



**THE REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE
SOCIAL SCIENCES UNIVERSITY OF ANKARA
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**CONSTANT CYCLE IN NATURE AND EXISTENTIAL DREAD
IN SHAKESPEARE'S *HAMLET* AND KHAYYAM'S *RUBAIYAT***

Master's Thesis

Surhay Göç

Master of Arts in English Language and Literature

August 2024



**THE REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE
SOCIAL SCIENCES UNIVERSITY OF ANKARA
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**CONSTANT CYCLE IN NATURE AND EXISTENTIAL DREAD
IN SHAKESPEARE'S *HAMLET* AND KHAYYAM'S *RUBAIYAT***

Master's Thesis

Surhay Göç

**Thesis Advisor
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zümre Gizem Yılmaz Karahan**

Master of Arts in English Language and Literature

August 2024

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to express my gratitude to my thesis supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zümre Gizem Yılmaz Karahan, who has always been just a phone call away and never withheld her support throughout this process, despite my persistent failures in time management.

I also extend my heartfelt thanks to Prof. Dr. Mine Özyurt Kılıç and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Şafak Horzum, whose meticulous approaches and comprehensive critiques significantly contributed to the final version of this thesis.



TABLE OF CONTENTS	
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	i
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	ii
ÖZET	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. DEATH, DREAD, WINE AND WILL TO HAPPINESS	25
3. <i>HAMLET</i> AND THE EXISTENTIAL IMPASSES OF CONSCIOUS SUBJECT	40
4. <i>RUBAIYAT</i> AND <i>HAMLET</i>: SHARED INTELLECTUAL SPRINGS AND EXISTENTIALIST NOTIONS	55
CONCLUSION.....	73
WORKS CITED.....	78

ÖZET

Bu çalışma, Ömer Hayyam'ın *Rubailer*'i ile William Shakespeare'in *Hamlet*'inin karşılaştırmalı bir analizini sunmaktadır. Böylece, iki yazarın insanın varoluş koşulları, fırlatılmışlık hissi, yaşamın geçici doğası ve tabiattaki maddi döngünün sürekliliği gibi meseleleri irdeleyişlerindeki benzer tutumu göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır. Hayyam ve Shakespeare birbirinden oldukça farklı zaman ve coğrafyalarda eser vermiş olsalar da, kökleri Antik Yunan düşüncesine dayanan ortak bir entelektüel kaynaktan beslendikleri iddia edilebilir. Farabi ve İbn-i Sina gibi İslam bilginleri aracılığıyla Helenistik felsefenin etkilerinin izi, belki Hayyam'ın metafizik ve şüpheci muhakemelerinde gözlemlenebilir. Benzer şekilde, Klasik Yunan ve Roma klasiklerinin yeniden doğuşuyla tanımlanan Rönesans, Shakespeare'in çalışmalarına da nüfuz eden entelektüel bir iklim yaratmıştır. Denilebilir ki bu kültürel ve düşünsel koşullar her iki yazarı da etkilemekle beraber *Rubailer* ve *Hamlet* bağlamında düşünüldüğünde bir adım öteye geçmiş ve varoluşçu bir perspektiften tartışmaya müsait benzer imgelemlemlerle karakterize olmuştur. Her iki eserde de rastlanabilen kafatası, şarap testisi, bira fıçısı, tıkaç, kulp yahut toz gibi nesneler ölümlülük farkındalığını uyandıran ve nihayetinde beyhudelik hissini tetikleyen imgeler olarak işlev görür. Bu nesnelerin, vaktiyle yaşamış görkemli bir hükümdarın ya da merhum bir aşığın bedeninden parçalar ihtiva ediyor olma ihtimali, her iki yazarı da oldukça şaşırtmakla birlikte ölümün kaçınılmazlığı, doğanın kayıtsız işleyişi ve geçicilik karşısındaki varoluşsal çaresizliğe dair derin bir farkındalık sunmaktadır. Bu farkındalık, zaman zaman alaycı bir tutuma dönüşür ve bu iki şairin kendi maddi sonlarının tatsız bir habercisi olarak da işlev görür. Dolayısıyla, varoluşçuluk adına merkezî kavramlar olarak kabul edilebilecek “fırlatılmışlık,” “absürtlük,” “kaygı” ve “yabancılaşma” gibi insanlık halleri, her iki eserde de gözlemlenmeye müsaittir. Sonuç olarak, bu çalışma *Rubailer* ile *Hamlet*'i varoluşçuluk merceğinden karşılaştırmakta ve Søren Kierkegaard, Martin Heidegger gibi düşünürlerden yüzyıllar önce bu iki eserin benzer varoluşsal çıkmazları benzer biçimde ele aldıklarını göstermenin yanı sıra eserlerin ortak bir entelektüel kaynaktan besleniyor olduklarına vurgu yapmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: William Shakespeare, Ömer Hayyam, *Hamlet*, *Rubailer*, varoluşçuluk, ölüm, varoluşsal kaygı, yabancılaşma

ABSTRACT

This study endeavours to present a comparative analysis of Omar Khayyam's *Rubaiyat* and William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, aiming to demonstrate the similar approaches both authors adopt in examining issues such as the human condition, the sense of being thrown into existence, the transitory nature of life, and the enduring material cycles in nature. Despite the significant temporal and geographical differences between Khayyam and Shakespeare, it can be argued that they draw from a shared intellectual heritage rooted in ancient Greek thought. Through Islamic scholars like al-Farabi and Avicenna, the influence of Hellenistic philosophy might be observed in Khayyam's metaphysical and sceptical reasoning. Similarly, the intellectual climate shaped by the Renaissance—a revival of Greek and Roman classics—permeates Shakespeare's works. These cultural and intellectual contexts not only influenced both writers but also contributed to the emergence of shared existential imagery in *Rubaiyat* and *Hamlet*. Objects such as skulls, wine jugs, beer barrels, stoppers, handles, and dust, recurrent in both works, serve as symbols of mortality awareness and ultimately evoke a profound sense of futility. The notion that these objects might contain remnants of a once-glorious king or a deceased lover astounds both authors, offering a deep awareness of death's inevitability, nature's indifferent mechanisms, and the transient nature of existence. This awareness occasionally manifests in a tone of irony, functioning as a grim forewarning of their own material demise. Consequently, existential conditions such as "thrownness," "absurdity," "anxiety," and "alienation"—concepts central to existentialism—are discernible in both works. In conclusion, this study compares *Rubaiyat* and *Hamlet* through the lens of existentialism, highlighting how these two works, centuries before philosophers like Søren Kierkegaard and Martin Heidegger, addressed similar existential dilemmas in remarkably similar ways. It also emphasizes the possibility of both works drawing from a shared intellectual tradition.

Keywords: William Shakespeare, Omar Khayyam, *Hamlet*, *Rubaiyat*, existentialism, death, existential anxiety, alienation

1. INTRODUCTION: The Kernels of Existence in the Graveyard

“The same worms that eat me will someday eat you too.”

(Viagra Boys, Worms, 2018)

One could argue that having a conscious understanding of death is crucial for providing meaning to our existence and for realizing our genuine condition in the face of existence. “With death, Dasein stands before itself in its ownmost potentiality for Being” (Heidegger, *Being* 294). In this way, one can establish a much more genuine bond with life, with the awareness of their own finitude and limits. In fact, this thesis will focus on *Rubaiyat* and *Hamlet* on the axis of this awareness of finitude, which can lead to a more authentic connection with life. The partnership between these two works and the attitudes and imaginative expressions of Shakespeare and Khayyam is worth seeing and comparing. Instead of asserting that Khayyam and Shakespeare had direct contact, my thesis aims to highlight the similar mindset they both exhibited when addressing existential issues and to suggest that they might have been influenced by similar sources that indirectly trace back to Ancient Greek philosophy.

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) highlighted the powerful role that the concept of death plays in appropriately challenging existential conditions when he rhetorically asked in a 1961 lecture where we should go to reflect most effectively on the mystery of our origin. He said that the graveyard was the best place to do so (qtd in Watts 95). As locations where the concept of death is embodied, cemeteries enable people to face their mortality head-on, resulting in a more genuine and profound contemplation of our mortal existence.

It is a fortunate coincidence that, similar to Heidegger's situation, Hamlet most successfully reflected on the mystery of origin and confronted the human predicament in all its nakedness in a graveyard. On the other hand, centuries before Hamlet confronted the transience of existence in the graveyard, another poet and philosopher who rose from the East, Omar Khayyam (1048–1131), was also astonished and sometimes even horrified by his own

existence, namely the awareness of a state of existence that will end in extinction. Khayyam also insistently mentioned death in his concise quatrains called ‘rubai,’ in parallel with his meditations on existence. At this point, what brought these three names from different centuries, Khayyam, Shakespeare and Heidegger, together at a similar point was their sensitivity towards death. Moreover, they not only approached death with similar sensitivity but also put death into writing as a philosophical problem. In this scope, my thesis investigates Omar Khayyam’s *Rubaiyat* (c. 12th century) and William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* (1623) from an existential perspective using a comparative method. My main intention is to show how these two poets, who lived in different centuries and different geographies, developed a similar comprehension of death and existential problems. Considering that both authors express similar existential dilemmas, and that Khayyam wrote several centuries before Shakespeare, it might be probable to suggest that Shakespeare might have been influenced by Khayyam. However, I believe that it would be a daring and premature decision to argue a direct effect.

My aim in this thesis is not to claim that there was a direct interaction, but rather to point out the common attitude they displayed when dealing with existential concerns and to claim that in this context, they may have been fed by common sources that, albeit indirectly, date back to Ancient Greek thought. As we recall, the Seljuk period in which Khayyam lived was part of an Islamic Golden Age, and the works of great thinkers such as al-Farabi and Avicenna played a key role in the scientific and philosophical developments recorded during this period:

Aristotle’s philosophy was introduced to the Islamic world through the efforts of al-Farabi, who also facilitated the study of Plato’s works. Thanks to al-Farabi, the teachings of many significant Greek philosophers, particularly the pre-Socratic natural philosophers, came to the forefront. Known in the Islamic world as “Ustad-ı Sani” (the Second Master), al-Farabi earned this title as Aristotle was regarded as the “First Master.” Later, Ibn Sina acknowledged that his understanding of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* was made possible through al-Farabi’s commentaries. (Usta 245)

Considering that thinkers such as al-Farabi and Avicenna almost served as a kind of bridge in the Islamic world’s acquaintance with names such as Aristotle and Plato, it is quite possible that Khayyam, as “one of the sustainers of Avicenna’s school” (Nasr 169) were influenced by the thoughts of these rational philosophers:

Rational philosophers such as al-Kindi, al-Farabi, and Avicenna viewed the pursuit of God’s wisdom not as an abstract, passive, or fatalistic discourse that stifles human will,

but as a concrete and dynamic endeavour. For them, understanding God and attaining His wisdom entailed reflecting on the universe, society, and nature, unravelling their mysteries through reason, acquiring knowledge, and actively engaging with life and nature by transforming matter. (Usta 150)

Although Khayyam and Shakespeare do not engage in scientific activities to transform nature, they examine the continuous transformation in nature and the dynamics of the material cycle with great care. Within the framework of this sort of a philosophical tradition, the emphasis on reason, a more engaging relationship with life, and philosophical concepts such as transforming matter/nature are notions that can be directly detected in Khayyam's quatrains, as we will see in the following parts of the study. It is quite possible to observe a similar philosophical attitude in *Hamlet* as well. As I will try to show in the third chapter, both Shakespeare and Khayyam acted with a profound questioning and a sensitivity towards the material/natural cycle. However, another part that is even more interesting to me is that both of them fell into some metaphysical/existential dread in the next stage of their philosophical endeavours.

I particularly need to emphasize the possible indirect influences of Ancient Greeks on Khayyam because the Renaissance—which Shakespeare lived in—is also defined as a period of intellectual rebirth characterized by a return to the same antiquity. Both Shakespeare's and Khayyam's periods prepared the ground for the construction of new horizons by inheriting a cumulative cultural accumulation from the past (for the Seljuks, the golden age of Islam and the ancient Greek writers contacted through Islamic philosophers, and for the Renaissance, again the cultures of Ancient Greece and Rome). In this sense, it can be claimed that Shakespeare and Khayyam are intellectual products of similar transformation processes dating back to the sources of Ancient Greek. Moreover, the universality and timelessness of the issues they address to, particularly the existential concerns that are explored in depth in both works, likely contributed to the emergence of similar forms of expression. These existential themes—whether explored in post-World War II literature, Elizabethan England, or the 14th-century Seljuk Empire—reflect the fundamental and timeless existential conditions of humanity, regardless of time and place. In essence, it is the unavoidable fate of humans to live conscious of their own existence and imminent death. In this regard, both Khayyam and Hamlet grapple with questions concerning the relentless cosmic isolation into which the individual is cast, burdened by the awareness of their own mortality.

Given these intellectual commonalities and the fact that this study will focus on content rather than form, it is not a significant issue that one work is a tragedy and the other a poem. In

fact, this contrast offers an intriguing example of how similar intellectual attitudes, feelings, and tones can emerge despite differences in literary form. Perhaps, when we look at Shakespeare's other works, especially his tragedies, we can encounter similar existential concerns. I will now try to show some of the existentialist notions that are open to discussion with some quotes from *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *King Lear* and *Julius Caesar*, and then I will attempt to explain why I chose *Hamlet*, and not one of these tragedies, for this comparison. Prior to that, I will continue with a passage from *Macbeth*:

Out, out brief candle!

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player

That struts and frets his hour upon the stage

And then is heard no more. It is a tale

Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,

Signifying nothing. (V.v.22-27)

In these parts of the monologue we hear after the death of Macbeth's wife, it is impossible not to be caught up in thoughts about the futility and transience of life. These lines, which liken life to a theater play and a tale that only "implies nothingness," strongly emphasize the futility of individual struggles and the inevitable annihilation on the horizon, notions that can be discussed more thoroughly and repeatedly in *Hamlet*. In addition, the following lines, in which Macbeth questions the monotony of everyday existence and a cyclical circle of time, are also worth considering:

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,

Creeps in this petty pace from day to day

To the last syllable of recorded time[.] (V.v.22-27)

Consolation for the course of events that progresses day by day and almost crawls until the day the end of time comes is always sought in tomorrows. Time, with its continuous nature, makes people feel stuck and futile. On the other hand, when we take a brief look at *Othello*, the contrasts we come across in some sections may remind us of some dualities such as soul-body and divine-mortal, which can be encountered in *Hamlet* and Khayyam's quatrains: "O, I have lost my reputation! I have lost the immortal part of myself, and what remains is bestial"

(II.iii.254-256), says Cassio, because with the loss of his reputation in the eyes of society, he finds his own subjective existence worthless and meaningless. When the “immortal part of self,” which can be said to be constructed with some social or metaphysical values, disappears, as can be seen, only a “bestial” essence remains regarding the person. While the qualities related to the self are expressed as phenomena related to a more metaphysical set of values and are immortal in nature, the body, as an entity outside of the self, is closer to a more animalistic existence. For instance, in *King Lear*, Lear refers to the aspect of human existence that can be described as bestial in the storm scene and equates humans with other living beings in a way that is stripped of social constructs: “Is man no more than this? Consider him well. Thou ow’st the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat no perfume. Ha? here’s three on’s are sophisticated. Thou art the thing itself: unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, fork’d animal as thou art. Off, off, you lendings! Come, unbutton here” (III.iv.10). If stripped of culture and civilization, the ‘unaccommodated man’ now exists in its simplest form, and in this direction, it is implied that if there is no inherent or constructed meaning, the human leads a rather poor, bare, and in a sense futile existence. It is quite possible that these somehow have a thematic similarity to the invocations I have discussed or will discuss extensively in this text regarding *Hamlet*. Besides, naturally, it is possible to find nuances that can be associated with an existential attitude in any other tragedy of Shakespeare other than *Hamlet*. However, *Hamlet* has a different importance at this point.

I think that in none of Shakespeare’s works, except for *Hamlet*, do we witness the duality of existence and non-existence and the relationship of man with both his consciousness of existence and death through such direct and insightful monologues. Even the line “To be, or not to be” (III.i.55) draws a sharp line between existence and non-existence. Immediately afterwards, the state of existence is associated with conscious life characterized by the mind’s suffer. On the other hand, death emerges as a possible solution signifying a state of sleep in which the activities of consciousness have also disappeared, thus a state that can be named as nothingness.

Whether ’tis nobler in the mind to suffer

The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,

Or to take arms against a sea of troubles

And by opposing end them. To die—to sleep[.] (III.i.57-60)

Hamlet, while stating here that the whole issue of human existence can be reduced to one of the choices of being or not being, enduring the pains of the mind or not, makes a sharp outburst similar to Albert Camus's (1913-1960) attitude that the main problem of philosophy is to answer the question of whether to commit suicide or not. Moreover, even after Hamlet draws such a line between existence and non-existence, he cannot help but be caught up in some doubts about the issue and concerns about the afterlife: The concerns about a possible suffering after death, expressed as "But that the dread of something after death" (III.i.77), come right after the lines where death is already very clearly associated with the state of sleep, and shed light on the real psychological conditions of man very well. Even right behind the most daring and ambitious statements produced, the mind finds itself in uncertainties accompanied by doubt and anxiety. While it is possible to see in Khayyam's quatrains, expressions that offer a deep insight into the dualities of existence-nonexistence and death-life, and that genuinely bring to the psychological state of man who has been thrown into the world, there is another great similarity which is very significant to me.

The similarity in question is that, at the point where both of their contemplations reach their peak, everything undergoes a very similar singularization for both Khayyam and Shakespeare. This singularization is a material equalization state where consciousness is no longer active and which occurs with the indifferent functioning of nature towards human's body. While Khayyam talks about a body that is stripped of consciousness with death, mixed with the soil and then becomes clay and eventually finds a new material form for itself in an object like a wine jug, we see the same process illustrated in the same way in *Hamlet*. In my opinion, we do not witness the power of death and nature, which can seem almost cruel and which equalizes everything in the same material form with a great indifference, so closely in any of Shakespeare's works. Therefore, *Hamlet* and *Rubaiyat*, in addition to exhibiting a common existentialist attitude, are worth examining comparatively because they present death and the helplessness/ineffectiveness of man in the face of the functioning of nature with such a similar imagery. Therefore, they both exhibit such a great common sensitivity towards the constant cycle in nature. In short, the most remarkable similarities are the perceptions of both Khayyam and Shakespeare that allow them to see the memory of a possible old dead person in any ordinary object, a parallelism that is not always possible to come across. In addition to their strong emphasis on the equalization of everything in the material realm and their illustrating the futility of human existence with the same imaginative processes, there is a final issue that can be mentioned.

While *Hamlet* explores the inner conflicts of the conscious individual and addresses concepts such as suicide, death anxiety, and existential displacement within a dramatic structure, Khayyam's quatrains feature a speaker who directly addresses to the reader, inviting them to share in his personal reflections. What is particularly interesting is that in *Hamlet*, the most profound contemplation of human existence occurs through Hamlet's monologues, which convey his existential struggles in a direct manner. In this respect, Hamlet's monologues share a remarkable similarity with the directness found in Khayyam's *Rubaiyat*. There seems to be no major incompatibility in the areas I wish to examine and compare. Furthermore, it may ultimately be worthwhile to explore how tragedy and poetry reflect shared existential and philosophical concerns, building bridges between genres and highlighting existing intellectual commonalities.

