

Comparative Analysis on *the Epic of Gilgamesh* and *Aphrodite and Hippolytus* and the Difference on Death between Eastern and Western View

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Abstract

There are two emphases on this paper. First, this paper compares the Epic of Gilgamesh and Aphrodite and Hippolytus on the basis of content. Secondly, this paper compares the difference of death between Eastern and Western view. This paper concludes that there are some differences and similarities from The Epic of Gilgamesh and Greek mythology, between Ishtar and Aphrodite. Death and suicide by Takeyama, according to Mishima (in Patriotism) is the final of his life achievement; death with heroic sense; death with pride. In Western view, death and suicide by Ophelia (in Hamlet) becomes the escape because of the great loss, depressed, and the unbearable burden.

Keywords: world literature, Eastern, Western, death, perspective

1. Introduction

The Epic of Gilgamesh is an epic poem from ancient Mesopotamia which tells about King Gilgamesh of Uruk. *The Epic of Gilgamesh* is mentioned as the earliest of literature in the world because it was dated in the Third Dynasty of Ur around 2100 BCE and written in Old Babylonian. Altes (2016, p. 183-193) states that the newest Akkadian version is considered as the source of *The Epic of Gilgamesh* we know today. Gilgamesh is stated as two third of god and one third of human, so it is undoubted that Gilgamesh is known because of his “*pouvoir-faire* or his legendary strength” Gilgamesh is blessed by the physical power that cannot be easily tamed by anyone because the gift is given by God.

Gilgamesh’s gorgeousness had enchanted Ishtar, as stated by Sonik that ‘Gilgameš, having caught the eye of Ištar thanks

to his great beauty, is made an offer of marriage by the goddess, with attendant promises of great power and prosperity (Sonik, 2016, p.385-393).’ The previous citation shows that Gilgamesh’s physical strength and all his talents had captivated Ishtar to propose a marriage to the king and offered him great power in the world and prosperity. Who is Ishtar? Is she an important character in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*?

In Sumerian myth, ‘The goddess Inanna/Ishtar has been repeatedly classified as a fertility goddess and/or a goddess of war (Wessels, 2016, p.35-55).’ Ishtar or also known as Inanna, is the most important goddess that is believed in Mesopotamian society as the guardian of earth’s productiveness and war or one who creates and destroy at the same time, so Ishtar’s position is different, ‘while other goddesses were demoted or domesticated, Inanna/Ishtar continued to be adored, possibly

because of her association with two important mythic cycles central to kingship ideology, namely the sacred marriage and the descent and ascent from the netherworld.’ Besides being respected to be the guardian of sacred marriage, Ishtar was valued because she was linked to the underworld or the dead world. ‘In Babylonian lore, Ishtar is the sister of Ereshkigal, queen of the Underworld (Taylor, 2006).’ In other words, Ishtar’s influence is not only around the kingship circle, but also the afterlife world, so she is respected by the society because Ishtar has unlimited power, ambitious, confident, and fully in control. With those capitals, Ishtar proposes Gilgamesh, as she said to him below:

‘Come to me Gilgamesh, and be my bridegroom; grant me seed of your body, let me be your bride and you shall be my husband. I will harness for you a chariot of lapis lazuli and of gold, with wheels of gold and horns of copper; and you shall have mighty demons of the storm for draft mules (Sanders, 1960).

Ishtar emphasizes her power and richness to tempt Gilgamesh. Because of her power, she promises Gilgamesh to grant him wealth, gold, and power, but the king refused, he says, ‘And if you and I should be lovers, should not I be served in the same fashion as all these others whom you loved once?’ (Sanders, 1960, p.55), Gilgamesh’s refusal is something beyond her expectation because none could decline Ishtar so far; Ishtar’s magnificence will be always accepted by everyone. Gilgamesh’s refusal is stated by Jonathan M. Riley (2016, p.20-33) that ‘after Gilgamesh kills Humbaba, Ishtar, the

goddess of love, tries to seduce him, but Gilgamesh snubs her and catalogs all of the lovers whom she has rejected in the past, implying that he would end up like they had.’ Gilgamesh refused Ishtar because she has a bad habit to dump her previous lovers in the past including ‘Dumuzi and the gardener Isullanu, whom she loved with tragic consequences (Karahashi and Carolina, 2006, p. 97-107).’ Dumuzi has to spend half the year in the underworld with Ereshkigal, Ishtar’s sister as ransom. Ishtar used her husband Dumuzi to replace her in the underworld because anyone who enters the underworld could not leave. Placing her husband in the underworld to replace Ishtar is evidence that Ishtar is a selfish character. Hence, Gilgamesh did not want to his life ended up like Ishtar’s ex-lovers.

