

Urgency and Delay:

The Experience of Time in William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*

Juliette Huisman

6175015

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Supervisor: Prof. dr. Ton Hoenselaars

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Abstract

William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* (1599-1601) is known for its famous delay, making time an important and central concept in the play. This thesis analyses time and temporality, focusing on the possibility in difference between time as it is objectively known to pass and time as it is subjectively experienced. The thesis will do this by asking the question of how the concept of time functions in and adds to the story as presented in *Hamlet*. The analysis will in part be linked to the broad concepts of grief, mourning, memory and trauma.

The thesis does so by close-reading the text of *Hamlet* and comparing objective and subjective time, uncovering the sometimes perceived as incoherent modes of time in *Hamlet*. The difference in objective and subjective time is then further expanded upon in light of the subjective experience of a traumatic death, mourning and time. This results in a conclusion that views the multiplicity of time in *Hamlet* not as problematic but as a possible addition to the experience of the themes of grief and mourning present in the play.

Key Words

Grief, *Hamlet*, Memory, Mourning, Shakespeare, Temporality, Time, Topology, Trauma

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Introduction

Time is a common and recurring theme in Shakespeare’s plays. *Hamlet*, or *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, specifically explores time in all different forms – past, present and future – by representing it as unhinged, with time being “out of joint” (Shakespeare 1.5.189). This unhinged quality is in part represented by the ghost of Hamlet’s dead father, whose presence emphasises the “haunting relationship between the past and the present” (Buffery 57). However, the ghost is only “one way to begin to apprehend” (58) the disjointed time frame present in *Hamlet*. The question of time and how it is experienced is central to the play, with the theme being in constant discussion. Due to the explicit mentioning of time present in the play, it could be expected that the timeline ought to be clear and undisputable. Yet, this is not the case. Time as a concept is inevitably present in all story telling. However, in *Hamlet* it can be said to be foregrounded and, as a result, function more prominently within the story itself. This begs the question: How does the concept of time function in and add to the story as presented in *Hamlet*?

To answer this question, a more narrow definition of the broad concept of time should be established first. Time can be defined in many different ways. This has also been reflected in dictionaries, with the Oxford English Dictionary providing thirty-five definitions for the word alone (“Time”). As a result, there are many ways to distinct different forms of time, with the distinction between past, present and future being perhaps the most obvious. However, in addition to these modes of time, many Shakespeareans draw a distinction between time as it passes and time as it is experienced when discussing Shakespeare. Lauren Shohet, in her introduction to different forms of time, makes this distinction when she compares “‘measured’ or ‘objective’ time” (1) to subjective time. In doing so, she emphasises the difficulty of imagining how time might appear and be experienced by others (1-2). R. L. P. Jackson draws another, similar distinction when he compares “‘real time’” to “‘remembered’” or “‘experienced’ time,” noting that difficulty can be found in distinguishing the two (336). This is especially true for literary works where time is “filtered through” the personal experience of a character, as is the case in *Hamlet* (336).

In analysing both objective and subjective time, different indicators should be taken into account. Objective time can in part rely on, as Johannes Schlegel calls it, “numerical operations” (170) such as calendrical time. However, this presents its own set of difficulties when analysing Shakespeare. A change from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar was officially introduced in October of 1582, which is almost twenty years before Shakespeare wrote the tragedy of *Hamlet* (Dawson 1760). However, in Protestant countries such as Denmark and England, this introduction was delayed (Jackson 324; Schlegel 171), creating a disjunction in what could be deemed objective European time at that moment in history. Subjective time presents its own difficulties. Unlike objective time, subjective time does not rely on numerical operations and can therefore not be counted as such. Subjective time can only be measured as being longer or shorter – or moving slower or faster – in comparison to objective time.

It should also be recognized that another form of time that exists within the theatre is performance time, which refers to the amount of time it takes to perform a certain play. Some scholars have taken performance time and the act of performing into consideration in their analysis of the concept of time in relation to *Hamlet*. Joshua Billings, for example, argues that both time and space from inside and outside the performance collide, allowing Hamlet to reflect on the story from outside the time of the play as a whole (67). However, my own analysis will keep to only objective and subjective time, seeing that performance time is dependent on both forms. Additionally, my analysis will be based on the close reading of the text of *Hamlet*, and not on any specific performances. Considering that performance time can still vary even when aiming for full fidelity to Shakespeare’s work of *Hamlet* itself, it will not be discussed further in my analysis.