When we take existentialism and *Hamlet* as our keywords, of course, it is possible to reach countless studies with a short literature review. The same is most likely true for Khayyam and his *Rubaiyat*. However, the available literature lacks a specific study focusing on Khayyam and Shakespeare. The main reason this thesis focuses on the *Rubaiyat* and *Hamlet* is that both of them are fertile works in terms of thought, reasoning and existential anxiety. Of course, this thesis does not claim to compare all of *Hamlet* and all of the *Rubaiyat* in the most comprehensive way possible. What I desire is to make a close reading of the excerpts I have selected from the intensely similar parts of *Hamlet* and *Rubaiyat*.

When the literary and genre nature of these two works are considered, a question may come to mind: Why do we feel the need to compare a tragedy and another text in the form of poetry? Although they are different texts in terms of literary form, I do not think that this difference in form will pose a major problem since my comparison will develop in the context of the intellectual content of these works and on the axis of a philosophical focus. The comparison will not be a comparison of form, language or style, but of a philosophical perspicacity. The point this thesis wants to draw attention to is the parallelism between the existentialist intellectual attitudes of Khayyam and Shakespeare, their philosophical demeanours, and the similarities in their handling and expression of problems such as worldly life, death, transience and the unknown. Besides all, there is another issue that makes this topic even more interesting for me.

In short, the main aim is to analyse how these two poets comprehend the human condition in the face of death, as well as to demonstrate their common poetic images such as dust, skull, wine jug, beer barrel, soil, plants growing on a grave and the components of the

dead body that maintain precession. All these objects, in Khayyam and Shakespeare, become the mediators of witnessing the functioning of nature which is indifferent to human existence and the depressing transience of life. Therefore, all these images inevitably become closely related to philosophical problems such as death, faith, God and the afterlife.

On the axis of these problematic notions of conscious human existence, my dissertation attempts to build its theoretical framework through the lens of existentialism, drawing inspiration from thinkers such as Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855), Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), Simone de Beauvoir (1908–1986), Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980) and Albert Camus (1913–1960). Therefore, starting from the philosophers in consideration, this introduction shall first present the general outlines and a brief history of existentialism. Then, after briefly presenting the cultural and contextual backgrounds of both authors, I will try to show why I want to mention them in an existential context and what similarities they exhibit. However, to say something briefly in advance about the question of why these two authors are suitable for examination on the axis of existentialism, I can put forward the enormous focus they direct on the individual and the existential conditions of the individual as an answer. Once I start to construe existentialism and attempt to convey its historical background, it will be better to understand why the emphasis on the individual is so important.

First and foremost, it is probably difficult to come up with an inclusive and satisfactory definition of existentialism that can address all its aspects. The reason I say this is the variety and diversity of the answers given to the question “What is existentialism?” to date. For example, “Simone Weil portrays it as depression, Emmanuel Mounier as despair, Octave Hamelin again as anxiety, Antonio Banfi as pessimism, Jean Wahl as rebellion, Gabriel Marcel as freedom, György Lukács as idealism, Julien Benda as irrationalism, and Paul Foulquié as the philosophy of absurdity” (Bezirci 9)¹. However, existentialism should neither be idealized nor criticized without a nuanced understanding. To accurately define it, one should start from a basic point, that is the human. The human who reflects on himself/herself is conscious of his/her own existence and lives with the awareness of his/her mortality. Yet still, if we consult Jean-Paul Sartre without even getting into these issues, we see that, according to him, existentialism is a concept that is a doddle to define. “It can easily be defined” (*Existentialism* 2) he says and continues as follows:

¹ Quotations from Turkish sources have been translated by Surhay Göç .

The question is only complicated because there are two kinds of existentialists. There are, on the one hand, the Christians, amongst whom I shall name Jaspers and Gabriel Marcel, both professed Catholics; and on the other the existential atheists, amongst whom we must place Heidegger as well as the French existentialists and myself. What they have in common is simply the fact that they believe that existence comes before essence – or, if you will, that we must begin from the subjective. (Sartre, *Existentialism* 2)

The quotation above shows that even Sartre, after saying that it is very easy to define existentialism and limiting the framework to “existence comes before essences” (*Existentialism* 2), cannot help but continue by saying “or” (2) and paves the way to another definition. In any case, after defining existentialism in some way and drawing the lines of the existential tradition, we encounter an observable distinction between existential philosophers: theist existentialists and atheist existentialists. Among theist existentialist philosophers, we can count names such as Søren Kierkegaard, Karl Jaspers (1883–1969) and Gabriel Marcel (1889–1973). Philosophers known as atheist existentialists are names such as Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir and Albert Camus. There is a bit of a complicated situation related to Camus, though. Although he is referred to as an existentialist philosopher, according to Camus himself, he was neither an existentialist nor a philosopher. (qtd. in Cooper 31). As for Sartre and Beauvoir, they did not define themselves as ‘existentialists’ at the beginning of the twentieth century. There is also an interesting anecdote about this:

At a colloquium organized by members of the Dominican order, Sartre once declared that he did not know what existentialism was. But both of them very soon came to accept the label as theirs, and both then began defending existentialism against criticisms of it that they considered to be unfair. Sartre’s single most famous such defence was his lecture, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, delivered to a packed audience in Paris under conditions of near-pandemonium in late October 1945. Beauvoir’s most sustained early apologia was her essay on *Existentialism and the Wisdom of Nations*, in which she argued that contrary to critics’ claims, with its emphasis on freedom and responsibility, existentialism was in fact a very hope-filled worldview. (McBride 52)

Although Beauvoir and Sartre were distant from existentialism at the beginning of the century when they were active in a philosophical sense, they became staunch defenders of existentialism in the later years of their lives. In the texts they wrote, they engaged in an intellectual struggle against negative thoughts, prejudices and misunderstandings about existentialism.

A similar case is that of Camus who never associated himself with existentialism in any period of his life, he gave much space to writers such as Karl Jaspers, Lev Shestov and Søren Kierkegaard, whom he referred to as 'existential' in his writings, and shaped the boundaries of his own 'absurd' philosophy with some of his criticisms (that we would see in following lines) towards Kierkegaard. According to Camus, "What is absurd is the confrontation of this irrational [world] and the wild longing for clarity whose call echoes in the human heart" (Camus 26). Therefore, due to our collision of the search for meaning and our efforts to calm our hearts in the face of an indifferent and chaotic universe, we fall into an existential impasse. "The absurd is born of this confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world" (Camus 32). The need mentioned here must be the need for a rational exchange that one tries to establish with the fact that he/she exists and with the existing things he/she observes. That is the need to attribute a reason and purpose and to make sense of it satisfactorily. However, after these attempts, if a person encounters the 'silence of the world', that is, the inaccessibility and inexplicability of things or appearances, the feeling of the absurd takes effect. What makes the absurd even more relentless is that for Camus, even science is useless: "I have returned to my beginning. I realise that if through science I can seize phenomena and enumerate them, I cannot, for all that, apprehend the world" (25). Science explains one way or another process and offers hypotheses, but in the last instance, it does not offer a holistic existential comprehension.

According to Camus, Kierkegaard also deeply confronted this incomprehensible essence of existence and nature and the anxiety-provoking sense of absurdity: "Kierkegaard, for a part of his existence at least, does more than discover the absurd: he lives it" (Camus 30). One can sense Camus' reasons for coining this sentence, at the beginning of the "Eulogy on Abraham" in Kierkegaard's remarkable work *Fear and Trembling* (1843): "If a human being did not have an eternal consciousness, if underlying everything there were only a wild, fermenting power that writhing in dark passions produced everything, be it significant or insignificant, if a vast, never appeased emptiness hid beneath everything, what would life be then but despair" (15) It can be said that Kierkegaard is aware of a possible state of hopelessness and meaninglessness lying under the surface of existence, but he eliminates this state of despair by taking an eternal state of consciousness as a precondition. In a sense, this is the exact opposite of Camus' philosophical stance. Both Kierkegaard and Camus sense despair, but while Camus insists on confronting the absurd at this point, Kierkegaard posits in a more secure position. According to Camus, the point where Kierkegaard deeply confronted alienation and the absurd

and even experienced it, what he should have done was to try to maintain his rationality and embrace the absurd, however, he “takes the leap” (Camus 39); that is, he surrendered with his heart and took refuge in the divine in a way. By doing so, he committed a “philosophical suicide” (Camus 32). In a sense, what is at stake in this philosophical suicide is a return to the comfortable space of belief and faithful submission, namely the safe bed of Christianity.

Having grown up so terrified of Christianity, Kierkegaard eventually returns to its most brutal facet (40), states Camus. He views Kierkegaard’s relationship with Christianity as a regression from which Kierkegaard could not save himself and had to return again with the dread he felt in the face of existence, almost as a kind of childhood trauma. Kierkegaard was frightened by Christianity as a child and as a result of his deepest ontological concerns, he turned to one of these early sources of fear. However, according to Camus, one must stand firmly against the absurd without attempting a leap towards the divine, without leaving the rational attitude behind and listening to the needs and commands of the heart. Perhaps one of the reasons why Camus is remembered among atheist existentialist philosophers is this approach and criticism he brought to Kierkegaard and his relationship with Christianity.

Of course, Kierkegaard plays a much more important role in the history of existentialism than being the target of Camus’s criticisms shaped around the axis of absurd thought. Indeed, Kierkegaard is the one who first showed us how to construct a way of thinking that makes the individual in their concrete existence the main philosophical focus, even before Heidegger or Sartre (Malpas 296). It is essential to consider the responsibility attributed to the Self and the meaning attributed to it as one of the dominant elements of the existentialist tradition. Kierkegaard plays a vital role in the history of philosophy as one of the first thinkers to emphasize the concrete existence of the individual. Thus, he challenges the abstract nature of traditional philosophical categories. According to him and naturally other existentialists, concepts such as truth and meaning were not intellectual abstractions but concrete experiences that should find their basis in the individual’s experimentations. Since the self is fundamentally ethereal, it should be comprehended in the axis of possibilities, anxiety, and choices (Kaufmann 17). Therefore, at this point, it was inevitable that concepts such as possibilities, freedom, responsibility, dread, alienation, suicide, and depression would become relevant as philosophical problems because these were experiences that the conscious being suffered from and that shaped its self-perception.

If it is remembered that the aforementioned notions such as freedom, possibilities and responsibility are concepts that are at the focus of humanist thought as well, it will be possible

to establish a parallel between existential philosophy and humanist understanding. That is why Jean-Paul Sartre also placed significant emphasis on the humanist character of existentialism, rather than its pessimism, when he titled his brief exposition as *Existentialism is a Humanism*, in 1946:

Some have blamed me for postulating that existentialism is a form of humanism. People have said to me, “But in *Nausea* you wrote that humanists are wrong; you even ridiculed a certain type of humanism, so why are you reversing your opinion now?” Actually, the word “humanism” has two very different meanings. By “humanism” we might mean a theory that makes man as an end and as the supreme value. (51)

However, Sartre opposes the idea of ‘humanism’ that takes the human as an ‘end’ or ‘supreme value,’ and he states that “Existentialism will never consider man as an end, because man is constantly making” (52). At this point, an alternative understanding that can be defined as “existentialist humanism” (53) comes into operation: “We remind man that there is no legislator other than himself and that he must, in his abandoned state, make his own choices, and also because we show that it is not by turning inward, but by constantly seeking a goal outside of himself in the form of liberation, or of some special achievement, that man will realize himself as truly human” (53). Thus, an individual has to become aware of his/her freedom of choice and the responsibility that comes with this freedom. Hence, existentialist humanism centres on the notion that people are not set in their nature but are capable of becoming anything they want to be by using their freedom (Norman 6). Human exists without an essence assigned and then attempt to construct himself/herself in their own abandonment. The main basis for Sartre’s attempt to reconcile existential philosophy and humanism is this awareness of the individual’s destiny. It can be said that for Sartre, although human is not an ‘end point’ or ‘supreme value’ as in the traditional humanist understanding, it is like a ‘starting point’ on which philosophical reasoning and the construction of a system will be based.

The fact that I can point to an attitude that can be described as existential in Shakespeare may also be due to this parallelism in content between existential philosophy and Renaissance humanism. As we know, the era in which Shakespeare lived and produced his works was under the intense influence of the cultural renaissance. Parallel to this, the intellectual conditions in which Khayyam was living had already begun to take shape before he was born and were already being described as the Golden Age of Islamic civilization. However, unfortunately, it can be said that Khayyam in a sense reached the end of this era, when the era of intellectual debate and creation had ended during Khayyam’s lifetime, and religious rulings known as

fatwas were issued by jurists against rationalists, especially philosophers (Aminrazavi 71). Although Khayyam was born in a period when the intellectual Golden Age of Islamic civilization was beginning to decline, the scientific and philosophical climate that was collectively experienced before he was born must have contributed to his education in his early youth. In addition, the fact that dogmatism was on the rise again in the conditions of the time Khayyam was born into and that Khayyam was exposed to this can be put forward as factors that prepared the ground for the poet's rebellious and sceptical aspects.

On the other hand, what was the importance of the cultural atmosphere, which had affected Shakespeare, in the history of thought and what kind of changes did it promise intellectually? To clarify it, it would be useful to remember the conditions before the Renaissance and make a comparison:

Philosophical dialogues in Middle Ages were abstract works, lacking verisimilitude or a flavour of genuinely spontaneous conversation. Such dialogues continued to be written in Renaissance. However, beginning in the 15th century, realistic dialogues, modelled on works such as Cicero's *De oratore*, came into vogue. These humanist dialogues aimed to depict credible conversations in realistic settings. (Black 26)

What continues to be interesting to me here is the value given to realistic dialogues and realistic settings, far removed from abstract reasoning, in humanism, similar to the tendency we see in the existentialist tradition and especially in Heidegger. Also, similar to existentialism that stripped away from theoretical and abstract framings and asked questions about the 'quiddity of existence' and the situation of the conscious subject in the world, the Renaissance brought with it certain questions about philosophy. The fractiousness and pluralism of the philosophical enterprise in the Renaissance raised in acute form a question that concerns philosophers in all periods: What is philosophy, and what should it be (Hankins 5)? As a result of these questions, humanists approached philosophy as a set of values that are grounded in the human experience rather than abstract reasoning, in parallel with Socrates' philosophy as a life practice and the existentialists' worldview based on the subject existing through actions. "Humanism in this sense reduced the divine to the human, was opposed to any sort of religious dogma or revelation, and based philosophical reflection on a conception of the human beings as a purely biological entity formed as the result of an evolutionary process, without an immaterial spiritual nature" (Hankins 31). It can be said that this understanding is positioned parallel to the perception that comes centuries later in Sartre and will draw the general lines of existential philosophy more clearly. Within existential philosophy, sooner or later we turn from the ideal to the material and

there is a fall from the divine to the human. There is no assigned essence or innate meaning, and if they were somehow, they would exist within a certain process and by being constructed by the human. That is why it is said that ‘existence precedes essence.’

What do we mean by saying that existence precedes essence? We mean that man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world – and defines himself afterwards. If man as the existentialist sees him is not definable, it is because to begin with he is nothing. He will not be anything until later, and then he will be what he makes of himself. Thus, there is no human nature, because there is no God to have a conception of it. Man, simply is. Not that he is simply what he conceives himself to be, but he is what he wills, and as he conceives himself after already existing – as he wills to be after that leap towards existence. Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself. (Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism* 22)

This need to build oneself imposes a responsibility on human and also leaves him/her with the problem of freedom. In a sense, they encounter themselves and try to hold on to a slippery ground. They are free to make choices and will face the consequences of the choices they make. No one will choose for them, no one will live or die for them. After all, in a world where there is no divine guide or support, where a human will build himself/herself ‘towards death,’ it is inevitable to face the problematic character of existence.

In the context of this study, existentialism is limited for now within a definition that points to the problematic aspects of existence in which it is an attitude or mindset that emphasizes the negative facets of living in a world without any fundamental source of importance or meaning (Malpas 293). Here, the problematic aspects of this sort of existence, experienced in a world in which one suddenly finds himself/herself and in which there is no pre-given meaning, are elements that can be directly observed in Khayyam’s quatrains and Shakespeare’s tragedies (in the context of this study, of course in *Hamlet*).

As we will all agree, it would be an unfortunate anachronism to directly characterize Khayyam or Shakespeare as existentialists. In any case, it is not my purpose to make such a claim. What I will point out is that with existentialism placing the subject at the centre of philosophical inquiry, certain concepts have become philosophical problems to be examined. In doing so, I intend to show how they concern themselves with the human condition through their philosophical attitudes rather than their artistic personalities. What I mean by the human condition here is the conditions in which man exists as a mortal and conscious being, regardless

of time and geography. In other words, to exist as being-towards-death (*Being* 426), as Heidegger puts it. “Factical Dasein exists as born; and, as born, it is already dying, in the sense of Being-towards-death” (426). This was an important point because it explicates that from the moment of birth, humans exist with and are headed towards death. To be able to examine such an existence and to speak about it, we should understand that death presents itself as a phenomenon that is impossible not to be concerned about and cannot be ignored.

Even though some existentialist philosophical issues—like the meaning of death or the extent of personal moral responsibility—might seem particularly pressing in a given historical context, they are perennial issues that transcend place and time (Cooper 27). That is, although some of the debates and common concerns associated with existentialist philosophy have frequently come to the fore in the aftermath of major turning points such as World War II, and although existentialism has sometimes been referred to as “the metaphysical expression of the spiritual dishevelment of a post-war age” (Harvey 261), in fact, these concerns and awarenesses have always found a place in humanity’s unconscious or in its production, and it is possible to trace these notions back to ancient thinkers.

Existentialism, for all its claims to be new and unusual, is part of a lengthy tradition in Western philosophy that dates at least to Socrates (469–399 BCE) (Flynn 1). When we look at Socrates’ philosophy, the main thing that comes across is a state of care of the self. This was an activity to address the question of what proper behaviour and existence are, rather than an effort to put forward some abstract and theoretical truths, just like existentialism aims to do. Moreover, in Plato’s *Phaedo*, we can see Socrates’ treatment of the issue of death as a philosophical problem. For example, Socrates says here, “Ordinary people seem not to realize that those who really apply themselves in the right way to philosophy are directly and of their own accord preparing themselves for dying and death” (Plato 116). According to him, one of the primary duties of those who practice philosophy is to be familiar with the idea of death and to be properly prepared for death. So, philosophical reasoning is, at its most basic, a state of being related to death. Philosophical inquiry continues its existence with death, despite death, and in relation to death.

In this vein, just like all other existentialists, Heidegger also positioned the issue of death at an important point in the world of thought. In fact, in his magnum opus, *Being and Time* (1927), he said: “Let the term ‘dying’ stand for that way of Being in which Dasein is towards its death” (Heidegger 291). It seems that for Heidegger, dying is not an unfortunate event that happens once and ends, but rather a process inherent in and parallel to the state of existence.

Death is equivalent to dying and is almost a parallel state of becoming: “Death is not an event; it is a phenomenon to be understood existentially” (Heidegger, *Being* 284). Individuals exist towards death, and thus death continues its process from day to day. In this sense, death is not a moment but a component of one’s experience of existence. The fact that our conscious being and death are so intertwined compels, and forces a person to embark on his/her search for meaning by confronting death.

Thus, one of the main topics of Heidegger's thinking is death. He emphasizes that being “prepared for death” is an essential part of living an authentic life and that genuine Being can only be shown when Dasein faces its own mortality by firmly acknowledging that it is always and unavoidably traveling towards its own demise (Watts 95). The factor that brings the question of Being to the stage with all its might is the situation of being face to face with death. Granting the cogency of this situation, Heidegger believed that it would be possible to resolve the problems of what an authentic existence entails and what the basic meaning of Being is, by taking death as a hallmark.

