



**UNRAVELLING SELF-DIFFERENTIATION AND CHRONIC ANXIETY IN
FATHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIP IN SELECTED SHAKESPEAREAN
PLAYS**

By

DENG JIANBO

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra
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Philosophy**

February 2025

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in
fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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February 2025

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Twenty-one of Shakespeare's works pivot around familial discord, primarily delving into the strained dynamics between fathers and daughters. While examining the father-daughter relationship in theatrical works has been the prominent focus of scholarly inquiries, analysis of familial relationships using Bowen Theory in Shakespearean plays remains widely unexplored. Hence, the present study adopts an innovative interdisciplinary research approach and scrutinizes the dynamics of the father-daughter connection in four of Shakespeare's plays, which are *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The primary objective of this study is to evaluate the degree of self-differentiation exhibited by fathers and daughters in the selected plays. Furthermore, the study explored the fusion and differentiation within their interactions with both their original and nuclear families and the manifestation of chronic anxiety among fathers and its impact on their daughters. Lastly, the study investigated the presence of chronic

anxiety resulting from social circumstances and its effects on the father-daughter relationship, as depicted in the selected texts. The findings of the study indicated that the fathers and daughters in the selected plays demonstrated a lower degree of self-differentiation, which is proportioned with the quality of their father-daughter relationships. The analysis of these four plays revealed a discernible pattern wherein the daughters are subjected to their fathers' emotional projections. Additionally, the selected plays illuminated the father-daughter relationships as embodiments of various social-emotional processes: patriarchal constructions, mental diseases, emotional pain, societal degradation, religious norms, and promiscuous sexuality. This analysis posits that the father-daughter relationships depicted in the plays *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* can be characterized as dysfunctional. This dysfunction arises from several factors, including the lower levels of the self-differentiation of the fathers and daughters, the projection of the father's anxieties onto their daughters, and the chronic anxiety resulting from societal regression. Using Bowen Theory to examine the father-daughter relationship in these plays, this study provided a novel way to examine dysfunctional family relationships depicted in William Shakespeare's works.

Keyword: Bowen Theory, Differentiation of Self, Father-Daughter Relationship, Shakespearean Plays, Societal Regression.

SDG: GOAL 4: Quality Education

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**MENGURAIKAN PEMBEZAAN DIRI DAN KEBIMBANGAN KRONIK
DALAM HUBUNGAN BAPA DAN ANAK DALAM SHAKESPEAREAN
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Dua puluh satu daripada karya Shakespeare berkisar tentang konflik kekeluargaan, terutamanya meneroka dinamika ketegangan hubungan antara bapa dan anak perempuan. Walaupun kajian tentang hubungan bapa-anak perempuan dalam karya teater telah menjadi fokus utama penyelidikan akademik, namun analisis hubungan kekeluargaan menggunakan Teori Bowen dalam drama Shakespeare masih kurang diterokai. Oleh itu, kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan penyelidikan antara disiplin yang inovatif untuk meneliti dinamika hubungan bapa-anak perempuan dalam empat drama Shakespeare, iaitu *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, dan *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Objektif utama kajian ini adalah untuk menilai tahap pembezaan sendiri yang ditunjukkan oleh bapa dan anak perempuan dalam drama terpilih. Seterusnya, kajian ini juga meneroka ketidakbezaan(fusion) dan pembezaan sendiri dalam interaksi mereka dengan keluarga asal dan keluarga nuklear mereka serta manifestasi kebimbangan kronik dalam kalangan bapa dan kesannya terhadap anak perempuan mereka.

Akhir sekali, kajian ini menyiasat kewujudan kebimbangan kronik yang berpunca daripada keadaan sosial dan kesannya terhadap hubungan bapa-anak perempuan seperti yang digambarkan dalam teks terpilih. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa bapa dan anak perempuan dalam drama terpilih mempamerkan tahap pembezaan diri yang rendah, yang berkait rapat dengan kualiti hubungan bapa dan anak perempuan. Analisis keempat-empat drama ini mendedahkan corak yang jelas di mana anak perempuan bergantung pada unjuran emosi daripada bapa mereka. Selain itu, drama-drama terpilih menggambarkan hubungan bapa-anak perempuan sebagai manifestasi pelbagai proses sosial-emosi: pembentukan patriarki, penyakit mental, kesakitan emosi, kemerosotan masyarakat, norma agama, dan seksualiti bebas. Analisis ini merumuskan bahawa hubungan bapa-anak perempuan yang digambarkan dalam *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, dan *A Midsummer Night's Dream* boleh dikategorikan sebagai hubungan yang tidak berfungsi. Ketidakfungsian ini berpunca daripada beberapa faktor, termasuk tahap pembezaan diri yang rendah dalam kalangan bapa dan anak perempuan, unjuran kebimbangan bapa terhadap anak perempuan mereka, serta kebimbangan kronik akibat regresi sosial. Dengan menggunakan Teori Bowen untuk mengkaji hubungan bapa-anak perempuan dalam drama-drama ini, kajian ini memperkenalkan perspektif baharu dalam menganalisis hubungan kekeluargaan yang tidak berfungsi sebagaimana yang digambarkan dalam karya William Shakespeare.

Kata kunci: Teori Bowen, Pembezaan Diri, Hubungan Bapa-Anak Perempuan, Drama Shakespeare, Regresi Sosial

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Researchers have varying perspectives on the definition and functions of a family. Samuel T. Gladding defines family as individuals with physical and/or psychological connections, sharing historical, emotional, or financial ties and identifying as part of a household (6). George Peter Murdock defines family as a social group characterized by cohabitation, economic cooperation, and procreation. According to his definition, a family consists of two adults of different genders, with at least one child, either biological or adopted, “of the sexually cohabiting adults” (Murdock 1). In contrast, Kerr and Bowen (1988) perceive the human family as a distinct type of “natural system” known as an “*emotional system*” (28). This study defines family as a complex emotional unit in which family members are connected and emotionally dependent on each other. Murdock’s definition emphasizes the role of the family in maintaining socially approved sexual relationships (Murdock 1). Additionally, family functions encompass child-rearing, financial support, and education, all aimed at preserving the well-being of family members and society. Ideally, families provide predictability, structure, and safety as individuals mature and engage in their communities (Collins et al. 28-29). In society, the family continues to serve as the primary source of “attachment, nurturing, and socialization” for people (Lander et al. 194). A well-functioning family contributes to personal and social development.

A number of the families, though, are dysfunctional. A dysfunctional family is one in which relationships, emotional reactions, and communication patterns are inadequate and contribute to individual and family functioning difficulties. Beavers and Hampson (2000) point out that dysfunctional families exhibit several characteristics: family members struggle to negotiate and adapt, resulting in chaos in family functioning; boundaries among family members become problematic, with a significant conflict between “the developmental need for separation/individuation” and the family’s emphasis on the unity and extreme loyalty of the family (Beavers and Hampson 133). Kerr and Bowen (1988) note that the emotional functioning patterns in a nuclear family result from the lack of differentiation among family members. Anxiety amplifies each pattern, and when it reaches a significant degree, it contributes to the emergence of a particular type of clinical dysfunction. Three types of dysfunction can arise in nuclear families: “(1) illness in a spouse; (2) marital conflict; and (3) impairment of one or more children” (Kerr and Bowen 160).

Issues related to dysfunctional families have been a recurring theme in literature, spanning ancient and modern works. For example, the Greek tragedies *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus and *Oedipus the King* of Sophocles both describe family problems caused by disputes among family members. Playwrights like Eugene O’Neill depict dysfunctional families in works such as *Morning Becomes Electra* (1931) and *Desire Under the Elms* (1924). In the late 20th century, dysfunctional family relationships were also investigated in plays by Arthur Miller, Lorraine Hansberry, Tennessee Williams, Clifford Odets, and Edward Albee (Syed 208). The representative plays include Miller’s *All My*

Sons (1947), *Death of a Salesman* (1949); Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959); William's *The Glass Menagerie* (1944), *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947); Odets's *Awake and Sing!* (1935), *The Country Girl* (1950), Albee's *The Sandbox* (1960), *The American Dream* (1961), *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962) and *A Delicate Balance* (1966).

The examination of dysfunctional family dynamics extends beyond contemporary and ancient literature. William Shakespeare (1564-1616) is renowned for depicting dysfunctional family dynamics in the English Renaissance. His plays, such as *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Othello*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Pericles*, and *The Tempest*, are known to portray complex familial relationships. Shakespearean plays depict the cultural milieu of European social existence in the Renaissance, illuminating the fundamental characteristics of British society throughout the shift from feudalism to capitalism. Shakespeare's works endorse humanism, exalt the splendor of human nature, support rationality, order, kindness, and forgiveness, and scrutinize the imperfections of early humanism. In addition, his plays examine intricate and fragile family connections, including the interactions between authoritative fathers and defiant daughters.

Shakespeare's exploration of father-daughter relationships in his plays often delved into timeless and universal themes that continue to resonate today. As social norms and contexts evolve over the centuries, family relationships, such as father and daughter relationships, remain constant. Shakespeare often

portrays the conflict between fathers and daughters who grapple with different ideas and values. According to Dreher (1986), the father-daughter relationship is crucial in twenty-one of Shakespeare's plays, "from the early *Two Gentlemen of Verona* to his last complete work, *The Tempest*" (1). Shakespeare often portrayed fathers with strong views about their daughters' futures, causing conflicts arising from motives and expectations. Many of his female characters seek independence and self-determination, which challenges patriarchy. The paternal figures in Shakespeare's comedies are typically shown as harsh, controlling, and angry older men who prevent their daughters from marrying the person they truly love, which puts the young lovers through a challenging ordeal (Dreher 14). Portia's father's anguish in *The Merchant of Venice* constrained her autonomy, while Jessica secretly eloped with Lorenzo in defiance of her father's wishes. Likewise, in *The Taming of the Shrew*, Katherine (Katherina/ Kate) challenges her father's power and weds Petruccio. According to Dreher (1986), the romances involve a plot where "daughters are lost, then found, redeeming their fathers in the process" (15). In the play *Cymbeline*, the father, Cymbeline, wrongly accuses his daughter, Imogen, of having listened to the slander of his second wife. Ultimately, Cymbeline emerged victorious over the Roman invaders, thanks to the aid of his two sons, daughter, and son-in-law, who had been separated in his early years. By the conclusion of the play, the father and daughter are brought together once again, and the misapprehension is successfully resolved. In contrast, Shakespeare's tragedy portrays the profound grief experienced by fathers due to their daughters' defiance. The character of Lear in the play *King Lear* represents the anguish experienced by a father tormented by his daughters' "rejection or

betrayal” (Dreher 15). Similar tensions may arise today as parents and children explore differences in career choices, life partners, or personal beliefs. Living standards have improved, but there is still a tension between tradition and modernity in family relationships. Shakespeare’s plays often reflect the social tensions of his time, and contemporary issues of cultural expectations, social norms, and family traditions still contribute to conflict in father-daughter relationships today.

Whereas the dysfunctional father-daughter relationship theme is apparent in twenty-one of Shakespeare’s plays, the current study decided to select two tragedies (*Hamlet* and *King Lear*) and two comedies (*A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *The Taming of the Shrew*) as the subjects of textual analysis. In these plays, Shakespeare defied tradition by making the traditional silent daughter into the one who spoke their mind, showing disrupted father-daughter relationships. Therefore, the study selected the four Shakespearean plays. The first play, *King Lear*, depicts the violent and arrogant father Lear, who listens to the flattery of his two eldest daughters (Goneril and Regan), gives them his land, and drives away the youngest daughter, Cordelia, who tells the truth that her love cannot be measured in grand declarations, but she is sincere and honest instead. The ingratitude of his two eldest daughters drove him to become furious, painful, and mad. The second play, *Hamlet*, represents the cold father-daughter relationship between Ophelia and Polonius. Ophelia is deeply fond of Hamlet, but her father, Polonius, employs her to spy on Hamlet. Hamlet ruthlessly abandons Ophelia because Ophelia follows her father’s order. Hamlet’s rejection and anguish over her father’s death drive Ophelia to

drown in a stream. The third play, *The Taming of the Shrew*, depicts the commoditized relationships between the father, Baptista, and the daughters, Katherine and Bianca. Katherine is called a “shrew” because she is a sharp-tongued, ill-tempered, aggressive woman. Her father is anxious to marry her off, preferring to take out an expensive dowry. The second daughter, Bianca, secretly married Lucentio without her father’s consent. The fourth play, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, describes Hermia’s pursuit of love with Lysander, regardless of the marriage arranged by her father, Egeus. In the face of her father’s accusations and abuses and even suing the Duke of Athens to coerce her with the tyranny of the law, Hermia did not have the slightest fear. To fight for the freedom of marriage, Hermia disobeyed her father’s will and the laws of Athens and eloped with Lysander.

Even though the dysfunctional father-daughter relationship is evident in the four plays, it has not received extensive scholarly attention. The study of family relationships in *King Lear* has focused on the father-daughter relationship between Lear and Cordelia (Scherr, 2011; Hamamra and Uebel, 2020) and the father-son relationship between Gloucester and Edgar (Hamamra and Uebel, 2020). The research on dysfunctional family relationships in *Hamlet* mainly involves the father-son relationship (Rutter, 2015), the mother-son relationship (Haverkamp, 2006; Mackenzie, 2017; Owens, 2020), and the marital relationship (Hudson, 2019). Still, there is little research on the father-daughter relationship between Ophelia and Polonius. Similarly, studies on relationships in *The Taming of the Shrew* mainly cover master-servant relationships (Brockman, 2015; Mathie, 2020) and marital relationships (Smith, 2002; Kaul,

2022). In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, topics such as popular culture (Lamb, 2001), bestiality (Boehrer, 2004), humanism (Burke, 2006), religion (Gleckman, 2019), and animals (Bach, 2014; Fretz, 2022) have been explored. Not so much research has been done on the theme of family relationships in this comedy.

Although academics have studied the familial relationships in the selected plays, most employ traditional feminist analysis (Smith, 2002; Haverkamp, 2006; Moreno, 2010; Zou, 2014; Kaul, 2022) and psychoanalytic approach (Schafer, 2010; Owens, 2020; Baysal, 2020; Brkic, 2021). There is a gap in the research literature regarding the father-daughter relationship in selected Shakespearean plays utilizing Bowen Theory, short for Bowen Family Systems Theory. Thus, this study addresses this gap and examines the father-daughter relationships in the four plays through a new angle, using Bowen Theory, developed by Murray Bowen (1913-1990). Bowen Theory, developed in the mid-20th century by Murray Bowen, has evolved and gained importance in understanding family dynamics. Bowen Theory attempts to solve relationship dilemmas such as parent-child relationships, marital relationships, siblings, or other relationships. It helps people understand the operating mode of the system in the relationship. Bowen Theory is considered one of the rare comprehensive explanations of psychological development from a systemic and multigenerational point of view. This theory offers the basis for family therapy, distinguishing it from theoretical approaches to individual psychotherapy. Bowen's concepts are employed to examine family systems in dramas, novels, and films.

Unlike the psychoanalytic and behavioral schools, Bowen Theory has a distinct systemic perspective. Bowen posits that the family functions as an emotional entity and a complex network of interconnected relationships, and any disturbance in the emotional state of one family member will impact their entire relational system. Chronic anxiety is a core idea in Bowen Theory, serving as the primary cause of family dysfunction. Chronic anxiety is widespread and is a physiologic phenomenon that is common to all living organisms. It is triggered when an organism becomes aware of an actual or perceived threat. The eight “interlocking concepts make up Bowen’s theory”: Differentiation of Self, Emotional Triangle, Nuclear Family Emotional System, Family Projection Process, Emotional Cutoff, Multigenerational Transmission Process, Sibling Position, and Societal Regression (Brown 95).

Over the past thirty years, studies have examined dysfunctional family dynamics in literary works using Bowen Theory (Knapp and Womack, 2003; Schiff, 2004; Opiari, 2006; Alan Chavkin and Nancy Fell Chavkin, 2015; Wang and Li, 2019). Nevertheless, there is a scarcity of research investigating father-daughter relations in selected plays via the lens of Bowen Theory. Although Knapp and Womack (2003) used Bowen Theory to study Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* in the book *Family Dance: Family Systems Therapy and Literary Study*, they examine various facets of family relationships, such as sibling and marital relationships, in this tragedy, not just father-daughter relationships. Hence, this research seeks to fill this gap by examining father-daughter relationships in Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* by utilizing Bowen Theory. The study deploys the

method of textual analysis and close reading. It utilizes the concepts of differentiation of self, emotional triangle, nuclear family emotional system, family projection process, and social regression (societal regression) in Bowen Theory to analyze the level of self-differentiation of Lear, Regan, Goneril, and Cordelia in *King Lear*, Hermia and Egeus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Ophelia and Polonius in *Hamlet*, Baptista, Katherine, and Bianca in *The Taming of the Shrew*. A thorough investigation of the texts examined the fusion and differentiation in their interactions with their original and nuclear families. Furthermore, it reveals how the fathers project their chronic anxiety onto their daughters. The chronic anxiety brought about by the societal regression on the father-daughter relationships in *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is also discussed. This research argues that the root cause of dysfunctional father-daughter relationships in the selected dramas stems from the level of the differentiation of self of the characters chosen, the projection of the fathers' anxieties or unresolved conflicts onto their daughters, and the chronic anxiety brought about by the societal environment. The application of Bowen Theory in literary criticism helps to understand the relationship between individuals, families, and society, analyzes the relationship between historical and cultural backgrounds and individual psychology, and provides an emerging perspective for interpreting literary texts.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Shakespeare's writing spans multiple eras and has drawn much scholarly interest. About 400 years ago, he depicted problematic family connections that

still exist in modern culture. In particular, the relationship between a father and a daughter is still quite complex, challenging the idea of feminine submissiveness and submission to male authority. In recent years, research on father-daughter relationships in Shakespeare's plays has been conducted primarily from traditional psychological and feminist perspectives. Remarkably, few prior researchers have explored father-daughter relationships in Shakespeare's plays from the standpoint of Bowen Theory.

Two main reasons underscore the urgency of this research. The first point is that exploring the father-daughter relationship in Shakespeare's work is worthwhile. Shakespeare portrayed other daughters who defied patriarchal authority, such as Juliet, Cordelia, Portia, and Hermia, even though he is often regarded as upholding traditional social norms. Shakespeare, known for his critical stance towards his society, endowed his female characters with a complicated agency and a significant emotional depth. Nevertheless, these women are depicted as living within a male-centered world. Shakespeare recognized this phenomenon and depicted his heroines realistically, mainly focusing on the conflicts between rebellious daughters and their patriarchal fathers. In a patriarchal society, daughters are often perceived as their fathers' property, leading to an imbalance that prevents a harmonious father-daughter relationship. Despite the prominence of father-daughter relationships in Shakespeare's plays, recent studies on family relationships in the selected plays have primarily focused on the father-son, mother-son, and marital relationships. For instance, Owens (2020) explores the relationship between Hamlet and his mother. Rutter (2015) highlights the significance of Heinrich

Bullinger's sermon in understanding the relationship between Hamlet, his father, and Claudius. Kaul (2022) concentrates on "marital relationships" in *The Taming of the Shrew* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* as well as the underlying hypotheses governing these relationships (555). This indicates a shortage of scholarly investigation into the father-daughter relations within the chosen plays in recent years. It includes the main characters like Lear, Regan, Goneril, Cordelia, Hermia, Katherine, and Bianca, as well as the minor characters like Ophelia, Polonius, Egeus, and Baptista.

The second reason lies in the choice of theoretical framework, Bowen Theory. Family relationships in Shakespeare's plays have been explored extensively from feminist, psychological, and other perspectives. However, few scholars have applied Bowen Theory to father-daughter relationships in Shakespeare's plays, as most scholars may prefer to utilize theories based on literary criticism or cultural studies. The study only focuses on the father-daughter relationship in the selected Shakespeare plays and researches this topic from a new perspective, i.e., Bowen Theory.

Scholars have predominantly scrutinized female roles in Shakespeare's works through the lenses of traditional feminist analysis (Hamilton, 1943; Cady, 2010); Mazzola, 2019; Öktem, 2020). For instance, Mazzola (2019) draws inspiration from feminist readings of Shakespeare to explore how characters such as "Goneril, Gertrude, and Juliet" reject societal expectations imposed on women (110). Mazzola focuses on the power and resistance of female characters in Shakespeare's works and offers a feminist and biopolitical perspective on their

actions. While Mazzola examines the radical nature of women's suicide and the disregard for social values, she does not discuss the broader social and historical context in which these plays were written and performed. Feminist research on Shakespeare's father-daughter relationships remains relatively sparse. According to critics like Kathleen Mcluskie, Ellen Gainor, and some modern academicians, Shakespeare's plays not only failed to free female characters from the constraints of a male-centric society but also revealed a patriarchal consciousness.

In addition, although many studies have examined the psychological elements of relationships between fathers and daughters in Shakespeare's plays, most have used conventional psychological research approaches. For instance, Sharon Hamilton's controversial *Shakespeare's Daughters* categorizes Shakespeare's daughters using psychological approaches. However, psychological literary criticism is increasingly confronted with the limitations of "intrapsychic psychology," which originated in the early 20th century and failed to address contemporary concerns (Knapp, *Striking at the Joins* 225). Scholars note that family systems therapy, such as Bowen Theory, has emerged as a widespread mode of therapy in real-world settings and offers new insights for literary criticism (Bump, 1991; Cohen, 1991; Knapp, 1996, 1997).

Conversely, the selected texts have not been extensively explored through the lens of Bowen Theory. Shakespeare's *King Lear* has been a focal point of psychoanalytic studies, but most of these studies have employed the

traditional methodologies of Lacan or Freud. For example, Nicolas Brémaud's *Lear's Delirium?* (2015) delves into the three critical periods of Lacan's teaching. In comparison, Nardizzi (2020) connects the subplot of Gloucester in *King Lear* with the rich history of Oedipus. Lehtonen's *The Intelligence of Negative Passion and the Collapse of Stoicism in King Lear Studies in English Literature* (2019) posits that portraying traditional negative emotions in *King Lear* foreshadows modern cognitivist theories of emotion. Research on dysfunctional family relationships in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* predominantly focuses on marital, father-son, and mother-son relationships, with limited attention to the father-daughter relationship of Ophelia and Polonius. Research methods for *Hamlet* essentially involve traditional psychology and feminism. Scholars have employed various theories and methodologies to study *The Taming of the Shrew*, including grotesque theory, psychology, feminism, paradox intervention, and cognitive methods. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, scholars primarily employ feminism, aesthetics, Orientalism, and ethical approaches to analyze the comedy.

Currently, while some studies have discussed relationships and conflicts in *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, few studies have utilized Bowen Theory to examine the father-daughter relationships in them. This study utilizes Bowen Theory to examine how selected plays portray father-daughter interactions. It employs textual analysis and close reading. It uses the five concepts in Bowen Theory (differentiation of self, emotional triangle, nuclear family emotional system, family projection process, and social regression) to assess the father-daughter relationships in

the selected plays. The two comedies, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the two tragedies, *King Lear* and *Hamlet*, are the primary sources. The tragedies and comedies are selected for this study because they explore dysfunctional father-daughter relations characterized by emotional alienation, patriarchal control, and contested autonomy. While other genres, such as history and romance, also explore family themes, tragedies often reveal the devastating consequences of paternal authority. While comedies offer space for resistance, negotiation, or resolution, they provide a contrasting but complementary framework for analysis. The secondary sources are critics' comments on selected texts. Bowen Theory serves as a compass to guide the research. The objectives of this study include identifying the level of self-differentiation of the characters in the selected Shakespearean plays, examining the projection of the fathers' chronic anxiety onto their daughters, and investigating the chronic anxiety of social regression and its impact on the father-daughter relationship. This interdisciplinary study will demonstrate how Shakespeare's comedy and tragedy provide a rich medium for applying Bowen Theory and the behavioral patterns of dysfunctional families and provide a feasible paradigm for employing Bowen Theory in literary criticism.

1.3 Research Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are outlined as follows:

1. To identify the level of self-differentiation of the father and daughter characters in the selected texts and examine its influence on the father-daughter relationship.

2. To examine how the father-daughter relationship is influenced by the projection of chronic anxiety from fathers onto their daughters in the selected texts.
3. To examine the manifestations of societal regression affecting the father-daughter relationships in the selected plays.

1.4 Research Questions

This study aims to address the following questions:

1. How does the level of self-differentiation in the father and daughter characters in the selected texts affect the father-daughter relationship?
2. How is the father-daughter relationship impacted by the projection of the fathers' chronic anxiety onto their daughters in the selected texts?
3. What are the manifestations of social regression in the selected plays that affect the father-daughter relationships?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study aims to enhance the academic understanding of Shakespeare's plays *King Lear* (1604-05), *Hamlet* (1600), *The Taming of the Shrew* (1623), and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1594-95) by enriching psychoanalysis in the interdisciplinary approach, Bowen Theory. While previous research has widely used feminist and traditional psychoanalytic approaches to analyze Shakespeare's description of gender roles and power structures, the application of Bowen Theory — which examines intergenerational emotional patterns, family systems, and social regression—remains largely underexplored. This study seeks to bridge this gap by analyzing the dynamics in father-daughter relationship in selected dramas through the five concepts in

Bowen Theory: differentiation of self, emotional triangles, nuclear family emotional system, family projection process, and social regression. These concepts have hardly been utilized to evaluate the family dynamics of the chosen plays. Applying these concepts provides a new perspective, enhancing the conventional interpretation of Shakespeare's portrayal of family relationships.

The importance of this study lies in its ability to reformulate the dynamics of the father-daughter in these plays. Although much has been written about the father-daughter relationships in literature, primarily through the lens of traditional feminist and psychoanalytic approaches, the application of Bowen Theory to this analysis offers a new perspective. This approach allows one to understand how Shakespeare's depiction of family relationships exceeds simple social regression and speaks of deeper psychological processes and family systems. Bowen Theory offers a novel theoretical framework that helps illuminate emotional complexity in the selected texts that may not be fully explored in the current scholarship.

This study fills the gap by offering a more nuanced interpretation of family relationships, especially between fathers and daughters, in Shakespearean studies. It examines how Bowen Theory offers a theoretical framework for understanding the dynamics of strength, emotional dependencies, and hidden impacts of family systems in dramas. This perspective provides new knowledge about the complexity of Shakespeare's family depiction and enriches the scholarship for the dynamics of the family in literature.

Applying Bowen Theory—a school of Family Systems Theory—this study offers a novel framework for examining father-daughter bonds in Shakespeare's dramas. This interdisciplinary study not only deepens character analysis but also contributes to Shakespeare's scholarship by relocating the dynamics of the family as structured systems rather than isolated personal pathologies, thus advancing literary study through a new theoretical framework.

1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Study

The scope of this research focuses on the analysis of four Shakespearean plays: *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. These dramas were chosen because of dysfunctional relations with the father-daughter, a critical but underexplored topic in Shakespeare's scholarship. The selection of these four dramas—two comedies and two tragedies—is for a broad exploration of various genres and dynamics of the family. The study primarily focuses on how Bowen Theory can be applied to the lighting of complex father-daughter relationships in these works and offers a new insight into Shakespeare's depiction of family dynamics and conflicts.

Bowen Theory is chosen as the only theoretical framework for this research despite the existence of other schools of Family Systems Theory, such as systemic, structural, and cognitive-behavioral approaches. Bowen Theory is selected because of its focus on the emotional interdependence of family members and its emphasis on generational patterns, which is especially

suitable for understanding complex, prolonged dysfunctional relations between fathers and daughters in these dramas. Bowen Theory was rarely used to interpret these dramas, especially regarding interdisciplinary approaches used in the current Shakespearean scholarship. While traditional psychoanalytic and feminist theories were used to study these works, the unique Bowen Theory perspective offers a new way for literary analysis.

The study uses the five concepts of Bowen Theory, which are differentiation of self, emotional triangle, nuclear family emotional system, family projection process, and societal regression, to analyze the dysfunctional father-daughter relationship in the selected texts. The study only uses the five concepts because the other three concepts (emotional cutoff, multigenerational transmission process, and sibling position) are irrelevant to analyzing father-daughter relationships in the chosen texts. The study uses Bowen's concept of differentiation of self to identify the level of self-differentiation of selected characters. It examines the emotional triangle that persists in the family of origin of the chosen characters and the chronic anxiety projected by their parents, so the concepts of the emotional triangle, nuclear family emotional system, and family projection process are employed. Besides, the chronic anxiety that societal regression brings to their self-differentiation can impact family relations. Therefore, the concept of societal regression is also used. The study does not intend to use the concept of the sibling position because it does not attempt to examine the sibling relationship in the selected dramas. The study does not use the concept of multigenerational transmission process because the study deals with fathers and daughters in the nuclear family. The

father's family of origin (the father, the father's siblings, and parents) and the mother's family of origin (the mother, the mother's siblings and parents) are not the subjects of the investigation. Furthermore, the concept of emotional cutoff is not used, as it does not appear in all four selected plays. This research focuses on the five concepts in Bowen Theory which are applicable in the analysis of all four plays.

The study focuses exclusively on the published text of the selected Shakespearean plays, excluding any analysis of their performance or screen adaptations. The analysis is limited to the lines in the plays and does not include research or consideration of how the plays are staged or adapted to films. Rather than reviewing the interpretive choices in live performances or film adaptations, the focus is on literary aspects such as language, themes, characters, and other elements of the written text.

In addition, although there are other Shakespeare dramas with remarkable father-daughter dynamics, such as *The Merchant of Venice*, *Twelfth Night*, and *The Winter's Tale*, the study is limited to the four plays that contain some of the most transparent, prolonged, dysfunctional father-daughter relationships. This focused scope allows a more detailed and cohesive analysis of these relationships that have been relatively neglected in a recent Shakespeare scholarship. The study aims to fill this gap by exploring the emotional and psychological dimensions of the father-daughter relationships in *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Lastly, the scenes analyzed are confined to those that reflect the father-daughter relations in the chosen texts:

Table 1: Selected Scenes

Play	Act	Scene (s)
<i>King Lear</i>	Act 1	Scenes 1,3,4
	Act 2	Scenes 2, 4
	Act 3	Scene7
	Act 5	Scene 3
<i>Hamlet</i>	Act 1	Scene 3
	Act 2	Scenes 1, 2
	Act 3	Scenes 1, 2,3
	Act 4	Scene 5
<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>	Act 2	Scene 1
	Act 3	Scenes 1. 2,3
<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	Act 1	Scene 1
	Act 2	Scene 2
	Act 3	Scenes 2, 3
	Act 4	Scene 1

1.7 Theoretical Framework

This study's theoretical framework comprises differentiation of self, emotional triangle, nuclear family emotional system, family projection process, and social regression in Bowen Theory. These five concepts will be used to examine the father-daughter relationships in the selected Shakespearean plays for this research to reveal the reasons behind such dysfunctional relationships.

Bowen Theory is one of the earliest comprehensive theories addressing the way the family organization functions. Murray Bowen, a renowned psychiatrist, is the theory's originator. Born in 1913, Bowen was raised in Tennessee and departed in 1990. He was initially trained in psychiatry, where later he utilized the tenets of his theory as psychoanalytic therapy for his clients. In the late 1940s, while working at the Menninger Clinic, Bowen shifted from an individual

focus to a family systems perspective. In 1954, Bowen moved to the National Institutes of Mental Health (NIMH) and began to involve more family members in his research and “psychotherapy with schizophrenic” (Brown 94). This represented a significant shift in his approach to understanding the emotional system. When Bowen founded the Georgetown Family Center in 1959, he expanded his theories to deal with more minor emotional problems. Between 1959 and 1962, he conducted detailed research on intergenerational family patterns. He directed his study and practice at the Georgetown Family Center until his death. Bowen Theory emphasizes “the importance of understanding family dynamics, including concepts such as differentiation of self, emotional triangles, and multigenerational transmission processes” (Brown 94). Bowen believed that individuals are most easily understood in “the context of their family systems” (Brown 94).

Michael E. Kerr is one of Murray Bowen’s collaborators. He is one of the present leaders of Bowenian Therapy at the Georgetown Family Centre (Brown 94). The two worked closely together for 20 years before Kerr succeeded Bowen as director of the Georgetown Family Center in 1990. In 1988, Michael E. Kerr collaborated with Murray Bowen on the book *Family Evaluation: An Approach Based on Bowen Theory*. In 2019, Kerr published *Family Systems: A Journal of Natural Systems Thinking in Psychiatry and the Sciences*. Kerr has also written several articles related to Bowen Theory and its applications. He founded *Family Systems: A Journal of Natural Systems Thinking in Psychiatry and the Sciences* and served as editor from 1994 to 2014. Kerr concentrates on the relationship between Bowen Theory and

evolutionary theory, the relationship between physical, emotional, and social symptoms and the family emotional process, the differentiation process, and the development of the disease concept.

Bowen Theory serves as the theoretical framework for this research. Due to its ability to scientifically explain the intricate behaviors and responses of the symptomatic family member and the behavior of other family members, Bowen Theory is considered “a key concept in the field of family therapy” (Alzoubi 15). Unlike psychoanalytic approaches, which predominantly emphasize personal and internal changes, Bowen Theory posits that transformation must occur at the level of relational systems. Additionally, while psychoanalytic theory highlights the unconscious guiding “one’s conscious thoughts and actions” (Shapiro et al. 42), Bowen Theory emphasizes an individual’s chronic anxiety level and the degree of differentiation from their family of origin as primary factors influencing interpersonal relationships. Some of the core elements of Bowen Theory are worth noting. Firstly, Bowen argues that his theory applies to the family and the general human condition. Secondly, instead of offering a theoretical framework composed of “dichotomous psychological concepts (nature/nurture, marital problems/child problems, physical illness/emotional illness), Bowen sees “phenomena along a continuum” (Shapiro et al. 42).

Bowen’s primary emphasis was on patterns that develop in families to lessen anxiety. A significant source of anxiety in families is the feeling of either excessive intimacy or significant emotional distance in a relationship. The level of anxiety within a family is influenced by the existing amount of external stress and the inherited sensitivity to specific themes that have been passed down

through generations. Suppose individuals within a family cannot consider their responses to relational challenges and instead respond anxiously to perceived emotional pressures. In that case, it can lead to a persistent “state of anxiety or reactivity” (Brown 95). Bowen claims that society parallels anxiety about family and can be observed between the social and family affective functions. Therefore, Bowen Theory is conducive to interpreting literary works and is especially suitable for analyzing dramas that reflect family dysfunction. It can help readers understand the father-daughter relationships in Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Bowen Theory consists of eight interconnected concepts. This study utilizes the five concepts (differentiation of self, emotional triangle, nuclear family emotional system, family projection process, and social regression) to address the three research questions mentioned earlier. The remaining three concepts (emotional cutoff, multigenerational transmission process, and sibling position) do not apply to analyzing the father-daughter relationship in the chosen texts.

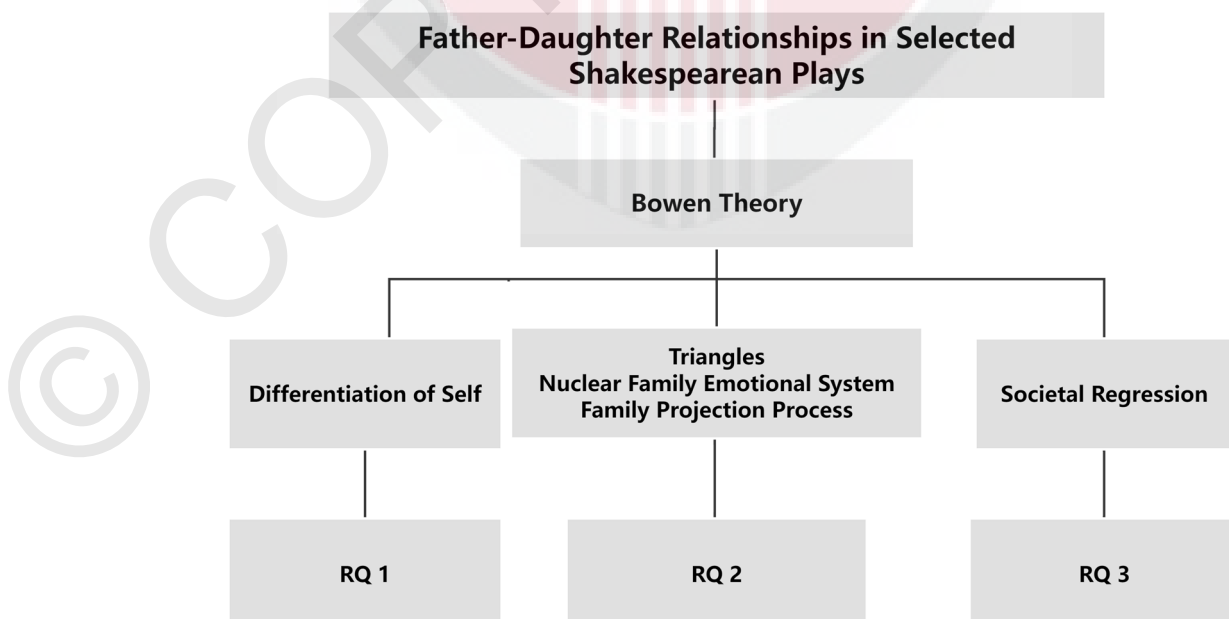


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

This study is primarily grounded in Bowen Theory, developed by Murray Bowen, which serves as the central framework for analyzing father-daughter relationships in the selected Shakespearean plays. Each research question (RQ) is addressed through specific concepts within Bowen Theory: The concept of differentiation of self is fundamental to answering RQ1. The concepts of emotional triangles, nuclear family emotional system, and family projection process are central to addressing RQ2. The concept of societal regression provides the theoretical basis for answering RQ3.

1.8 Research Methodology

The research employs textual analysis and close reading of the selected texts using Bowen Theory as a framework in a relatively objective manner. The analysis focuses on the portrayal of the father-daughter interactions in the selected texts. Bowen Theory served as a roadmap for textual analysis and close reading. Its five concepts—differentiation of self, emotional triangle, nuclear family emotional system, family projection process, and social regression—are utilized as a literary lens to critically examine the father-daughter interactions in the selected texts.

The study primarily relies on textual analysis to understand and analyze the texts, which is an integral aspect of the methodology. The research utilizes Shakespeare's *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as the main sources. The primary rationale for selecting these texts is the portrayal of father-daughter interactions in the

dramas. Up to this point, examining the father-daughter relationship in the chosen texts has not been explored using the framework of Bowen Theory. Reviews from scholars and critics serve as secondary sources for insight into the current study trends about selected plays, father-daughter relationships in Shakespeare's plays, and Bowen Theory. In exploring the portrayal of dysfunctional family connections in literature, the analysis incorporates critics' assessments of studies that illustrate dysfunctional family dynamics in literary genres like fiction and drama through the lens of Bowen Theory.

The study initially establishes the research questions and procures the necessary texts to address these questions, with a specific emphasis on contextual information. Initially, it was vital to formulate research questions. Allen (2017) notes that the methods and choices in the research process, such as "many modes of methodology," are impacted by the question (1755). A literature review is performed to identify a research gap and formulate the research questions. The literature review serves to identify the gap in existing research, and subsequently, research objectives and questions are formulated. The next stage involves identifying the exact location of the text. Allen (2017) notes that the research question guides the academics toward a specific element discussed in the research texts, and the main emphasis lies on the "bits, units, or elements of the text (s)" that contribute to the analysis (1755). Furthermore, Allen (2017) points out that the researcher identifies the sections of the chosen plays that most effectively address the research questions by seeking out the most compelling elements within the texts, and these elements are then analyzed to "provide insight into the research question" (1756). Hence,

this study explicitly examines the chosen characters' lines and actions, analyzing the father-daughter connection in the selected texts through the lens of Bowen Theory.

Subsequently, a close reading of the chosen texts is carried out, drawing upon the concepts of Bowen Theory. By engaging in continuous attempts of close reading, criticism is developed that employs creative and critical thinking skills to arrive at a well-founded understanding of the father-daughter relationship depicted in the chosen texts. Throughout the process of close reading, research questions are formulated utilizing Bowen Theory.

Bowen Theory is the most compelling theoretical framework for comprehending character qualities and examining father-daughter relationships. Family Systems Theory, as literary analysis, examines the portrayal of families in literary works, regards individuals as a sub-system of the family system, and observes that literature reflects the characters and the system in which they exist. To truly comprehend the characters, it is imperative to have a thorough awareness of their familial background. As literary analysis, Family Systems Theory acknowledges and analyzes the characters' feelings in conjunction with other characters in the literary piece. Family Systems Theory, as applied to literary criticism, systematically identifies individuals and families and deeply examines the psychological aspects of characters within the family setting. It posits that characters' psychological issues in literary texts are not isolated but rather intricately linked to their familial origins. Family Systems Theory allows for a systematic exploration of the motivations and

emotions that drive the conduct of individuals within a family setting. The constraints and interplay of family dynamics, historical implications, societal structure, and the individual psyche are explored by utilizing Bowen Theory. In addition, incorporating Family System Theory into literary criticism allows for a deeper understanding of how people, families, and society interact. Through this method, we can delve into the complex web of relationships between the character's psyche, literary criticism, historical roots, and cultural context, which can pave new avenues and perspectives for literary criticism. Therefore, Bowen Theory is a suitable literary lens for examining the father-daughter relationship in the chosen texts.

This study primarily employs the concepts of differentiation of the self, nuclear family emotional system, emotional triangle, family projection process, and societal regression in Bowen Theory. It applies these concepts to analyze the relationships between the fathers and daughters in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Bowen thinks that family dysfunction stems from chronic anxiety. Differentiation of self is directly proportional to chronic anxiety. The characters' differentiation of self is influenced by their family of origin, nuclear family, and societal regression. Consequently, the study analyses the levels of differentiation of self concerning the fathers and the daughters in the selected texts. It also explores the ongoing emotional triangle within the characters' families of origin, particularly the triangular relationship and the chronic anxiety projected by the fathers. These factors significantly impact the characters and contribute to their lower levels of self-differentiation. Furthermore, the characters' chronic anxiety, which

arises from their personal experiences of societal regression, can also have a detrimental effect on their differentiation of self. Therefore, the concept of societal regression is also utilized.

To achieve this research's first objective, the study pivots on the concept of differentiation of self in Bowen Theory. To elucidate the problem of father-daughter relationships, the selected characters must consist of fathers and daughters with lower levels of self-differentiation. For this reason, the study chooses Lear, Cordelia, Goneril, and Regan in *King Lear*, Hermia, and Egeus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Ophelia and Polonius in *Hamlet*, Baptista, Katherine, and Bianca in *The Taming of the Shrew* as the subjects of analysis.

Following this, to address the second research objective, the present study employs the concepts of the emotional triangle, nuclear family emotional system, and family projection process in Bowen Theory to discuss the projection of the chronic anxiety of the fathers onto the daughters. Each of these concepts plays an important role in the formation of how anxiety is transmitted in family systems and how it manifests itself in relationships between family members. By using these three concepts in Bowen Theory, the study determines how chronic anxiety in the family system affects father-daughter relations, both in terms of emotional reactivity and the role that every member of the family plays in maintaining these cycles of anxiety.

The third objective of this study is achieved by exploiting the concept of social regression in Bowen Theory to discuss the influence of social factors like

humanism, feudalism, patriarchy, and religion on the self-differentiation of the characters and the relationship between father and daughter in the Shakespearean era.

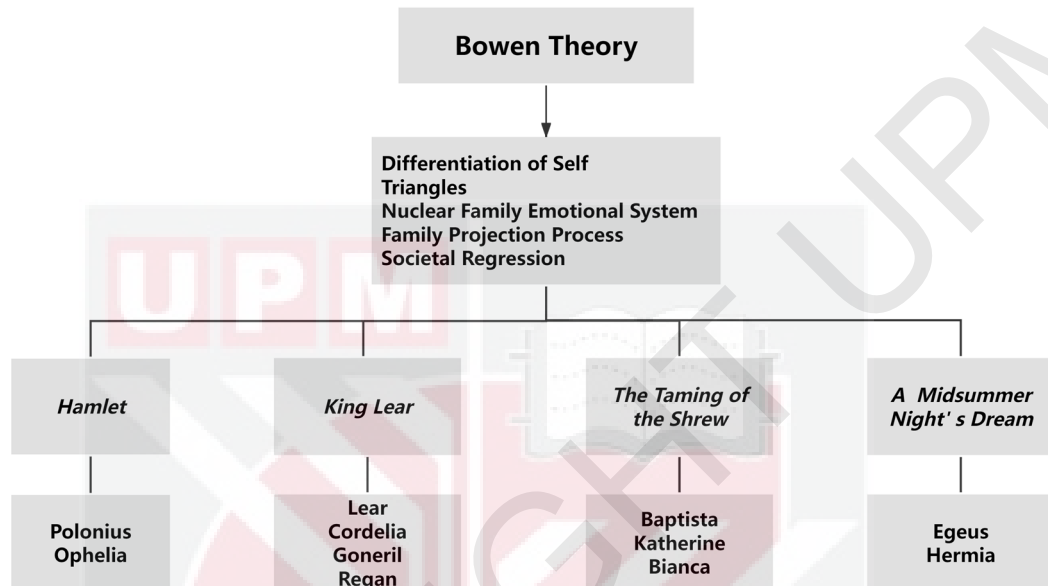


Figure 2: Research Methodology

The study is based on textual evidence in interpreting and analyzing the texts as part of the methodology, using the concepts of differentiation of self, emotional triangle, nuclear family emotional system, family projection process, and social regression in Bowen Theory. Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *The Taming of the Shrew* are used as the primary sources for the study. A close reading of the text and all the related sources regarding the theoretical framework of Bowen Theory is used intensively in realizing this study.

1.9 Justification of Selected Texts

The thesis focuses on four of Shakespeare's plays, precisely two tragedies, *Hamlet* and *King Lear*, and two comedies, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. These plays explore the relationship between father and daughter, a theme in twenty-one of Shakespeare's thirty-eight plays. The study selects the two comedies and the two tragedies for the following reasons:

The first aspect crucial in selecting the literary texts is undoubtedly due to the theme of the dysfunctional father-daughter relationships, which is reflected in the dramas. In Bowen Theory, the term "dysfunctional" is used to describe relationships that reflect an inability to manage emotions or maintain healthy boundaries. Bowen Theory emphasizes how unresolved emotional attachments and undifferentiated relationships can lead to dysfunction. From the perspective of Bowen Theory, the father-daughter relationships in the selected Shakespearean plays can be considered dysfunctional because they deviate from healthy functioning patterns. *King Lear* is one of Shakespeare's four tragedies, in which dysfunctional father-daughter relationships are manifested in the Lear family. The relationship between father and children is turned upside down due to the filial ingratitude of the three degenerated daughters, Cordelia, Goneril, and Regan. Cordelia, Lear's preferred daughter, declines to engage in flattery towards him, unlike her sisters Goneril and Regan. Lear is infuriated by this, leading him to terminate his connection with her and distribute her portion of the kingdom between Goneril and Regan.