Further about Ishtar’s love proposal and Gilgamesh’s marriage refusal, according to R. Foster (1987: 22, 36) as cited by Karahashi and López-Ruiz, it is written that ‘Gilgamesh’s rejection of the sexual advances of Ishtar, here a personification of unproductive attraction to the opposite sex, affirms and asserts the of his relationship with Enkidu and his self-identity, which marks the beginning of knowledge.’ Gilgamesh puts his friendship to Enkidu above the sexual interest, but their friendship did not last forever because Enkidu died when both of them fought Bull of Heaven. Enkidu’s death is a turning point for Gilgamesh to think about the city he ruled. He thought about finding the eternal life. In the end, after the long journey,

Gilgamesh finally realized that the eternal life is not something that Ishtar had offered to him, to be forever young and could not die, but through the civilization and cultural invention.

Concerning Ishtar's identity, we may conclude that as a goddess, Ishtar is an important figure amid Mesopotamian society. When it comes to Mesopotamian culture, we see how Ishtar is respected, but how about the portrayal of women in Mesopotamian or Sumerian literature. 'Mesopotamia was a patriarchal society, and positions of authority were limited largely (Gadotti, 2011, p. 195-206).' Men are the authority in Mesopotamian's life aspect. How Ishtar is described having good position and respected goddess is well-known for the attribute of femininity, such as goddess of fertility and sacred marriage, even as the goddess of sexuality. As additional information, how women were portrayed in Sumerian literature is as stated by Gadotti (p.204) that 'Indeed, the non-traditional characters attested in the corpus represent women in traditional roles (counselors, mothers, wives).' That is how patriarchal society is strong in Mesopotamian culture.

The story with the theme such as love refusal as shown by Ishtar to Gilgamesh is one of the universalities of human life. Even though *The Epic of Gilgamesh* is depicted as the story of demigods and the goddess, but the emotion shown by the characters in the story somehow is part of human's life. *The Epic of Gilgamesh* illustrates Ishtar's love that may inspire people

to have such feeling, the friendship between Gilgamesh and Enkidu, life achievements and limitation, separation and sorrow, even life and death. Such emotions are close to human's life that everyone could feel and experience since back, now, and then. The motif of a marriage proposal by a goddess or a female of high status who falls in love with a handsome male is also found in Greek literature, namely Aphrodite.

The same theme of the marriage proposal and love rejection are also depicted in Greek's mythology of Hippolytus and Aphrodite. Hippolytus is known because of his physical gorgeousness. He wants to serve himself as a hunter as he considers that his purity as a hunter remains untainted by women. Aphrodite falls in love to Hippolytus but he rejects the goddess's proposal. Why does Hippolytus reject Aphrodite? Hippolytus rejects Aphrodite because 'Chastity as superior value for the hunter and the fear of the loss of power and strength that inevitably follows sexual intercourse with a woman or goddess is a core motif of the tragedy of Hippolytus.' Hippolytus believes that his hunting ability will be staying with him if he is pure. Hippolytus believes that his power will remain if he does not have any sexual relationship with any woman. Furthermore, Hippolytus is also afraid of losing his power if he has sexual intercourse with woman or goddess. That is why Hippolytus rejects Aphrodite's love proposal, but he does not realize that his rejection has raised Aphrodite's anger.

