatory. Claudius is praying when Hamlet finds him off guard. If he performs his revenge right here and now, it will mean granting an easy passage to his father's wicked murderer into heaven. It is illogical and unfair that a good and virtuous king should repent his sins in the fires of purgatory, while the soul of his murderer reaches heaven through relief of sin before he parts with earthly life. In enacting revenge at this hour, Hamlet would become an agent who sends Claudius to final account when it is most suitable for his soul "black as hell" (III, 3, 92-93) to make this transition between the worlds. If we take into account understanding of death built around conceptual metaphors DEATH IS DEPARTURE and DEATH IS GOING TO A FINAL DESTINATION, then it means that Hamlet should be careful to choose the right situation and circumstances to execute revenge. Since death is not a state, but an action full of movement, we often rely on DEATH IS AN AGENT conceptual metaphor. In the process of mapping between the domains, we see death as coming to claim us, and as taking us on a journey towards the final destination.

In cases of unnatural and untimely deaths, we can say that a murderer comes to claim the life of his victim, and sends him or her away from this world to final account. Murderers determine the experiences and paths in the afterlife of their victims by selecting a particular moment at which to strip of life. The awareness that the manner and circumstances in which we leave this world determine how we will go to the next one is another thing that paralyzes Hamlet's action, and forces him to obsess over concepts of life and death. Davies recognizes Hamlet as acting like a sinister accountant, who weighs the gravity of earthly offences in relation to fates in the afterlife in cases of his father and uncle<sup>59</sup>. He mentions "hire and salary" (III, 3, 79) to explain that death at a proper moment may actually represent a reward for culprits. After inspecting the situation in which Claudius took his father's life, and the situation in which he might take his uncle's life, Hamlet immediately voices objection which ends his dilemma with a simple "No". He cannot send his father's murderer to heaven "in the purging of his soul" (III, 3, 84) because Claudius will skip purgatory as a destination on

his journey in the afterlife since he will leave this world without the burden of sin.

Hamlet thinks of Claudius as "fit and season'd for passage" (III, 3, 85), which is why he gives up on conducting revenge at this point. Conceptualization of life and death is certainly responsible for the young prince not jumping at the first chance to execute revenge. Mary Crane says that, as the play proceeds, Hamlet continues to try out various theories about the relationship between the subject and the action<sup>60</sup>. He tries to fit in his newly acquired knowledge and contemplation about death and the afterlife into the circumstances that he finds himself in so that he could take proper actions.

In this play, Shakespeare is alluding to the afterlife more often than we would expect him to. We should also bear in mind the fact that Hamlet is the only of his tragic heroes whom we do not see happy and satisfied during his life. For tragic heroes of other Shakespeare's plays, we may be fine with imagining nothing but silence after life's fever, but we definitely expect more for the one whose passionate love of righteousness and goodness only gleams through strong sentiments of melancholy and nihilism<sup>61</sup>. The expectation that Hamlet should be granted more in the afterlife than he was given in earthly life resonates at the end of the play in the words of Horatio.

Now cracks a noble heart. - good night, sweet prince;  
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!  
(*Hamlet*, V, 2, 360-361)

Poets are often creative because they combine several basic conceptual metaphors to build metaphorical linguistic expressions of great beauty and emotional power, such as the one from the closing scene in *Hamlet*. Conceptual metaphor LIFETIME IS A DAY helps us understand that good night refers to death and bidding farewell to those who have departed. DEATH IS SLEEP facilitates understanding of the image where angels sing lullabies to the deceased in order to put them into the state of permanent rest. The metaphorical linguistic expression that Horatio utters to part with his friend embodies the perfect emotion to match the poignant situation. First of all, there is a feeling of great attachment and respect for the deceased and the conviction that he or she gets to spend eternity resting peacefully in the realm beyond earthly troubles. Secondly, the person to whom tribute is paid in these words is accompanied and soothed by angels, who according to *The Great Chain of Being*<sup>62</sup> represent pure intelligence. LIFE IS A FLUID metaphor gives rise to "now cracks a noble heart" (V, 2, 358), where heart corresponds to a container and life to fluid in that container. When the container cracks, the fluid leaks out and its amount diminishes. Metaphorically, life diminishes and death corresponds to an empty container<sup>63</sup>. The amount

<sup>60</sup> Crane, *Shakespeare's Brain*, 131.

<sup>61</sup> Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, 147-148.

<sup>62</sup> Kostic, *Šekspirov život i svet*; Tylliard, *The Elizabethan World Picture*.

<sup>63</sup> Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 19.