Upon assuming authority, Goneril and Regan subject Lear to mistreatment and ultimately betray him, resulting in his descent into madness and banishment. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the relationship between Hermia and her father, Egeus, is dysfunctional. At the play's beginning, Egeus compels his daughter Hermia to marry Demetrius instead of her true love, Lysander. Egeus asks Theseus, the Duke of Athens, to impose his will on his daughter, even if Hermia's refusal of her father's orders would result in her being sentenced to death or sent to a nunnery under Athenian law. In the end, Hermia stands beside her father and elopes with Lysander. *Hamlet* also reflects a dysfunctional father-daughter relationship. Polonius uses his daughter Ophelia as a tool, never caring about her feelings, to spy on the secret of Hamlet's madness. He betrays his daughter's love and uses her as a sacrifice to court the king. In *The Taming of the Shrew*, the father, Baptista, promises to pay an expensive dowry to make the eldest daughter Katherine marry smoothly. He decides to get the money back on the marriage of his second daughter Bianca, who has many suitors. Baptista regards her daughters' marriage as a business. In the selected plays, the fathers fail to maintain emotional balance and boundaries, confront their daughters with each other, and fail to consider their daughters' emotional needs, resulting in conflict, manipulation, or alienation. The fathers project their emotional anxieties onto their daughters, leading to emotional alienation and distress. In addition, none of the fathers in the selected plays allow their daughters to express their individuality or independence, leading to emotional integration. Thus, the father-daughter relationships in the selected plays are dysfunctional.

Secondly, there has been little study of father-daughter relationships in the selected dramas from the viewpoint of Bowen Theory so far. Researchers have investigated characters' images, religion, death, and old age in Shakespeare's *King Lear*. The main research methods include psychoanalysis, spatial theory, ethical criticism, geopolitics, ecocriticism, and ecofeminism. When it comes to *Hamlet*, character study always occupies the central position. Hamlet's analysis and interpretation represent the majority, focusing mainly on the formation of Hamlet's madness and ghost image. Studies on Ophelia, Polonius, and Ophelia's mother are starting to catch the attention of some researchers. Research into family relationships in *Hamlet* slowly popped up. While research on the nuclear family in the tragedy has received more attention, there has been little research on the father-daughter relationship. More emphasis has been placed on the father-son, mother-son, and marital relationship rather than the father-daughter relationship in the drama. Academics rely primarily on traditional psychology and feminism to study *Hamlet*. Research on *The Taming of the Shrew* has similarly prioritized themes of marriage, bragging courtship, social anxiety, and character analysis, often emphasizing marital and master-servant relationships while neglecting father-daughter dynamics. Research methods on this comedy focus on grotesque theory, psychology, feminism, paradoxical intervention, and cognitive approaches. Research topics of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* include popular culture, bestiality, humanism, religion, and animals, and research methods mainly include feminism, aesthetics, orientalism, and ethical criticism. Few scholars have used Bowen Theory to interpret the relationship between father and daughter in these four plays. Thus, this study examines the father-daughter relationship within the

four plays by Shakespeare and approaches them through the lens of the new perspective, Bowen Theory, which helps bridge the research gap.

Thirdly, the theme of the father-daughter relationship depicted by Shakespeare in the selected works is still relevant in present society. Shakespeare's works were written during an era of changing social norms and family dynamics. Relationships between parents and children were developing, and exploring these developments enabled Shakespeare to comment on and reflect on his time's social and cultural context. Additionally, dysfunctional father-daughter relationships are universal. These relationships resonate across cultures and periods. While specific social norms may have changed, the underlying dynamics of family relations that Shakespeare portrays remain a rich source for understanding and reflecting on the complexity of contemporary father-daughter relationships.

Finally, these dramas are most appropriate to the aim of exploring father-daughter relationships because the selected characters have the following similarities: they have lower levels of self-differentiation, and the daughters are projected by their fathers' anxieties or unresolved conflicts. In addition, the daughters are affected by societal regression. They are typical and representative. They are all depicted in the period of patriarchal society and are bound by conventional moral standards. Sarup Singh (1983) notes that Renaissance Britain was a patriarchal society; daughters may be the most prominent victims of patriarchal families, and "Elizabethan daughters were no exception" (33). They must abide by diverse ethical standards. Although they are unwilling to accept the chains locked themselves and make some efforts,

they have lower self-differentiation due to societal regression. The concept of societal regression in Bowen Theory emphasizes its impact on the level of differentiation of self. The same social background of the selected texts makes it feasible to analyze the father-daughter relationships from Bowen Theory.

1.10 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is structured thoughtfully into seven distinct chapters: the introductory segment, the main body, and the concluding part. In the first chapter, a concise elucidation of the study's backdrop is meticulously presented, which includes a brief exploration of the statement of the problem, a delineation of research objectives, an articulation of research questions that will guide the inquiry, and an insightful exposition of the profound significance of this study. Additionally, the chapter thoughtfully discusses the scope and limitations of the study. A detailed overview of the research methodology is provided, emphasizing the rigor applied. Additionally, the chapter affords an insightful glimpse into the justification of the selected texts and concludes by outlining the structural framework that governs the entirety of the thesis.

Chapter 2 is the literature review of the recent 30 years, which consists of five parts. The first part is a literature review of Family Systems Theory in literary scholarship. The second part explores studies that used Bowen Theory as a theoretical framework in literary works. The third part is an overview of dysfunctional family research in literary works. The fourth part states the study of father-daughter relationships in Shakespeare's plays. The fifth part provides an overview of the selected texts: *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Chapter 3 introduces the theoretical framework and research methods used in the thesis. Firstly, it presents Bowen Theory and its eight core concepts. Then, it explains the five concepts mainly used in the thesis: differentiation of self, family projection process, triangles, nuclear family emotional system, and societal regression. In addition, the chapter explains research methods and discusses how the five concepts in Bowen Theory will be applied to the research.

Chapter 4 consists of three parts. The first section describes the research objective to be achieved, the concept of differentiation of self, and the chapter's structure. The second part evaluates the level of the differentiation of self of the chosen characters. The third part analyzes the influence of the self-differentiation of the selected characters on the father-daughter relationships in the plays chosen.

Chapter 5 investigates the projection of the fathers' chronic anxiety onto the daughters in the selected Shakespeare's plays. By using the concepts of triangles, the nuclear family emotional system, and the family projection process in Bowen Theory, this chapter mainly identifies the origin of the self-differentiation of the selected characters and the influence of the family of origin and the nuclear family on their ability to differentiate themselves. It establishes a link between the family projection process, the level of differentiation of the self, and the father-daughter relationship.

Chapter 6 meticulously examines the manifestations of societal regression that affect the father-daughter relationships in the selected plays. It analyzes how

societal regression influences the self-differentiation of the characters and, in turn, impacts the dynamics of father-daughter relationships in Shakespearean dramas.

Chapter 7 concludes the thesis and discusses the findings of the study. It points out the study's limitations and recommends studying various family relationships in Shakespeare's plays and other literary genres through the lens of Bowen Theory. Additionally, it looks forward to employing other family systems theories to examine dysfunctional family relationships in literary works.

1.11 Definition of Terms

Family: The human family is a distinct type of “natural system” known as an “*emotional system*” (Kerr and Bowen 28). This system is formed by interactions and emotional dynamics between its members, especially in terms of roles and relationships in the family. In the context of this study, the family is not only a biological unit but a socio-emotional construct, where the individuality and emotional reactions of each member are linked to the collective emotional health of the family.

Individuality: Individuality is “a biologically integrated life force” (more fundamental than a simple function of the brain) that nourishes an organism to follow its guidelines and to be a separate and independent entity (Kerr and Bowen 64). It represents the ability of an individual to maintain a clear sense of self, led by congenital drives and conscious principles. In the study,

individuality will be considered a critical factor in understanding character dynamics, primarily how the level of the characters' differentiation of self influences family relationships, especially the bonds of the fathers and the daughters.

Togetherness: Togetherness is a life force with biological roots (more fundamental than being merely a function of the brain), which encourages an organization to follow the instructions of others, to “be a dependent, connected and indistinct entity” (Kerr and Bowen 64). Unlike individuality, togetherness emphasizes the emotional fusion among individuals, often leading to a loss of distinct self. This concept is essential in analyzing the relational tensions in Shakespeare's father-daughter characters.

Triangles: A triangle is a system of three people. It is “the smallest stable relationship unit” (Kerr and Bowen 132). This concept is essential for understanding the relational dynamics in Shakespeare's dramas because many father-daughter relations are affected or complicated by a third party (e.g., mothers or other family members), destabilizing the emotional system.

Anxiety: Anxiety may be an organism's reaction to an actual or imagined threat (Kerr and Bowen 111). In this research, anxiety will be examined concerning how the selected characters go through an emotional upheaval in family systems, especially the father-daughter dynamic.

Chronic anxiety: Chronic anxiety is “a system or process of actions” and responses which, when triggered, rapidly offers its impulse and “becomes largely independent of the initial triggering stimuli” (Kerr and Bowen 112). This term will be analyzed to understand how unresolved family tensions in selected Shakespeare’s works create permanent emotional struggles for characters.

Basic self: The nucleus of the self, which consists of all things that guide and determine “the course of the self” (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 180). In this study, the distinction between the basic self and the pseudo self will help to illuminate their emotional development and stability in family relationships, especially in selected Shakespeare’s tragedies and comedies.

Pseudo Self: The “part of self that is negotiated” within a relationship (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 184). This distinction will be crucial to understanding how Shakespeare’s characters struggle to maintain their sense of self in negotiating family expectations, especially fathers and daughters.

Differentiation of Self: Differentiation of self is the capability to be a person while remaining connected to others or separated while remaining committed (Titelman 146). This concept is central to understanding how Shakespeare’s father-daughter relations are evolving, especially in how the characters go through emotional tensions and affect mutual development.

Emotional Cutoff: Bowen defines “emotional cutoff” as “the way people manage the intensity of fusion between the generations” (Brown 97). A cutoff

is more of an escape; people decide to be utterly distinct from their family of origin. While emotional cutoff may reduce immediate pressure, “patterns of reactivity in tense relationships remain unchanged and versions of the past, or their mirror image, are repeated” (Brown 97).

Emotional System: The “emotional unit” is a collection of individuals who have developed significant ties through spending considerable time together. It can be a group of animals, “a human family (nuclear or extended),” or “a workplace system” (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 182). In selected Shakespearean dramas, these systems can be analyzed to understand how the family dynamics form the emotional paths of the characters chosen, especially father-daughter relationships.

Feelings: Happy or painful experiences at different intensity levels. They originate from and are perceived by the individual’s “emotional system” (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 183). This study will examine feelings as key indicators of emotional health and relational dynamics, especially in family contexts.

Fusion: The “emotional attachment” of at least two selves with “mother/child symbiosis” as a paradigm. It can be seen in any strained or dominant relationship. The two selves in a “fusion” are “intensely emotionally reactive to each other and experience a loss of gain of self in the relationship” (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 183). This concept will be analyzed to understand how emotional fusion affects the father-daughter relations in selected texts, often contributing to unhealthy relational patterns.

System: System is “the emotional relationships between or among human beings or other animals.” Typically, all it takes to make people emotionally meaningful or related is for them to spend much time together. When people do this, they start to emotionally arouse each other sooner or later, creating the phenomenon of emotions being handed down from one person to another. This phenomenon becomes an “observed” pattern (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 184). This relational system will be the central point in analyzing how Shakespeare depicts the family structures and how these systems affect character development and conflict resolution.

Symbiosis: The term “symbiosis” depicts the undifferentiation between individuals, specifically in connection to the mother-child bond. A symbiotic relationship is a typical condition between a mother and infant, but it is also employed to describe the fact that “older children and adults have not grown completely away from the mother (the family)” (Kerr and Bowen 85). This term will be used to explore how Shakespeare’s characters struggle with emotional attachment and boundaries between self and others, particularly in the dynamics of parents and children.

Family Projection Process: The “mechanisms” whereby parents and children play an active role in transmitting parental issues to children (Bowen 137). In the context of selected Shakespearean dramas, this concept will be explored to understand how father-daughter relations are impacted by the generational transmission of emotional patterns.

Shakespearean Tragedy: A Shakespearean tragedy is a story of extraordinary catastrophe leading to the death of a man of high social status, and the story revolves around human actions that cause “exceptional calamity and ending in the death of such a man” (Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy: The Substance of Shakespearean Tragedy* 60). The interplay of anxiety, family dynamics, and emotional systems in selected Shakespearean tragedies, *King Lear* and *Hamlet*, will be analyzed to show how these factors contribute to tragic results, especially in father-daughter relations.

Shakespearean Comedy: Shakespearean comedy is a genre that combines humor, romance, social commentary, and conflict resolution in a way that delights and enlightens audiences. Shakespeare’s comedies often include complex plots with mistaken identities, disguises, love triangles, and humorous subplots. It can be seen as a synthesis of the pleasurable and didactic elements, aiming to entertain while also “exposing vice or correcting folly” (Crane 3). Shakespeare’s comedies resolve conflicts with happy endings, usually involving romantic stories and restoring order and harmony (Crane 2-5). This genre will be examined in the light of Bowen Theory of the emotional system to understand how family dynamics and emotional patterns contribute to the development of relationships, especially in comedies such as *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *The Taming of the Shrew*.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter consists of five sections. Section one begins with a literature review of Family Systems Theory in literary scholarship. The second section analyzes the application of Bowen Theory to various literary works. Section three overviews the research on dysfunctional families in literary works. The fourth section briefly reviews the study of father-daughter relationships in Shakespeare's plays. Section five discusses research conducted and articles written on the selected texts. The research status and the latest theoretical achievements of the chosen dramas are summarized in detail. For the purpose of this research, the literature review on the selected texts focuses on studies concerning family relationships in literary works in the last thirty years. There are multiple approaches to studying selected Shakespearean tragedies and comedies; however, this literature review focuses mainly on research concerning interdisciplinary approaches.

The above five parts help us understand the dysfunctional family relationship in literary criticism, examine the research focus and methods of selected texts in recent years, and find the gap in the study. In general, the researcher summarizes and analyzes each study, offering a wealth of examples and evidence to support the argument, describing the research trend, revealing the research focus, and discovering the direction and significance of the study.

2.2 Family Systems Theory in Literary Scholarship

Psychologists have used Family Systems Theory as a viable therapeutic modality since the 1950s after recognizing the family as a unified living system or organic unit that governs significant interactions between family members. Family Systems Theory developed as a socio-psychological methodology during the contemporary and postmodern periods. Remarkably, the theory becomes well-suited and pragmatic for addressing individual and familial issues arising from community life's demands and the ongoing fragmentation and reconstruction of our environments or stories. Family therapy models created by eminent therapists like John Bell, Gregory Bateson, Virginia Satir, Murray Bowen, James Framo, Sal Minuchin, Mara Selvini-Palazzoli, Carl Whitaker, and Augustus Napier serve as the foundation for current family therapies. Family Systems Therapy aims to alleviate individual and family dysfunction by "helping individuals within the family system recognize interactions that are detrimental to communication" (McFarland-Wilson 6). The underlying premise of Family Systems Theory posits that family dysfunction is rarely rooted internally or triggered by a single traumatic event. Often, family discords are deeply rooted in emotional and physical processes that are intrinsically interconnected to people and events in the family, as any disruption within the system can create a chain reaction, influencing not just the individual involved but also other family members, often in unexpected or far-reaching ways. Over half a century, Family Systems Theory has evolved into three primary schools: the empirical school initiated by Virginia Satir, the structural school developed by Salvador Minuchin, and the systemic school mooted by

Murray Bowen. All three schools developed by these individuals are of great value in applying Family Systems Theory to literary criticism.

Family Systems Theory, particularly Bowen Theory, has received limited attention from literary scholars in their study of family dynamics and interpersonal interactions among family members. However, there are a few instances of "convergences between the two" (Alzoubi 20). For instance, John V. Knapp used systems-theoretic models of family dynamics in his book *Striking at the Joints: Contemporary Psychology and Literary Criticism* (1996) to analyze D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* and Henry Roth's *Call it Sleep*. In *Reading the Family Dance: Family Systems Therapy and Literary Study* (2003), Knapp and Womack present a collection of essays employing Family Systems Theory to analyze literary works, particularly emphasizing certain facets of family dynamics and psychological motifs. Additionally, Knapp (2004) proposes the integration of family systems psychotherapy into literary criticism. Knapp (2004) asserts that by using the framework of Family Systems Theory, critics can "understand diverse members of an intimate fictional grouping with integrity" (Knapp, *Family-Systems Psychotherapy and Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism: A Comparative Critique* 149-66). Knapp believes that through using the insights and categories of family systems therapy, critics may focus on family dynamics and relational patterns in literary works, which can lead to a more nuanced understanding of characters and narratives, provide insight into the psychological underpinnings of characters' behaviors and motivations, and enrich the interpretation of literary works (Knapp, *Family-Systems Psychotherapy and Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism: A Comparative Critique*

149-66). Furthermore, Knapp (2010) presents a sampling of predominantly literary essays that utilize Family Systems Theory (FST). Knapp proposes that this approach has emerged well beyond “the hitherto dominant psychological critical paradigmata associated with Freud, Jacques Lacan, and psycho-analytic criticism” (Knapp, *New Psychologies and Modern Assessments: Rethinking Classics In Literature, Including Film and Music* 1).

Notwithstanding these applications, little has been done to examine the theme of father-daughter relations in Shakespeare’s plays using Bowen Theory. This study uses the five concepts of Bowen Theory—differentiation of self, emotional triangle, nuclear family emotional system, family projection process, and social regression— to analyze the father-daughter dynamics in selected dramas to provide a relatively objective and nuanced understanding of these relationships.

2.3 Bowen Theory in Literary Works

In the recent thirty years, John V. Knapp and Kenneth Womack (2003), Sarah Eden Schiff (2004), Benjamin Roger Oipari (2006), C. M. Gill (2010), Cheryl B. Lester (2011), Alan Chavkin and Nancy Fell Chavkin (2015), Najah Ahmad Fayiz Alzoubi (2016), Chenlei Wang and Yan Li (2019) have applied Bowen Theory to specific paradigms of films, novels, and dramas.

A few scholars have applied Bowen Theory to the analysis of novels. Lester (2011) draws concepts from Bowen Theory to demonstrate how William

Faulkner's novels dramatize how emotional systems and relational networks spread anxiety and constrain independent thought, feeling, and action within an emotional realm. Continued work on systems of thinking supports her goal of contributing to the scholarship that continues to flourish around the intensely emotional field of Faulkner's research (Lester 265). Sarah Eden Schiff (2004) uses Philip Roth's early novels, written in parallel with the elaboration of Bowen Theory, as a test case to assess the critical validity of systems theory as a construct in literature. The author contends that readers can gain insight into themselves and the literary characters they encounter by carefully interpreting Bowen Theory and Philip Roth's fiction. This understanding reveals that we are all part of a family, and our struggles do not necessarily stem from "penis envy, or the name of the father, or a weak ego." Instead, our challenges arise from the complex dynamics of an "anxious family and societal system" (Schiff 63-64). Schiff applies Bowen's eight concepts to the five novels by Philip Roth, the post-war American novelist. Schiff tests Bowen Theory with five of Roth's earliest novels depicting the process of self-development in the family context. Using examples from these novels, Schiff explains each of Bowen's eight concepts instead of focusing on analyzing the reflection of self-differentiation in the novels. The author assumes that perhaps the best example of Roth being aware of the societal emotional process is what he went through in real life. Roth experienced firsthand the extreme anxiety of American Jews after the Second World War, which continues today. Roth, however, remained faithful to his "beliefs and values" and did not abandon his "fictional purpose" (Schiff 63). More attention should be paid to the differentiation of the self of the main characters in the novels, as the differentiation of self is the cornerstone

of Bowen Theory, which is closely related to family dysfunction. Because Schiff's research focuses on those novels in which Roth dedicates his literary pursuit to the domestic environment, the author fails to find many clear examples of what Bowen calls the societal emotional process in his novels.

Some critics have used Family Systems Theory to examine the families depicted in the movie. C. M. Gill's *Martyring Veda: Mildred Pierce and Family Systems Theory* (2010) employs Family Systems Theory to interpret the film *Mildred Pierce* (1945), an adaption of James M. Cain's 1941 novel. Using concepts such as differentiation of self and triangulation, the author argues that Veda should not be seen as a mere "villain or scapegoat" but as a martyr to the Pierce family system (Gill 81). Gill notes that the film shows that each member of the Pierce family shares their blame for the film's tragedies. Chenlei Wang and Yan Li (2019) use Bowen Theory to analyze the reasons why Neil Perry, a prominent character in *Dead Poets Society*, commits suicide in "a family with low differentiation" and how to address the parent-child conflict in this context (695). The authors state that although Neil's suicide is a spontaneous act and stems from his inner struggle, the problems he faces result from multi-generational inheritance. Neil shows a lack of rational thinking in the face of family pressure. Neil's behavior is also the result of low self-differentiation resulting from unhealthy triangular relationships in the nuclear family (Wang and Li 699).

Nevertheless, most academics employ Bowen Theory for the analysis of drama. Alan Chavkin and Nancy Fell Chavkin (2015) analyze Arthur Miller's

play *The Death of the Salesman* using the theory of Interpersonal Acceptance and Rejection Theory and Family Systems Theory. The authors use these theories to analyze the characters in the play, their interactions, and the family dynamics depicted in the play and provide a deeper understanding of the issues of acceptance, rejection, and family relations in psychological frameworks. The author argues that *Death of a Salesman* is not solely about “one or two individuals” but rather about “a family system” and the strong relationships, as well as the tensions, among its members (Alan Chavkin and Nancy Feyl Chavkin 27). The authors mainly employ the concepts in Bowen Theory: differentiation of self, emotional fusion, triangles, family projection process, chronic anxiety, and sibling position. The authors attribute Willy’s struggles and self-destructive behavior to a combination of interpersonal acceptance and rejection in the family system. However, the authors did not delve into the historical context in which Arthur Miller wrote *Death of a Salesman* and how the social norms and events of the time affected the themes and characters of the play.

Benjamin Roger Opipari’s dissertation, *American Drama and the Disabled Family Member: A Family Systems Approach*, is the most relevant and meaningful reading of Eugene O’Neill’s *Long Day’s Journey into Night* (1956) using Bowen Theory (Alzoubi 23). Opipari places greater emphasis on character environments and the interconnectivity of family members. Opipari focuses on emotionally and physically handicapped family members in the five plays by different authors and their impact on the entire family’s functioning. The author examines each case differently from the general Family Systems

Theory: Laura's emotional and physical handicap in Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie*; Reciprocal addiction from the perspective of Bowen Theory in *Long Day's Journey into Night* by Eugene O'Neill; Homeostatic maintenance and post-traumatic stress disorder in David Rabe's *Sticks and Bones*; Family secrets in Sam Shepard's *Buried Child*, and Tina Howe's *Painting Churches* on dementia and its influence on family conflict and cohesion. In chapter two, Opiari asserts that one of the most drug-addicted families in American drama of the 20th century is the Tyrone family of *Long Day's Journey into Night*. Everybody in this play has a drug addiction, and because of their physical fitness and emotional well-being, no one can help the family. Instead, their behavioral patterns only disrupt the families they think "they are helping" (Opiari 65). Bowen Theory is an ideal way to analyze the Tyrone family because substance abuse is both a symptom and a cause of anxiety in dysfunctional families like the Tyrone family (Opiari 65). Anxiety is the leading cause and effect of substance abuse in the play. The author concludes that the massive dysfunction of the Tyrone family results from the fundamental principle of circular causality, or more precisely, the total ignorance of the family that each member is equally responsible for their disappearance. Tyrone's intoxication and Mary's addiction are linked circularly: "he drinks because she abuses, and she abuses because he drinks." Additionally, each member reproaches the other with the problems of the family. However, neither family member believes they play a role in "systemic dysfunction"; most importantly, the men turned a blind eye to the anxiety of Mary, furthering her addiction. They never see how their alcohol use exacerbates her dysfunction, increases anxiety, and leads to her substance abuse. They blame themselves on each

other, but they fail to understand that, as a system, they are destroying themselves (Opipari 100-01). The author explains how Tyrone's poor level of self-differentiation and anxiety contributes to emotional disturbances throughout the family. Opipari focuses on Tyrone and Mary's nuclear emotional system and their relationship to their families of origin. The author also discusses the triangulation process without explaining the mechanism of the emotional triangles but emphasizes the emotional reactions of family members and their emotional fusion. The author does not discuss other concepts, such as the family projection process, sibling position, and societal regression.

In the dissertation, *Bowen Theory and Family Disintegration in Tennessee Williams's Drama*, Alzoubi (2016) uses the eight concepts of Bowen Theory as a literary critical tool to examine themes of family disintegration in Tennessee Williams's eight plays. The author argues that there is a parallel with Bowen Theory in Williams's plays: family members do not operate individually but in the system that determines their emotions, "thoughts and behaviors" (Alzoubi 3). Chapter one examines the functional level of Williams's families in *The Glass Menagerie* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* using the concepts of differentiation of self and triangles. Through the nuclear family emotional system and family projection process, chapter two investigates "the nuclear family dynamics" in *Summer and Smoke* and *Period of Adjustment*. Chapter three explores the levels of self-differentiation of the three nuclear families in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, the emotional modes of the nuclear family, and the profiles of the two siblings. The author also ties the drama to *Sweet Bird of Youth*. The final chapter applies the concepts of emotional cutoff and societal

emotional process in *The Night of the Iguana* and *Suddenly Last Summer*, exploring how isolation can occur within “family unit and in broader social settings” (Alzoubi 26-27). Alzoubi (2016) applies the eight concepts of Bowen Theory to the eight plays by the American dramatist Tennessee Williams. However, the author does not focus on the father-daughter relationships in the selected plays.

Very few scholars have applied Bowen Theory to studying Shakespeare's plays in recent years. At the end of Part II of his edited book, *Reading the Family Dance: Family Systems Therapy and Literary Study*, Knapp discusses the dysfunctional aspects of the Hamlet family: fraternal rivalry, parent-child coalitions, and marital treason. Knapp argues that the fall of Denmark can be attributed to the “unhappy marriage between King Hamlet and Gertrude,” suggesting that the Queen's affection for King Hamlet's brother explains her brief mourning period for her first spouse. Piotr Sadowski (2005) supports this idea. However, Sadowski disagrees with Knapp's interpretation of Gertrude's death because it lacks persuasiveness. Sadowski argues that the Queen's consumption of the drink from the goblet should not be interpreted as a deliberate act of self-destruction, even if done unknowingly, to resolve her moral dilemma following the closet scene. This is because she is entirely unaware of Claudius's treacherous scheme and, therefore, lacks any knowledge or suspicion that “the wine is poisoned” (Sadowski 99). While Knapp primarily focuses on Shakespeare's tragedy *Hamlet* in his exploration of Bowen Theory, he also explores various family relationships depicted in the play, including parent-child, marital, and sibling dynamics. He does not focus on the father-daughter relationship in the tragedy.

Bowen Theory has been mainly applied to the interpretation of dramas such as *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and *Long Day's Journey into Night*. Although there are studies on dysfunctional family relationships in drama from the Bowen Theory perspective, few studies focus on father-daughter relationships.

2.4 Dysfunctional Families in Literary Works

In recent research on dysfunctional family relationships in literary works, a predominant focus has been placed on dramas. For example, Sarah Mead Wyman (2016) characterizes Sam Shepard's *Buried Child* (1977; revised 1997) as a reflection of the dynamics of family dysfunction, highlighting that destructive "guilt" and calming fantasies turn around "lost sons" and broken dreams (40). Melania Terrazas (2017) has examined "the role of repetition (of language, imagery, and plot), and a dispersed or fragmented narrative voice as major mechanisms giving voice to traumatic experiences" in Patrick McCabe's *The Butcher Boy* (317). The writer concludes that in the play, "Francie and his trauma within an incomplete and dysfunctional family serves as a metaphor" for the nation's illness (Terrazas 318). Moreover, R. Krishnan and T. S. Ramesh (2018) discuss themes of human isolation and extreme dependency within Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*, delving into the breakdown of family dynamics and the quest for enduring love (147). These studies underscore the negative portrayal of dysfunctional families within dramas.

Several examinations of family dysfunction in literature concentrate on various family relationships within dramas, such as father-son and marital relationships. For instance, Mehvish Syed (2014) explores family dynamics in representative American family plays by Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, Edward Albee, and Sam Shepard, focusing on the dysfunctional dynamic among family members, particularly fathers and sons (206). Shuchi Agrawal (2017) analyzes Albee's *The Zoo Story*, emphasizing the homosexual undertones in the character Jerry's relationships and how his dysfunctional family background contributes to his unconventional relationships (11). Agrawal also highlights the "socio-economic barriers" and his lack of adherence to "heterosexuality" as contributing factors to Jerry's struggles (11). Mohammed Dahash Al-Jizani (2016) delves into the crises of marital breakdown within American families through the analysis of O'Neill's plays *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1931), *Desire Under the Elms* (1924), and *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1941) (21). Al-Jizani contends that O'Neill's perspective on life, heavily influenced by Greek tragedy, is fundamentally tragic, exploring themes of religious decline, emotional deprivation, infidelity, and violence (21). These studies predominantly explore abnormal father-son and marital relationships in dramas, with limited emphasis on dysfunctional father-daughter relationships.

While many researchers expounded on dysfunctional familial relationships in theatre, other scholars have focused on dysfunctional relationships in fiction. For example, Paul Sharrad (2013) examines family dynamics within a recent English Indian novel, highlighting Vikram Chandra's portrayal of emotional

complexity in divorced couples and swinging relationships in *Love and Longing in Bombay* and Arundhati Roy's depiction of dysfunctional family life in *The God of Small Things* (124). Sharrad also notes the prevalence of themes related to incest in recent fiction, such as Raj Kamal Kha's *The Blue Bedspread* and Akhil Sharma's *An Obedient Father* (Sharrad 124). Additionally, Jose M. Yebra (2014) explores the interstitial status of Irish homosexuality in Colm Tóibín's works, emphasizing the cultural and societal contexts surrounding homosexuality in Ireland (96). While these studies acknowledge the influence of social factors, including incest and homosexuality, on family relations, they primarily analyze these factors from a cultural standpoint and do not explicitly adopt the Bowen Theory perspective. The research departs from these approaches by considering the social elements within literary texts and examining the influences on their relationships through the novel lens of Bowen Theory.

Traditional psychological approaches have been frequently employed to dissect dysfunctional family dynamics within specific dramas. For instance, Koichi Suwabe (2012) discusses the Oedipal drama in the novel *Go Down, Moses*, power dynamics, focusing on the themes of family relationships, betrayal, and the collision of the past. Suwabe suggests that Lucas may find an Oedipal father in Zack or old Carothers when suppressing his birth father (Suwabe 109). Paralyzed in "his dysfunctional family romance in the racist South," Roth is incapable of maintaining a steady relationship with Lucas, "either as a 'son' or as a 'father'" (Suwabe 112). This analysis highlights the role of dysfunctional family dynamics in shaping character motivations and

interactions. Similarly, Abdelfadeel (2013) applies a psychoanalytical lens to Anton Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* (1904), speculating that the characters' failed relationships in the play stem from "repressed memories" and unresolved psychological issues (2). Abdelfadeel applies classic psychoanalytic methods to "literary criticism," stressing concepts such as "repression," fundamental questions, and "defences" (1). It represents a new interpretation of the characters' behavior in *The Cherry Orchard*, specifically regarding "their emotional behavior" towards each other, paving the way for similar psychoanalytical interpretations of Chekhovian figures in other plays (Abdelfadeel 2). Li Jing and Xiong Shanshan (2016) analyzed the dysfunctional families in Sam Shepard's play *A Lie of the Mind*: Jack's and Beth's families. In the former family, the relationship between the father and Jack and between the father and Sally is discussed. The authors apply Chodorow's framework, holding that Jake exhibits the "Oedipus complex" as a man (Li and Xiong 25). Within the latter family, Maylor was "the authoritative patriarch" (Li and Xiong 26). Maylor and Beth's relationship is distorted: Baylor is a father of authority, and Beth is a vulnerable girl. Baylor was the authoritarian patriarch, and Meg was a docile and obedient spouse (Li and Xiong 26). The authors conclude that "Sam Shepard wanted to find a balanced and ideal" form of family by describing dysfunctional families composed of men and women (Li and Xiong 26). While these studies offer valuable insights into the psychological dimensions of character interactions within dysfunctional families, Bowen Theory has not been applied to analyzing the similar theme in the plays.

Additionally, traditional feminist perspectives have been employed to explore family dynamics in literary works. For instance, Salazar (2019) examines Emer Martin's novel *More Bread or I'll Appear* (1999) in the context of family dynamics in Ireland from the 1970s to the 1990s. The author draws on Diarmaid Ferriter, the work of Alpha Connelly, and transnational feminist theories to account for the "historical, ideological, social and cultural context" of the time (Salazar 110). Salazar (2019) contends that Emer Martin's work, *More Bread or I'll Appear* (1999), serves as a reflection of contemporary feminist ideologies, depicting multifaceted family dysfunction encompassing "domestic violence, abuse," alcoholism, and a modern feminist narrative (110). The analysis emphasizes the influence of women in determining the dynamics of the family in the novel and the consequences of experiences of female migrants on a worldwide scale. By adopting a transnational feminist viewpoint, this study examines women's experiences in different cultures and highlights how it disrupts traditional patriarchal institutions within the family. However, the study does not fully address the various cultural, historical, and social factors that influence family dynamics in Ireland and may overlook nuances or complexities that may affect the understanding of family dysfunction in the novel.

While research on dysfunctional family relationships in literature is not rare, most existing studies predominantly employ psychological and feminist approaches. There is a shortage of research examining dysfunctional family relationships in literature from the perspective of Bowen Theory, with even fewer studies dedicated to exploring dysfunctional father-daughter

relationships. Thus, the research offers a fresh approach by utilizing Bowen Theory, which has not been extensively applied to the study of dysfunctional family relationships depicted by Shakespeare.

2.5 The Father-daughter Relationships in Shakespeare's Plays

The research on familial relations in Shakespearean plays has changed over the past few years. A keen focus on family study started in the 1970s. Previously, the concepts of marriage and family had remained unchanged for several hundreds of years. These concepts were regarded as natural characteristics of society and received little attention from critics. It was not until the anthropologist Gayle Rubin proposed the sex/gender system in 1975 that the researchers examined marriage and the family's construction from the social, cultural, and political dimensions, and the interest turned towards the reconstruction of the Renaissance patriarchal family. This thinking about the structure of family organization has existed several times in history, even in contemporary life. Until now, researchers have done a great deal of study on family relationships in Shakespeare's plays. The following is a detailed and targeted examination of Shakespeare's plays' social, historical, linguistic, and psychological criticisms of the father-daughter relationship.

The complex dynamics of father-daughter relations under patriarchal authority in Shakespeare's dramas have received some critics' attention. Halenárová (2015) provides an in-depth analysis of the father-daughter relationships across multiple Shakespearean plays, including *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *The*

Merchant of Venice, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*. Halenárová examines how these relationships reflect the social norms of Elizabethan society, particularly with respect to obedience and the prescribed roles of women. Halenárová argues that while daughters were generally expected to conform to societal ideals of obedience and humility, Shakespeare's characters often challenge these expectations, revealing the nuanced and multifaceted nature of father-daughter relationships (1). Mehta explores "the intricacies of the father-daughter relationship in *Abhijnansakuntalam* and *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*" (176). Mehta examines how these relationships reflect cultural attitudes and social problems in their respective contexts, primarily focused on authority, obedience, and the emotional complexity of patriarchal structures. Mehta claims that while both daughters face social restrictions and emotional unrest, their experiences are significantly formed by the attitudes and actions of their fathers, illustrating different cultural perspectives on family and gender roles. In contrast, Flewelling (2015) explored the dynamics between fathers in power and their relationships with their daughters in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Tempest*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *King Lear*. Flewelling assumes that these father-daughter relations often fail if the father does not change the harmful control he applies to his daughter (3). However, Flewelling has a limited exploration of how powerful Shakespeare's characters affect their daughters and how their authority and control over women can reflect broader social norms and tensions of that time.

Building on examining family structures, some scholars have focused on the dysfunction within father-daughter relationships in Shakespeare's works. For example, Hamamra and Uebel (2020) establish a connection between the father-daughter relationship in Shakespeare's *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* and the history, arguing that in early modern Great Britain, the father-daughter relationship was based on the patriarchal rule, which sparked daughters' revolt and "rebellion against patriarchal authority" (379). Hamamra and Uebel note Shakespeare's *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet*'s comment on fathers' dominance over their children. This domination manifests itself in their daughters' denial by Brabantio and Capulet. In the scenes of reconciliation between the children and the parents, the father's anger triggers the discourse of denial, underlining "an emotional intensity" (Hamamra and Uebel 379). Ultimately, the author concludes that Shakespeare's *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* demonstrate that the denial discourse reveals the emotional power of the father-daughter relationship. In the Renaissance tradition, patriarchal ideology has strengthened by denying and suppressing opposing forces, and the pain of male authority figures like Brabantio and Capulet has been alleviated by their refusal of "their disobedient daughters" (Hamamra and Uebel 379).

Conversely, several scholars note the normal familial dynamics shown in Shakespeare's plays. Magdalena Cieślak (2017) believes that the relationship between Prospero and Miranda in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* is the author's typical depiction of parental authority and filial duty (161). Compared with other father-daughter relations portrayed by Shakespeare, Prospero-Miranda is not

necessarily considered abusive (Cieślak 165). The author is sharp, noting the non-abusive relationship between Prospero and Miranda. It is very different from the disrupted father-daughter relationship in Shakespeare's plays that most researchers have seen.

Several critics have employed conventional psychological methods to analyze the relationships between fathers and daughters in Shakespeare's plays. In *Domination and Defiance: Fathers and Daughters in Shakespeare*, Dreher (1986) uses a psychological approach to study the various dynamics in father-daughter relationships in Shakespearean comedy, tragedy, and romance, which are widely classified. Concentrating on the marriage and filial piety of the daughters, the author divides Shakespearean fathers into four categories: reactionary, mercenary, egocentric, and jealous, and divides daughters into dominated, defiant, androgynous. Sharon Hamilton's categorization of Shakespeare's daughters is similar to and more controversial than that of Diane Elizabeth Dreher. In *Shakespeare's Daughters*, Sharon Hamilton believes that Capulet in *Romeo and Juliet* is Juliet's incompetent father, Prospero in *The Tempest* is Miranda's worthy mentor, Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Jessica in *The Merchant of Venice* and Desdemona in *Othello* are daughters rebelling against their fathers; Hero in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Lavinia in *Titus Andronicus* and Ophelia in *Hamlet* are acquiescent daughters; Bianca in *The Taming of the Shrew* and Goneril and Regan in *King Lear* act like good girls sneakily; Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*, Viola in *Twelfth Night* and Rosalind in *As You Like It* are girls performing on their fathers' behalf. Marina in *Pericles*, Perdita in *The Winter's Tale*, and Cordelia in *King Lear* are tolerant and healing. Hamilton's categorization of the daughters is instructive

as it emphasizes the polarization of gender roles, arguing that more balanced female figures bring more harmony to their world. However, Hamilton gives a less complex picture of the discourse of Renaissance women without expressing the nature of this harmony or reconciliation. Gierstae (2015) analyzed father-daughter relations in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, and *Othello*. Gierstae holds that "the typical pattern" of the father-daughter relationship is a middle-aged to elderly man, typically a widower, with an adolescent daughter transitioning into young womanhood (2). Gierstae analyzes the experiences of fathers and daughters during this challenging procedure by employing psychoanalytic criticism. Moreover, Jahan draws on psychological theories to understand how the father-daughter relationships in selected Shakespeare's plays reflect deeper emotional and psychological struggles. Jahan contends that Shakespeare's *King Lear* and *Othello* depict a multifaceted and intricate dimension of the father-daughter relationship. In contrast, *Hamlet* illustrates a conventional father-daughter dynamic in which Ophelia embodies the archetype of the "good woman" who submits to "the patriarchal authority of her father and brother" (V). Jahan assumes that Shakespeare's depiction of father-daughter relations does not only enriches the characters' narratives but also serves as a commentary on the social constructs of his time and supports reflection on ongoing problems related to gender and authority. Although the author includes psychological criticism, the depth of this framework may be limited. Jahan does not use contemporary psychological theories or interdisciplinary approaches that could offer another insight into the emotional complexity of the father-daughter relations depicted in Shakespeare's dramas.

While psychological approaches offer valuable insights into the emotional and relational complexity of the father-daughter dynamics in Shakespeare's works, feminist perspectives provide a critical lens to further investigate power and agency in these relationships. Pashabhai (2016) uses feminist theoretical perspectives to analyze the dynamics of power and agency in the patriarchal context of the Renaissance. Pashabhai (2016) discusses society, family, and marriage at the time of Shakespeare and focuses on father-daughter conflicts in Shakespeare's *Othello*. Pashabhai (2016) claims that the father-daughter relationship in Shakespeare's *Othello* reflects significant psychological and political conflicts that question the "traditional family model" of the Renaissance period (1). Pashabhai (2016) assumes that Desdemona resists her father's authority, which is demonstrated by her secret marriage with Othello, as a critical commentary on the social norm that daughters obey their fathers. This act emphasizes not only Desdemona's search for agency and independence but also underlines the inherent conflicts within the family relations during Shakespeare's time, which eventually challenge the roles and dynamics of power between genders.

Despite feminist criticism in analyzing the father-daughter relationship in Shakespeare's plays, Lenker (2001) uses a different approach by using new historicism to explore the broader social and political contexts that shape father-daughter relations in Shakespeare and Shaw's dramas. In the book *Fathers and Daughters in Shakespeare and Shaw*, Lagretta Tallent Lenker (2001) employs New Historicism to examine the father-daughter relationship in Shakespeare and Shaw's dramas concerning existing social power

structures. The author considers the father-daughter relationship the perfect drama vehicle for Shakespeare and Shaw to further their social and political agendas. Based on the discoveries of specialists in culture and history, Lenker sees the family as an analogy for the state and the emerging feminist resistance.

However, the current researcher noticed that critics have used methods from diverse areas to study the father-daughter relationship. For instance, Öz Öktem (2020) analyzes the father and daughter in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, employing postcolonial theory, gender studies, and anthropological perspectives on kinship and marriage as theoretical frameworks. The author is grounded on concepts related to the exchange value of women in patriarchal societies, as formulated by Claude Lévi-Strauss in his work on kinship systems. The author contends that Claribel's marriage to the African king undermines the overly confident post-colonial interpretations of the Prospero-Caliban relationship. The author also reads the play in contradiction to the historical and political conditions of the Mediterranean. The author believes Claribel's story gives a glimpse of the presence of hundreds of Christian maidens in the Islamic harems during this time, and their stories and the respect and power they have earned in the Muslim royal family can help to imagine the fate of Claribel (Öktem 36). Additionally, Elizabeth Mazzola (2019) draws inspiration from insights into biopolitics, as well as feminist readings from Shakespeare, to examine how figures such as Goneril, Gertrude, and Juliet reject the rules that require a woman's blood to flow. Building on the work of philosophers Giorgio Agamben, Roberto Esposito, and Alain Badiou, the author perceives

the death of female figures as forms of agency, accusation, and subtraction (Mazzola 110). The author concludes that the deaths of Antony, Romeo, and Hamlet allow for other heroes and histories. These women's deaths are ultimately merciless. Nevertheless, it is also possible that, concerning the destiny of the little star Romeo, the lovely Prince Hamlet, or Emperor Antony, female characters figure out a way to finish their own stories, and their impact is always magical, toxic, invincible, fiery and transformative (Mazzola 130). To highlight the role of female characters and the significance of women in the Renaissance, the author placed less emphasis on the historical context of Shakespearean plays and became more interested in dramatic texts. While the study does not recognize the social structures that create gender and family, it reveals women's significance in family relationships.

Discourse and rhetoric have also been used to examine the strong family relations and emotional connections inherent in those relationships over the past few years. Attention is focused on syntactic and semantic analysis and language's social, dramatic, and literary functions. In *Shakespeare's Late Style*, Russ MacDonald (2006) claims that repeating vowels, consonants, words, and metric patterns in Shakespeare's language is a bonding mechanism and creates a strong emotional connection between the characters. This repetition generates "ligatures" — phonetic and rhythmic ties — which intensify the sense of coherence and safety, similar to family ties, and contribute to the depiction of a harmonious and supporting home environment (McDonald 215). The author's ideas are unique, persuasive, innovative, and entertaining, bridging the gaps in an accurate technical description of Shakespeare's late style. In

the dissertation, *The Rhetoric of Bonds, Alliances, and Identities: Interrogating Social Networks in Early Modern English Drama*, Christina J. Cady (2010) focuses on expressing emotional bonds through language and rhetoric. She believes that language plays a vital role in parent-child relationships. Her approach combines speech act theory and considerations of symbolic capital with feminist, cultural, social, and language studies to show how people do things with language. She argues that speech acts, a function of family life, social alliances, kinship, and friendship, can motivate people to take action. She notes that language and rhetoric allow people to reconstruct themselves and guide social relationships (Cady iv). Cady's emphasis on the emotional power of the language offers a valuable framework for analyzing relational dynamics in Shakespeare's dramas. The study uses Bowen Theory to understand the psychological and emotional complexity of these father-daughter relations in selected Shakespearean plays. McDonald and Cady's distinctive viewpoint addresses the lack of comprehension regarding Shakespeare's late style and early modern English theatre. Their analysis offers fresh and nuanced perspectives on the significance of language in shaping human experiences and forming relationships.

This review of the literature demonstrates the ongoing interest of researchers in family studies over the last three decades, describing the father-daughter relationship in Shakespeare's plays ranging from social, linguistic, psychological, and ontological dimensions. Few researchers have used Bowen Theory to investigate the father-daughter relationship in Shakespearean plays. The research uses Bowen Theory to bridge the

research gap in the study of the father-daughter relationship in the selected Shakespearean plays.

2.6 Reviews of Critics on the Selected Shakespeare's Plays

2.6.1 *King Lear* (1604-05)

Over the past three decades, researchers have explored issues such as character images (Davis, 2018; Bidgoli, 2021), religion (Lefler, 2010; Benson, 2007), death (Byker, 2021; Lawrence, 2005), old age (Sarkar, 2020; Park, 2019) in Shakespeare's play *King Lear*.

Research examining character images in Shakespeare's *King Lear* remains the prevailing trend. Davis (2018) analyzes the perspectives of different characters in *King Lear* regarding the authority of Lear following the division of the kingdom. He contends that significant figures in the play, namely Goneril, Oswald, and Regan, consider Lear's authority "defeasible," whereas other characters, mainly Kent, perceive Lear as a man possessing indefeasible and inherent power (59). In this context, protagonists and antagonists are essential for understanding the drama's authority and power dynamics. Moreover, Bidgoli (2021) specifically highlights the significance of Cordelia's function and "subjectivity" (385). According to Bidgoli, drawing from Levinas' philosophy, Cordelia's resistance/sacrifice is not simply a decision she makes. Instead, "she (dis) embodies a heteronymous logic and the absolute openness" and acceptance of others (385). Cordelia's silence and sacrifice are unconscious,

and she is a responsive individual with peculiar attributes (Bidgoli 385). However, the dynamics of power are equally impacted by the antagonists, especially Goneril and Regan, whose actions against Lear reflect and worsen his vulnerability. Character analysis is a conventional approach in Shakespearean studies that aids in comprehending the characters under examination. However, in analyzing relations in *King Lear*, it is necessary to focus equally on protagonists and antagonists, especially when considering the father-daughter relations. Therefore, this study focuses exclusively on Lear, Cordelia, Goneril, and Regan as subjects of inquiry. It employs Bowen Theory to examine their levels of self-differentiation and how these levels influence their father-daughter relationships.