2. Discussion

The paper takes notes some similarities of The *Epic of Gilgamesh* and Greek mythology Aphrodite that listed as follows:

Epic of Gilgamesh	Greek mythology
Ishtar as the goddess of fertility and sexuality	Aphrodite as the goddess of love and sexuality
Ishtar is an ambitious goddess	Hellenistic Aphrodite was not so shy, she knows what she wants
Ishtar is in love with Gilgamesh	Aphrodite is in love with Hippolytus
Ishtar's love proposal is refused by Gilgamesh	Aphrodite's love proposal is rejected by Hippolytus

From the comparison table above, the primary similarities between these two works lie in several things: 1. Both Ishtar and Aphrodite are known as the goddess of love and symbol of femininity. 2. Ishtar falls in love with Gilgamesh and Aphrodite falls in love with Hippolytus. Both men are respectable and good-looking. 3. Ishtar and Aphrodite have their own love affairs. Ishtar has the previous relationship with Dumuzi, while Aphrodite has a love affair with Ares. 4. Both Ishtar and Aphrodite are not faithful women.

The difference of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and Greek mythology's Aphrodite lies in the

plot line after the proposal rejection. In the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, Ishtar asks her father to release Bull of Heaven to kill Gilgamesh, but in the Greek mythology, Aphrodite causes Phaedra to be obsessed for her stepson Hippolytus while his father and her husband Theseus is away from home, but Hippolytus refuses to grant his step mother's desire. Phaedra chooses to commit suicide by hanging herself, but before she did it, she wrote a tablet dedicated to Theseus, telling that Hippolytus has raped her. Returning home, Theseus reads the tablet and expels Hippolytus, then, 'Theseus prays that Poseidon will send a beast against Hippolytus to kill him that very day. An odd episode then follows in which a roaring bull comes out from a huge wave and causes Hippolytus's horses to go mad (Karahashi and López-Ruiz. p. 99).' Hippolytus cannot defeat the bull, as consequence, he died. In the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, Gilgamesh is successfully beat Bull of Heaven, but in Greek mythology's Aphrodite, Hippolytus cannot help himself to survive.

Furthermore, this paper discusses the associated traits of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, which the first thing to note is the parallel of between the wrestling scenes of Gilgamesh and Enkidu and God and Jacob in the Bible as follows:

In the Gilgamesh story, Enkidu has been created by the gods expressly for the purpose of fighting this round with the hero. Anu responds to the lament of the people of Uruk by summoning Aruru to create a match for Gilgamesh, one equal

in strength, in order to contend with him (Hamori, 2016, p. 625-642).

The people of Uruk were oppressed by Gilgamesh because he forced his people to build the fortress to protect their land from the enemies. His people knew that Gilgamesh was very strong thus they asked Anu, their God to create a compatible counterpart to defeat Gilgamesh. Anu granted the prayers then created a match to Gilgamesh named Enkidu. Enkidu is a Minotaur which fought Gilgamesh for days, but apparently, they had the same strength and finally, they became friends.

Concerning the associated traits about Gilgamesh's story, there are several characteristics to discuss. Gilgamesh and Enkidu are matched to the wrestling of God and Jacob in the Bible, that "there is a point at which the partners seem to agree to stop fighting, and the hero lets his attacker go (Hamori. p. 629)." Enkidu becomes the best friend of Gilgamesh and 'Jacob is blessed directly by a divine agent and is given his name, his title as the father of Israel (Hamori. p. 626).' God gives blessing towards Jacob and grant him the title as father of Israel, meanwhile in the Epic of Gilgamesh, the duel has opened Gilgamesh's eyes that 'his rule is harsh and his people are distraught; after it, the formerly unbearable ruler stops tormenting the people of Uruk and directs his attention toward more worthwhile endeavors.' Gilgamesh turns into a better king of Uruk after the fight with Enkidu.

Considered as the earliest literature, *The Epic of Gilgamesh* had inspired literature in other countries, one of them is *The Odyssey* written by Homer from Greek. *The Odyssey* was created in 800 BCE, about a millennium after *The Epic of Gilgamesh* had been written. There are factors of *The Epic of Gilgamesh* that influence other literature, especially *The Odyssey* of Greek, namely: '1. Linguistic availability, 2. Geographical availability, 3. Cultural availability, 4. Chronological availability, 5. Analogy, 6. Density, 7. Order, 8. Interpretability 9 (Riley, 2016, p.20-33).' The previous citation means that there are eight features in the intertextuality in *The Odyssey* and *The Epic Of Gilgamesh*, but this paper focuses on the seventh and eighth features, namely, the Order to compare the content between Gilgamesh and Odysseus.

