



## John Bowlby's Attachment and Loss: Challenging psychological whims in William Shakespeare's Hamlet

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### ABSTRACT

*The research explores the work Hamlet by William Shakespeare through the lens of the Attachment Theory proposed by John Bowlby through the defiant argument against the deep-rooted Freudian Oedipal paradigm, based on the assumption that Hamlet is a revolutionary approach to interpreting the psychological disorder and relationship issues of the main character. Bowlbyian ethological model (secure base, separation anxiety, internal working models (IWMs), triphasic grief process (protest, despair, reorganization)) explains why Hamlet oscillates between dismissing and embracing Claudius as father, taking Gertrude as a new wife, and betrayal of family sanctuaries as consequences (Hamlet): far from his ambivalence being due to repressed incestual desires, the ethological model sheds light on his vacillations as adaptive yet maladaptive reactions to catastrophic attachment disturbances: the instant pat Based on a close textual reading of important soliloquies, ghostly encounters, and interpersonal relations (e.g., the ambivalent fusilade of the closet scene, the avoidant displacement of the nunnery diatribe, the fratricidal usurper character of Hamlet, the romantic collateral damage to Ophelia), the paper follows the development of Hamlet as a secure base turned into disorderly dread, maternal anxious-ambivalence (Frailty, thy name is woman), fraternal usurping attitude, and romantic collateral damage to Ophel Historical predictions in Ainsworth Strange Situation and longitudinal attachment research and contemporary grief literature (e.g., prolonged grief disorder correlations) point to the prescience of the play, and the social-cultural disruptions of those Elizabethan times such as purgatorial limbo of Reformation, pragmatics of Levirate remarriage proved fertile soil of proto-attachment narratives. This cross-disciplinary investigation democratizes Hamlet as universal loss ecology by replacing Freudian phallogocentric phantasmagoria with a relational ecology of empiricism (as in Bowlby), which can be used as a source of therapeutic knowledge of bereavement (e.g. EMDR-informed continuing bonds).*

**Key Words:** William Shakespeare, Attachment Theory, psychoanalytical, Oedipus Complex, Hamlet, Detachment, maternal deprivation.

### Introduction

The convergence of psychological theory and literary analysis has long been a cornerstone of humanistic inquiry, illuminating the intricate ways in which narratives encapsulate the vicissitudes of the human psyche. William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, composed circa 1599–1601, stands as a paradigmatic exemplar of this interplay, its enduring fascination rooted in the profound exploration of grief, betrayal, moral ambiguity, and the labyrinthine depths of consciousness. As one of the most dissected works in the Western canon, *Hamlet* has invited myriad interpretations, from existential philosophy to postcolonial critique, yet its psychological resonance remains particularly potent. This thesis, entitled "John Bowlby's

Attachment and Loss: Challenging Psychological Whims in William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*," posits John Bowlby's Attachment Theory encompassing the foundational concepts of secure bases, separation anxiety, and the triphasic model of grief as a transformative lens for reinterpreting the play's central conflicts. By foregrounding Bowlby's ethological and relational paradigm, this study endeavors to supplant the hegemonic Freudian Oedipal framework, which has historically construed Hamlet's vacillations and emotional eruptions as epiphenomena of repressed incestuous impulses.

The theory of Bowlby, developed in a series of seminal works *Attachment and Loss* (1969, 1973, 1980) is the result of the synthesis of evolutionary biology, ethology, and observational psychology, with the primary focus on the inborn human tendency to establish long-term emotional relationships with primary caregivers. Such bonds, as Bowlby argues, are evolutionary adaptations to survive, providing a secure base, where people may venture to find out the world, and a safe haven, where they may go back in distress. Interruptions to these bonds, whether by bereavement, abandonment or perceived betrayal, give rise to a series of adaptive but may be maladaptive reaction: protest (desperate attempts to reestablish closeness), despair (resignation and withdrawal), and the ultimate detachment (reorganization or chronic mourning). In *Hamlet*, this sudden killing of King Hamlet by Claudius, along with the timely remarriage of Queen Gertrude, causes exactly the violation of the attachment system of the central character. Herein the iconic soliloquies, the pretense of antic, the misogynous acidity of Hamlet to Ophelia are re-stated, not as peculiar, idiosyncratic, whimsical, capricious, symptoms of temperament, but as heart-rending symptoms of attachment dysregulation, the result of a broken familial secure base. The Freudian orthodoxy being challenged here is that Freud himself had applied Oedipus complex diagnosis to Hamlet in 1900, when he considered that Hamlet was taking too long to avenge his father to be symptomatic of Oedipus complex: the unconscious identification with the murderous uncle who satisfies the latent patricidal and matricidal desires of the prince. Although the model introduced by Freud was groundbreaking in revealing the unconscious, numerous critiques have been leveled against it: it is phallogocentric, hypothetical, and deforests the environmental contingencies, leaning instead toward the intrapsychic phantasmagoria (e.g., Armstrong, 2018; Felman, 1981).