In addition, several scholarly investigations have been undertaken to examine the intricacies of the master-servant dynamic in Shakespeare's *King Lear*. For example, Malik Haroon Afzal et al. discuss the master-slave relationship in terms of "Hegel's Master-Slave Dialectic," emphasizing the development of identity, power, and self in this relationship (Afzal et al. 38). The authors argue that the inability to achieve accurate self-awareness and recognition from others ultimately results in Lear's tragic suffering and the disintegration of his family and political world. Afzal et al. mainly employ G.W.F. Hegel's master-slave dialectic and psychoanalytic theory, especially the ideas of Sigmund Freud. However, Afzal et al. do not delve deeply into the broader historical context of Shakespeare's period.

Examining the parent-child dynamic in Shakespeare's *King Lear* is a central area of interest. Arthur Scherr (2011) examines the relationship between Cordelia and Lear. Scherr argues that Cordelia's honesty and unwillingness to flatter her father reflect her rebellion against the conservative patriarchy of their time. Scherr asserts that Cordelia rebels "in her subtle (perhaps not so subtle)" way "against the rigid patriarchal society of her time," as Meursault discreetly rebels against the "hypocritical banalities" of his time (25). In contrast, Baysal (2020) discusses the relationship between Cordelia and Lear as central to the emotional and thematic essence of *King Lear*. Baysal notes that Cordelia's rejection of Lear's first demand for a public declaration of affection is significant; It shows her integrity and the complexity of their relationship. Baysal argues that the relationship between Lear and Cordelia can be interpreted through a Freudian lens, where Lear's view of his daughter intertwines with issues of fate and familial responsibility. The author reveals that the relationship between Cordelia and Lear and the degree of their suffering is "in unison" (Baysal 30). However, it is better to expand this interpretation to include the antagonistic roles of Goneril and Regan, whose jealousy and betrayal of Cordelia worsen Lear's emotional turmoil and the feeling of abandonment.

Similarly, Hamamra and Uebel primarily focus on the father-daughter relationship between Lear and Cordelia, neglecting the relationship between Lear, Goneril, and Regan. However, the relationship between Lear and his two elder daughters, Regan and Goneril, is essential to understanding the drama's emotional dysfunction and tragic consequences. Hamamra and Uebel assert that Cordelia's "disobedience to her father's unjust demand" demonstrates that

property ties hold greater importance than familial connections built and resolved through spoken communication (380). Lear's grief arises from his refusal to acknowledge Cordelia, demonstrating his "dependency" on the female character whose absence renders him vulnerable and weak (Hamamra and Uebel 381). In addition to the father-daughter relationship between Lear and Cordelia, Hamamra and Uebel explore the father-son relationship between Gloucester and Edgar. However, it is important to consider the antagonistic roles of Regan and Goneril, whose rivalry and schemes undermine Lear's emotional stability.

In contrast, Brkic (2021) examines "the ambivalence in the relationship" between Regan, Goneril, Cordelia, and Lear in Shakespeare's *King Lear* (11). According to the author, using "nodes and edges" in the visual representation of characters' interactions can enhance the identification of emotional and verbal subtleties within these relationships (11). These subtleties can catalyze further investigation, inquiries, and discussions. The author employs close reading, Franco Moretti's distant reading, and the psychoanalytic method alongside the affective turn. The author emphasizes the emotional nuances within the characters' interactions rather than focusing on the dynamics of the father-daughter connections. The ambivalence discussed by Brkic is central to understanding the contradictory forces in father-daughter relations, with the antagonistic behaviors of Goneril and Regan positioning them as catalysts for Lear's suffering and as figures of emotional enmeshment.

Critics often contextualize the depiction of family discord in Shakespeare's *King Lear* within broader societal norms and perceptions of aging parents and intergenerational relationships. Sarkar (2020) examines Shakespeare's *King Lear*'s portrayal of aging and its effects on family relationships. The author focuses on the generational tensions that result from Lear's aging and Goneril's and Regan's ambitions. Their behaviors exemplify broader social implications for how power dynamics change as parents age and children seek to assert their rights. The author points out that Shakespeare portrays the diminishing power of a King and a father in *King Lear* as "an effect of old age" (Sarkar 30). Sarkar's analysis provides a close reading of the text to examine the dynamics of family relationships. However, Sarkar's analysis of the father-child relationship in *King Lear* is based on a limited study approach of close reading. While Sarkar suggests that envy and betrayal are the causes of damaged family relationships, this perspective is subjective. Adopting a more scientific approach can enrich the research and yield a more thorough knowledge of the family relationships in *King Lear*. Additionally, Sarkar's analysis overlooks the nuanced antagonistic roles of Goneril and Regan, which are pivotal to the emotional and psychological complexities examined in this study.

Multiple academics have examined the tragedy through the lens of traditional psychology. As an illustration, Schafer (2010) investigates how the public responds to Lear's cruel aggression towards Cordelia and asserts that Lear's punishment showcases a merging of the apparent contradictions of the internalized subject matter with "a dominant version of the narcissist's

self" (*Curse and Consequence* 1506). Schafer holds that repressed anxiety and defense seem to be key themes of *King Lear* and the public relations with him and themselves in a subconscious excitation (*Curse and Consequence* 1506). Defenses against severe depression and anxiety put Lear into a "paranoid-schizoid" state, and Lear's emotional state is related to "the destructive narcissism" he displays when attacking Cordelia (Schafer, *Curse and Consequence* 1507). Schafer (2010) posits that Lear is unaware of the extent of his emotional turmoil and internal conflicts manifested by his relationships with others. This subconscious excitation affects his behavior and decisions without explicit understanding, leading to unpredictable emotional reactions and relational dynamics. The study examines the father-daughter relations in selected Shakespearean plays through the lens of Bowen Theory, which emphasizes the role of emotional systems in family relationships, suggesting that anxiety and emotional reactivity often work on the unconscious level and influence how family members interact.

In a previous analysis, Schafer (2005) examines Cordelia's act of forgiving Lear from a psychoanalytic perspective and proposes that unforgiveness continues to exist alongside the compassionate and perceptive act of choosing not to forgive, which is made possible by "higher-level ego functioning" (Schafer, *Cordelia, Lear, and Forgiveness* 389). Furthermore, Brémaud (2015) suggests that *King Lear* is a profoundly intricate tragedy centered around a father, "beautiful, rich and complex," telling us what might be "the beginning of a psychosis" (403). Brémaud refers to the three critical periods in the teaching of Lacan: the period that attaches great importance to "the foreclosure of the

Name of the Father,” the period addressing alienation and secession, and the supposed “Borromean knots” (403). The author reveals that “the center of the tragedy of *King Lear* is an issue related to the Father, with what Father signifies” (Brémaud 403). In contrast, Maginess and Zeilig (2018) draw a comparison between Shakespeare’s portrayal of “dementia” in *King Lear* and modern interpretations of the condition referred to as “dementia” (53). They suggest that Shakespeare explores many interpretations of dementia in his play, *King Lear*, which aligns with contemporary understandings of the condition (Maginess and Zeilig 53). In another analysis, Nardizzi (2020) establishes a connection between the subplot of Gloucester in *King Lear* and the extensive background of Oedipus, a highly influential figure in literary criticism for understanding human subjectivity. The author proposes that the Oedipal figure serves as a basis for the suffering Shakespeare’s character Gloucester endured in *King Lear* (347). Lehtonen (2019) argues that portraying King Lear’s conventional negative feelings signifies “the emergence of modern cognitive theories of emotion,” in which emotions are intelligent and calculated. The drama challenges the Stoic perspective on passion and reconciles the divide “between passion and reason” prevalent throughout the Renaissance by portraying intense emotional expressions (Lehtonen 259). Additionally, Conran (2006) examines how Shakespeare deals with King Lear’s struggle to revive the object, to enable the object to contemplate him, to forgive him, and ultimately accept him, allowing him to pass away serenely (65). The study examines the father-daughter relationships in selected Shakespeare’s plays through the lens of Bowen Theory. Applying Bowen’s concepts of differentiation of self, family projection process, triangles, nuclear family

emotional system, and societal regression to the analysis allows for a deeper understanding of the complex relational dynamics between the fathers and the daughters.

One noticeable trend over the past thirty years is that scholars have increasingly adopted interdisciplinary approaches to Shakespeare's *King Lear*. One such innovative approach is the application of spatial theory to the play. Yang (2012) utilizes Gaston Bachelard's "poetics of space" to examine the topic of "displacement" in *King Lear* (Yang 67). According to Yang, Lear considers finding Cordelia the "culmination" of his journey home (77). Yang claims that Lear never felt at ease throughout his lifetime, as he underwent a transformative self-discovery and delved into the concept of intimacy throughout the play. Although Lear fails, his "physical and mental journeys" embody the "poetics of space" (Yang 78). Applying Gaston Bachelard's poetry of space to *King Lear*, Yang provides a micro-analysis of the characters' experiences of displacement and their home search, enhancing our understanding of the play's themes and characters. Although Yang offers a rich analysis of the psychological and emotional dimensions of the characters, he stops short of examining the social and historical context and impact on issues of displacement and belonging in *King Lear*.

Additionally, Shivangi Kanojia (2020) examines Shakespeare's *King Lear* from the perspectives of ecocriticism and ecofeminism. The author discusses the relationship between humans and nature, the impact of environmental change on society, and the power dynamics within the play. The author argues that

Lear's treatment of nature in the tragedy reflects his attitude toward women. Lear's fear of losing control of the earth and nature is linked to his fear of giving power to women, especially seen in his interactions with Cordelia (Kanojia 142). The author uses ecocriticism and ecofeminism to provide a deeper understanding of the characters, themes, and power dynamics in the tragedy for the readers. However, the author does not cover the historical context of Shakespeare's period of environmental issues and the developing relationship between humans and nature in the sixteenth century.

While Kanojia approaches *King Lear* through ecocriticism and ecofeminism lenses, Pfankoch (2024) focuses on ethical concerns and offers a moral interpretation of human behavior and responsibility in the drama. From the ethical perspective, Pfankoch examines issues such as justice, care, human frailty, and the consequences of our actions in Shakespeare's *King Lear*. The author argues that humans can "grant one another the gift of dignity" based on trusting themselves in the bleak and brutal aspects of humanity depicted in the play (Pfannkoch 173). The author emphasizes the importance of understanding and engaging with ethical questions, especially in the context of individual actions and relationships. The author's interpretation of the themes and characters in *King Lear* is subjective. However, the author does not explore the cultural and historical context of Shakespeare's time and how it informs the ethical issues presented in the play.

Moreover, Stuart Elden (2021) employs an interdisciplinary approach, geopolitics, to explore the geopolitical dimensions of Shakespeare's play *King*

Lear. Elden examines the theme of struggle over land, the collapse of feudal social order, and the emergence of private property in *King Lear*. Elden posits that *King Lear* is a rich terrain for examining “Shakespeare’s political thought and his sense of the politics of geography” (147). While Geopolitics provides valuable insights into the political dimensions of texts such as *King Lear*, there is a need for other theoretical frameworks that account for the multidimensional nature of human experience and interactions beyond traditional geopolitical boundaries. Notably, Chakraborty (2024) analyzes the character of Lear in Shakespeare’s *King Lear*. The author reveals how Lear lacks integral psychology, leading to his tragic downfall. Chakraborty argues that Lear’s journey in the play exemplifies the transformative power of suffering and man’s capacity for spiritual growth. Chakraborty’s research is based on the principles of integral psychology. The author refers to Sri Aurobindo’s ideas, such as “Triple Transformation” and the idea of “integral life,” to contextualize Lear’s character development (Chakraborty 142). Chakraborty combines insights from psychology, literature, and philosophy, creating a multi-dimensional understanding of the character in *King Lear*. This interdisciplinary approach helps to bridge the gap between literary analysis and psychological theory.

Overall, scholarly investigations on *King Lear* have predominantly concentrated on religion, death, old age, character image, master-servant relationship, and parent-child relationship. Scholars have examined the tragedy through interdisciplinary approaches like spatial theory, ethics, geopolitics, ecocriticism, and ecofeminism. Although the father-daughter relationship in *King Lear* has been explored, few studies have been conducted

using Bowen Theory. The exploration of family dynamics in *King Lear* is primarily limited to traditional psychoanalysis and close reading. This study applies Bowen Theory to explore how emotional processes shape Lear's relations with Goneril, Cordelia, and Regan. Rather than viewing their dysfunction in isolation, the analysis places their interactions in systemic patterns of emotional enmeshment and anxiety transmission, which controls the family collapse of the tragedy.

2.6.2 *Hamlet* (1600)

Over the past thirty years, researchers have predominantly directed their attention towards Hamlet, the main character of Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*, and Polonius and Ophelia, the minor characters. The study of family relationships in this tragedy has dealt primarily with the father-son, mother-son, and marital relationships. Nevertheless, examining the paternal bond between Polonius and Ophelia through the lens of Bowen Theory has been overlooked. Researchers' studies can be divided into two categories when analyzing the main character, Hamlet. The first encompasses traditional research topics, exploring the external human environment, the causes of Hamlet's tragedy, his melancholy, and the course of his revenge. For example, Jason Gleckman (2014) analyzes Hamlet's use of free will, its exertion, and the dramatic "catharsis" in which it results (291–304). Emily Anglin (2017) positions Hamlet within the history of melancholy and explores how he utilized it as a form of authority. The "metatheatrical representation" of Hamlet's melancholy and its relation to "Essex's rebellion" are examined concerning the collapse of the

medical concept of melancholy (Anglin 15). The second category focuses on character study, psychological traits, and story development. For example, Peter Bray (2017) comments on the hero journey of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* from a broader perspective of "psychospiritual and posttraumatic growth" (526).

Moreover, the focus has been increasing on Ophelia as a minor character, highlighting her role as a genuinely insane individual. Alison A. Chapman (2007) argues that Ophelia's "ravings" reflect an awareness of "England's medieval Catholic past" (111). Her descent into madness is characterized by numerous allusions to medieval Catholic forms of piety, such as references to "St. James, St. Charity, 'old lauds,' pilgrimage to the shrine Lady of Walsingham, and other pre-Reformation religious folklore" (Chapman 111). Caralyn Bialo (2013) interprets Ophelia from the perspective of popular culture and offers insightful views on the traditional "treatments" of Hamlet (293). Safaei and Hashim (2013) argue that Ophelia is often portrayed as a symbol of vulnerability and frustration, seen solely as an object of entertainment for Hamlet, characterized by lustfulness and susceptibility to promiscuity. However, Ophelia acquires a new dimension that contrasts the traditional image in literary revision. While Ophelia's sensuality is emphasized in three 21st-century novels—*Ophelia*, *The Prince of Denmark*, and *The Dead Fathers' Club*—she is endowed with "agency, voice, and a skeptical cast of mind" (Safaei and Hashim 181). James J. Marino (2017) views Ophelia as one of Shakespeare's most distinctively "individual heroines" (818). Ophelia possesses a mysterious inner life, and by examining aspects of her character that psychoanalytic interpretations resist or repress, one can uncover the deeper fantasies that shape "psychoanalytic

discourse” (Marino 818). In *Ophelia’s Mother: The Phantom of Maternity in Shakespeare’s Hamlet*, Rebecca Potter and Elizabeth Ann Mackay (2017) argue that Ophelia’s actions in the first half of *Hamlet* bear the imprint of her mother, who expresses herself through her daughter’s behavior (127-42). Ophelia’s adherence to practices that characterize a dutiful daughter establishes her virtuous character. These scholars adopt a sympathetic rather than a critical approach toward Ophelia.

Aside from Ophelia, the minor character Polonius has sparked scholarly interest. Eric Sterling (2002) asserts that Polonius dominates his children. Hamlet recognizes Polonius’ control over his daughter and understands that the sudden change in her behavior stems from her father. Hamlet despises Polonius because he uses his authority over Ophelia to undermine the prince’s relationship with her (Sterling 3). Robert J. Cardullo (2010) explores Polonius’ procrastination. The author argues that Polonius’ delay is closely linked to Hamlet’s in the play. Polonius’ comical delay sheds light on “the tragic delay,” or Hamlet’s reluctance. At the play’s pivotal moment, the “closet scene,” these two forces of delay converge in a startling and fatalistic encounter (Cardullo 487). The author thoroughly examines Polonius’ delays and connects them to Shakespeare’s play’s broader action and significance. Joanne Paul (2016) discusses how Polonius in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* fails the test of truth by agreeing to Hamlet’s changing assertions, revealing him to be a flatterer rather than a trustworthy advisor. By examining Polonius through the lens of “contemporary sentiments” regarding rhetoric in politics, the author argues that Shakespeare depicts Polonius as an “ineffective humanist and crafty

Machiavellian” (Paul 646). The author offers no historical explanation for the performance of Polonius but concentrates on relating the character to the broader context of Shakespearean writing and politics at the time. The study focuses mainly on analyzing characters’ dynamics through the new perspective, Bowen Theory. The analysis focuses on the thematic and relational complexity of the role of Polonius rather than on the interpretation of history.

Scholarly discussions on family relationships in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* have explored the marital relationship. Glenda A. Hudson (2019) explores the similarities between Shakespeare’s *King Henry VIII* and *Hamlet* and between *Austen’s Mansfield Park* and *Sense and Sensibility*. Hudson examines the striking “differences in the treatment of forbidden degrees of marriage” and how these unions influence the masculine and feminine figures in the texts (193). Hudson believes the cultural-historical and intertextual connections between Shakespeare and Austen’s depictions of incestuous familial alliances in marriage and their relationship to issues of control, inheritance, and “equality of status” in their respective times offer a fresh perspective (193).

Not only is the marital relationship in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* prominent, but the mother-son relationship is also a significant focus. Judith Owens (2020) asserts that Hamlet has “forgotten the lesson of ‘the mobled queen,’” only remembering the ghost’s instructions. Concerning Hamlet’s “emotional life” and his potentially loving relationships with his mother, Ophelia, and friends, he is tragically constrained by the “familial imperatives” imposed by the Ghost

on “a loving son” (Owens 202). Additionally, Anselm Haverkamp (2006) argues that as Hamlet’s mother, Gertrude plays a vital role in connecting the past to the present through her role as queen and childbirth. This may explain why Hamlet regards Gertrude as “the focal point of his anguish” (Haverkamp 174). Anselm Haverkamp uses an interdisciplinary approach that combines literary analysis with historical, legal, and psychological approaches when describing the relationship between Gertrude and Hamlet. The author integrates constitutional and criminal law, considerations of historical context, and cultural significance and provides a nuanced understanding of the dynamics between Gertrude and Hamlet. Anna Fraser Mackenzie (2017) posits that the mother-son relationship forms the foundation of *Hamlet* and provides cues that propel the play’s action (Mackenzie 157). Throughout different versions of *Hamlet*, Gertrude’s influence on the drama’s development remains consistent “because or in spite of her emotional absence” (Mackenzie 157). The author mainly uses literary analysis to discuss the mother-son relationship. The author also considers the historical and cultural context of the play to offer insight into the portrayal of mother figures in Renaissance literature. The author focuses on specific aspects of the relationship between Gertrude and Hamlet, such as incest and the difficulties of balancing the roles of mother and wife. However, other critical views or scholarly interpretations may offer different insights into the mother-son relationship in the play.

The father-son relationship in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* has been another focal point. Tom Rutter (2015) contends that Bullinger’s description of purgatory as being “intercepted by pirates and robbers” reveals a crucial yet overlooked

aspect of Hamlet's relationship with his father, namely, "the structural parallel between Hamlet's unfinished voyage to England and the alleged trajectory of his father's spirit" (Rutter 138). These episodes illustrate Greenblatt's argument that Shakespeare employs the controversial concept of "purgatory" to "uncanny" effect in the play, particularly in "endowing the living Hamlet with the ghostly aura of his dead father" (Rutter 139). Although Rutter examined the father-son relationship in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the father-daughter relationship in the tragedy was overlooked. Saburo Satô (2004) delves into the father-son dynamic in Tôson Shimazaki's *The Broken Commandment* and *Hamlet*, asserting that Shimazaki earnestly engaged with reading *Hamlet* during his youth, drawing significant inspiration from Shakespeare. Both works exemplify a profound "personal struggle" (Satô 508). In both works, the protagonists experience isolation and lack outside support, leading them to go their own ways and challenge their culture's social norms and values. In addition, the author highlights the protagonists' resistance to social mores and their pursuit of new lifestyles, revealing a common thread of self-salvation and rejection of established beliefs. Satô further highlights that Shimazaki ventures into "a theme unusual for Japanese literature" (508). The author presents a comparative analysis of the father-son relationship in *The Broken Commandment* and *Hamlet* but neglects to examine the father-daughter relationship in the tragedy. Additionally, the author places greater emphasis on the cultural and historical backdrop of *Hamlet*.

While the father-son relationship in *Hamlet* has been explored in various cultural and literary contexts, other scholars have shifted their focus to the

theological and philosophical dimensions, utilizing interdisciplinary approaches and theoretical frameworks, such as hermeneutics, to analyze the tragedy. Roberta Kwan (2015) examines how the “ambiguous ontology of the ghost” in *Hamlet* mirrors theological discussions of the Eucharist in the late Elizabethan period (3). The author argues that “with the Eucharist by both the revenant and Hamlet,” the playwright introduces contemporary hermeneutical and epistemological anxiety and the tension associated with “the theological controversy,” particularly the interpretation of Christ’s words of institution “Hoc est corpus meum (This is my bodie)” (3). In addition, Kwan (2015) notes that “the Eucharist debates” shed light on “the hermeneutic conditions” that shape “Hamlet’s pursuit of epistemological certainty,” illustrating that it foreshadows “confusion, eternal peril, and futility” (3).

Some others have approached *Hamlet* from a predominantly psychological standpoint. Andrew Barnaby (2013), in a modest manner, endeavors to historicize the relationship between psychoanalysis and the Renaissance, arguing that *Hamlet* should be viewed as “the starting point of psychoanalysis in ways Freud both did and didn’t see” (222). Barnaby elucidates how Freud’s concepts aid in comprehending the construction of Hamlet’s plot through the lens of grief and, intriguingly, how Hamlet appears to anticipate Freud, even mysteriously “proleptically corrects Freud’s own neurotic refusal to see what was in front of his own eyes” (222). Anders Zachrisson (2016) initially examines issues regarding “psychoanalytic interpretations of literary characters,” particularly “the question of treating the character as fiction (the aesthetic illusion) or as a real person”(137). Zachrisson regards Hamlet as a

potential human being, a creation of Shakespeare, and an authentic and intuitive expression of man in the Shakespearean sense (137). The author concludes that Hamlet is characterized by being “irrational, impulsive, emotional, unreasonable, inhibited, brooding suspicious, revengeful, condemning,” and more (Zachrisson 146). However, all these traits are exhibited in a humane, routine manner. There is nothing pathological or convincingly restrictive about his character. Perhaps what sets him apart as “‘unnatural’ in him is his intelligence—his wit” (Zachrisson 146). The authors continue to employ traditional psychological research methods in their investigations of *Hamlet*.

Feminist criticism comprises another significant genre within Shakespearean literature, differing from the romantic Shakespeare criticism of its era. Feminist criticism primarily concerns examining the role of women and the extent to which the literary work represents a relatively high proportion of women, moving beyond mere images shaped by masculine discourse. M. Ayub Jajja (2014) extensively reviews Shakespeare’s great tragedies (i.e., *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Romeo and Juliet*) from the perspective of deconstructive feminism. The study hypothesizes that women in Shakespeare’s tragedies are depicted as “lesser and negative stereotypes” and that “these texts have reinforced and strengthened the patriarchy and patriarchal values” (Jajja 228). Jajja focuses primarily on examining Shakespeare’s tragedies from a feminist perspective, particularly the portrayal of women in these works. Feminist literary criticism, while providing valuable insights into the status of women and power structures, can sometimes ignore

the complexities and nuances of male characters and their relationships in favor of female characters.

The above literature review shows that Hamlet remains the central figure in *Hamlet's* studies. The character of Hamlet is often interpreted as embodying the complex fusion of humanism, feudalism, and Christianity. In this context, humanism concerns Hamlet's philosophical outlook emphasizing human dignity, reason, and the potential for moral and intellectual progress. Feudalism represents the social structure and values that directly conflict with Hamlet's more individualistic and modern sensitivity. In contrast, Christianity forms Hamlet's ethical framework, especially his fight against the notions of sin, salvation, and the afterlife. Hamlet's fragility and complex nature arise from the tension between these competitive ideologies and the environmental pressures he faces in the corrupt Danish court. Nonetheless, some studies have moved beyond the confines of Hamlet's personality. Scholars have begun to explore minor characters such as Ophelia and Polonius. The study of family relationships, particularly father-son, mother-son, and marital relationships, has emerged as a significant research area. However, little research has been conducted on the father-daughter relationship between Ophelia and Polonius through the lens of Bowen Theory. Traditional psychology, feminism, and hermeneutics have been the primary research methods employed in *Hamlet* studies. While drawing upon conventional psychology, this study surpasses its limitations and adopts a novel and suitable theory, Bowen Theory, to undertake groundbreaking research on the father-daughter relationship between Ophelia and Polonius.

2.6.3 *The Taming of the Shrew* (1623)

In the recent thirty years, the research themes of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* focus on the character, Petruchio, and family relationships like marital relationships and master-servant relationships. However, there was no sufficient scholarly focus on the dynamics between Baptista and his daughters through the lens of Bowen Theory.

Research on the portrayal of characters in the comedy primarily centers around Petruchio. By comparing Petruchio's eccentric behavior in Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* with Plautus's *Miles Gloriosus* and the English variants of Udall, Lyly, and Peele, Philip D. Collington (2016) repositions Petruchio as a "braggart soldier" (81). The author also recreates a widely forgotten "comedy subgenre," "braggart courtship," with unique "poetic styles," ancillary characters, "narrative events," and "thematic functions" (Collington 81). The author holds that Petruchio is the only one fit to marry Katherine (Collington 83). Additionally, the author believes "a recovered 'generic competence' in braggart comedy" might help convince modern theater audiences and readers that such excesses once proved traditional rather than controversial and "that Petruchio was originally more laughing stock than menace" (Collington 88). By establishing Petruchio as a braggart soldier, the research sheds new light on his actions and motivations and the cultural implications of his relationship with Katherine. However, the analysis focuses primarily only on the character of Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew*. It offers no in-depth study of other characters or relationships in the drama.

Furthermore, this analysis is constrained to the context of early English theater and does not investigate the braggart courtship genre's broader cultural or historical significance. David W. Cole (2000) analyzes the character of Petruchio. The author thinks that the description of the straightforward and honest Petruchio sounds plausible. Still, after careful consideration, it is "one more thread of deception in the play's fabric of false appearance" (Cole 184). The author concludes that "in a most Machiavellian sense," Petruchio is wiser than "either blunt or honest" (Cole 185). Cole's analysis of Petruchio's compelling character adds depth to the interpretation of the play and encourages a more nuanced approach to character analysis in Shakespeare's works. Cole, however, concentrates on one scene in *The Taming of the Shrew* and does not offer a comprehensive analysis of the play. While Cole's analysis of Petruchio's character and the issues of deception and honesty is understandable, his analysis is limited to the character, Petruchio. This focus on Petruchio lacks an in-depth study of other characters or relationships in the drama, especially the dynamics between Baptista and his daughters.

Family relationships, such as marital relationships, in Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* have received some scholarly attention. Amy L. Smith (2002) considers the marital relationship in the comedy. The author believes that the drama's weddings, banquets, and courtships represent "an acceptance or rejection" of a wife's submission to her husband. They "dramatize" a wedding that has Petruchio and Katherine "negotiating not only but also gender hierarchies, love, sexuality, and parental demands" (Smith 290). Smith offers a multifaceted analysis of the depiction of marriage in

Shakespeare's play. She explores the complexities of gender roles, power dynamics, and performance in marriage and offers nuanced interpretations of the marital relationship depicted in the play. However, studies have not examined the historical and cultural context of marriage in Shakespeare's time, including social norms, legal systems, and gender roles, which helps understand the play's depiction of marriage. Mythili Kaul (2022) concentrates on marital relationships in *The Taming of the Shrew* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. The author examines the challenges faced by women in "a patriarchal society" and explores the ways women "negotiate the situation" and their place in it (Kaul 555). Kaul's analysis offers valuable insights into the complexity of gender and power dynamics in marriage. Still, it neglects the role of Baptista, Katherine's father, in shaping these dynamics primarily through his interactions with his daughters.

Besides marital relationships, several commentators analyze the master-servant dynamic in the comedy, with a specific emphasis on Petruchio's function as Katharina's instructor. Elizabeth Mathie (2020) illustrates how criticism of mastery in early modern England can avoid "the fundamental question of mastery's justification" (271). The author believes the criticism of the mastery of the drama fosters indifference to the possibility that Katharina resists or yields to her tamer's methods. It suggests the contradictory mechanisms in which an early modern British audience is both skeptical of Petruchio's rule and refuses to consider the justice of the original premise of "the play-within-a-play": that "Katharina must have a master" (Mathie 271). The author contributes to the ongoing scholarly debate on the play's treatment of

gender and power dynamics by offering a new perspective on Petruchio's role as Katharina's trainer. The author argues that Petruchio functions as a trickster figure, specifically a "horse courser" (Mathie 257). The author's analysis of the discourse of training in these horsemanship references shows how Petruchio's actions can be seen as a form of cruelty that this discourse condemns. By turning the audience's attention to the other male masters and away from Katharina, the actual subject of Petruchio's cruelty, the play's reference to animal sport demonstrates how a contemporary discourse of training works to maintain patriarchal order even as it critiques tyranny. The author thus offers a new way of thinking about the play's treatment of gender and power dynamics, one that considers the broader cultural context of early modern England and the discourse of training that was prevalent at the time. While the author extensively explores the discourse of horsemanship and animal training in the play, other important ideas about how the play deals with gender and power dynamics are not as heavily involved. Although the author's analysis is insightful and revealing, it is essential to consider multiple perspectives and approaches to understand how the play deals with gender and power dynamics.

In addition, Sonya Brockman (2015) explores Elizabethan anxieties about the changing social status by examining Tranio, the servant in Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. The author argues that Tranio's knowingly voluntary participation in this "social performance" exemplifies the anxiety of "members of the Elizabethan elite" about "social mobility" (Brockman 213). The "social transformation" of Tranio is not permanent, although, like Christopher Sly, he

turns into a gentleman at the orders of his master (Brockman 213). However, he has to regain the servile status “in the final act” (Brockman 213). The article concludes that the servant’s perception of his performance potency makes him “a threat in Elizabethan society” (Brockman 213). Brockman provides valuable analysis of the social anxieties depicted in Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew*, presenting insightful interpretations of the social dynamics prevalent during that era. However, Brockman does not address an examination of the broader historical or political context of the Elizabethan era. Besides, Brockman mentions the Elizabethan anxiety over Tranio’s changing social status in *The Taming of the Shrew* but does not consider the effect of social anxiety on the father-daughter relationship.

Methods for analyzing *The Taming of the Shrew* have broadened to cognitive theories, the concept of paradoxical intervention, feminism, grotesque theory, and interdisciplinary approaches. With the proliferation of research methods, employing a psychoanalytic perspective to analyze the father-daughter connection in this comedy is increasingly prevalent. Kingsbury (2004) draws on the physiological basis of Shakespeare’s “psychological vocabulary” to illustrate Petruchio’s taming skills and Katherine’s scathing rebuke of the “castigation” of “‘foul contending rebel’ wives at the end of the play” (62). The author argues that by “figuring acting or role-playing as a form of affective self-control,” “a discourse of bodily mastery” emerges in *The Taming of the Shrew*. The author highlights “the nature of emotional containment” in the process (Kingsbury 63). However, underlying this requirement of physical control is the dramatic tension produced by the inherent indiscipline of the humorous body,

which is the play's theme. Shakespeare, through his description of Katherine's anger and his so-called "taming," ultimately more radically undercuts the prose —like precepts that humorously locate gender difference in the body, "and thus the patriarchal justification for women's subordination" (Kingsbury 63). Kingsbury's analysis emphasizes the struggle for control in the drama but does not explore how Baptista's impact on Katherine and Bianca contributes to this struggle.

Additionally, Culpeper (2000) uses cognitive theories to analyze the portrayal of Katherine. The author maintains that "literary characterization" can be fruitfully studied by drawing on theories developed in the field of "social cognition" to explain "the perception of real-life people"(Culpeper 291). The author shows how this approach describes the construction of the protagonist Katherine in Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. Using the concepts of "cognitive theories of knowledge (especially schema theory) and impression formation," the author depicts "the role of prior knowledge" in shaping a character's impression and how different kinds of impressions are formed. The author asserts that Katherine is not, as some reviewers suggest, just a shrew, "an inconsistent character," or a typical figure of a farce (Culpeper 291). The author argues that Petruchio's actions may have influenced how the Elizabethan audience viewed Katherina. Petruchio makes "a series of behaviours that are prototypically shrewish" (Culpeper 307). So, "in the remainder of the play there is likely to be a strong bias toward perceiving Katherina as less shrewish" (Culpeper 307). In this paper, the author "goes beyond pragmatic analyses of plays" with an interdisciplinary approach, relying

on theories of “social and cognitive psychology” (Culpeper 311). The author focuses on the text, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and within the confines of the theories, produces assumptions on the “construction of character,” which explain the existing textual proofs in a “systematic and parsimonious” way (Culpeper 311). The author also shows how the “cognitive approach to characterization” integrates and considers different “characterization concepts postulated in literary theory,” partially those of “flat and round” figures (Culpeper 311). The author concludes that Katherina is not a flat figure, a cartoon, a broken-hearted woman, or a shrew but “a character of farce” (Culpeper 311-12).

Feminist analysis has been employed to examine the portrayal of gender roles and power dynamics in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Hongyuan Zou (2014) uses feminism to analyze Katherine’s experience and psychological status from the perspective of women’s economic status, the double standard of social customs in men’s and women’s behavior, and men’s suppression of women’s social status and freedom, revealing Katherina’s rebellion against the patriarchal society and victory. The author believes economic reasons, different social standards of behavior between men and women, and patriarchy deny women their status and freedom. However, Katherina is an angular and independent person who expresses her anger and opinions when faced with unfair or unwilling things rather than silently accepting them (Zou 119). Besides, Victoria Moreno (2010) uses a feminist perspective to examine the representation of women, gender roles, and social constraints that characterize the female characters in *The Taming of the Shrew*. The author

asserts Katherine's anger is perceived as a response to "cultural values" that call for suppressed female instincts to express themselves (Moreno 21). Through a feminist perspective, the author explores power dynamics, social expectations, and struggles for autonomy and self-expression in a male-dominated world.

Several interdisciplinary research approaches have been used to examine family relationships in Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. Arbaayah Ali Termizi (2015) mainly uses Mikhail Bakhtin's point of view on the "grotesque" theory to explore the grotesque performance of "love and feasting" in the drama. The author argues that "Bakhtin's conceptualization of the grotesque" contributes to the dramatic positioning of love in *Antony and Cleopatra* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, "whereby the theme of love gets un-romanticized in these plays" (Termizi 191). Applying Bakhtin's "grotesque" theory to the study of *The Taming of the Shrew*, the depiction of love as a carnal and physical experience is brought to the forefront, challenging traditional romanticized notions of love. Richard Raspa (2010) reads Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* through the concept of paradoxical intervention. The author asserts the theme of the choice between a life of "obedience" and a life of "exasperation," which reveals how characters select to relate to others in the play. The author contends that, from the opening introduction to the incendiary conclusion of the "tamed" shrew Katherine, the drama's structure gives characters a choice: "obey or exasperate" (Raspa 102). Each character's choice determines the likelihood of "trust and intimacy" (Raspa 102). Additionally, the author argues that the conflict between Katherine and Petruchio is "less about demanding

spousal obedience and following a husband's commands, and more about obedience in its etymological sense" (Raspa 104). Paradoxical intervention influences Petruchio and Katherine in different ways. Their outbursts end, and their quarrels calm down. Everybody appears to understand that obedience is the doorway to intimacy. Katherine became, like Petruchio, not "tamed" but "shrewd" (Raspa 111). Raspa's argument highlights the transformative power of paradoxical intervention, offering a compelling interpretation of the characters' changing relational dynamics. Although Raspa (2010) provides valuable analysis of the transformative nature of paradoxical intervention in *The Taming of the Shrew*, the author fails to explore the historical and cultural context of the play, which is crucial for understanding the social norms and expectations that influence the characters' actions and relationships.

Recent scholarship has approached *The Taming of the Shrew* from an interdisciplinary perspective, incorporating insights from psychiatry, gender studies, and feminist theory. Barbara Józefik (2022) engages psychiatrist perspectives on patriarchy, power dynamics, and gender roles in Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* through interdisciplinary approaches. Józefik highlights the oppressive nature of societal expectations on women, especially in terms of marriage and family dynamics. Józefik challenges traditional interpretations of the play, arguing that Shakespeare may have intended to satirize male behavior and "misogyny" rather than embrace such attitudes (74). Using analysis of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* through the eyes of a psychotherapist, the author draws on feminist theory and gender studies to examine issues of patriarchy, power dynamics, and gender

roles in the comedy. The approach involves a close reading of the text. It also incorporates theoretical frameworks from scholars such as Judith Butler. However, Józefik does not address the detailed analysis of characters other than Katherine and Petruchio.

The analysis of familial dynamics in *The Taming of the Shrew* centers on the master-servant and marital dynamics. Conventional research approaches, such as psychoanalysis and feminism, are employed. Interdisciplinary approaches such as grotesque theory and the concept of paradoxical intervention are utilized. However, few studies have explored the father-daughter relationship from the perspective of Bowen Theory. The research looks at the father-daughter relationship between Baptista, Katherine, and Bianca through the lens of Bowen Theory. Using Bowen's concepts of differentiation of self, family projection process, triangles, nuclear family emotional system, and societal regression, this study explores the complexity of the relationship between father and daughter.

2.6.4 *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1594-95)

Research on William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the recent thirty years is multifaceted. Scholars have examined various themes, including popular culture, bestiality, humanism, religion, and animals. For instance, in her work *Taken by the Fairies: Fairy Practices and the Production of Popular Culture in A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Mary Ellen Lamb (2001) addresses the complex issue of discussing popular culture without establishing binary relationships with another culture. The author also explores the potential

political implications when popular culture is used merely as a symbolic construct within a relevant discourse field. Instead of ascribing a fixed meaning, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* adapts its interpretation based on the viewer's ideology and personal experience. The author states that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* comprises separate scenes, each with its unique narrative form, culminating in a complex ideological act that operates concurrently in aesthetic, social, and psychological dimensions. Additionally, the music in the comedy is both academic and all-encompassing, offering various perspectives for diverse social classes that exist "not only between but within individual audience members" (Lamb 280). While Lamb's work casts light on how the drama adapts to different interpretations, it cannot solve nuanced dynamics between key family characters such as Egeus and Hermia.

Other scholars delve into the topics of desire and sexuality and further enrich the multilateral critical landscape of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In *Economies of Desire in A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Bruce Boehrer (2004) asserts that the theme of bestiality in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are parallel and inverse with the drama's different references to homosexual groups and attachments and the two modes of discourse can be perceived as "a nervous projection of tendencies intrinsic to the play's understanding of gender difference and heteroerotic love" (99). While Boehrer examines desire and sexuality, the study does not consider the relationship between Hermia and Egeus.

Furthermore, some critics have expanded the thematic concerns of humanism and sexuality. In *Why A Midsummer Night's Dream?*, Kenneth Burke (2006) discusses several concepts associated with *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and

the consideration of general critical methods is also addressed. The author thinks *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is "a fanciful embodiment of the Humanistic attitude" (Burke 307). Jason Gleckman (2019) proposes that in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shakespeare employs the notion of fairies, beings that have long been linked to "the English landscape" and feminine erotic, to depict, in a manner of Spenser, how erotic and even lustful desires can serve as a possible path towards "religious conversion," particularly to Protestantism (23). The author contends that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* provides "a revolutionary version of early modern marital sexuality," poetically adapted to the burgeoning "Protestant nation," extending the space for sexual enjoyment in marriage as the reformers have done. However, it is also "a particularly English sexuality," and it occurs against, and perhaps partially inspired by, "erotic beings" originating from "the English countryside: the fairies" (Gleckman, *Hamlet and Free Will in Action* 23). Social elements such as homosexuality in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are involved. However, they are not analyzed through Bowen Theory. Although Gleckman discusses the intersection of sexuality and marriage, the dynamics of the father-daughter relationship in the drama, particularly Egeus' s control over Hermia, remain primarily unexplored. This is essential for understanding the tension between individual desires and paternal authority.

While themes of human desire and sexuality have dominated the study of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, some scholars have focused on Shakespeare's depiction of animals in the comedy. Fretz (2022) examines how Ovidian influences shaped Shakespeare's use of serpents and asses in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The author discusses how animal dreams evolved, specifically

how Ovidian motifs became early modern dramatic tools. The author asserts that to fully understand Shakespeare's utilization of animal dreams in this play, it is imperative to have a thorough understanding of the Ovidian framework of human-animal metamorphosis. Within this framework, animal states and imagery are employed to portray, amplify, or symbolize various aspects of human nature. The author also argues that Shakespeare skillfully adapted "Ovidian animal symbolism for early modern culture by filtering it through religious and demonological references" (Fretz 328). Moreover, Bach (2014) examines the representation of animals in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Bach explores the idea of the "animal continuum" in the text, examining how different characters and elements in the play are positioned along this continuum (124). The author discusses the importance of animal imagery, symbolism, and themes in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and sheds light on the complex relationship between the characters and the animals portrayed in the comedy. Bach argues that Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* does not abide by the rigid division between humans and animals.

Additionally, Aidan Day (2012) concentrates on Carter's "Overture and Incidental Music" in an unprecedented manner. At the same time, the author explores patriarchal prejudice and Orientalism that permeates the "latent content" of "the fairy story" in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Day 12). The author states that the dispute between Oberon and Titania centered on who would own "a little Indian boy," and their conflict is settled after the "proud Titania" has been humiliated and ridiculed by Oberon, who reaffirms the

authority of the patriarchy (Day 14). Carter's *Overture and Incidental Music for A Midsummer* is based on English literature and Shakespeare while examining the *Dream* from a gendered perspective, discovering a latent Orientalism in the work's imagination (Day 29). Day's research on gender dispositions, patriarchal structures, and imperial elements in fairy tales enriched the research of gender and power dynamics in literature. The study gave scholars and researchers valuable insights into how traditional stories reflect and sustain social norms and power dynamics. This research, however, mainly concentrates on gender politics and overlooks the father-daughter dynamics between Egeus and Hermia, a relationship that directly contrasts Oberon and Titania's power struggle.

Besides exploring the different themes in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, scholars have mainly used methodologies such as aesthetics, Orientalism, ethics, and feminism to investigate this comedy. For instance, in *Shakespeare and Impure Aesthetics: The Case of A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Hugh Grady (2008) discusses the decontextualization of literature from the larger social context, goal, and intertextuality. The author notes that when the fairies watch the shifting devotion of the four young lovers (Hermia, Lysander, Demetrius, and Helena), they see clearly "how dangerous desire can be: breaking hearts, destroying friendships, promoting jealousy and violence" and destabilizing families (Grady 294). It is thus a misleading statement of self-mockery of an "aesthetic production" without purpose, creating a specialized "place," a sphere in which the "materials of the social text" are re-functionalized in an aesthetically structured and autonomous

domain, manufactured from and printed with all the “cultural materials” that inform self-contained artifact. The play is “Shakespeare’s paean to, and anatomy of, impure aesthetics” (Grady 302). While dysfunctional family relations are mentioned in the study, the abnormal father-daughter relationship between Egeus and Hermia remains an insufficiently explored area that can be examined through Bowen Theory to analyze emotional patterns and projections in their interactions.

The representative of the study of ethical disputes in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is William M. Hawley, whose representative works include *A Midsummer Night’s Dream: Relating Ethics to Mutuality* (2010). The author asserts that Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* shows that ethical disputes need to be solved through relationships. The contradictory “fairy world” of King Oberon “interferes with” human affairs, causing ethical confusion. The author holds that “Hegel’s dialectic, Jean-Luc Nancy’s transfiguring, and Martin Buber’s relational perspectives take up Shakespeare’s premise of treating ontology and ethics as facets of the same movement” (Hawley 159). As Hegel maintains that any (unavoidable) alienation has to be overcome, it also demonstrates “Nancy’s and Buber’s symbolic consecration of ethical being as mutuality” (Hawley 159). The emerging moral relationship dampens the “unethical acquisitiveness” of Helena and Demetrius (Hawley 163). While the lovers do not solve every ethical dilemma posed by the financial, “political and social conflicts” of the drama, their renewed wishes “extend relational ethics to the world of the play” and our audiences today (Hawley 163). The study underscores the significance of mutuality and relational ethics in conflict

resolution, drawing on the insights of philosophers like Hegel, Jean-Luc Nancy, and Martin Buber. It also illustrates how the characters' interactions exemplify ethical imperatives. The study integrates literature and philosophy and provides valuable insights for scholars in both fields. However, the study mainly concentrates on these philosophers' viewpoints, and other perspectives can enrich the discussion.

The representative work of feminist study on the comedy is Lisa Walters's *Oberon and Masculinity in Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2013). The author notes that Oberon can be seen as the rebel subject, a view reinforced by his inconsistency with the first modern interpretations of masculinity. Oberon even looks like the first current hypothesis about women. Thus, "the power dynamics of the world of Titania and Oberon" offer a more complex depiction of "gender and sexuality" than the critics have yet recognized (Walters 157). The author concludes that Oberon can be seen as "a figure of masculine disorder" through "the political lens of Titania's matriarchy" (Walters 159). Oberon is even similar to "rebellious and disorderly women in the play such as Hermia, who defies the orders of Theseus and her father by running away with Lysander, or Helena, who aggressively pursues her love interest into the forest" (Walters 159). Shakespeare depicts intricate "layers of power dynamics," as the drama portrays a swing of authority and rebellion between "the two worlds of Athens and fairyland." To better understand the "folkloric views" of "the fairy queen's authority," the view of power relationships in the drama should be repositioned and another pattern of "gender and sexuality" in the drama would have to be provided (Walters

159). Walters' analysis of Oberon and Masculinity in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* provides a new perspective on the play's gender politics and power dynamics. By challenging traditional readings of Oberon as a patriarchal ruler, Walters offers a more complex representation of gender and sexuality in the play. Furthermore, Walters' examination of the forest outside of Athens as a space where patriarchal norms are questioned and matriarchal modes of authority can establish themselves offers a more profound comprehension of the play's involvement with gender roles and power dynamics. Walters' research adds to a broader discourse on how Shakespeare's plays might be analyzed from a feminist and gender studies perspective. Nevertheless, Walters' study fails to incorporate wider social and historical contexts that have the potential to enhance the analysis. Walters' research offers crucial insights into Oberon's masculinity. Readers should view this study within the broader context of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* research and acknowledge that it may not cover all potential interpretations or analytical perspectives.

Scholarship in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has embraced interdisciplinary methodologies. For example, Bulkeley (2020) integrates Freudian and Jungian perspectives with insights from anthropology, religion studies, neuroscience, evolutionary biology, and cognitive psychology. The author elucidates "the aesthetic whole of Shakespeare's work" and its captivating impact on spectators from the latter part of the 16th century to the early years of the 21st century (Bulkeley 297). Although Bulkeley's interdisciplinary approach is comprehensive, it does not explore the father-

daughter relationship in the context of Bowen Theory, which would give a deeper understanding of how generational emotional patterns and anxiety contribute to conflicts between Egeus and Hermia.