Here, Heidegger’s attitude, which tried to address and make sense of existence in the context of *Dasein*, that is, the human being who exists towards death, was an important breakthrough towards re-taking the subject as the basis of philosophical inquiry. This attitude also pointed to a deficiency in the Western philosophical tradition. According to Heidegger and some other existential philosophers, the philosophical tradition had ignored the essential questions and problems regarding existence. However, if we assume a truth to be pursued, the problem of being and the questions it brings with it stands before us as important intellectual problems. Heidegger observed that the central enigma of life—that is, the existence of a world and a cosmos as opposed to nothing—had received very little study in Western philosophy since Plato’s time and in science following Aristotle (Watts 14). According to Heidegger’s position, Plato and the philosophers who followed him failed to address the central question of being because they attempted to situate their philosophical interpretations of Being within a theoretical framework. Heidegger therefore saw the history of Western philosophy as the forgetting of Being and held that because of the artificially created division between the mind and the actual world of things, most people are unaware of the fundamental oneness and indivisibility of Being (Watts 14). Accordingly, the duality of mind and matter established between the subject and the observed external world drew an artificial boundary between the conscious subject and the world. As a result, a comprehensive philosophical investigation of Being could not be grasped.

When we try to grasp Being on a rational level, or when we engage in the ancient philosophical inquiry that makes Being the fundamental question, that is, when we ‘encounter’ our own sheer being, according to Albert Camus, we face to the absurd nature of existence:

That stage scenery masked by habit becomes again what it is. It withdraws at a distance from us. Just as there are days when under the familiar face of a woman, we see as a stranger her we had loved months or years ago, perhaps we shall come even to desire what suddenly leaves us so alone. But the time has not yet come. Just one thing: that denseness and that strangeness of the world is the absurd. (20)

When we examine this fate of humans, on the axis of the concept of the absurd and thrownness, the only thing we know in the current circumstances is that we were born without our will, that we are here now in this incomprehensible world, that we have experienced all of this, that all of this will inevitably end one day, and that this termination will happen again without our will.

Taking this theoretical framework into consideration, a person who cannot find an absolute meaning inherent in the essence of existence at times faces two options: suicide or an attempt to construct a meaning. These options and the possible attitude one will take emerge as a kind of philosophical problem that we should deal with, as Camus points out in his pivotal work *Myth of Sisyphus* (1942): “There is but one truly serious philosophical problem and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy. All the rest—whether or not the world has three dimensions, whether the mind has nine or twelve categories—comes afterwards” (11). What can be considered as more metaphysical issues, such as dimensions or categories, which Camus refers to as ‘all the rest,’ are secondary questions in comparing whether life is worth living. Before acting with the motivation to explain life with theories, formulas and dimensions, a person must be convinced that life is something worth sustaining, understanding and explaining. Even if we ignore our incapability to have an insight into the inherent value and the first cause of our existence and successfully devote ourselves to the experience of daily life, from time to time we become deeply aware of the incomprehensible essence of things, appearing as a sense of alienation:

It happens that the stage sets collapse. Rising, streetcar, four hours in the office or the factory, meal, streetcar, four hours of work, meal, sleep, and Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday, and Saturday according to the same rhythm—this path is easily followed most of the time. But one day the “why” arises and everything begins in that weariness tinged with amazement. (Camus 19)

One feels that the whole familiar decoration has collapsed and neither philosophical concepts nor science or religion can be satisfactory and can offer an absolute answer. Even when we believe in God, it is still possible to be startled by the ancient and unanswerable question: “Why?” “Why and how did God exist?” “Why did he/she/it create things?” and the like.

This kind of inquiry forces one to consider our true “situation” in the world, our existence, our limits, and our potential; it also inevitably forces one to face life's givens, “deep structures,” or fundamental issues. (Yalom 30). The illusion caused by our habituation to daily life suddenly breaks down in the same direction and we find ourselves faced with a pile of meaningless occupations and senseless objects. Although consciousness can determine the reasons for the existence of these designed, manufactured and functional objects in daily life, it cannot comprehend the process by which it was created. That is, we are left helpless to overcome the disharmony of the world and the irrationality of our existence. Thus, the thought of a possibility that can be painful for a person arises: Maybe there is no inherent meaning or a secret to be revealed beyond the words. Even the word “secret,” even the word “word” and even the word “even” are products of human perception and definitions.

Herein, the ancient question, which has always been asked “Why are there beings at all, and why not rather nothing?” (Heidegger, *What is Metaphysics?* 110) stands in all its harshness. The idea that things exist and the impression that this existence is causeless, fruitless, meaningless, and purposeless, or perhaps there is a reason that our minds cannot even come close to comprehending in current circumstances is extraordinarily disturbing to the mind of human beings.

Fortunately, this does not have to be a moment of destruction where everything ends or an awareness that paralyzes consciousness and leaves the person in a state of eternal terror. We can even say that this may sometimes be the point where everything begins. “Begins—this is important” says Camus, “[w]eariness comes at the end of the acts of a mechanical life, but at the same time, it inaugurates the impulse of consciousness. It awakens consciousness and provokes what follows. What follows is the gradual return into the chain or it is the definitive awakening” (19). This moment, when we have to encounter ourselves and define ourselves in order to build our essence of existence, parallels the point that Camus mentioned and where something begins. At this stage, one can begin to question what life is and even whether life is worth continuing.

Once suicide appears as a philosophical problem craving for a soothing answer about whether life is worth living, we are essentially attempting to construct a personal meaning.

When examined from a chronological perspective, written culture reveals that death and existential anxiety have consistently been prominent themes in literature. From ancient Egypt to the post-war existentialist writers, death has always been approached with different perspectives but with similar feelings resonating within different epochs and cultural imaginations. “The concept of death has significantly influenced human thought and creativity, from the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (1800 BCE), one of the earliest texts on this subject, to contemporary expressions such as the music of Metallica” (18) says Kaan Ökten, in the introduction to his compilation work titled *Ölüm Kitabı* (The Book of Death, 2022). It can even be claimed that the thought of death or the fear of death is the most important propulsion mechanism that shapes a person’s life and causes him to establish orders and mechanisms that transcend death (Ökten 18). Indeed, although it is possible to describe our conscious existence as futile in conditions where we are faced with the idea of nothingness and feel the transience of the world, it is difficult to estimate how difficult it would be to have a permanent world life without death. Immortality or a state devoid of death would be pointless (Williams 82). In this framework, death appears not only as an unpleasant reality that reveals the futility of everything and establishes the corrosive power of time but also as a source of motivation that can encourage creativity and the attempt to create one’s own meaning. If it is accepted that the basic motivations of creative initiatives are the desire to strengthen one’s existence and to transcend death, then the awareness and fear of death can play a role as a factor pushing people to creative or constructive action.

Within this philosophical and literary framework, this thesis will focus on William Shakespeare and Omar Khayyam comparatively as both are among the authors who have made the subject matter of death a philosophical problem, especially in *Hamlet* and *Rubaiyat*. These poets treat death as one of their main subjects further projecting the idea that death fuels people’s feelings of thrownness, loneliness or despair. Furthermore, in slightly more audacious terms, it can be argued that centuries before such eminent thinkers as Kierkegaard, Heidegger, or Sartre, and while existentialism was not conceptualised in any way, Shakespeare and Khayyam practised themes and motifs closely related to the existential philosophy.

For instance, bung, jug, dust, grass, tulip, skull or cavities that no longer contain eyes or teeth appear as images that evoke the idea of death and the material traces of past corpses. Undoubtedly, these objects are ordinary items that are used for daily purposes and cannot have a philosophical function in theory and practice. However, in the context of Shakespeare and Khayyam, each simple object can lead to large-scale contemplation and existential questioning.

A kind of deduction begins when Khayyam or Hamlet contemplates a wine jug, spigot, adobe or beer barrel. What is seen is not only the holistic image of that object but also the particles or the different material elements that make up that object. After deep contemplation on the objects, a strange awareness of the general plane of existence is achieved from both of them.

Hamlet is aware of the depth of geologic time, where the corpse directly combines with the earth's particulate matter and where he, Ophelia, Yorick, and all of humanity will spend countless aeons of decay as slowly fossilizing matter (Mitchell 128). Similarly, in Khayyam, every life from past to present ultimately becomes one on the same material plane, as if confirming the futility of everything. Then, both Hamlet and Khayyam sense the absurdity of this common fate of our existence. They observe an ironic situation which also serves as an unpleasant harbinger of their own material adventures on the horizon.

One cannot help but feel the futility and painful side of worldly life despite the existence of God, in *Hamlet*:

Exeunt all but Hamlet.

. . . O that this too solid flesh would melt,

Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew,

Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd

His canon 'gainst self-slaughter. (I.ii.126-130)

Hamlet displays a tremendous example of pessimism when he reproaches God's command forbidding suicide. The idea of suicide cannot function as a concept that could console us with the possible alternative path it offers: "the Everlasting had fix[e]d / His canon [a]'gainst self-slaughter" (I.ii.129-130). Hamlet continues his words as follows:

. . . O God!

How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable

Seems to me all the uses of this world!

Fie on't! Oh fie, fie, 'tis unweeded garden

That grows to seed, things rank and gross in nature[.] (I.ii.130-134)

Here, in Hamlet's current conditions of existence, the world is virtually empty and associated only with negative qualities and emotions. Hamlet seems to sense, in Camus' words, the

inhuman and alien aspects underlying beauty and nature (20), which do not promise a certain aesthetic or sense of security. It can be seen that Omar Khayyam appears with a similar attitude. According to remarkable Iranian existentialist writer Sadegh Hedayat, “constant sorrow, sorrow, absence and death are among the characteristics of Khayyam’s thought” (Hidayet 29). According to Khayyam, nature continues its blind turn, the sky is empty, and no one comes to its aid (qtd. in Hidayet 28). This indifferent cycle of nature, which cannot be attributed to any divine purpose, the godless sky and the incomprehensibility of objects can cause a feeling of alienation. In Camus’ words,

A step lower and strangeness creeps in: perceiving that the world is ‘dense,’ sensing to what a degree a stone is foreign and irreducible to us, with what intensity nature or a landscape can negate us. At the heart of all beauty lies something inhuman, and these hills, the softness of the sky, the outline of these trees at this very minute lose the illusory meaning with which we had clothed them, henceforth more remote than a lost paradise. (Camus 20)

Possibly, this experience Camus mentions is beyond emotions, sensations, thoughts, and perhaps language that we are familiar with. It seems like a helpless confusion that could only be experienced without being fully expressed. At such times, the friendly parts, elements, individuals, and units of nature, which we try to take shelter in by thinking or watching, no longer give people a sense of admiration and serene feelings, but only sheer fear. Nature suddenly assumes its incomprehensibility.

Khayyam seems to be struggling in the unknown, in this nature that ignores us, in the face of the unconsciousness and indifference of things, and under the empty sky, with a sense of being thrown:

The heavens earned no profit on my birth;
my death won’t aid their beauty or grandeur.
Then why have they decreed this coming and
this going? Neither ear has ever heard. (translated by Juan Cole 35)

This feeling of wonder can sometimes turn into a source of pleasure for Khayyam when he can aestheticize nature and find solace in wine. This dialectics of Khayyam’s philosophy of pleasure can be described as resolving the paradoxes of happiness-sadness, religion-disbelief, past-future, and birth-death by living outside of them in an authentic state of *nowness*, a state of

never finishing today (Vaziri 225). 'Never finishing today' promises to get rid of the imperious power of time that wears the human out. If one embraces the present as the only reality, it becomes more possible to be free from the emotional burdens of the past and the anxieties of the uncertainty of the future. Contemplation with intense focus on these paradoxes and deadlocks, which are closely related to existence, eventually causes one to free oneself from abstract judgments that lead to doubt and confusion, and embrace the genuine aspects of every life's experience and today's opportunities.

In addition, although this wonder feels like a child's astonishment observing the universe or an old man ecstatically watching the stars, it sometimes slides into the distress of the unknown. In this case, it recalls a sort of suffering far from serene moments. As we just saw, according to Khayyam, our life on this earth is a state of coming, staying, and going which we cannot attribute an inherent meaning. This comprehension reduces our existence to a state of being in a material dimension. In this material realm, the world materialized from the collision of particles. These "rotating particles" in Hedayat's words (37) persist their functions in commitment and harmony (Hidayet 37). However, there is no continuity of the deceased one's consciousness in the new life-filled adventure of his/her particles in nature. There is a vanishing of a mode of existence that outweighs all others aside from the objective remnant of matter (Levinas 9). Even though a body that is capable of continuing its relationship with matter, clay and dust remains after death, there is something that disappears beyond that body and all the matter into which it is mixed. An essence has disappeared, and the ability to perceive, sense or react has been erased. There is still a face that can be observed in its entirety for a while, but this face no longer contains any facial expressions. Even though the eyes exist and will continue to contribute to existence with their chemical distribution in the compound even when they dissolve in the soil, those eyes no longer have a look. Therefore, in this process, death turns the human body into a component of a natural and elemental process keeps moving persistently. At this point, the idea of death seems as natural and easily acceptable as possible. However, since conscious life and social identity are erased in this process and human is faced with a total uncertainty, contrary to the natural description in the previous sentence, death continues to create great hesitation and anxiety.

Sadeqh Hedayat also signifies the continuous and endless current in Khayyam's images. Hedayat explicates that these quatrains seem small but they deal with important and dark philosophical problems that have troubled people in various periods; problems that have been imposed on people and mysteries that remain unresolved (23). However, perhaps what Hedayat

alludes to under the name of dark philosophical problems is some fundamental questions related to human reality. They are beyond darkness and light, good and evil, and what he calls unsolved mysteries might already be impossible to solve. Also, with all their inextricability, they are quite timeless and universal. Khayyam inevitably reminds us of Hamlet and his “quintessence of dust” (II.ii.308) when he utters the following lines: “Given that this world is dust, wouldn’t it have been better / had I never been born, o was” (69). Likewise, according to Hamlet, in all this chaos and despite all his virtues, what is a human being, other than a handful of dust? He exclaims:

What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty! In form and moving, how express and admirable! In action, how like an angel! In apprehension, how like a god! The beauty of the world, the paragon of animals – and yet to me what is this quintessence of dust? (II.ii.303-308)

Although both authors’ approaches focus on the image of dust associated with the human state of existence, there is still a difference in their approaches. In these lines, Hamlet establishes his reasoning from man towards dust. After first talking about man’s virtues, his noble sides, and his similarity with angels and God, he refutes the same praises by pointing out the main material reality underlying all these false and temporary appearances, that is, dust. On the other hand, Khayyam comes from dust towards man and sees the face of beauty in the material history of the dust. Thence, he strikingly presents past lives that were transformed into matter by the natural cycle and draws attention to their new reduced states. What is observed now is that they are mixed into dust and soil. What brings Khayyam and Shakespeare together here is the same witty lament about human destiny and the unchangeable fate of consciousness and flesh.

Ultimately, the main purpose of this thesis is to examine *Hamlet* and *Rubaiyat* within the cultural and intellectual conditions in which they were shaped to deal with the similarity in the images from an existential perspective and to trace the absurd tone and the existential dread in both works. Thus, my thesis uses a comparative approach to examine Omar Khayyam’s *Rubaiyat* and William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* from an existential standpoint. It further explores the sensitivity and negative emotions that can be caused by deep contemplation of the essence of existence, stripped of everyday life, by concentrating on images that imply mortality salience and a sense of futility. This awareness can sometimes be a source of sarcasm and an unpleasant indicator of their impending material demise. Both authors use immobile things like a skull or a wine bowl, to indirectly attest to the fleeting nature of life, its futility, and the never-ending cycle of birth and death. Motifs, which can be reconciled with existentialism, like thrownness,

absurdity, anxiety, and alienation are evident in both *Hamlet* and *Rubaiyat*. The thesis shows how existentialist ideas were comparably implemented by Shakespeare and Khayyam, given their similar and/or different mindsets. In the end, this thesis analyses these two poets' works in the frame of existential philosophy.



2. DEATH, DREAD, WINE AND WILL TO HAPPINESS

In the history of Islamic intellectual thought, Omar Khayyam is a singular figure, both in the East and the West, as a sort of unknown, misunderstood by many, loved by free spirits, and hated by traditionalists, (Aminrazavi 1). One of the reasons why Khayyam is described as unknown may be as follows: In both geographies, Khayyam's essential virtues have been overshadowed by certain perceptions or certain judgments about him. When it comes to the West, it can even be said that the basis of this problem lies in some difficulties regarding translation. Even Edward Fitzgerald's translation, one of the most important reasons for Khayyam's popularity in the West, may have had a negative impact. FitzGerald's translation should be regarded as an antiquated piece of Orientalism, not as a reflection of Omar Khayyam's intellectual pondering (Vaziri 223). Whereas, an interpretation that misses Khayyam's intellectual presence and philosophical attitude, runs the risk of leaving out his most noteworthy aspects. Juan Cole, who offers another new translation of Khayyam's quatrains, also criticizes FitzGerald's translation in the same vein: "[M]any of the words used by FitzGerald have a distancing effect, appealing to the exotic or the ancient, whereas the original verses are marked by immediacy" (6). However, the most important feature of the 'art of rubai' is that it is direct, and it is characterized by concise quatrains that can carry simple aesthetics with deep philosophical reasoning. For this very reason, it is necessary to avoid exotic and orientalist embellishments, and one must focus on the substance. Hence, I will mainly prefer Juan Cole's translation of *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyam: A New Translation from the Persian* (2020) for the rubais that I will include in my work. But there is another translation that I might turn to when I feel the need to preserve the ancient and more poetic spirit of the quatrains while still bringing the intellectual core to the forefront. That is Edward Henry Whinfield's translation (1883), again directly from Persian sources.

Besides the translation problem in the West and the exotic or orientalist images that have been formed about Khayyam, when one looks to the East, it can be seen that the judgments about Khayyam are formed on a religious axis. While the reason why Khayyam was appreciated by the "free spirits" (1), as Aminrazavi put it, was the poet's relentless scepticism, his inability

to find solace in dreams of the afterlife, and his reckless debates with both his own existence and God, the same reason why he was labelled as an infidel or a heretic by conservatives.

Khayyam's sceptical attitude, existential questionings and perhaps the recurring image of wine in his poems caused him to be described as an infidel or a hedonist in his land. Moreover, his use of topics such as God, heaven, worship, faith, and death as poetry materials, sometimes seriously and sometimes sarcastically, inevitably made him a controversial figure. It is possible to wrongly view him as an agnostic hedonist without considering his true thought, a view that many people still hold today (Nasr 410). However, when one examines his quatrains at a closer look, it is possible to realise that it is inappropriate to characterize Khayyam with such reductionist patterns and that his intellectual world promises much more than this.

The stereotype of exotic, arcane, oriental philosophy ultimately destroyed Khayyam's profound existential philosophy (Aminrazavi 216). Hence, his philosophical side has been overshadowed by an exotic image in the West. He might be seen as a mysterious Easterner who merely says "carpe diem" out of easiness and exotic worries. However, Khayyam offers much more than "carpe diem, bread and wine, and the emptiness of life" (Vaziri 224). He was a philosopher-poet who never abandoned his sceptical attitude and his consciousness inevitably led Khayyam to deeply meditate on existential concerns. For this reason, Khayyam's quatrains can be considered concise texts in which aesthetics and philosophy go hand in hand. My main purpose is to focus on these philosophical notions in Khayyam's *Rubaiyat* that can be associated with an existentialist standpoint and to compare them with similar attitudes in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Before that, this section will endeavour to provide a brief overview of Khayyam's life, philosophy and poetry.