To analyse how objective and subjective time are at play in *Hamlet*, relevant parts of the scholarship on time in relation to Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* will be discussed on the following pages. After this, in the analysis, the different forms of time as present in *Hamlet* will first be discussed. To do so, I will discuss both objective and subjective time separately. Objective time will be analysed by way of accumulating textual references to the extent of time that, according to multiple characters, has passed. By doing so I will establish the timeline by way of direct textual references. This will be followed by a second reading of the text, which will focus on time as is subjectively experienced by Hamlet himself. Due to the “intricate” nature of *Hamlet* making any textual reading fraught with difficulties (Dawson 1760), I will only refer to the version known as *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark:* *Combined Text* when referring to *Hamlet*, unless otherwise indicated.

The analysis of both objective and subjective time in *Hamlet* will then be continued by way of contrasting the two timelines that they present. The expected differences will be discussed in the broad context of grief and mourning, as to take a closer look as to why the experience of time may differ for Hamlet. To do so, two other broad contexts, memory and trauma, will also be taken into account.

Lastly, the findings will be recapitulated and reviewed in the conclusion, where, taking into account the analysis, a tentative answer to the central question of this paper will be formulated. This will be done in light of the themes of grief, mourning, memory and trauma.

Literature Review

In her paper on tragedy and temporality, Rebecca Bushnell states that the two are fundamentally intertwined (783). Bushnell argues that tragic theatre illustrates the thickness of time, which follows Edmund Husserl’s line of thought that within the present itself the past and future are also encapsulated (783-784). Time in tragedies must be seen as “multiple” and inherently interconnected (784). She continues by arguing that time in tragedies shows this intertwinement of past, present and future by focusing on “a moment of decision when an action must happen that will drive everything to come” (784). While Bushnell’s article does not address *Hamlet* specifically, this “experiential time of human life” (Kastan qtd. in Bushnell 783) present in tragedy and the interconnectedness of time that she speaks of has already been recognised to be present in *Hamlet* as well.

Other scholars have, in specific relation to the tragedy of *Hamlet*, already said much about the different modes of time that are at play. Time has long been a topic of discussion in Shakespearean studies, with Hamlet’s delay attracting special interest from scholars over the years (Lewis 199). Time, as a concept, is important and made central in the play of *Hamlet* by way of the play’s fixation with the duration and experience of it. Throughout the play there are references to, what Johannes Schlegel calls, the “numerical operations” (170) of time. In the play there is an explicit concern with time, temporality and its effects on the self (167). However, while time is made numerical, objective, and blatantly explicit, scholars have found *Hamlet* to be haunted by time-related uncertainties (Jackson 324; Schlegel 167). R. L. P. Jackson further emphasises this uncertainty in time by highlighting that time in *Hamlet* is depicted as constantly shifting between “the precisely and meticulously delineated and the vaguely suggestive, metaphorical and indeterminate” (324) Schlegel exemplifies this by pointing out Hamlet’s inability to use numbers to represent the passage of time correctly and consistently throughout the play (167).

From the beginning of the play onwards, “at least” two different temporalities are presented at once (Jackson 328). These two forms of temporality are often recounted in a similar fashion to Lauren Shohet’s distinction in forms of time: objective and subjective (1). Jackson argues that one representation of time in *Hamlet* finds itself in the form of objective time, or, as he calls it, “real, particularised or present time” (328). The other form of time present he describes as more subjective, deeming it “remembered or experienced past time” (328). Schlegel seconds this distinction in how time is represented in *Hamlet*, acknowledging the shift between the objective, “delineated” time and the more subjective, “indeterminate” forms of time (Jackson qtd. in Schlegel 166). However, the shift between the two forms of time does not hold for all characters, at all times. As Sarah Lewis points out, while for other characters such as Ophelia “time goes right,” time is only out of joint for Hamlet himself (207). This difference between temporalities for characters within the play is explained by Kristine Johanson, who states that all characters have their own “pace” and that time is “artificial, subjective, and individual” (90). *Hamlet* is known as a play that focuses on the individual, which is made central in the use of soliloquies specifically, but highlighted, too, through interactions with others (Greenblatt 1752-1753). This “movement between temporal exactitude and temporal indeterminacy” (Jackson 333) can therefore often be seen in dialogues between Hamlet and other characters, shifting from one person’s temporal experience to that of another.