The above literature review shows that researchers mainly use Orientalism, feminism, aesthetics, and ethics in studying Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The research topics involve humanism, popular culture, religion, bestiality, and animals. However, the father-daughter relationship in the play has not been examined from the Bowen Theory perspective. Therefore, it is essential to investigate the father-daughter relationship in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in light of Bowen Theory. The research is centered on Hermia and Egeus' father-daughter relationship. The study looks at the level of self-differentiation of Hermia and Egeus, the projection of Egeus' chronic anxiety on Hermia, and the effect of chronic anxiety resulting from social regression on the father-daughter relationship.

2.7 Conclusion

From this, we can see that scholars have studied dysfunctional relationships in literature, mainly using traditional psychoanalysis and feminism. Studies on father-daughter relationships in Shakespearean plays have been conducted mainly from the perspectives of feminism, historicism, new historicism, linguistics, and traditional psychology. Studies using Bowen Theory on father-daughter relationships in selected Shakespearean plays are lacking.

Currently, there is little investigation of father-daughter relations in selected texts using Bowen Theory. The critics have focused on analyzing Lear and Cordelia in *King Lear*, studying the themes of religion, death, old age, displacement, and more. Its criticism involves interdisciplinary methodologies like ecofeminism, spatial theory, and ecocriticism. Studies on family relationships in this tragedy have focused on the father-daughter relationship between Lear and Cordelia and the father-son relationship between Gloucester and Edgar. Character analysis has been a central focus of Hamlet scholarship, with some scholars examining minor figures such as Ophelia and Polonius. The research on dysfunctional family relationships in the tragedy mainly involves the father-son, mother-son, and marital relationships, but there is less research on the father-daughter relationship of Ophelia and Polonius. *Hamlet's* interdisciplinary research methods mainly include traditional psychology, feminism, hermeneutics, and so on. Studies of themes in *The Taming of the Shrew* vary from marriage and Braggart courtship to social anxiety, character analysis, and family relationships. However, they mainly focus on marital relationships and master-servant relationships in the comedy. Scholars have used grotesque theory, psychology, feminism, the concept of paradox intervention, and cognitive theories. As for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, research topics range from humanism and popular culture to religion, bestiality, and animals. Scholars mainly use feminist, aesthetics, Orientalism, and ethical methods to study the play.

Over the past thirty years, researchers have mainly studied dysfunctional family relationships in the selected texts in the light of psychoanalysis and

feminism. In *Hamlet*, various studies explore Hamlet's relationship with Gertrude while sidelining Ophelia's connection to Polonius. In *King Lear*, significant attention goes to Lear's interactions with Cordelia but not as extensively as his bond with Goneril and Regan. Research on the relationship between father and daughter in these plays is done primarily from the standpoint of traditional psychoanalysis, new historicism, and feminism. Few scholars have studied the father-daughter relationship in the selected Shakespeare's plays from the view of Bowen Theory. The literature review emphasizes the need for more research in this field, proposing that an investigation utilizing Bowen Theory to shed light on father-daughter interactions in chosen Shakespearean plays would be groundbreaking.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

An internationally acclaimed leader of the family therapy movement, Murray Bowen is a pioneer of Family Systems Theory, which studies human emotional activity and communication behavior. His Family Systems Theory was one of the first comprehensive theories that examined the functioning of family systems (Bowen, 1966, 1978; Kerr and Bowen, 1988). The works of Guerin (1976, 1987), Carter and McGoldrick (1980, 1988), Lerner (1986, 1988, 1990, 1993), and Schnarch (1991, 1997) all center around Bowen Theory in their conceptualizations (Brown 94). Bowen published the original six concepts in 1966: differentiation of self, triangles, nuclear family emotional process, family projection process, multigenerational transmission process, and sibling position. In the 1970s, he added two concepts: emotional cutoff and societal emotional process (Kerr and Bowen 16). In 1978, Bowen wrote a book, *Family Therapy in Clinical Practice*. This book deals with the extent and depth of Bowen's contributions. It shows the evolution of Bowen Theory, starting with his early writings on schizophrenic families and their treatment, developing his concepts of triangulation, intergenerational conflict, and societal regression, and concluding with his exploration of self-differentiation in one's family of origin. In 1988, Bowen co-wrote one of the most fundamental books on Bowen Theory, *Family Evaluation: An Approach Based on Bowen Theory*, with

Michael E. Kerr, director of training at the Georgetown University Family Center. Bowen's student and colleague, Robert M. Gilbert, has successfully captured the essence of Bowen Theory, explored the growth and chaos of family systems, and how to deal with and resolve relationship problems. His representative books include *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory* (2004) and *Extraordinary Relationships: A New Way of Thinking about Human Interactions* (1992). These books serve as the primary theoretical sources for the thesis. Although the critical concepts of Bowen Theory have remained unchanged for over thirty years, notable expansions exist. These include an emphasis on life cycle stages as explored by Carter and McGoldrick in 1980 and 1988, as well as the integration of a feminist perspective as discussed by Carter, Walters, Papp, Silverstein in 1988, Lerner in 1983, and Bograd in 1987 (Brown 94).

Bowen Theory believes that the family is the principal source of individual emotion and personality and that chronic anxiety is the source of family dysfunction. Bowen Theory is unique in explaining people's emotional activities. Bowen defined the family as "an emotional unit" consisting of "a network of interlocking relationships" (Goldenberg et al. 1991). Bowen Theory treats family members as elements of an interrelated structure rather than an independent spiritual entity. In addition, Bowen Theory elaborates that the behavior of each member of the family system affects other members and that a person's behavior and emotions can only be explained in the context of the family. Based on Bowen Theory, a person's behavior is influenced by, and inextricably linked to, their family of origin and the nuclear family. Bowen Theory insists on a systematic way of thinking, which does not regard the

individual as an isolated existence but believes that understanding the interaction pattern between family members is necessary for understanding the individual. Thus, Bowen Theory is used in various disciplines, from psychology and sociology to literary studies.

The chapter opens with an overview of Bowen Theory, presenting the concepts of the emotional system, the individuality and togetherness forces, and its eight concepts. It gives the readers a general understanding of Bowen Theory. Later, the chapter elaborates on five concepts of Bowen Theory, which are mainly applied to the thesis: differentiation of self, family projection process, triangles, nuclear family emotional system, and societal regression. Each concept is defined and introduced, followed by a brief explanation of how it can be applied to the analysis. The chapter concludes with an introduction to using these five concepts in Bowen Theory to analyze the father-daughter relationship in the chosen plays through a combination of textual analysis and close reading. This study concentrates on how these concepts will be applied to analyze father-daughter relationships in selected Shakespearean dramas. By exploring these concepts, this chapter sets the stage for a detailed examination of how Bowen Theory can illuminate the psychological and relational complexities in families portrayed by Shakespeare in selected texts.

3.2 Bowen Theory: An Overview

3.2.1 The Emotional System

The notion of “the emotional system” is one of the most prominent in Family Systems Theory (Kerr and Bowen 30; Kerr 108). Family Systems Theory considers the *feeling* system and the *intellectual* system, aside from the emotional system, to impact “human functioning and behavior significantly” (Kerr and Bowen 33). The *feeling* system refers to an integral part of human emotional experience, characterized by an intellectual or cognitive awareness of various emotional states. The *intellectual* system is the most recent part of man's nervous system acquired in evolution, usually called “man's ‘thinking brain’” (Kerr and Bowen 34; Kerr 108).

Family Systems Theory assumes that “the functioning and behavior of all organisms” are affected significantly through an emotional system embedded in the life process on a likely more fundamental level than genes. This system is believed to “have its roots in the protoplasm itself” and may even affect how genes work (Kerr and Bowen 49). The concept implies that systems of relations have certain *universal* features. The processes of relationship that function “between intracellular components, between cells, between organ systems and between individuals of a species may be organized based on some common principles” (Kerr and Bowen 49).

Family Systems Theory focuses on “the *function* of an individual’s behavior” within the broader context of the relational process (Kerr and Bowen 49). Consciousness of function relative to the whole is a cornerstone of any relationship theory. Functional thinking adds a significant aspect to understanding a person’s motivation. This additional dimension is that a person is at least partially motivated by a process not entirely contained in that person. It is somewhat confined to the relational system of the individual. Thus, Family Systems Theory explains some aspects of “a person’s behavior within the context of the function of that behavior in the emotional system” (Kerr and Bowen 49).

The human family has been depicted previously as a unit of emotion. We can also refer to it as an “emotional field” (Kerr and Bowen 55). The word “field” is appropriate because it “suggests the complexity of the emotional stimuli” to which family members contribute and respond on several levels (Kerr and Bowen 55). The “emotionally determined functioning of the family members” produces “a family emotional ‘atmosphere’ or ‘field,’” which, in turn, affects the emotional functioning of each individual (Kerr and Bowen 55). This is analogous to “the gravitational field of the solar system, where each planet and the sun, under their mass, contribute gravity to the field and are, in turn, regulated by the field they each help create” (Kerr and Bowen 55). One cannot “see” gravity and the emotional field. However, the “presence of gravity and emotional field” can be deduced through foreseeable ways planets and people respond to each other (Kerr and Bowen 55).

The “existence of a family emotional field” results from a relational process motivated by emotion in every family (Kerr and Bowen 55). Even though “the intensity of this process” can vary from one family to another and “within the same family over time,” it is still present to some extent (Kerr and Bowen 55). This “emotional process” causes people to assume various *functioning positions* within the family. An individual’s functional position impacts his “beliefs, values, attitudes, feelings and behavior” (Kerr and Bowen 55). Another significant aspect of functional positions is that they work in a mutually reinforcing relationship (Kerr and Bowen 55).

An overfunctioning individual is generally a person “who feels responsible for the emotional well-being of others and who works to compensate for perceived” (real or imagined) deficits in their functioning (Kerr and Bowen 56). On the other hand, the person not functioning well is dependent on the person who works too much to do things he feels minor or incapable of doing. In extreme cases, the underfunctioning one can count on “the overfunctioning one to tell him how to think, feel and act” (Kerr and Bowen 56). The person who is functioning too poorly may not feel so dependent.

As described in the case of non-human animals, an individual’s relational process and functional position in this process may influence behavioral effects. To a certain extent, an individual’s functional position in a family system will affect “his *intrapsychic* and *physiological* functioning” (Kerr and Bowen 56). Dreams, fantasies, feelings, attitudes, and intellectual functioning can all be influenced meaningfully. A poorly functioning person, for instance, may

experience a loss of trust, have difficulty focusing except for simple tasks, and consider himself a burden to others. Conversely, a person who functions too much can draw strength and confidence from other people's dependence on him. The functional position may also be detrimental to physical health. A person who functions too poorly may become ill because others require him and because he demands more from himself than he realistically achieves. An under-functional person may become sick by withdrawing into selfishness and helplessness. This self-absorption is not the result of selfishness but the abandonment of too great self-control. An underfunctioning person with a chronic disease improves his functioning and suffers "a dramatic remission of symptoms" if his excessive functional partner gets sick or dies (Kerr and Bowen 56).

The emotional system works as if it is regulated by the interaction of two "life forces" that counterbalance forces defined by Family Systems Theory as "individuality and togetherness" (Kerr and Bowen 58). Although one can never be sure that such forces exist, what has been observed about the family affective system is coherent "with their existence" (Kerr and Bowen 58). The following section will present the nature of individuality and togetherness and their manifestations in the family relational system.

3.2.2 The Individuality and Togetherness Forces

Family Systems Theory postulates that the functioning of the "emotional system" reflects an interaction between two forces of life that counterbalance:

individuality and *togetherness*. Moreover, the theory assumes that the development of physical, emotional, and social malfunctions brings an essential relationship to “adjustments people make in response to an imbalance of individuality and togetherness” in a system of relationships (Kerr and Bowen 60). In Bowen Theory, the individuality and togetherness forces are two contradictory drives that significantly affect the dynamics of the family: the togetherness force, which supports emotional closeness and dependence, and the individuality force, which promotes autonomy and personal independence. These forces are vital in analyzing father-daughter relations because they explain the tension between the fathers’ desires for emotional closeness with their daughters and the need for autonomy and self-differentiation.

Individuality is a biologically embedded life force (more fundamental than a simple function of the brain) that encourages an organization to follow its guidelines and be an independent and separate entity (Kerr and Bowen 64). Togetherness is “a biologically rooted life force” (more fundamental than simply being a function of the brain), which pushes one organism to follow the guidelines of others, “to be a dependent, connected and indistinct entity” (Kerr and Bowen 64-65). A human has a variety of “biological and psychological systems” that induce him to act as part of a group and follow the compass of the group (Kerr and Bowen 65). These internal systems direct the person toward the group’s guidelines and send signals that lead others toward themselves. This strength of being connected is reflected in the effort to act, feel, and think like everyone else and the struggle for others to act, feel, and

think like themselves. While “the togetherness force is rooted in biological processes,” its intensity in a given person is highly impacted by learning (Kerr and Bowen 65). This learning varies from the conditioning of emotions and feelings to developing values and beliefs. The degree to which a group is stable, cohesive, and cooperative depends on the interaction of individuality and togetherness. The ability of groups of individuals to participate closely and collaboratively is impacted both by the ability of individuals to follow their guidelines and by the extent to which group guidelines guide individuals. Individuality is similar to “the individual half of the individual-team dichotomy”, and togetherness is similar to the team-half. In one family or another group, people are involved in both processes at the same time (Kerr and Bowen 65).

The individuality force defines the self by distancing one person from another. It drives a person to adopt his convictions, reason his choices, and demonstrate independence. This self-construction works with beliefs, goals, and limitations that distinguish oneself from others, starting early in life and, ideally, going on throughout. The individuality force has long existed in humans. It is a constant reminder that boundaries cannot be compromised in personal relations (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 13).

The togetherness force inspires us to turn to others for commitment, affiliation, and acceptance. It is “an emotional process” that transmits anxiety and self from person to person. This flow of emotion and self between people is the basis for viewing “the group as the emotional unit” (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 13).

In people, the togetherness force can be seen in friendship, family, and society. In “these emotional units, the transfer of anxiety between individuals is such that something of each self is exchanged between them” (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 13). One wins, and “the other loses self” because those considered problematic are both focused (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 13). Alternatively, they can get lost by concentrating on one another or a third. Togetherness is highly prone to automatic responses in states of low emotional maturity or very high levels of anxiety. While fusion can reduce anxiety, it may also create uncomfortable feelings and drive people into “the direction of relationship aversion” (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 13-14).

The more emotionally mature individuals are, the easier it is to handle the forces of individuality/ togetherness. This person is “a more emotionally complete self” and is less necessary to be attached to someone else (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 14). Life is always pleasant for that person, whether with others or alone. The more emotionally mature or differentiated people are, the more capable they are of dealing with life’s issues, “including those of relationships” (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 14). Conversely, emotionally immature people tend to look for solace in relationships, expect others to “complete their lack of self they find in themselves,” and try to build a self “out of two or more selves” (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 14).

How much vital energy people put into a relationship and the extent to which that relationship regulates their lives is bound by the power of the togetherness

force. The proportion of vital energy that people retain to govern their own lives independently of the relationship is a product of the force of individuality. When a relationship is quiet and in a relatively comfortable balance, the interaction of “individuality and togetherness” can hardly be seen. The adjustments people make between them are so “subtle and automatic” that they are not apparent. However, when the relationship evolves towards a significant imbalance, “the pressure for adjustment is more intense” and more accessible to observe (Kerr and Bowen 66).

3.2.3 The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory

Bowen developed a series of Family Systems Theory, the core of which is the eight concepts of Bowen Theory: differentiation of self, triangles, nuclear family emotional system, family projection process, multigenerational emotional process, sibling positions, societal emotional process (societal regression), and emotional cutoff. These eight main concepts form the basis of Bowen Theory and are interconnected, so a deep understanding of each concept is needed to understand each other.

Differentiation of self is the cornerstone of Bowen Theory. Differentiation of self is the ability to think and reflect, to fail to automatically respond to “internal and external emotional stimuli” (Kerr and Bowen 92). Bowen and his colleague, Michael E. Kerr, argue that Family Systems Theory explains the functional level regarding chronic anxiety and differentiation of self. The level of self-differentiation is directly proportional to stress adaptability. In the relational system, the higher the chronic anxiety level, the more strained the adaptive

capacity. When the intensity of an individual's anxiety reacts to stress, impairs his functioning of himself and/or "those with whom he is emotionally connected," adaptive capacity is exceeded, resulting in functional impairment with mild to severe "physical, emotional, or social symptoms" (Kerr and Bowen 111). Thus, symptom development relies on the magnitude of stress and the individual or family's ability to adapt to the pressure. Individuals and families who adapt very well face significant stress to induce symptoms. If chronic anxiety levels are low, "poorly adaptive people and families" may be asymptomatic (Kerr and Bowen 111). Therefore, this study will analyze the level of the self-differentiation of Lear, Regan, Goneril, and Cordelia in *King Lear*, Hermia and Egeus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Ophelia and Polonius in *Hamlet*, Baptista, Katherine, and Bianca in *The Taming of the Shrew* and its impact on the father-daughter relationships.

A triangle is the basic building block of an emotional (relational) system (Piercy et al., 1996, 27; Bowen, 2004, 332; Kerr and Bowen, 1988, 335). In the context of Bowen Theory, the triangle concerns the dynamic interaction between three people in a relationship. It represents the emotional interdependence of these individuals and how different emotional forces impact the balance of this relationship. The main factor affecting the activity of a triangle is anxiety. When it is low, a two-person relationship can be peaceful and comfortable. However, since internal and external emotional forces easily disrupt a relationship, it generally does not "remain completely comfortable very long" (Kerr and Bowen 132-33). Inevitably, a particular increase in anxiety interferes with the balance of relationships. A two-person system can be stable while quiet, but as this

level of calm is hard to maintain, a two-person system is better described as unstable. When anxiety increases, “a third person becomes involved in the tension of the twosome, creating a triangle” (Kerr and Bowen 132-33). The term “third person” here concerns a figurative rather than a literal third individual. It can represent any third entity— a person, event, or object—drawn into relational dynamics to stabilize emotional balance. This process is an inherent feature of emotional systems where anxiety and tension increase the need for external involvement. Although more than three individuals can be involved in the emotional system of the family, the triangle is perceived to be the smallest stable unit because it is a fundamental mechanism by which emotional reactivity and anxiety are managed. The operationalization of this concept in the context of this study will concentrate on how triangles are reflected in the father-daughter relations in selected Shakespearean dramas, where the third party often disrupts primary relational dynamics, which affects the emotional outcome of interaction.

The nuclear family emotional system refers to the patterns of emotional functioning inside a family in a single generation. The fundamental patterns observed among the father, mother, and offspring are “replicas of the past generations” and will continue to be replicated in future generations (Bowen 407). When symptoms appear in a single pattern, it results in more severe symptoms in a relationship or a person, leaving family members free from symptoms. When symptoms occur in multiple forms, anxiety is distributed among the conditions, and all family members’ functioning levels are less affected.

Family Projection Process refers to the process whereby parents project their part of immaturity to one or more children (Bowen 513). As far as the original family is concerned, the two dynamic structures, the emotional triangle and the chronic anxiety provoked by the family projection process, impact the self-differentiation of an individual. Hence, this thesis will focus on analyzing how the family of origin influences the level of the characters' differentiation of self through the projection of the fathers' chronic anxiety onto the daughters.

Multigenerational Transmission Process is the process by which emotional patterns, behaviors, and psychological dynamics are passed from one generation to another in the family system. The multigenerational transmission process describes the overall mode of the family projection process as it involves specific children, avoids others, and takes place over several generations (Bowen 333). In Bowen Theory, this concept explains how unresolved emotional problems, anxiety, and relational patterns are transmitted across several generations, which affects how family members interact and respond to emotional stress. The complexity of this concept is to recognize that family members not only pass on specific behaviors or beliefs but also emotional reactions that can shape the emotional functioning of subsequent generations. For example, if unresolved anxiety or emotional reactivity of parents is not dealt with, it may be unconsciously projected onto their children, which affects their emotional development and relations. This process can continue for generations; each generation inherits and potentially amplifies these emotional patterns.

Sibling position is an expansion and change of sibling positional profiles initially defined by Toman (1961). The original profiles were derived from research into “normal” families. Firstborns are inclined to identify with power and authority. They use their size and force to defend their position and attempt to minimize the cost of having siblings by controlling them (Nichols, *Family Therapy: Concepts and Methods* 117). As oppressed family members, later-borns are more likely to identify with the oppressed and challenge the status quo. They are more open to the experience because this opening helps them, as late family members, to find a vacant niche. What developers once considered a shared family setting turns out to be completely unrequited. Each family is “a multiplicity of microenvironments, a collection of niches” composed of distinct perspectives “from which siblings experience the same events in very different ways” (Nichols, *Family Therapy: Concepts and Methods* 117-18). The sibling positional profiles Nichols discussed here are based on research into family dynamics, particularly investigating roles and firstborn children’s behaviors. Nichols found that the firstborns often identify with authority figures and power structures in the family. These profiles are characterized by a tendency toward leadership and responsibility and a strong tendency to conform to the established authority norms.

Emotional Cutoff is when an individual deals with emotional difficulties or other preoccupations in the family system by taking emotional distance from others. Kerr stated that the emotional cutoff *reflects* a generational fusion problem, resolves an issue by reducing anxiety associated with uncomfortable contact, and creates an issue by separating persons from significant relationships and

intensifying fusion into the remaining relationships (Goldenberg et al. 202). In this context, emotional difficulties relate to unresolved family conflicts, social pressures, or psychological problems that dominate the characters' emotional states. Preoccupations include recurring emotional concerns or unresolved conflicts that overshadow the characters' capacity for healthy relational engagement, especially in father-daughter dynamics. Emotional cutoff, therefore, refers to the detachment that individuals create in response to anxiety or overwhelming emotions, often leading to alienation and communication difficulties.

According to the concept of societal regression, when a family experiences chronic, sustained anxiety, they gradually disconnect from their "intellectually determined principles" and increasingly rely on emotionally driven decisions to alleviate immediate anxiety. As a result of this process, the family begins to show specific symptoms like increased conflict, emotional withdrawal, and breakdown of communication. These symptoms manifest gradually and indicate a shift from healthy functional interactions. Over time, the family's ability to deal with challenges and make stable relationships decreases. This reduction in functioning concerns reduced the ability to solve practical problems, provide emotional support, and adapt to change, resulting in a deterioration of the overall family dynamics. In severe cases, this dysfunction can lead to a family unit disintegration or a significant loss of emotional connection and support.

The societal concept posits that society is undergoing a continuous process characterized by a growing prevalence of chronic societal anxiety. The societal emotional process illustrates how social anxiety influences the emotional system of the family and society. Bowen foresaw contemporary concerns about the social impact on the functioning of families. Michael E. Kerr and Murray Bowen (1988) provide an example of the high level of crime that causes significant social stress in communities. They recognize sexism, class, and racial biases as examples of unpleasant socio-emotional processes. However, they argue that “individuals and families with higher levels of differentiation” are more resistant to these adverse social impacts (Nichols, *The Essentials of Family Therapy* 87). Bowen (2004) argues that chronic anxiety arises from the population explosion, diminishing availability of food and resources essential for sustaining human life on earth, and environmental pollution, which threatens the delicate balance necessary for human survival (Bowen 418-19). Gilbert (2004) notes that social conventions have been transformed into an “anti-family ethic”; social anxiety, which makes relationships more difficult to maintain, are two ways families are affected by social regression (*The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory* 86-87). In response to this anxiety, society tends to make decisions driven by emotions to alleviate the immediate anxiety. However, these decisions often lead to dysfunctional outcomes. Consequently, efforts to alleviate these symptoms “result in more emotional band-aid legislation,” exacerbating the underlying problem. This cyclic pattern mirrors the similar cycles observed in families experiencing emotional illness (Bowen 417).

3.3 Bowen Theory: Selected Concepts

3.3.1 Nuclear Family Emotional System

Bowen Theory emphasizes emotional dynamics in the nuclear family, consisting of parents and children, as the primary unit for understanding family relationships. This focus is significant because the topic of the study is father-daughter relationships. The extended family has no connection with the examination of the father-daughter relations. The Nuclear Family Emotional System offers a clear and focused concept for exploring the emotional and psychological dynamics of the father-daughter relationships in the selected texts.

Roberta M. Gilbert (1992) argues that the fundamental unity of emotional functioning is not the individual as believed, but the nuclear family. Many human problems originate in the family system, but the family's relationship patterns involve some family members and the whole family. Understanding the family relationship patterns can be intricate at first. It is like different individuals are emotionally entangled with each other. When one person's emotions become tense, "another person will react predictably" (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 6-7). These ongoing emotional interactions and their forms are often recognizable, becoming familiar patterns over time. In addition, the parents' original families also play a very significant role in the emotional process. Bowen found that anxiety is transmitted to the nuclear family through the passage and flow of each other's original family, and a lot of family anxiety appears to concentrate on one member. To some extent, the

progression of the “illness” is influenced by the infiltration of family anxiety. In families, emotions come and go from one person to another, even “from generation to generation” (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 6-7).

Gilbert (2004) states that “the nuclear family, rather than the individual, is the emotional unit,” which leads to a completely different, and for most, a new way of thinking, systems thinking(5). The notion that family is an emotional unit means that what influences one person also affects everyone in the system. Simply put, anxiety can quickly shift between the people in the group. Furthermore, in a family “fusion” of selves, family members exchange “self” for “the family relationship togetherness” (Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory* 5-6). In a fused family system, the emotional boundaries between family members become blurred, and individuals often prefer family unity over their emotional independence, leading to a lack of differentiation of self. This results in a scenario where personal needs, thoughts, and feelings are sacrificed because of group cohesion and creates an environment where members cannot express themselves authentically. The notion of the fusion of selves helps to explain dysfunctional father-daughter dynamics in selected Shakespearean dramas.

3.3.1.1 Anxiety

Anxiety is a significant component of the emotional system. Fundamentally, the strongest emotion is anxiety. This relative strength of anxiety emphasizes its ability to impact behavior and emotional reactions more intensely than other emotions, like anger, sadness, or joy, in the context of family dynamics.

Emotions are automatic physiologic responses. As they become conscious, they are feelings. Anxiety is automatic and mostly unconscious. Anxiety spreads among groups and between people, which is “infectious.” Where the anxiety spreads determines “the limits of the emotional system” (Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory* 6). Anxiety may be defined as an organism’s reaction to an actual or imagined threat (Kerr and Bowen 111). For example, in a family system, if one member responds anxiously to a conflict, this anxiety can spread to other members and affect their behavior and emotional reactions.

There are two distinct forms of anxiety: acute anxiety and chronic anxiety. Every day, humans encounter acute anxiety in response to many stresses, such as vehicle accidents, stock market instability, or workplace threats (Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory* 7). Bowen’s concept of “chronic anxiety” refers to a widespread and inherent phenomenon in natural systems. Bowen considers it a biological occurrence humans share with all other living forms. Chronic anxiety, in Bowen’s perspective, refers to the emotional and physical reactions that are automatic rather than controlled by the brain. It is passed down from previous generations within families cumulatively and uniquely. Different individuals within our species experience and express this anxiety more intensely due to “the way previous generations in their families have channeled the transmission of their own” (Friedman 140).

Acute anxiety is distinct from chronic anxiety. Acute anxiety usually takes place in response to actual threats and is felt to be of limited duration. People typically cope well with acute anxiety. Chronic anxiety usually occurs due to

imaginary threats and is not seen as being limited by time. Chronic anxiety is often strained or beyond the capacity of individuals to cope. Acute anxiety is nourished by fear about what is; chronic anxiety is nourished by fear of what could be. While there are innate and learned elements in both acute and chronic anxiety responses, learning plays a greater significant role in chronic anxiety. Even though “everyone experiences acute and chronic anxiety,” the difference between individuals “in the amount of chronic anxiety they experience” seems to be mainly based on “learned responses” (Kerr and Bowen 112). More precisely, it is conceived “as a system or process of actions” and responses that rapidly deliver its momentum and become largely independent from the stimuli initially triggered (Kerr and Bowen 112).

Chronic anxiety disrupts the equilibrium of emotional dynamics within a family. Increased chronic anxiety increases the emotional pressure in the family, so the individual is more likely to fuse their emotional reactions with others in the family to handle anxiety. This fusion occurs when family members become too emotionally involved and lose their sense of individuality in favor of maintaining an emotional connection or togetherness. The increased fusion relationship concerns the growing emotional enmeshment of the family members, where the thoughts and feelings are increasingly different, leading to a lack of differentiation of self. For instance, in a family where a parent is overly nervous, they can project their anxiety onto their children and lead children to adopt the emotional state of parents and view situations through the same anxiety lens, even if they are not directly involved. This fusion of emotional and intellectual systems further enhances chronic anxiety as the reactions of family members

become more reactionary and less rational. As anxiety escalates within a family system, each member instinctively attempts to alleviate their anxiety. Individuals' endeavors to alleviate their anxiety contribute to the emergence of predictable interaction patterns within families. The interactions within the family system result in the redistribution of anxiety, causing particular relationships and individuals to bear a more significant amount of family anxiety either momentarily or persistently (Kerr 110). When individuals in the family try to manage or reduce their anxiety, their actions and behaviors lead to the development of consistent, recurrent ways of interaction. These patterns of behavior may be predicted over time because people in the family respond to anxiety in some ways that affect how they communicate or act around them.

3.3.1.2 The Togetherness Fusions

Regardless of whether we try to ignore or distance ourselves from it, the family, as a significant institution, plays a crucial role in shaping various aspects of our lives, including our flaws and strengths. We owe many positive aspects of ourselves to our family, including our responses and the values we have acquired. Conversely, these same forces have contributed to developing the models we desired to be distinct, giving us difficulties (Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory* 8).

A significant aspect of human existence is influenced by the powerful togetherness force that originates from the fundamental social unit, the family. This force, in contrast to the force of individuality, naturally and instinctively brings us together as a family and emotionally defines it. The phrase “naturally

and instinctively” in the sentence means the power that works on a deep, automatic level without conscious thinking or intentional action. It unites us, assimilating a portion of each self, requiring our presence for the collective. Togetherness is a force that seeks to integrate individuals into the group when one focuses too much on individualism or self-interest, to the point where it disrupts the balance between personal autonomy and group cohesion (Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory* 8-9).

In this way, this organism, so much larger than itself, of which we are all a part, the family, is composed of “the ‘donations’ of the self from its members—parts of selves that are there more for the family than for the individual” (Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory* 9). The members “fuse” together or “lose self” into the family in automatic responses that are as old as time. This “huddling together” or flock instinct comes into play every time anxiety rises (Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory* 9). In different families, when one is upset, everybody does it, and so do the cows.

As individuals relinquish a part of self, these parts of self become “fused” together into a group self. All that remains for the individual, to be himself, is the part that has not been merged with the group. This remaining part distinguishes each as an individual self. It will vary from family to family and even from person to person within the same family (Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory* 9). This process can be observed psychologically through family dynamics, where individuals fight for autonomy because of emotional enmeshment and lack of differentiation. Highly fused families show blurred boundaries, with emotional dependence and difficulty in maintaining

individuality. Psychological fusion is manifested in behaviors like the increased need for approval, emotional reactivity, and challenges in decision-making. In literature, fusion is often described through characters that experience conflict between their personal desires and family or societal expectations. Characters can show fusion features as they navigate the tension between their identity and group pressures. Identifying fusion before it fully merges requires recognizing early signs of dependence, emotional reactivity, and struggle to maintain personal boundaries. In psychology and literature, fusion is a gradual process, and its early signs can be detected through behavior and internal conflict, which indicates a growing emotional interdependence of the individual with the group before completing the fusion.

3.3.1.3 Family Relationship Patterns

Family relationship patterns refer to the recurring emotional dynamics and behavioral interactions that develop over time in a family unit. These patterns are formed by the collective emotional processes of the family, including how members manage anxiety, communicate, and create emotional boundaries. These are often learned behaviors passed by generations that affect how family members relate to each other. Unlike conventional relations that could follow culturally or socially expected norms of interaction (such as general respect, mutual support, and communication), family relationship patterns are more deeply rooted in emotional dynamics that can strengthen or strain these connections. For instance, a family with a high level of anxiety can develop an emotional reactivity pattern where members are involved in frequent conflicts or avoid difficult conversations.

Whenever a member of the family experiences stress, it causes anxiety in everyone. Furthermore, there has been an increased intensity in the tendency towards fusions (herding instinct). Although the fusions tackle feelings of loneliness and danger, they themselves cause discomfort and heighten anxiety. Consequently, family members may try to alleviate their anxiety by adopting specific familiar postures towards each other. These postures are tangible evidence of either the integration of relationships or the dissolution of individuality into a group (stuck-togetherness). When trying to address anxiety, togetherness (or fusion) in a relationship can create anxiety itself, increasing “the overall difficulty” (Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory* 9-10). The postures mentioned are widely recognized and resemble how many other species behave in times of “danger (fight, flight, freeze and care-take)” (Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory* 9-10). Family members often accept specific positions or behaviors to alleviate anxiety and manage emotional tension that can either integrate or dissolve relationships in the family system. Integrative postures, such as supportive behaviors and collaborative problem-solving, support emotional connection and strengthen family bonds. For example, a parent who calmly assures a desperate child or family members who work together to resolve the conflict supports unity and mutual understanding. Conversely, dissolutive postures like avoidance, withdrawal, blaming, or excessive dependence signal a breakdown in emotional connections. An example is when a family member is constantly withdrawing from difficult conversations or when one member is scapegoated, creating an emotional distance and weakening the family cohesion. Over-reliance on others (e.g., a child unable to make independent decisions without parents’

approval) can also contribute to the dissolution of individual autonomy, preventing healthy differentiation and destabilizing family dynamics. These postures, whether integrative or dissolutive, are tangible evidence of the underlying emotional processes, illustrating the family system's strengthening or fragmentation of relationships. The difficulty Gilbert emphasized here is the paradox of fusion, which is intensified by the pursuit of emotional closeness to reduce anxiety. Excessive togetherness results in a loss of personal boundaries and emotional autonomy, increasing dependence and emotional reactivity in a relationship. As a result, it is difficult for individuals to manage their anxiety because the emotions of others influence them. The difficulty can be identified through signs of excessive dependence, emotional reactivity, and inability to make independent decisions, suggesting that the relationship has been too fused. This emotional entanglement increases anxiety and complicates conflict solutions.

It is well acknowledged that the postures or behaviors that individuals adopt in response to anxiety or emotional stress within relationships are automatic due to frequent and possibly everyday usage. Often, we fail to recognize our emotional and relational issues. These are emotional and responsive responses. If individuals use them briefly and alternately, switching between reactions depending on the situation, as is often the case for many, usually, no significant problems occur. According to Gilbert, when one source becomes the sole means of expressing anxiety, it becomes troublesome and "repetitive to the point where no one knows how to get out of it" (Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory* 10). There are four distinct patterns that anxiety in

relationships might manifest as: “triangling (or focused child); conflict; distance; overfunctioning/underfunctioning reciprocity (or dysfunctional spouse)” (Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory* 10)

There are four distinct patterns that anxiety in relationships might manifest as: “triangling (or focused child); conflict; distance; overfunctioning/underfunctioning reciprocity (or dysfunctional spouse)” (Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory* 10). Triangling happens when emotional tension between two individuals, usually parents, is moved to a third party, often to a child who absorbs anxiety. For instance, parents can involve their child in their disputes, which makes the child the emotional focus, which prevents the parents from solving their problems. The conflict arises when unresolved anxiety leads to recurring arguments, such as a couple repeatedly fighting for finances without dealing with deeper emotional concerns. The distance is manifested as an emotional or physical withdrawal to avoid anxiety, as can be seen when one partner avoids difficult conversations, thereby increasing emotional disconnection. Finally, overfunctioning/underfunctioning reciprocity includes one partner that assumes excessive responsibility while the other avoids it, creating an imbalance that promotes dependence and resentment. These patterns reflect automatic reactions to anxiety, which, when not solved, maintain relational dysfunction and prevent emotional resolution. The identification of these patterns is necessary to interrupt the anxiety cycle and support healthier relational dynamics.

3.3.2 Differentiation of Self

The concept of “differentiation of self” is one of the most vital concepts in the natural systems paradigm, second only to the concept of triangles. Bowen conceptualized differentiation of self as “a continuum that ranges all the way from ‘undifferentiation,’ or ego fusion, to a hypothetical complete differentiation of self from others,” which is ultimately unattainable (Roberto 12). Bowen (1966/1988, 1972/1988) notes that differentiation can be viewed as emotional maturity, although it is not directly related to “emotional health, pathology, or symptoms” (Roberto 12).

Bowen emphasized that differentiation of self is an essential goal for every family member, especially children. Differentiation of self requires people to have the awareness and ability to be independent of the family. Family Systems Theory further states that the degree of an individual’s self-differentiation depends on two factors: the degree of parental differentiation of self and the relationship between the individual and family members. In general, individuals have the same level of differentiation of self as their parents, but there are differences in the level of differentiation of self between members of the same family. Usually, children who are close to their parents tend to be less differentiated. In this case, the positive effect is that the child helps the parents reconcile their marriage in their daily life, which is good for family harmony, but such a child is poorly independent, and his or her self-awareness cannot be well developed. A person with a low level of differentiation can experience an emotional fusion, feel what the group feels,

and have insufficient interpersonal boundaries with family members. In Family Systems Theory, people with less differentiation of self are more likely to internalize the emotional conflicts and struggles of the family with these conflicts, so when the family faces misfortune or tremendous pressure, they cannot always deal with these changes and think independently and objectively. Instead, becoming anxious and depressed can have a significant impact on their healthy body and mind. For example, children not separated from the family may be more likely to blame themselves for family conflicts, such as the breakdown of their parents' marriages and emotional conflicts between siblings. Another view is that in well-differentiated families, children have a high degree of emotional separation, so they can think and act independently and have their own beliefs and values. Therefore, people with high levels of differentiation of self are more likely to keep their minds calm and clear and are less likely to make impulsive, emotional decisions when they are emotionally chaotic. Thus, well-differentiated people are more likely to find satisfaction through their efforts, while poor-differentiated people may seek approval from others (Kerr and Bowen 88-94).

Bowen (1966) introduced "a theoretical scale" (not a concrete psychometric tool) for assessing an individual's level of differentiation (Goldenberg et al. 196-97). Bowen has divided the differentiation scale (which typically refers to basic differentiation) into four operating ranges (0–25, 25–50, 50–75, 75–100) and identified some of the features of individuals in each range. Besides, he "defined some variation within the ranges" in terms of "whether people are at the high or the low end of a particular range" (Kerr and Bowen 98). The four

ranges of the scale are explained below:

0-25: Individuals in this level exhibit emotional attachment to their family and others and lead lives in a state of submergence in their thoughts and dominance of their feelings (Goldenberg et al. 197; Kerr and Bowen 98). They are characterized by persistent rumination on family and relational issues. The dominance of their feelings is observed by increased emotional reactivity and prioritizing emotional reactions before rational thinking in decision-making and behavior. Emotionally in need and highly responsive to others, sustaining long-term relationships is very challenging for individuals in this spectrum. The more significant part of life's energy goes into "loving" or "being loved," much energy is consumed in the reactivity of having failed to obtain love. There is limited energy remaining for goal-oriented activities. Attempting to attain comfort is sufficient. Their level of chronic anxiety is high, so it is hard to find situations where they can feel at ease (Kerr and Bowen 98). In this context, "energy" refers to psychological and emotional sources devoted to searching and managing love and leaves little for goal-oriented activities. "Reactivity" concerns emotional reactions to the inability to gain love, which increases anxiety and consumes emotional energy, preventing the ability to concentrate on other life objectives.

25-50: Individuals in this range are still influenced by their emotional systems and the responses of others (Goldenberg et al. 197; Kerr and Bowen 99; Bowen 218). They "have poorly defined selves" but an emerging ability to "differentiate a self" (Kerr and Bowen 99; Bowen 218). A substantial amount of

personal energy is expended on the pursuit of affection and love, leaving minimal energy for “goal-directed activity”(Goldenberg et al. 197; Kerr and Bowen 99; Bowen 218).

50 to 75: Within this spectrum, the intellectual system is sufficiently advanced to prevent the emotional system from overpowering during times of stress, and there is a reasonably well-developed “sense of self” (Goldenberg et al. 197; Kerr and Bowen 102).

75–100: Operationally, people on this scale see the difference between feeling and thinking. The relative division of emotions and thought makes life subject to “the control of deliberate thoughts” (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 191). They are “free to engage in goal-directed activity or to lose ‘self’ in the intimacy of a close relationship” (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 191). They answer little compliments or critiques and have a realistic self-assessment (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 191; Goldenberg et al. 197).

Low differentiation (0-50) is marked by emotionality, reliance on others, inability to act independently, inflexibility, attributing problems to external factors, and experiencing psychosomatic or psychotic symptoms when under stress. The individual’s capacity for logical problem-solving is diminished, with a greater emphasis on seeking stability and affection. Additionally, there is a tendency to avoid engaging in conflicts. Disruptive events tend to “cause anxiety and clinical symptoms” (Goldenberg et al. 197; Roberto 12).

Individuals who fall within the midrange differentiation (50-75) possess explicit beliefs and values about significant life matters, although they nevertheless tend to prioritize the viewpoints of others excessively. They might make some decisions driven by emotional responses stemming from their worry about receiving “disapproval from significant others” (Goldenberg et al. 197; Roberto 12).

High differentiation (75-100) is characterized by having a clear objective, strong values and beliefs, adaptability, security, independence, the ability to handle disagreement, a low degree of symptoms related to stress, a “well-defined sense of basic self and less pseudo self” (Goldenberg et al. 197; Roberto 12).

Basic self is a quality exemplified in “I” positions, which defines personal convictions, requirements, desires, and boundaries. The fundamental essence of basic self has the potential to transform, but solely within the individual, and necessitates the foundation of novel information and experience. The basic self of an individual remains unaffected by the interpersonal patterns of conduct since it is impervious to manipulation, force, endorsement, or authority (Bowen, 1972/1988). “Pseudoself” refers to a dynamic and flexible self influenced by the beliefs and values gained via interpersonal relationships. These beliefs are acquired to obtain gains from a relationship. They are subject to negotiation and are typically impacted by the stances adopted by others. Pseudoself is “the part of self that fuses in intense emotional interactions” (Roberto 12; Bowen 217).

Low differentials “are vulnerable to stress” and are more susceptible to “physical and social illness” (Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory* 186; Bowen 218). They may become chronically dysfunctional as it happens. People with a higher level of differentiation can quickly regain emotional balance after stress. People with low self-differentiation live in a world of sentiment where they cannot distinguish between emotion and fact, are keen to seek love or approval, attack others for not providing these needs, and have no energy for self-development or purpose-oriented activity. People with low differentiation lead a relationship-based life and make important “life decisions based on what feels good” (Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory* 186; Bowen 218). As a group, people with low differentiation of self are more prone to problems and poor interpersonal relationships. A new issue unexpectedly appears as they try to cope with the previous problem. When the relational balance fails, family function deteriorates, with disease or other issues. They may be too numb to sense and have no energy to seek love and acceptance. Much energy is spent on the unpleasant things of daily life (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 187-88; Bowen 218).

People with higher scores on the scale can recognize “the difference between feelings and intellect,” express their beliefs freely and peacefully, and not attack the beliefs of others for reinforcement or defense. They are entirely beyond the control of the sentiment system to choose between “intimate emotional closeness” or “goal-oriented activity” and can draw satisfaction and enjoyment from one or the other (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 189). Compared to lower-scale people, who feel themselves as the center of the

universe and either overestimate or devalue self, they have a realistic assessment of self to others (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 189).

As “a theoretical concept” for global observation of human phenomena, “the differentiation of self scale” is crucial. Its value lies in assessing people’s overall potential and predicting their overall life pattern, but not as a short-term measure from one month to the next or from one year to the next. The pseudo-self has too many situations of exchange, borrowing, and compromise within the relational system, especially among people with a low degree of differentiation, and such functional changes at the level of self that it is difficult to estimate the degree of self-differentiation “on short-term information” (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 189; Bowen 511). Most people live with the same degree of self-differentiation when they leave their parents’ families. They solidify that level in their marriage and do not have much life experience to change the basic level. Many life experiences automatically increase or decrease the level of functioning of self, but this change “can be as easily lost” as acquired (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 189).

Researchers have not widely used Bowen’s scale to investigate the degree of self-differentiation of characters in literary works. Only Alzoubi (2016) applied the scale in his dissertation, *Bowen Theory and Family Disintegration in Tennessee Williams’s Drama*. This study uses the scale of differentiation of self to classify individuals into one of the four operational ranges, allowing a nuanced analysis of self-differentiation in selected characters. It emphasizes a textual analysis guided by theoretical foundations and informed by scholarly discourse on the application of Bowen Theory to literary studies.

From the literature above, one can understand that self-differentiation plays an essential role in individual development and is a significant indicator for assessing individual physical and mental health. For poorly differentiated people, emotional needs or inherent insecurities can force them to give up developing their individuality and seek love and acceptance from others, whereas well-differentiated people are more likely to relate to their roles and identities, not only build strong relationships but also commit to achieving significant goals and accomplishments in all aspects of life. As a result, individuals who are better able to differentiate themselves may be cognitive, behavioral, and emotionally independent in the presence of other meaningful ones without losing intimacy, and they are less likely to be influenced by others to change their responses and decisions. Self-differentiation does not simply represent the rational thinking and emotional expression of individual self-functioning but also includes the degree of differentiation of the family system of origin, the degree of differentiation of interpersonal communication, and the capacity to regulate stress. As a result, this study defines differentiation of self as the ability of an individual to effectively distinguish between rational and emotional functioning, followed by self-functioning characteristics, differentiation concerning parents and other family members, and interpersonal competence. The study uses a textual analysis of the selected characters' behavior, relationships, and emotional dynamics, guided by Bowen Theory. This approach aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the self-differentiation of the characters and draw on the theoretical framework to ensure robust analysis.

3.3.3 Triangles

Triangles is another concept of great importance in Bowen Theory. The triangle is the fundamental molecular within the emotional system, “the smallest stable relationship system” (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 132; Lieberman, p. 36; Kilpatrick, 1980, p. 168). Bowen (1985), Friedman (1991), and Kerr and Bowen (1988) considered triangles as “one of the most important dynamics to assess” since they serve as the fundamental unit of family structure (Gehart 289).

The triangle consists of two individuals in a state of emotional proximity and one individual who is more detached from the group. During emotionally tense situations, assuming an external standpoint is the most favorable position regarding comfort. Individuals isolated together tend to triangle in the third person when there is an increase in tension. Families are perceived as including a series of interconnected triangles, the formation of which is contingent upon the level of “anxiety and tension” prevailing at a particular time (Lieberman 36).