<sup>59</sup> Davies, *Hamlet: Character Studies*, 18.



of fluid in the container that is left at any moment corresponds to the amount of life that one has at his or her disposal.

Before life completely drains out of Hamlet, he prevents Horatio from killing himself and entrusts him with a task by saying, “in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain to tell my story” (V, 2, 347-348). LIFE IS A STORY metaphor assumes that everyone’s life is structured like a tale. Entire biographical and autobiographical tradition rests on this assumption<sup>64</sup>. What Horatio is expected to do is construct a narrative of an eyewitness that will serve the ultimate purpose of revealing things as they are, not as they appear to be. The distinction between things as they are for real and what they appear to be is one of Hamlet’s main preoccupations, and he worries about this even at his deathbed. The relationship between Hamlet and Horatio was one of loyalty and trust. That is why Horatio represents a perfect narrator who will impart a coherent life story, highlighting certain parts and participants in which manner Hamlet’s name will not remain “wounded” after his death.

### 3. Conclusions of conceptual metaphor analysis in *Hamlet*

Hamlet is definitely the character who defies deductive expectations of Renaissance by being the very core of dramatic and psychological interest. His language is exceptionally rich in metaphorical representations of the abstract, which may lead us to believe that Shakespeare has invested some of his own contemplation into Hamlet. The genius of this literary character is unique, and it is manifested in metaphorical linguistic expressions that are found in his discourse. He is one of the very few literary dramatic characters who can be said to possess and manifest authorial conscience, which is not to be confused with Shakespeare’s<sup>65</sup>. If we try to study Hamlet’s character through analysing metaphorical linguistic expressions and conceptual metaphors based on which he reasons and speaks, then we will notice that Prince of Denmark and Shakespeare have intellectual brilliance in common, if nothing else. Of Shakespeare’s own inwardness, we cannot say that we learn much based on conceptual metaphor analysis and interpretation of metaphorical linguistic expressions. However, we can have some general idea about this great author’s state of the mind at the time when he was writing *Hamlet*, which contains experiences of personal grief. Shakespeare excessively thinks about death and the afterlife in *Hamlet*. He is also preoccupied with the questions of purpose and reasons behind things. Metaphorical linguistic expressions that talk about life, death, the afterlife, and our purpose in this world are numerous, which makes these abstract ideas the core of the contemplative dimension of the play. The list of conceptual metaphors that we have encountered at the root of lines analysed is quite long.

LIFE IS A JOURNEY  
 LIFE IS PILGRIMAGE TO HEAVEN  
 LIFETIME IS A DAY  
 LIFE IS A PRECIOUS POSSESSION  
 LIFE IS BONDAGE  
 LIFE IS BURDEN  
 LIFE IS BEING HERE  
 BEING ALIVE IS BEING HERE  
 PEOPLE ARE PLANTS  
 PEOPLE ARE CONTAINERS  
 PEOPLE ARE FOOD  
 DEATH IS A JOURNEY  
 DEATH IS DEPARTURE  
 DEATH IS GOING TO A FINAL DESTINATION  
 DEATH IS SLEEP  
 DEATH IS REST  
 DEATH IS NON-EXISTENCE  
 DEATH IS AGENT

The reason why there are so many conceptual metaphors for life and death is because these are rich concepts. When we try to conceptualize them, different views and aspects need to be taken into consideration. We use structures from various source domains because each of the conceptual metaphors listed gives us structure for understanding different aspects of target domains. LIFE IS A PRECIOUS POSSESSION and LIFE IS BURDEN, for example, make sense of different aspects of life. In combining, questioning, and elaborating all these metaphors, *Hamlet* represents life as a constant struggle. He also exhibits heavy sadness over so much death and corruption, which is noticed in human character, in political and social constructs. Such profound thoughts about life, death, purpose, and the afterlife as we encounter in *Hamlet* universally acknowledge Shakespeare as an unrivalled philosopher, psychologist, and a literary genius. It may even be observed that philosophy gives to Shakespeare almost as much as Shakespeare gives to philosophy, which particularly seems to be true in *Hamlet* and *King Lear*.

The expression of Shakespeare’s and Hamlet’s inwardness is probably the result of achieved spiritual maturity and developed capacity to express in words what is abstract and transcendental. Dwelling in the spheres of things abstract and transcendental is already challenging enough, but being able to put into words what is beyond our experiential barriers is where Shakespeare’s true greatness lies. Therefore, the key moment of the play is in the words that are representative of a vast contemplative activity, not in the moral dilemma of enacting revenge, or in Hamlet’s constant self-reproach for inaction.