To explain no. 8 about Order, in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Gilgamesh and his best friend Enkidu kill the Bull of Heaven, a creature that was asked by Ishtar from Anu to revenge to Gilgamesh. After Enkidu dies, Gilgamesh feels sad. Enkidu's death has triggered a question in Gilgamesh's mind, will he die too? The sorrow of longing for a best friend, Gilgamesh leaves his kingdom and wanders to seek the meaning of eternal life. He meets Shiduri who encourages him to go home. But before he goes home, Gilgamesh goes down to the *netherworld* to see Enkidu. After that, Gilgamesh returns home and finally realized that the only way to reach eternal life is through civilization and cultural invention.

Comparing to *The Odyssey*, Odysseus's men kill the Cattle of the Sun, but his men die. Odysseus wanders through the world and meets many people, just like Gilgamesh. He meets Calypso who urges him to go home. Odysseus also has a descent into the underworld, during which he encounters his friend who has died and eventually after the long journey, Odysseus returns home to Ithaca, to go back to his wife, Penelope, and son Telemachus.

From the explanation and comparison above, we can draw the red line between Gilgamesh and Odysseus, as stated by Riley that 'the order of these corresponding elements may indicate that much of the format of the first half of *The Odyssey* was taken from *The Epic of Gilgamesh*.' Both stories have the same pattern even though not all, such as, Penelope who waits for Odysseus for twenty years from Trojan War, where in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, no wife waits for Gilgamesh.

a. The Difference between Eastern and Western Perspective on Death

The second elaboration will talk about Eastern and Western view on death. A circle of life, death is the scariest phase; somehow, each culture in the world has its own perspective about death, 'such as Hinduism, envision a circular pattern of life and death where a person is thought to die and is reborn with a new identity This contrasts with the Christian view where death is believed to occur only once (Gire, 2016, p.2-22).' The view on death is

different according to the -ism, i.e. belief that people believe, such as in Hinduism and Christianity.

Hinduism believes that people will reincarnate, over and over, to finish his phase of life, as a way to purify himself, until the human is freed from sin and *samsara* or suffering. One that has to undergo reincarnation will deal with new life and identity as an effort to redeem his sin in the previous life circle. In Christianity, death is believed to happen once and the dead people will stay together with God on the Judgment day. However, 'death is the human experience that crosses the cultural boundaries (Okuyama, 2016, p.2-22).' Though all human believe that people eventually die, people's reaction and understanding towards death are completely different from one culture to another culture. Death can be done on purpose, so, it is not merely a natural phenomenon. The next paragraphs discuss death on purposes, namely by committing suicide and murdering.

One of Eastern literature that discusses death as part of human life is the tetralogy entitled *The Sea Fertility* that consists of *Spring Snow* (1969), *Runaway Horses* (1969), *The Temple of Dawn* (1970), and *The Decay of the Angel* (1971). *The Sea Fertility* is written by Kimitake Hiraoka (1925-1970), but he often used his pen name, Yukio Mishima. Mishima was a Japanese celebrity in his living time. He was not only known for his achievement as a writer, but also as *kabuki* and *noh* theatrical player. Another prestigious achievement that

Mishima got is when he was nominated for the Nobel Prize winner. In short, Mishima was an influential writer at that time.

In the tetralogy entitled *The Sea Fertility*, especially in 'the first novel of the tetralogy, *Hani no Yuki* (1968; *Spring Snow*) recounts the doomed love affair between Kiyosaki and Satoko which leads to Kiyooki's physical death and Satoko's death to the world when she joins a religious group (Atkinson, 2016, p.56-64).' Through the character of Kiyooki and Satoko, their story can be categorized as a tragic plot. Both Kiyooki and Satoko come from the different family background. Kiyooki comes from the social climber family while Satoko comes from the aristocratic class family. Actually, they had love affairs that in the end, they had to separate, not only like separating or breaking the relationship, but both are dead by a different reason. Mishima had been aware of death and wanted to embrace it. He wants to show that death is not scary, but it is a natural thing. Another trigger for Kiyooki and Satoko's reason to separate is the complexity of relationship as concerned by Mishima himself, as follows:

'Mishima's struggle highlights for us the necessity to understand the complex relationship between modernity and the traditional sensibilities of not just Japan but any nation, particularly in an age of political and economic instability when the questions of culture and globalism step out of obscurity and into the open (Verbovszky, 2016, p.1-2).'