As with other concepts, triangles extend from the essential “Nuclear Family Emotional System” concept. Triangles start first as “child focus.” The child focus is undoubtedly the most straightforward and most apparent triangular relationship of the emotional system (Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory* 40). One parent gets anxious, and the other parent “takes on” the anxiety. A child who is close to the parent accepts the upset, which can take place sometimes a day in all families. However, if it becomes a model, the

family ends up with an anxious child. If the anxiety lingers too long, the child will develop a symptom that will cause them to absorb more anxiety from the parents, which in turn increases the load of more anxiety on the child. The issue and intensity of anxiety have risen with time. This primitive triangle is often seen as a model for the concept of triangles.

When anxiety goes up between two people, they automatically look at a third person and, in one way or another, include this person in the situation. That triangular arrangement looks more stable. It appeared to last longer and control anxiety better than either. Triangles are omnipresent and automatically present in emotional systems. In Bowen Theory, they are considered the fundamental molecules or components of every individual's system—whether “the family, an organization, or society itself” (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 77). Triangles link all family members, and they are nearly innumerable in any large family. Triangles are attached to extended family members utilizing a set of interlocks. The family establishes links with family and organization by linking triangles to social organizations and relations (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 77).

Some triangles exhibit good health, while others do not. In the latter situation, triangles are commonly employed to cope with anxiety, wherein the tension between two individuals is projected onto another object. The initial triangle exists between a child and their parents. During times of stress, anxiety tends to extend “from one central triangle within the family to interlocking triangles outside the family,” particularly in “work and social systems” (Gladding 130).

Opinions to date on the fundamental properties of triangles can be summed up as follows: (1) A stable twosome can become unstable with the addition of a third individual. For instance, a harmonious marriage can become confrontational after a child is born. The time and energy invested in the child's presence undermine a parent's capability to maintain a balanced relationship. (2) A steady pair can become unstable if a third person is removed. For instance, spousal discord may increase after the departure of children. Once away from home, children are less likely to get involved in their parents' problems. (3) An unstable pair may be stabilized by adding another person. For instance, a conflicting marriage can become more harmonious after a child is born. Parents distance themselves from one another and concentrate on their children. (4) An unstable pair can be stabilized by removing a third. For instance, conflict between two people can be reduced if two people avoid a third person with marginalization problems in their relationship, incitement to patronage conflicts by polarizing the questions emotionally (Kerr and Bowen 136).

Triangulation levels vary from one family to the next and within one family over time. This is because the triangle is an undifferentiated product of the human process. The lower the level of differentiation in a family, the more significant the triangle is in maintaining emotional stability. If anxiety is very low, it is possible that "the three members of a triangle" operate as emotionally independent individuals, "even in a poorly differentiated family" (Kerr and Bowen 136). However, in a poorly differentiated system, the stress must be very low for this to happen. Stress leads to anxiety, and when it gets infectious,

the triangles get more active. In a highly differentiated system, people may stay apart emotionally, even under high stress. While people can retain emotional independence, the triangle is small, and the system's stability is not dependent upon it (Kerr and Bowen 137). Triangulation is a prevalent pattern in the fused family, where involvement in a triangle indicates a certain degree of undifferentiation. In other words, when triangulation increases, the level of differentiation decreases, resulting in a higher degree of involvement with the family of origin. Consequently, the process of separation becomes more complex. Leaving the family of origin does not guarantee that an individual has achieved differentiation (Becvar 145-46).

In Bowen Theory, triangles refer to emotional dynamics where a third party is connected to control or amplify the tension between two individuals. Triangles are designed when emotional tension between father and daughter is redirected through a third party, worsens, or releases conflict. They dissolve when the primary emotional conflict is resolved directly without needing a third party. This analysis helps to reveal how triangles either maintain or resolve family tension and offer insight into the dynamics of relationships between the fathers and daughters in selected Shakespearean dramas.

3.3.4 Family Projection Process

The term “family projection process” refers to the mechanisms whereby the parents and the child play an active role in transmitting parenting issues to children. To explain this “process with individual theory,” one must presume the

parental “projection” and “introjections” of the child (Bowen 137). Introjection includes the internalization of attitudes, beliefs, or values of others, especially important persons such as parents, often without conscious knowledge. This can lead to internal conflicts when personal desires encounter these internalized beliefs. For example, a daughter can internalize her mother’s expectation that academic success is the only way to get approval, leading her to prefer success at the cost of her well-being. Both processes shape the family dynamics because projection can disrupt relationships by attributing someone’s feelings to others, while introjection can create unrealistic self-expectations. Understanding these mechanisms is essential in analyzing emotional interactions in family systems and can help interrupt miscommunication and emotional distance cycles.

The parents can push the child to resist projection until they accept it. However, in most cases, the parents initiate the projection, and the child receives it. Alternatively, the child can activate the projection, forcing the parents to accept that he is the cause of the family issue. The words “blamer” and “self-blamer” depict a part of the projection process. People are divided between “blamer” and “self-blamer” in a functional axis. In a stressful situation, both sides try to find reasons for the situation. The blamer looks outside himself; his perception system is accustomed to searching for “the causes in the other or in the environment,” and he cannot look into himself. The self-blamer perceives causes in self with precision, but he has as much ability to look beyond himself “as the blamer is at looking inside of self” (Bowen 138). The *real* cause of any situation can be a combination of inner and outer factors. In theory, a mature

individual can objectively assess inner and outer factors and “*be responsible for the part self plays*” (Bowen 138). The more immature a person is, the stronger the blaming and self-blaming (Bowen 138). Goldenberg et al. (2017) note that the severity of the family projection process is determined by two factors: the parents’ level of “immaturity or differentiation” and the family’s “level of stress or anxiety” (202). In Bowen Theory, immaturity is characterized by emotional reactivity, poor self-regulation, and difficulty independently managing emotions. It can be operationalized through behaviors like frequent emotional explosions, impulsive decisions, and dependence on others for emotional validation. Blaming includes attributing responsibility for one’s problems to others rather than taking personal responsibility. It is observed in repeated verbal accusations and externalizing responsibilities for emotional anxiety. Immaturity and blaming are apparent when individuals cannot handle emotions independently or avoid responsibility for their actions. In contrast, occasional frustration or shared responsibility in resolving issues does not qualify as immaturity or blaming.

Bowen posits that the family projection process most commonly operates through the mother with the mechanism that allows her to alleviate her anxiety by directing her attention towards the kid. Factors such as the parents’ lifestyle, unexpected events that upset the family during pregnancy or around the time of birth, and unique relationships with sons or daughters have a role in determining the “selection” of the child for this process. A prevalent pattern involves one child receiving a significant amount of protection, while the involvement of other children is comparatively minimal. The child who receives

protection is typically the one most emotionally bonded to their parents and thus has a lesser level of self-differentiation. A child who grows up with minimal involvement in the family projection process may develop a higher basic differentiation level than their parents (Bowen 513).

The concept of family projection in examining father-daughter dynamics in selected Shakespearean dramas is operationalized by identifying how a father's unresolved emotional problems are projected onto his daughter, affecting their relationship. This projection is observed when fathers impose their anxiety, insecurity, or desires on their daughters and distort their sense of self. For example, in *King Lear*, Lear projects his fear of old age onto Cordelia, Goneril, and Regan. Family projection is indicated by unrealistic expectations, emotional fusion, and recurring patterns of miscommunication, where the daughter's behavior reflects the father's unresolved emotional conflicts.

3.3.5 Societal Regression

The last and eighth concept, societal regression, was already reasonably well-defined in 1972 and was eventually added as a distinct concept in 1975. In addition, the *family systems theory* was officially changed to *the Bowen Theory* in 1975 (Bowen 388).

Early evidence illustrates that when family triangles become tenser, forming interlock, family triangles will finally seek connections from "agencies, institutions, friendship systems," or the like. In the early years of Bowen's

interest in social questions, he argued that all societies have good and bad times; they still have their ups and downs, and the cyclical phenomenon of the 1950s was part of a different cycle. By the 1960s, anxiety had risen as the order of urban and university campuses disintegrated. Children have run off and hitchhike around the country. Living with drugs and irresponsible lifestyles erodes family functions and ultimately leads to disintegration. In response to these changes, Bowen added a new concept to Bowen Theory, societal regression. It means that social anxiety levels fluctuate with historical evolution. People in the age of social regression have higher levels of anxiety, which leads to more chaos and reckless behavior in society. The behavior of chaos and absence of responsibility, in turn, creates more anxiety, leads to more social problems, and increases levels of anxiety (Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory* 81-82). To observe the fluctuation of levels of social anxiety with historical development in selected works, the study analyzes how the characters' behaviors, emotional states, and reactions reflect the social norms and pressures of their historical context.

The concept of social regression stipulates that when a family experiences chronic and persistent anxiety, the family begins to lose touch with "its intellectually determined principles" and increasingly turns to emotionally determined decisions to relieve anxiety (Bowen 418). The outcome of this process is symptoms and, finally, regression to "a lower level of functioning" (Bowen 418). The societal concept presupposes that the same process exists in society; we are in a time of growing chronic social anxiety; society reacts by making emotional choices to lessen anxiety at the moment; this results in

dysfunctional symptoms; efforts have resulted in more emotional legislation, further aggravating the problem; the cycle is repeated in the same way that the family goes through similar cycles, which we call “emotional illness” (Bowen 418). Bowen’s current assumption is that chronic anxiety results from an explosion in the population, a decrease in the supply of “food and raw materials” necessary for the maintenance of human life on earth, and environmental pollution that slowly threatens the vital equilibrium essential for “human survival” (Bowen 418-19).

Bowen notes a cyclical phenomenon when social anxiety starts to increase, and degenerative behaviors may be accentuated. This period of anxiety is characterized by an unwillingness to take responsibility for the family or other organizations in society (such as the court system) when the behavior disintegrates (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 165).

Scholars have suggested that the root causes of human anxiety and social degradation include overpopulation (especially in urban areas) in the face of the fear of mass destruction by weapons, economic inequality, economic fluctuations, loss of moral principles, loss of adaptability to multicultural groups, advanced technology overwhelms the senses, the media, the “Frankfurt School,” vowed to break down Western culture and the government’s continued expansion, weakening people’s sense of responsibility and increasing taxes. Another social factor of particular interest to Murray Bowen’s student and colleague, Gilbert, is whether the “helping” professions are to blame for social degradation or have even played a negative role (Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory* 84).

The family is a component of the social system, and no family can be independent of the effects of social degradation. The ways in which the family is influenced by societal regression are changes in social morality to “an anti-family ethic” (Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory* 87); Social anxiety makes the maintenance of relationships difficult; Emerging risk factors (sex, drugs, violence) contribute to parenting difficulties; Dual-career full-time families use all their strengths and means to raise their children; As a lack of accountability has become the norm, parents have acted like legislatures by setting up various short-term measures in the hope that the problem will resolve; Due to emotional or geographic distance, the growing nuclear family is unable to access essential support resources from the extended family. In addition, the family is not a priority in society, companies, the military, enterprises, and other organizations “have moved nuclear families frequently.” Society ignores the significance of supporting and assisting nuclear families (Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory* 87).

Shakespeare wrote his famous dramas during the Renaissance, an essential period of significant social change in England. The Renaissance, emblematic of a renewed fascination with classical scholarship, burgeoning commercial endeavors, and the rise of the middle class, marked a transition from the medieval to the early modern era. England witnessed discernible shifts in power dynamics during this epoch, notably with the consolidation of authority under the Tudor monarchy, which weakened the influence wielded by feudal lords. Concurrently, this period was marked by advancements in the arts, sciences, and governance, notwithstanding the persistent challenges and

conflicts that accompanied these developments. The selected Shakespeare's plays addressed social transformation or moral chaos. In these plays, Shakespeare describes social dysfunction or conflict, providing insightful commentary on human relationships against a backdrop of changing society. Thus, based on the concept of social regression in Bowen Theory, the thesis establishes a link between the influence of the social environment and chronic anxiety and analyses the source of the conflict between the fathers and daughters in the selected dramas.

3.4 Research Methodology

The plays used for this study are *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. There are three reasons for the selection of these texts. The first reason is that the unnatural father-daughter relationship is reflected in the comedy. The second reason is that the chosen roles have a low degree of self-differentiation, and the daughters are affected by the chronic anxiety projected by their fathers. In addition, they are also affected by social regression. *Hamlet* and *King Lear* are both tragedies. *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are comedies. Thus, this allows the possibility to compare the similarities and differences of the father-daughter relationship in Shakespeare's tragedy and comedy.

To highlight the issue of father-daughter relations, the selected dramas have to be composed of characters at a low level of differentiation of self. Therefore, the research chooses Lear, Cordelia, Goneril, and Regan in *King Lear*, Hermia, and Egeus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Ophelia and Polonius in *Hamlet*,

Baptista, Katherine, and Bianca in *The Taming of the Shrew* as the selected characters.

In this thesis, the examination of father-daughter relationships in Shakespeare's plays, including *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, is primarily based on concepts of the differentiation of self, nuclear family emotional system, emotional triangle, family projection process, and societal regression in Bowen Theory. The thesis analyses the level of differentiation of self of the fathers and daughters in the selected texts. The thesis also discussed the emotional triangle that persists in the chosen characters' family of origin and the chronic anxiety projected by their parents. This is because they have a crucial impact on the characters and are the source of their lower differentiation of self. Furthermore, the concept of societal regression is also used since chronic anxiety resulting from the personal experience of societal regression might have a particular adverse effect on their levels of differentiation of self. The father-daughter relationships in the selected dramas are examined in the light of Bowen Theory through textual analysis and close reading. The analysis's relative accuracy and objectivity are ensured by applying the Bowen Theory to the characters and their relationships in selected dramas. This is achieved by grounding analysis in text evidence and Bowen's concepts (differentiation of self, nuclear family emotional system, triangles, family projection process, and societal regression).

3.4.1 Textual Analysis

This study employs textual analysis to examine the father-daughter relationships in William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Specifically, it investigates the dynamics between Lear and his daughters (Cordelia, Goneril, and Regan), the relationship between Polonius and his daughter Ophelia, the interactions among Baptista, Katherine, and Bianca, and the father-daughter relationship between Egeus and Hermia.

The focus is the selected plays: William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The findings and observations of the study are based on primary and secondary texts. Jason Bainbridge advocates the use of "primary and secondary texts" in carrying out "textual analysis" (Allen 1754). In addition to the dramas selected for analysis (primary texts), this study also references other texts that exist within the set of texts. It is insufficient to comprehend "a series of texts" without seeing changes or consistency of information "in volumes, publications, or advertisements just before or after" (Allen 1756). Looking at other texts in the series can provide a broader understanding. Thus, secondary texts such as journal articles, conference presentations, dissertations, books related to selected dramas, dysfunctional family relationships, and Bowen Theory support source texts or test findings from primary texts on the theme.

Using the societal regression concept of Bowen Theory, this study considers the culture within which the selected texts were made, trying to understand the social elements when the chosen plays were created, as these factors influence the perception of the father-daughter relationships in the plays. Textual analysis involves understanding a culture, subculture, or co-culture by interpreting one or more texts. Cultural and subculture norms affect the understanding of texts (Allen 1755). Therefore, in chapter six, social factors such as humanism, feudalism, and patriarchy during Shakespeare's time are discussed to give the reader a better comprehension of the impact of societal regression on father-daughter relations.

Besides, the study pays close attention to the type of the selected texts. The type of text under review helps the researcher understand methods of interpretation and analysis. For example, the fact that the text is anchored in "the context of a tragedy or comedy" would make it possible to interpret the same message very differently (Allen 1756).

3.4.2 Close Reading

While textual analysis has limitless benefits by uncovering the merits of a playwright's work, this study also examines the relationship between father and daughter in selected texts through a close reading integrated into the prism of textual criticism. Textual analysis is a method involving the understanding of language, symbols, and/or pictures presented in texts to obtain information on how people understand and communicate life and life experiences (Allen

1753). Beckman observes that the current literary community shows renewed interest in textual analysis by re-examining Shakespeare's plays. Close reading is also called close textual analysis. Texts are artifacts that inspire meaning. To infer such meaning requires a close reading (Allen 136). By doing a close reading analysis, "hidden themes" that have been neglected or undervalued may emerge (Allen 136). In literature, "close reading analysis served as a new manner of analyzing and interpreting" (Allen 136). This study considers the intrinsic characteristics of selected texts rather than their eternal characteristics. Close reading is a suitable method for analyzing the father-daughter relationships in the dramas, as it brings the most provocative characteristics of the plays into a more exciting relationship (Brown 184).

This study uses critical and creative thinking in close reading analysis, so both kinds of thinking co-occur. Critical thinking will benefit the critic when conducting a close reading analysis (Allen 137). Ways must be found to organize observations through close reading because "critical and creative thinking are systematic" (Allen 137). Questions such as "How does the level of self-differentiation in the father and daughter characters in the selected texts affect the father-daughter relationship? How is the father-daughter relationship impacted by the projection of the fathers' chronic anxiety onto their daughters in the selected texts? What are the manifestations of social regression in the selected plays that affect the father-daughter relationships?" are asked in the close reading.

This study connects the close reading to Bowen Theory. The word “theory” stems from the Latin “theōria”. Theories are principles of explanation for a person or a phenomenon. Theories are the basic principles that critics use to account for the function of society (Allen 137). During the close reading, Bowen Theory serves as a compass. The research begins with the theory and guides analysis with a deductive approach. Guided by Bowen Theory, which is used at various times, this study moves from subjectivity to objectivity to examine the underlying causes of the dysfunctional father-daughter relationships as reflected in selected texts.

This study examines father-daughter relationships, starting with research questions on the subject, followed by a close reading. The close reading is centered on the dysfunctional father-daughter relationship in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. The relationship between Lear, Cordelia, Goneril, and Regan is covered in *King Lear*. *Hamlet* revolves around the disrupted relationship between Ophelia and her father, Polonius. *The Taming of the Shrew* focuses on the relationship between the father, Baptista, and the daughters, Katherine and Bianca. In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, the relationship between Hermia and her father, Egeus, is highlighted. The research questions mentioned above are considered while analyzing the father-daughter relationships in the selected plays. Following a series of “themes and questions” may lead to new questions and ideas in one’s close reading (Allen 138).

The present study attempts to shed more light on the problematic father-daughter relationships from four of Shakespeare's plays through textual analysis and close reading. By using Bowen Theory to study the father-daughter relationship often overlooked in the selected plays, this research aims to provide inspiration for studying family relationships in Shakespeare and other literature.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework and methodology, concentrating on the application of Bowen Theory to analyze father-daughter relations in *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The five concepts in Bowen Theory, differentiation of self, nuclear family emotional system, triangles, family projection process, and societal regression, are used through text analysis and close reading, emphasizing the fathers and daughters in the selected texts. The analysis uses Bowen's scale to assess the level of differentiation of self of the characters and relational dynamics. The verification process ensures consistency and supporting interpretation with textual evidence and scholarly references. This method allows nuanced criticism of selected texts, guided by Bowen Theory.

CHAPTER 4

DIFFERENTIATION OF SELF AND THE FATHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIP

4.1 Introduction

The chapter analyses the level of differentiation of self of the selected characters to achieve the first research objective: to clarify how the chosen characters' level of self-differentiation affects the father-daughter relationship. The analysis in this chapter concentrates mainly on Bowen's concept of differentiation of self and applies the concept as a literary-critical tool to a reading of selected Shakespeare's plays. Differentiation of self is the cornerstone of Bowen Theory. For the purpose of this chapter, the concept will be examined in the selected plays because the father-daughter relationship is portrayed in all of these texts. Bowen's scale of differentiation of self is Bowen's unique contribution to understanding fundamental human characteristics. It can be used to analyze the extent to which people can distinguish feelings from rational thought. Bowen's scale divides the scale of self-differentiation into the profile of low levels of differentiation (0–50), the profile of midrange differentiation (50–75), the profile of high levels of differentiation (75–100) (Goldenberg et al. 197; Roberto 12). Bowen defined the characteristics of individuals within each range. Classifying the selected characters' self-differentiation level is a helpful starting point for understanding the father-daughter relation represented in the selected dramas.

This chapter consists of two primary sections and a conclusion. Each section is dedicated to the analysis of the level of differentiation of self of the selected characters of a drama chosen, i.e., *King Lear* (1604-05), *Hamlet* (1600), *The Taming of the Shrew* (1623), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1594-95). While the first two are tragedies and the latter are comedies, both highlight dysfunctional father-daughter relationships.

The self-differentiation levels of the chosen fathers and daughters in *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are low. This may be a contributing factor to their strained father-daughter connection. The chapter ends with a conclusion that presents a general overview of the findings.

4.2 Differentiation of Self

4.2.1 Differentiation of Self of Lear, Cordelia, Goneril and Regan

Lear is the most problematic member of his family's emotional system, struggling with mental and emotional dysfunctions. Lear is an imprudent monarch, and the tragedy stems from the partitioning of his kingdom. Lear's final official action before retirement was transforming his throne into an auction block. The arrogant, stubborn, and boastful Lear divides his kingdom among his daughters based on their expressions of love for him. According to Fauzi (2019), Lear, who should possess profound insight as a result of "a lifetime of mistakes," is instead simply characterized by foolishness (90).

Ibrahim (2012) believes that Lear's most "foolish yet devastating decision" is his insistence on keeping the title of King and its "prerogative rights" while relinquishing the actual responsibilities of reigning (17). Lear's decision to allocate territory and authority to his daughters demonstrates his lack of intelligence.

Lear's imprudence is further demonstrated by his vulnerability to Goneril and Regan's flattery, inability to discern Cordelia's sincere motives, and dismissal of Kent's counsel. Goneril and Regan, while carrying out the obsequious parts to which they were placed, offer elaborate displays of affection that mask their true intentions and make them seem like submissive extensions of Lear's self. Their duplicity facilitates Lear's "fantasies of self-sovereignty" (Lehnhof 112). Conversely, Cordelia declines to express her affection and submission, causing Lear to become furious. Lear gives his whole estate to Goneril and Regan, who hate him. Lear "gives nothing to Cordelia," even though she genuinely harbors affection for him (Fauzi 91). Kent, a reliable minister, acknowledges Cordelia's genuineness and boldly proclaims, "Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least" (1.1.152). Kent comprehends that splitting land and power symbolizes King Lear's loss of authority, foreshadowing tragedy. Nevertheless, Lear neglects to recognize Kent's unwavering allegiance and sagacity. The love trial reveals Lear's vulnerability to manipulation and his "irrational choices" (Sarkar 29).

These irrational actions emphasize Lear's folly in his role as a monarch. According to Kerr and Bowen, individuals within the range of 0-25 experience

a sensory environment, with those at the lower end exhibiting an extreme sensitivity to their surroundings that can result in a loss of sensation, rendering them “numb” (98). Lear’s impairment exacerbates his difficulty distinguishing between thoughts and feelings, thus classifying him in the 0-25 range on Bowen’s scale.

In addition, Lear has a profound desire for affection from his daughters, particularly Cordelia. This is consistent with Bowen’s classification of individuals with differentiation levels ranging from 0 to 25, whose most of life’s energy is directed towards pursuing love, either by loving others or by seeking to be loved. Additionally, a significant amount of energy is used in response to “the reactivity to having failed to get love” (Kerr and Bowen 98). The love contest initiated by Lear is a manifestation of his deep desire for unwavering love and complete submission from his daughters. Nevertheless, his three daughters disillusion him with their misconduct. Goneril and Regan utilize insincere compliments, while Cordelia exhibits “high pride” (Ibrahim 18). Lear conveys his affection and hopes for his unwed daughter Cordelia when he confides in Kent: “I loved her most, and thought to set my rest/On her kind nursery” (1.1.123-24). Lear’s exceedingly elevated “expectations of his daughter” and his emotions towards her must be why he decided to sever the fundamental bond of fatherhood (Pulido 12). Furthermore, Lear’s anguish stems from “his disowning of Cordelia,” exposing his reliance on the daughters and their emotional connection (Hamamra and Uebel 381). Lear’s emotional attachment to his daughters suggests his low level of self-differentiation.

Furthermore, Kerr and Bowen argue that persons between the range of 0 and 25 “experience a high level of chronic anxiety, making it challenging for them to find situations in which they can be truly comfortable” (Kerr and Bowen 98). Lear harbors the strongest affection for Cordelia and longs for her love. Nevertheless, when Cordelia is on the verge of transitioning from being a daughter to being a wife, Lear has overwhelming anxiety and fear, compelling him to take steps to interfere with her marriage. This conduct, motivated by anxiety, reaches its peak with the love test. Schafer (2010) notes that Lear’s furious response is derived from profound and unacknowledged anxiety, as evidenced by his previous portrayal of his aging self’s “crawl toward death” (1. 1. 41). Anxiety may bring about manifestations of “destructive narcissism” (Schafer, *Curse and Consequence* 1510-1511). Goneril astutely notices Lear’s heightened state of anxiety, remarking on the effects of his advanced age and his unwise decision to disown Cordelia.

You see how full of changes his age is. The observation we have made of it hath been little. He always loved our sister most, and with what poor judgment he hath now cast her off appears too grossly (1.1.288-291).

Goneril also comments, “the best and soundest of his time hath been but rash” (1.1.294-95). Lear has been plagued by anxiety for a long time in his own home, and his sudden outburst is just the result of the cumulative effects of chronic anxiety. Lear’s lack of wisdom, intense desire for affection from his daughters, and high level of anxiety suggest that his level of self-differentiation is in the 0-25 range.

Goneril and Regan's level of self-differentiation is also within the range of 0-25. Three primary reasons support this classification. Firstly, individuals at a basic level of 25 or below are deeply immersed in their emotions and "are mostly unaware of an alternative (Kerr and Bowen 98). Stephen Reid suggests that Goneril represses "her original love of her father" and harbors an intense hatred for her mother, Regan, and Lear (240). In line with Bowen Theory, individuals between 0 and 25 tend to be "complete emotional appendages of the relationship systems to which they are attached" (Kerr and Bowen 98). Goneril and Regan demonstrate heightened sensitivity to Lear's demands and recognize their father's appreciation for sweet words of affection. Consequently, they craft flattering statements to please him. Goneril claims to love her father more than "eyesight, space, and liberty" (1.1.56), attributing her love as being "no less than life; with grace, health, beauty, honour" (1.1.58). Similarly, Regan boasts about her willingness to sacrifice all happiness for her father's love. However, shortly after Lear moves into Goneril's house, she mistreats him, instructing Oswald to ignore him and claiming illness: "When he returns from hunting/ I will not speak with him. Say I am sick" (1.3. 7-8). On the other hand, Regan experiences Goneril's jealousy and harbors her anger toward her father for favoring her mother and Cordelia. Additionally, Regan expresses her "murderous wishes" toward her mother and Cordelia (Reid 240).

The second reason for categorizing Goneril and Regan within the lower range of self-differentiation is their high level of chronic anxiety, which hinders their functioning within the family system. According to Bowen, individuals in the 0-25 range exhibit "a high level of chronic anxiety" (Kerr and Bowen 98). Goneril

and Regan's chronic anxiety is evident in their words and actions toward Lear. First, Goneril and Regan engage in the love test, expressing exaggerated and unrealistic declarations of love to Lear to gain power and authority, and their deceptive behavior reflects their anxiety about securing their positions and manipulating Lear. Second, Goneril complains that Lear and his men are violent and unruly, suggesting a lack of patience with Lear's behavior. This impatience indicates their anxiety about handling Lear's arbitrary and picky disposition. Goneril warns her father about his behavior and accuses his knights of changing her court into "a riotous inn" (1.4. 222), "a tavern or a brothel" (1.4.223) rather than "a graced palace" (1.4. 224). The conduct of Lear and his followers offers Goneril a compelling reason to evaluate herself. Goneril's fundamental issue is "a certain anxiety" that she will be unable to overcome her lifelong attitude of being dominated by her "wilful, blind, and tyrannical" father (Reid 229). Third, Goneril and Regan's disrespectful treatment of Lear indicates their disrespect toward his authority and growing impatience with his actions. Their abuse of Lear reflects their anxiety about maintaining control and power in the face of his aging and declining mental state. Lastly, Goneril and Regan worry about managing a father they consider irrational and unpredictable. Goneril and Regan attribute Lear's actions to "infirmity of his age" and question his self-awareness, reflecting their anxiety about Lear's mental stability and decision-making capabilities (Sarkar 28-29). Goneril perceives her rule as a natural consequence, challenging the notion that younger generations are inherently superior. She begs her father to understand her intentions correctly, emphasizing his old age and stating that he should exercise wisdom: "As you are old and reverend, should be wise"

(1.4.218). Overall, Goneril and Regan's chronic anxiety for Lear is evident in their impatience, deceptive behavior, disrespectful behavior, and questioning of Lear's state of mind. Their actions and words convey their fears and insecurities in maintaining power and authority in the face of Lear's aging and changing behavior.

The third reason for placing Goneril and Regan in the lower self-differentiation range is their extreme selfishness, as they resort to attacking their father and others to consolidate their power. Bowen states that individuals with a self at the 0-25 level have poorly developed senses of self, often limited to "narcissistic pronouncements" such as "I want, I hurt, I want my rights" (Kerr and Bowen 98). Under enough stress, "very poorly differentiated people" may "murderously strike out at others," especially those they depend on the most (Kerr and Bowen 98). Both Goneril and Regan compete against each other "for the sake of their own kingdom," engaging in displays of power, stating "psywars," and issuing threats (Fauzi 9). After gaining control of their father's land and power, they suppress Lear. Overthrowing "the hierarchical structure," they launch attacks against their father and other men in positions of power, determined to dominate and "reduce them to inferiors" (Dreher 106). Regan cruelly orders Kent to remain in the stocks "till night" and throughout the night (2.2.137). When they capture Gloucester, Goneril sadistically suggests plucking out his eyes. Regan "remains behind to accomplish this heartless deed" (Dreher 106).

In summary, Goneril and Regan are deeply immersed in a world of affection. They suppress their feelings and harbor profound hatred and hostility toward their father and Cordelia. Their anxiety levels are high, and they exhibit extreme selfishness by attacking one another, their father, and others. They disrupt the traditional notion of daughters' obedience, with Goneril boldly expressing her unwillingness to endure her father's wrongdoing: "By day and night he wrongs me. Every hour/ He flashes into one gross crime or other/ That sets us all at odds. I'll not endure it" (1.3.3-5). Despite Shakespeare's potentially exaggerated portrayal of Goneril and Regan, it effectively highlights their low level of self-differentiation.

Cordelia possesses a slightly higher degree of self-differentiation than Lear, Goneril, and Regan. Kerr and Bowen (1988) note that individuals in the range of 25-50 have "poorly defined selves but a budding capacity to differentiate" (99). Cordelia exhibits a combination of slight silliness, moderate reason, and chronic anxiety. Cordelia's level of self-differentiation falls within the range of 25-50.

First and foremost, Cordelia exhibits a certain degree of anxiety. When Lear tests the love of her daughters for the first time, Goneril and Regan boast about their love for Lear, while Cordelia chooses to remain silent, stating, "What shall Cordelia speak? Love and be silent" (1.1.62). Cordelia is aware that her words are not as flattering as those of her sisters, causing her to feel nervous. She hopes that her father will perceive the truth behind her silence and comments aside, "I am sure my love's/ More ponderous than my tongue" (1.1.77-78). These expressions reflect Cordelia's transient "emotional state of

anxiety” (Kour 112). Her love for her father must have been mixed with grief and anxiety (Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth* 277). Cordelia fears her father will be displeased by her straightforward words, but she insists on remaining silent.

Additionally, Cordelia exhibits a certain degree of foolishness. She should have better understood the temperament and personalities of her father and two sisters. Cordelia understands that openly expressing her true thoughts to her father would make him unhappy and possibly even angry. However, she chooses to tell the truth, putting him in an awkward position. Cordelia realizes that once her sisters acquire land and power, they will mistreat their father and leave him homeless. Furthermore, Cordelia informs her father that she will give half her love to her future husband, which is unwise. Greenfield (1977) notes that due to her “poor judgment or weak spirit,” Cordelia is satisfied with presenting herself to her father as a vague idea of a woman whose virtue lies in the fact that she is merely half her father’s daughter and half her husband’s wife (48). At that moment, Cordelia has no husband, so the idea of reserving half of her love does not apply. Cordelia fails to distinguish between familial love and romantic love. Familial love pertains to natural or instinctive affection, such as the love between parents and children (Yarber et al. 228). Romantic love, on the other hand, involves “intense attraction” within an “erotic context,” with the expectation of lasting for an extended period (Jankowiak and Fischer 150). While both types of love coexist, they are distinct forms of love. However, Cordelia fails to comprehend this distinction, believing that the more she loves her father, the less love she can give her husband. This demonstrates that Cordelia’s level of self-differentiation is not high.

Based on Bowen's scale of self-differentiation, Cordelia falls within the 25-50 range. Apart from being able to differentiate her thoughts and feelings moderately, Cordelia is not wholly driven by the lower range of emotions (0-25) like Lear. Cordelia's emotional nature aligns with the traits described in Bowen Theory, where individuals in the 25-50 scale segment reside in "a feeling-dominated world" (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 188). After discovering that her father has been expelled from the house by her sisters and left to wander in the wilderness, Cordelia decides to go back to England to seek justice for him. She believes her sisters will be captured once her commanding army arrives in England. However, Cordelia fails to consider the factors essential for victory in war, such as justice, combat purpose, strategic and tactical insight, exceptional military leadership, excellent troops, and noble combat convictions. Cordelia remains oblivious to her position as the Queen of France, and her army is not Lear's royal guard but the French army. Consequently, her expedition turns into a French invasion of British territory, arousing anger among British citizens. As Albany states,

Where I could not be honest,
I never yet was valiant.
For this business,
It touches us as France invades our land,
Not bolds the King, with others whom,
I fear, Most just and heavy causes make oppose (5.1.24-28).

Cordelia's emotional attachment has transformed a family's internal conflict into aggression against her homeland, resulting in a disastrous failure. While Cordelia's actions are motivated by her feelings for her father, she sometimes demonstrates rationality and a certain level of self-awareness. Cordelia can

differentiate herself to some extent and exhibits characteristics of individuals in the 25-50 segment of Bowen's scale, who possess a reduced "fusion of self" and an "increasing capacity to differentiate a self" (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 188). In the love test, Cordelia, whom Lear most loved, could have said sweet words that her father liked and inherited the most property. However, Cordelia insists that her silent love is worth more than flattery. Lear was furious and severed the father-daughter relationship with her. Nevertheless, with her remarkable "self-awareness," Cordelia knows what she is doing and understands Lear's anger and cruelty (Schafer, *Cordelia, Lear, and Forgiveness* 399). She does not resent her father's contempt for the father-daughter relationship. Cordelia firmly believes in her vision of love. Her silence reflects her ability to differentiate herself. It is clear that Cordelia stays true to herself and does not stray from her principles, regardless of her father's wrath. Her beliefs are ingrained in her character and cannot be changed. This aligns with the pertinent assertions presented in Bowen Theory. Individuals at the higher end of the 25-50 range on the Bowen scale have some understanding of "intellectual principles" (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 188). Cordelia understands her sisters' true nature and recognizes the underlying motives behind their flattery. In Act I, Scene I, as Cordelia prepares to leave, she says to her sisters: "Love well our father. / to your professèd bosoms I commit him" (1.1.270-71). Cordelia does not condemn the hypocrisy of the sisters but attempts to persuade them. This demonstrates that Cordelia's level of self-differentiation is between 25 and 50.

According to Bowen's scale, individuals whose levels of differentiation of self are between 25 and 50 possess a heightened sensitivity towards emotional discord, the perspectives of others, and the need to make "a good impression" (Kerr and Bowen 98). Cordelia's impression is "emphatically one of unity" (Danby 133). Cordelia seems to "reconcile opposites: passion and order, innocence and maturity, defenselessness and strength" (Danby 133). For instance, upon discovering her sisters' mistreatment of Lear, Cordelia strives for justice on her father's behalf, ultimately sacrificing her life for him. These actions reveal Cordelia's kind-hearted and righteous nature and her capacity for self-differentiation to some extent.

Cordelia's blend of foolishness and reason indicates her ability to distinguish between her thoughts and feelings. While Cordelia can be perceived as silly, anxious, and emotional, she is not irrational. Her actions are often guided by reason, even in adversity. Despite her father's rebuke and expulsion, Cordelia maintains her dignity and reason, avoiding sinking into irreparable pain and sorrow. Instead, she expresses her love for her father through her words: "O my dear father, Restoration hang/ Thy medicine on my lips, and let this kiss/ Repair those violent harms that my two sisters/ Have in thy reverence made!" (4.6.23-26). These statements and behaviors indicate that Cordelia's level of self-differentiation falls within the range of 25 to 50.

4.2.2 Differentiation of Self of Polonius and Ophelia

In *Hamlet*, Polonius, the Lord, has a poorly defined self yet demonstrates a growing ability to differentiate. According to Michael E. Kerr and Murray Bowen

(1998), individuals within the range of 25–50 on Bowen's scale are characterized by individuals lacking their own beliefs and convictions, readily adapting to the dominant ideology, and seeking external authorities to validate their positions in life (99). Polonius falls within this range. After Claudius ascends to the throne, Polonius swiftly aligns himself with the new king. He dutifully carries out Claudius's orders and shares his concerns, thus establishing himself as a successful minister. Lott (1968) notes that Polonius holds a prominent place and earns the esteem of Claudius and Gertrude. However, his simplistic outlook on life, his stubbornness in holding onto his beliefs, and his constant interference in other people's matters ultimately lead to "his downfall" (Lott iv).

Despite Polonius's being driven by his feelings towards Ophelia, he demonstrates moments of reason and self-awareness. Lott (1968) contends that Polonius is wise, recognizing that Prince Hamlet's passion exceeds an average man's, making it necessary to be cautious of his advances toward Ophelia (liv). As a father to Ophelia and Laertes, Polonius imparts his life philosophy and offers them guidance. Polonius starts with the love of the most disturbing girl, telling Ophelia that a man's heart is sinister:

For Lord Hamlet,
Believe so much in him, that he is young,
And with a larger tether may he walk
Than may be given you. In few, Ophelia,
Do not believe his vows, for they are brokers,
Not of the dye which their investments show,

But mere implorators of unholy suits
Breathing like sanctified and pious bawds
The better to beguile (1.3.123–131).

Additionally, Polonius advises his son Laertes to study in France, away from Denmark's volatile political climate. When bidding his son farewell, Polonius imparts his son with life wisdom regarding friendships, conduct, and lifestyle choices. These examples illustrate that Polonius is a skilled courtier, a wise father, and a person with a certain level of self-differentiation.

Kerr and Bowen contend that individuals in the 35–40 range are sensitive to “emotional disharmony” and others’ opinions and try to create a favorable impression (100). They are proficient observers of “facial expression, gestures, tone of voice” and acts that may indicate acceptance or disapproval (Kerr and Bowen 100). In line with this, Polonius employs gentle persuasion when advising Ophelia to distance herself from Hamlet. He warns her not to believe Hamlet’s flattering words: “These blazes, daughter, / Giving more light than heat, extinct in both/ Even in their promise as it is a-making, / You must not take for fire” (1.3.117-20). He also encourages her to maintain a reserved demeanor: “Set your entreatments at a higher rate/ Than a command to parley” (1.3.122-123). Polonius employs a gentle tone to indirectly convey that Hamlet’s love is deceptive and should not be taken seriously, emphasizing the importance of aligning words and actions. Rather than resorting to harsh discipline, Polonius comforts his daughter with kind and gentle words, showcasing his low level of differentiation of self.

However, while Polonius demonstrates reason at times, he also exhibits moments of foolishness. Polonius disregarded the king's suspicious nature and flattered him: "assure you, my good liege, / I hold my duty, as I hold my soul, / Both to my God and to my gracious King" (2.2.43–45). To please Claudius, he actively investigates the cause of Hamlet's madness, wrongly attributing it to his daughter's rejection. At the same time, Queen Gertrude reveals the valid reason: "I doubt it is no other but the main —/ His father's death and our o'er-hasty marriage" (2.2.56–57). Polonius manipulates his daughter, using her as bait and even offering his head and position a guarantee to support his idea, relying on his experience to understand the youth's emotional issues. Unwittingly, he becomes entangled in the web of royal intrigues. Hamlet, however, sees through Polonius' motives and drops hints to him on three occasions. The first comes when Hamlet refers to Polonius as a "fishmonger" (2.2.175, 189), implying that he should protect Ophelia from scandalous situations. The term "fishmonger" is used to suggest "the smell of corruption" associated with Polonius, who has been bragging about his cleverness (Spenser 251). The second hint references Jephthah, who sacrificed his daughter, and cautions Polonius about the potential consequences of his actions: "O Jephthah, judge of Israel, what a treasure hadst thou" (2.2.404). Last, Hamlet instructs Ophelia to confine Polonius within his house, indicating that he suspects someone is spying on him. Although Ophelia lies about Polonius's whereabouts due to his eavesdropping, Hamlet's suspicions persist, and Hamlet warns against Polonius' involvement: "Let the doors be shut upon him, that he may play the fool nowhere but in's own house" (3.1.134-35). Hamlet's astute observations and warnings reveal his awareness

of Polonius' intentions. Unfortunately, Polonius fails to grasp these hints and meets his demise at Hamlet's hand. Hamlet depicts him as one of "these tedious old fools" (2.2.220). According to Kerr and Bowen, individuals in the lower part of the range of 25-50 are "fairly typical no-selves who have many of the characteristics of people lower on the scale" (Kerr and Bowen 99). Therefore, Polonius's level of self-differentiation is within this range.

Ophelia's level of self-differentiation is lower than Polonius's, ranging from 0 to 25. Bowen suggests that individuals with a level of 25 or below are so consumed by their emotions that they often disregard an alternative. They make crucial life decisions based solely on "what feels right" (Kerr and Bowen 98). Ophelia's self-differentiation falls within this range since she struggles to differentiate between her feelings and thoughts, leading her to rely entirely on her emotions when functioning within the family system. Additionally, Ophelia lives in "a world of dumb ideas and feelings" (Gordon 56). She experiences profound role confusion, suppressing her personal feelings to conform to external expectations. Ophelia exhibits a robust emotional dependence on Hamlet. Despite following the advice of her father and brother to distance herself from Hamlet, she has little influence over him. When Hamlet learns the truth of the conspiracy and bids farewell to love, he inflicts the first blow on Ophelia. Polonius, believing he understands the prince's foolishness, uses his daughter to manipulate him. Hamlet, driven to madness, denies ever loving Ophelia and repeatedly urges her to "a nunnery" (3.1.123, 132, 139, 142, 152). He even insults her, saying, "Or if thou wilt needs marry, marry a fool; for wise men know well enough what monsters you make of them" (3.1.140–42).

Ophelia is profoundly saddened and despairing due to Hamlet's madness, and she laments:

That sucked the honey of his music vows,
Now see that noble and most sovereign reason
Like sweet bells jangled out of tune and harsh;
That unmatched form and feature of blown youth
Blasted with ecstasy. O woe is me,
T'have seen what I have seen, see what I see! (3.1.159-64).

Ophelia's grief echoes Hamlet's, making her his shadow and scapegoat. Furthermore, according to Kerr and Bowen, individuals with a basic level of self-differentiation at 25 or below are excessively "responsive to others' opinions" and desires, leading to their functioning predominantly governed by "emotional reactions to the environment" (98). In the play, Ophelia lacks determination in the presence of Polonius and fails to express her personal opinions. She strives to be a dutiful daughter who obeys her father. Although she disagrees with her father's ideas, she chooses obedience to avoid conflict and maintain emotional closeness with him. This characteristic is typical of individuals with low levels of self-differentiation. In a "poorly differentiated family," emotional and subjective factors strongly influence family dynamics, preventing children from developing independent thinking, feeling, and acting (Kerr and Bowen 94). Children in such families operate "in reaction to others" (Kerr and Bowen 94).

Ophelia's obedience is reflected in her compliance with Polonius, Laertes, and Hamlet. From a young age, Ophelia has been entirely obedient to her father and remains "ready to obey him blindly" (Lott Lix). Polonius orchestrates a meeting between Ophelia and Hamlet to determine if his love for her is genuine. Ophelia is completely docile during this encounter. Although she has two unconscious arguments against Polonius's reprimands and warnings, she perceives them as significant and delicate. Upon receiving a severe rebuke from her father, Ophelia becomes submissive. In Act One, Scene Three, Polonius instructs Ophelia to take better care of herself and value herself more highly: "Marry, I'll teach you: think yourself a baby/ That you have ta'en his tenders for true pay, / Which are not sterling. Tender yourself more dearly" (1.3.105-07).

Ophelia confesses her love for Hamlet and believes his affection to be sincere when she says, "My lord, he hath importuned me with love/ In honourable fashion" (1.3.110–11). She adds, "And hath given countenance to his speech, my lord, / With all the vows of heaven" (1.3.113–14). However, Polonius insists that Hamlet's enthusiasm is merely temporary, dismissing his passion as that of a passionate prince toying with an innocent girl.

Despite hearing these insulting words directed at Hamlet, Ophelia shows no anger and refrains from refuting them. The most striking instance of her compliance occurs when Polonius rudely demands that she end her relationship with Hamlet, and she meekly agrees, saying,

I would not, in plain terms, from this time forth
Have you so slander any moment leisure
As to give words or talk with the Lord Hamlet.
Look to't, I charge you. Come your ways (1.3.132–35).

Ophelia calmly and unhesitatingly follows her father's commands, stating, "I shall obey, my lord" (1.3.136). She even rejects Hamlet's letters and denies him access to her (2.1.110). Ophelia possesses no independent thoughts and complies with every arrangement made by her father.

Additionally, Ophelia exhibits great obedience toward her brother, Laertes. Before Laertes departs for France, he speculates about the prince's feelings toward his sister, approaching the matter with the discerning mind of a young man:

Perhaps he loves you now,
And now no soil nor cautel doth besmirch
The virtue of his will; but you must fear,
His greatness weighed, his will is not his own,
For he himself is subject to his birth (1.3.14–18).

Ophelia obediently responds, "I shall th'effect of this good lesson keep/ As watchman to my heart" (1.3. 45–46). Ophelia's subordination to Hamlet is also evident in the play. She is portrayed as innocent, young, and full of aspirations for love. Deeply in love with Hamlet, she obediently follows his commands. The play includes a scene in which Hamlet teases Ophelia, saying, "Lady, shall I

lie in your lap" (3.2.107). Initially, Ophelia rejects his advances, responding with, "No, my lord" (3.2.108). However, when Hamlet clarifies, "I mean, my head upon your lap" (3.2.109), Ophelia agrees, saying, "Ay, my lord" (3.2.110). In the presence of her father, brother, and lover, Ophelia assumes a docile and submissive role, which indicates her low level of differentiation of self.

Kerr and Bowen also say that "the lack of self is usually manifested in being complete emotional appendages of the relationship systems to which they are attached" (98). Ophelia's love for Hamlet is so strong that she becomes an appendage. Claudius and Polonius employ her as a means of covertly observing Hamlet. She displayed a lack of assertiveness, complied with their wishes, and ultimately ruined her love for Hamlet. Ophelia's esteemed father is revealed to have been killed by her cherished lover, Hamlet. Ophelia experiences profound anguish due to Hamlet's use of sarcasm and his lack of concern. Furthermore, the death of Polonius shatters her emotional well-being. Ophelia lacks emotional independence and does not aspire to achievement other than love. The existence of love sustains her life, but its absence inflicts misery upon her.