After analyzing numerous metaphorical expressions from the play whose main concerns are questions about life, death, purpose, and the afterlife, we may be safe to claim that *Hamlet* is not a play about revenging a murdered father, or recuperating the throne and restoring justice into a usurped country. *Hamlet* is a play about soul sickness caused by the “thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to”. Metaphorical linguistic expressions from *Hamlet*, in whose base we tried to identify conceptual

<sup>64</sup> Lakoff and Johnson, 172.

<sup>65</sup> Bloom, *Bloom’s Shakespeare...*, 12-13.

metaphors, were selected with care. They are immensely important for understanding specific monologues and dialogues, but they are also important for general understanding of the play. The complexity of matters that metaphorical linguistic expressions cover, their philosophical and psychological debt acknowledge that inside Shakespeare himself there must have been something strong going on to call for such linguistic creativity<sup>66</sup>. Conceptual metaphor analysis approach explains how and why we tend to understand *Hamlet* in all its intricacy of themes and philosophical insights. All the major metaphorical linguistic expressions that are embodiments of Shakespeare's vast reflexive activity rest upon conceptual metaphors that we all possess and share as principal mechanisms for grasping what exists beyond our senses, and beyond this world of concrete objects.

The aspect of the play that we understand almost instinctively is passionate grief over death of the loved ones, and disillusionment over injustice in this world that we would like to set right, but instead we can only bear it like stoics. The intensity of emotions and thoughts embodied in the words of *Hamlet* does not exclude the possibility that Shakespeare started writing this play for commercial reasons to stir passions and provoke reactions among audience of his time. However, material seems to have gotten out of Shakespeare's hand. Old grievances and sorrows awakened regarding death of the loved ones, bonds between fathers and their sons. Death of the loved ones gives rise to another important theme, that of the afterlife. This ancient question has always preoccupied man and caused anxiety about living and dying. Mysteries of what happens after death are illustrated in *Hamlet* through tensions between Protestant and Catholic religions. Was there purgatory, and were the dead able to continue to communicate with the living? Were the living capable of relieving the burden of sin on behalf of the dead?

Views over metaphors *DEATH IS A JOURNEY* and *DEATH IS GOING TO A FINAL DESTINATION* varied in terms of stages that the journey to a final destination included. *Hamlet* still refers to the anxiety of Catholics that sudden death might prevent them from settling the account with God, as shown in the frustration of the ghost. In the play, Shakespeare acknowledges the existence of purgatory through the ghost, and he negates it through Hamlet,

who makes no reference to purgatory, and mentions only heaven and hell in his discourse. Metaphorical linguistic expressions about life, death, and the afterlife that are mainly based on conceptual metaphors *LIFE IS A JOURNEY*, *LIFE IS PILGRIMAGE TO HEAVEN*, *DEATH IS DEPARTURE* and *DEATH IS GOING TO A FINAL DESTINATION* seem to give advantage to Catholic over Protestant tradition. First, the ghost in *Hamlet* is not a hallucination. In the play, there are eleven sightings of the apparition by four different characters, which would have been proof enough for the objective existence of the ghost for Elizabethan audience who believed in the possibility of such supernatural interferences. Latin and Greek literature were precedents for ghosts returning from the dead to make contact with the living. This means that a ghost returning from Virgilian underworld for literary purposes was not Shakespeare's invention, but it had a very long tradition that preceded Renaissance by far. As mentioned earlier, Protestants allowed appearances of ghosts, but saw them mainly as masqueraded devils, which is the possibility entertained in *Hamlet*.

Roman Catholic doctrine warned that ghosts may be devils in disguise, but it accepted the possibility that spirits of the dead could temporarily return from purgatory if for some reason disturbed. Conceptual metaphor analysis revealed that the collision between two religious traditions led to uncertainties and confusion regarding comprehension and perception of death and the afterlife. Conceptual metaphors about life and death that we have listed as found in metaphorical linguistic expressions of the play are responsible not only for creating the view that destiny is far more powerful than man, but they also create a particular tone that may be understood as religion. After all, the play opens with a religious idea that a soul may come back from purgatory, and it finishes with another religious idea - that souls are carried to rest by angels.

Finally, Shakespeare seems to show his familiarity with the dangers of imaginative temperament throughout the play. The need to comprehend life, death, purpose, and the afterlife put mental world in perpetual motion and restlessness. Because of this, Hamlet's humor is probably very close to Shakespeare himself, and it is in this play that we encounter Shakespeare the man more than in any of the bard's other works.

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<sup>66</sup> Greenblatt, "Death of Hamnet...".

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