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*Linguistic and cultural analysis of “living conditions” word-group in “Hamlet”  
by William Shakespeare*

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**Abstract:** The paper is dedicated to textual and cultural analysis of several elements of the word-group “living conditions” in Shakespeare’s Hamlet. Housing conditions are represented by the key word *castle* and includes elements describing outer and inner elements. Their functional load is defined through the action of the play. The second group of *clothing* is discussed within the context of Elizabethan rules and traditions as well as its function as description of the characters in the play.

To put the study in the general frame of English vocabulary, words under study are looked up in popular dictionaries and older meaning is compared with the new development where possible.

#### **Аннотация.**

Настоящее исследование посвящено изучению текстового и лингвокультурологического значения двух сегментов тематической группы «условия жизни» в пьесе У.Шекспира «Гамлет». Тема «жилище» представлена лексему «замок» и включает как наружные, так и внутренние элементы. Их смысловая нагрузка выясняется через анализ действия пьесы, связанного с описываемыми локациями. Вторая группа – «одежда» исследуется в контексте жизненных правил Елизаветинской эпохи, а также в связи с описанием персонажей пьесы. Для создания более общей картины исследуемые лексемы просматриваются по надежным словарям для выяснения значения и его эволюции там, где это возможно.

**Ключевые слова:** Гамлет, анализ текста, условия жизни, жилище, замок, одежда, Елизаветинская эпоха

**Key-words:** Hamlet, textual analysis, living conditions, housing, castle, clothes, Elizabethan age

## **Introduction:**

The aim of this study is the linguistic and cultural analysis of the textual elements that describe living conditions in the text's play of Hamlet. As well as to compare these elements under study with the present day meanings presented in different English dictionaries. Finally the general overview gives a certain idea about the lifestyle in Elizabethan era.

Living conditions or lifestyle is an inherent aspect of human existence, changing in time together with the evolution of human civilization. No wonder that the notion or concept of living conditions is the subject of study for various academic fields, such as ethnography, sociology, art history, cultural studies etc. Linguistics is not an exception in its interest to the living conditions word-group or thematic field, mostly because it requires a multifaceted analysis allowing for semantic, functional or linguo-cultural approach. This inter-subjectivity and importance of the topic demonstrates scientific relevance of the present study.

The aim of the study is to define the role of the group in question in the text of the play, in the action of the play, in the frame of the culture of the period and to see its incorporation in reliable present-day dictionaries. This requires the use of several methods of analysis, semantic, contextual, constructing the textual meaning through the function in the action of the play, projecting the general cultural information (of Elizabethan era) upon the use in the play.

We see the linguistic novelty, or our achievement in the fact that this combination of the thematic group, the play by Shakespeare, the elements of Elizabethan time all together has not yet been studied in a complex way.

We can classify the "living conditions" concept as it is presented in the play in the following lexical sets: housing, clothing, food and drinks, dishes and utensils, tools, weapon, musical instruments, customs. Each may be further divided into subsets, some groups being more representative than others. *Housing* contains

types of buildings (ex. Castle), adjacent structures (ex. platform, orchard), inner division (ex. hall, chamber, closet), interior decoration (ex. Arras, mirror) and furniture (table, shelf). Clothing may be male and female, it also includes head-gear and footwear, it may be military ammunition or actors' costumes.

Out of the long inventory we have chosen for our presentation two groups: housing and clothing.

These lexical sets have different roles in the play and allow for various interpretations. Some semantic segments are actually discussed by the characters in the play, thus indicating their cultural functions in the society of the period, which contributes a lot to the general cultural and linguistic aim of this research. Others are only indicated in the stage remarks and require semantic and textual reconstruction. In other words, lexemes under study are closely linked with situations – in the text, in the life of the time. They continue to be linked with situations of present-day use because Shakespeare is one of the most read and staged authors both in England and worldwide. The reference between the word form and its meaning may have changed, words may have become obsolete or different in meaning, or moved to the lexical periphery, or remain as dialectal words. There is a relevant quotation from David Crystal

“It is a commonplace that Shakespeare gives us a remarkable picture of the range of social situations in Elizabethan England. What is less often remarked is that each of these situations would have linguistically distinctive. Just as today we have scientific, advertising, and broad casting English, so then there was legal, religious, and courtly English — to name just a few of the styles which are to be found. In addition to archaisms and neologisms, hard words and easy words, there is speech representing different degrees of formality, intimacy, social class, and regional origins. In short, we encounter in the plays by William Shakespeare most of the language varieties of Early Modern English.”.[Crystal 2008:22]

Crystal gives a general overview, which is relevant for our research only in part, but during my analysis I kept in mind the scope of possibilities and found some in my material as well.