However, the disunity, or, perhaps more appropriately, the disjunction, of time in *Hamlet* can create confusion. According to Schlegel, different temporalities can often be experienced or viewed as “problematic” (163). The inconsistencies in temporalities could be seen as the result of a not yet fully developed change in how time was perceived, a view that slowly changed in the shift from the Middle Ages to the Early Modern Period (163). In other words, the difficulty in aligning the plural temporalities found in *Hamlet* could be seen as the result of an inconsistency in the view of time (164). However, the difference in temporalities presented can also be viewed, as Northway calls it, as “Shakespeare’s fascination” with the speed and manipulation of time (284). By analysing the experience of time as represented in *Hamlet*, I will illustrate how the temporal contradictions apparent in the play might uncover a deeper view into the effects of grief on a person’s temporal experience. By conflating different timelines and, by doing so, problematizing the notion of time, Shakespeare’s tragedy can be seen as to consciously illustrate an awareness of these different notions of time.

While sources have attributed these conflicting temporalities to both his feigned madness (Schlegel 174) and the quick changes consequent of his father’s death (Jackson 336; Lewis 209), scholars often cite the disjointed nature of time itself as a singular topic of discussion about the play, rather than approaching it as part of the thematics within the play. This focus on the multiplicity of time in *Hamlet*, rather than what the multiplicity might indicate or mean, has been cited before as problematic (Johanson 103). In the following analysis, I will delve deeper into the a possible connection between the disjointed nature of time and the ways in which it joins together the play as a whole thematically from the viewpoint of grief and mourning, in relation to memory. To do so, and narrow down the vast literature available on these broad topics, I will use relevant parts of Harvard University professor Philip Fisher’s *The Vehement Passions*, which has been cited by Princeton University Press as “demonstrating enormous intellect” (“*The Vehement Passions*”) on the topics at hand. In this work Fisher traverses the relevant classic and contemporary works, both of scholarly and literary nature.

Analysis

In the following analysis, two specific forms of time in *Hamlet* will be explored: objective time and subjective time. First, objective time will be established by way of analysing different mentions of numerical operations. This will be followed by an analysis of time as disjointed and how it is shown to be experienced subjectively by Hamlet himself. Subjective time will here be shown to differ from objective time, showing it to be “out of joint” (Shakespeare 1.5.189). This disjunction in time will then be explored and related to the broad themes of mourning and grief, within the wider context of memory.

**1. Objective Time**

The first reference to a numerical operation can be found near the start of the play, where the audience is told by Hamlet that his father is “But two months dead – nay not so much, not two” (1.2.138). He further states that his mother Gertrude had married his uncle Claudius “within a month” (1.2.145) of his father’s death. While these numerical references are possibly affected by Hamlet’s subjective experience as will be further discussed later, other characters also suggest a similar timeline. Claudius claims that the memory of Hamlet’s father’s death still “be green” (1.2.2), suggesting that it only recently occurred. Additionally, later numerical references inhibit this scene from being situated much later than a few months, as mentioned. This thus situates the start of the play around two months after the death of Hamlet’s father.

The scenes stretching from Act 1, scene 1 to Act 2, scene 1 can be said to take place over the course of a handful of days when taking the numerical references into account. Multiple different “night[s]” (1.1.9; 1.2.242; 2.1.84) are mentioned, which would indicate the passing of three to four days.

Between Act 2, scene 1 and Act 2, scene 2 there is a suggested jump in time. The audience first hears of Hamlet’s perceived madness at the end of Act 2, scene 1. In fear of Hamlet’s madness worsening, friends of his are sent for to help him. They arrive at the start of the following scene from Wittenberg, Germany. Assuming that travel takes more than a day, it can thus be assumed that another couple of days have passed. The events following this jump in time seem to be, again, stretched out over a few days.

It is in Act 3, scene 2 that time is once again explicitly mentioned, shedding more light on the amount of days that have passed. In this scene Hamlet laments his mother’s happiness and his father’s death, who he states to believe to have “within’s two hours” (3.2.114). This numerical reference is however clearly tainted by his subjectivity, which is also highlighted in the play by Ophelia correcting him. She states that it has not been two hours since his father’s passing, but rather “twice two months” (3.2.115). This places this scene around two months after the start of the play and four months after the death of Hamlet’s father.