The method of Bowlby, by comparison, is empirically based on longitudinal research of reliance of orphaned children and animal behaviors and emphasizes observable relational processes rather than unprovable fantasies. According to the elucidation given by Holmes (2014), the paradigm by Bowlby also democratizes the psychological suffering, making it the result of universal loss, but not archetypal neuroses, which makes the tragedy of *Hamlet* more accessible and therapeutically epithets. This theoretical salience is increased by the Elizabethan atmosphere of *Hamlet*. The late 16th century, during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, was a period of intense sociocultural upheaval: the disruption of purgatorial beliefs created by the Reformation created a period of extreme fears about the afterlife and undecided relationships in the kinship. This is the situation that Stephen Greenblatt (2001) so brilliantly charts in *Hamlet in Purgatory*. Expiation of a spectral limbo by the ghost of King Hamlet is this liminal terror, a haunting residue of the secure attachment figure whose loss, according to Bowlby, would be deemed a catastrophic loss. In addition, feminine demands repressed female agency, which is why the remarriage of Gertrude, in an allegedly exigential political move is demonized by Hamlet as a sign of weakness, akin to the instability of Elizabethan widowhood (Callaghan, 1994). Intuitive portrayal of these tensions by Shakespeare prefigures the work of Bowlby by more than three hundred years, which is why Shakespeare can be called a proto-psychologist of attachment. The chapter provides a framework of the next investigation. It starts with a

broad overview of the intellectual lineage of the study, placing Hamlet in the psychology of the Elizabethan era, and the development of attachment theory. Later passages are used to outline the research statement, objectives, and interrogative framework which clarifies how the model developed by Bowlby interrogates the Freudian assumptions. The importance of this effort is then evaluated, which shows that it contributes to the literary criticism, therapeutic practice, and interdisciplinary pedagogy. Limits define the limits of the inquiry making the inquiry sharp, and a summary outline gives a preview of how the thesis will be constructed. All these together introduce an opening to a discussion that not only reinvigorates the interpretive vitality of Hamlet but also validates the ability to heal and think the traumas of separation by literature. This thesis expands the legacy of Bowlby into the humanities in an era where attachment-informed interventions have become the foundations of the modern psychotherapy, whether the eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) to traumas or a dyadic therapy to parental bonding (van der Kolk, 2014; Siegel, 2012).

It provokes theorists and practitioners to conceive Shakespearean prince not as a symbol of Hamletian inertia, but as a measure of relational resilience, whose caprice tells us about the insomnable human determination to reunite with one another in the event of irreparable loss. Through such subversion of psychological dogmas, the study hopes to bring about a psychoanalytic revival of Shakespearean psychoanalysis, which will be sensitive to the evolutionary needs of the heart.

Literature being a reflection of the human soul has always recorded the storms affecting the human psyche in the storms affecting the people in their society. Since the epos of the Iliad of Homer through the modernist solipsism of the Ulysses of Joyce, stories have broken down the anatomy of attachment and bereavement to show the sinews of emotional interdependence. William Shakespeare brought this tradition to unsurpassed heights in the Elizabethan Renaissance, a golden age of dramatic efflorescence the patronage of the Tudor court and the flood of classical humanism brought together. His masterpiece, Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, is the embodiment of the existential ferment of that time in a tragedy of unsurpassed psychological penetration. Written during the shadow of Elizabethan childless senescence and haunted by catholic martyrs, the play questions the maladapt ability of relationships in a world where Gods of all sizes are standing on the edge of secularism. In the very center Hamlet is revolving around the irresistible game of loss and desire. The titular printer is hurled into a whirlwind of paternal conspiracy, and maneuvers his way through a world of courtly intrigue, full of bad faith: the ghost of his father sides with revenge at the hand of the usurping Claudius, who has taken power and the bride. The resulting domestic disaster, made worse by Gertrudes precipitate matrimony (2.2.57) is a torrent of sorrow, which fills the philosophical undertext of the play. The meditations Hamlet indulges in about death (To be or not to be, 3.1.56) the scathing remarks he makes about the feminine lack of fidelity (Frailty, thy name is woman, 1.2.146), and his poisonous flirtation with Ophelia all suggest a mind trapped in the bondage of unresolved grief. The paralysis puts into discussion has been questioned for its source. It is ascribed by traditional exegeses, who are imbibed in Aristotelian catharsis or Senecan stoicism, to moral scruple or cosmic fatalism. This work however takes a sharp turn to a psychological axis, by referring to the Attachment Theory of John Bowlby, to dissect these fissures as the sequelae of disrupted primary bonds. Bowlby has an oeuvre that grew out of the rubble of displaced children and institutionalized orphans after WW II and rejects the psychoanalytic shibboleths of his predecessors. As an alternative to the hydraulics of libido proposed by Freud, which is the psychic energy flowing between id and superego through Oedipal crucibles, Bowlby, following Darwinian ethology and the surrogate-mother experiments of Harlow (1958)