## **1. HOUSING**

Mentioned in the play are four types of lexemes that can be attributed to the heading Housing:

1. The building proper: castle, house
2. External attachments to the castle: platform, orchard, churchyard
3. Internal parts of the castle: rooms, halls, stairs, a closet, a passage, a chamber
4. Furniture and interior decoration: table, shelf, arras, bed, etc.

Here, in this paper we are not discussing the fourth section: furniture and interior decoration as this topic has been studied in detail in [Мячинская 2016]

### **1.1. Types of buildings:**

#### **1.1.1. The Castle:**

##### **A) The Castle in cultures and time:**

A castle is a type of fortified structure built in Europe and the Middle East in the past. Usually it is designed as private fortified residence of lords or nobility. This is distinct from palace, which is not fortified.

During approximately 900 years that castles were built, they developed a great variety of forms and acquired many different features. Some traits are typical and are always present in the structure of a castle, such as curtain walls or arrow slits that were commonplace for defense and privacy. In its evolution, the castle as an

architectural type became much safer, offered better protection, more defensible and more comfortable.

Nowadays, castles are designed for prestige, for fantasy, and to embellish a romantic view of the premises where rich people enjoy their life. Castles of old are still there, belonging to kings, queens, the highest upper classes. Some castles are open for public, at least on certain days, so that we can envision their real structure and imagine the life that used to flow inside their walls. Castles, for that reason, is something quite realistic and do not need much theoretical reconstruction.

### **B) “Castle” in Dictionaries:**

The word *castle* is defined in English dictionaries as a large building or set of buildings fortified for defense; with thick, high walls built to protect people during wars and battles. Built mostly of wood or masonry, castles were located on a raised site and were sometimes surrounded by a ditch or moat. In the past, especially in the Middle Ages a castle was built by a ruler or a king or a prince and it was the strongest part of the fortifications of a medieval town.[Cambridge, Collins, Oxford dictionaries]

### **C) The Castle in Shakespeare’s Hamlet:**

The scene of action in Shakespeare’s Hamlet is Elsinore Castle. On the front page after the list of characters it is stated: *Scene: Elsinore* (even without “castle”) and then repeated in stage remarks before almost every act, sometimes designated as “The same”. No description of design, size or decoration of the castle is given in words, yet it is one of the most famous places in the world as it houses the great tragedy of prince Hamlet, the tragedy of murder, incest, revenge and madness (real or feigned). Elsinore has become famous together with the phrase ‘Hamlet, prince of Denmark’. It is not just a geographical name but an important element of human culture, history, a symbol and a legend. But this is what the name has become,

because originally it was a geographical name which Shakespeare chose for certain reasons.

The name of Elsinor was not the real name of the castle; the real name was Kronborg and Kronborg is the Anglicized name of the surrounding town of *Helsingør*. Despite its strategic importance, Kronborg castle was built to be both a fortress and a palace. Its richly decorated facade, with colorful stonework and carvings was popular during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance era. *Helsingør*, losing its initial h-sound gave *Elsinore*. The main aims for choosing ‘Elsinore Castle’ are that William Shakespeare wants to correlate real places, real events which were in the United Kingdom with the plot of the play. On the other hand Shakespeare wants to create a suitable castle for the play’s theme that deals with treachery and revenge, a play in which it seems almost impossible for the hero’s revenge to know exactly what is true and what is not. [whc.unesco.org]

1. 2 External parts attached to the castle: platform, orchard, graveyard

### 1.2.1 The Platform

The first stage remark of the play<sup>1</sup>:

- 1) “*Elsinore. A platform before the castle. Francisco at his post. Enter Bernardo*”. [1,1]

In another edition of the play:

- 2) “*Elsinore Castle, The platform of the watch. Enter Bernardo and Francisco, two sentinels (from opposite directions).*” [ (1968) 1,1]

The existence of different versions of the text is not an unusual thing, deviations are small and do not affect the meaning, It is a well-known fact that Shakespeare did not write down his plays, he staged them. The English term for the author of a

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<sup>1</sup> In examples from 2010 the year of publication is not mentioned in brackets.

play - playwright – means a master, a creator of plays, a worker, of the same pattern a shipwright or wheelwright. So it was normal that the author had no written, registered version of a play. Actors, spectators, friends may have recorded aural performances in writing. Hence the famous (or notorious) controversial discussion of Shakespeare's authorship. Anyway, we discuss variations when it is appropriate.