Ophelia, having lost Hamlet's love and experiencing the accidental murder of her father, develops schizophrenia. Ophelia undergoes considerable stress and trauma throughout the play, including the death of her father, Polonius, and the rejection of Hamlet. Trauma and stress are factors that can trigger or exacerbate schizophrenia. Bowen Theory holds that the family can be precisely conceptualized as "an emotional unit" in which family members

function reciprocally in their relationships with each other (Kerr and Bowen 10). Children with schizophrenia often feel weak and vulnerable because of their parents' overreaching behavior. Ophelia's family, especially her relationship with her father, Polonius, may play a role in her emotional distress. In *Hamlet*, Polonius is portrayed as oppressive and controlling. According to Bowen Theory, family members can influence each other's emotional states. Polonius instructs Ophelia to be obedient and interferes with her love life. Living under Polonius' control, Ophelia gradually grows weaker, becoming schizophrenic. Ophelia's schizophrenia is evident in her songs, gestures, and words.

Firstly, Ophelia's schizophrenia is marked by her erratic behavior, including singing nonsensical songs. These behaviors are consistent with delusions and disorganized thinking often associated with schizophrenia. Her songs reflect her grief over losing her father and the loss of Hamlet's love. For example, the lines "How should I your true love know/ From another one? —/ By his cockle hat and staff,/ And his sandal shoon" (4.5.23-26) express one of the reasons behind Ophelia's insanity: the loss of Hamlet's love. Ophelia appears troubled by her father's death and Hamlet's distance from her, but she seems to have confused her father's and lover's identities. It cannot be claimed that Ophelia definitively learns of Hamlet's involvement in Polonius's murder. Ophelia sings about losing her virginity: "Then up he rose, and donned his clothes, / And dugged the chamber door;/ Let in the maid, that out a maid/ Never departed more" (4.5.51-54). She also remarks, "Young men will do' t if they come to' t, / By Cock, they are to blame" (4.5.60-61). Additionally, the lines "He is dead and gone, lady, / He is dead and gone. / At his head a grass-green turf, / At his

heels a stone" (4.5.29-32) reveal another reason for Ophelia's descent into madness: the death of her father. These two reasons are sometimes merged in her song: "White his shroud as the mountain snow" (4.5.35) and "Larded with sweet flowers, / Which bewept to the grave did — not — go/ With true-love showers" (4.5.37-39).

Secondly, Ophelia's mental illness is evident in her gestures and words. Her restlessness, agitation, changes in direction, and nonverbal cues such as "winks and nods and gestures" (4.5.11) demonstrate that lunacy is manifested via words and body (McEvoy, *William Shakespeare's Hamlet* 69). Ophelia "speaks much of her father, says she hears/ There's tricks i' th' world, and hems, and beats her heart, / Spurns enviously at straws, speaks things in doubt/ That carry but half sense" (4.5.4-7).

Lastly, Ophelia's speech is fragmented and incoherent in her mad scenes. Her disorganized communication is like the erratic thinking exhibited by individuals with schizophrenia. Ophelia's madness is also portrayed through "fragmented, communal, and thematically coherent quoted discourse" (McEvoy, *William Shakespeare's Hamlet* 68). For instance, when Ophelia asks, "Where is the beauteous majesty of Denmark?" (4.5.21), it becomes clear that she confuses the king and Queen (Spenser 311-12). When Gertrude enquires about the meaning of Ophelia's song, Ophelia responds with, "Say you? Nay, pray you, mark" (4.5.28), indicating her madness and insensitivity to those around her. When Claudius asks, "How do ye, pretty lady?" (4.5.40), she replies with, "Well, God'ield you! They say the owl was a baker's daughter. Lord, we know what

we are, but know not what we may be. God be at your table!" (4.5.41-43). Horatio describes her like this: "She is importunate, / Indeed distraught. Her mood will needs be pitied" (4.5.2-3). This might refer to a "folk-tale" here: Christ, when begging, asked a baker's daughter for bread, but she refused, leading Christ to transform her into an owl. This reference signifies a change in status. Ophelia suggests that although she has changed, her situation is not as wretched as that of the baker's daughter (Spenser 312-13). In this way, Shakespeare depicts Ophelia's folly, rendering her words meaningless. Furthermore, Ophelia's farewell, "Goodnight, ladies" (4.5.70), indicates her insanity. Unless the Queen has "attendants," she is the only female present (Spenser 313). Using the plural "ladies," Ophelia demonstrates her confusion and blurs gender boundaries. Claudius notes that Ophelia is "divided from herself and her fair judgement" (4.5.83). Laertes' statement, "A document in madness—thoughts and remembrance fitted" (4.5.177-78), further emphasizes her madness.

In the end, Ophelia kills herself in the stream. There has not been a clear critical consensus on Ophelia's death. Some argue that Ophelia's death can be both accidental and intentional. Barbara Smith (2008), for instance, notes that Ophelia performs "an unconscious death wish" and that she accepts her situation and decides, either logically or impulsively, to let herself die rather than trying to stop herself from drowning (106). Other critics interpret Ophelia's death as suicide. Leverenz (1978) argues that Ophelia's suicide can be seen as a reflection of the male world's rejection of the female, as "woman" represents what reasonable men deny (303). Higonnet (1985) states that

Ophelia's "suicidal solution" is related to a disintegration of the self, a fragmentation that results in emotional drowning (106). Coursen and College (1978) suggest that Ophelia's suicide may be understood through the lens of baptism (29). Norton (2018) argued that the only valid excuse for Ophelia's suicide was "evidence of madness" (203). Wilson (2019) also suggests, "Ophelia dies off-stage, committing suicide by drowning herself" (1). The study strongly believes Ophelia died of suicide. Ophelia, having lost both her lover and her father, suffers anguish greatly. This suffering leads to her wallowing into madness, ultimately resulting in her drowning:

Clamb'ring to hang, an envious sliver broke,
When down the weedy trophies and herself
Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide,
And mermaid-like a while they bore her up;
Which time she chanted snatches of old tunes,
As one incapable of her own distress,
Or like a creature native and endued
Unto that element. But long it could not be
Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,
Pulled the poor wretch from her melodious lay
To muddy death (4.7. 145-55).

These lines from the Queen depict only the scene of Ophelia's death. There is no explicit evidence that Ophelia takes her own life here. However, the First Clown's and the Second Clown's words indicate that Ophelia died by suicide. The First Clown suggests that Ophelia intentionally drowned herself: "she drowned herself/ wittingly" (5.1.12-13). The Second Clown even implies, "If this

had not/ been a gentlewoman, she should have been buried/ out o' Christian burial" (5.1.23-25). The first Clown further states: "Why, there thou sayst; and the more pity/ that great folk should have count' nance in this world/ to drown or hang themselves more than their even/ Christian" (5.1.26-29). Based on these lines, it can be inferred that Ophelia's death was a result of her intentional act of taking her own life. According to the church's rules, Ophelia "should in ground unsanctified have lodged" (5.1.223), and "shards, flints, and pebbles should be thrown on her" (5.1.225). However, Ophelia is granted "her virgin rites, / Her maiden strewments, and the bringing home/ Of bell and burial" (5.1.226-28).

Based on the analysis above, it is evident that Ophelia has a low level of self-differentiation, falling between 0 and 25. According to Kerr and Bowen, individuals who score between 0 and 25 on the self-differentiation scale may lead relatively successful lives until their relationship system is disrupted through events such as death or divorce, causing them to experience permanent impairment (Kerr and Bowen 99). Initially, the innocent Ophelia leads a happy and peaceful life. The passionate pursuit of Hamlet ignites the flame of love in her heart. Unfortunately, the prince's madness and rejection turn Ophelia's sweet love into disappointment and sorrow. Ophelia also suffers a severe blow with her father's death. Furthermore, according to Kerr and Bowen, "hard-core schizophrenic people come from the 0-10 range of differentiation," and "chronic schizophrenic people who lead somewhat productive lives have a little more differentiation" (99). Ophelia descends into a state of insanity, expressing nonsensical speech, ultimately taking her own

life in the stream. These instances highlight Ophelia's low level of self-differentiation.

4.2.3 Differentiation of Self of Baptista, Katherine and Bianca

Baptista's level of self-differentiation falls within the range of 25 to 50. Three reasons support this claim. First, despite his desire for his daughters' success and happiness, Baptista interferes in Katherine and Bianca's lives, treating them as possessions, indicating his level of self-differentiation (25-50). Based on Bowen Theory, individuals between the ranges of 25 and 50 tend to embrace perspectives that align with their emotional characteristics. They rely on external authorities, such as "cultural values, religion, philosophy, the law, rule books, science, physicians, and other sources to support their position in life" (Kerr and Bowen 99-100). Even though Bianca is favored by her father, she is still treated as his property. When two suitors, Gremio and Tranio, compete for her, Baptista states, "'Tis deeds must win the prize, and he of both/ That can assure my daughter greatest dower/ Shall have my Bianca's love" (2.1.338-340). Baptista disregards Bianca's feelings and love, and he even sets her wedding date without her knowledge: "Now, on the Sunday following shall/ Bianca/ Be bride to you, if you make this assurance; / If not, to Signor Gremio" (2.1.391-94). The daughter is seen as the father's possession, allowing Baptista to determine her marriage partner. Furthermore, when Baptista discovers Bianca's love for Lucentio, his primary concern remains the dowry: "That like a father you will deal with him/ And pass my daughter a sufficient dower, / The match is made, and all is done" (4.4.43-45). Baptista

treats Bianca as a commodity and her marriage as a business transaction. Baptista considers Bianca a valuable asset, while Katherine is viewed as priceless. The strained relationship between father and daughter is evident in Baptista's rebuke of Katherine: "For shame, thou hilding of a devilish spirit" (2.1.26). Baptista never demonstrates the care and love expected from a father towards his daughter, believing that having such a sharp-tongued daughter brings disgrace upon him. He tells Petruchio, "She is not for your turn, the more my grief" (2.1.63). Katherine is a fragile daughter who can only weep when her father compels her to marry Petruchio. However, her tears receive no sympathy from Baptista, who instead remarks, "Go, girl. I cannot blame thee now to weep. / For such an injury would vex a very saint, / Much more a shrew of thy impatient humour" (3.2.27-29).

Additionally, Baptista firmly adheres to patriarchal ideology. Kerr and Bowen assert that individuals with a self-differentiation level between 25 and 50 quickly adapt to the prevailing ideology due to their lack of personal beliefs and convictions (99). During Shakespeare's time, "those in authority—parents or guardians of minor children and masters of servants—had to give formal consent to the marriage of their charges" (Cook 69). Moreover, "in some cases, offspring become equated with property, to be disposed of at the owner's pleasure" (Cook 72). Baptista treats his daughters as his property in the play and exercises control over their marriages. To ensure the smooth marriage of his sharp and headstrong eldest daughter, he willingly promises a substantial dowry: "After my death the one half of my lands, / And in possession twenty thousand crowns" (2.1.121-22). He even decides to profit from Bianca's suitors by demanding the highest dowry as the condition for marriage: "That like a

father you will deal with him/ And pass my daughter a sufficient dower, / The match is made, and all is done” (4.3.43-45). Baptista’s manipulation of his daughters’ marital prospects indicates his low level of differentiation of self.

However, Baptista demonstrates a certain degree of self-differentiation. Individuals with a self-differentiation level ranging from 25 to 50 possess an undefined sense of self but develop a certain degree of self-differentiation (Kerr and Bowen 99). Hardin Craig supports the conventional critical consensus by explaining Baptista’s insistence on Bianca remaining unmarried until Katherine is wed: “Baptista does not want Katherine left on his hands” (155). From the play’s outset, it becomes clear that finding a suitor for Katherine is difficult. Neither Gremio nor Hortensio is willing to marry her but instead seeks to find someone else to marry her—anyone who would “thoroughly woo her, wed her, and bed her, and rid the house of her” (1.1.135-36). Hence, Baptista’s decision to marry off Katherine first proves to be a wise choice (Stetner 225). Baptista’s intelligence is further demonstrated when he says, “If either of you both love Katherine, / Because I know you well and love you well/ Leave shall you have to court her at your pleasure” (1.1.52-54). Baptista extends an invitation to court Katherine to Gremio and Hortensio, who had just besieged him, to permit them to court Bianca. Baptista confidently advances the offer, fully aware that neither intends to pursue it. When they persist in seeking permission to court Bianca, he resolutely reaffirms his decision to deny all suitors access to his youngest daughter (Stetner 234). Therefore, Baptista’s level of self-differentiation falls within the range of 25-50 on Bowen’s scale.

Katherine's degree of self-differentiation is slightly inferior to Baptista's. Katherine's anxiety, thirst for love, aggressiveness, vulnerability, and emotional imbalance indicate her level of self-differentiation on a scale of 0-25. Firstly, Katherine exhibits a high level of anxiety, which impacts her ability to differentiate herself within the family system. Baptista's preference for Bianca further intensifies Katherine's anxiety, as evident in his words: "And not it not displease thee, good Bianca, / For I will love thee ne'er the less, my girl" (1.1.76-77). Baptista openly expresses his preference for Bianca, which causes Katherine distress. She fears being neglected by her father due to his favoritism towards Bianca, which leads to her anxiety about never getting married and living a miserable life without a husband.

Secondly, Katherine yearns intensely for her father's affection, which aligns with the traits in individuals ranging from 0 to 25. According to Kerr and Bowen, individuals with a self-differentiation level between 0 and 25 often devote a significant amount of their energy to "loving" or "being loved," and they react strongly to the absence of love (Kerr and Bowen 98). Katherine's rebellious behavior, disregard for her father's words, and intimidation of her sister stem from her resentment towards her father's favoritism: "What, will you not suffer me? Nay, now I see/ She is your treasure, she must have a husband. / I must dance barefoot on her wedding day, / And for your love to her lead apes in hell" (2.1.31-36). Katherine's words and actions reveal her deep longing for paternal affection.

Thirdly, Katherine's aggressiveness indicates her low level of self-differentiation. According to Bowen Theory, individuals with very poor differentiation, when under sufficient stress, may resort to violent behavior, particularly towards those on whom they depend the most (98). While Katherine is often labeled as "curst shrew," she also possesses the ability to display cruelty (Felheim and Traci 107). Katherine is a young woman who consistently speaks her mind and fearlessly exhibits aggression and coarseness when necessary. She desires a husband, but not the one approved by her father (McEvoy, 2000 129; Sangeetha 111). Katherine's behavior aligns with the stereotypical characteristics of a "shrewish" woman, including violent actions, rude language, and contempt for authority (Pitt 96). Katherine's aggressiveness manifests through four violent acts in the play.

The first instance occurs in Act II when Katherine's sister Bianca says something that displeases her: "Is it for him you do envy me so? / Nay, then, you jest, and now I will perceive/ You have but jested with me all this while" (2.2.18-210). Katherine strikes her and exclaims, "If that be jest, then all the rest was so" (2.1.22). Secondly, when Hortensio attempts to teach her to play an instrument, Katherine breaks his head with the lute after he corrects her:

Why no, for she hath broke the lute to me.

I did but tell her she mistook her frets,

And bowed her hand to teach her fingering,

When, with a most impatient devilish spirit,

'Frets, call you these?' quoth she, "I'll fume with
them,'

And with that word, she struck me on the head,
And through the instrument my pate made way (2.1.148-54).

Katherine also strikes Petruchio in Act II, Scene I, after he teases her: "What, with my tongue in your tail? Nay, come again, / Good Katherine, I am a gentleman" (2.1.216-17). Katherine retorts, "That I'll try" (2.1.218), and proceeds to strike him. Additionally, Katherine beats Grumio in Act IV, Scene II: "Go, get thee gone, thou false, deluding slave, / (Beating him) That feed' st me with the very name of / Sorrow on thee and all the pack of you, / That triumph thus upon my misery. / Go, get thee gone, I say" (4.2.31-35). These acts of violence highlight Katherine's limited self-differentiation.

According to Bowen Theory, people at a basic level of 25 or below exhibit a high level of responsiveness to the opinions and desires of others to the extent that their behavior is mainly "governed by their emotional reactions to the environment" (Kerr and Bowen 98). Katherine is primarily obedient. Although Katherine defies her father's wishes and rejects suitors, subjecting herself to public humiliation, she finally earns much money for her husband when, contrary to all expectations, she obeys him and professes the importance of female submission (Maurer 186). Initially, Katherine obeys her father despite complaining about being scolded for beating Bianca. She consistently abides by her father's arrangements and decisions. Moreover, Katherine is obedient to her husband. Her submission is "an imaginary resolution" of the conflict with Petruchio (McEvoy, *Shakespeare: The Basics* 133). Petruchio domesticates Katherine like an animal. On the one hand, she physically obeys her husband,

enduring horseback riding and walking through the rain at night. She returns home without warmth, a bath, or food, and she is unable to sleep due to Petruchio's disruptive behavior. On the other hand, she submits to her husband's wishes spiritually. Katherine remains obedient despite his intentional lateness for the wedding, strange attire, and forcibly taking her away. She tolerates Petruchio's inappropriate behavior, such as scolding the servants, throwing things, engaging the tailor for her clothing to dismiss him angrily, and scolding her like an ignorant child. Katherine understands that unless she conforms to his desires, she will not find peace, and thus she gives in. She surrenders her will, dignity, and becomes blindly submissive, transforming into her husband's servant. She becomes a tool for men to domesticate women. In the play's final moments, she addresses other women, advocating loyalty and obedience to their husbands:

Fie, fie, unknot that threat'ning, unkind brow,
And dart not scornful glances from those eyes
To wound thy lord, thy king, thy governor.

...

Then vail your stomachs, for it is no boot,
And place your hands below your husband's foot,
My hand is ready, may it do him ease (5. 2. 141-84).

Katherine's final speech testifies to her unwavering obedience to her husband. Furthermore, it conveys the doctrine of order as applied to the domestic sphere, suggesting that an "insubordinate wife" parallels "a rebellious subject" (Duthie 57-58).

Katherine falls within the 0-25 range because her impairments exacerbate her difficulty distinguishing between emotions and thoughts, leading her to rely solely on her feelings when functioning within the family system. According to Bowen Theory, individuals with a differentiation level ranging from 0 to 25 inhabit an emotional world. They possess an acute awareness of their surroundings, which hampers their ability to reason and express themselves effectively. They become emotionally dependent and overly sensitive to others, facing challenges in maintaining stable relationships (Kerr and Bowen 98). Despite her shrewish demeanor, Katherine is not devoid of emotions and is susceptible to being hurt by them. The shrewish behavior can be interpreted as a response to excessive emotional pain inflicted upon her, prompting her to retaliate against the world. Shakespeare avoids portraying Katherine as either an unconscious shrew or a pitiable victim, allowing her complex emotions to transcend the boundaries of farce (Heilman 53). Katherine experiences overwhelming distress due to her father's favoritism of her sister Bianca. On the day of her marriage, she endures genuine anguish rather than simply exhibiting automatic fury for retaliation. These painful emotions reach beyond the superficial aspects of her character and the conventions of comedic farce (Heilman 54).

According to Bowen's scale, Bianca's level of differentiation of self can be classified in the 25-50 range, indicating a capacity to differentiate between thoughts and feelings compared to individuals in the lower range (0-25), like Katherine. Gilbert suggests that individuals in the upper part of the 25-50 segment are somewhat aware of intellectual principles. However, their sense

of self still merges with the system, expressed through dogmatic authority, discipleship, or rebellion (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 188). Bianca demonstrates a certain level of self-differentiation and reasonableness. She rejects the arrangements made by Lucentio and Hortensio. Bianca asserts her autonomy by choosing her preferred course and study time: "Why, gentlemen, you do me double wrong/ To strive for that which resteth in my choice. / I am no breeching scholar in the schools. / I'll not be tied to hours nor pointed times, /But learn my lessons as I please myself" (3.1.16-20). Bianca defies tradition by choosing her lover, Lucentio, and marrying him secretly, despite her father's intention to marry her off to the suitor with the highest dowry.

Bianca can make an impression on others and exhibits some level of self-differentiation. Individuals in the 25-50 range are sensitive to emotional discord, concerned about others' opinions, and strive to create a positive impression (Kerr and Bowen 100). Bianca is described as low-voiced, well-behaved, respectful towards her father, and capable of attracting men with her charms (Maurer 186). In Act I, Scene I, Bianca makes a better impression on suitors than Katherine. One of the suitors, Gremio, rejects Baptista's proposal to marry Katherine abruptly, stating, "To cart her rather. She is too tough for me. / There, there, Hortensio. Will you any wife?" (1.1.55-56). Katherine becomes extremely angry and insults Lucentio and Hortensio, referring to them as "mates" (1.1.58). She threatens Hortensio with violence, claiming she would "comb" his head with a three-legged stool and treat him like a fool (1.1.64-65). As a result, Katherine leaves a negative impression on the men. In contrast, Bianca makes a favorable impression by saying, "Sister, content you in my

discontent. / Sir, to your pleasure humbly I subscribe. / My books and instruments shall be my company, / On them to look and practice by myself" (1.1.80-83). Bianca leaves a positive impression on others by reproaching Katherine, gaining her father's sympathy, and showcasing her education, reasonableness, gentleness, and obedience. Initially portrayed as a modest and silent maiden, Bianca reveals her level of self-differentiation (25-50).

4.2.4 Differentiation of Self of Egeus and Hermia

Egeus expresses his budding self in authoritativeness, and his level of self-differentiation falls within the range of 25 to 50. According to Bowen Theory, individuals in the higher range of the 25 to 50 part of the scale possess a certain level of understanding of intellectual concepts. However, "the system is still so fused with feeling that the budding self is expressed in dogmatic authoritativeness" (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 188). Egeus goes to Theseus, the Duke of Athens, to complain about his daughter Hermia. He orders her to marry Demetrius, a young man of the noble Athenian family, but she refuses to obey him because she falls in love with Lysander. Egeus points out that Demetrius is her best selection. He is absolutely in control of Hermia. When Egeus learns that Lysander writes rhymes to Hermia and exchanges tokens of love with her, goes to her window on moonlit nights and sings "with feigning voice verses of feigning love" (1.1.31), seduces her with braided hair bracelets, "rings, gauds, conceits, knacks, trifles, nose-gays, sweetmeats" (1.1.33-34), and he is "full of vexation" (1.1.22). He accuses Demetrius of turning Hermia's obedience to him into "stubborn harshness" (1.1. 38). From

Egeus's prosecution, it is clear that he is authoritative. Hermia and Lysander have a profound love for each other. However, Egeus keeps the couple from falling in love in any manner possible. Hermia loves Lysander, while Egeus likes Demetrius.

Egeus considers Hermia a private property, which his conversations with Lysander can prove: "And it is mine, and all my rights of her/ I do estate unto Demetrius" (1.1.97-98). His words and actions indicate that he views his daughter as a commodity. This irrationality is evidenced by Athenian law. Hence, we learn that the "right" here refers to the father's possession of the children. They can deprive the children of their freedom. Egeus severely requires obedience from Hermia. He demands justice from Theseus and wishes that the cruel law be implemented on his daughter: "I ask the ancient privileges of Athens: As she is mine, I may dispose of her—/Which shall be either to the gentleman/ Or to her death, according to our law/ Immediately provided in that case" (1.1.38-45). Egeus wants to control his daughter Hermia with two choices: absolute obedience to his will or death.

Egeus adheres to the law of Athens with relentless zeal, rendering him the only character in the play without sympathy. In the scene that the lovers awaken, the rich harmony of Theseus's speech creates an atmosphere in which the jerky and irritable style of Egeus is entirely irrelevant: "Enough, enough, my lord; you have enough./ I beg the law, the law upon his head—/ They would have stol' n away, they would, Demetrius,/ Thereby to have defeated you and me—/ You of your wife, and me of my consent,/ Of my consent that she should

be your wife (4.1. 153-58). In the usual printed text, Egeus does not appear in the final scene. His “fussy, sterile concern” with his power is a state of mind where the absolute harmony of the play finds no place (Leggatt 102-03).

Additionally, Egeus is a man ruled by feeling. Based on Bowen’s scale, individuals who fall between the 25-50 range are nevertheless influenced by “their emotional system” and the responses of others (Goldenberg et al. 197). At the beginning of the play, Egeus scolds the young Lysander, whom Hermia favors over his father’s disapproval: “With cunning hast thou filched my daughter’s heart, / Turned her obedience, which is due to me, / To stubborn harshness” (1.1.36-38). This accusation is standard and motivated by fatherly folly. Many fathers maintain the foolish idea that since they are the God of their daughters, only “magic and spells” and other similarly unnatural tricks can lure their children from the temple at their feet (Stetner 229). From this, we can see that Egeus’s level of differentiation of self is between 25 and 50.

Hermia’s level of self-differentiation is as low as Egeus’, between 25 and 50. Firstly, Hermia also lives in a world of feeling. In Act One, Scene One, when Lysander asks Hermia why her cheek is pale, and the roses on her face withered quickly (1.1.127-28), she replies: “Belike for want of rain, which I could well/ Beteem them from the tempest of my eyes” (1.1. 130-31). Hermia feels that it is unfortunate for the noble to submit to love (1.1.136), it is abominable for the old to “be engaged to young” (1.1.138), and it is unfortunate to “choose love by another’s eyes” (1.1.140). These are manifestations governed by emotion. Hermia is tormented by her love life. Her poor love is accompanied

by “thoughts, dreams, sighs, wishes, and tears” (1.1.150-55). In addition, Helena’s description of Hermia shows that Hermia lacks self-confidence. Because she is short, she has a little low self-esteem. Helena told Hermia something harsh: “Fie, fie, you counterfeit, you puppet, you!” (3.2.289). Hermia is very sensitive to the title “puppet”; thinking that Helena won Lysander’s heart with her tall figure, she questions Helena: “How low am I? I am not yet so low/ But that my nails can reach unto thine eyes” (3.2.299). Hermia sees Helena’s remark as an implication that she is short. It is a sensitive point, for Hermia becomes enraged (Pitt 89). Terrified, Helena seeks shelter from the gentlemen present and reveals Hermia’s shortcoming again: “Because she is something lower than myself/ That I can match her—” (3.3.305-06). Hermia is hurt again: “Lower? Hark again” (3.2.307). Helena adds when she describes the character of Hermia in school: “O, when she is angry she is keen and shrewd. / She was a vixen when she went to school, / And though she be but little, she is fierce” (3.2.324-26). Hermia is beyond reason’s control: “Little again? Nothing but ‘low’ and ‘little’? —/Why will you suffer her to flout me thus?/ Let me come to her” (3.2.327-29). Hermia, small, dark, and quick of tongue, is even more alive. She is soon cast out of her patience as a young girl, although she is learning to bear the usual crosses. Her temperament is as sharp as her tongue and is most delicately aroused regarding stature and complexion. Charlton describes Hermia as a “vixen” when she was a schoolgirl, and “even in the drawing-rooms of the politer world, she has not quite mastered her instinct to bring her nails into the fray” (116). This characterization suggests that Hermia is an emotional-dominant girl who is irritable, aggressive, and has a low level of self-differentiation. Pitt further emphasizes Hermia’s temperament, stating that

there is a clear sense of Hermia as short, aggressive, and relentless at the end of the play (89). It can be seen that Hermia often loses control of her emotions. These all show that Hermia cannot distinguish reason and feeling well and is dominated by emotion.

Secondly, Hermia suffers from a lack of love and recognition. As for people ranging from 35 to 40, “their spirits can soar with expressions of love and approval or be dashed by the lack of it” (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 188). The authoritative attitude of her father towards Hermia caused her some anxiety. The nightmare of Hermia sheds light on her anxiety. One night, she awoke in a panic, crying: “Help me, Lysander, help me! Do thy best/ To pluck this crawling serpent from my breast! /Ay me, for pity. What a dream was here? Lysander, look how I do quake with fear. /Methought a serpent ate my heart away,/ And you sat smiling at his cruel prey”(3.1.151-56). On the one hand, the serpent’s image in Hermia’s dream is closely tied to the evil image of her father, Egeus. Egeus holds the life-and-death authority of her daughter. He seeks to take control of his daughter’s life through control of her marriage. Although Hermia survives the control of her father, she still has lingering fears in her heart.

On the other hand, the “serpent” in Hermia’s dream is also closely connected with her lover Lysander. When Lysander proposes to her to rest for the night, Hermia asks him to find a place to sleep for himself because she would rest her head “upon this bank” (2.2.45-46). Lysander boldly said: “One turf shall serve as pillow for us both; /One heart, one bed; two bosoms, and one troth”

(2.2.47-48). Hermia is not overwhelmed by love and still insists: "Nay, good Lysander; for my sake, my dear, / Lie further off yet; do not lie so near" (2.2.49-50). Lysander still does not give up: "Then by your side no bed-room me deny; For lying so, Hermia, I do not lie" (2.2.57-58). Hermia still politely refuses. She first declares that she is not "meant to say Lysander lied" (2.2.61) and then asks him to sleep far away for the sake of love and politeness (2.2.62-63). It can be seen from this that Lysander repeatedly asks to lie next to Hermia, wanting to get closer to her, but Hermia is concerned that the distance between them would go beyond the safe space in her heart, so she declines. After Hermia wakes up from a nightmare, she realizes that Lysander is no longer there and says with anger: "Then I well perceive you are not high. / Either death or you I'll find immediately" (2.2.161-62). Hermia is driven by rage. When she pleads with him to return Lysander, Demetrius says: "I had rather give his carcass to my hounds" (3.2.64). Hermia raged: "Out, dog; out, cur. Thou driv'st me past the bounds/ Of maiden's patience" (3.2.65-66). Frightened by her fury, Demetrius makes a wise decision: "There is no following her in this fierce vein. / Here therefore for a while I will remain" (3.2.82-83). Hermia's interactions with Lysander and her subsequent emotional explosions reflect the low level of self-differentiation.

Although Hermia is emotionally driven, she is generally reasonable and possesses some degree of self-differentiation. According to Bowen Theory, people between 25 and 50 on the scale have less self fusion and a growing ability for self-differentiation (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 188). Hermia is witty and honest. Theseus tells her to obey her father and marry an

honorable Demetrius. Hermia has some capacity to differentiate herself. She is faithful to her feelings, not ready to deny or be defeated, even by the duke. We learn from Theseus persuading Hermia to obey her father's choice, or she will be sentenced to death or separated from men forever: "be in shady cloister mewed" and "live a barren sister" all her life, singing "faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon" (1.1.65-73). Hermia is fearless and bravely expresses her valid will: "So will I grow so live, so die, my lord, / Ere I will yield my virgin patent up/Unto his lordship whose unwished yoke" (1.1.79-82). The conflict between Hermia and his father is omnipresent throughout the play. At the outset, Hermia is determined to protect her lover and fight her father. She rejects Demetrius, not because he is neither a gentleman nor inferior to her lover, but because there is no love between them, though Demetrius loves her so much. Later, Hermia abandons all her possessions in Athens and escapes with Lysander. When she awakens in the forest, she realizes that her lover changed her mind and fell in love with another girl. Having nothing, Hermia does not let her feminine fragility overwhelm her nor rushes into the arms of her admirer, Demetrius, to take revenge. She does her best to restrain her emotions and always waits for "the break of the day" (3.3.34) with reasonable expectations for her lover in her heart. In the final resolution of an entanglement of love, Hermia again finds herself in perfect balance with the man she loves (Pitt 87).

We can see that Hermia possesses some capacity for self-differentiation.

Moreover, individuals at the top of the 25-50 range lack their beliefs and opinions but can quickly know what others think and feel. This understanding of others provides them with a superficial pseudo-self. If their expectations are

unmet, they will create rebellious pseudo-self in the same proportional intensity of opposition within “the established order” (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 189). Hermia fiercely refuses male authority figures to assert her “sovereignty” in the domain of love. Hermia’s rebellion is particularly apparent in the opening scene, where she confronts her father, Egeus, in the presence of Duke Theseus. In response to Egeus’s warning, Hermia expresses courage and determination to defend her love and dignity. In the days when parents were regarded as the authority and children were the father’s property, Hermia dared to express her true wishes, which shows that she can differentiate herself. The law will punish Hermia if she violates her father’s authority: “For you, fair Hermia, look you arm yourself/ To fit your fancies to your father’s will, / Or else the law of Athens yields you up (1.1.117-19). Hermia, who sought the independence of personality and freedom of love, did not withdraw. After talking with Lysander, she decided to run away from the claws of Athenian law. While escaping into the forest, the romantic protagonists try to “replace an abstract and objective system with subjective, personal judgments,” the father’s voice in their own eyes (Krieger 39). Hermia flees Athens with her favorite lover, Lysander, to avoid marrying Demetrius or becoming a nun. This demonstrates Hermia’s rebellious nature, indicating that her level of self-differentiation lies between 25 and 50.

4.3 The Relationship between the Fathers and the Daughters

From the above analysis, we know that the level of self-differentiation of the fathers and daughters in the selected plays is not high, significantly affecting

the dynamics of their relationships. Bowen Theory emphasizes the centrality of self-differentiation, distinguishing one's thoughts and emotions and maintaining emotionally regulated and healthy family relations. Low self-differentiation leads to emotional reactivity and anxiety that distorts family roles and prevents the development of stable and supportive relations. The degree of self-differentiation shapes how individuals control their emotions and determines how they interact with others, especially in emotionally charged family dynamics

In *King Lear*, Lear and his daughters exhibit low levels of self-differentiation. Lear is portrayed as foolish, anxious, and desperate for his daughters' love, which shows a high degree of emotional fusion with them. His behavior is driven by anxiety and fear of abandonment, leading him to irrational decisions, especially in his relationships with Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia. His level of self-differentiation is between 0 and 25, reflecting his difficulties distinguishing between his thoughts and emotions. Similarly, Goneril and Regan, driven by selfishness and chronic anxiety, emotionally fused with Lear, preventing their ability to function independently. Their levels of self-differentiation, also in the range of 0 to 25, further worsen family tension. Although she is governed more by the emotional system than the intellectual one, Cordelia is still influenced by the emotional expectations that Lear put on her, reflecting a low degree of self-differentiation (25-50). Bowen Theory assumes that individuals with low self-differentiation are preoccupied with external validation and acceptance. It will not be possible to regulate its emotional state effectively, leading to increased anxiety and defensiveness, which in turn deteriorates relational problems.

Similarly, in *Hamlet*, Polonius and Ophelia lack self-differentiation, which significantly influences their relationship. Polonius occasionally demonstrates self-awareness and reasonableness even though his emotions toward Ophelia drive him. His level of self-differentiation ranges between 25 and 50, which indicates a certain level of differentiation of self but is still primarily influenced by emotions. Ophelia shows a much lower level of self-differentiation, probably between 0 and 25, because she is emotionally dependent on her father and obediently monitors his instructions. Bowen Theory suggests that low self-differentiation results in the inability to maintain relationship autonomy. This emotional dependence leads Ophelia into a cycle of emotional reactivity, which eventually culminates in her madness and death. The inability to differentiate emotions from thoughts in Polonius and Ophelia prevents the establishment of a healthy, balanced father-daughter relationship.

Bowen Theory posits that individuals with lower levels of self-differentiation are obsessed with seeking love, acceptance, and validation from others. They are often not driven by an innate compass of sound judgment but tend to be emotionally volatile by relationship issues, which they overtly use defensively, worsening relationships. Highly differentiated individuals possess the ability to regulate their emotional states, while those with lower differentiation levels are more susceptible to emotional influences. Highly differentiated individuals can choose their emotional states and leverage them effectively, while individuals with lower levels of differentiation have closely interconnected emotional and thought systems, leading to heightened anxiety. Individuals with lower self-differentiation experience more anxiety, while those with “higher levels of

differentiation of self" experience less (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 24). Therefore, individuals like Lear and his daughters, Polonius and Ophelia, experience chronic anxiety and are constantly affected by their emotions. This phenomenon, rooted in low self-differentiation, contributes to the difficulty of maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships, as evidenced by the tumultuous father-daughter dynamics of Lear and his daughters and the submissive relationships between Polonius and Ophelia.

In *The Taming of the Shrew*, the relationship between Baptista and his daughters, Katherine and Bianca, is similarly influenced by their low levels of self-differentiation. Shakespeare depicted Baptista as a wise man with feudal ideology. He has some degree of self-differentiation. His level of self-differentiation is in the 25-50 range. Baptista's degree of self-differentiation affects his daughters. Katherine's self-differentiation level ranges from 0 to 25 because she is highly anxious, desperately in need of her father's love, and lives in a feeling world. Bianca's self-differentiating level is between 25 and 50 because she is sometimes rational and knows how to make a good impression on others. Baptista's degree of self-differentiation directly impacts his daughters, preventing them from achieving a balanced father-daughter relationship. Second, family members cannot strike a balance between individuality and togetherness. The lower degree of self-differentiation among Baptista and her daughters prevented them from maintaining a good father-daughter relationship.

Additionally, Hermia and Egeus are susceptible to emotional influences due to the lack of high differentiation, which hinders their capacity to govern the dynamics within their family successfully. Both Egeus and Hermia have a low level of differentiation of self. Egeus is a man who is ruled by feeling. Within the realm of authoritativeness, he expresses his budding self in authoritativeness. Based on this, his level of self-differentiation falls somewhere between 25 and 50. Despite the fact that Hermia is heavily influenced by her feelings, she is generally sensible and has a certain degree of self-differentiation. Furthermore, she is defiant in her behavior. It can be concluded that Hermia's level of self-differentiation falls somewhere between 25 and 50. According to Gilbert (1992), individuals who have an inadequate ability to differentiate themselves from others are more prone to problems and poor interpersonal relationships (*Extraordinary Relationships* 187). As a result, Egeus and Hermia's father-daughter relationship is poor.

Overall, the low level of self-differentiation between the fathers and daughters in these selected Shakespearean dramas significantly prevents their ability to create harmonious relationships. Emotional reactivity and chronic anxiety associated with low self-differentiation prevent the fathers and daughters from achieving emotional autonomy, making it difficult for them to maintain healthy interpersonal dynamics. This aligns with Bowen Theory, which emphasizes that differentiating one's thoughts from emotions is essential for regulating relationships and controlling emotional tension in families. The failure of the father-daughter relationships in these dramas, whether through Lear's emotional dependency, Polonius and Ophelia's lack of emotional autonomy,

Baptista's control, or Egeus and Hermia's emotional entanglement, demonstrates the profound influence of self-differentiation on relational dynamics. Self-differentiation is crucial in facilitating healthy and balanced interactions, and its absence leads to dysfunctional family relationships, as shown in these dramas.

4.4 Conclusion

Bowen Theory assisted much in securing a methodology for the analysis. It helps to examine the father-daughter relationship. The concept of differentiation of self is utilized to analyze the level of the differentiation of self of the selected characters in the chosen plays.

The level of the differentiation of self of the selected characters is not high in the comedies and the tragedies. As we see with these Shakespearean fathers and daughters, the lower the level of self-differentiation a person has, the harder it is to establish good relations with others. The level of self-differentiation exhibited by the fathers and daughters in the selected dramas is low, resulting in strained father-daughter relationships. Shakespeare has created fathers and daughters with a lower level of self-differentiation and dysfunctional father-daughter relationships in the selected comedies and tragedies.

CHAPTER 5

FAMILY PROJECTION PROCESS AND THE FATHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIP

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is going to achieve the second research objective: to examine how the father-daughter relationship is influenced by the projection of chronic anxiety from fathers onto their daughters in Shakespeare's renowned plays *King Lear* (1604-05), *Hamlet* (1600), *The Taming of the Shrew* (1623), and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1594-95), employing the three concepts in Bowen Theory: the nuclear family emotional system, family projection process, and triangles. These tragedies and comedies intricately depict dysfunctional father-daughter relationships, aligning with Bowen's theoretical framework. According to Bowen Theory, the family projection process is pivotal as one of the primary mechanisms within the nuclear family emotional system. Moreover, the nuclear family embodies a multitude of triangular relationships. Consequently, this chapter will expound upon the father-daughter relationship in the plays mentioned above from the perspectives offered by the nuclear family emotional system, the family projection process, and triangles.

To comprehensively examine the father-daughter relationship, it is imperative to investigate the surrounding family environment and the dynamics among its members. Gaining a holistic understanding of an individual character necessitates a thorough comprehension of their entire family system. Thus,

extensive research is imperative to establish connections between family systems and literary works. A comprehensive exploration of the daughters' characters depends upon acquiring insights into their respective family environments and familial associations. Within a family, an intricate web of emotional connections prevails, fostering profound impacts on its members' thoughts, emotions, and behaviors.

5.2 Family Projection Process in *King Lear*

5.2.1 Lear's Influence on His Daughters

Kerr and Bowen propose that the human family, portrayed as an emotional unit, can also be characterized as an "emotional field." The emotional functioning of family members, which is influenced by their emotions, creates the emotional "atmosphere" or "field" of the family, which, in turn, impacts the emotional functioning of each individual within the family (Kerr and Bowen 55). Bowen argues that the fundamental unit for "emotional functioning" is the "nuclear family" (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 6), with relational patterns within the family having an impact on the entire family unit. Emotions are consistently conveyed and rebounded within families "from person to person (and even from generation to generation)" (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 7). The problematic father-daughter relationship in *King Lear* is linked to Lear's chronic anxiety and the projection of the anxiety onto his daughters.

In *King Lear*, the mother of Cordelia, Goneril, and Regan is absent, yet the word "mother" is mentioned three times. In Act One, Scene Four, Lear curses

Goneril: "Turn all her mother's pains and benefits" (1.4.265). In Act Two, Scene Two, Lear expresses his emotions by exclaiming: "O, how this mother swells up toward my heart!" (2.2.231). In another instance, Lear asserts to Regan, "If thou shouldst not be glad/ I would divorce me from thy mother's shrine, / Sepulchring an adultress" (2.2.302-04). Lear asserts that the mother bears responsibility for the adverse consequences that her daughters, Regan and Goneril, have endured. Goneril and Regan have evolved into "scheming, power-hungry adults" (Akbar and Zaidi 30-31).

In the play *King Lear*, Cordelia, Goneril, and Regan's mother are absent, and Lear has to take care of his three daughters alone. The harmful effects of Lear's depression would inevitably infect their family, thus creating an oppressive atmosphere inside the family system of origin where Cordelia, Goneril, and Regan reside. Consequently, this condition has evolved into an established pattern in which the daughters are unable to escape their enslavement. Thus, due to the strong bond between the daughters and their father, they are profoundly influenced by their father's negative emotional state, developing a similar personality. Cordelia has the same level of stubbornness as her father. While Goneril and Regan experience a gradual accumulation of bad feelings, ultimately leading to the development of a violent disposition. Goneril and Regan's inherent flaws cause their lives to descend into chaos and keep them chronically anxious.

The capacity to differentiate the self is categorized into two levels: the basic level and the functional level. The basic level is primarily determined by "the

degree of emotional separation” an individual has from their “family of origin.” This level is established during personal development and is unaffected by the surrounding environment (Kerr and Bowen 96). The individual’s level of functioning is influenced by the chronic anxiety level inside their most crucial relational system, which can be enhanced through “relationships, drugs, beliefs, and culture values, religious dogma, and even superstitions” (Kerr and Bowen 97). The father consistently projecting his depression to Cordelia, Goneril, and Regan in their growth, together with the chronic anxiety within their family of origin, leads to their poor capacity to differentiate at a functional level.

5.2.2 Chronic Anxiety from Lear’s Emotional Projection

The term “Family Projection Process” describes the ways in which parents and children actively participate in passing parental issues onto children (Bowen 136). In Shakespeare’s play *King Lear*, Cordelia, Goneril, and Regan experience emotional projection and inherited anxiety from their father, Lear. This contributes to their low differentiation of the self and ultimately leads to dysfunction in their father-daughter relationships. Bowen’s multi-generational transmission process refers to the intergenerational transfer of familial anxiety. The family anxiety discussed here relates to chronic anxiety, which is the root cause of family dysfunction. Anxiety is an organism’s genuine or imaginary response to a threat (Kerr and Bowen 111). There is a prevailing belief that anxiety can be categorized into two distinct types: chronic anxiety and acute anxiety. Gilbert suggests that those with low levels of differentiation of the self-

heightened levels of anxiety. They primarily experience two types of anxiety. One type of anxiety is acute anxiety, which is a reaction to external pressures such as the consequences of poor choices. The other type is chronic anxiety. The source of these anxieties can be traced back to the “family emotional systems” and recurring patterns that persist over time, ultimately leading to “a permanent emotional response of the individual” (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 24). Chronic and acute anxieties stem from different origins, but both have a detrimental impact and lead to “the effect of producing symptoms” (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 24). Anxiety symptoms encompass “emotional, mental or physical” disorders (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 24). *King Lear* illustrates how the intergenerational transmission of chronic anxiety of Lear leads to emotional distress and relational breakdowns with his daughters.

As examined in the preceding chapter, Lear is not an individual with a high level of self-differentiation. Well-differentiated individuals have enough confidence to manage their relationships with others effectively. They do not shy away from emotionally intensive relationships or exhibit excessive anxiety when confronted with them. Individuals who do not rely heavily on the approval of others to improve their well-being, nor feel extreme responsibility for enhancing the well-being of others, tend to be “psychologically and physiologically” calm (Kerr and Bowen 112). Lear initially expresses concern about his advanced age and physical weakness impeding his ability to govern the state. With his impending old age, Lear decides to pass on the inheritance of his land to his daughters according to the degree of affection they have for

him. Lear's youngest daughter is deliberately exempted from his inheritance as she is deemed frank and rebellious, and she eventually marries the king of France. Finally, Lear passes the inheritance of his land to his eldest daughters, but they do not reciprocate the gesture and desert him, further intensifying his anxiety and wrath.

Lear has been experiencing chronic anxiety, which has caused his daughters to feel uneasy. The occurrence of events in the family of origin can often result in dysfunctional family dynamics due to the interconnectedness of individuals. Any impact on one person can have consequences on others, and one person's anxiety can quickly be transmitted to another. According to Gilbert, the emotional unit is a fundamental aspect of nature in human society and the entire natural system. Understanding this concept can shed light on how anxiety spreads among individuals within a group. When a family member experiences stress, like a cow, it causes anxiety for everyone. Thus, the trends of "fusions (herding instinct)" increase (Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory* 9-10). According to Gilbert, the "fusions" experience heightened anxiety when confronted with feelings of loneliness and danger, which in turn makes them feel uneasy (Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory* 9-10).

Lear's denial of Cordelia's inheritance and his condemnation of Goneril and Regan as a "serpent" (1.4.268, 282, 319), "wolves" (1.4.302), and "vultures" (2.2.307) demonstrates the deterioration of the father-daughter connection in the Lear household. The situation transforms Lear's authority and paternal power are altered through the split of his kingdom and the fight for his affection. Lear is cunningly deceived by his two wicked daughters, Goneril and Regan. He withholds the inheritance from his beloved youngest daughter, Cordelia, severs their biological ties, and places his entire fate in the hands of his two elder daughters. Upon fulfilling their desires, the two deceitful daughters remove their disguises as dutiful daughters while examining love, exposing their true nature, and expelling their father from the residence. Lear's chronic anxiety is reflected in his daughters, leading them to behave in a disloyal manner, disrupting the inherent bond between father and daughter. The emotional behaviors exhibited by the characters in this play are rooted in chronic anxiety. There are several indications within the drama that point to their inclination toward chronic anxiety.