In *Liberation Philosophy: From the Buddha to Omar Khayyam* (2019), Mostafa Vaziri states that in the northeastern Iranian city of Nishapur, Omar Khayyam was born in 1048 and passed away there in 1131 (215). He was a brilliant mathematician, astronomer, and a lettered philosopher-poet. This versatility is also revealed in the quatrains that in his *Rubaiyat*, Khayyam adopts an approach that can be called analytical, he is also intensely interested in the movements of celestial beings, and he contemplates the continuous cycle in nature. Khayyam's sceptical side and his sensitivity towards nature constitute the backbone of the intellectual theme in his poems. Therefore, Sadegh Hedayat, a 20th-century Iranian existential writer, examines Khayyam under two headings as a philosopher and a versifier (23). While it is indisputable that Khayyam's poet and philosopher personas are the more prominent ones, it is impossible to fully

isolate the two from one another because his poems are mostly where his intellectual side comes through.

“An acrid smell of wine rises from Khayyam’s rubais, and death says: ‘Let’s be happy’ through its clenched teeth,” (26) says Hedayat, in his work *Hayyam’in Teraneleri* (Quatrains of Khayyam) (1934). This brief and poetic statement is crucial for understanding Khayyam’s literary and intellectual world, as it concisely highlights the three recurring themes in his quatrains: death, wine, and the will to happiness.

As Mehdi Aminrazavi notes in his valuable work *The Wine of Wisdom* (2005), the wine image in Khayyam’s poetry can be interpreted in three different ways:

- 1- The intoxicating wine
- 2- The wine of love
- 3- The wine of wisdom. (126)

The wine image can be taken literally as intoxicating since Khayyam sometimes suggests the intoxication of wine as a defence mechanism against life’s unanswerable questions. In fact, it can be said that in some verses, Khayyam positions wine as a more realistic source of happiness, as opposed to divine promises, and establishes a contrast between worldly/real pleasure and divine/narrative pleasure: “You say the garden of Eden with heavenly virgins delights us / I say it’s the nectar of the grape that delights us” (30) It seems that with this opposition he establishes, he declares that he casts his vote in favour of the worldly, that is, wine that can console him a little in his temporary worldly life and promise him pleasant inspirations. The last two lines that follow immediately explain Khayyam’s attitude and what he means by wine: “Insist on cash on the barrelhead and don’t sell on credit / Brother, drumming sounds more pleasant when heard from afar” (30). As can be seen more clearly here, paradise with its celestial virgins is like a distant dream for Khayyam. The gardens of paradise are like drums whose sound comes from afar and is heard pleasantly from afar. Since he makes such an analogy, these imaginary narratives must resemble noise for Khayyam when listened to and examined closely. Rather than relying on such an imaginary narrative and a distant promise, resorting to the ‘wine of the moment’, which he describes as ‘cash on the barrelhead’, seems like a more reasonable and realistic option for Khayyam.

On the other hand, contrary to the literal use of wine as I claim, in the Sufi tradition, wine can be seen in other poets as being identified with a real divine ecstasy rather than the

calming effect of alcohol. For instance, another Persian poet Hakim Sanai (1080–1131) states in one of his quatrains: Were I not intoxicated by my love for You,

I fear I might find an easier path;

but once having once tasted Your wine

I abandoned the world of order. (Sanai 25)

In these lines, contrary to what we see in Khayyam, wine is not presented as the opposite of the divine or preferred to the gardens of heaven; rather, it is a symbol related to God Himself and is almost an attribute of God. What makes Sanai ‘intoxicated’ is the love of that holy being whom he addresses as “You,” and this divine love becomes possible by tasting “His wine.” There is no doubt that the wine mentioned here has a divine symbolic meaning rather than being the red wine that Khayyam drinks as a source of consolation. While Sanai tastes God’s wine, abandons the worldly order, and almost makes metaphysical insinuations to the reader that he is privy to a secret behind appearances, Khayyam, on the contrary, seems to have long since disregarded the beyond and developed a more down-to-earth vision: “I have no idea if my creator will lift me up to heaven or hurl me down to hell / A crust of bread, a lover, and a cup of wine—that’s all I need” (32). In these lines of Khayyam’s, it does not seem possible to claim that wine is used in a way that is not intoxicating and has a mystical function, stripped of its everyday meaning. He seems to have long since left God’s final decision regarding him (heaven or hell) outside his sphere of concern, and he is at peace with the real meanings that concepts such as bread, lover, and wine express in worldly life.

In addition to the interpretations of ‘the intoxicating wine’ and ‘the wine of love’ that I discussed above, another interpretation that Aminrazavi mentioned, as we recall, was the thesis of ‘the wine of wisdom’ (126). Within the framework of this interpretation, the image of wine takes on a more philosophical quality, somewhere between the worldly and the divine. Within this reading, wine does not express anything as directly as the real wine, which is only intoxicating, nor as indirectly as the wine of love, which is only divine. This symbol can also be read as a will to happiness against pessimism or as an indicator of peace surrounding the thoughts of free people (Mermer 238). I also think that the wine mentioned in Khayyam’s verses combines ‘intoxicating wine’ with the ‘wine of wisdom’, which can be placed on a more philosophical plane, and should be evaluated within the framework of these two interpretations. From my point of view, Khayyam uses wine as a prescription for the anxieties and futile confusion he feels in the face of the sufferings of existence, and the uncertainty of worldly life

and death, and this modest attempt inevitably evolves into a philosophical dimension. In another quatrain, he again draws a contrast between the real happiness that is available and the divine promises that draw the image of a distant imaginary narrative, and advises on properly comprehending the present, through the ecstasy promised by wine:

A bottle of Shiraz and the lips of a lover, on the edge of a meadow –
are like cash in hand for me—and for you, credit toward paradise.

They've wagered that some go to heaven, and some to hell.

But whoever went to hell? And whoever came back from paradise? (translated by Juan Cole 33)

Even the phrase 'A bottle of Shiraz' is an indication of how truly he speaks of wine. He places the meadows of the world against the gardens of Eden, and the time he will spend with wine and his beloved on the edge of the tangible meadows of the world is much more real for him and an opportunity that should not be missed. The eternal happiness of heaven, which no one goes to and returns from and cannot witness firsthand, or the fear of hell cannot overcome Khayyam's sceptical and rational barriers. In this context, wine is both a worldly nectar that delights his heart and a philosophical tool that enhances the present moment by stripping away concerns about the past and future, making today the absolute time to embrace and appreciate.

Another focal point of Khayyam's thought is death, not merely as an end but as a symbol of impermanence. Since Khayyam focuses heavily on nature, he emphasises a material cycle that continues to multiply with death and always maintains its existence. When examined in this context, death is of course not the end, but an indispensable part of existential transformation. Nevertheless, even if death cannot destroy things on a material level, it still constitutes the irreversible end of consciousness. However, this is not sustainable due to the fundamental laws of death. The fundamental existentialist contradiction is the tension between the will to live and the knowledge that death is inevitable (Yalom 8). When it is considered from this perspective, death is the loss of consciousness and thence, it triggers anxiety; hereby, it turns into a harbinger of absolute impermanence. In Khayyam, although the thought of death causes feelings of transience or meaninglessness, fortunately, it is not characterised by absolute despair:

When life has run its course, no matter spent
in Baghdad or Kabul—and whether sweet

or bitter as it drained: Drink up! For once

we've gone, the moon will still grow full, then dim. (translated by Juan Cole 34)

Here, while reflecting on mortality, he focuses on death's power to reduce everything—sweet or bitter, good or bad—to the same place and render it meaningless. However, even as he emphasizes the cosmic indifference that humanity faces, he does not get stuck in absolute pain or pessimism. It can be said that a reality he has already accepted pushes him to exist in the present with a sense of submission. In other words, he temporarily forgets about death, which will ultimately unite everything on a common plane, and instead focuses on making the most of today's life. Herewith, in Khayyam's context, focusing on death enables one to live in the present (Aminrazavi 99). It is possible to argue that in this case, the existential attitude is shown by the cognitive function of death anxiety. Existentialists believe that death is a necessary part of life and that acknowledging death as a reality is crucial to establishing a life (Şahin 1830). In Khayyam, contemplating death triggers a moment of melancholy that simultaneously highlights opportunities in the present. The inevitability of dissolution and the awareness of how temporary everything is, even though he is passionate about life, awakens the notion that there is nothing else but today to embrace. Thus, he wants to experience both intellectual and sensual pleasures at their peaks and strongly appreciates the landscapes of nature.

Aminrazavi's emphasis on living 'here' and 'now' concerning Khayyam's thoughts on death aligns with Sadegh Hedayat's interpretation. In both Aminrazavi's and Hedayat's contexts, death becomes an intellectual stepping-stone rather than a source of absolute pessimism and hopeless struggle against transience. Awareness of death fosters a consciousness of the present, urging one to seize happiness before it is too late. In these conditions, once death is truly realized, it always announces its existence as a reality that is difficult to ignore, which means that a person continues to live with mortality salience. What is sustained is a mortal life. The idea of death is inherent in life itself. The fate in question here inevitably brings to mind Yalom's approach to death: "It is a terrible truth, and we respond to it with mortal terror" (8). Fortunately, Khayyam is one step away from that constant terror and relentlessly obsessive anxiety and he reacts with a mirthful grief: "Barkeep, why grieve about the future fate of friends? / Bring out your finest vintage—since the night is disappearing" (38) His awareness of the uncanny and uncertain future increases the value of the time we are still alive and the happiness that can be achieved during these times. In a world where everything is so transient, the day that is still in our hands, today, and everything it promises become blessings for which an intellectual effort is made:

Give up desire for this world—live content!

Don't think about this era's good and bad.

Quick, grab a wine glass and a lover's curls.

Life's fading and the day will soon be done. (translated by Juan Cole 42)

Hence, within the context discussed by both Hedayat and Aminrazavi, there is an undeniable connection between the consciousness of death and the will for happiness in Khayyam's work. In a sense, the idea of death prompts the urge to live in the moment.

Besides using the idea of death as a stepping-stone, which underscores life, he also addressed diverse and fundamental topics including biological and mechanical processes, atomism, the philosophy of pleasure, rejection of the metaphysics of an afterlife, and an onto-epistemological discourse on nothingness. Such topics deserve more rigorous philosophical scrutiny than just calling them “merely” poetry (Vaziri 217). That is to say, Khayyam's quatrains constitute a form that combines a minimalist aesthetic with introspection about human's existential condition.

Due to the large number of these quatrains, it is open to debate as to which ones can be attributed to Khayyam. Anywhere from 500 to 750 rubais are credited to Khayyam, but some of these quatrains may have been composed by other poets (Kennedy 140). Sadegh Hedayat also states:

If the writings about Khayyam and the rubais were brought together, they would form a large library. The book of rubais attributed to Khayyam and circulated from hand to hand generally contains eighty to twelve hundred rubais, but they contain contradictory ideas. Even if a person lived for a century and changed his religion twice a day, he would not have the strength to express such thoughts. (Hidayet 11)

Throughout these various quatrains, it seems that at times, he assumes the persona of a dervish or a Sufi while at other times he adopts the persona of a drunkard, lustful person, atheist, or infidel. The only undeniable historical reality is that all these quatrains were said in Persian in the 11th and 12th centuries (Hidayet 11). In addition, it is possible to take a look at what his contemporaries wrote about Khayyam to get more insight into both his literary and social existence.

One of the oldest books mentioning Khayyam is *Çehar Makâle* (1150), written by Nizami-yi Arûzi, one of Khayyam's contemporaries. However, in this important source even

though Khayyam's name is mentioned, his rubais and poet identity are not (Hidayet 13). Aminrazavi states:

The oldest source in which Omar Khayyam is mentioned is a letter written by Abu'l Majd Majdud ibn Adam, also known as Sana'i Ghaznavi, a literary genius and a man of considerable fame. This letter was written by a literary figure to Khayyam himself, praising him for his many virtues. However, Khayyam's quatrains or his identity as a poet are not mentioned. This absence might suggest that the *Rubaiyat* were not written by him. If Khayyam had written poems, it is reasonable to expect that Khayyam may have been a poet of a different kind who composed his *Rubaiyat* for himself or perhaps his close students and cannot be classified as a professional poet. (41–42)

According to Hedayat, though, the first work that mentions Khayyam as a poet is the book *Haridet'ul Kasr* (1176), written in Arabic by Imaduddin Katib-i Isfahani. Khayyam is shown here among the poets located in Khorasan. While Khayyam's literary identity is emphasized here, in some other works, Khayyam's poetry is not mentioned and instead, his worldview is criticized harshly. For instance, Necmuddîn-i Dâye's work *Mirsâdu'l-ibâd* (Course of the Sufis) (1223) accuses Khayyam of materialism. In the third section of the first chapter of his work, Dâye describes philosophers, materialists and naturalists as "poor people in confusion and misguidance" (63) and continues his words as follows: "One of them, Omar Khayyam, fell into the valleys of misguidance as a result of his confusion and he confessed his blindness" (Dâye 63). These judgements, which most probably stem from Khayyam's materialistic thinking and general scepticism, give us an idea about his position in the cultural and intellectual climate of that duration. He is criticized as a materialist deprived of faith and wisdom, rather than a religious figure who complies with the traditional beliefs of the period.

It can be said that the main reasons for the contrast between Khayyam and the religious tradition of his time are the pessimism and scepticism that Hedayat describes as "constant elements in all of Khayyam's quatrains which he maintained from his youth until his death". (Hidayet 19). However, Vaziri argues that attributing pessimism to Khayyam is incorrect and Khayyam presented an understanding of the material world that would produce clarity, confidence, and pleasure in life (Vaziri 215). Nevertheless, the pessimism felt in Khayyam's poems does not manifest itself as a state of hopelessness that destroys the pleasure and clarity in life. His pessimism can be understood as a turning point, rather than an unchangeable bottom at which the person perishes. In the next stage of pessimism, Khayyam advises us to hurry

against the wheels of time and experience life as much as we should, rather than getting lost in sorrow:

Since we can't trust tomorrow,
find a way to fill this lovelorn heart with joy:
Drink up in the light of the moon—a moon that someday
will look for us . . . and not find us. (translated by Juan Cole 20)

In addition to making one feel the structure of time that flies and the unreliability of tomorrow, he emphasizes the necessity of seizing joy while it is still possible. The inevitability of death and the uncertainty of human existential conditions seem to leave no other choice but to embrace what is being experienced in the present. It is also possible to feel nature's indifference towards humans through the image of 'a moon that someday will for us and not find us. This sad relationship with the moon reminds me: "Only the mountain has lived long enough to listen objectively to the howl of a wolf" (Leopold 129). Khayyam is aware of the natural process that will continue, indifferent to his dissolution, beyond his perceptions. This awareness becomes a state that makes Khayyam's transience even more perceptible.

Khayyam is deeply aware of finitude, which brings discomfort. It is inevitable that the human mind, acquainted with the concept of infinity, will feel some ache when it realizes its own finitude. Pain is the fundamental mood of human finitude (Chul-Han 44). Khayyam attempts to parry this mood with the palpable pleasure of today. At the point he has reached, all he has left is the experience of today's possibilities:

Look out, for you will shed the spirit.
You will go behind the curtain of God's mysteries.
Take a sip of wine, since you don't know where you came from;
and be happy, since you don't know where you're going. (translated by Juan Cole 27)

What creates the pessimistic picture in Khayyam is his irremediable scepticism. This scepticism seems to stem from a presupposition regarding the limitations of the human mind and what humans can comprehend epistemologically: "No one has solved the secrets of eternity / no one has set foot outside the circle" (42) The circle mentioned here, which cannot be stepped outside,

can be associated with the rational capacity of man. What will become known to man will only occur within the boundaries of this circle. Khayyam's acceptance of the inaccessibility of absolute truth reaches such a point that in the last two stanzas, he characterizes the situation as a kind of helplessness: "Whether I consider masters or apprentices—all who are born of a mother are helpless" (42) It can be said that we are witnessing the conflict between the desire to comprehend and the intuition that there will always remain an inaccessible dark point beyond comprehension.

The only thing Khayyam does not doubt is the limited capacity of the human mind. Therefore, even if there is a secret or an inherent meaning waiting to be discovered behind the phenomena and at the core of existence, he seems to think that it is not possible to reach this unknown: "You cannot pierce the veil of mystery" (28). The incomprehensibility of such an ancient secret, whether assumed or intuited, points to the futility of speaking about it. One should remain silent about things that cannot be expressed in words (Wittgenstein 89). Thence, Khayyam renounces speaking and speculating about the secret of eternity and prefers a silence of his own, accompanied by wine. "You do not have a home save in black earth! / Start drinking, since this story isn't short" (28) He does not engage in rational grounding efforts that have been ongoing and have not reached an absolute answer for centuries regarding the incomprehensible dynamics of existence and death. In addition, he does not want to be comforted and consoled by dreams of the afterlife, which are inevitably going to have their share of doubt and a heaven narrative whose authenticity is unknown: "Liberate yourself from heaven and from hell / no sage would be fooled by such fables" (44). Embracing a heavenly plan that is highly unlikely to exist and missing the opportunities of the only opportunity, which is worldly life, would be one of the greatest betrayals of truth. When Khayyam also falls into pessimism with the uncertainty, the limitations of rational faculties and the incomprehensible aspects of death, he first experiences a phase of acceptance, and at this point, pessimism, rather than making him depressed, pushes him to build the promised paradise at the moment.

At the end of his life, Khayyam, who was an interpreter of spiritual tortures, looked at the world's inevitable events—such as decay and dissolution—in a depressing and forced way that was fundamentally gloomy (Hidayet 19). Therefore, while one can attribute to Khayyam a philosophical attitude that even reaches nihilism, on the other hand, Vaziri claims that attributing negative nihilism to Khayyam is an unfortunate misconstruction. Khayyam emphasizes nothingness with the word 'hich' which means 'nothing' or 'emptiness' in his native language. On the axis of Vaziri's argument, the primary use of the 'nothing' or

‘emptiness’ is not for nihilism but it refers to the single destiny of all things and the four permanent elements of water, earth, air, and fire survive, so there is no complete void (225–226). Based on these surviving elements, one can agree that Khayyam points to the endless cycle in nature through a sort of destiny, rather than absolute nothingness or emptiness. The main thing that caused Khayyam to emphasize the endless cycle in nature and the ever-continuing state of being is the sensitivity he developed towards the body and objects based on the particles that constitute them: “Then in a mystic tongue the clay complained to me / I once was just like you; one day you’ll be like me” (66) The speaking clay points to the fate of a deceased person, who dissolves in the soil and constitutes a new form with the atoms of its corpse. Everything is interconnected within the material plane and everything that exists is articulated and unified in an intricate structure. Of course, there is a continuous state of being here, but this cannot be said to have led to much consolation in Khayyam far from nihilism and pessimism. Although there is a possibility that a dead person may continue to exist in dust particles, thanks to the floating atoms that integrate with material, this does not mean that that person continues to exist. Such integration of the body with objects rather emphasizes the annihilation of that person. With the death of consciousness, the body is reduced to only a corporeal realm. The body has dissolved from its former vital state, and the existence it can henceforth lead on earth is less alive than a grain of wheat. Rather than an active, constructive, vital existence, it is the existence of a remnant of death, equivalent to the existence of a particle of dust.

Thus, even if Vaziri contends that “Khayyam’s notion of ‘hich’ implies that almost ‘nothing disappears’ in death” (226), something—a core more than things—disappears in Khayyam’s quatrains. Herein, Khayyam’s conceptualization of “hich” is not that far from the idea of nothingness. His epistemological understanding suggests a holistic view that pertains primarily to the material realm rather than the spiritual domain. Despite the particles within objects retaining traces of past lives or bodies, they are devoid of vitality. The cyclical nature of material existence in nature, wherein atoms from deceased bodies contribute to the formation of new objects, holds little relevance to the conscious experience of human beings.