Two sentinels are explicitly indicated in the second version, and from the conversation between Francisco and Bernardo [1,1], we understand that they are both guards perform their duties; they are the watch. This makes clear that the platform serves a military function, which agrees with the definition of a castle as a buildings fortified for defense.

The platform is mentioned in Hamlet many times; why is it important? The word *platform* is very important in the play because it has several functions for the plot.

English dictionaries define a *platform* as 'a flat surface that is raised higher than the floor or ground and that people stand on when performing or speaking.' So function of platform is to perform, to present, to speak, to send a message to the audience. [Cambridge, Collins, Oxford dictionaries]

William Shakespeare mentioned this word many times in his play; at the beginning he wants to show a real warlike purpose of the castle by the presence of sentinels on their guarding duty. Armed soldiers are there at the platform to fight enemies if they appear and protect people living in Elsinore castle.

Another function in the next scene is to show the first appearance of the ghost of Hamlet's father, and the first meeting between father and son.

The last function which is very important is to discover the truth, the truth of how Hamlet's father died, and this encounter between them plays a great role in the play.



The action of the platform is accompanied by circumstantial descriptions which can be deduced from the speech of the guards: darkness, cold, calmness, isolated place, midnight)

- 3) *“the air bites shrewdly; it is very cold...it is nipping and an eager air...I think it lacks of twelve”*. [1,4]

Thus Shakespeare created a proper atmosphere for the ghost appearing.

Each fragment of action on the platform in this play presents a certain concept and we can see that the play of Hamlet is full of human concepts; there is fear and suspicion in the first appearance: both the guards and Hamlet are afraid of the ghost, their suspicion, especially Hamlet's who wants to know what the ghost wants from him. There is pain and shock; Hamlet is shocked to pain by the betrayal of his uncle. When he learns that Claudius killed his father to get the throne and his mother in addition, he is ready for revenge: he makes up his mind to avenge his uncle. There is also loyalty: Hamlet's loyalty to his father and Hamlet's friends' loyalty to him. So each stage of action on the platform teaches us – readers and spectators- a lot about life, shows various sides of human experience. In my view, this play is the plot of our life now, all of us live through the same experiences of fear, suspicion, love, betrayal, loyalty, revenge and courage.

### **1.2.2. Orchard:**

Orchard is defined in English dictionaries as “an area of land where fruit trees but not orange trees or other citrus trees are grown. [Cambridge, Collins, Oxford dictionaries]

There are very few medieval pictures of orchards, but documents reveal that they were often bounded by walls, hedges, wattle and sometimes by moats. The orchard in “Hamlet” is not a scene of actual action; it is part of the ghost's story.

- 4) “Now, Hamlet, hear. 'Tis given out that, sleeping in my orchard, A serpent stung me” [1,5]

Evidently the orchard is part of the Castle, most probably an annex.

The ghost reveals that he was murdered by his brother, when he slept in his orchard. Old Hamlet had his life, his crown and his queen stolen from him all at once. He died without a chance to pray or take the last rites, so that now, instead of being in heaven, he is burning in the fires of purgatory.

“Shakespeare displays the betrayal of humanity and how it took place, through presenting the orchard with the sleeping King (Hamlet’s father) as a kind of innocent and peaceful state. It is worth mentioning that Claudius is described via the metaphor of the serpent, through the deceit of the serpent, through using imagery designed to evoke the Biblical Garden of Eden where, in the Book of Genesis. It also reminds of the murder of Abel by his brother Cain in Genesis. These Biblical allusions would have resonated deeply with Shakespeare’s audiences, imparting even greater gravity to the ghost’s story”. [cor.coursehero.com].

### **1.2.3. The churchyard**

The churchyard (graveyard, cemetery) is the scene of action in act [5, 1] following the stage remark: “The same, a churchyard.” The same refers to the previous act where the place of action is Elsinore, which means that the churchyard is also part of the castle, outer part, another annex.

In the play it is not a quite place, not an abode of eternal peace and tranquility.

A churchyard is a place where two most extreme opposites – life and death- meet. In “Hamlet” this scene is also full of controversy. Two gravediggers, sextons, (called for some reason *clowns* in the play) are engaged in the wittiest conversation full of puns, jokes and unusual ideas. They represent a social class completely

different from the high class people inside the walls of the castle, i.e. low working class. Shakespeare is a great master of social linguistic discrimination and identification; he uses different vocabulary, idioms, grammar, even syntax and rhetoric means to show the social status of his dramatic characters. To have people speaking the way the two gravediggers speak required a place like a graveyard. Shakespeare exploits its potential as an appropriate location for out-of-the-ordinary things, thoughts and words to the full.