Another jump in time has been made at the start of Act 4, scene 2. Here, the time at which Hamlet is at sea and away from his home is in part skipped over. While, again, the passing of days is not made fully explicit, there are numerical operations at play that are referenced. Hamlet’s uncle Claudius states that it had been “Two months since” (4.4.80) he had a conversation with “a gentleman of Normandy” (4.4.81) whose report “Did Hamlet so envenom with his envy” (4.4.102). This references to yet another two months situates Hamlet at court at that time, meaning that he could not have been away at sea for longer than two months. Whether or not this was just before Hamlet’s departure or earlier, is however not made explicit.

Adding up the different numerical references present throughout the play, one could state that the objective timeline between Hamlet’s father’s death and the end of the play spans between five and seven months. Two of these months are stated to have happened before the start of the play, with the timeline of the play itself thus spanning three to five months.

**2. Subjective Time**

*2.1 Time Out of Joint*

As has been shown in the previous analysis of objective time, there are also references to time in *Hamlet* that do not adhere to the objective timeline as established. This is clearly reflected in Hamlet’s use of the numerical operation of time when he mentioned that his father was only “two hours” (3.2.114) dead. However, Hamlet is not the only person for whom time is shown to be disjointed. The first instance in which time appears out of joint is when the ghost appears at the start of the play. Before the ghost first appears on stage, at the start of Act 1, scene 1, time is spoken about by the characters with certainty and without any indication of it being at odds with objective time: “’Tis now struck twelve – go thee to bed” (1.1.5). However, the following night, after the ghost has first appeared on stage, time is questioned and made to seem uncertain. Hamlet questioning of the hour is answered with just as much doubt by the other characters: “I think it lacks of twelve” (1.4.4). The two scenes, which show similarities to one another in events, are “at odds in [their] apparent temporal looseness” (Jackson 331). This contrast highlights the disjoint in time that occurs when the past, personified in the ghost, appears. Additionally, this disjunction of time is again related to the ghost when discussing the duration of his presence. Horatio states that the ghost stayed as long as “one with moderate hast might tell a hundred,” while Barnardo and Marcellus claim it to be “Longer, longer” (Shakespeare 1.2.237-238). Time can thus be seen as out of joint as a result of the ghost, whose presence represents a “haunting relationship between the past and the present” (Buffery 57).

Due to the presence of the ghost of their dead King, and the relation to the past he represents, time becomes out of joint for those still actively grieving their King. However, as the play and time go on, time only appears to remain disjointed for Hamlet. For most other characters, time can be said to be set right again after the disappearance of the ghost. These characters are only unsure of objective time when it relates to the ghost, showing no hesitance in their perception of time in later instances. However, this is not the case for Hamlet, who continues to see the ghost when others have moved on, remaining disjointed from time.

*2.2 Subjectivity and Soliloquies*

While Hamlet is not the only character who is shown to be disjointed in time in the play, he is the only one for whom time is not set right. Throughout the play he remains in a state of mourning, as suggested by his mother who states that Hamlet remains “forever with thy veilèd lids” (Shakespeare 1.2.70). This mourning, which links him to the past, and his ambitions to avenge his father’s death, which link him to the future, place him in a present that has become disjoint from the objective present at hand. It is this subjective experience of time that is shown to differ from the objective timeline as outlined above.

Hamlet expresses his views on the passing of time already in his first soliloquy, referring to a month as “A little month” (1.2.147). This emphasises that time, albeit a defined numerical operation, can be experienced in a different and subjective manner. Here Hamlet indicates that he perceives time as going fast by adding the adjective “little” (1.2.147), showing that his perception of the duration of a month is not objective. The fact that he expresses this in a soliloquy can also be seen as significant. A soliloquy is defined as “a speech, often of some length, in which a character, alone on the stage, expresses his thoughts and feelings” (Cuddon 665) and addresses only the subject himself or herself. This use of an introspected form of speaking therefore emphasizes the subject and their experience over anything shared or objective. Through his soliloquies, of which he has seven in total, Hamlet is able to reveal what is truly “within” (Jackson 336). However, it should be noted that in the play of *Hamlet*, he is not the only one with his own soliloquies. In Act 3, scene 3, Claudius has a soliloquy of his own, which Hamlet perceives as him praying upon his entrance. Yet, *Hamlet* is known as and famous for being a play that introduces “a whole new kind of literary subjectivity” (Greenblatt 1753), focusing mainly on Hamlet’s inner life, psyche and experiences. For this reason, the link between the subjectivity of soliloquies and the ideas he expresses in them regarding time still amount to the analysis.