Vaziri seems to agree with this perspective as well, stating: “The biological perspective of hīch also points to the complete dissolution of human consciousness, with its childhood memories, experiences, and other recollections, not just the dissolution of the carnal body alone” (Vaziri 227). Within Khayyam’s quatrains, there is an essence that undergoes dissolution leaving only dust behind: “Fill my cup, since I am on my way to being dust” (35). Defining his

life as a course leading to dust and equating death with pollination can be presented as evidence that Khayyam did not foresee a continuity of consciousness after death. This is an indication of the dissolution of consciousness, as an ultimate fate, even if the material cycle continues.

The vital reason for dissolution is the constant transformation in nature. “There was a rapid conversion in nature,” says Hedayat adding that “people, animals, plants, everything appeared, disappeared and turned into the soil in this scene; there were many souls on the land, many sultans and gentle beauties” (7) in Khayyam’s poetry. Thanks to this constant transformation, everything, animate or inanimate, ultimately becomes one on the same unconscious plane. This is a continuity that can inspire a kind of fascination with the workings of nature. But at the same time, it is an ancient dialectic that deeply makes people feel their individual helplessness in the face of this existential determinism.

What is meant by the term existential determinism is a reality regarding the essence of our existence, random chaos, or a state of existence into which we are left without any choice by God. As Aminrazavi points out, in the context of *Rubaiyat*, “We are neither asked to come into this life nor are we asked when we would like to leave; and in this ‘eternal recurrence of the same,’ as Nietzsche says, we are pounced upon by the merciless forces of nature while our cries for help are to no avail” (100). Eventually, we are here and we shall undoubtedly suffer in spite of all the beauty. Khayyam’s understanding of death, which he approaches through the states of change observed in dissolving bodies, rather than inside the theologians’ spiritual framework, is what has allowed him to come thus far (Hidayet 37). Whether we define him as a materialist or not, we cannot deny that this attitude, which we often see in his rubais, is to some extent the result of a materialist contemplation. If Khayyam had been an idealist philosopher who was far from the reality of matter and who established the soul-body duality, he would not have given so much thought to the fate of the body underground: “Here, have a drink since you’ll be sleeping for a long time underground without a best friend or soul mate lover” (30) The idle state of the body in the soil preoccupies Khayyam’s mind, and as can be seen, death is identical to a long sleep for him. Moreover, death, which is a means of meeting God (ultimate beloved) for a believer, is like an unpleasant event for Khayyam, and it separates a person from his beloved. The destructive nature of death stems from the interconnectedness of body and soul in Khayyam’s philosophy: “Those whose deeds grow out of their hypocrisy want to separate the body from the soul” (37) In many quatrains, even though he mentions the elements of the body that are constantly mixed in nature thus continue their concrete existence with different appearances, as can be seen, this is a perception that excludes the soul-body

dualism and emphasizes the body as the mere reality. In this case, consciousness appears as a function of the body. Once the breath leaves the body, all that remains are inert parts, dissolving and covered with clay.

Khayyam is obviously sceptical about death as well. No one—whether the most implacable atheist or a believer who does not doubt the afterlife in his heart—can present an unshakable and absolute prediction about death and its aftermath. Death, by its nature, is beyond comprehension and we either create an afterlife plan that is possible with faith, or we foresee a state of nothingness that is also impossible to define.

Whether there is an end or not, the only thing that concerns us and poses a problem under current conditions is the fact that death is a great unknown. Death is a mystery, even though it may not be a finality, and Khayyam believes that trying to solve riddles is pointless (Aminrazavi 218). Since existence is inherently mysterious, in the last instance, it is in vain to ponder about existence (Türkmen and Yasa 140). It is such an incomprehensible experience that transcends all human activities and language itself. To continue our lives, sometimes there is no more satisfying option than ignoring it. Once the futility and uselessness of pondering death and worrying about this unknown has been confirmed by Khayyam, the only thing left to do is to celebrate the moment. When we think about what to do in the face of the incomprehensibility of this realm where no one returns and no one can have any knowledge about it, the advice of the wine cup comes to our aid:

Overwhelmed with desire, I pressed my lips to the lip

of that bottle and asked it the secret to a long life.

It gave its mouth to mine and whispered:

Have some wine, since once you're gone, you won't be back. (translated by Juan Cole 50)

As a result of his observations and reasoning on this axis, Khayyam encounters the problem that human comprehension capacity is limited. “No one has ever understood or will ever understand the secrets of eternity, or there is no such thing as a secret” (Hidayet 27). If we think about the mystery that Khayyam could not attempt to solve intellectually, it can be said that what is mentioned is a meaning, a reason, a purpose inherent in existence. Denying the existence of such a secret also shows parallelism with Sartre's judgment that “Existence comes before essence” (Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism* 28). One exists and finds oneself in the world

as a conscious being, meaning constructing then starts. This comprehension holds that there is not any innate meaning that has been predetermined and is awaiting resolution with us. At this point, ideas like “meaning” and “secret” seem to be ideas that are part of our perception and experience and are not distinct from it.

The option that emerges in the face of the eternal cycle that has ultimately reduced people to the same place without stopping for generations, the transience of today, and the reality of death, is to practice the art of living without falling into absolute despair. After realizing the transience of today, paradoxically there is no choice but to cling to today. In Khayyam, this does not necessarily mean spending a superficial day and simply enjoying the moment with a hedonistic attitude. He loves life consciously, feeling the pleasure of life to the fullest, because he is unwilling to spend his life in deprivation (Kula and Erdem 577). Thus, he developed a subtle sensitivity towards existence and sought long-term consolation in the face of the grief brought by death by turning his eyes to nature:

See how the gales have ripped the rose's skirt;

before, its beauty drove the songbirds wild!

While it lives, shelter under the rosebush,

before the tempest tramples it to dust. (translated by Juan Cole 62)

In this quatrain, even when he starts talking about flowers and birds, which are joyful elements of nature full of life and colour, he cannot avoid making allusions to decay through the ‘rose's ripped skirt’ and ‘dust’. At the very beginning, the main reason behind his sensitivity to the birds and flowers is his mortality salience. Since he carries the joy of life with a profound awareness of death, Khayyam wants to benefit from all the colours of the sorrowful world and the coolness of all the shadows as much as possible. The transience of the beauties he observes in human life and nature, and the feeling that these are things that can slip away from his hands in the blink of an eye, increases the value of all these beauties even more. While the perceivable (rose and songbirds) and the perceiving (conscious subject) still exist, this subject-object liaison should be established before it is too late. In the span of life, which is a period that has no value compared to the infinite nothingness, a person should not waste his/her time worrying too much and should see the rose swaying in the wind and the nightingale watching the rose. He/she should see because he/she can see and when the time comes, he/she will not be able to see again.

Upon further investigation, one may uncover a plethora of divergent perspectives that diverge from one another. Rather than trying to define Khayyam strictly, it would be beneficial to avoid rigid definitions. Nevertheless, it can be claimed that he uses his pessimism as a stepping-stone and his sense of grief coexists with a desire to appreciate the value of the moment. The vital necessity of someone to build their own meaning and exist as a conscious subject in the present moment is one of the thoughts that can be observed in the quatrains of Khayyam. In this context, it is possible to evaluate him on an existentialist axis. This existential approach constitutes the main point in my thesis that brings Khayyam and Shakespeare together on the same plane. Therefore, in the next chapter, Shakespeare and *Hamlet* will be discussed comparatively around existentialist notions.



3. *HAMLET* AND THE EXISTENTIAL IMPASSES OF CONSCIOUS SUBJECT

“Poor modern man!” says Walter Kaufmann in *From Shakespeare to Existentialism* (1960). According to him, the philosophy of our modern time is portrayed as godless existentialism. It reveals itself through a depressing doctrine: Humans are thrust into the world, but they are not at home there. Without a divine parent, he or she is left to live a life of care, anxiety, and failure that ends in death and leaves nothing behind (Kaufmann 2). Although this sort of existentialism reached its highest potential at the beginning of the 20th century, it illustrates a human condition that can be traced to every age. Regardless of the time and conditions in which people live, they have always been exposed to confusion in the face of their conditions and felt the anxiety brought by the incomprehensible nature of existence. Thus, it is always possible to encounter existential concerns in every phase of the written expression culture, from the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (1800 BCE) to Fyodor Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* (1866) or Camus’ *The Stranger* (1942). As Kaufmann states in another work titled *Existentialism: from Dostoevsky to Sartre* (1956), the first section of *Notes from Underground* is the greatest existentialist overture ever penned (14). Taking the extension from *Gilgamesh* to Dostoevsky into consideration, the timelessness and continuity of existential problems are undeniable. However, the increased frequency with which these issues are discussed, especially in modern times, has led to the association of some writers from previous centuries with contemporary thought, due to their exploration of similar concerns. William Shakespeare is one such writer identified with modern times because of his profound engagement with human conditions.

Nonetheless, claiming that Shakespeare does not present a portrait of the people of his own age and that he is directly a writer of modern may be assertive in a sense. At this point, another possible approach can be considered: In *Hamlet*, Shakespeare draws the portrait of a person who is equally distant from his own age and ours. By doing so, Shakespeare portrays a character for all ages because it shows the timeless and universal situation of humans *vis-à-vis* their existence. Regardless of the time he lives in, some existential concerns are inevitable for a thinking individual who faces his existence and is aware of his mortal consciousness.

The role of thinking, namely the function of comprehensive judgments about existence in *Hamlet* is undeniable. According to Mina Urgan, the main reason why *Hamlet* is the one that arouses our curiosity the most among Shakespeare's tragedies is that while emotions and passions come to the fore in *King Lear* (1608), *Anthony and Cleopatra* (1623), *Othello* (1622), and *Macbeth* (1623), it is the predominance of thinking in *Hamlet* (321). Rhodri Lewis points out a similar aspect in *Hamlet and the Vision of Darkness* (2017):

Whatever else has been said about Hamlet's performances as a historian, a poet, a revenger, a friend, or a son, his status as a thinker has been affirmed as all but an article of faith. He is Shakespeare's intellectual, whose philosophical depth militates against vengeance, who sees through the manifest corruption of personal and political life in Elsinore, and whose penetrating vision yokes together optimism about the potential of the human condition with a sort of existential nausea. (238)

This act of thinking that Hamlet persists at every stage of the play opens the door to many different results. While Hamlet's thoughts and statements about death are the most dominant, his reasoning is not confined to this subject alone. The range of issues that Hamlet contemplates and shares his ideas about is quite broad. Indeed, the topics he examines vary widely, encompassing theatre, human nature, acting, politics and so on. For instance, Hamlet offers profound advice to the actors about performing, which reflects deep insights into the art of theatre.

Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue. But if you mouth it as many of your players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much – your hand, thus – but use all gently. For, in the very torrent, tempest and, as I may say, whirlwind of your passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness. (III.i.1–8)

It seems that although Hamlet does not care about moderation in his daily life and demonstrates a sort of eloquence in his speeches, he is in favour of understated speech, measured actions and keeping emotions under control in theatre acting:

Suit the action to the word, the word to the action; with this special observance – that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature. For anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing whose end, both at the first and now, was and is to hold as 'twere the mirror up to Nature, to show Virtue her own feature, Scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure. (III.i.17-24)

While Hamlet continues to advise the actors that their performances should be measured and natural, he strongly emphasizes the theatre's function as a "mirror up to Nature" (III.i.22). This approach brings to mind the concept of mimesis. In its most classical sense, mimesis refers to representation based on imitation in Ancient Greek rhetoric, evolving into the notion of reflecting nature and reality in the thoughts of Plato and Aristotle (Kıyar and Karkın 1–2). It is possible to come across first-hand definitions of the concept of mimesis in *Poetics* (330 BCE): "And they execute it either by simple narrative or by narrative conveyed by imitation (mimēsis) or by both" (Aristotle 393) Within this framework, art that attempts to depict anything can only offer a reflection or imitation of natural phenomena. By arguing that a play should serve as a mirror to nature, Hamlet tries to preserve this naturalness.

It is not merely an aesthetic concern that drives Hamlet's emphasis on naturalness in a play. While his advice to the actors contains significant technical and aesthetic insights into the art of theatre, there is also a functional motivation behind his desire for a completely natural performance. As is well known, Hamlet hopes to catch the king off guard through the play, thereby confirming the king's guilt in his own eyes. Everything must be presented with utmost realism and transparency to confront the ruthless king with his sins.

Consequently, the play Hamlet wishes to stage serves a political function as well. Beyond the realms of theatre and acting, contemporary political conditions are often the targets of Hamlet's scrutiny: "The time is out of joint. O cursed spite, / That ever I was born to set it right" (I.v.156–157). Yet still, the current political and social climate in Denmark is deeply discouraging for Hamlet. The nation is engulfed in disorder and rampant injustice, creating an atmosphere of pervasive chaos. Hamlet's sense of duty to rectify this dire situation weighs heavily on him, almost like a curse, given the tumultuous circumstances in which he finds himself. Despite his profound sense of obligation, the prevailing conditions seem systematically designed to obstruct and further complicate his efforts.

How all occasions do inform against me
And spur my dull revenge. What is a man
If his chief good and market of his time
Be but to sleep and feed? A beast – no more.
Sure he that made us with such a large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not

That capability and godlike reason

To fust in us unused. (IV.iv.31–38)

In this chaotic era, all circumstances appear to conspire against Hamlet, exacerbating his inaction and inner turmoil. ‘All occasions do inform against him’ and all these external prevailing conditions obstruct his ability to act, further intensifying his internal conflict. Nonetheless, humanity is called to engage actively to work, and to transform both oneself and the world. If a man, who is destined for more than mere sustenance and rest, fails to rise above the level of a beast, then the virtues bestowed upon him by God are rendered futile. Thus, Hamlet’s reflection conveys both a broader critique of human nature and his own self-disappointment. In fact, it can be said that in a way, the criticism he brings to humanity as a whole is rooted in his disappointment with himself. What causes self-awareness and disappointment here is the tension between the active engagement he desires to enter into with life and choices, and the state of imprisonment that prevents this desire, again stemming from his own inner doubts and lack of courage.

However, his own disappointment caused by his inaction does not end easily. His analysis and philosophical depth, which can almost be said to reach the level of overthinking, can prevent him from putting his will into practice and sabotage Hamlet’s potential to take action. The state of rumination eventually leads him to a unique awareness of the conditions we are in, and this awareness creates a kind of dread.

Thus, Hamlet’s stagnation continues to exist as a yield of a mental state, occasionally paralyzed by doubt and fear (Parvini 15), but also fruitful in terms of intriguing manifestations and wit combats. Hamlet’s relationship with thought does not make his job any easier in practice and prevents him from drawing his sword, on one hand. Yet, on the other, it gives him a solid insight that triggers existential nausea, touching on a different sort of reality.

At heart, Hamlet’s main concern is with change. He grasps the painful sides of two different types of change: Firstly, a state of malfeasance on a social scale that we can sense in the simile for Denmark as “an unweeded garden” (I.ii.133). Then a state of disintegration on a larger extent on the scale of existence, death, the material cycle, and the destructive or transforming wheels of time (V.i.93–105, 175–186). To express his unease with change, he uses pictures of corruption, pollution, and disintegration in the political, human, and natural worlds (Mitchell 127). He has trouble with change because the change that Hamlet witnesses is not for the better. It is subversive rather than constructive.

Hamlet expresses the hard-to-accept speed of this change very well with his unique eloquence. For instance, when Horatio tells Hamlet that he came for his father's funeral, Hamlet replies, "I prithee do not mock me, fellow student, / I think it was to see my mother's wedding" or "Thrift, thrift, Horatio, the funeral baked meats / Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables" (I.ii.91–92, 94–95). With all its strikingness, the image of meat cooked for the funeral but served cold at the wedding beautifully reveals the state of social corruption.

The corruption within both familial and state institutions that Hamlet observes through the actions of individuals renders him incapable of remaining indifferent to the broader social decay. In essence, Hamlet perceives a profound disintegration of societal values. In his life, love has been sullied, audacity proliferates unchecked, and the implementation of laws is impeded. The murder and betrayal by his uncle, coupled with the perceived indifference of his mother, represent a collapse of structures that once held significant meaning for him. Hamlet, along with the collapse of meaning and the shaking of moral structures, is forced to confront the problematic nature of concepts such as "freedom" and "responsibility", which have always been at the centre of existential philosophy. In an existential sense, freedom is a problematic concept because the individual is entirely responsible for the world, life design, choices, and actions. (Yalom 9) Hamlet is also free to make choices, and he must confront the consequences of his choices – whether he takes action or not – in any case. This situation may create a state far from a positive sense of freedom and closer to dread, which may be what leaves Hamlet in deep dilemmas.

The prescription offered by the ghost to Hamlet in the face of this demoralisation is known to everyone. He will kill his uncle, who murdered his father and married his mother, and thus will take his revenge; however, he cannot take any action in this direction. On the other hand, a secondary remedy comes into play that will solve everything from the root and also involves a possible act of killing. The secondary solution, which he repeats many times in different places, is to kill himself. However again, he cannot commit suicide due to the vortex created by his thoughts and his relentless doubts. The unknown of the afterlife, which he calls "undiscovered country" (III.i.121), and the possibility of "the dread of something after death" (III.i.77) give him chills.

Regarding Hamlet's demoralisation, Terry Eagleton states that "[a]ll experiences become exactly equivalent in their triviality" (71). No possible option, no way out, no action or inaction promises an absolute solution in the current conditions. One of the reasons for this is that actions lose their shine and importance when viewed from the perspective of eternity

(Cantor 43). We soon see that what is equated in “triviality” is not just actions but also conscious experiences of human beings. Each life is reduced to a triviality within the material plane, reflecting the inevitability of death and the cyclic nature of existence. What makes experiences and conscious subjects equal in the same insignificance is the unwavering functioning of nature, indifferent to human desires. What is in question is a state of imperious change that manifests itself on a much broader existential scale. In the face of this change, which operates through natural processes immediately after death, the past life, plans, and actions of the conscious subject have no effect.

The ongoing state of excessive thinking and scrutinizing causes Hamlet to lose himself in the intense awareness of this other state of change in the next stage. It is beyond social and political issues. It is more ancient than ordinary human life. It is the very change regarding the fate of the human body in the face of death and the material realm. Hamlet witnesses the reality of this change mostly and naturally through skulls. What he inevitably thinks of when he looks at a skull is the possible state of that skull once upon a time. The skull, which once bore eyes that conveyed emotions and presented a reflection of consciousness, is now dysfunctional, rotting in the ground like mere waste. The oral cavity, which once held the tongue that spoke and even sang, now becomes merely the messenger of emptiness and silence:

That skull had a tongue in it and could sing once. How the knave jowls it to the ground, as if 'twere Cain's jawbone, that did the first murder. This might be the pate of a politician which this ass now o'erreaches – one that would circumvent God, might it not? (V.i.71–75)

In these words, it is inevitable to feel the life-death dualism and the extraordinary transience of life. Death discredits worldly matters and reveals the futility of our actions on an existential scale. Hamlet's way of observing and comprehending the world at this point reminds us of what Nietzsche said in the context of *Hamlet*: Once he becomes conscious of reality, “have acquired knowledge” (40) now he finds action propulsive and sees destruction and the absurdity of becoming everywhere. When the individual becomes aware of the essential functioning of nature, which is often ignored, and the reality it points to, this provokes a sense of absurdity regarding existence. In addition, the person becomes aware of the continuous destructive activities of nature. It is enough to observe the adventure of the body on or inside the ground to perceive the destructive effects of natural processes as well as constructive ones. Once consciousness is lost, it does not matter to whom the remaining body or skull belongs. The fate

of every individual is to have his bones thrown hither and thither by the careless gravedigger, no matter what their social status is.