At the outset of the play, King Lear, to prevent any future conflicts and distribute his daughters' inheritance while he is still alive, apportions the land based on the extent of their affection towards him. Goneril and Regan employ flattery, each obtaining a third of the land. Cordelia, Lear's cherished daughter, unexpectedly conveys that her love for him is solely based on her name, with no further affection. Furthermore, she asserts that her husband will have fifty percent of her love, care, and obligations when she eventually marries. Upon hearing this, Lear becomes enraged, severs the father-daughter bond, and lets

her wed the King of France. Consequently, Lear's chronic anxiety is projected onto his other two daughters. Goneril expresses her anxieties to Regan: "If our father carry authority with such dispositions as he bears, this last surrender of his will but offend us" (1.1. 293-95).

Lear first resides with Goneril, but it does not take much time for Goneril to become repulsed by her father's disorderly, ill-tempered, and overbearing behavior, as well as his "a hundred knights and squires/ men so disordered, so debauched and bold" (1.4.235-36). Consequently, she requests her father to decrease the number of them. Upon hearing Goneril's accusation, Lear begins to comprehend the brutal essence of her character and denounces her as "darkness and devils!" (1.4.247) and a "degenerate bastard" (1.4.249). Experiencing intense irritation and anger, Lear implores the goddess to nullify Goneril's capacity to reproduce, thus ensuring that her "derogate body" will never bear "a babe to honour her!" (1.4.273-74). If she is compelled to give birth, "create her child of spleen" and subject her to a lifetime of agony (1.4.275).

Following Lear's departure from Goneril, he seeks refuge with his "kind and comfortable" Regan and vows to expose Goneril's "wolvish visage" (1.4.302). Goneril voices her concern to Albany, stating that "'Tis politic and safe to let him keep/At point a hundred knights, yes, that on every dream, /Each buzz, each fancy, each complaint, dislike, / He may enguard his dotage with their powers/ And hold our lives in mercy" (2.1.303-07). During his encounter with Regan, Lear expresses his anger with Goneril by cursing her in her presence:

"You nimble lightnings, dart your blinding flames/ Into her scornful eyes. Infect her beauty, / You fen-sucked fogs drawn by the pow'rful sun/ To fall and blister!" (2. 2. 338-41).

Upon hearing Lear's nasty invective towards Goneril, Regan becomes apprehensive that her father may also direct his curses towards her. Contrary to Lear's expectations, Regan is not significantly superior to Goneril. In contrast, she possesses a greater degree of repulsiveness and malevolence. Before Lear's arrival, Regan and her spouse depart for Gloucester's castle, purposefully evading Lear and putting Kent in the stocks as a means of humiliating Lear. Initially, she expresses concern about the potential dangers of having fifty followers, as there would be conflicts with so many people in a house under "two commands" (2. 2. 414). She advises her father to bring only "five and twenty" if he plans to see her, as she anticipates a potential threat (2. 2. 420-21).

Outraged at Regan's brutality, Lear decides to side with Goneril after considering the number of knights each will enable him to keep. He rationalizes his choice by stating, "I'll go with thee. / Thy fifty yet doth double five-and-twenty, / And thou art twice her love" (2.2.431-33). Despite Lear's concessions, such as reducing his number of knights and choosing to reside with Goneril, the malevolent Goneril remains unsatisfied and rejects Lear by questioning: "What need you five and twenty, ten, or five" (2. 2. 435). Meanwhile, Regan conspires with Goneril to manipulate Lear by asking, "What need one?" (2.2.437). Due to their relentless nature, Lear curses Regan and Goneril as

“unnatural hags” (2.2.452). At this point, he is on the verge of seeking revenge on them and plans to carry out an action that will be “the terrors of the earth,” although he does not know yet how he will do it (2.2.456).

Ultimately, Regan and Goneril endeavor to reconcile, take in their father, and drive his followers away. Lear is enraged by the daughters’ irrational fear and hostility toward his supporters. Regan explains her worries: “what they may incense him to, being apt/ To have his ear abused, wisdom bids fear” (2.2.478-79). Regan is more concerned about her safety than her father’s passing. This concern stems from her father’s decision, in his later years, to give all of his possessions and rights to his daughters. Once the daughters’ hope of supporting Lear in his old age is shattered by their actions, the anxiety of displacement increases and is projected onto the daughters themselves, creating a harmful cycle. The once-peaceful bond between a father and daughter deteriorates and becomes distorted.

The father-daughter bond is destroyed when the daughters exclude their father, Lear, from entering the house during a stormy night. Lear becomes insane and says to Kent, “filial ingratitude. /Is it not as this mouth should tear this hand/ For lifting food to’ t? But I will punish home. / No, I will weep no more. — In such a night/ To shut me out? Pour on, I will endure. / In such a night as this! O, Regan, Goneril,/ Your old kind father, whose frank heart gave all—/O, that way madness lies. let me shun that! / No more of that” (3.2.14-22). Lear’s chronic anxiety has consistently been projected onto Cordelia, Goneril, and Regan, intensifying their stubbornness, irritable disposition, and vulnerability.

In the love contest, Cordelia fails to articulate her affection for her father despite Lear's warning that she will obtain nothing if she insists on saying nothing. On the other hand, Goneril and Regan reduce the number of Lear's followers and stock Lear's servant, always in a condition of chronic anxiety. Lear's chronic anxiety and its projection onto Cordelia, Goneril, and Regan ultimately result in the deterioration of the father-daughter relationship.

5.3 Family Projection Process in *Hamlet*

5.3.1 Polonius's Influence on Ophelia

Bowen's perspective emphasizes the family system rather than the individual, asserting that a comprehensive understanding of a person's family dynamics is crucial for comprehending their relationships (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* xviii). Ophelia's father, Polonius, holds a significant position as chief counselor to King Claudius and King Hamlet and is likely to be well rewarded. However, Polonius, acting as a domestic tyrant, projects his dissatisfaction with his life on his son and daughter. While little is known about Polonius's deceased wife, a subtle remark from his son implies her unassuming presence (Goddard 356). Polonius proves to be an inadequate and disengaged father to Ophelia, lacking emotional connection and intimacy. In the Polonius family, the father figure fails to fulfill his role, merely exerting control without assuming responsibility. Despite being the focal point of the family, Polonius relies solely on his authoritative image, unlike caring fathers who foster affection, friendship, and regular communication with their children.

Indifference characterizes Polonius's approach to family life, devoid of love and intimacy.

Polonius significantly influences Ophelia, assuming an authoritative role that fosters her compliance. According to Bowen Theory, individuals with low differentiation tend to be excessively enmeshed or "fused" with others in their closest relationships. In contrast, those with high differentiation can maintain a distinct sense of self (Tuason and Friedlander 27). Based on the analysis in the previous chapter, we know that Polonius does not have a high level of self-differentiation. Polonius, a cunning and authoritarian father, and his daughter Ophelia exhibit an over-integrated dynamic, resulting in Ophelia's limited capacity for psychological self-differentiation. As a child "awakening into womanhood," Ophelia naively speaks of Hamlet's affectionate gestures toward her, while Polonius assumes that Hamlet must resemble his younger self (Goddard 356). In Act One, Scene Three, Polonius figuratively "poisons her ear," attaching himself to her like insects to a budding rose (Goddard 356). Ophelia, obedient to her father's wishes, disbelieves Hamlet's declarations and complies with her father's demands, which marks the initial stage of Ophelia's descent into madness and eventual demise (Goddard 356). Due to her limited self-differentiation ability, Ophelia, resembling her father's shadow, becomes a scapegoat. Polonius projects his emotions onto Ophelia, disrupting her natural differentiation process and hindering her journey toward self-independence. Throughout the play, Ophelia and her father share several scenes, yet her role solely entails emotional reactions without rational thought. She often displays a state of "fusion" in her interpersonal interactions, lacking

distinct individuality. Kerr and Bowen employ the term “symbiosis” to depict undifferentiated relationships, particularly the mother-child bond. They describe “symbiotic relationships” as normal for infants and mothers, highlighting that older children and adults have yet to fully separate from the family unit (Kerr and Bowen 85). The concept of “unresolved emotional attachment” denotes an intensely close, symbiotic, and almost inseparable state of low differentiation between parents and children (Kerr and Bowen 196). Influenced by her father, Ophelia experiences excessive emotional pressure, hindering her self-differentiation and hindering her ability to detach from her original family. Ophelia shares a deep emotional fusion with her father, facilitating the development of a symbiotic relationship.

Furthermore, Polonius displays indifference and selfishness, paying little attention to his family. Ophelia never experiences genuine intimacy from her father, rendering her unfamiliar with its true meaning. Consequently, when she encounters Hamlet’s affection and closeness, she misunderstands them. The parent-child relationship lies at the core of the “differentiation of the self,” with mentally healthy individuals gradually establishing emotional independence from their parents as they mature. Individuals with a high level of self-differentiation can maintain a clear distinction between their intellect and emotions, enabling them to act based on reasoned thinking that may contradict their feelings and subjective truth (Bowen 489). Conversely, less differentiated individuals experience heightened levels of chronic anxiety. Bowen (1976, 1978), Kerr and Bowen (1988), Cf., Skowron and Friedlander (1998), and Titelman (1998) argue that highly differentiated individuals tend to possess

better psychological adjustment, while those with lower differentiation struggle with stress-induced dysfunction, leading to increased mental and physical symptoms (Peleg-Popko 357). Ophelia becomes deeply influenced by her father during her romantic involvement with Hamlet. Her immaturity regarding self-differentiation hinders her ability to separate her rational and emotional faculties, making it difficult for her to assert independence.

Ophelia struggles to find a balance between individuality and togetherness but fails to achieve a satisfactory equilibrium. This tension leads to a strained relationship with her father. Bowen Theory posits two fundamental life forces within individuals: individuality and togetherness. Individuality drives people to embrace their beliefs, make choices, and assert personal autonomy (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 13). Conversely, the togetherness force compels individuals to seek attachment, affiliation, and approval from others (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 14). Ophelia yearns for her father's love but fails to receive it, resulting in an ongoing conflict between her individuality and her desire for togetherness. All these pave the way for the later plots of the drama.

5.3.2 Laertes's Influence on Ophelia

The brother, Laertes, also exerts a significant influence on Ophelia. In the light of Bowen Theory, Laertes inherited the rules and norms his father internalized from his family of origin. The Polonius family is wealthy and noble. Following the expectations of the class and the father's example, Laertes can reap the benefits of his ordered household, entering university to study.

It becomes apparent that Laertes, much like their father, does not prioritize Ophelia's well-being. He shows little concern for her inner world, viewing her as a naive sister. As Laertes prepares to study overseas, Ophelia receives advice from Laertes about parting. Considering himself a worldly-wise young man, Laertes imparts wisdom regarding the main challenges a young woman might face in courtly life. He warns Ophelia that Hamlet's affections are merely fleeting, and his attention is nothing more than "a violet in the youth of primy nature, /Forward not permanent, sweet not lasting/The perfume and suppliance of a minute" (1.3.7-9). In Western tradition, violets have long symbolized transitory aspects of life and love (Spenser 228). Furthermore, Laertes suggests that the mind and soul develop as the body matures, drawing young people toward the opposite sex. He cautions Ophelia to recognize that her feelings fall within this category, as "youth to itself rebels, though none else near" (1.3.44), which implies that young individuals are full of vitality, and even in solitude, their sexual impulses remain active. However, Laertes' advice proves shallow as he judges Hamlet based on his character. Ophelia keenly observes his shallowness and reminds him, in a sisterly manner, to "heed his own warnings" (Camden, *On Ophelia's Madness* 247-48). Laertes influences Ophelia, who perceives him as a substitute father, projecting her longing for paternal love onto him. She yearns for Laertes' intimacy and affection. Sharon Hamilton clarifies their relationship by arguing that Ophelia possesses the mental acuity to resist this misguided advice. Ophelia has a strong affection for her brother, but "perhaps because of their closeness in age, she recognizes the source of his suspicions about other men in his loose behavior" (Hamilton 82).

The influence of Polonius and Laertes on Ophelia is significant. Ophelia has followed the authority of her father and brother since childhood (Günenç 167). Motherless and confined by the men in her life, Ophelia has been molded to conform to external expectations, reflecting the desires of others (Dane 406). She yearns for connection and closeness from her father and brother, but these desires go unfulfilled. As a result, she falls into a deep depression and tragically takes her own life.

5.4 Family Projection Process in *The Taming of the Shrew*

Bowen Theory postulates that the fundamental emotional unit is the nuclear family (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 26). From this perspective, the individual is merely a fragment of the emotional unit, and a complete understanding of the individual necessitates a thorough comprehension of the nuclear family. Emotions are not confined to individuals; they flow continuously from person to person within the family unit. The interdependence within families significantly influences the behavior and functioning of its members. In the case of *The Taming of the Shrew*, Baptista's influence on Katherine and Bianca is profound. Therefore, a comprehensive examination of the father-daughter relationship between Baptista and his daughters, within the context of their entire family environment, proves beneficial. Baptista's nuclear family in this play comprises Baptista and his two daughters, Katherine and Bianca. Bianca is soft-spoken, sweet, unassuming, and dutifully obedient to her father. Conversely, Katherine is strong-willed; her words are characterized by abuse and anger, and her actions are often violent (Moreno 21). Baptista views

marriage as an economic transaction, with Petruchio acknowledging that he proposes to Katherine for her generous dowry. At the play's outset, the Baptista family appears to be unhealthy.

The family projection process of Baptista's daughters is evident in *The Taming of the Shrew*. The first projection occurs in Katherine's emotional process, with Baptista projecting his emotions onto her. The second projection manifests in Bianca's emotional system. As mentioned, undifferentiated emotions absorbed within the nuclear family emerge through various mechanisms, including the family projection process. While Shakespeare does not explicitly depict the marital relationship between Baptista and his wife in this comedy, sufficient information can be deduced from the emotions exhibited by the daughters. Baptista indicates that whoever marries his shrewish daughter Katherine will receive a generous dowry. Baptista, being a family tyrant, favors Bianca as his beloved daughter (Goddard 69; Finn 18; Dreher 110). The distant relationship between Baptista and his daughters results from the family environment.

Firstly, Katherine and Bianca grow up in a family environment lacking maternal love, negatively affecting their character formation and development. The absence of a mother yields numerous psychological and behavioral consequences for children. In *The Taming of the Shrew*, Shakespeare does not provide a depiction of Katherine and Bianca's mother. Insufficient background information about Baptista and his wife is available to investigate the mechanisms guiding their functioning within the emotional system of the nuclear family. However, based on Bowen Theory, it can be inferred that

Baptista's emotional undifferentiation may result from marital conflict or dysfunction in one spouse, with anxiety often projected onto Katherine and Bianca. Baptista carefully selects suitors for Katherine and Bianca, imposing his desires rather than allowing the daughters to choose their ideal husbands. With the mother's absence, the father fails to establish intimacy within the marital relationship, projecting dissatisfaction onto his daughters and forming a fused state of over-integration with them.

5.4.1 Baptista's Influence on Bianca

Bowen Theory suggests that chronic anxiety in the family can be projected through parents onto their children, especially those who are more submissive or emotionally vulnerable. The child may absorb this anxiety and change his or her behavior to alleviate the parent's emotional distress. Thus, Bianca, who is more submissive than Katherine, is likely to be a victim of Baptista's projection.

Baptista's chronic anxiety is evident in his overt preoccupation regarding his daughters' marriages, particularly Bianca's. He became acutely aware of society's expectations for his daughters and relentlessly sought and secured profitable marriages for them. His anxiety is exacerbated by his tense relationship with his eldest daughter, Katherine, who is known for her shrew. Baptista's constant worry about Katherine's marriage leads him to project his anxiety excessively on Bianca.

Baptista yearns for Bianca to be tender, submissive, and charming to entice potential suitors. Baptista arranges two tutors to coach and groom Bianca into

the “perfect lady” he envisages. He hires Lucentio to teach language and literature and Hortensio to teach music: “(To Hortensio) Take you the lute, (to Lucentio) and you / the set of books. /You shall go see your pupils presently” (2.1.106-08). Baptista’s iron-clad expectations stifle Bianca’s ability to differentiate herself. Besides valuing her beauty, Baptista demanded prodigious expectations of Bianca’s obedience. His unwavering fixation on her compliance prevents Bianca from developing a strong sense of self beyond her father’s and society’s shackles. Bianca transforms from being her father’s model of an obedient daughter to becoming a submissive and obedient wife after her marriage to Lucentio.

It can be inferred that Baptista profoundly impacted Bianca’s behavior and upbringing. In Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew*, Bianca is depicted as a compliant daughter, the attributes that Baptista holds in high regard. Bianca’s endearing and submissive nature directly results from the influence of Baptista’s chronic anxiety.

5.4.2 Baptista’s Influence on Katherine

According to Bowen Theory, it can be inferred that Katherine’s rudeness and shrewishness can be traced back to her father’s unjust treatment. Katherine is merely a victim of her father’s unfair actions. Baptista’s preference for Bianca exacerbates Katherine’s fierceness. In Act Two, Scene One, when Katherine hits Bianca, Baptista scolds Katherine: “Why, how now dame, whence grows this insolence?” These words and actions continue to provoke Katherine,

leading to the development of an unconscious psychological stereotype that she internalizes, viewing herself as a “shrew.” Katherine’s pungency originates as a personality issue, but due to her father’s projection, it evolves into a psychological problem. Distortion and perversion, to some degree, can give rise to aggressive behavior, serving to achieve psychological balance by targeting obstacles that hinder her desires. Katherine often behaves like a frustrated older child, seeking attention, throwing outbursts, and accepting negative attention to affirm her identity. She desires genuine relationships, rejecting the façade of superficial obedience, dominance, and subtle manipulation prevalent around her (Dreher 110-11). Therefore, Katherine’s defiance and aggression can be considered a reaction to a family emotional projection.

Additionally, Baptista regards Katherine as a commodity eager to be rid of, asserting that he would pay a heavy dowry to anyone who marries her. Baptista places Katherine as a condition for Bianca’s marriage, declaring that Bianca will not marry until Katherine finds a husband. It becomes apparent that Baptista’s primary concern in arranging the marriage is money, rather than his daughter’s happiness when Petruchio “brusquely makes his bid for Kate” (Kahn, *‘The Taming of the Shrew’: Shakespeare’s Mirror of Marriage* 90). In this regard, Papero elucidates, “the dysfunction of the parents as a whole leads to the process by which the child is drawn into the affection between them” (Papero 58). In other words, Baptista’s anxiety and mood disorders contribute to the projection and emotional damage inflicted upon his daughter. Baptista employs a distinct approach to handling emotions, and his overall

dysfunctional parenting impairs Katherine's ability to differentiate her role within the family system. Thus, Baptista bears responsibility for Katherine's violent tendencies.

Baptista's belittling of Katherine results in a strained father-daughter relationship due to her diminished self-worth and low levels of self-differentiation. Bowen Theory argues that self-worth is developed within the family and is learned by children through their interactions with their parents. The messages conveyed by the father and daughter significantly impact their perception of self-image. For children, parents serve as the source of self-image. In Katherine's case, her father, Baptista, is the primary mirror for her self-image. Baptista consistently praises Katherine's dignified and ladylike sister, Bianca, explicitly displaying his preference for her and occasionally mocking Katherine. The continual devaluation by her father prevents Katherine from developing a healthy self-image. It fosters a subconscious belief that she is genuinely the person her father perceives her to be. Consequently, Katherine's self-worth is diminished. Uncomfortable with Bianca's delicate nature, Katherine seeks solace by lashing out at her.

Accompanying the low self-worth is a low level of self-differentiation, wherein the family unit becomes over-fused, inhibiting the formation of stable psychological boundaries with family members, particularly the parents. According to Kerr and Bowen (1988), an individual with a somewhat higher degree of self-differentiation exhibits a slightly more remarkable ability for autonomous functioning while remaining barely developed. Unless actively engaged in a relationship, one is so "incomplete" that one struggles greatly to

effectively manage one's life and attain a significant level of emotional well-being. Once a relationship is established, one will integrate into it nearly entirely. This relationship has the potential to "complete" one by offering "an identity and greater sense of self-worth" (Kerr and Bowen 69). One manifestation of fusion is the ability of one partner to evoke or trigger emotions in the other. Specifically, as one partner experiences heightened emotional tension, the other partner's anxiety also increases. Strong feelings of joy or distress in one partner can elicit irritation and frustration in the other (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 35). When Baptista bids farewell, Katherine vehemently expresses her disagreement with her father by proclaiming:

Why, and I trust I may go too, may I not?
What, shall I be appointed hours, as though belike I
knew not what to take and what to leave? Ha! (1.1.102-104)

In the play, Katherine outlines the negative impact of her father on the emotional influences and provides a significant aspect of Baptista's projection process. In Act Two, Scene One, when Katherine strikes Bianca, Baptista says:

Why, how now, dame, whence grows this insolence?
Bianca, stand aside. — Poor girl, she weeps. —
Go ply thy needle, meddle not with her.
(*To Katherine*) For shame, thou hilding of a devilish spirit,
Why dost thou wrong her that did ne'er wrong thee
When did she cross thee with a bitter word? (2.1.23-28).

Katherine perceives that her father does not care for or love her as a daughter because she is fierce. Baptista consistently belittles Katherine. Instead of

fostering her self-confidence, his actions undermine her well-being to the point where she develops an inferiority complex. Although Katherine eventually marries Petruchio, she still harbors resentment toward her father's attitude and remains emotionally entangled in her parents' emotional system, leading to dysfunction in her married life.

Bowen Theory effectively elucidates the family dynamics within Baptista's household. The play does not feature a mother figure, leaving the father, Baptista, indifferent toward his two daughters, acting arbitrarily. Both daughters experience significant inner conflicts. Despite the outward appearance of a connected and intimate family, this family proves to be hypocritical and artificial upon closer examination. Katherine is dissatisfied with her father's favoritism toward Bianca. She endures mockery and unequal treatment. No matter what the Baptista family members do on the surface, they cannot help developing themselves into self-centered, isolated individuals who have difficulty connecting with others.

5.5 Family Projection Process in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

The father-daughter relationship between Hermia and Egeus requires a comprehensive understanding of Hermia's entire family system. This part will clarify Hermia's whole family system and subsequently examine the father-daughter relationship between Hermia and Egeus. Directing attention towards Hermia's parents, this study will further illuminate the root cause of the strained relationship: the mother's absence, leading to a fusion between father and

daughter.

5.5.1 The Absence of Hermia's Mother

To better understand the family structure, Bowen's three subsystems in a family system are parents, parent-child, and siblings. In the case of Hermia's nuclear family, only two subsystems exist, namely parents and parent-child. Analyzing Hermia's parents is essential to better understanding the father-daughter relationship with Egeus. In Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Hermia is the daughter of Egeus, a powerful nobleman in Athens (Alsharadgeh 121). Egeus perceives his daughter as an object he can control at his discretion. His language exposes the inherent violence that often underlies law or reason, highlighting a dissonance amidst the apparent nature of love (Jacobson 23-24). Theseus embodies fatherhood as a cultural act, an art in which the father acts as a demiurge or homo faber, shaping, molding, and leaving his imprint upon what is otherwise formless matter. Remarkably absent from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is the relationship between the mother and daughter. In this comedy, the central female character is not Hermia's mother but Hermia. The mother's role is wholly excluded from this account of a daughter's formation. Hermia lacks a mother figure; her existence is solely under the influence of her father.

As Hermia is Egeus' only child, this father-daughter relationship often encounters complications since the father's anxiety and lack of differentiation are mainly focused on Hermia. According to Kerr and Bowen, in their discussion of Family Systems Theory, the development of physical, emotional, and social symptoms in children of a nuclear family is affected by root cause factors that influence adult symptom development: the level of differentiation and chronic anxiety (Kerr and Bowen 187). They further note that the relationship with the primary caretaker, typically the mother, exerts the most significant influence on the child's level of differentiation. If the mother dies, leaves the family, or becomes highly dysfunctional during the child's early years, the father, a grandparent, or another person will serve as a substitute and exert the most direct influence on the child's differentiation. Even when the mother is present but lacks a sense of self, the father's and others' influence on the child increases. Individuals with the most emotional significance to the child hold the most substantial sway over their differentiation (Kerr and Bowen 189). In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Hermia's mother is absent. Within a psychoanalytic framework, one can speculate that the adolescent Hermia is struggling with a much earlier and more formative relationship with an unseen and unmentioned figure: her mother (Waller 82). Consequently, Hermia's father, Egeus, holds the most significant influence over her differentiation. Egeus appears as an unacceptable authority figure, having previously been willing to condemn his daughter to death due to her refusal to marry a man he arbitrarily chose for her. Similarly, he demonstrates equal anxiety in condemning Lysander to death for his defiance. For Egeus, life is a game, and his anger stems primarily from feeling "defeated" by the lovers. Hatred and triumph take precedence over love (Jacobson 50). Egeus' s excessive control and lack of differentiation exemplify the family projection process. His

unresolved anxiety and emotional immaturity are projected onto Hermia, which eventually impairs their relationship.

5.5.2 Triangles

Triangles permeate *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, but the mother is absent. Instead, a triangle forms through the father's intervention, not between the child and the mother but between the daughter and her suitor. This is evident when Egeus enters with Hermia, Lysander, and Demetrius, presenting his "paternal complaint" (Calderwood 10). Egeus' choice for his daughter is ill-fated unless he intends to maintain her companionship, as some may argue. By insisting that she marry a man she does not love and one who may prove unfaithful, given Demetrius's current behavior, Egeus ensures that she will eternally love her father and never truly leave him. There are even suggestions that Egeus holds a particular affection for Demetrius. Shakespeare does not allow us to assume that Egeus' preference for Demetrius is merely possessive, i.e., as Hermia belongs to him, he can give her to whomever he chooses, or that it is simply an affirmation of male bonding. Egeus wants Hermia to marry Demetrius rather than Lysander. Garner (2010) interprets Lysander's sarcasm as reflecting Egeus's sentiments toward Demetrius (56). Egeus's actions and words indirectly reflect his preference for Demetrius as Hermia's mate.

Hermia's relationship with her father worsens when she declines to marry Demetrius. Even when love is reciprocated and seemingly grounded in clear vision, family disapproval often obstructs it. In the case of Lysander and Hermia, their passion is hindered by Egeus' desire for Hermia to marry

Demetrius. Egeus has the law on his side. All the relationships in the play, especially this one, underscore the conflict between love and law. The “ancient privilege of Athens” empowers Egeus to dispose of his daughter as he pleases, treating her as his property and marrying her off at his will. His words exhibit the violence inherent in law, exposing a contradiction within the apparent harmony of love. Theseus’ decree dictates that Hermia must align her desires with her father’s will, implying that her father’s authority must counter her passion; otherwise, the laws of Athens will sacrifice her on the altar of reason (Jacobson 72).

The parents played a large part in Hermia’s upbringing. As the mother is absent and the central relationship is between Hermia and her father, particular attention is paid to the father-daughter relationship. According to the preceding analysis, Hermia’s relationship with Egeus is tense.

5.6 Conclusion

The selected Shakespearean plays showcase the intricate ways fathers and daughters unconsciously navigate their familial ties amidst emotional turmoil and a lack of differentiation. While these behaviors may superficially seem dysfunctional, contradictory, or compromised, they ultimately profoundly influence the family’s emotional integrity.

Notably, the absence of mothers in the selected plays, such as Ophelia’s mother in *Hamlet*, the mother of Cordelia, Goneril, and Regan in *King Lear*,

the mother of Katherine and Bianca in *The Taming of the Shrew*, and the mother of Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, is significant. In all four plays, the daughters are compelled to comply with their fathers' will and function as mere extensions of their fathers. They become objects of their fathers' emotional projections. However, due to the heightened levels of anxiety and undifferentiation within the daughters' emotional systems, the fathers' lower level of self-differentiation renders them more susceptible to the family projection process. Overall, the selected Shakespearean plays exemplify the emotional dynamics centered around Bowen's concepts of the nuclear family emotional system, family projection process, and triangles. Bowen Theory effectively elucidates the intricacies of the father-daughter relationship in these dramas.

CHAPTER 6

SOCIETAL REGRESSION AND THE FATHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIP

6.1 Introduction

This chapter is going to achieve the third research objective: to investigate the impact of societal regression on the father-daughter relationship in William Shakespeare's *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. They represented emotional processes in society and dysfunctional father-daughter relationships. Bowen responded to the evolving dynamics of his theory by introducing a novel concept, initially referred to as "societal regression" (Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory* 82). This novel concept suggests that cultures display distinct anxiety levels, orderliness, and organizational structure during different historical periods. During periods characterized by societal regression, heightened levels of anxiety permeate the general populace, giving rise to a climate marked by increased disorder and the manifestation of irresponsible behaviors. This, in turn, catalyzes a feedback loop wherein the ensuing chaos and recklessness generate further anxiety, thereby sustaining an escalating cycle of societal disruption and dysfunction (Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory* 82). The chapter employs the concept of societal regression to examine the father-daughter relationships as portrayed in the selected Shakespearean plays. It is worth noting that the concept of societal regression, as exemplified in these plays, is a compelling illustration of the nuclear family's centrality as the fundamental unit within the broader social fabric.

The manifestations of societal regression in the selected Shakespearean plays are promiscuous sexuality, emotional disorders, corruption, and chaos in England in Shakespeare's times, as well as the effect of the Renaissance on the emotional process in society. These cases are presented through the emotionally disturbed daughters: Cordelia, Goneril, and Regan in *King Lear*, Ophelia in *Hamlet*, Katherine and Bianca in *The Taming of the Shrew*, and Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. To investigate these ideas, the following part will present the concept of social regression and how it is evident in the father-daughter relationship within the chosen texts.

The subsections are chosen to explore how societal regression affects the father-daughter dynamics in selected Shakespeare's dramas. The criteria for their inclusion concentrate on the importance of social changes, especially the dynamics of power, patriarchy, and emotional reactivity, all within the framework of Bowen Theory. Each subsection examines specific aspects of social regression, such as the fall of feudalism in *King Lear* and melancholy in *Hamlet*, emphasizing how these affect father-daughter relations. The subsections were structured to gradually build, starting with broad social concepts and narrowing their effects on family dynamics. The subsections ensure a comprehensive, layered analysis of societal regression, aligning with the third objective of the study.

6.2 Societal Regression in *King Lear*

Bowen's concept of social regression illuminates a cyclical process in which increased social anxiety leads to more destructive conduct, driven by factors

such as overpopulation, unequal distribution of resources, environmental degradation, and social threats such as nuclear weapons. Social anxiety impairs social functioning, increases individual stress, and affects family relationships, ultimately affecting all family members (Bowen 429-30).

Shakespeare's *King Lear* is set during a period of profound societal transformation and moral disarray, vividly portraying a dysfunctional social environment. The play captures the essence of societal regression and its impact on families and individuals, as illustrated in the play: "Love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide; in cities, mutinies; in countries, discord; in palaces, treason; and the bond cracked 'wixt son and father" (1.3.104-07). These lines capture the play's thematic focus on the fragmentation of social and familial bonds.

In *King Lear*, social regression is intricately connected with examining father-daughter relationships. The play emphasizes the topics of loyalty, betrayal, authority, love, and the consequences that arise when family bonds are tense or broken, a poignant reminder of how deeply connected personal dynamics are with more extensive social structures in human experience. Through these elements, Shakespeare produces a timeless reflection of power dynamics in families against the background of moral decline in society.

6.2.1 The Rise of Individualism

One of the manifestations of societal regression in *King Lear* is the rise of individualism. Individualism is a narrower branch of the wide-ranging humanist

philosophy. The term “humanism,” derived from the Latin word “humanitas,” reflects the cultural values associated with a liberal education, encompassing the study of language, literature, history, and moral philosophy (Kraye 1). Although humanism did not propose a specific philosophical system, it significantly emphasized the importance of human values and personal development. The “studia humanitatis” were regarded as essential for cultivating a refined and virtuous individual (Demolen 7). Notably, humanists such as Petrarch and Giannozzo Manetti highlight “individualism and the importance of personal experience and feelings” (Demolen 7). As a Renaissance humanist, Shakespeare adeptly captured his era’s spirit and infused his works with “the human spirit” (Do 2). Raspa (2016) demonstrates that *King Lear* is deeply intertwined with the “moral philosophy” of Renaissance humanism (53).

Shakespeare portrays the wrongdoings of Lear, Cordelia, Goneril, and Regan and the ensuing catastrophe in the tragedy. Their behaviors reflect the characteristics of individualism. As the play begins, King Lear partitions his kingdom. He relegates his powers from active governance, an act that reflects a selfish endeavor where he prioritizes his desire to enjoy his old age, disregarding the potential impact on national stability: “Know that we have divided/In three our kingdom, and ‘tis our fast intent/To shake all cares and business from our age” (1.1.37-39). This decision, perceived as a violation of “primogeniture and cosmic order” by Shakespeare’s contemporaries, is viewed as “a dangerous threat” to the kingdom’s stability (Dreher 64).

Lear's decision to quit the throne and divide his kingdom among his daughters reflects his desire for personal autonomy and his expression of individualism. King Lear yearns to shed the weight of rulership while desire retains the privilege of power, boldly asserting his will over conventional obligations. Moreover, Cordelia's steadfast refusal to flatter her father in public epitomizes unwavering individualism on her part. She places her integrity above familial and societal expectations, setting a compelling example of principled defiance. Furthermore, Goneril and Regan's behavior demonstrates individualism through their pursuit of power and autonomy and a refusal to meet societal and familial expectations. Their behaviors demonstrate an extreme form of individualism that prioritizes self-interest. When Lear divides his kingdom, they deceitfully flatter him to gain power and land. Regardless of their father's happiness, self-interest and a desire for power drive their words and actions. After obtaining their inheritance, Goneril and Regan violently challenge Lear's authority and autonomy. They disregard Lear's demands and reduce his followers. They show individualism by pursuing personal profit at the expense of family and societal order. Lear and his daughters pursue individualistic desires for autonomy, integrity, or power at the expense of the father-daughter relationships. Shakespeare emphasizes the complex dynamics of individualism in this tragedy.

6.2.2 The Fall of Feudalism

Another manifestation of social regression in *King Lear* is the decay and fall of feudal society. The Elizabethan age was a transformative period

encompassing “two historical epochs, the feudal and the capitalist,” characterized by the emergence of novel ideas resulting from the downfall of the old and the confrontation of the new (Dreher 29). The transition from feudalism to capitalism during the early Renaissance resulted in a transfer of authority. The power that feudal lords formerly held moved above the king while simultaneously moving below individual patriarchs. These patriarchs exercised control over their nuclear families, with the father assuming the position of authorized “petty tyranny” within the household (Stone 7; Kahn, *Man’s Estate: Masculine Identity in Shakespeare* 14; Dreher 40). Shakespeare devised a succession of rebellious female characters that broke the constraints of feudalism. He acknowledged that women occupied the lowest position in the feudal system. Before marriage, girls are required to comply with their fathers’ authority; otherwise, they face the possibility of being denied their dowry and inheritance. Cordelia disobeys her father’s command, speaks out, and is perceived as threatening the feudal system. Consequently, Lear deprives her of her heritage and sends her away. Goneril and Regan do not consistently tolerate their father’s outbursts; instead, they retaliate against him equally. The betrayal of daughters further demonstrates the decline in the feudal order. The decision of Goneril and Regan to undress Lear of his dignity and reduce his followers symbolizes the broader collapse of authority in family and society. The drama criticizes the transition from the system of mutual loyalty to the one powered by personal ambitions, as seen in the daughters’ disregard of the father’s welfare after securing their inheritance. Their actions indicate rejecting old feudal values and embracing a new social order.

In *King Lear*, the division of the kingdom reflects the destabilization of the traditional feudal order. At the time of Shakespeare, the feudal system was one in which authority and loyalty were centered around the king, and family relationships were framed by rigid hierarchies of loyalty and obligation. Lear's decision to divide his kingdom among his daughters, based on their verbal expressions of love, presents these basic principles of loyalty, heritage, and duty. This action undermines the social contract that holds the family and the kingdom together. By dividing his kingdom, Lear breaks the unity and stability that the feudal system once provided, leading to a society that no longer works on the principles of mutual respect and duty.

The intense power struggle between King Lear and his daughters, Cordelia, Goneril, and Regan, reflects a clash between the traditional feudal system and the emerging new order. As the daughters challenge and reject Lear's authority, the play vividly captures the turmoil when new societal structures attempt to supplant the old. The poignant tragedy of the daughters, initially resisting the outdated feudal norms but, in the end, succumbing and falling victim to their folly. The poignant narrative powerfully underscores the anxiety and instability that can accompany societal regression.

6.2.3 Patriarchy and the Power Struggles

Patriarchy is also a manifestation of social regression in *King Lear*. Marriage and the accompanying family settlement in a patriarchal society encouraged the expansion of the patronage network. This process was closely overseen

by “the elders of both families” (Stone 73). The “juxtaposition” of women’s ability to actively “in matters of love and desire” with the passive ideal of submission to “patriarchal authority” also generates “serious anxiety about the truth of women’s love” and marital faithfulness (Kemp 41). It is noteworthy that a similar dilemma exists between parents and children. In Shakespeare’s play *King Lear*, Lear is “anxious over the love of his daughters” (Kemp 41). The connection between Lear and his daughters is characterized by a cold and distant atmosphere, and they lack an understanding of the concept of love. Patriarchy is a social system where the eldest males assume power and authority. This results in “a constant struggle” within families, towns, counties, and even courtrooms to gain approval or establish a shared claim over an individual, often an older man, who holds the reins of authority (Stone 73). Under the hegemony of male dominance, the daughters prioritize status, disregard familial affection, and perceive land as a manifestation of love. Lear is frank about his intentions: “We have this hour a constant will to publish/ Our daughters’ several dowers, that future strife/May be prevented now” (1.1.43-45). Nevertheless, Lear harbours concerns regarding the potential negative influence of the unfavorable social environment on his daughters, which could result in their lack of support for him. Consequently, he organizes a competition to choose which daughter would receive the “largest bounty” (1.1.52) based on their level of respect and virtue. Lear seeks to uphold his position through the system of patriarchy. He desires the recognition he is entitled to as a father and the treatment he has previously enjoyed as a monarch after losing the throne. Nevertheless, he is unprepared for the dethronement to undermine his dominant position as the head of the family. Lear miscalculates the

constraining power of patriarchy following his loss of royal status. The patriarchal consciousness that Lear is powerful and sovereign in his reign drives the two elder daughters to use flattery to acquire their father's territory and authority. Despite Cordelia's deep affection for Lear, she refuses to engage in flattery, which results in her being cursed and abandoned by her father. Lear desires to have a retinue of one hundred knights to symbolize his aristocracy, which Goneril and Regan objected to, perceiving as a challenge to their authority. Upon Goneril and Regan's rebellion against their father and the reduction of his followers, Lear curses Goneril to be infertile. This demonstrates the prevailing patriarchal hierarchy within society during that specific era. Women were regarded as symbolic of their ability to reproduce. The dispute between the father and daughter is simply a manifestation of a power struggle.

King Lear exhibits different manifestations of societal emotional processes, including patriarchy. Shakespeare's depiction allows us to perceive Lear's anxiety for his daughters. He worries that the hostile social environment will gradually weaken their relationship, and they will not continue to live together and provide him with assistance. Therefore, these emotional loads have played a role in his escalating levels of chronic anxiety, damaging his relationship with his daughters.

In *King Lear*, societal regression and family disintegration are inseparably connected. The collapse of the Lear family, especially concerning the father-daughter dynamics, reflects the disintegration of social order. Shakespeare's

treatment of individualism, the fall of feudalism, and the patriarchal power struggles emphasize the complex relationship between family and societal regression. The drama suggests that the health of family and society depends on maintaining loyalty, trust, and moral integrity. When these ties are broken, there is a personal and social disaster. Shakespeare reflects on societal regression and its deep connection with personal dynamics.

6.3 Societal Regression in *Hamlet*

William Shakespeare's timeless tragedy *Hamlet* was probably written in London in January 1600. It offers a captivating kaleidoscope to explore the intricate dynamics of the father-daughter relationship within the context of societal regression in Bowen Theory. Hoy (1963) argues that Shakespeare's narrative in *Hamlet* asserts that the entire court and society are steeped in corruption (263). McEvoy (2006) also notes that Shakespeare speaks to the tension of the era in the tragedy, characterized by the waning influence of the "aristocratic tradition," the increasing power of capitalism, and the tumultuous aftermath of the Reformation, which gave rise to religious and intellectual upheaval in Shakespeare's London (*William Shakespeare's Hamlet: A Sourcebook* 65).

Hamlet's setting—a corrupt and chaotic Danish court—symbolizes widespread social degradation. According to Bowen, such chaos reflects social anxieties driven by technological and civilizational progress. Do (2023) notes that Shakespeare vividly expresses this turbulent zeitgeist through *Hamlet*,

portraying Denmark as a brutal prison of moral and social decay, while Shakespeare denounces a world where money prevails, murderers evade justice, and absurdity reigns supreme. Society descends into an irredeemable state of cunning and decay. In the process of social decay in the environment, individuals can lose themselves (Do 5-6). Focusing on the relationship between Polonius and Ophelia, Shakespeare presents a complex father-daughter dynamic. Incorporating the Senex archetype, Polonius displays genuine paternal concern and abusive qualities. His character gives further charm to the irony of his resort to comedy, culminating in his death and his daughter, who later descends into great melancholy. Ophelia remains Shakespeare's first examination of an intelligent and loving girl engaged in and ultimately destroyed by "political intrigue" (Davies 183).

In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, we see how the family dynamics interact against the backdrop of societal regression. Shakespeare's portrayal of Polonius and Ophelia is a microcosm of the broader social decay he denounces in *Hamlet*. Through these characters, he reveals the tragic consequences of family involvement in a corrupt and morally corrupt world. Polonius and Ophelia, symbols of a more crucial social regression, underscore Shakespeare's work's enduring relevance and profound insights into understanding the complexity of human relationships amid social turmoil. Societal regression is "a process of erosion of functioning over time" (Lester 21). In *Hamlet*, we can observe how social regression affects the father-daughter dynamic.

6.3.1 The Patriarchal Control

During Shakespeare's era, society was deeply engrained in a patriarchal structure, where power and authority were predominantly vested in men. This patriarchal society is mirrored in Shakespeare's seminal works, particularly in his portrayal of father-daughter relationships. Darkouchi (2014) astutely observes that the Polonius-Ophelia relationship in *Hamlet* vividly reflects the skewed power dynamics and patriarchal constraints on women's autonomy that prevailed in the sixteenth century (358). This insight sheds light on the enduring relevance of Shakespeare's portrayal of gender dynamics, making his works a compelling lens to grasp a snapshot of the prevailing power imbalance and hegemonic practice of that era.

Ophelia's existence is overshadowed by the male-dominated world around her. Polonius's authoritarian control stifles Ophelia's ability to develop an independent identity, leaving her ill-equipped to navigate a world beyond his influence (Do 5-6). For instance, when queried by her father about her beliefs in Hamlet's affections, Ophelia responds with deference: "I do not know, my lord, what I should think" (1.3.104). Subsequently, when Polonius issued a directive limiting her interactions with Lord Hamlet, Ophelia dutifully complied, stating, "I shall obey, my lord" (1.3. 136). Similarly, when Polonius inquires whether she had engaged in any contentious exchanges with Hamlet, Ophelia reports, "No, my good lord, but as you did command/ I did repel his letters and denied/ His access to me" (2.1. 109-11). These interactions vividly illustrate how Ophelia's agency and autonomy have been systematically eroded by the

controlling influence of her father, further emphasizing her subservient position within a patriarchal society.

Besides, Ophelia symbolizes the daughter as a pawn in pursuing her father's advancement. As Davies (2017) presented in *Hamlet*, Ophelia becomes a pawn in the hands of Polonius, who uses her as "a decoy to test Hamlet's sanity" (184). Ophelia embodies the idealized image of an Elizabethan woman—a young lady of noble birth, protected by her family and secure in her identity. However, her fate takes a tragic turn as she becomes entangled in the political intrigues of her father and the court. The contemporary audience may perceive Ophelia's readiness to be used as highly astonishing. However, by considering the cultural influences of the patriarchal society during the Elizabethan era, one might develop "a greater empathy with her" (Lenker 54).

Despite initially obeying the wishes of her father, Polonius, Ophelia's eventual descent into madness and her tragic end can be perceived as a rebellion against the limitations imposed on her by her father and society. In *Hamlet*, Ophelia emerges as a daughter, paradoxically navigating the patriarchal system and ultimately being consumed by it.

As the play unfolds, the death of Polonius leaves Ophelia isolated and vulnerable in a male-dominated society. This phenomenon of the "masterless woman," as observed by Underdown, had the potential to disrupt hierarchical communities, including the patriarchy (36-38). Ophelia, when stripped of her father in her life, becomes a potentially unruly woman—a character who

unintentionally speaks unwelcome truths that challenge the dominant social order. Lenker (2001) notes that Ophelia's insanity becomes a source of embarrassment and a potential challenge to the authority of the Queen, King and the foundations of patriarchal power that the play interrogates. This uncontrollable divergence of voices draws parallels between Ophelia and Davis's "unruly woman," highlighting the significance of her character in facilitating change and innovation within society (Lenker 152). The authoritarian Renaissance society perceived women without male control as a genuine threat. Shakespeare's portrayal of Ophelia possibly invoked both "sympathy for her plight" and fear of the potential disruptions to the established order (Lenker 152). Ophelia's madness amplifies the discord within Denmark, much as the "masterless woman" did in Renaissance England, a country already apprehensive about the stability of its patriarchal order (Lenker 153).

The social regression associated with patriarchy provokes deep social anxiety, especially within family and gender dynamics. In *Hamlet*, Polonius embodies an authoritative figure, while Ophelia is expected to correspond to the subordinate role of obedience. On the one hand, Ophelia must observe her father's directive to spy on Hamlet; on the other hand, she is torn by her love for him. This irresolvable conflict deteriorates her psychological anxiety and eventually culminates in her madness and subsequent suicide. The social anxiety fostered by patriarchal structures leads to the destructive behavior of Ophelia and seriously disrupts her relationship with her father.

6.3.2 The Promiscuous Sexuality

Ophelia's premarital sexual encounter with Hamlet is suggested by her song: "Tomorrow is Saint Valentine's day, / And in the morning betime, / And I a maid at your window / To be your Valentine. / Then up he rose, and donned his clothes, / And dugged the chamber door; / Let in the maid, that out a maid / Never departed more" (4.5. 47-54). In the play, virginity is central to "a daughter's position in the world," which Laertes emphasizes when advising his sister Ophelia (Davies 166). Hamlet further reinforces this notion by stating, "That if you be honest and fair, your honesty should admit no discourse to your beauty" (3.1.109-10). Camden (1951) notes that Bruto echoes this sentiment, equating chastity with many virtues (*The Elizabethan Woman* 41). Cressy (1997), in contrast, asserts that it was commonly believed that it was acceptable for a couple who had established a contractual agreement to move from kissing and fondling to engaging in sexual intercourse. According to the law, such "premarital 'incontinence'" was considered fornication and might be subject to punishment if detected. However, a robust cultural trend allowed engaged couples to take the risk of their "chastity" before marriage (Cressy 277). Ophelia's premarital incontinence is a manifestation of societal regression.