Spring Snow tells the story of how Kiyooki and Satoko had to deal with modernity that entered Japan at that time. Kiyooki romanticized the old Japanese values but Satoko blends values of East and West. Mishima showed that the differences of their view about life style or about how to accept modernity between the will to embrace traditional values. What Kiyooki and Satoko had experienced is an example of Japanese's people had to deal with, not only in political and economic fields but how they had to behave toward their own culture and globalism at the same time.

The paper also gives another example of Mishima's writing about death, a short story entitled *Patriotism* (1960). *Patriotism* tells Lieutenant Shinji Takeyama who does hara-kiri because of his inability to choose loyalty to the Emperor and his comrades. His comrades do insurgents, but personally, Takeyama chooses to defend the Emperor, but he disappointed the ordinance does not send him, as stated as follows:

"I knew nothing. They hadn't asked me to join. Perhaps out of consideration, because I was newly married. Kano, and Homma too, and Yamaguchi (Mishima, 1996)."

The regiment does not ask Takeyama to join the eradication the mutiny because he is a newlywed. Actually, Takeyama is not the only one who is not asked to join, but also some of his friends in the regiment. However, the regiment's decision not to ask him joining has offended Takeyama because defending the

nation from chaos is the right for every citizen, whether he is a newly married or not. As the result of his disappointment is stated as follows:

“They’ve taken me off guard duty, and I have permission to return home for one night. Tomorrow morning, without question, I must leave to join the attack. I can’t do it, Reiko (Mishima. p. 107).”

Takeyama’s disappointment because the Army regiment gives him a day off when the insurgent happens in the city. Because of that reason, Takeyama wants to join the attack because there are a lot of his comrades. He won’t let his colleagues do the attack without him. Despite Takeyama’s solidarity to his friends is definitely high, he could not betray the Emperor, so, he comes to a decision, to be the best way, for him to kill himself, as stated by Takeyama ‘to cut his stomach.’

Takeyama’s suicide means a lot to Mishima because Mishima portrays himself in the character of Takeyama. Death, to Mishima, is not only depicted in his novels, but he realized his own death by committing suicide. Mishima’s letter to his parents says that “to die not as a literary man but entirely as a military man (Johnson, 2016, p. 50-53).” To Mishima, joining the military is one of his obsessions to defend Japan because of his love to his country. Mishima’s suicide had appalled Japan in 1970 because he chose to do hara-kiri. Mili states that ‘Harakiri was a ritual practiced by the samurai class. To die one day is a natural phenomenon but dying with dignity was very important and death was an important occasion to make self-

honor 9 Mili, 2016, p.1-3).’ Even though categorized as suicide, hara-kiri is not common suicide because hara-kiri is the noble death. Further, Mili explains that ‘the samurai class established the hara-kiri as a custom and privilege. With the rapid westernization, hara-kiri was suddenly forced to take a backseat to new conceptions of government and social order.’

To Yukio Mishima, his decision to commit hara-kiri is part of his idealism; he longed for heroic death defending his country. Within hara-kiri, there is privilege and devotion and nationalism. Mishima’s death by committing hara-kiri shocked the world because hara-kiri had not been practiced for a long time because of the new concept of globalization and on behalf of human rights. By committing hara-kiri, Mishima thought that he preserved the traditional Japanese values. He did not want the pure Japan’s values and norms are replaced by modern concepts and perspectives. Mili’s review is strengthened by Pierre, he states that ‘Yukio Mishima committed seppuku in an act of political protest seemingly intended to inspire a return to nationalism.’ In other words, committing hara-kiri is also mentioned as the essence of Bushido or the way of warrior, so, Mishima showed his nationalism and sacrifice himself to defend Japan from the grip of Western because ‘committing suicide rather than surrender was the honorable act of the Japanese soldier.’ Hara-kiri is often done by the Japanese soldier in the Second World War when they

were caught by the enemies. They thought that it was better to kill themselves rather than to surrender to enemies because killing themselves is the more honorable act. Four years before Mishima's suicide, "in 1966, Mishima published the novel *Patriotism*, which became a medium through which it appeared that Mishima hoped to reignite the passion for bushidō."