In the final act the first scene, Hamlet defines this change in question as a “fine revolution” (V.i.88). This is a fertile revolution in terms of destruction and distortion, and it will lead to a new unconscious order that is far from all our worldly desires. However, this new situation reminds Hamlet of ruin rather than order. Revolution is far from being constructive and promising. The revolution that Hamlet observes over the bones of a deceased body only points to decay, deep silence and futility:

Why, e'en so. And now my Lady Worm's – chapless and knocked about the mazard with a sexton's spade. Here's fine revolution an we had the trick to see't. Did these bones cost no more the breeding but to play at loggets with them? Mine ache to think on't. (V.ii.83–88)

Another interesting point in this section is that Hamlet is no longer content with merely pointing out an external reality, but he also reveals his individual/emotional relationship with the change that can be described as dissolution or decay. The phrase “Mine ache to think on't” as an honest and restless confession, reflects a deep sense of unease about the beyond-doubt future of his own skeletal system. He profoundly senses that this temporality, he observes through the accompaniment of Lady Worm, is an unpleasant reality that concerns his intimate existence. “Nothingness lies coiled in the heart of being – like a worm” (Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* 21). Hamlet, inspired by Lady Worm, seems to sense the worm of nothingness that thrives in the heart of existence, and he intuitively feels that he is condemned to nothingness because he exists. Therefore, Hamlet not only shows the vanishing ability of our essence in the face of death and the transience of our worldly ambitions with his sarcastic criticism, but he also falls into despair on an individual scale within his own existential dread. When he sees the current state of the bones in the dust, he establishes an inevitable identification with them. Because of what these bones reveal about the unpleasant reality that awaits him on the horizon, Hamlet feels existential angst in almost physical dimensions. The new state of the bones that once held life together and carried the body full of life is so distressing that it hurts Hamlet's own bones. Nietzsche asserts that when Hamlet truly grasped the essence of existence, he acquired profound knowledge (40). This insight, however, brought with it a profound sense of nausea that paralyzed his ability to alter the eternal nature of things (40). Granting the cogency of Nietzsche's remark, it is inevitable that a feeling of helplessness will follow this situation. In this respect, Hamlet shows the situation of the human being who exists as a conscious being among unconscious objects

and cannot find a satisfactory reason, purpose or inherent meaning in all this existence. Wherever Hamlet looks at, what catches his eye is the feeling of futility. What is worse is the fact that this is a prevailing fate that closely concerns him. This destiny cannot be changed no matter what we do. Thus, Hamlet represents the conscious subject who is completely helpless in the face of nature, who has no choice but to submit with resignation and find the peace that comes with acceptance, or to writhe in existential agony.

Hamlet is both fascinated and repulsed by nature's flow as he muses over corruption and the recycling of stuff (Mitchell 127). It can be said that what is meant by "recycling of matter" here is the shaping of bodies into new forms within the natural process through decomposition. Nature's flux and the power of the functioning of nature to reduce every being to the same material level causes an awareness of the transience of our existence and the helplessness of our mortal bodies. Perhaps the only positive aspect of the transience of existence and this common destiny of mortal bodies is that it dissolves all social statuses, and, thus, constitutes absolute social and material equality for everyone. This is the awareness of the constant flow that equalises the particles of the mortal bodies of the clown Yorick and the magnificent Alexander on the same material level, that is, in the same dust purifying them of all their qualities and worldly adjectives. This constant flow strips people off of their human qualities and turns them into waste memories left over from the death of consciousness, so to speak. It is undoubtedly in the scenes where Hamlet begins talking to the gravediggers that we witness the beginning of this reasoning and the gradual rise of awareness of the unpleasant reality of nature:

Hamlet. What man dost thou dig it for?

Gravedigger. For no man sir.

Hamlet. What woman, then?

Gravedigger. For none, neither.

Hamlet. Who is to be buried in't?

Gravedigger. One that was a woman, sir, but rest her soul she's dead. (V.ii.121–127)

This quotation showcases that it is indeed the gravedigger who first came up with the insight into the distorting function of death, which strips away every reality, every quality that once clung to the living person, and reduces the dead to the prevalent material plane. The gravedigger, who is literally responsible for digging graves in daily life, serves a similar

function in thematic and intellectual terms. With his recklessness, he paves the way for later scenes in which death is truly interrogated. It is perhaps here, from the gravedigger's words, that Hamlet first gets the inspiration for similar speeches he will make about Alexander the Great, Yorick and some others later in the same scene. In the gravedigger's perception, the person whose grave is being dug is neither male nor female. Death reigns as the sole arbiter that transcends genders and equalizes all roles. That is why the only evident condition now is being dead. It reduces all distinctions regarding worldly life in the same unity.

Mortality and emotions caused by the inevitability of death are the dominant themes not only in the dialogues but also in the songs sung by the gravedigger as he works. The gravedigger does not have a unique name or even a qualified identity. His only merit seems to be his profession and his practical relationship with death. Yet, through the songs he sings, we can penetrate his inner world and his perception of life to some extent. The songs begin with nostalgic allusions to youth, the opposite of death and destruction:

In youth when I did love, did love,
Methought it was very sweet
To contract-a the time for-a my behove,
O, methought, there-a was nothing-a meet! (V.i.57–60)

In these tender times when love makes everything bearable with all its sweetness, time has not yet begun to make its destructive wheels felt and there is enough will to pursue desires. In the next song, the inevitable change that reigns under the leadership of time leaves the carefree days of youth behind:

But age with his stealing steps
Hath clawed me in his clutch
And hath shipped me into the land
As if I had never been such. (V.i.67–70)

Here, age is depicted as a thief who steals things, and the contrast between the new conditions that come with ageing and what it takes away from our youth becomes more visible. The sorrowful memory of a youth that is so distant and foreign that it has never been experienced gives rise to a sense of loss. The song that comes right after is a true conclusion in every way,

and it touches upon death, about which the gravedigger has a lot of practical knowledge in all its nakedness.

A pickaxe and a spade, a spade,

For and a shrouding-sheet,

O, a pit of clay for to be made

For such a guest is meet. (V.i.89–92)

Herein, it can be observed that death is underlined in its physical reality. What makes death feel more tangible here is the emphasis placed on the gravediggers' tools such as "a pickaxe" and "a spade." These are the tools that allow the human body to reach the pit where it will reach its ultimate dissolution.

Because of their line of work, gravediggers are able to see things from an eternal perspective, which makes individual deaths seem insignificant (Cantor 69). This perspective of the gravediggers on death and their understanding of cosmological dimensions soon begins to show itself in Hamlet's discernment. He understands the depth of geological time, where the human body directly combines with the planet's particulate matter and where he, Ophelia, Yorick, and all of us will spend extended periods of dissolution as slowly fossilizing matter (Mitchell 128). With this awareness of the depth of geological time, a new attitude emerges in Hamlet's approach in the face of death. "The impulse of consciousness" (Camus 19) begins in the graveyard scene when Hamlet observes his surroundings and begins to contemplate death, decay, dissolution and transformation.

The circumstances surrounding Hamlet are similar to existential psychotherapist Irvin D. Yalom's theory of the turning point in human existence where people confront their deepest worries. In genuine solitude, silence and enough time, we will undoubtedly confront the most important issues of existence if we can reflect profoundly on our "situation" in the world (18). What Hamlet is now aware of is the sense of futility. This situation leads him to an attitude that can almost be described as sarcastic, to such an extent that it nearly approaches the concept of the absurd, which is defined as "the confrontation of irrational and the wild longing for clarity" (Camus 26) in *The Myth of Sisyphus*. In Camus' philosophy, the world is irrational (Bal 17). It is elusive, incomprehensible, seemingly without cause or purpose, and behind every appearance of the world lies a threatening silence. Hamlet also eventually becomes aware of the irrational side of our existence and this life-death dilemma in which we struggle, and a trajectory that has

no satisfactory destination, leading to nowhere but dust. After all, while it is even possible to think that Alexander is now a plug blocking a barrel, isn't this an affirmation of the futility of our existence and the impotence of every conscious subject in the face of death?

In fact, once death functions, we cannot even talk about nature ignoring us. There is no longer a consciousness that would conclude that nature is indifferent to humans. The duration of our conscious existence on Earth is extraordinarily limited when considered within the scales of the universe and nature. With the end of conscious existence, we are left with nature only on a material plane, while nature, indifferent to our death, continues its perpetual motion beyond human perception and subjective experience. What remains of us, beyond being ignored, are now things that nature has taken in and absorbed in soil's elements.

According to Camus' philosophy, we can say that as a result of this realization like Hamlet's, a person is faced with two possible options: suicide or recovery (Camus 19). After the troubling realization he experiences, the person will respond to this incompatible and absurd world by either killing himself, or he will use this state of alienation or awareness as a stepping-stone. However, I think that when Hamlet becomes aware of our existence in the cemetery and nature's frightening disregard for us, it is too late to attempt to construct his meaning or to commit suicide. The death that the playwright has already determined for Hamlet is now near. The turmoil that will arise after Hamlet's contemplations about his existential situation will take Hamlet from us with another unexpected death, without allowing Hamlet to kill himself or to spend the rest of his life as a thinker engaged in his thorny existential meditations.

Moreover, although Hamlet questions himself about suicide throughout the play, we can observe that he is far from the courage to commit it. This lack of courage stems from a deep doubt. It is a doubt created by Hamlet's sense of uncertainty about the afterlife which is characterized by "the dread of something after death" (III.i.77). The scepticism about whether death is an absolute end where everything will reach eternal serenity or a state of a possible continuity in which the soul will have to endure some suffering prevents Hamlet from taking action again.

This is the primary focus of the "To be, or not to be" soliloquy, which is Hamlet's most well-known speech. According to Hamlet, if he were a pagan—that is, if he thought that death was essentially the end of life—he would have no trouble accepting suicide. Visions of what lay beyond the ancient world's narrow vistas, however, concern him (Cantor 39). Perhaps one can claim that "To be, or not to be" speech—which is nearly extinct now and frequently recurs

in popular culture—is an expression of existential man’s dismay at the arbitrary nature of existence regarding thrownness in Kierkegaard’s terms (Tekinay 120). Until a person puts his or her own subjective meaning into life, humans are born with no purpose at all and are unable to distinguish between existence and non-existence, or, in Hamlet’s words, “to be” and “not to be” (Tekinay 120). Although I agree that this sentence can be read within the framework of an existential approach, I would like to oppose the interpretation that Hamlet emphasizes that there is no distinction between existence and non-existence.

In fact, I think this is the point where Hamlet becomes sincerely aware of the sharp distinction between the states of existence and non-existence. He further expresses this in the manner of a great orator. Such statements are most prominently encountered in the soliloquies of the play which present significant propositions about existence, hence serving as a manifestation of Hamlet’s contemplations. Moreover, these soliloquies not only reflect the fruits of his introspection but also contribute to the continuity of his meditative state. Shakespeare’s tragedies all contain these kinds of reflections on presence and absence, but *Hamlet* is where they come to a reflective culmination (Cirovic 63). One of the places where reasoning reaches this meditative culmination is the place where Hamlet deeply feels the sharp difference between the states of being and not being, the extraordinary distinction of being and nothingness. The negation of the verb “to be” denotes non-existence, non-being, and thus death as an extension of a more fundamental conceptual metaphor: To be alive is to be (Cirovic 63). I think this is an expression of what it means to exist as a conscious being. What sharply distinguishes to be alive and to be dead is the states of consciousness and unconsciousness they represent. Consciousness brings with it sensations, comprehension, perception and the power of expression. With death, the person is prohibited from these activities and the body remaining from the deceased is now only in a state of inertness. This immobility and unresponsiveness are likely to give the impression that what disappears with death is consciousness. The fact that Hamlet sees death as an option that can be embraced to ease the pain of his mind is, I believe, an indication that he suffers from self-consciousness. If “to die is to sleep and no more” and “by a sleep to say we end” (III.i.60), he could have ended the experience of existing as a conscious being and could have quit struggling with the external negative effects of the perceived world, with the attraction of the eternal state of unconsciousness that this last sleep would bring.

However, Hamlet is aware of the great uncertainty about the afterlife and has no empirical knowledge of the death experience, which prevents suicide from being an option that

can be used as a last resort. Death, which we have no information about because it is somewhere “no traveller returns” (III.i.79), is imagined as a land that requires courage to sail to. It is akin to an absolute departure, and therefore those who experience it are in a state where they can no longer share their experiences. The absolute unknown that our consciousness is aware of makes us rather “bear those ills we have” (III.i.80). In other words, we endure all the troubles that are the price of being alive. Death is “a negativity whose destination is unknown” (Levinas 14) and thence, once we come into existence, our will to continue existing generally persists despite the suffering we may endure.

Furthermore, we can never be certain that to “fly to others that we know not of” (III.i.81) will not prove more painful than our current tribulations. The unknown aspects of what lies beyond can appear more frightening than the difficulties we face in our present existence. Hamlet’s observation that “conscience does make cowards [of us all]” (III.i.82) underscores how our predicament is intrinsically linked to the nature of consciousness. One reason consciousness may engender fear is that it confines a person’s experience of existence to their own sense of self. The tension between our awareness of fundamental isolation and our longing for connection creates an existential conflict (Yalom 9). Although individuals attempt to express themselves and share their thoughts and feelings through verbal communication or physical gestures, there is no assurance that these expressions, constrained by their own consciousness and perception of the world, will be interpreted as intended by others. This uncertainty can lead individuals to question and despair over the possibility of achieving genuine communication. Such impasses, characterized by doubt and isolation, become even more pronounced when confronted with the reality of death.

When a living person encounters a dead one, they face an absolute barrier to communication. The impossibility of interaction with the deceased makes this uncertainty even more palpable. Thus, death is portrayed as an “undiscovered country” (III.i.78) because once one has discovered it, they can no longer be the discoverer.

The hesitation caused by this inaccessibility, coupled with the anxiety about the experience of death, transforms the act of suicide into a challenge requiring significant courage. As a conscious being who suffers both from existence and the dread of non-existence, Hamlet presents suicide as a complex issue that warrants a thorough examination of its potential benefits and drawbacks. Therefore, it is more fitting to consider Albert Camus’ exploration of suicide rather than focusing solely on the concept of “thrownness.” As we continue to examine Hamlet’s soliloquy, these ideas become increasingly clear in the subsequent lines:

To be, or not to be – that is the question;
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
And by opposing end them; to die: to sleep[.] (III.i.55–59)

This quotation shows that in Hamlet's approach, there are quite big differences between existence and non-existence. Persisting in existence or life also means being patient with reason and continuing to endure suffering if necessary. There is also a possible state of sleep that death promises, and if this is real, it is probably a more peaceful state. That is why the famous question posed by Hamlet, "To be, or not to be" seems to me more like the statement Camus expressed centuries later in a different form: "There is but one truly serious philosophical problem and that is suicide; judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy" (Camus 11). There seems to be a need for Hamlet to make a decision about this important philosophical problem and implement this decision.

However, he cannot do that either. Although he seems to attribute a positive meaning to death with his constant emphasis on sleep, even death does not promise absolute serenity to Hamlet. Since the soul is immortal and death is a sleep, Hamlet is worried that he may still dream because of his immortal soul (Urgan 389). Thus, he will not be able to find complete consolation in either life or death, and his thinking side will inhibit the possible actions he can take.

Ultimately, Hamlet shows a timeless reflection of the human condition, dealing with existential questions that transcend its time. These questions interestingly point to some modern sensibilities. While Hamlet carries the burden of deep reflection, the play reveals the situation of a conscious individual in the face of the unpleasant realities of existence. Hamlet's intense awareness of the transitory nature of life and the uniqueness of death reveals a tragic yet deeply insightful perspective on the human experience. As Hamlet oscillates between action and inaction, or life and death, he embodies the existential fear and search for consolation that are

at the core of the human condition. In the next section, some specific quotes from the *Rubaiyat* and *Hamlet* will be discussed with a comparative method and from an existential perspective.



RUBAIYAT AND HAMLET: SHARED INTELLECTUAL SPRINGS AND EXISTENTIAL NOTIONS

When comparing Khayyam and Shakespeare regarding their shared sensitivities toward human existence, encompassing concepts such as death, life, and eternity, and their existential philosophical attitudes, it is crucial to incorporate the historical and cultural climates of the periods in which these writers lived. This approach allows for a more comprehensive and nuanced analysis. In this context, before starting to analyse some quotes from *Hamlet* and *Rubaiyat* comparatively in this chapter, I will try to illustrate the parallel historical conditions in which Shakespeare and Khayyam existed, thought and produced.

By examining the social, cultural, and scientific circumstances that likely influenced these two authors—who created their works in distinct eras and cultural milieus—scholars can construct a deeper and more historically grounded understanding of their philosophical stances. To begin, it is useful to outline the historical context: the philosopher, poet, and astronomer Omar Khayyam (1048–1131) lived and produced his works nearly five centuries before Shakespeare (1564–1616), during the later period of the Seljuk Empire’s prosperity—a time often regarded as the golden age of Islamic culture. Moreover, Friedrich Rosen, a scholar of Eastern culture and a translator of Khayyam, argues that Eastern literature—particularly the scientific and cultural heritage of Muslim countries—served as a “pre-Renaissance” for the Western Renaissance. He asserts that “if it were not for the accumulation of Eastern-Islamic civilization, such a breakthrough in human history would not have been possible” (qtd. in Usta 339). This era saw significant advancements in philosophy, science, and the arts, driven by favourable social and political conditions, a recurring phenomenon in history. The Seljuk dominion over Persia, Anatolia, Iraq, and Syria fostered a unique political climate that influenced philosophical development (Nasr 165). The roots of the scepticism and materialist reasoning evident in Khayyam’s work, which will be analysed throughout this thesis, can be traced back to the intellectual practices of his era. On the other hand, it can be remembered that England, where Shakespeare lived, was also going through a period that could be considered quite consistent in political terms, parallel to the conditions in which Khayyam was living, and that the cultural climate was being shaped by some scientific breakthroughs or cultural developments. Along with new horizons, some issues such as the position of man in the universe, the responsibility of the individual, and the role of belief occupied a considerable place in the works of both Shakespeare and his contemporaries. It can be said that in both ages, there was a kind of intellectual revival accompanied by consistent political conditions, and this

situation gave rise to a wide intellectual wealth from which great names such as Shakespeare and Khayyam could currently feed.

Khayyam's birth coincided with the conclusion of a period marked by remarkable progress in the arts, philosophy, mathematics, and literature. However, the period during which he matured and created his works was marked by a shift toward more conservative intellectual discourse. As Aminrazavi notes, "In the fifth–sixth/eleventh–twelfth centuries when Khayyam lived, the glorious days of intellectual debate and creativity had come to an end; and jurists began to issue fatwas (religious decrees) against rationalists, particularly philosophers" (Aminrazavi 71). This conservative turn was likely driven by the Seljuk Empire's efforts to strengthen Sunni orthodoxy by positioning theology in opposition to philosophy, thereby suppressing other intellectual pursuits (Nasr 168). The fact that Khayyam was born at the tail end of an era marked by cultural and scientific flourishing and matured under these complex conditions is significant. His adulthood and the period during which he wrote his works coincided with an intellectual climate marked by increasing dogmatism. This shift in social and cultural conditions may have mirrored the dualities within Khayyam's intellectual world, a conflict often evident in his rubais, where he poetically critiques his contemporaries: "Khayyam attempts to fit in with the official religion of the time in his non-poetic writings, but in his quatrains, he shows himself as the Khayyam we know—with his misgivings and questions, engrossed in the mysteries of life and fate, and critical of his contemporaries' hypocrisy and display of saintliness" (Javid 171). Fortunately, despite the prevailing conditions and the pressure stemming from the conflict between Khayyam and his contemporaries, he was still able to engage deeply with philosophical thought. It is said that Khayyam, even within the context of these intellectual tensions, was influenced by the works of Avicenna. This influence persisted even during a time when the science of Kalam, shaped by a more traditional understanding of theology, dominated intellectual discourse.