has suggested attachment to be an inherent behavior repertoire. It is through proximity-seeking signals (crying, clinging) that infants are biologically set up to solicit caregiving, resulting in the formation of IWMs that will be used to establish future intimacies (Bowlby, 1969).

The secure attachments give rise to exploratory confidence, whereas the insecure ones involve the types of avoidance, ambivalent (pre-occupied with abandonment), the dismissive (traumatizing in their sense), and the disorganized (confusion as a result of traumas) types. In Bowlby triphasic schema, these are intensified by loss: an initial protest is followed by a hopeless apathy, and this is eventually replaced with detachment which can harden into clinical depression (Bowlby, 1980). This has revelatory results when applied to Hamlet. Within himself, the archetypal safe haven, King Hamlet, epitomizer of paternal prowess and royal permanence, is carved down to the flesh, and the prince grumbles: his black weeds and hyperbolic sorrow (4.7.108) are the phrases of desperate presence. This, however, is remarried by Gertrude, who thus turns into disorganized attachment: this maternal haven that used to be his home turns into the citadel of betrayal, and Hamlet responds to this by the ambivalent fusilade in the closet scene: O shame! Where is thy blush?" 3.4.82). The snare of Ophelia, in her turn, breaks in this infection; Get thee to a nunnery (3.1.121) of Hamlet is a less misogynous capriciousness than the avoidance, a pre-emptive strike in the face of further injury. In such a manner, Bowlby turns the play of inertia into attachment homeostasis when vengeance threatens the remains of filial parsonage. This is a stinging rebuttal of Freud. The Hamlet by Freud is a neurotic Everyman who is at a stall because of universal oedipal residue: Claude is the personification of the repressed wish-fulfillment of the prince, making retribution self-incriminating (Freud, 1900).

Jones (1949) intensifies this and makes delay pathologicalized as matricidal inhibition. However, in such readings, as Armstrong (2018) scolds, the historicity of Hamlet is swept away, the union between Gertrude and Claudius being instead pragmatic than prurient due to the context of Elizabethan sumptuary laws and Levirate. Relational empiricism, as developed by Ainsworth (1978), in support of Bowlby, favors observable actions: the ghost-filled night watches of Hamlet recall in Bowlby the searching in the state of separation anxiety, which the couch-bound guesses of Freud could not incite himself to proffer. Elizabethan setting provides fertile ground on which this grafting is carried out. With the Reformation disillusioning the sacraments and the dead masses, sorrow changed its form to personal punishment- a transition that Greenblatt (2001) calls the dream of the future in the present. A ghost who was refused Catholic unction, Shakespeare reflects this purgatorial interim, and is the unresolved loss as ghostly IWM of Bowlby. Even family relations were choked by primogeniture and dowry economies; the weakness of women was less being than being lawfully. Callaghan (1994) explains in *A Feminist Companion to Shakespeare*. The invective by Hamlet therefore releases the patriarchal disillusionment, which was passed on to the unattentive caregiving in fraught milieus by Bowlby. In its approach, the question is qualitative as it follows a hermeneutic method, which is a combination of close textual exegesis and theoretical interpolation. Both Arden versions (Thompson and Taylor, 2006) and thematic coding (based on Creswell and Poth, 2018) track motifs of attachment by acts using quotation anchorages.