Japanese's view on death, especially in hara-kiri is a positive decision. In many cultures we acknowledge today, committing suicide is a psychiatric practice, but in Japan, in term of hara-kiri, it is considered as high devotion to culture. Comparing to Western's perspective on death, death is viewed differently, though a lot of Western authors talk about death in their books. Western culture is relatively close to Christianity which bans its believers to not to commit suicide, yet people still do that. One of the Western writers who talked about death is Shakespeare. He wrote tragedy as much as comedy, such as in *Romeo and Juliet*, *Antoniuis and Cleopatra*, and *Hamlet*. Representing the Western side about death, *Hamlet* will be discussed.

Shakespeare (1564-1616) lived in Renaissance period (1560-1600), a period of revival in literature, culture, and science, and is known as the Elizabethan era. The Renaissance period is marked by patriotism, religious tolerance, social balance, high enthusiasm, intellectual's development, and religiosity is separated from the state, because the congregations of Catholic and Christian were

same in numbers. As stated by Jessica Dyson, Niamh Cooney, Jana Pridalova that 'In the heavily religious sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the death of Christ might be seen as the ultimate combination of love and death in self-sacrifice for others.' In the Elizabethan era, death is considered the common thing, including to commit suicide for self-sacrificing to others' lives.

How about Shakespeare? According to Yujun Liu, 'Shakespeare's families are closely connected with Christian (Liu,2016, p. 119-123).' Shakespeare's mother, Mary Arden, came from Catholic families in Warwickshire, while his grandfather was a Catholic priest, named Father Hugh Hall. Christianity influenced Shakespeare's literary works. And among all of Shakespeare's works, namely 'the religious ideas embodied more fully in his tragedies than his other works, especially in his four famous tragedies *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, and *Othello*(Liu. p. 120).' He was an outstanding and also the most productive writer. Most of the plays that Shakespeare had written is in the form of family, as stated by Bruce W. Young that 'family is an important concern in almost all of Shakespeare's plays and is central to many of them (Young, 2009).' The earlier quotation means that the plays which are described in the form of family are like *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet*, that is strengthened in Young's opinion that 'The Capulets and Montagues in *Romeo and Juliet* are something of an anomaly given that

each household includes a nephew (Tybalt and Benvolio).’ (Young, p. 72).

Regarding the death from Western side, the paper chooses *Hamlet*. *Hamlet* tells the story of the king in Denmark who died mysteriously. The king’s widow Gertrude then get married to with the king’s brother Claudius. The king’s spirit haunts the kingdom and urges his son Hamlet to revenge upon his death to Claudius.

Ophelia is the only character in *Hamlet* who commits suicide. She commits suicide because her father, Polonius, is killed by Hamlet, a man that she falls in love with. Knowing that her father is gone, Ophelia is depressed as stated by Farhana Haque that ‘In this play there also came the controversial mad condition of Hamlet and also the mad scene of Ophelia when she came to know about her father’s death and Hamlet who was also sent to England (Haque, 2016, p.55-59).’ Ophelia could not resist her sorrow because of her father’s death thus she is getting crazy. She chooses to drown herself in the river to end her loss and suffering, because she loves her father so much, as Ophelia’s brother says:

LAERTES
So she is drowned.
GERTRUDE
Drowned, drowned.
(<http://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/hamlet/> on 1 December 2016)

The citation above shows the dialogue between Learates, Ophelia’s brother and Gertrude, Hamlet’s mother. They are shocked when knowing that Ophelia just killed herself by

drowning in the river. Ophelia’s death shows us that women in the Elizabethan era were dependent on men and weak. Further, the patriarchal system in England at that time did not give opportunities to women in developing their career in public sphere, even; no women were allowed to perform in the playhouses. If women had to see the performance in the playhouse, they had to cover their face. In other words, ‘Elizabethan society thinks that women are weak so they should follow what the men tell them and obey the men’s rules (Mesut Güneç, 2006, p.171).’ Ophelia has to learn to behave according to customs of her society. She has followed her father and brother’s power unconsciously since her childhood. Actually, Ophelia is an obedient woman, modest, but passive one. So, her father’s death made her vulnerable, because she was not accustomed being independent woman. Without men, Ophelia felt nothing.