The most important proof of the continuation of the school of Ibn Sina in the fifth/eleventh and sixth/twelfth centuries is, in fact, 'Umar Khayyam himself. He lived in the middle of this period of eclipse of Avicennian philosophy, between Ibn Sina's students and Tusi and must be considered an eminent philosophical figure during this period of suppression of philosophical thought in Persia and other eastern lands of Islam. (Nasr 169)

The common philosophical attitude shared by Avicenna and Khayyam centres around a metaphysical investigation. As noted in the Preface to Ibn Sina's *Remarks and Admonitions*:

Physics and Metaphysics, “the wealth of philosophical and medical literature Avicenna left us includes books, essays, and poems concerned with the study of the cosmos, with a special focus on nature, the human being, God, and their interrelationship” (Inati 21). As this passage indicates, both Avicenna’s and Khayyam’s philosophies focus on nature, the essence of humanity, and the interactions between these elements and God. However, there is a key difference. While Khayyam also examines issues such as the essence of existence, nature, and God, his approach remains relatively materialist. In contrast, Avicenna’s philosophy contains the dualism of body and soul: “the change of the body by death—due to which the body is no longer an instrument for the rational soul and a preserver of the relationship with it—does not harm the soul’s substance” (166). In my view, Khayyam does not entertain the notion of an immutable, transcendent soul whose substance endures beyond death. Instead, in Khayyam’s quatrains, dualities such as existence-nothingness, and life-death are sharply delineated. The tension between the desire for eternal life and the inevitability of eternal nothingness, belief and disbelief, life and death, existence and non-existence, forms the basis of Khayyam’s intellectual and poetic exploration. In his inquiries, which often yield no definitive answers, Khayyam adopts a sceptical approach, perceiving death as a phenomenon that negates all these dualities and obliterates both consciousness and the soul. As we will see more closely in the sections on Shakespeare, although Hamlet occasionally seems to worry about the metaphysical suffering that the soul may suffer after death, he also ultimately foresees death as something in which consciousness or the soul is erased and what is left of the human being can only exist on a material plane.

The sceptical and rational attitude that characterizes Khayyam’s philosophy can likely be traced to both his personal life and education, as well as to the historical context in which he lived. Khayyam’s extensive education and his broad intellectual interests, spanning mathematics, astronomy, philosophy, and poetry, exposed him to scientific methods of thought, which, in turn, nurtured his sceptical approach. This rational mindset was likely further influenced by the conservative and dogmatic tendencies prevalent in the society and intellectual circles of his time. Furthermore, Khayyam’s intellectual breadth was considerable. “He studied Qur’anic sciences, Arabic grammar, literature, and other introductory religious sciences” (Aminrazavi 19), in addition to “various branches of mathematics, astronomy, and traditional cosmological doctrines” (19). Just as it is possible to attribute the rational and skeptical tendencies in Khayyam’s quatrains to his relationship with mathematics as an analytical activity, it is also possible to attribute his broad-scale cosmological perspectives on the

universe, matter, and the cycle of life and death to his relationship with astronomy. For Khayyam, the movement of the celestial spheres and the continuous movement of the particles that mix with the earth as the body disintegrates and causes new material forms to be collected from there are equally important. All these perspectives can lead to judgments about the futility of the human existential situation and its extraordinarily rapid transience within cosmic time. On the other hand, although Shakespeare was educated more in the “Sweet smoke of rhetoric” (III.i.61) with Armado’s words in the play *Love’s Labour’s Lost* (1598), rather than being familiar with positive sciences like Khayyam’s, it is still possible to encounter a cosmological perspective similar to Khayyam’s in Shakespeare, which can be based on the breakthroughs in astronomical understanding of the Renaissance.

William Shakespeare lived centuries after Omar Khayyam, during a period often regarded as a “golden age” (just like the era in which Khayyam lived)—the English Renaissance. This era, sometimes described as a ‘rebirth’ due to the revival of ancient Greek classics (Celenza 72), was a time of significant intellectual flourishing. Its roots can be traced back to ancient texts, and it was marked by an intensification of scientific discoveries and the rise of humanism, a worldview that emphasized human potential and reason. “Humanists searched for, edited, and translated the works of neglected and obscure ancient philosophers, including Platonists, Epicureans, and Stoics, and even encouraged the study of non-Christian religions such as Judaism and Islam” (Hankins 4). The period also witnessed ground-breaking advancements in astronomy, notably by figures such as Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543), whose work on heliocentrism (Applebaum 19) led to the widespread acceptance that the Earth was not the centre of the universe but rather a part of a vast, dynamic cosmos, with humans, once thought to be at the centre, now relegated to a more modest position in the universe. These intellectual advancements, alongside the sectarian conflicts between Catholics and Protestants (Greenblatt 369) and the political tensions of the Elizabethan era, undoubtedly influenced Shakespeare’s worldview and his dramatic works. *Hamlet* reflects the complex socio-political environment of the time. Traces of these conditions—social, political, and religious—are evident throughout the play (I.ii.126–134; IV.iv.31–38). Thus, when comparing Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* with Khayyam’s *Rubaiyat*, it is possible to draw meaningful connections between the sociocultural realities that shaped their respective works.

Although Renaissance humanism and existential humanism differ in numerous ways, they share a similar focus on the condition of humanity in the universe or the “whatness of human existence.” In this regard, I find it intriguing that *Hamlet*, written during the English

Renaissance—a period profoundly shaped by humanist philosophy—contains existential nuances that echo themes central to existentialism. Jean-Paul Sartre later described existentialism as a humanist philosophy, and this connection forms a compelling parallel across centuries. Renaissance humanism’s emphasis on human potential and the individual’s relationship with the world inevitably brings issues such as the search for meaning, doubt, and the confrontation with life and death to the forefront. These themes constitute the intellectual foundation and thematic core of *Hamlet*. Therefore, it is possible to draw connections between Hamlet’s relationship with suicide, his awareness of death, his doubts and concerns about the afterlife, and his reflections on the absurdity of human existence with the cultural climate of Shakespeare’s time. Both Renaissance humanism and Hamlet’s introspective soliloquies focus primarily on the human condition. Furthermore, considering the political and religious atmosphere of the period—rather than merely the cultural achievements of the Renaissance—it becomes evident that the religious conflicts in England and the power dynamics surrounding the monarchy also influence the themes and concerns presented in *Hamlet*.

Like Shakespeare, it is inevitable that Khayyam was influenced by the political and religious structure of his era. Just as Shakespeare’s works reflect the tensions between monarchy and the people, the religious conflicts in England, and the influence of Renaissance humanism, Khayyam’s persistent scepticism and his advocacy of rationalism likely emerged as a natural response to the conditions he observed and experienced. A closer look at Khayyam’s quatrains reveals critiques of the prevailing cultural structure, the conventional ways of thinking, and the unquestioning submission of individuals. This suggests that Khayyam’s intellectual conflict with the dominant cultural and intellectual traditions of his time played a significant role in shaping his philosophical stance and the themes he explored in his poetry.

Beyond the era in which he lived and his relationship with society, Khayyam’s personal inclinations and educational background undoubtedly played a significant role in shaping his quatrains. As previously noted, while Khayyam gained lasting fame primarily through his poetry, he was also a mathematician and astronomer. These disciplines, which require a rational mindset and scientific methodology, offer valuable insights into Khayyam’s intellectual character and personal leanings. His deep engagement with astronomy likely heightened his awareness of cosmological time and the insignificance of humanity within the vast universe. Thus, the scientific and rationalist outlook embedded in his study of mathematics and astronomy, both of which are analytical by nature, also influenced his literary works. This rational perspective, alongside his scepticism towards supernatural explanations, is clear in his

quatrains, particularly in his probing questions about God and the afterlife. Khayyam's always inevitable scepticism towards issues such as the afterlife and God ultimately serves as a factor that paves the way for him to adopt a philosophical reasoning that I describe as an existentialist attitude and, in this context, can be considered together with *Hamlet* .

Unlike Khayyam, Shakespeare does not present himself with an intellectual identity beyond that of poet and playwright, and it is unlikely that he was directly involved in science or philosophy. However, Shakespeare infused his works with significant philosophical depth. This philosophical dimension can be attributed, in part, to the intellectual climate of the Renaissance, a period marked by the rediscovery of Roman and ancient Greek texts. The revival of classical philosophy during this time contributed to a culture of reflection and intellectual exploration, which influenced the comprehensive questioning and reasoning found in Shakespeare's plays. Additionally, philosophical traditions such as Stoicism, Platonism, and Epicureanism (Nuttall 212) can be traced within Shakespeare's works, further emphasizing the philosophical underpinnings of his writing. Among these philosophical schools, especially Stoicism constitutes an intellectual core which can be intensely felt in Khayyam's works. It is said that the issue that, in a sense, 'dominates' the Stoic tradition is the relationship between the individual and the cosmos (Sellars 18). In this sense, the following part from Marcus Aurelius' famous *Meditations* is worth remembering: "Human life. Duration: momentary. Nature: changeable. Perception: dim. Condition of Body: decaying. Soul: spinning around. Fortune: unpredictable. Lasting Fame: uncertain. Sum Up: The body and its parts are a river, the soul a dream and mist, life is warfare and a journey far from home, lasting reputation is oblivion. Then what can guide us" (Aurelius 2.17)? What is deeply felt in Khayyam's rubais is that human life is a moment that passes in the blink of an eye and has no power in the face of eternity, and in parallel with this, the continuous change of nature, which operates indifferently to humans. When thinking about the body, the first thing that comes to mind is decay and dissolution into soil. Everything about human destiny ultimately comes down to oblivion.

The philosophical stance and existential dilemmas depicted in *Hamlet* and *Rubaiyat*—particularly concerning notions such as scepticism, the sense of being thrown into existence, and the intuition that our existence is without cause or purpose, and ultimately futile—become most apparent in their treatment of death. Both *Hamlet* and *Rubaiyat* extensively examine death and its implications for the immutable fate of humankind, transforming it into a central philosophical concern. Khayyam frequently emphasizes death and the inevitable decay of life in his quatrains, underscoring this theme as a fundamental aspect of the human condition.

Similarly, in *Hamlet*, particularly in the famous cemetery scene, we witness a parallel sensitivity and imaginative expression of the same themes. When it comes to death, futility, transience, and the indifferent, cyclical nature of existence, both Khayyam and Shakespeare present strikingly similar intellectual and emotional perspectives. This common ground is evident in their shared approach to the human body's fate. Both authors delve into the transformation of the body after death, contemplating its reduction to an inert, material form. The process by which the body returns to the earth, where the soil transforms into clay, and from which new objects are created, highlights the continuous cycle of life and death. In the final stage, the particles of the body persist in their material form within these new creations, now utterly divorced from the consciousness and life they once embodied. This cycle is emphasized in both authors' works. The objects they use to symbolize this cycle—such as the wine jug or beer barrel—are so closely aligned that, from a comparative perspective, one could argue that a literary interaction between the two is conceivable.

Considering that Shakespeare lived centuries after Khayyam, it would be bold to claim that the universally renowned playwright was directly influenced by the *Rubaiyat*. However, the question of whether Shakespeare was influenced by Eastern literature in general, and not solely by Khayyam and *Rubaiyat*, is a subject of ongoing debate. These discussions, however, seem to centre more on the possibility of indirect influence rather than direct influence. Such indirect influence could have occurred through alternative cultural interactions, such as trade routes. When considering Shakespeare and the possibility of Eastern influence, there are some other significant works to remind before *Hamlet*. For instance, some of the exotic elements in plays such as *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello*, including references to Eastern culture and characters bearing traces of it, suggest an indirect influence. However, despite the presence of some Eastern references and furthermore the “presentation of the Orient” (Al-Kadi 7) in works such as *Othello* (1604), *Antony and Cleopatra* (1607), and *The Tempest* (1661), there seems to be no direct discussion of Eastern influence in *Hamlet*. Nevertheless, the striking similarities between *Hamlet* and *Rubaiyat*, particularly in their contemplations on death, the cyclical nature of existence, and the human condition, are worth discussing and, in my view, are intriguing.

Hamlet has faced a great betrayal, and this also represents the collapse of a great structure that constitutes a meaning. He has completely lost his faith in both the family institution and the legitimacy of the state administration. While his uncle's betrayal and his mother's new marriage represent the collapse of a formerly trustworthy structure, Hamlet also has to face the death of his father and on top of that, he now has to make an irreversible decision.

But the decision-making mechanism is also being destroyed day by day. His thoughts fluctuate between revenge and the possibility of suicide.

In most of the play, we can see that Hamlet suffers from the conditions of his existence and his desire for everything to end. It is as if he wants to dissolve and find absolute silence without the turmoil of consciousness. Below is an example of his desire to dissolve into infinite composition of natural bodies:

. . . O that this too solid flesh would melt,

Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew,

Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd

His canon 'gainst self-slaughter. (I.ii.126-130)

However, his will is inhibited, and amid all these painful experiences, he is deprived of the option of leaving everything behind. Joining this conversation from a new perspective, it is significant to mention Emil Cioran and his approach to suicide here. Romanian thinker and writer Cioran said in a video interview with Christian Bussy in 1973 that “[i]f I didn’t have the idea of suicide, I would have killed myself long ago” (Bussy 02:43). In these words he uttered, he was indeed emphasizing that even if we would never commit suicide, the thought of a possible suicide and knowing that we always have this opportunity can offer us consolation in the face of existence. In this context, the idea of suicide turns into an intellectual emergency kit and paradoxically takes on a life-enhancing quality.

What inhibits Hamlet’s will is his deprivation of the possibility of suicide. Everlasting God has even taken away from his good followers, and automatically from Hamlet, the right to seek solace with the idea of suicide, with his law prohibiting self-slaughter. If suicide were not forbidden in the eyes of God, Hamlet might have found solace in the prospect of an act that would end his suffering. Since he does not have such a choice, he continues with the description of the conditions he has to experience and endure:

. . . Oh God, O God!

How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable

Seems to me all the uses of this world!

Fie on’t! Oh fie, fie, ’tis unweeded garden

That grows to seed, things rank and gross in nature[.] (I.ii.130-134)

He must confront a world he associates with extremely negative qualities, such as “weary,” “stale,” or “unprofitable.” The uses of this world are weary because the repetitive and seemingly meaningless cycle leads to exhaustion at some point. A stagnant, dull and monotonous course can make the exhaustion of the process even more unbearable. It is inevitable that this process, which is exhausting and in which no action can be taken to create change, will eventually give the impression of being unprofitable. In fact, it is not even possible to be convinced that action is necessary, beyond the fact that our actions cannot change anything. This confusion and the difficulty in grounding facts in absolute meaning contribute to feelings of hopelessness and aimlessness. On the other hand, change and the indifferent functioning of society or nature continue with its corrupting and destructive power.

In Khayyam, we encounter a similar suffering caused by the conditions in which Hamlet found himself. I think the common point in both cases is that there are external factors beyond their will that exceed their choices and that they inevitably have to face. Sometimes it is God, sometimes it is the dynamics of existence and nature that are beyond us. In this respect, a fundamental sense of being thrown is felt in Khayyam’s lines:

Since my advent here on that first day wasn’t up to me,

but my unwilling departure has been firmly decreed—

get up now, get ready, and bring me a drink,

since I’m going to blot out the sorrows of this world with wine. (translated by Juan Cole 20)

Khayyam does not specifically highlight suicide in this passage, but he does make a compelling case for the aspects of life that defy one’s free will. By claiming that he would not have wanted to enter the world if his opinion had been sought and that he would not have wanted to leave after entering it once, he highlighted the never-ending paradox that everything is outside of our control. This earthly existence, which we find ourselves in without warning and are unable to leave behind because of some divine decree or our unwavering need to survive, is like a garden full of troubles for Hamlet. In the same vein, for Khayyam, it is a place where he finds himself in unwillingly and paradoxically has to leave with an ‘unwilling departure’ again, characterized by sorrow.

It is evident from these reflections that Khayyam and Hamlet both doubt the heavenly mandate that persists in governing against their desire. Khayyam has a god he names the heavenly Artisan, whose motives he cannot comprehend, just as the Everlasting God who established Hamlet's canon.

What though 'tis fair to view, this form of man,

I know not why the heavenly Artisan

Hath set these tulip cheeks and cypress ferns

To deck the mournful halls of earth's divan. (translated Edward Henry Whinfield 10)

Apparently, Khayyam is not totally complaining about the existence in this quatrain. He can also focus on the positive aspects of daily life and nature by appreciating them with a sense of gratitude. He shows his satisfaction with his own existence with images such as "tulip cheeks" and "cypress ferns." This identification established through plants, the life-filled reference to the red and vibrant appearance of tulips and the branches of the cypress tree extending towards the sky, indicate a sense of admiration and joy for life. But still, all this beauty is, in a sense, groundless or based in mournful halls. In other words, it consists of a secret that is far from a satisfactory reason and whose wisdom cannot be grasped. For this reason, Khayyam questions Master Painter's motivation in doing all this, but cannot find an answer, representing the dilemma faced by the conscious subject who has opened his/her eyes in a meaningless universe, trying to attribute a meaning to things.

The heavens earned no profit on my birth;

my death won't aid their beauty or grandeur.

Then why have they decreed this coming and

this going? Neither ear has ever heard. (35)

In all this turmoil and in the face of the incomprehensibility of the world, the only thing certain for both Hamlet and Khayyam is death. Death presents itself as a common inevitable fate that reduces everything and everyone to the same place, brings them together in the same unity, and thus makes the futility of existence even more visible.

What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty! In form and moving, how express and admirable! In action, how like an angel! In apprehension, how

like a god! The beauty of the world, the paragon of animals – and yet to me what is this quintessence of dust? (II.ii.303-308)

As can be clearly seen here, for Hamlet, human's mental abilities, divine qualities and all the beauty he/she promises have no power in the face of death. After all the praise for the human nature, Hamlet destroys his own thesis with a single sentence. The sense of futility that Hamlet feels deeply reveals itself in the image of "dust." Thus, while death is explored extensively, it is evident that perceptions and concerns about death are rooted in materialistic perspectives. Hamlet's understanding of death reflects a profound inner turmoil regarding natural processes and the material cycle, rather than a divine or spiritual dimension. This perspective resonates with the broader Renaissance thought, which is characterized by a precarious and dynamic interplay between classical and Christian elements (Cantor 2). Although Hamlet intermittently expresses belief in God and concerns about the potential torments of the afterlife throughout the play, his ultimate view on death tends towards materialism. For Hamlet, death invariably leads to a state of decomposition, epitomized by the imagery of dust. Consequently, Hamlet embodies the tension between ancient materialist sensibilities and Christian thought. While thinking about death and designing the post-death processes, it can be seen that Khayyam's imagination, as well, is based on the image of dust rather than reaching out to dreams of the afterlife. From this perspective, death is examined with a materialist understanding. "Have some wine, since your body will anyway crumble beneath the earth / and they'll shape your clay into mugs and wine cups" (Khayyam 44). Everything in both poets' works reverses, eventually depends on dust, and unites in dust. In their shared understanding, the reality of matter and the finality of death become more pronounced through the imagery of dust. Both Hamlet and Khayyam intuitively perceive that once cognitive functions cease and the soul departs from the body, the individual's existence comes to an end. They do not foresee a divine or eternal life for the soul independent of the body. This perspective reveals that their reasoning ultimately leads them to a materialist and naturalist view. If they had truly believed in an afterlife, the eternity of consciousness, and the soul's independence from the body, the processes affecting the body would not be as significant or troubling. Instead, they consistently view death through its most tangible, visible, and materially destructive aspects.