To counter-balance their easy talk and merry singing, they are digging a grave for Ophelia, the saddest moment of the play - two opposites come together. And again, in their jocular manner they are discussing the essence and implications of committing a suicide.

Hamlet appears on the site returning from his interrupted voyage to England together with Horatio, a true friend. The atmosphere of the graveyard puts him in a mood of meditation about the fickleness of human life, about vain ambitions of people, who will ultimately find themselves in a grave, "meat for worms".

Hamlet changes his usual conversational style, lapses into "legal verbiage with punning effect to emphasize the irony of the macabre situation" [(1968) 5, 1] or, to the contrary, uses slang and colloquialisms.

- 5) *"A politician, a courtier, my Lord Such-and-such all go to "my Lady Worm's, chapless, and knocked about the mazzard with a sexton's spade" [5, 1]*

Chapless – without the lower jaw, mazzard – head (slang)

Here he pronounces the famous phrase,

- 6) "Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio" [5,1].

But more important than the change of his linguistic behavior in agreement with the situation of the churchyard, of course, are his positivist materialistic

philosophical stances on the futility of human grandeur and on the eternal order of things *governing* the world.

- 7) "*Alexander [the Great, of Macedonia] died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth to dust; the dust is earth; and of the earth we make loam; and why of that loam (whereto he was converted) might they not stop a beer barrel?"* [5,1]

The churchyard in "Hamlet" is a place where emotions run wild, bare and blazing; where words that could not be said elsewhere are pronounced. Hamlet speaks of his love for Ophelia:

- 8) "*I loved Ophelia. Forty thousand brothers could not (with their quantity of love) Make up my sum.*" [5,1].

This is followed by Hamlet's most passionate monologue on his love (lines 245-285).

Thus, the churchyard in the play is not merely a location, where sorrow is, typically, expressed; here it is a concentration of opposing forces, a burning pot of emotions, not actually relevant for the development of the plot, containing little action as such.

### **1.3. Parts of buildings, such as room, chamber, closet, hall:**

#### **1.3.1. Room:**

William Shakespeare mentioned the word *room* in the play of Hamlet about 12 times, each time with a different import, a different significance.

The lexeme "Room" is defined in Oxford English Dictionary as "A part or division of building enclosed by walls, floor, and ceiling". [oxf.oxforddictionaries.com]

In Collins dictionary the word *room* is defined as "a countable noun: is one of the separate sections or parts of the inside of a building. Rooms have their own walls,

ceilings, floors, and doors, and are usually used for particular activities. You can refer to all the people who are in a room as the room”. [coll.collinsdictionary.com]

### 1.3.2:

#### A) Room of state:

In the play the word *room* appears in the stage remark to scene 2 of the first act with an attribute “a room of state in the castle”.

In another edition of the play [Wright and LaMar 1959] this same stage remark reads, “Elsinore castle, An audience chamber”. So, it is evident that a *room of state*, *an audience chamber* are synonyms to a *great hall*.

A great hall is defined in English dictionaries as a “main room of a royal palace and castle in medieval times”. [Cambridge, Collins, Oxford dictionaries]

Apparently *a room of state* denotes a *great hall* for various activities, discussions, negotiations and for receiving guests. The word-group *audience chamber* is more informative, though *audience*, judging by the contents of the scene in the play, simply means talks of the King or with the King, “in the presence of the monarch”. What is clear from the comparison of the three word-groups is that room, chamber and hall are synonyms and, at least in this situation, do not carry any connotations or differences in their lexical meaning. What may differentiate them is their distribution within their collocations, i.e. they are hardly interchangeable in the combination with the attribute.

Shakespeare didn’t describe this room; nothing is said about its design, size, there is no indication of furniture.