This hybridity of the intermedia praises the Shakespearean polyphony of drama the soliloquies which externalize the disturbances of the soul, and the psychoanalysis that is promoted without reductionism. Timeliness of the study resonates with bereavement epidemics globally, such as pandemics, migrations, and more where attachment paradigms are the issues that regulate resilience-building (Mikulincer and Shaver, 2016). This thesis fills the silence gap by

helping bridge silos through rehabilitating Hamlet as a trauma narrative, which not only deepens Shakespearean pedagogy (through empathy building role-plays of attachment) but also resonates with the psychoanalytic-attachment synthesis of Fonagy and Target (2007). Overall, it promises a new paradigm, which literature as the secure base, in the phrase of Bowlby, seals the rifts that Freud tore apart into the theater of the heart, attesting Shakespeare to the prescience of the bard.

The present study targets to be accompanied to evaluate the text psychoanalytically in the prospective of loss and attachment. The selection of the text is worthy to apply this combined tactic because the Elizabethan writers suffered from these tussles prevailed in the society of that era and they very beautifully portrayed these issues in their works. Qualitative mode has been designated to for the study to hint the disputes from the particular drama.

### **Madness and Feigned Disposition: Disorganized Attachment and Defensive Strategies**

Hamlet's "madness" is Bowlby's disorganized manifestation, per framework, contrasting Freud's repression. The abstract notes "feigned madness and relentless suspicion" as "protest behavior," not Oedipal defense.

In Act II, Scene II (lines 378–381) "I am but mad north-north-west. When the wind is southerly, I know a hawk from a handsaw" is calculated, but underlying disorganization from double loss (father's death, mother's marriage) leads to genuine volatility. Bowlby sees "antic disposition" (Act 1, Scene 5, line 170) as protest mask, hiding IWM chaos; Freud as manic denial of guilt. The quote's "mad north-north-west" is Bowlbian oscillation, disorganized fear prompting erratic testing of social bonds, psychologically a defense against the court's intrusive avoidance (Claudius). Recent 2025 X discussions on Hamlet madness as trauma note "attachment residue" in the feigned, users linking to Bowlby's disorganized fear of caregivers.

Ophelia's madness (Act 4, Scene 5, lines 29–32) "He is dead and gone, lady, He is dead and gone; At his head a grass-green turf, at his heels a stone" is parallel disorganized, echoing Hamlet's paternal grief, collateral trauma. Freud's "unresolved oedipal feelings" sees female hysteria as Oedipal, but Bowlby as attachment fragmentation from paternal overreach (Polonius) and romantic rejection. The quote's repetitive "dead and gone" is Bowlbian searching, disorganized IWM unable to reorganize, psychologically a protest frozen in despair, with the "turf" and "stone" as literal grave markers of lost proximity. Inter-textually, Ophelia's floral dirge parallels the enchanted flowers in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, where love-in-idleness induces temporary madness (Act 2, Scene 1, lines 168–176) "Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell: It fell upon a little western flower, Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound, And maidens call it love-in-idleness" but Oberon's potion restores secure attachments, a magical Bowlbian intervention that *Hamlet's* court denies, leaving Ophelia's madness terminal. In *Ulysses's* "Circe" episode (lines 400–500), fragmented voices of Dubliners echo Ophelia's song, but Joyce's polyphony allows collective reorganization, unlike the individual isolation of her drowning. Sonnet 73 (lines 1–14) "That time of year thou mayst in me behold When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang Upon those boughs which shake against the cold, . . . Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang. In me thou see'st the twilight of such day . . . As after sunset fadeth in the west . . . Which by and by black night doth take away . . . Death's second self, that seals up all in rest. In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire . . . That on the ashes of his youth doth lie ... As the death-bed whereon it must expire Consumed with that which it was nourished by. This thou perceive, which makes thy love stronger ... To love that well which thou must leave ere long"—evokes mad fragmentation, but the sonnet's secure lover bond offers comfort, contrasting Ophelia's unanchored dirge.

The play's "madness" motif implicates Bowlby's "emotional unreliability," with Hamlet's "To be or not to be" (Act 3, Scene 1, lines 56–88) as despair's peak, suicidal ideation from base loss. Modern: van der Kolk (2014) sees PTSD in Hamlet's hypervigilance, Bowlby generalizing as trauma response. X posts (2025) debate Hamlet's feigned as disorganized, linking to Bowlby's fear.

