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Predestination of *Hamlet* Within *Hamlet*

During the play within the play that Hamlet puts on, there is a reference for predestination towards one's life and love, along with how life has the potential to be cruel although it continues to go on. When referencing predestination, this is discussing how everything has already been written down and planned out by the wheel of fortune or "Lady Luck" and there is nothing that can be done about rewriting it. The main point of interest of the play-within-the-play would include the ability to choose one's destiny when compared to having it be written down by Lady Luck, with love being a side point of interest.

This world is not for aye, nor 'tis not strange

That even our loves should with our fortunes change,

For 'tis a question left us yet to prove,

Whether love lead fortune or else fortune love. (Shakespeare 3.2.195-8)

These lines reference how life, even though it can be considered unfair, will still continue. This is referenced in the last act of the play after the massacre when a dying Hamlet talks to Horatio for the final time. "Horatio, I am dead, / Thou livest. Report me and my cause aright / to the unsatisfied" (5.2.343-5). It is because Horatio was able to survive the massacre that he would be able to tell the story of how all of the events within the play came to unfold. This result also implicates how those who survive the assault of turmoil are able to write history in their favor, as it is harder to find evidence to contradict the surviving account than it is to believe it.

Predestination is referenced in one's life and love, via the wheel of fortune or "Lady Luck." With the wheel of fortune, being different than the game show with Vanna White, emphasizes how every civilization was able to rise and fall throughout history. Fortune is can be best described as luck with the wheel keeping that luck in motion, as a civilization rises it must be prepared to fall as luck runs out. Boethius, an early Roman scholar, wrote *The Consolation of Philosophy* shortly before his execution in 524 AD discussing how one must suffer in order to obtain accept the will of God (Stewart). This falls into line with how the wheel of fortune will always fall, as if on an actual wheel which implies the name of this concept, with those able to suffer through these downfalls being seen as stronger in the eyes of God.

It should be known that the play-within-the-play questions whether life is able to be predestined by the wheel of fortune. This is due to the inability to determine the existence of predestination in the first place, as it can be perceived as either humans having no ability to make their own choices, as the wheel would have made every choice imaginable, or humans living with their own free will, with the wheel being either non-existent or limited to large scale choices such as outcomes of war. This is best explained including the line before the block quote at the beginning of this paper.

Grief joys, joy grieves, on slender accident.

This world is not for aye, nor 'tis not strange

That even our loves should with our fortunes change,

For 'tis a question left us yet to prove,

Whether love lead fortune or else fortune love. (Shakespeare 3.2.194-8)

A smaller aspect to the quote would include the wheel of fortune predetermining one's love life. This is seen with line 198, as it is unsure whether love is unaffected (or leads) the wheel of

fortune or if the wheel is in control over love. The importance of this distinction is that the Player King, who is the one giving this dialogue, is hesitant to answer this question as the question should remain ambiguous. "That even our loves should with our fortunes change, / For 'tis a question left us yet to prove" (3.2.196-7). This aspect of the wheel of fortune gives a whole new aspect to being able to fall in love, as there are two distinct ways that the emotions can be perceived towards love. The first being that the romance was fated by the wheel, and that this was predestined to happen through fate. And then there is the more realistic perception that this romance blossomed from the compatibility between these two people with a romantic relationship forming out of convenience.

Although this is not considered to be the main point of interest with the play-within-the-play, the ability to choose one's destiny, in either love or life, when compared to having it be written down by Lady Luck is a crucial aspect to predestination. This reference to predestination is towards one's life and love, along with how life has the potential to be cruel although it continues to go on. As discussed before, predestination references how everything has already been written down and planned out by the wheel of fortune with there nothing able to be done about rewriting it.

Works Cited

Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*, edited by Harold Jenkins, Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1982, pp 165–419.

Stewart, H. F. *Boethius, an Essay*. Edinburgh and London W. Blackwood, 1891.