Another subtle and yet direct reference to the subjectivity of time is made by Claudius, who tells Laertes to “Take [his] fair hour, [for] time [is] thine” (Shakespeare 1.2.60). While this statement is made in relation to a shared experience of objective time, here time is also made personal. This idea underlines time as being experienced differently and subjectively, in addition to the personal ability to make time one’s own. With this statement Claudius expresses that time is one’s possession and in a way can be shaped by our own thought and action, meaning that one spends time as one pleases and does so subjectively. The fact that this statement is made just before Hamlet’s first entering the stage could be to link the idea of one’s own time with Hamlet’s subjectivity.

By incorporating the idea that time can be experienced and shaped differently and subjectively, the timeline as experienced by Hamlet can be shown to differ from the objective timeline as established. Time as Hamlet experiences it could be said to be both time-bound and timeless (Jackson 328). His perception of time is shaped by hyper-focusing on the moment of his father’s death whilst simultaneously avenging that same death without regard to time or delay. This is shown to result in these two notions of time running together in his mind. Nearing the end of the play, Hamlet can be said to experience time to such a subjective degree that objective time almost becomes unknown to him. In Act 5, scene 1, Hamlet has even become unable to converse correctly in numerical operations. In this scene, also known as the gravedigger’s scene, Hamlet is unable to neither confirm nor deny how much time has passed. Even when it comes to his own age, something “Every fool can tell” (Shakespeare 5.1.131) according to the gravedigger, he is non the wiser. While the accuracy of the dates used by the gravedigger himself has also been questioned for the coincidences they present are unlikely (Schlegel 168), it does underline Hamlet’s own disjoint from time yet again at the end of the play.

*2.3 Time in Mourning*

One way to explain the differences between objective time and time as Hamlet subjectively experiences it, is grounded in Hamlet’s need and inability to mourn his father’s death properly. Other characters are shown to be less affected by grief or to, in the two months leading up to the start of the play, have dealt with their grief and been able to put the past behind them. This is shown to be the case at the start of the play, in Act 1, scene 2, where multiple characters state to have moved on. Claudius is shown to have done so by stating his acceptance of the nature of death, describing the “death of fathers” as a “common theme” of life (Shakespeare 1.2.103-104). His mother, the Queen, also urges Hamlet to “cast [his] nighted color off” (1.2.68), having been able to do so herself. Aside from their words and wishes, Hamlet’s personal period of mourning is also halted by the marriage of his mother and uncle Claudius that came at a by Hamlet perceived “most wicked speed” (1.2.156).

Philip Fisher states in his book *The Vehement Passions* that passions, such as grief and mourning, are processes that take time (64). He cites David Hume, who stated that one’s strongest response and the event that triggers it are always in close proximity in time (qtd. in Fisher 54). However, while the duration of such strong responses are socially marked as appropriate or not, the duration of mourning differs for everyone and is of essence in processing a death (Fisher 64). The natural course of mourning is that of immediate and intense reaction, which slowly, and over a indefinable amount of time, fades until the direct pain can be perceived as a memory (54). However, when applying this to the play, it could be said that Hamlet is never provided the opportunity to naturally progress through these different stages of grief. The cause of this can be ascribed to his mother’s marriage, which he himself expresses to have experienced as quick arrangement, possibly halting his mourning process. He had wanted to be able to mourn longer, expressing that even “beast[s] that wants discourse of reason” (Shakespeare 1.2.150) would have taken more time. The fact that temporal mechanisms such as surprise were also at play in his father’s death, adds to his consequent experience and need for more time (Fisher 55-56).

Fisher states that, when the process of mourning is hastened, it can be experienced in the same manner as not being able to mourn at all (64). On this topic, Sigmund Freud has noted that the duration of an appropriate response, such as grief, is of essence (qtd. in Fisher 65). However, the individual duration of these responses still remains unexplained, unpredictable and highly individual (Fisher 65). This makes it impossible to socially deem a certain timeline appropriate, which is the opposite of what Claudius suggests and urges in *Hamlet*. Due to the social pressure and constraint placed upon Hamlet, it can thus be said that he is unable to mourn the death of his father properly.