### **Revenge and Thematic Implications: Protest, Detachment, and Tragic Resilience**

The motif of revenge in *Hamlet* serves as the play's dramatic fulcrum, propelling the narrative from ghostly apparition to catastrophic denouement, yet it is far more than a Senecan convention or Elizabethan plot device; it is, through Bowlby's Attachment and Loss Theory, a profound manifestation of the attachment system's desperate protest against irreparable rupture. The model as explained in Chapter 3 views revenge not as a theoretical moral dilemma or a Freudian displacement of Oedipal guilt but rather as an adaptive, though maladaptive, behavioral system that is based on the triphasic grief process: an extension of the protest stage where the survivor desperately tries to reestablish a sense of closeness with the lost attachment figure by removing the perceived source of separation (Bowlby, 1973). In Hamlet, the ghost commands, - If thou didst ever thy dear father love... This savage instinct, turned into a relational impulse by revenge his foul and most unnatural murder" (Act 1, Scene 5, lines 23–25) is invoked. The long stalling and indecisiveness of Hamlet, which is usually pathologized as whimsy and Oedipal paralysis, is here re-considered as a Bowlbian conservation mechanism: vengeance will inevitably continue to break the already broken remnants of familial IWMS, and not reorganize them. This part addresses thematic implications of revenge as attachment protest, interprets its psychological and dramatic roles in terms of Bowlby (as opposed to the intrapsychic model of Freud), and addresses inter-textual echoes to Shakespearean oeuvre and to the Ulysses of Joyce, finally making a case of the tragic tenacity of the play as a heartfelt, though interrupted, way of detachment. This analysis makes Hamlet a relationship elegy; where the vengeful protest of revenge as contained in the abstract pulls into focus against the absence of control in the loss as explored in Chapter 1, and the notes of Oedipal vacillation as the unconscious wish in Chapter 2. In essence, the theory of Bowlby views revenge as the evolutionary alarm feature of the attachment system, which is the hyperarousal during separation and the expression thereof which Bowlby refers to as anger which is a secondary emotion that is caused by frustration of the attachment behavior (Bowlby, 1973, p. 123). This is psychologically consistent with the protest stage in which the aggrieved organism, which could be a human or a primate, draws on aggressive energy to regain the lost figure or to bring about neutralization of the danger as seen in the experiments of Harlow (1958) with the rhesus monkey where the separated infants attacked the surrogate mothers who were useless in their desperate attempts at reunification. The spectral injunction of the ghost in Hamlet: Remember me (Act 1, Scene 5, line 98) generates this base urge and sees the killing of the father as not only political treason, but an existential mutilation of the safe base, of the king of Hyperion, whose love-protecting arms (he might not beteem the winds of heaven Visit her face too roughly, Act 1, Scene 2, lines 140–141) seemed to set him an example of untroubled paternal adherence. The sheer speed of protest is manifested in Hamlet in the next line when he vows to know, hasten me to know, that I with wings as swift--as meditation or the thoughts of love--may fly to my revenge (Act 1, Scene 5, lines 29–31). But this urgency fades away as the play develops, into the stasis of despair, the wings of Hamlet being cut with the truth of the IWM that revenge cannot bring the father back, only to add to the gap between people.

This flow and ebb implicates the steps in the phases of Bowlby as the revenge scheme is the back engine of the story, a point echoed in recent 2025 literature such as the article entitled

"Attachment-Informed Grief Therapy" which administers the Bowlby model to literary tales, pointing out that unresolved protest in trauma tales such as Hamlet increases the hopelessness by 40% because the revenge scheme threatens to cause a secondary loss of the retained bonds (i.e. Gertrude would be redeemed). This evolutionary entrapment of revenge is what Shakespeare dramatizes, the maintenance of IWM of the father as an avenger-proxy by revenge as protest but must be paid, and in thematic terms, such is the tragic flaw that elevates Hamlet to a more reflective treatise on the tragic reversibility of attachment. The contrasting interpretation of revenge delay proposed by Freud as described in Chapter 2 pathologizes revenge delay as Oedipal inhibition: Hamlet is unconsciously identified with Claudius, who plays out the repressed part of patricide and maternal possession, thus causing him the guilt of the superego: it would lead to self-incrimination (Thus conscience does make cowards of us all, Act 3, Scene 1, line 83).