Ophelia and Hamlet's promiscuous sexuality and the effects of an anxious presence to reach an emotional intimacy could be regarded as results of the emotional process in society. One can see promiscuous and restrained sexuality as markers of societal emotional regression, which shows closeness

in *Hamlet*. On the other hand, repressed sexuality manifests itself clearly in Ophelia as madness. While her newfound freedom of expression during her madness might be seen as liberation from patriarchal control, “ultimately she still expresses those constraints through song” (Aughterson and Ferguson 138). The context of Ophelia’s disease, akin to hysteria later, is “sexual frustration,” social powerlessness, and the oppressive regulation of women’s bodies (McEvoy, *William Shakespeare’s Hamlet* 69). Enduring her father’s relentless control and monitoring, Ophelia’s madness unveils the steep price of suppressing her emotions and sexuality, as evidenced in the play. Ophelia’s Bonny Robin song: “For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy” (4.5. 185), emerges as an explicit exploration of themes related to lovers, unfaithfulness, and extramarital affairs (Edwards 58). Interestingly, Robin is construed as “one of the cant terms for the male sex organ” in the 16th century (Morris 601). This reading suggests that Ophelia’s songs serve as an outward projection of her deeply repressed sexual desires.

6.3.3 Human Spirit in Conflict

As a Renaissance humanist, Shakespeare has infused the human spirit into his *Hamlet*. Do (2023) defines Renaissance humanism as a cultural movement that aimed to restore and enrich the ancient Greek and Roman cultures of the Middle Ages. Do points out that Renaissance humanism, in stark contrast to prevailing religious dogma, sought to elevate humanity, emancipate individuals from the spiritual shackles of feudalism, challenge scholasticism and ecclesiastical authority, and steer society toward the pursuit of authentic

existence (10). Through the medium of *Hamlet*, Shakespeare adeptly channels his profound philosophical outlook on life, undoubtedly influenced by the French Renaissance humanist Montaigne (1533–1592) (Do 8). As MacCary (1998) has extensively deliberated, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* stands as a testament to the era's intellectual discourse:

Even if we cannot convince ourselves that Shakespeare knew this particular essay of Montaigne before he wrote *Hamlet*—Montaigne's constant reference to and quotation from ancient philosophers adds further force to the argument in favor—we should appreciate that his philosophical positions are congruent with those of Shakespeare. Both represent a questioning of the High Renaissance celebration of man as in control of his mind and his universe. Montaigne makes specific reference to Copernicus's decentering of the earth in the universe, and this, of course, suggests human decentering, since the old worldview saw the universe as God's creation for human benefit. What happens to people's thinking about themselves when they can no longer hold on to the old beliefs: in their likeness to each other, in their prescribed place in the order of things, in their ability to use their reason to impose their own order and control, in their godlike nature? The answer lies in Hamlet's concern with nothing, or nonbeing (MacCary 50).

Renaissance humanism influences William Shakespeare's portrayal of the characters and the father-daughter relationship in *Hamlet*. Wilson (1964) even ventured to suggest that Polonius drew inspiration from Burleigh: "The figure of Polonius is almost without doubt intended as a caricature of Burleigh, who died on August 4, 1598" (104). Like many fathers of his time, Polonius adheres to the notion that obedience is paramount in shaping a woman's character. However, this perspective was increasingly challenged by sixteenth-century Humanists who argued for women's liberty and self-development. Unfortunately, like countless others, Ophelia was deprived of such freedoms from an early age, leading to her subjugation and inability to think or act

independently. As articulated by Agrippa, “subjection is self-perpetuating in women” (Dusinberre 95).

The advancement of humanism made it possible for daughters to receive education, but it also led to social anxiety and regression. The central theme of *Hamlet* revolves around the education of both fathers and daughters. Initially presenting himself as a mentor, Polonius is ultimately unmasked as a counterfeit educator, driven by his ego and desire to maintain dominion over his daughter. For instance, Polonius articulates: “Marry, I’ll teach you: think yourself a baby/ That you have ta’en his tenders for true pay, / which are not sterling. Tender yourself more dearly” (1.3. 105-07). At this moment, Polonius imparts paternal counsel to his daughter, simultaneously encouraging her to hold herself in high regard while emphasizing the importance of preserving her chastity with discernment. Nevertheless, his guidance traps his daughter in a perilous predicament that she cannot evade, ultimately leading to her demise. Hamilton (1943) asserts how Polonius shapes Ophelia’s upbringing, leading to her tragic downfall. In his zealous guardianship, Polonius denies his daughter the opportunity to appraise him objectively, measure his sermons against his actions, or question the role he has cast her in. His untimely demise leaves Ophelia in a state of despair, “lost and helpless” (Hamilton 92). Ophelia descends into madness and ultimately takes her own life. Shakespeare’s depiction of this disrupted relationship reflects the broader humanist struggle against restrictive societal norms.

6.3.4 Melancholy

The melancholy is a cultural phenomenon in Renaissance society and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. During the Elizabethan era, audiences loosely attributed any madness stemming from grief to melancholic madness (Babb 74). The vogue for melancholy in English literature and society began to gain prominence during the latter part of Queen Elizabeth's reign. This phenomenon was partly due to "the imitation of the Italian affectation of melancholy by travelers returned from the Continent" (Babb 74). It is apparent that many "melancholic travelers" in Elizabethan London formed a distinct social group. This group was further expanded by persons who took up the affectation even though they had never been abroad (Babb 74). Schleiner, in contrast to Babb, asserts that melancholy encompasses conditions "from madness to genius" (*Melancholy, Genius, and Utopia in the Renaissance* 10). As the fashion for melancholy diminished and the physiological basis of melancholy as temperament and disease resurfaced, it was re-associated with serious scholarship rather than fashionable trends (O'Connell 54).

Shakespeare himself tended to explore melancholy throughout *Hamlet*. Lyons (1971) notes that the images of illness in the play create a world closely related to melancholy and serve as a suitable reaction. The play's environment and images comprise "melancholy or diseased" characters (Lyons 78). The lunacy that Ophelia ultimately experiences is, in part, a manifestation of a more prominent personality, yet distinct and complete, a separation "from herself" and from "her fair judgment" (Lyons 85). According to Robert Burton (2016),

“love is a species of melancholy” (681). Babb (1951) believes that Ophelia holds significant sway in the portrayal of “lovesick maidens” in early Stuart plays, with her madness primarily rooted in her profound grief over her father’s demise rather than “disappointment in love (Babb 166).

Social regression marked by melancholy in *Hamlet* creates a ubiquitous social anxiety that profoundly influences individuals in the family unit. The destructive behavior of Ophelia, including her eventual madness and death, can be considered a direct consequence of this social anxiety. The emotional repression she experiences, especially in the context of her relationship with her father, Polonius, worsens her psychological anxiety. When Polonius applies strict control of his actions and emotions, Ophelia’s sense of melancholy is intensified. This dynamic leads to the disintegration of their relationship because Ophelia becomes increasingly depressing and culminates in her tragic demise. Thus, the destructive consequences of social anxiety are laid bare in Ophelia’s fate, which emphasizes the profound impact of social regression on personal identity and family relationships.

6.3.5 Religious Norms

The norms and beliefs of Shakespeare’s time regarding suicide and Christian burial practices are reflected in *Hamlet*. This is particularly evident in Ophelia’s gradual decline into madness and her eventual tragic suicide in the brook. Under established canonical norms, Ophelia’s final resting place should have been designated as unhallowed ground, which would have mandated the

casting of “shards, flints, and pebbles” upon her grave. However, it becomes evident that the overarching authority of the monarch’s edict superseded the ecclesiastical regulations, affording Ophelia the privilege of a dignified burial. Furthermore, it is worth highlighting that she was granted the customary tokens of purity, symbolized by the ceremonial scattering of flowers upon her grave, as indicated by Jenkins (389).

During the Tudor period, suicide was regarded as a sin by the Church and considered a criminal act under English law (John-Stevas 233). The punishment for suicide included the confiscation of the deceased’s property and the denial of a Christian burial (Norton 202). Surprisingly, despite these legal and spiritual prohibitions, historical records suggest that as many as 12 % of violent deaths in the Tudor era may have been due to suicide (Hair 6-43). This alarming statistic underscores the prevalence of mental distress during this period, highlighting the need to explore the societal factors contributing to such a high suicide rate, including the impact of familial relationships.

In addition, in the context of societal regression, *Hamlet* can reflect the Old Testament’s view that the human heart is inherently wicked from a young age. This perspective leads to a societal code that prescribes self-control and assumes virtue as necessary for harmonious living in society. However, this notion of self-control and virtue is juxtaposed with the irrationality of the family scene in *Hamlet* (French 150). In Act I, Scene III, Polonius imparts a solemn admonishment to Ophelia, prompting her to reassess the sanctity she had ascribed to Hamlet’s words and deeds. He posits that the innate disposition of

the male is marked by both carnal desire and duplicity, articulating:

When the blood burns how prodigal the soul
Lends the tongue vows. These blazes, daughter,
Giving more light than heat, extinct in both
Even in their promise as it is a-making,
You must not take for fire. From this time, daughter,
Be somewhat scanter of your maiden presence (1.4.116-21).

Indeed, Polonius' discourse serves to underscore Ophelia ought to exercise restraint in baring her beauty, lest it be perceived by Hamlet, and lose her virginity. This warning narrative indicates Renaissance anxiety about female chastity and the morality of the Old Testament, especially the concept of women as guardians of virtue in the fallen world. The basic prerequisite is that women must maintain sexual purity to adhere to the moral integrity of the community. As a result, Ophelia is not only instructed to be chaste; she has the task of the burden of moral vigilance in the face of the corruption of men.

Religious norms in *Hamlet* play a decisive role in driving social anxiety, especially concerning the issues of purity, chastity, and sexual behavior. These social expectations create an atmosphere of moral and emotional pressure, which worsens the psychological stress of individuals, especially women who are exposed to strict behavior codes. In the case of Ophelia, religious norms surrounding female virtue and sexual decency intensify her inner conflict and significantly contribute to her emotional deterioration. The pressure to maintain her purity and adherence to the moral expectations of her society is the burden

that she cannot reconcile with her desires, especially with her love for Hamlet. This religious anxiety increases the tension of the relationship of Ophelia with her father, Polonius, who embodies these religious norms by persistently monitoring her behavior and strengthening the importance of her virginity. His adamant control and the weight of these religious ideals lead to a wedge between them and deepen her sense of isolation. As the tension between social expectations and her desires increases, the mental state of Ophelia deteriorates, leading her to engage in destructive behavior and culminating in her suicide. Ophelia's tragic end reflects the devastating impact of societal regression, especially religious norms, on father-daughter relationships.

6.4 Societal Regression in *The Taming of the Shrew*

6.4.1 Patriarchal Power

Shakespeare's works are renowned for exploring the complexities of human relationships, and *The Taming of the Shrew* is a microcosm of Elizabethan society's patriarchal power dynamics. Verma (2021) notes that Shakespeare's plays often serve as mirrors reflecting the complexities of family relationships in Elizabethan society. In the 16th century, England was characterized by a patriarchal family structure, where males held central positions of authority, while women were expected to be "obedient, submissive and silent" (Verma 108). Józefik (2022) proposes that *The Taming of the Shrew* explores family dynamics within a particular stage of "the family life cycle" and within a family with a specific structure (71). Detmer (1997) argues that *The Taming of the*

Shrew reflects the prevailing “cultural desires for masculine domination” (289). Lakshmanan (2011) posits that *The Taming of the Shrew* was “ahead of its time in its views towards gender roles within society” (112). Aughterson and Ferguson (2020) suggest that *The Taming of the Shrew* illustrates how women adhere to men’s perspectives on society and how the “fluidity of identity and crossing of identity boundaries (of gender or class)” can lead to social achievement (82).

In *The Taming of the Shrew*, Baptista assumes the father’s role responsible for arranging the marriages of his two daughters, Katherine and Bianca. In Elizabethan England, fathers had the authority to select husbands for their daughters, and daughters were expected not to interfere in this decision-making process. This power dynamic is evident in Baptista’s control over his daughters’ marital destinies. Baptista’s absolute control over his daughter’s marriage is apparent when he prioritizes the marriage of his eldest daughter, Katherine: “Gentlemen, importune me no farther, / For how I firmly am resolved you know:/ That is, not to bestow my youngest daughter/ Before I have a husband for the elder” (1.1. 48-51). What Baptista said is not surprising, reflecting the social reality that the father arranged the daughters’ marriages at that time. George Trevelyan (1942) notes this in his *History of England*:

The daughter who refused to marry the gentleman of her parents’ choice was liable to be locked up, beaten, and flung about the room, without any shock being inflicted on public opinion. Marriage was not an affair of personal affection but of family avarice, particularly in the ‘chivalrous’ upper classes (Trevelyan 196).

From Trevelyan's depiction of the position of women in the 15th century, we know that women who refused to marry the gentleman chosen by their parents risked harsh treatment, including confinement and physical punishment. Baptista's authoritative control over his daughter's marriage reflects the prevalent practices of the time.

Bowen embarked upon his contemplation of social unrest and societal regression around the year 1955. During this period, societal manifestations exhibited heightened restlessness, increased self-centeredness, more significant immaturity, escalating lawlessness, and a burgeoning sense of irresponsibility compared to preceding years (Bowen 293). The discernible indicator of societal regression within Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* is unequivocally represented by the influence wielded by the force of wealth. Baptista's arrangements for Katherine's marriage include using a substantial dowry to secure a suitable husband. In England, brides who did not inherit land could not give landed property due to primogeniture. Instead, they were required to bring a considerable substantial cash sum, known as a 'portion,' as their dowry. During the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, this currency was directly allocated to the groom's father, who frequently used it as a dowry when marrying off one of his daughters. As a reciprocal gesture, the groom's father provided the bride with an "annuity," known as a "jointure," which ensured that she would receive a fixed annual income in the event of her husband's death (Stone 72). In *The Taming of the Shrew*, Baptista uses the promise of a generous dowry to attract potential suitors for Katherine. While Baptista outwardly emphasizes the importance of love in marriage, his true

motivation is revealed to be financial gain. He is primarily concerned with Petruchio's wealth rather than Katherine's happiness. So does Petruchio. This mercenary approach to marriage is highlighted by Lisa Jardine, who criticizes Petruchio as a "fortune-hunting rascal" supported by her substantial dowry (60). Despite Baptista's initial pretense of prioritizing love, he never truly considers Katherine's opinion regarding her marriage, demonstrating his indifference to her feelings (Detmer 287).

Baptista's indifference towards Katherine is further underscored when he witnesses her distress on her wedding day. When the wedding started, and everyone anxiously awaited the groom, Baptista failed to comfort Katherine and complained that it was "this shame of ours" (3.2.7). Katherine corrects him: "No shame but mine" (3.2.8). Baptista only thinks about his reputation as a parent. Katherine felt that it was a shame that she was abandoned by the groom at the church door before she was married. However, the father did not consider his daughter's feelings at all. His following line broke the daughter's heart even more: "Go, girl. I cannot blame thee now to weep. / For such an injury would vex a very saint, / Much more a shrew of thy impatient humor" (3.2.27-29). Baptista's apathetic reaction to Katherine's emotions exemplifies the absence of affection in their father-daughter relationship.

Additionally, Baptista's approach to arranging his younger daughter Bianca's marriage mirrors the commodification of marriage during this period. Despite Bianca's gentle and submissive demeanor, her father views her primarily as a commodity to be traded. Baptista decides to marry Bianca to the suitor who

can offer the wealthiest dowry, emphasizing financial gain over her happiness. Baptista's willingness to award Bianca to the suitor with the most substantial financial offering highlights the mercenary nature of marital arrangements during the Elizabethan era.

However, it is crucial to recognize that the power dynamics within these marriages were not solely motivated by financial considerations. They were deeply intertwined with societal hierarchies and religious doctrines that reinforced the notion of filial obedience. As King James (2012) stated in *The Holy Bible*, children, including daughters, were expected to obey their parents as part of their divine duty: "Honour thy Father and thy Mother" (189). Disobedience was considered a grave sin. Children are often perceived as their parents' property, subject to "the owner's pleasure" (Cook, *Making a Match* 72). This hierarchical perspective on family relationships was prominent during the Renaissance and emphasized the lifelong duty of children to obey their parents.

Despite these societal norms, daughters in *The Taming of the Shrew* did not always conform to their fathers' authority. Davies (2017) points out:

It remained, however, a father's principal duty to find a suitable match for a daughter. The Garden of Eden was often cited, where Eve had been the choice not of Adam but of God the father. Daughters might rebel, parents might disagree, siblings and relatives would sometimes interfere, causing further family splits (Davies 170).

Davies' words confirm that the daughters were not even allowed to decide about their marriages and that it was up to the father to make the arrangements. A daughter's disobedience to her father's order, or a father's forcing a daughter to marry someone she does not love, or not agreeing to marry someone she loves will affect family relations.

Bowen's concept of societal regression is evident in *The Taming of the Shrew*, where the commodification of marriage reflects a deep social anxiety that penetrates family and gender dynamics. Baptista's use of dowries to ensure marriages for his daughters underlines the prioritization of wealth over personal well-being and illustrates the influence of the patriarchal system on the father-daughter relationship. While seemingly pragmatic, Baptista's actions will build his daughters as commodities to be traded rather than individuals with autonomy. This societal regression, where marriage is considered as a transaction rather than a combination of mutual affection, intensifies anxiety in the family. The emphasis on wealth and status over emotional connection creates tension, especially in the case of Katherine, whose forced marriage to Petruchio reflects her struggle to assert her identity in a system that values her primarily for her dowry. This conflict between personal agency and social expectation is managed by Shakespeare's narratives and emphasizes how patriarchal structures of that time shape the relationships between the father and his daughters.

6.4.2 Humanist Education

The daughters in *The Taming of the Shrew* received humanist education and had independent thinking, which is also one of the reasons for the conflict between Baptista and his daughters. The daughters in the play, Katherine and Bianca, receive a humanistic education that encourages independent thinking and the pursuit of true love and marital happiness. Baptista's daughters' education leads to discord between them and their father. Baptista highly values his daughters' education, even calling Bianca "Minerva" and insists that Katherine should be raised with all the attributes of a truly educated gentleman (1.1.84, 1.2.86). Bianca's education is evident as she engages in reading and music, highlighting her intellectual development: "My books and instruments shall be my company, / On them to look and practise by myself" (1.1.82-83). Katherine, too, benefits from a humanist education, as noted by Hutcheon: Katherine's demonstration of autonomy at the end of the play confirms the importance of "a humanist education," which enables her to become a proficient and intelligible speaker (317).

However, this independence and capacity for critical thinking lead to conflicts between the daughters and their father, Baptista. Baptista's endorsement of Petruchio's bid creates tension when Petruchio asserts that Katherine's father has consented to their marriage: "your father hath consented/ That you shall be my wife, your dowry 'greed on, / And will you, nill you, I will marry you" (2.1.263-65). Katherine vehemently opposes the arrangements made for her, publicly protesting and rejecting her suitor. She questions her father's judgment and motives, feeling as though she has been put up for sale: "You have showed a tender fatherly regard, / To wish me wed to one half-lunatic, /

A madcap ruffian and a swearing Jack” (2.1. 281-83). This outspokenness illustrates the tension between humanistic education and paternal authority.

The Taming of the Shrew emphasizes the limitation of humanism, especially in connection with the social restrictions imposed by the predominant social norms of that time. Katherine and Bianca, as humanistic education products, show the potential for independent thinking and agency, but their intellectual autonomy is in direct conflict with the anticipation of his father, Egeus. Egeus’ insistence on controlling their marriage reflects the tension between humanistic ideals that advocate personal freedom and individual choice and a rigid social structure that limits such freedoms, especially for women. This conflict emphasizes inherent contradiction in humanism because it seeks to promote personal development while being limited by social and family norms. Shakespeare uses this dynamic to reflect the struggle faced by humanism in the world that continues to be shaped by traditional power structures. The clash between the humanistic ideals of independence and the traditional values imposed by characters such as Egeus reveals the limitation of humanism and the challenge of reconciliation of personal autonomy with the expectation of society.

6.5 Societal Regression in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*

6.5.1 Patriarchy System

Shakespeare’s play, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, was probably composed in 1594 or 1595 and was initially published in 1600. Shakespeare is believed to

have written the play specifically for “an aristocratic wedding” (Wells and Taylor 575). The aristocratic family structure in Shakespearean England was fundamentally patriarchal, with formal connections between parents and children being a defining feature of the aristocratic class. Daughters, specifically, were frequently regarded as burdensome, and their marriages were viewed as a strategy for parents to obtain economic benefits and political alliances (Boose 3). Egeus, akin to several fathers throughout his era, is depicted as fixated on maintaining his authority over Hermia, even at the cost of her wellbeing. The opening scene of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* sets the stage for the play's central conflict, pitting Egeus, a domineering father, against his headstrong, defiant daughter, Hermia. In Act One, Scene One, Egeus presents as an assertive, domineering figure who wields authority over Hermia, creating a tense and compelling dynamic that drives the narrative forward. He insists that she wed Demetrius, a suitor he has selected (Szakolczai 9). Nevertheless, Hermia strongly objects to this arrangement, emphasizing her autonomy and declining to wed Demetrius, the man her father prefers. Her resistance results in her being summoned before Theseus, the Duke of Athens, to face judgment. Theseus, in his warning, highlights the societal norm that children should view their fathers as god-like figures with absolute authority: “To you your father should be as a god” (1.1.47). Egeus, on the other hand, asserts his authority to make choices for his daughter, stating, “As she is mine, I may dispose of her” (1.1. 42) and proceeds to transfer his ownership of Hermia to Demetrius, saying, “And she is mine, and all my right of her/ I do estate unto Demetrius” (1.1.97-98). These words indicate the “official ideology” during that period (Cook 99). Dreher (1986) observes that Egeus's speech in

the play demonstrates his perception of Hermia as a possession, treating her as a commodity to be transferred. His possessive love is apparent in his use of “first-person possessive pronouns,” highlighting his authority and dominance over her. When Lysander mocks Demetrius as having her father’s love, Egeus responds passionately, asserting his authority to transfer Hermia to Demetrius (Dreher 50).

Theseus’s support of Egeus’s demands vividly illustrates the cultural psychology that drives this patriarchal societal system. Theseus persuades Hermia to wholeheartedly obey her father, advocating that fathers are the ultimate authorities who sculpt their children’s lives, much like a master craftsman moulding a wax figure:

What say you, Hermia? Be advised, fair maid.
To you your father should be as a god,
One that composed your beauties, yea, and one
To whom you are but as a form in wax,
By him imprinted, and within his power
To leave the figure or disfigure it (1.1.46-51).

Hermia is reminded by Theseus’ warning that it is pointless to challenge her father’s authority in a society where children are seen as submissive and malleable. On the other hand, fathers possess godlike power to shape or even harm their offspring at will. Szokolczai (2007) believes Hermia acknowledges the authority of the law, but while being unaware of the source of her power, she persists in defying her father’s demand and seeks to understand “the

possible outcomes of her defiance” (10). Gleckman (2014) points out that in pre-classical Athens, the original setting of the play, sexual appetites are firmly “subordinated to patriarchal imperatives” (24). Hermia’s investigation into the probable ramifications of declining to wed Demetrius demonstrates her resistance to conforming to societal norms. The play’s opening scene is a satirical critique of patriarchy and its detrimental effects on women. Parents frequently presume that they possess more experience and the obligation to make judgments on behalf of their children when it comes to arranging appropriate matrimonial unions (Cook 80). Egeus’ unwavering determination for Hermia to wed Demetrius stems from his aspiration to uphold his patriarchal dominion, leading him to behave irrationally by placing this power above his daughter’s welfare. In her article “Law of the Father,” Stephanie Chamberlain (2011) argues that Egeus’ motivation for disregarding his daughter’s wishes is not driven by concern for her happiness, future economic prospects, or societal well-being. Instead, it is rooted in the “ancient privilege of Athens.” His “highly irrational and ultimately arbitrary demand” appears governed by privilege or prerogative (34). Zitouni et al. (2020) argue that in this particular scene, Shakespeare mocks Egeus’ irrational actions and adopts a feminist perspective, emphasizing the damage caused by “the laws of a patriarchal system” (121). Kurian (2016) argues that the idea of “patriarchal paternal control” is “affirmed and naturalized” by the interaction between Egeus and Hermia, with the approval of Theseus (9). In addition, Olson (1957) contends that Egeus perceives himself as a custodian with the power to make choices for his daughter. Theseus remains stalled regarding the notion that children must conform to their father’s authority without defiance or question. The

reference to Athenian law likely pertains to the hierarchical law established by Theseus, as described by Plutarch (Olson 103-04).

Thus, the father-daughter conflict in the comedy serves as a microcosm of the societal norms and expectations regarding marriage in Shakespeare's time, reflecting the patriarchal control parents often had over their children's marital choices. Dreher (1986) points out that Egeus may appear excessively authoritarian to modern audiences, coercing their daughters into choosing between romantic love and filial obedience. Examining the historical context of Renaissance marriage customs is essential to understanding his motives better. Marriage served a different purpose during the Renaissance than the modern view of a personal romantic relationship. It was primarily a means of uniting two kinship groups, securing economic advantages, and forming valuable political alliances. Marriage was an economic necessity for cooperation and the division of labor in various fields of work among ordinary people, such as peasants, artisans, and laborers. In this context, parental consent plays a crucial role in a child's career choice, religious vocation, or marriage. Parents were expected to "provide for their children's future," and this societal expectation was deeply ingrained in the behavior of the time (Dreher 24). Montrose (1996) points out that Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* portrays the conflicting ideas and tensions related to the institution of marriage within English Protestant culture. The portrayal of this work has both authoritarian and misogynistic elements, highlighting the dominance of men over women. Nonetheless, it also exposes the numerous and potentially conflicting ideological stances about early modern Protestant marriage, characterized by debates about equality versus hierarchy in

domestic life (Montrose 110-13). Ania Loomba (2016) notes that Egeus represents a patriarchal authority that seeks to control Hermia's choices, especially regarding her marriage. He urges Hermia to marry Demetrius, whom she does not love and summons his "ancient privilege" to dispose of her as she pleases. This reflects societal norms at the time, where fathers had more power over daughters' marriage decisions, viewing them as property rather than individuals with agency. Characters like Hermia challenge conventional ideas of male dominance and paternal authority, frequently resulting in conflict between the father-daughter dynamic. Hermia resists her father's insistence on an arranged marriage and questions his belief in his "ancient privilege" to decide her life (Loomba 182).

This resistance emphasizes the tension between Egeus's adherence to traditional patriarchal values and Hermia's desire for independence in love and marriage. Egeus insists on maintaining his patriarchal authority and refuses to recognize Hermia's right to select her partner, reflecting broader social expectations that limit individual autonomy. His unwavering attitude, driven by the patriarchal system, manifests itself as a form of societal regression, where traditional power structures are upheld at the expense of personal freedom. Hermia's rebellion against her father's requirements and asserting her agency also underlines the emotional and social conflict created by these entrenched norms. The power struggle between the father and the daughter, framed within the constraints of a patriarchal society, ultimately reveals a deep social anxiety induced by such regressive values, impairing father-daughter relations.

6.5.2 Sexuality

According to Bowen, sexuality is one of the prominent mechanisms for achieving closeness, and it is usually seen as one of the manifestations of anxiety and societal regression (304). Gleckman (2014) situates the play in historical debates about marriage and sexuality during the Reformation. Gleckman notes that English Protestants, grappling with the challenges posed by erotic feelings, sought to create a safe space for sex in marriage, as seen in the character of Egeus, who resists his daughter's emerging sexuality. In the context of pre-classical Athens, erotic desires are subordinated to "patriarchal imperatives" (Gleckman 24). Gleckman compellingly argues that the play introduces a revolutionary perspective on marital sex, particularly within the context of early modern Protestantism. Protestantism emphasizes the significance of sexual satisfaction within the marital relationship and promotes an expanded role of eroticism within marriage. Reformers like Luther and Calvin recognized the naturalness of sexual desire, but they emphasized the importance of exercising self-control and restraint, even within marriage (Gleckman 27-28). Gleckman points to moments of resistance to women's autonomy, primarily through characters like Hermia. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Egeus interprets his daughter's attraction to Lysander as a form of magic that pulls her away from the suitor he has selected. However, this magic is a metaphor for Hermia's "awakening eroticism" (Gleckman 25). Hermia's behaviors and desires defy conventional gender roles enforced by male characters, and the sexuality of the play can function as a critique of patriarchal values.

Additionally, Bowen contends that the sexual revolution, in its various forms, is viewed as a result of regression (Bowen 304). Homosexuality is often considered one of the symptoms of social breakdown. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was written at a time when heterosexuality was prevalent in Britain. Shakespearean works often masterfully steer the taboo of sexual desire, particularly female sexuality, into socially acceptable marital attributes. Scholars' consensus affirms Shakespeare's comedy's pivotal role in molding eroticism to conform to society's moral fabric, ultimately paving the way for harmonious and well-ordered unions (Frye 181; Olson 99). Sanchez (2012) suggests that patriarchal power and heterosexual marriage are safeguards against the perceived chaos of women's desires and emotions (501). In the context of heterosexual marriage, many scholars have highlighted how heterosexual unions can reinforce patriarchal structures. However, this perspective may be too simplistic, as it may fail to recognize women's agency and desire to exist within or outside these frameworks.

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, homosexuality is probably portrayed. Sanchez (2012) argues that the possibility of homosexuality between Helena and Hermia is significant (Sanchez 502). The competition and rivalry between the two characters can be interpreted as evidence of the intensity of their relationship rather than a sign of their decline. Sanchez expands on Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's theory of homosexuality of competition, using it in Helena and Hermia's relationship. This perspective allows the understanding that their rivalry may reflect a deeper emotional connection, suggesting that tenderness and aggression can coexist in their interactions. Helena's wistful recollection

of her deep bond with Hermia vividly highlights the idealization of same-sex relationships as sanctuaries of purity and innocence, untainted by the perceived sensuality and power dynamics often associated with heterosexual relationships:

We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,
Have our needles created both one flower,
Both on one ampler, sitting on one cushion,
Both warbling of one song, both in one key,
As if our hands, our sides, voices, and minds
Had been incorporate. So we grew together,
Like to a double cherry: seeming parted,
But yet an union in partition,
Two lovely berries moulded on one stem.
So, with two seeming bodies but one heart,
Two of the first—like coats in heraldry,
Due but to one and crowned with one crest.
And will you rend our ancient love asunder,
To join with men in scorning your poor friend?
It is not friendly, 'tis not maidenly.
Our sex as well as I may chide you for it (3.2.203–19).

Helena's impassioned accusation against Hermia has led many critics to draw a sharp contrast between the harmonious equality of female bonds and the dominance and violence associated with heterosexual relationships. This dichotomy has fueled arguments equating "heteroeroticism with female subjugation and homoeroticism with female

empowerment” (Sanchez 502). Furthermore, Sanchez argues that Helena’s memories of her closeness with Hermia are complicated by her acknowledgment of Hermia’s aggressive nature, suggesting that their relationship is layered and complex. Helena’s description of Hermia as “keen and shrewd” (3.2.324) and “fierce” (3.2.326) indicates the possibility of homosexuality and the depth of their relationship (Sanchez 504). Their relationship challenges the notion of femininity and reveals the possible desire of a woman to exist outside of heteronormative frameworks. The interaction between Helena and Hermia can be read as indicative of a homoerotic tension.

Besides, there may be a homosexual relationship between Egeus and Demetrius. Lysander’s jest in the first act, where he suggests that Demetrius should marry Hermia’s father, Egeus, instead of Hermia. This jest challenges the notion of Demetrius’s “certain right” to Hermia based on parental approval, as Lysander argues that Egeus seems to favor Demetrius more than his daughter (1.1.93–94). This episode reflects the complexity of romantic relationships within the societal constraints of the time (Derrin 430-31). According to Chamberlain (2011), Egeus is in love with Demetrius, and his passion for Demetrius overrides “his responsibility to Hermia” (34). David Schalkwyk (2008) argues that “Egeus wants to give his daughter to Demetrius because he loves him” (71). Egeus’s preference for Demetrius over Hermia can be perceived as an unconscious expression of his desire. This illustrates how social regression can make the father-daughter relationship dysfunctional by repressing desires.

Egeus loves Demetrius and wishes for his daughter Hermia to wed him. Hermia, however, rejects this arrangement, demonstrating her autonomy by declining to marry Demetrius and instead selecting Lysander as her partner. This resistance undermines the father-daughter relationship. Furthermore, the homosexual desire between Hermia and Helena would be deemed unacceptable within the societal norms of Elizabethan culture. The societal repression of same-sex relationships at this period induces anxiety, prompting Hermia to elope with Lysander. While driven by love and a desire for autonomy, this elopement exacerbates the burden on Hermia and heightens familial discord. Social anxiety resulting from homosexuality illustrates how societal regression ultimately compromises the relationship between Hermia and her father.

6.5.3 Divine Authority

Religion played a significant role in reinforcing parental authority in marriage during Shakespeare's time. Batty (1581) argued that parents possessed a divine "right and authority to place and bestow their children" (100v). Gouge (1976) further explained that in the initial institution of marriage, "when there was no Father to give consent, then our Heavenly Father gave his consent" (446). This view suggested that God played a role akin to a father, bringing his daughter to her husband, and fathers subsequently followed this pattern when offering their daughters in marriage. Gouge (1976) equated parental authority with God's command, emphasizing that children should unquestionably seek their parents' consent for marriage, drawing a parallel between God's act of

bringing the woman to the man in Genesis 2:22 and the right parents now held to arrange marriages (446-47). In Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Theseus advises Hermia to marry her father's chosen suitor. Theseus maintains that father figures should be revered as gods as they ultimately wield the power to shape Hermia's beauty and identity.

In Christian marriage ceremonies, the ritualistic assigned role of the father is exemplary of the enactment of paternalistic power. For instance, the traditional gesture of the father presenting the bride to the priest for marriage at the altar is based on an old church doctrine. It represents the father's pivotal role in entrusting his daughter to God as she begins this new life chapter. The matrimonial union symbolizes the heavenly father's divine act of providing a wife for Adam at the dawn of creation (Dreher 25). Thus, the enactments of Shakespearean play typify society's engrained patriarchal worldview and practice, which were rigidly shackled by the chains of religious dogma during Shakespeare's era. Theseus acknowledges the tradition of paternal authority and claims that Hermia's father, Egeus, has absolute rights over her daughter's life choices. He akin paternal authority to the biblical teachings that man is created in the image of God, and thus, fathers symbolize Godlike authority to whom daughters need to submit (Szakolczai 9-10). This echoes the societal influence of religious doctrines during Shakespeare's era, which fervently oiled the wheels of patriarchy and emphasized obedience.

In conclusion, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* reveals the profound influence of patriarchal structures, reinforced by religious teachings, on family dynamics

during Shakespeare's time. The religious and cultural view of marriage as a divine institution, where fathers held divine authority over their daughters, is evident both in the historical context and in the narration of the drama. The parallels drawn between the role of God in Genesis and the father's authority in arranging marriage underlie the strict expectations that they undergo paternal control, reflecting broader social regression. As Theseus advises Hermia to adhere to her father's will, Shakespeare criticizes social forces maintaining such unquestioned obedience and shows how religious norms functioned to maintain patriarchal power. The representation of marriage and paternal authority in the Christian ceremony, where the father gives his daughter as an act of divine sanctions, further exemplifies a deep-rooted patriarchal worldview. These traditional practices, underpinned by religious dogmas, not only shaped female roles in marriage but also strengthened a system in which social and religious expectations limited autonomy. Shakespeare's depiction of these dynamics in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* thus examines how societal regression, driven by religious doctrines, suppresses the female agency and reveals a complex interplay between religious norms and patriarchal structures in shaping the father-daughter relationships.

6.6 Conclusion

Different manifestations of socio-emotional processes are visible in the four selected Shakespearean plays. These manifestations encompass patriarchal constructs, mental disorders, emotional distress, societal decay, religious

decadence, and the inclination toward homosexuality. These social elements play a crucial role in Shakespeare's portrayal of the strained relationship between the fathers and daughters in the chosen Shakespearean plays. Notably, a stark difference emerges when assessing the dynamics of father-daughter relationships between the selected Shakespearean tragedies and comedies. The father-daughter relationship in the tragedies is severely dysfunctional. For instance, Lear's malevolence and antipathy precipitate his downfall and contribute to the ruin of his beloved daughter. Herein lies a portrayal of the origins of division, chaos, and moral decay, where fathers wield their power and wealth to satiate their selfish desires and avarice, inadvertently harming themselves and their progeny. In contrast, examining father-daughter relationships in the selected comedies reveals a less severe but flawed dynamic devoid of genuine human connection. While these relationships are not as devastating as those in the tragedy, they still fail to embody the warmth and depth of a father-daughter relationship.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

7.1 Summary of Main Findings

The thesis commences by establishing the foundational backdrop of the study. The research delves into the intricate father-daughter relationships depicted in William Shakespeare's *King Lear* (1604-05), *Hamlet* (1600), *The Taming of the Shrew* (1623), and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1594-95). In these dramatic works, we encounter dysfunctional dynamics within the familial bonds of fathers and daughters.

In *King Lear*, the relationship between Lear and his daughters undergoes a significant shift, primarily due to the ingratitude exhibited by Cordelia, Goneril, and Regan. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* unveils the strained association between Hermia and her father, Egeus, who insists upon her marriage to Demetrius. Meanwhile, *Hamlet* portrays Polonius utilizing his daughter Ophelia as a tool, mercilessly disregarding her emotions to spy on Hamlet's pretended madness. In *The Taming of the Shrew*, Baptista treats his daughters' marriages as mere business transactions.

The research employs Bowen Theory as its theoretical framework to scrutinize the father-daughter relationships depicted in these selected plays. In contrast to the psychoanalytic and behavioral schools, Bowen Theory adopts a

systemic perspective. Bowen postulates that a family functions as an emotional unit, an intricate web of interconnected relationships, where any emotional disturbance within one member affects the entire relational system. In recent years, Bowen Theory has emerged as a novel approach to exploring familial relationships in literature. It reframes literary characters not as isolated individuals but as interconnected components of a family. The application of Bowen Theory in literary criticism offers a profound understanding of the interplay between individuals, families, and society, enabling the analysis of the intricate interrelations between historical and cultural contexts and individual psychology, thereby providing a fresh lens for interpreting literary texts.

The concepts of differentiation of self, emotional triangle, nuclear family emotional system, family projection process, and social regression in Bowen Theory are primarily employed to attain the three research objectives of the study. The concept of differentiation of self is applied to analyze the level of self-differentiation of Lear, Regan, Goneril, Cordelia in *King Lear*, Hermia, and Egeus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Ophelia and Polonius in *Hamlet*, Baptista, Katherine, and Bianca in *The Taming of the Shrew*. The concepts of triangles, nuclear family emotional system, and family projection process are applied to identify the origin of the self-differentiation of the selected characters and the influence of the family of origin and the nuclear family on their ability to differentiate themselves. The concept of societal regression is used to examine the manifestations of societal regression affecting the father-daughter relationships in the selected plays.

Chapter two of the thesis provides an overview of Family Systems Theory in literary scholarship, the current research on Bowen Theory in literary works and dysfunctional families in literary works, examining father-daughter relationships within Shakespeare's plays, and the existing research landscape concerning the chosen texts. The study discerns that current analyses of father-daughter relationships in Shakespeare's works primarily adopt feminist, historicist, new historicist, linguistic, and traditional psychological perspectives. A comprehensive exploration from the novel vantage point of Bowen Theory is absent. Consequently, the thesis posits that Bowen Theory offers a robust theoretical framework for dissecting father-daughter relationships within the selected texts.

Chapter three elucidates the theoretical framework and research methodology employed in this study. It presents the textual analysis and close reading method in combination with Bowen Theory, which is conducive to the examination of father-daughter relationships in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

In chapter four, the concept of differentiation of self is used to examine the father-daughter relationship in the selected plays, addressing the first research question: How does the level of self-differentiation in the father and daughter characters in the selected texts affect the father-daughter relationship? The analysis centers on evaluating the levels of self-differentiation exhibited by the fathers and daughters depicted in these works. The discussion expounds on how differentiation of self informs our understanding of father-daughter

relationships, ultimately substantiating the assertion that these relationships are inherently dysfunctional. The analysis reveals that the selected fathers and daughters in *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* display low levels of self-differentiation, which may result in their dysfunctional father-daughter relationships.

The fifth chapter answered the second research question: How is the father-daughter relationship impacted by the projection of the fathers' chronic anxiety onto their daughters in the selected texts? It investigates the projection of the fathers' chronic anxiety onto the daughters in the selected Shakespearean plays, drawing upon Bowen's concepts of triangles, nuclear family emotional system, and family projection process. Through this analysis, it is evident that, in these four plays, daughters are coerced into aligning with their fathers' desires, becoming mere extensions of their fathers. They become objects of their fathers' emotional projections. However, due to the heightened levels of anxiety and undifferentiation within the daughters' emotional systems, the fathers' lower level of self-differentiation renders them more vulnerable to the family projection process.

Chapter six addressed the third research question: What are the manifestations of social regression in the selected plays that affect the father-daughter relationships? In this chapter, the concept of societal regression is deployed to examine manifestations of the social-emotional processes and their influence on the father-daughter relationships in the selected texts. The analysis reveals various socio-emotional processes within the four selected

plays, encompassing patriarchal constructs, mental disorders, emotional distress, societal decay, religious decadence, and promiscuous sexuality. Thus, the father-daughter relationships that Shakespeare depicts in the selected plays embody the manifestations of these social-emotional processes.

To sum up, this research employs Bowen Theory as a theoretical framework to analyze the father-daughter relationships within Shakespeare's *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, offering a novel perspective that enriches our understanding of these intricate dynamics. Using the five concepts in Bowen Theory, differentiation of self, emotional triangle, nuclear family emotional system, family projection process, and social regression, to explore father-daughter bond in selected texts, this study moves beyond traditional literary interpretations that often emphasize the historical context, patriarchal structure or character psychology in isolation, this study moves beyond traditional literary interpretations that often emphasize historical context, patriarchal structures, or character psychology in isolation. Instead, it places the father-daughter relation in a systemic network of intergenerational emotional patterns. Through close readings of the selected texts, this study shows how Shakespeare's representation of father-daughter bond resonates with and are interpreted by the five concepts of Bowen theory. Therefore, this interdisciplinary approach enriches Shakespearean scholarship and contributes to broader conversations on the intersection of literary criticism and psychoanalytic theory.

7.2 Recommendations for Future Studies

This study has effectively demonstrated the feasibility of employing the concepts of differentiation of self, triangles, nuclear family emotional system, family projection process, and societal emotional process in Bowen Theory to study the selected dramas. It is imperative to recognize that future literary investigations may consider other concepts of the theory: multigenerational emotional process, sibling positions, and emotional cutoff. Furthermore, forthcoming research can explore how economics, policy, gender, race, ethnicity, tradition, and culture influence family emotional systems and levels of self-differentiation.

The study only focuses on the father-daughter relationship in the selected Shakespearean plays. Subsequent research endeavors may encompass other family relationships in Shakespeare's plays, including marital dynamics, sibling interactions, and father-son relationships. Future research can utilize Bowen Systems Theory to explore the interpretations of such relations in Shakespeare's dramas.

The study exclusively chose four of Shakespeare's plays. Subsequent research might also investigate the theatrical works created by other playwrights. Besides dramas, future research projects can utilize Bowen Theory to investigate familial dynamics in genres of literature such as novels and films.

Lastly, future studies on family relationships in literary works can consider embracing other schools of Family Systems Theory, such as experiential, strategic, psychoanalytic, and cognitive-behavioral schools. Although this study is based mainly on Bowen Theory, which examines relationship with the father and daughter in selected texts, other schools of family systems theory can offer deep insights into familial dynamic. For example, the experiential school emphasizes emotional expression and authenticity in family interactions that could illuminate the emotional blocking of characters or breakthroughs in literary narratives.

7.3 Contribution of the Study

The thesis introduces fresh perspectives for examining father-daughter relationships in Shakespearean plays through the application of Bowen Theory. By employing Bowen's twentieth-century Family Systems Theory in Shakespeare's seventeenth-century plays, the thesis aims to demonstrate how Shakespeare's works, written more than four centuries ago, remain relevant in the modern age. The father-daughter relationships in Shakespeare's plays continue to draw numerous interpretations that enhance the appreciation of the dramatist's work. Thus, the thesis hopes to investigate new discussions on Shakespearean plays and Bowen Theory.

The principal contribution of this study lies in its novel approach to examining father-daughter relationships within Shakespearean plays. Moreover, it presents a methodology and fosters a paradigm shift in literary research. This

thesis underscores Bowen family systems analysis's practicality and illuminative potential in literary criticism. The theory's focal point is the dynamic and intricate interplay among family members. As an academic analytical tool, Bowen Theory advances the notion of circular causation. Notably, Bowen Theory possesses an inherent theatrical quality: while intrapsychic analysis centers on the individual, Bowen Theory directs attention to the shared essence of the characters on the dramatic stage. Consequently, owing to its circular, theatrical, and dynamic nature, Bowen Theory is the most fitting choice for this study.

Bowen Theory represents an innovative approach to analyzing dramatic literature, constituting a valuable addition to psychological criticism. In the family systems interpretation, all family members in the play in question serve as a source of identity for one another. The family is portrayed as a co-evolving ecosystem wherein each member influences the development of all others. Characters' actions are construed as a product of this interplay, signifying that all family interactions within the dramatic performance contribute to the growth or regression of its members. This approach is superior for dramatic analysis because it pivots towards observable interactions. Furthermore, family systems analysis extends its applicability to dramatic literature or stage, as critics seek patterns of miscommunication that imperil "the family's well-being" (Opipari 218-19). While it challenges traditional psychological research methods, it does not dismiss the utility of psychoanalysis entirely, recognizing that a character's inner psyche can sometimes be pivotal in explaining behavior. Bowen Theory expands the horizons of psychoanalytic criticism because readers and literary critics who use this theory as a means of

psychoanalysis must be willing to look to causes other than the traditional intrapsychic reasons proposed by psychoanalytic criticism to explain behavior. This marks a significant advancement in the field of literary studies.

Finally, this thesis endeavors to revitalize the exploration of Shakespeare's plays and serve as a blueprint for future inquiries into the intersection of psychology and literature. Over four centuries have elapsed since Shakespeare penned his works, yet the father-daughter relationships in these plays continue to spark fervent scholarly discussion. While Bowen Theory has been utilized for literary analysis since the 1990s, its application has not predominantly centered on Shakespearean plays. The thesis fills this gap by applying Bowen Theory to analyze the reasons for tense father-daughter interactions in the chosen Shakespearean plays. It provides a fresh perspective based on Family Systems Theory. Bowen Theory furnishes a framework for comprehending and resolving the complexities inherent in relationship dynamics, including parent-child interactions, thereby fostering a deeper comprehension of the intricate dynamics within these relationships. This interdisciplinary study advocates for the application of Bowen Theory in exploring family relationships within literary works, particularly between parents and children. By taking an interdisciplinary perspective, using Bowen Theory, and considering the entire family system within which the characters are embedded, this study provides valuable insights into the relationships between individuals within nuclear families, particularly between parents and children.

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Deng Jianbo is pursuing her doctoral studies in English literature at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM). Born in Pu' er, Yunnan, China, in 1984, she obtained her bachelor's degree in English literature from Yunnan University of Nationalities (2003–2007) and Master's degree in English Language and Literature from Yunnan University (2008–2011).

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LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

- Deng et al. "The Father-Daughter Relationship in Shakespeare's *King Lear* from the Perspective of Bowen Theory." *Journal of Language and Communication*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2023, pp. 183–99.
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