Losing grip of parent and Hamlet’s decision to leave for England are double punches for Ophelia, so she decides to end her life by drowning herself in the river as strengthened by Mesut Güneç (p.171) that ‘Going mad and death is the only way for them to rescue themselves from patriarchy.’ Social pressure especially in the Elizabethan era and patriarchal systems were merciless toward women’s existence. The society did not encourage women to be independent and strong, instead, they underestimated and looked down on women who had lost the most valuable in her

life, as stated by Lilly E. Romestant that ‘Her father is dead, her brother is absent, and Hamlet has rejected her. Her body and mind cannot sustain such deep abandonment. So, she does the only thing she can do: she disappears (Romestant, 2016, 1-16).’ The optional decision that Ophelia has is only two, going mad or dead, so committing suicide is the solution.

In Hamlet’s plot, we finally know the contradictive fact about Christianity which not allows one to commit suicide, but most of Shakespeare’s play ends with tragedy. As stated above, Shakespeare came from a religious, but his decision of inserting suicidal plot in his tragedies is quite contradictory. When dealing with Renaissance, we cannot separate it from Greek. When Renaissance finally reached England, a lot of people thought about it, including Shakespeare, as stated below:

Shakespeare was heavily influenced by the religious, humanistic, artistic and scientific discourses of his time in his exposure to the theme of suicide ... Shakespeare as the key figure of the neo-classist movement clearly adopts an approach towards suicide parallel to his Greek and Roman forebear and celebrates suicide as a means of manifestation of attaining nobility, honor and courage. (Zamani, 2015, p.1145-1156).

Renaissance’s enthusiasm had contributed to Shakespeare’s story. Why Renaissance? Renaissance means rebirth that emerged from Italy. Before Renaissance, Europe was in the Dark Ages where the power of religion was so huge; religion dominated all human’s life, from

the government, economic, science, to daily routines. The priest watched over the people’s thought. There is no freedom of creativity and invention.

England at time was far from Italy, so Renaissance did not reach England as fast as other countries in Europe, but eventually reached England when Queen Elizabeth ruled. The values of Renaissance influenced Shakespeare and inspired him when dealing with his own writings. One of Renaissance values is humanism with the notion of rational and autonomous self, which is reflected on *Hamlet*, namely Ophelia’s decision to end her life. Humanism does not believe in supernatural or spiritual things, so, when it comes to the spirit of Christianity, it is obviously paradoxical.

Shakespeare’s suicide theme in his tragedies is an evidence of complexity from family background and the society’s phenomenon. To Shakespeare himself, his plot of suicide is his intention to counter the public mindset in Elizabethan era that it is common sense for somebody to commit suicide because of insanity as believed as single truth by church, but in Shakespeare’s tragedies, the character who committed suicide were,

‘never demonstrate signs of insanity or mental breakdown. They are in complete sobriety and are depicted in a period of profound contemplation before perpetration of the act which attests not only to their logicity but also to the precarious states of moral and ethical ambivalence and hesitation that the Renaissance man had to get to grips with in an era where many

unquestionable religious doctrines were dubiously open to dispute (Zamani. p. 1155).

In Renaissance era, people are given opportunities to have the right to decide, to contemplate, even to ask the question about their own life without the influence of religion which is considered as the only standard of life at that time. Shakespeare's decision to depict suicide plot is a way to end life without considering the religious concept of Heaven and Hell.

3. Conclusion

From the elaboration of the two writers, Yukio Mishima and Shakespeare, we can see the contrast of death perspective between Eastern that is represented by Yukio Mishima and Western's by Shakespeare. Death and suicide by Takeyama, according to Mishima (in *Patriotism*) is the final of his life achievement; death with heroic sense; death with pride. In Western view, death and suicide by Ophelia (in *Hamlet*) becomes the escape because of the great loss, depressed, and the unbearable burden.

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