- 9) “[A room of state in the castle]. Flourish. Enter the King, Queen, Hamlet, Polonius, Laertes, Voltemand, Cornelius. Lords and attendants”[I,2]

The remark mentions quite a number of people in this room; it must be a place of big size, which means it is not a simple room but it's a great hall, a great hall in castles in medieval time. A significant word here is Flourish. It is a musical piece of very energetic and loud sound that is played by trumpets to indicate somebody or something of very great importance appearing or (here) departing. This stresses the solemnity and significance of the situation in the room of state,

In the Middle Ages, as well as in later times, at the times of Shakespeare the great hall is the main room of royal palaces, castles or in a large manor house, and in the country houses of the 16th and early 17th centuries. Great halls were found especially in England, Scotland and France, but there were similar rooms also found in some other European countries. At the time, the room would simply have been referred to as the "hall" unless the building also had a secondary hall, but the term "great hall" has been prevalent for surviving rooms of this type for several centuries to distinguish them from the others type of hall found in post-medieval houses.

More stage remarks at the beginning of a scene, (four times) indicate "a room in the castle" (2:2, 3:1, 4:1, 5), without further details about these rooms. The type or purpose of a particular room may be deduced from the action that is taking place there. The most demonstrative example for this is [3:3]; "a room in the castle" here denotes the chapel. The author describes the king when he is praying alone in this room.

The place where a king or queen can pray may be a chapel, especially in a castle like this and at the time of the action of the play. A small room, usually decked out in the same way as a small medieval church, may serve for that purpose.

This room (in 3, 3), and what is happening in it, are very important factors in the play, for two reasons. Firstly, the king is confessing in his crime and asking forgiveness. Secondly: Shakespeare shows the exchange of roles of the King and Hamlet. Hamlet is in a strong position because he has found a suitable moment to

avenge for his father when his uncle is busy with confessing and asking forgiveness. Usually when a person wants to confess in a prayer and ask forgiveness he is here at his weakest moments. But, at the same time, he is clearing of his sins, his soul is no longer as dark as it used to be, which makes his position stronger. Hamlet rejects the idea of revenge for this very reason: after confession his uncle's soul will not go to hell [Abbas2017]. Thus Hamlet is in the weak, he cannot follow his intention. All this fills a neutral notion of "a room in the castle" with intensive and complicated meaning, as if an empty vessel is filled with strong ale.

Linguistically, we notice that all the uses of the word *room* in the text have the same conceptual meaning as a space enclosed by walls, floor and ceiling, but they are different in pragmatic meaning which depends upon the action in the play.

### **1.3.3-Hall:**

The word hall is defined in English dictionaries as:

- a) An entrance; the room just inside the main entrance of a house, apartment, or other building that leads to other rooms and usually to the stairs:
- b) a building; a building or large room used for events involving a lot of people.  
[Cambridge, Collins, Oxford dictionaries]

William Shakespeare mentions *hall* in the text of the play four times, he uses hall as entrance and as a building room. Shakespeare mentions a hall as an entrance three times, in [5, 2]. Shakespeare doesn't mention details that may indicate a hall as an entrance or as a room, the situation of each usage shows if it was an entrance or a room.

In the stage remark to [5, 2] a "hall in the castle" indicates a room where Horatio and Hamlet are in a small space not enough to accommodate a group of people.

Remarkable is the use of the words *a hall in the castle* in the stage remark to [3, 2], a scene, where the visiting actors are going to perform presenting a play on the murder of Gonzago.

- 10) “*Sound a flourish. Enter Trumpets and Kettledrums. Danish march. Enter King, Queen, Polonius, Ophelia, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and other Lords attendant with the Guard carrying torches*”[ 3,2]

This is the most pompous and impressing appearance of the characters in the whole play and the most numerous attendance. The acting to be performed by the players is the pinnacle of the action in “Hamlet” – prince Hamlet is to know whether the Ghost was telling the truth and the King is a murderer. All this indicates to the size and grandness of the hall and equals it to the Audience chamber in 1.2.1

#### **1.3.4. Chamber:**

English dictionaries define chamber as a room designed and equipped for a particular purposes, a room in a private house, especially a bedroom (archaic or poetic).[ Cambridge, Collins, Oxford dictionaries]

#### **Bed Chambers in Elizabethan times**

The room in the castle called the Lords and Ladies Chamber, or the Great Chamber, was intended for use as a bedroom and used by the lord and lady of the castle - it also afforded some privacy for the noble family of the castle. This type of chamber was originally a partitioned room which was added to the end of the Great Hall. The Lords and Ladies chamber was subsequently situated on an upper floor when it was called the solar. The Solar gave more than privacy than a chamber more and was more isolated. There the lords could be alone and away from noise, hustle, bustle and cooking smells.[ [cast.castlesandmanorhouses.com](http://cast.castlesandmanorhouses.com)]



William Shakespeare mentions the word chamber in the text of his play two times; “*lady’s chamber*” and “*chamber*”.