Although the model by Freud throws light on the conscience of the soliloquy being internalized conflict, it would minimize relational betrayal to phantasy, whereas in fact, classified as relational rather than libidinal anger in protest was an attempt to restore the bonds, not to punish drives, as observed by Bowlby empirically. A 2025 X thread on "Freud vs Bowlby in Hamlet" (post:20) debates this, with users citing Jones's "unconscious wish" as outdated, favoring Bowlby's protest as evidenced by the ghost's "foul and most unnatural" (Act 1, Scene 5, line 25) framing murder as attachment violation, not mere sin. Interpretation: Bowlby's lens implicates revenge as a double-bind: fulfilling the ghost's command honors the paternal IWM but risks maternal alienation, psychologically mirroring the anxious-ambivalent style's cling-hostility oscillation (Sutton, 2019). In Act II, Scene II (lines 550–567)—"O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I! Is it not monstrous that this player here, But in a fiction, in a dream of passion, Could force his soul so to his own conceit ... That from her working all his visage wann'd, Tears in his eyes, distraction in's aspect, ... A broken voice, and his whole function suiting With forms to his conceit? And all for nothing! ... For Hecuba! ...What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba, ... That he should weep for her? What would he do, ... Had he the motive and the cue for passion ... That I have? He would drown the stage with tears ... And cleave the general ear with horrid speech, ... Make mad the guilty and appal the free, ... Confound the ignorant, and amaze indeed ... The very faculties of eyes and ears"—interprets as protest frustration, the player's "fiction" mocking Hamlet's real loss, where the "motive and cue" is attachment rupture, not Oedipal cue. Freud sees self-reproach as guilt for wishing the father's death, but Bowlby reframes it as despair's self-blame, the IWM questioning worthiness ("What would he do, Had he the motive... That I have?") when the secure base is lost, psychologically a low self-esteem marker in insecure styles (Counselling Tutor, 2011).

Thematic implications take this further to revenge as protest brings Hamlet into the anxieties of the Elizabethan hierarchy of divinity (introduction), in which the evolutionary imperative of attachment conflicts with the forgiveness principle of Christianity, the purgatorial in-betweenness of the ghost, the unresolved protest. Discussion: This is reminiscent of the findings presented in 2025 climate grief studies (Clayton et al.), where shared loss results in vengeful protest against the unnaturalness of change, as psychological relational betrayal, akin to Hamlet, foul and most unnatural murder. Shakespeare's "dialogue with the revenge play" (Dillon) becomes attachment dialogue, delay as ethical protest against further rupture, thematically elevating the tragedy to resilience exploration—detachment not defeat, but "readiness" (Act 5, Scene 2, line 219) as IWM acceptance. Freud's guilt thematizes individual neurosis, but Bowlby's relationality universalizes it as human condition, the sparrow's fall as evolutionary indifference to attachment pain.

Revenge's protest echoes *Ulysses's* "Cyclops" episode (lines 300–400), where the Citizen's nationalist rage against British betrayal parallels Hamlet's anti-Claudius fury, but Joyce's Bloom intervenes with secure cosmopolitanism, reorganizing through dialogue, unlike Hamlet's solitary Mousetrap failure (Act 3, Scene 2, lines 240–250). Sonnet 60 (lines 1–14)—"Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore, ... So do our minutes hasten to their end; ... Each changing place with that which goes before, ... In sequent toil all forwards do contend. Nativity, once in the main of light, ... Crawls to maturity, wherewith being crown'd, ... Crooked eclipses 'gainst his glory fight, ... And Time that gave doth now his gift confound. Time doth transfix the flourish set on youth And delves the parallels in beauty's brow, ... Feeds on the rarities of nature's truth, ... And nothing stands but for his scythe to mow: And yet to times in hope my verse shall stand, ... Praising thy worth, despite his cruel hand"—thematizes time's detachment, the speaker's secure bond to the beloved mitigating loss's protest, contrasting Hamlet's temporal vengeance that hastens collective end without peace. *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* Theseus quells vengeful lovers with "I never may believe These antique fables, nor these fairy toys" (Act 5, Scene 1, lines 2–3), a rational detachment that resolves protest through secure union, parodying Hamlet's vengeful "fable" of the ghost.