In addition to the common melancholy present when losing a parent, the text also allows for the possibility that Hamlet has experienced the death of his father as a traumatic event. Trauma, which Cathy Caruth has expounded as “a distressing experience that defies our capacity to represent or understand it using our traditional models” (Brillenburg Wurth and Rigney 409), can therefore be recognized as being at hand in the play. The model of time, such as traditionally used, could thus as a result be altered for Hamlet. Therefore, in addition to Hamlet’s before mentioned hastened mourning process, Hamlet might be unable to “place [his father’s death] in memory” (370), as is common when having experienced a traumatic event. The resulting continuous presence of the event in his mind (370) would only indicate an even greater need for time to mourn than he, and traditionally, is provided.

Seeing that it is suggested and expressed by Hamlet that he is unable to mourn his father properly and in time, the process and chance of the traumatic death of his father fading into memory is also possibly halted. Hamlet is never provided the chance to deal with the trauma of his father’s death, diminishing the chance of it fading into the background and making room for other events and responses. As a result, it could be said that the death of Hamlet’s father becomes all-consuming to him, holding him in the past and, as a result, disjointing his experience of time.

**3. Effects of Temporality in Hamlet**

The fact that Hamlet is unable to properly mourn his father can thus be seen as essential when analysing the play in relation to time. Grief is very much foregrounded in our experience of time (Fisher 57). However, by way of foregrounding the experience of time as done in *Hamlet*, it can also be said that the theme of grief is made central.

In *Hamlet* the use of time can be viewed topologically, with the early modern stage “linking different times” more often, making time, as part of the space, something flexible and complex (Habermann and Witen 2-3). Time is not used as merely a necessity in *Hamlet*, but rather as an active and engaging part of the story itself. The foregrounding of time can be seen as thematic and as a tool used to underline the process of mourning. By way of showing the difference in objective time and subjective time as experienced by Hamlet, the play can be said to put emphasis on the reason as to why Hamlet experiences time differently from other characters.

When viewing Hamlet in light of this analysis, a new dimension in the themes of grief and mourning already at hand in the play is emphasised. This allows for more insight into the process of mourning and illustrates the importance of mourning properly and at one’s own pace. In the play the concept of time functions in such a way that the experience of time and how one can become disjointed from it are made central. This can be seen as to add another, more psychological insight to the story of the Prince of Denmark.

This analysis brings forth an added value in that it provides a possible explanation as to why time is sometimes perceived as incoherent in *Hamlet*. As previously mentioned, Schlegel has argued that the different temporalities in the play can be experienced or viewed as “problematic,” even suggesting that the inconsistencies could have resulted from an undeveloped view of time in Early Modern Period (163). This analysis illustrates how the different temporalities in *Hamlet* are not problematic but can be seen as to enhance the thematic experience of the play. This is done so by showing the effects of grief on Hamlet, using his experience and perception of time to exemplify this. The temporal contradictions apparent in the play can be seen as to uncover a deeper view into the effects of grief on a person’s temporal experience.

Conclusion

The concept of time as presented in *Hamlet* can be seen as to function in a way that adds to the experiences of the themes of grief and mourning that are central to the story. *Hamlet*, as a play, showcases a literary subjectivity that mainly focuses on Hamlet’s inner life, psyche and experiences. This subjective experience is emphasised when analysing temporality in *Hamlet* by looking at the multiple modes of time.

The first mode of time analysed, objective time, has been constructed by looking at references to numerical operations that are made by multiple characters other than Hamlet in a consistent manner. From these references a timeline has been established that spans between five and seven months, with two months taking place before the start of the play. Subjective time as experienced by Hamlet has been shown to differ from this timeline, for he is unable to use the numerical operations that structure objective time in a correct manner.

To explain the differences in times in *Hamlet*, the analysis has shown that Hamlet’s subjective experience of time can be linked to grief and mourning. The presence of the past, which in the play takes up the form of the ghost, has been shown to disjoint time temporarily for multiple characters in the play. However, for Hamlet the past, and subsequent disjoint in time, remains in the present. I have suggested that this can be linked to his halted mourning process, which leaves him unable to place the possibly traumatic experience of his father’s passing in the realm of memories. Hamlet is, because of this, unable to move on from the past and remains disjointed in time.

This suggested relation between subjective time and mourning illustrates how the different temporalities at play in *Hamlet* should not be viewed as problematic. They can rather be viewed as adding to the subjective experience centralized in the play by underlining how the themes of grief and mourning affect Hamlet subjectively differently than they do other characters. The different modes of time contrast one another, drawing attention, again, to the subjectivity in *Hamlet* and the importance of time in mourning.

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