- 11) “*now get you to my lady's chamber and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favor she must come.*” [5,1]
- 12) “*will you do this, keep close within your chamber.*” [4,5]

### **1.3.5. Closet:**

The word closet in English dictionaries is defined as a cupboard or a small room with a door, used for storing things, especially clothes. [Cambridge, Collins, Oxford dictionaries] But Shakespeare uses it to denote a small private room. In Elizabethan age, this word referred to a larger room in which a person could sit and read in private; but now refers to a small room in general. In Elizabethan England, such a private retreat would most likely be termed a closet, the most recent in a series of developments in which people of means found ways to withdraw from the public life of the household as it was lived in the late medieval great hall. [cast.castlesandmanorhouses.com]

Shakespeare mentions this word in his play two times: one in “*queen’s closet*” [3, 4] and second one in “*Ophelia’s closet*” [2, 1], in both cases using the word closet to denote a private room not just used for sleeping but for reading or performing various activities. The reason behind that is that Shakespeare focuses on conversations between Hamlet and his mother and Hamlet and Ophelia. In the first case, in her private place, he revealed the truth of his mother. She had sinned mightily in marrying her husband’s brother and Hamlet had discovered how his father died. It was somewhat a sensitive and personal case, it was not suitable for Hamlet to reveal this in other parts of Elsinore castle.

In the second case Hamlet revealed his love to Ophelia in her closet, also in her private place.

### **1.3.6. The Chapel:**

A chapel is defined in English dictionaries as a small building or room used for Christian worship in a school, prison, hospital, or large private house. [Cambridge, Collins, Oxford dictionaries]

In older times the room in the castle called the chapel was intended for prayer and used by all members of the castle household. A chapel was commonly close to the great hall. It was often built two stories high, with the nave divided horizontally. The lord's family and pillars of society sat in the upper part and the servants occupied the lower part of the chapel. Today, the owners of many castles and manor houses will allow people to get married in their castle chapels with the reception then taking place in the castle. [ [cast.castlesandmanorhouses.com](http://cast.castlesandmanorhouses.com)]

William Shakespeare mentions the word chapel in [4, 2] when Rosencrantz asked Hamlet about Polonius's body in order to bear it into the chapel to make a funeral ceremony and bury the body.

The notion of housing is changing through times, in design, size, shape and even names of rooms. Rooms of the old are largely recognizable by their modern counterparts in more modest homes. Kitchens are still kitchens.

The main reason behind this is cultural development. For example, bed chambers now are known as bedrooms; halls have become entrance halls and dining rooms have taken over one of their main functions. Solars, cabinets have become sitting rooms, libraries and dressing rooms. Ice houses have been replaced by refrigerators. Despite these changes each of them still has the same conceptual meaning across times and across cultures. Bedrooms still carry the same purpose for sleeping and kitchens for cooking food,...etc.

## **2. CLOTHING**

## **2.1. Clothing in the English culture from 14th to 16th century:**

Simon Newman is a writer in history of middle Ages, he describes the clothing which worn by men and women in the Middle and Renaissance times differed depending on the occupation, social standing, and climate. In most of Europe the winter months can be very cold, particularly in damp and drafty stone castles and poorly houses. Because of the changing climate, most individuals in medieval Europe dressed in layers through winter and summer. [the.thefinertimes.com]

Despite the differences and variety in appearance of clothing which depend on the different social class these are still unified by the themes of practicality.

The style of clothing of Elizabethan age is frequently found in Shakespearean English, a lot of terms are still in use nowadays with essentially the same meaning (such as apron, hat, cuff, garters, skirt, stockings).

The outfit worn by both men and women in that era were not made of one single garment. In fact, various pieces together formed the entire outfit. Men and women were not allowed to wear whatever they liked. It did not matter how wealthy they were- the color, fabric and material of their clothes were dictated by their rank, status or position and this was enforced by the English law. These laws about clothing in the Elizabethan era were called “Sumptuary laws” or “the Status of apparels”. These laws were designed to maintain the strict class structure which had started in the early medieval era with the Feudal system. Fashion played a major role during the Elizabethan age; it reflects the cultural function of the English society at that time. One's rank and social status affected the kind of clothing one wore. The higher the rank, the more choice of clothes, materials, and colors was available to a person. People who belonged to the lower rank of society wore clothing made of materials like wool, sheepskin, and linen. They were not allowed to wear the materials of high ranks clothes. The colors that could be worn by them were brown, beige, yellow, orange, russet, green, gray, and blue. Women at that time had to wear gowns, hats, collars, corsets, underwear, ruffs and shoes,

while men at that time usually wore doublets, breeches, collars, underwear, hats, ruffs and shoes. [eli.elizabethan-era.org.uk]

## 2.2 Clothing in the play of Hamlet:

In the text of “Hamlet” the clothing aspect concerns mainly male outfit and describes pieces of clothing from top to footwear; words of general meaning belonging to the same semantic field as the head-word are also used. This lexical set has different roles in the play and allows for various interpretations.