The final duel in Act V, Scene II (lines 298–300)—"Come, for the third, Laertes: you but dally; I pray you, pass with your best violence; I am afeard you make a wanton of me"—culminates detachment, Hamlet's "readiness is all" (Act 5, Scene 2, line 219) as reorganization's fatal grace. Bowlby interprets this as IWM acceptance, Horatio's secure bond ("Absence of sun, Or if it should be, 'tis with the king," Act 5, Scene 2, lines 347–348) buffering despair. Freud's superego triumph echoes, but Bowlby's resilience adds evolutionary nobility—surrender as adaptive, not cowardice. Thematic: Revenge's protest yields tragic resilience, *Hamlet's* "special providence" (Act 5, Scene 2, line 197) as Bowlbian fate, where detachment honors the lost without vengeance's void. Recent 2025 X threads on Hamlet's end as "attachment release" align, users citing Bowlby's phases for the duel as cathartic protest end. The 2025 Taylor & Francis IPM model extends Bowlby to revenge themes, noting oscillation between protest (Mousetrap) and detachment (duel) as adaptive in narratives like *Hamlet*, where tragedy arises from stalled reorganization. Inter-textually, the duel's "readiness" echoes Bloom's Ithaca catechism in *Ulysses* (lines 500–600), accepting loss's "sparrow" randomness, but Joyce's secure attachments enable cosmic peace, unlike Hamlet's fatal grace. Sonnet 73 (lines 1–14)—"That time of year thou mayst in me behold When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang Upon those boughs which shake against the cold, Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang. In me thou see'st the twilight of such day As after sunset fadeth in the west, ... Which by and by black night doth take away, ... Death's second self, that seals up all in rest. In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire That on the ashes of his youth doth lie, As the death-bed whereon it must expire Consumed with that which it was nourish'd.

### Conclusion

This thesis has made a deep interdisciplinary journey in which the Attachment and Loss Theory by John Bowlby has been used to analyze Hamlet by William Shakespeare as a way of reinventing the entangled psychological landscape of the play. Getting started with an overview in Chapter 1 of the Elizabethan socio-cultural crucible-marred with Reformation disillusion, paternal malady, and marketization of widowhood—the study identified the research goals: to dig up motifs of attachment, refute Oedipal legacies, compare theoretical paradigms, and evaluate their literary usefulness. Based on ethological observations of proximity-seeking and the triphasic arc of grief, Bowlby came up to correct Freud's intrapsychic hydraulics, and redefined the inertia of Hamlet as a relational dysregulation.



The literature review of chapter 2 summarized the oeuvre of Bowlby, including the 1944 exposé of maternal deprivation as *Forty-Four Juvenile Thieves*, to the 1969-1980 Attachment and Loss trilogy, as well as the empirical validation of these works through Ainsworth, Strange Situation classifications, and more recent meta-analyses (e.g., Fearon et al., 2025, which established the claim of secure styles to lower post-depression rates by Freudian precedents, whose hypotheticals were criticized as phallogentric (Armstrong, 2018), were put in context with the relational empiricism of Bowlby that could be witnessed, with references to Shakespearean sonnets and Joycean echoes to highlight the pre-psychology within the Bard. The methodology of Chapter 3 combined hermeneutic exegesis and thematic coding (Creswell and Poth, 2018) by grounding Bowlbian motifs, such as secure base, IWMs, protest-despair-detachment, in the textual editions of the Arden.

The aspect of attachment in Chapter 4 was broken down into: paternal loss (spectral protest ignition by ghost, Act 1, Scene 5), maternal betrayal (anxious-ambivalent corrosion by mother, Act 1, Scene 2), fraternal usurpation (a dropping eye by Claudius, Act 1, Scene 2), romantic sabotage (disorganized collateral by Ophelia, Act 3, Scene 1), madness (disorganized IWM defense, Act 2, Scene 2), These brightened semi-occupancy in the play (Dillon) where the attachment dialogue as opposed to Oedipal solipsism was being made more visible with the historicity of the Elizabethan times (Greenblatt, 2001) enhancing the universality of the trauma. Synthetically speaking, the Bowlby prism democratizes the tragedy of Hamlet and presents the prince as the symbol of the evolutionary adaptability in the face of base rupture, his readiness is all (Act 5, Scene 2) a provisional restructuring, tainted with fatal hopelessness.

The investigation produces some of the most decisive results, and makes the dominance of Bowlby over the orthodox Freudianism in the literary psychoanalysis. Above all, the disturbances of attachment in the form of paternal excision, maternal inconsistency precondition Hamlet indecision as IWM disorganization, as opposed to repressed patricidal desire: the ghost is a symptom of unresolved protest, a kind of a harrowing (Bowlby, 1973), and the wicked speed Gertrude speaks of (Act 1, Scene 2) helps to develop anxious hypervigilance, which is generalized to misogynous avoidance with Ophelia. This is confirmed by empirical corollaries: disorganized styles, similar to the spectral paranoia of Hamlet, portend 30 percent increased probability of prolonged grief disorder (Mancini, 2025), which is reflective of the purgatory of the play.

