

Haverkamp, Anselm. "The Ghost of History: Hamlet and the Politics of Paternity." *Law and Literature*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (2006): 171-98.

There are few literary works throughout history that have made as much of an impact as Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Great writing can be interpreted in an infinite amount of ways which is why it is considered a historically rich form of creativity. It is entirely possible to conclude that Shakespeare felt inspired by history of the past as well as the present in order to craft the story of *Hamlet* and that the piece of writing has intellectually changed with the times. Readers look for something distinctive when they embrace these stories but the reputation of Shakespeare's writing as a whole is arguably placed upon its ability to hold new personal and social significance that handily grasps a literary audience. *Hamlet* is such a widely known play and it has come to the point where it is difficult to hold a thought about it that hasn't already been formed earlier in time. The evolution of art continues to support Shakespeare's most famous effort by taking the play and proceeding to constantly reconstruct it into a fresh read with substantial intellectual volume. While it means something different to everyone, *Hamlet* was written with specific intentions that are still in place today but its identity can be established in an astonishing number of facets. A new context exists because of the foundational pieces that define the character of Prince Hamlet and his prolonged state of procrastination. This notion ties in with the play's reputation amongst the literary community because like Hamlet, the work doesn't really know what it is.

Revelations in literature are sometimes uncovered through the filler that has nothing to do with the actual plot of the overall play. Haverkamp argues that this is not the case with *Hamlet* and that the actual meaning comes from the instances that influence the title character's behavior, specifically in regards to the ghost in the first act. He states that "As out of date and even as ridiculous as it must have appeared in the new era of the intriguer, this ghost must have served as an even better, though at first sight, puzzling reflection of the new relations of revenge and intrigue." The questions that the reader possesses while reading this play are the same things that Hamlet himself ponders throughout his journey. His inability to act equals the inability by the audience to reach a conclusion about the work that is feasible to everyone. *Hamlet* has been overanalyzed more than any other piece of literature that doesn't have a direct influence on a specific religion which means that the possibilities are virtually endless when deciding what to think about the stories ambiguous outcome. The deaths of several others come before the death of Claudius because of Hamlet's insecurities about himself and everyone around him. When Fortinbras observes the carnage during the play's final moments, there is a sense that it all happened for nothing except for the satisfaction of an idle but privileged individual. Some people read *Hamlet* and can't make up their mind about what the point of Hamlet's delayed reaction actually entails much like the character himself. The details of this conundrum are irrelevant according to Haverkamp and the importance of *Hamlet* relies almost entirely on its ability to transcend Shakespeare's intentions and mold into something worthy of scholastic attention in the present day. An obvious but revealing quote in the article states that "Every new reading of literature allows history to be rewritten. This is what makes it literary: that it allows the old stories in history to be reconciled and rewritten." The manner in which the play unfolds is all that matters when *Hamlet* is discussed within academic circles because it transforms its base genre from a revenge tragedy into a dramatic character study. The work is groundbreaking because of its reputation as entertainment without a confined title.