### 2.2.1 General/overall

The following text is Ophelia’s description of Hamlet’s appearance in his state of mental or emotional disturbance.

13) *“My lord, as I was sewing in my closet, Lord Hamlet, with his doublet all unbraced; No hat upon his head; his stockings fouled,*

*Ungartered, and down-gyvèd to his ankle;*

*Pale as his shirt; his knees knocking each other”[1,2]*

This description gives some information concerning what element of attire men of the time wore. He wore a doublet, which is the chief upper garment worn by men from the 15th to the 17th century. It was a close-fitting, waisted, padded jacket worn over a shirt. Also he wore stockings, a thin close-fitting piece of clothing that covers a woman’s leg and is worn by men in the past, also known as hose, especially in a historical context. He also wore a shirt, which is a garment having sleeves and worn on the upper part of the body, often under a coat, jacket, or other garments and is typically worn by a man. That is exactly a male outfit in the Elizabethan time; here we notice that the fashion of that time and this lexical set have a cultural and linguistic role in the play.

Hamlet in this text does not look like a prince of Denmark: there is no hat on his head, his shirt is unbuttoned, and his stockings are dirty, undone, and down around his ankles. He violated laws of clothing at that time, and this is cultural role. In this text Shakespeare shows the English culture by statuses apparels laws, these laws don't allow for everyone to wear whatever he wants, and that is the point, Hamlet wants to rebel against his society, he thus reflects his psychological disorder, his mourning, sorrow and sadness of his father death and his anger at his uncle and his mother.

In the English Language Culture dictionary, there is an enlargement of the definitions of this word-set with present-day meanings. Some words were used in the past or specific period and now we don't use them, for example *stocking* in the past was used both by men and women, now we can see it used only by women, and only for certain, very specific uses by men. A bonnet in the past was used by men, women and children and through time changed in shape and became mainly used for infants. That change depends on many circumstances like development of fashion. The development of our daily life from being complex to becoming easier is also relevant; with modern facilities life has become more comfortable than it used to be in the older times.

### **2.3. Headgear:**

Caps and hats were an essential part of clothing for men in the Elizabethan age and played an important role in the fashion of the day and developed quickly through times. In the past caps and hats together with other garment of a certain type indicated a person's job or station in life or a position in the society. The taller the hat the more important the man.

In the play, lexemes of this type are often to be found in figurative, metaphorical and idiomatic use.

- 14) “*Antiquity forgot, custom not known, The ratifiers and props of every word—They cry, “Choose we! Laertes shall be king!” Caps, hands, and tongues applaud it to the clouds: “Laertes shall be king, Laertes king!”*”[4,5]

“Caps” stands together with *hands* and *tongues* instead of a “head” because a tradition of throwing head gear into the air by people of the crowd to express their delight, admiration, to greet passionately is meant here. So, the use is not exactly figurative but it means a contextual shift from the material objective meaning to an abstract meaning of ‘delight’.

- 15) “*A very ribbon in the cap of youth, Yet needful too, for youth no less becomes the light and careless livery that it wears than settled age his sables and his weeds, importing health and graveness.*” [4,7]

English dictionaries define *cap and hat* as a soft flat covering of the head that has a curved part sticking out at the front (a peak or visor) and is worn especially as part of a uniform: an officer’s cap or a head covering which is a sign of your position. The word *hat* is defined as a covering for the head, typically having a wide flat bottom part and a higher central part. Hat brims were often turned up and fastened to the crown with a jeweled brooch or other ornament. Hat bands using scarves made of expensive fabric such as silk were often used as a form of decoration.

In 1571 a law was passed which ordered everyone over the age of six to wear a woolen cap on Sundays and holidays in order to help England’s wool trade. The upper classes were excused from obeying this law. In my view it was because wool was allowed only for lower ranks of society. So it’s not suitable for a person of upper rank to wear a hat or other items of clothes made of wool.

Shakespeare mentions the word *hat* in act 4 scene 5. In the collocation a “cockle hat”: adorned with a cockle shell, a symbol of pilgrimage to the shrine of St. James of Compostela.