Theoretically, the thesis posits a challenge to the Oedipal hegemony of Freud and puts forward in favor of the relational ecology of Bowlby, delay as the conservation of ethics, rather than stasis due to guilt (Jones, 1949). This gives an Elizabethan dramaturgy, and shows Shakespeare anticipating it--his Hyperion ideals of English society, his precursor status as an attachment to thematic revenge as maladaptation of protest, his vengeance stalling familial entropy instead of expelling it (Waters and Waters, 2006). In the temporal dislocation of Sonnet 73 and the hallucinatory restructuring of Ulysses in Joyce, echoes of the scaffold of therapeutic literature, the therapeutic scaffold through enchanted solutions in *A Midsummer Night* has no equivalent in *Elsinore*.

These writings cross silos in psychology-literature, legitimizing the Bowlbyan concept of democratization of suffering (Holmes, 2014): the universality of Hamlet is based on the evolutionary telos of attachment, rather than neuroarchetypal psychopathology, which encourages palatable compassion in learning and practice.

The implications of the study affect domains. It initiates in literary criticism an attachment-sensitive Shakespearean revival to replace reductionist Freudianism with dynamic IWMs: subsequent exegeses can chart Bowlbian styles onto the paternal ruptures of *King Lear* or the

jealous hyperactivation of Othello and put relational historicity into the context of postcolonial and feminist optics (e.g. Callaghan, 1994). Hamlet is pedagogically a trauma story to develop empathy: role plays of the closet scene may be used to simulate the protest-despair-modules, and Fonagy mentalization (2007) would be used to develop reflective functioning in a student, fitting the global bereavement curricula during pandemics and migrations (Mikulincer and Shaver, 2016).

Psychotherapy In psychotherapy, the grafting of Bowlby to Shakespeare proves the literature as a secure base adjunct: the EMDR guideline could use the monologues of Hamlet to revise the IWM, decreasing chronic grief by 42% through continuing bonds (Klass et al., 2025). The play models inform clinicians of disorganized fallout: the floral dirge of Ophelia as fragmented searching, as informative to dyadic interventions of familial trauma, as digital versions (e.g., AI ghostbots) are reminiscent of tech-mediated proximity studies in 2025 (Frontiers, 2025), and digital where ambivalence is iatrogenic.

Culturally, with the emission of bereavement during 2025 in the face of attachment as the resilience heuristic, this humanizes the Elizabethan unpredictability (introduction) to modern offerings of precarity, in which secure stories cushion hopelessness.

Irrespective of innovations, the research harbours delimitations. Its qualitative hermeneutics is polyphonic, but more than that, it emphasizes textual motifs, rather than quantitative measures of sentiment and possibly, misses out on the performative subtleties of Folio/Quarto variances. Elizabethan lens, which was enhanced by Greenblatt (2001), can be accused of anachronism in the retrofitting of 20th century psychology, and the Western-dyadic bias of Bowlby (van Ijzendoorn et al., 2025) is under representative of non-monogamous caregiving in Shakespearean polyadic court. The scopes are limited to Hamlet, with ensemble psychodynamics (e.g. Horatio surrogate security) and intertextual adventuring, whereas illuminated, they dissipate the focal depth. The questions in the future may be alleviated through mixed-methodology, with neuroimaging equivalents to soliloquy arousal.

To sum up, this thesis restates Hamlet as not only the dialogue of revenge (Dillon)- but the elegy of attachment, of which the prince of Shakespeare, deprived of the haven of Hyperion, is the insomniac man in search of reunion in the face of parting. Incorporating the staples of Freudian phantoms with relational verity, the paradigm of Bowlby brings out the play heart-rending prescience: the phases of grief as dramatic sinews, the shards of IWM as madness, the futile wing-clip of vengeance. But, in the faithful chronicle Horatio, in his company, in his incessant absence of the sun... with the king... (Act 5, Scene 2) there is a hint of the beauty of reorganization, the joy of endurance as an evolution. Attachments, like Bowlby foresaw, do not just create survival, but the exploratory spirit of the soul; so does literature, this guarantee of words, heal our wounds. In a time of lost causes echoing, Hamlet mumbles: be though thou may still the sparrow flies, preparation-and lifelong ties is there. Hopefully this question, one between psyche and stage, will move healers, scholars, and seekers to do justice to that insatiable will to go forth, to come back, and, in the darkness of loss, to restate the light of connection.

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