16) *“How can you tell the difference between your true lover and some other?  
Your true one wears a pilgrim’s hat and a pilgrim’s sandals and staff.”* [4.5]

A hat in this case indicates something pure, mortal.

The last item is **bonnet**.

It is defined in dictionaries as a type of a hat which has ties under the chin, worn by babes and women in the past or a flat brimless cap worn by men. Some dictionaries mention that this type of hat is worn by men and boys in Scotland, especially soldiers. Before the 17<sup>th</sup> century this word for male headgear was replaced by *cap* in English except in Scotland. [eli.elizabethan-era.org.uk]

17) *“I will receive it, sir, with all diligence of spirit. Put your bonnet to his right use. ‘Tis for the head.”* [5,2]

## 2.5. Military attire:

Scene 1 and 2 of the first act give material for understanding the role of military attire in the play – all connected with the appearance of the Ghost.

*“A figure like your father, Armed at point exactly, cap-a-pe,”*

*“’Tis very strange.”*

*“Arm’d, say you?”*

*“Arm’d my lord.”*

*“From top to toe?”*

*“My lord, from head to foot.”*

*“O, yes, my lord; he wore his beaver up.”*

*“My father’s spirit in arms. All is not well.*

*I doubt some foul play. Would the night were come!*

*Till then sit still, my soul. Foul deeds will rise,*

*Though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes." Hamlet [1, 2]*

Military attire must be important for the times of the play but Shakespeare gives no particular description of it. Instead, he mentions it in connection with the ghost several times. "He is armed at point", which means "fully armed",

"his beaver is up" = visor of his armor, this, evidently means that he is not ready for a battle but for a talk. That he is armed from head to bottom, or, in French, cap-a-pe is significant for the character as they stress it several times. Here, we also get a commentary to the importance of this description as Hamlet expects the Ghost to speak of deadly things –"foul play": treachery, murder. Of course, these are elements of the plot of the play, but it is demonstrative that Shakespeare chooses to describe a military form to introduce the topic.

## **2.6. Mourning clothes:**

Also we can notice that William Shakespeare mentions a unique cultural concept that exists across the world and times, that is the concept of mourning see [Abbas 2018]. Mourning is described clearly in the text; it is noticeable that Shakespeare described mourning dresses only with Hamlet. He wears nighted colour and inky cloak. Hamlet reflects his sorrow and sadness for his father's death in many scenes,

*18)"tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother, nor customary suits of solemn black, nor windy suspiration of forced breath, no, nor the fruitful river in the eye, .....these indeed seem"[1.2.]*

Hamlet shows to the Queen that with all symbols of sadness and sorrow neither his black clothes, his heavy sighs, his weeping, his down cast eyes nor any other display of grief can show what he really feels, all these things seem like grief inside him and these clothes are just a hint of it.

Hamlet reflects cultural perspective of the concept of mourning by his dark clothes,



19) *“Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted colour off, and let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.”*[1.2.]

Hamlet’s mother asks him to stop wearing these black clothes, and be friendly to the king. He cannot spend his whole life with his eyes to the ground remembering his noble father. Thus, clothing here not only reflects the Christian tradition of mourning (a cultural aspect) but also is a sign of very serious psychological state of the main characters and their confronting opposition.[ Abbas 2017; Abbas 2018]

### **To conclude:**

- ❖ Introducing elements that refer to the housing lexical subset, Shakespeare gives very few, if at all, details or description. Yet, they acquire a place of significance in the perception of the reader or spectator because the names, the lexemes, the notion get prominence because of the dramatic action that is taking place within the described localities. Words get flesh through the developments of the plot, while the plot may develop in this or that particular way in the appropriate surroundings.
- ❖ Clothing, on the other hand, very much agrees with the Elizabethan dressing rules, and carries importance in the play through the reference to the standards of the epoch. In the text, clothing plays an important role as an indication of this or that psychological state of the characters or their status and position.
- ❖ Shakespeare mainly characterized male outfit and described pieces of clothes from headgear to footwear.
- ❖ Overall, William Shakespeare concentrated on royal and noble lifestyle and cared less about poor and peasants lifestyle, still introducing some of the low rank characters and some elements of their life (soldiers, gravediggers).

- ❖ There are some Shakespearian terms that seem archaic nowadays; there are lot of terms that are still in use nowadays with essentially the same meaning; there are quite a few that have changed their meaning and are not archaic at all.

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