In contrast, for a person of faith, the stages the body undergoes on the material plane—its decay, dissolution into dust, or transformation into soil—are less significant and distressing. While these aspects may be unsettling to a believer, their focus remains on the immortality of the soul, which is perceived as separate from physical decay. This belief provides solace and

inner peace. For the non-materialist, the body is seen merely as a temporary vessel, with the soul being the enduring substance that transcends physical existence. Hamlet and Khayyam, however, appear to lack such a definitive belief in the soul's immortality and instead view the body as a substantial reality. They consistently associate death and the afterlife with dust, soil, decay, and the physical disintegration of the body, suggesting a perception of death grounded in concrete and material dimensions, rather than divine or spiritual narratives.

When a person dies, all of their characteristics are taken away from them, and they become waste—a stuff that can only exist on a material level. New life forms can emerge from this material level. Dung, death, excrement, dust and life can be intertwined. The sun can even impregnate corpses and create new possibilities with the new life forms it builds on the corpse: “For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, being a good kissing carrion” (II. ii. 356). In this death-life cycle, although death and the corpse provide shelter for new lives, this does not play a life-enhancing role for humans. Here, the only thing felt through the maggots sprouting on the body is the indifference of nature and its destructiveness towards the body of the dead person. These new life possibilities indicated by the mixtures in the soil cannot change anything about the reality and annihilation of the dead person. The new lives sprouting in the soil seem to create a contrast that only emphasizes the annihilation of the dead individual even more strongly.

Enter ROSINCANCE and GUILDENSTERNE.

Ros. What have you done, my lord, with the
dead body?

Ham. Compounded it with dust, whereto 'tis
kin. (IV.ii.6–9)

Here, when Hamlet says that he sent Polonius' body where it belongs, he repeats the image of dust in a tone that can almost be considered black humour. This darkly humorous attitude will continue to exist, increasing its power even more as he talks to the king about the fate of Polonius. Polonius is at a banquet, but this is a meal that is far from heavenly tables and where Polonius is not the guest but the menu himself:

Enter HAMLET and ATTENDANTS.

King. Now Hamlet, where's Polonius?

Ham. At supper.

King. At supper! Where?

Ham. Not where he eats, but where 'a is eaten. A certain convocation of politic worms are e'en at him. Your worm is your only emperor for diet. We fat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for maggots. Your fat king and your lean beggar is but variable service, two dishes but to one table. That's the end. (IV.iii.16–24)

Expressing the worms at this feast, in which Polonius indirectly participates as political worms bring Hamlet's black humour to its peak. Furthermore, the qualities that death strips from humanity are now attributed to maggots. The losses experienced by individuals—such as the decline of their political attributes, the diminution of worldly achievements, and the degradation of their physical state under the relentless decay of maggots—are emphasized with considerable intensity. Polonius, a highly political figure and one of the king's favourites, died unnecessarily while spying on Hamlet to inform the king. Now, there is no trace of Polonius' petty calculations and political existence. If any policy is to be carried out after a person dies, it is nature and the worms that will execute it. The maggots participate in a banquet where the new static and waste state of the human body, stripped of all biological, political, and social characteristics, becomes the meal. They rule as the only emperors, whose reign will eventually include the body of the king when the time comes. Undoubtedly, this is reason enough for a king to complain, and the dialogue between Hamlet and the king continues as follows:

King. What dost thou mean by this?

Ham. Nothing, but to show you how a king may go a progress through the guts of a beggar. (IV.iii.27-29)

Herein, Hamlet not only talks about Polonius, but also begins to talk about the king's similar fate in the future with all his recklessness. Just like Polonius, despite all his majesty and the hierarchical privilege he holds, the place where the king will ultimately arrive and unite with other people on the plane of death is the belly of a worm. Upon these mind games that Hamlet insists on continuing, the king impatiently asks once again where Polonius is, and the dialogue between them continues in the same tone:

King. Where is Polonius?

Ham. In heaven. Send thither to see. If your messenger find him not there, seek him i'th' other place yourself. But if indeed you find him not within this month you shall nose him as you go up the stairs into the lobby. (IV.iii.31–36)

While Hamlet talks about where to find Polonius, he falls from “heaven” to “nose” in a matter of seconds. Death and the fate of the body are here only within the framework of earthly senses. Hamlet suggests that the king send his men to heaven to find Polonius, but I think he also mockingly implies that this is not possible. To find Polonius, “smelling” is enough. Hamlet’s withdrawal of Polonius’s body into the confines of sensory experience immediately from heaven shows that death is an experience that remains within material and bodily boundaries in every aspect. Thus, the emphasis is on the concrete reality of death, which is stripped of all divine narratives and dreams of the afterlife, and concerns only this world and our conditions in this world. This corrosive effect of death, which can be observed closely through the senses, is not a situation that concerns Polonius only. Through the situation of Polonius, the common fate of all people is emphasized, and this fate includes the king. At this stage, we deeply sense that no qualifications, no worldly success or reign has any authority in the face of the cycle that shows the continuity of nature, hand in hand with death, and indifferent to humans. As a result, the adventure of a king will continue in the “guts of a beggar” (IV.iii.28-29).

One step later, both Hamlet and Khayyam begin to constantly refer to the fate of well-known rulers and their material bodies, especially those with great worldly achievements. Thus, they emphasize much more strongly the futility of existence with the contrast they establish between the worldly successes of the rulers and the activities of death. While doing this, what makes the similarity of their approaches even more interesting is that the images they use are also quite similar. For example, in *Hamlet*, the “beer barrel” or “bun-ghole” (V.i.204) and in Khayyam’s quatrains, the “mug” (44) or “wine cup” (56) are artefacts that allude to death and the remnants of deceased bodies. These are unquestionably commonplace objects with everyday uses. They cannot, in reality, have any philosophical purpose. But in the framework of Khayyam and Shakespeare, every ordinary thing might provoke deep reflection and existential problems. A sort of inference starts when Hamlet or Khayyam glances at an item. Not only is the object’s overall picture visible, but so are the constituent materials. Both writers experience a weird knowledge of the general plane of reality after giving the objects in question considerable thought. Hamlet becomes almost cynical in his statement when he considers the potential that components of Alexander the Great’s corpse could be present in the beer barrel’s spigot:

Alexander died. Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth into dust, the dust is earth,
of earth we make loam, and why of that loam whereto he was converted might they not
stop a beer-barrel? (V.i.209-212)

It is both a cunning and extremely insightful suggestion about what will happen to our bodies when we die that even Alexander is closing a gap in the new material dominion to which death has reduced him. In addition, Khayyam states:

Ah, potter, stay thine hand! with ruthless art

Put not to such base use man's mortal part!

See, thou art mangling on thy cruel wheel

Faridun's fingers, and Kai Khosrau's heart! (translated by Edward Henry Whinfield 292)

Similar to Hamlet's emphasis on dust and the barrel bung when discussing Alexander, another ruler, Kai Khosrau, is mentioned in this quatrain within a comparable context. Khayyam observes the potter and the new material formation on the potter's wheel is associated with Kai Khosrau in his mind. This association process and the relationship between the pot and the king develop through Khayyam's deep interest in the ongoing cycle within the material world, where death reduces the human body and disintegrates it into its components. When one perceives natural processes and elements that are constantly mixing and separating within this unity, it becomes inevitable that every observed object points to this ongoing cycle.

Khayyam consistently carries an awareness of death, emphasizing the contrast between elements of daily life, the former conscious existence of the deceased, and their current state of death. Kai Khosrau is deceased, his heart is mixed with the soil, and centuries later, a potter performs his 'ruthless art' through Kai Khosrau's remains. This imagery underscores the true nature of death, which ultimately reduces even the most majestic king to mere material that accumulates at the feet of a child sifting soil. In Khayyam's context, Kai Khosrau is dead, buried, dissolved into the earth, and his remains are sifted in a sense. Similarly, in Hamlet's context, Caesar dies, turns into clay, and his remains are used to block a hole to keep out the wind:

Imperial Caesar, dead and turned to clay,

Might stop a hole to keep the wind away.

O, that that earth which kept the world in awe.

Should patch a wall t'expel the winter's flaw! (V.i.213-216)

In both poets, natural processes transform the rulers into functional waste. This evokes a profound reflection on the common destiny of humanity. Also, there is a visible parallelism in their reasoning and the imaginative expression they employ while talking about the inevitable process of decaying. This decaying is as indifferent as possible to the social hierarchical structures established and believed in within the mortal world. Here, while a sarcastic political reference is made to the insignificance of all the pomp of the kings in geological time, a general human condition is also emphasized. Khayyam and Hamlet observe not only what happened in the specific case of Kai Khosrau or Alexandre, but it is valid for all humanity. In another of his quatrains, Khayyam conducts the same reasoning with a different person and through the image of a wine jug. Just like the relationship he establishes between Kai Khosrau and a pot, he assumes that the jug he observes may contain some parts of an unnamed former lover:

This clay mug once longed, like me—a heartsick lover—
for his beloved's face.

The handle of this earthen cup was once an arm,
draped around the neck of someone he adored (translated by Juan Cole 21)

In addition to associating the inanimate object with the body of a deceased person, Khayyam also establishes an identity between himself and a jug. The notion that this jug was once a “heartsick lover” like himself suggests that he too is subjected to the same fate. It is clear that one day Khayyam will inevitably die, mix with the soil, and his disintegrating components will embody themselves in other forms. However, Khayyam will be erased in his eternal silence, unaware of the wine jugs and new life forms that arise. Even if these new forms are composed of the elements from his own body, for Khayyam they do not promise a new life as we understand it in cultural terms. On the contrary, these new formations will make his death even more apparent. The living elements such as “face,” “neck,” and “lover,” whose traces he perceives in the jug, now only constitute the body and handle of an inanimate jug. This signifies the laws of death that will encompass Khayyam, annihilating him in the earth and imprisoning him in the eternal and lifeless stasis of static objects. When Khayyam reaches this awareness, he experiences a form of existential pain and fear of death. This is not a simple everyday anxiety like the fear of dying in an accident or a sudden heart attack. The anxiety that Khayyam feels is a dread on a much broader existential scale, a mental anguish in the face of the incomprehensible. The reason may be because Khayyam has a desire for continuous existence:

Ah! would there were a place to rest from pain,

Which we, poor pilgrims, might at last attain,

And after many thousand wintry years,

Renew our life, like flowers, and bloom again. (translated by Edward H. Whinfield 296)

If we consider the “many thousand wintry” mentioned here as the long and difficult life path that will end with death, it can be said that Khayyam is in a desire for an after-experience that will be identified with comfort and rest and will compensate for the sufferings of transitory life. Such a place can either be the silent eternal sleep of nothingness in the soil or a divine dimension where the soul can continue its eternal and painless existence. I believe he yearns for a literary resting place that he neither believes in nor considers possible for himself. “So sit with me on this green grass, my sweet, since now it won’t be long / before this meadow will be growing from the dust of you and me.” (translated by Juan Cole 60) The happiness of the green grass that he witnessed and enjoyed during his earthly life is overshadowed by the reality of the meadow that will one day grow on his own corpse. The fact that plants will one day grow on his own soil drives him to take advantage of the grass he can currently sit on. We come across the subject of green grass in *Hamlet*, in one of the songs sung by Ophelia, where it is used in relation to death:

Oph. He is dead and gone, lady

He is dead and gone

At his head a grass green turf

At his heels a stone. (IV.i.29-32)

Although I have pointed out a common image, a fundamental difference can also be noted here. The “green grass” that Khayyam mentioned was identical with relatively positive connotations. Despite all the feelings of transience and futility, it was like an analogy of the present that Khayyam can interact with before he passes away. In a way, Khayyam embodied the will to exist and the desire to save something from death with the image of “green grass.” However, in the context of *Hamlet*, the “grass” in Ophelia’s song is like an invading weed that has begun to cover the body of the deceased one. Rather than the greening and hopeful grass that we see in Khayyam’s context, it resembles an ivy that has begun to grasp the body as if to show the indifference of nature.

Both poets express a certain amount of surprise at the prospect that the things they use or gaze at could be the hands of a long-dead lover or the physical body of a tyrant. According to Khayyam, all lives—past and present—finally unite on a single material plane, suggesting that all is ultimately pointless. At that point, Khayyam and Hamlet realize how ridiculous our shared fate is. I think that what they see is a sad precursor to their own material adventures ahead of them, as well as an ironic circumstance for all human beings.

In the beginning, both of them started their questioning with the sensitive approach they developed towards existence and death, along with the question “Why?” For instance, the question of why all this exists, why everything is so intolerable and necessary, why God created us and why we were born unwillingly and now have to die unwillingly again. After spending time with these questions, they begin to ask “Why not?” In this world where everything is so random, chaotic, equally enjoyable and painful, and where death reduces us all to the same place, that is to dust, and exposes us to the wheels of the same cycle that goes on and on, why can’t Alexander, Caesar or King Kai Khosrau be imagined as dust in their new fashion? Why shouldn’t the adventures of these mighty rulers on earth have such a tragicomic ending? “No, faith, not a jot” (V. i. 377). Although it may seem like exaggerated reasoning at first glance, it is definitely not a joke, as Hamlet said, and if we pay attention, a solid insight can be gained into this common destiny, where hierarchical structures value judgments about the world no longer make sense.

CONCLUSION

The primary motivation behind presenting a comparative study of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Omar Khayyam's *Rubaiyat* from an existential perspective was my belief that both works are rich in philosophical exploration, and they demonstrate a remarkably similar intellectual attitude towards the existential conditions of humanity. What I mean by existential conditions of humanity here is the experiences that a human being, as a conscious subject who is aware of his/her own existence, must face. Being aware of his/her own existence inevitably brings with it the mortality salience, namely the inevitability of death. Accordingly, when a human being breaks away from the everyday practices and contemplates his own conditions, his mortality, and the absolute ungroundability of his ongoing experience of existence, he will face his own existential impasses. Such a contemplation is an attitude that we witness closely in Khayyam's lines and Hamlet's soliloquies. The most compelling aspect of examining *Hamlet* and *Rubaiyat* together is their shared reflection on the human condition, laid bare within an existential sensitivity. In both works, the doubts and anxieties surrounding death and the afterlife, the lamentation over life's transience and the perceived futility of human existence, and the relentless power of time and mortality emerge as core existential concerns addressed with profound honesty.

Elements such as Hamlet's contemplation of suicide, the sense of "thrownness" articulated in Khayyam's verses, and the pervasive scepticism in both works underscore their existential underpinnings. The authors' observations about the fate of the human body—that it dissolves into dust and might one day become part of a wine jug or a barrel stopper—highlight the themes of dissolution and material transformation. These observations convey the intellectual essence of these works, showcasing the cycle of destruction and reconstitution in nature. In my view, Shakespeare's and Khayyam's notions of death and human mortality transcend philosophical discourse, morphing into an unsettling uncertainty that provokes deep existential anxiety.

Furthermore, both authors evoke the natural cycle in which death, indifferent to human concerns, functions as a force that obliterates distinctions and unites all beings—king and jester alike—on the same material plane, reshaping them into new, mundane objects. This annihilation erases the faculties fundamental to authentic human existence, such as

consciousness, will, and sensory perception. In both *Hamlet* and *Rubaiyat*, death reduces human beings to a state of inert materiality, equating them to lifeless stones in the natural cycle. This shared cosmological perspective, expansive in scope and arguably ahead of its time, manifests in both writers as an acute awareness of the futility, meaninglessness, and inherent absurdity of existence. Consequently, human beings are ultimately reduced to inert, lifeless components within a natural and almost mechanical process that is wholly indifferent to their consciousness, anxieties, aspirations for eternal life, and search for intrinsic meaning. In the face of nature's relentless, destructive force, neither past achievements nor desires hold any significance or power.

In my analysis, I sought to draw a parallel between Omar Khayyam and William Shakespeare on the axis of an existential reading, focusing primarily on Khayyam's *Rubaiyat* and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. My primary aim was to highlight the existential attitudes present in these works and to demonstrate that both authors grapple with similar existential concerns. When discussing the human state in the face of death, they also use similar logic and images.

Khayyam's quatrains reveal a profound sense of wonder, doubt, and a feeling of meaninglessness or transience regarding existence. Recurring images in his work include uncertainty, death, the indifferent cycle of nature, and wine as a means of coping. Despite the anxiety and sense of meaninglessness that pervade his verses, Khayyam does not succumb to endless pessimism. Confronted with the lack of ontological meaning and the terror of the unknown, Khayyam's response is to embrace the present and make the most of life before it is too late. This approach mirrors Sartre's notion that "existence precedes essence," (Sartre 20) as Khayyam first exists and, free from predetermined divine meanings, strives to create his own essence and subjective meaning amidst anxiety and doubt. However, a continuous sense of meaninglessness and existential displacement remains evident throughout the *Rubaiyat*.

Hamlet reflects on the weariness, monotony, and futility of his existence. He perceives time as unmanageable and witnesses the disintegration of all structures of meaning. Unlike Khayyam, Hamlet is unable to transcend his existential crises or regain a sense of will to live at this point in his narrative. This contrast underscores the different ways Khayyam and Hamlet confront their existential dilemmas.

Nevertheless, both characters experience a sense of inhibition in their will. Khayyam, as can be seen in quatrains, is perplexed by the purpose of his existence and the notion of divine creation; he expresses a desire not to have been created if given the choice. Similarly, Hamlet

is troubled by the divine prohibition against suicide and expresses a wish to escape his own existence if he can. A crucial similarity between Hamlet and Khayyam's pieces lies in their contemplation of human conditions in the face of death, the indifferent flow of nature, and the reduction of all living beings to dust.

Khayyam's sensitivity to the material components of the body and objects emphasizes the endless cycle of nature and the eternal state of being. For instance, he imagines that a fragment of dust might contain part of a deceased lover's lock in his quatrains. This interconnectedness within the material world forms a complex framework where the continuity of existence is evident. However, this perspective does not provide Khayyam with comfort or a hopeful outlook. The notion that a deceased person's essence might persist in material objects merely highlights the annihilation of the individual. The body, after the death of consciousness, becomes limited to the corporeal domain, losing its prior vitality and reducing to the state of a mere particle of dust. This transformation signifies a relic of death rather than an active and vibrant existence.

Hamlet is both fascinated and repulsed by the natural processes of decay and the recycling of matter. This "recycling" refers to the natural process of decomposition, which transforms organisms into new forms. Hamlet's reflections underscore the transience of life and the vulnerability of mortal bodies in the face of death. The flux of nature, which reduces all beings to the same material level, accentuates the fleeting character of human existence and the inevitability of decay.

Both Khayyam and Hamlet frequently reference the fates of renowned rulers and their physical bodies, particularly those who achieved great things. This comparison sharply highlights the futility of life by contrasting the rulers' material accomplishments with the indifferent nature of death. The similarity in the images they use further emphasizes their parallel approaches. Their references to the artefacts such as cups, jugs, bunghole, beer-barrel, skulls, and dust recall the death and the remnants of the deceased. Although these are commonplace objects with everyday uses and, at first glance, lack any inherent philosophical significance, within the contexts of Khayyam and Shakespeare, such ordinary items can provoke profound reflection and existential questioning. When Hamlet or Khayyam reflects on such objects, they perceive not only the overall form but also the individual materials comprising them. This contemplation leads both writers to a profound awareness of the fundamental nature of reality.

The associations they build highlight the deep engagement with the continuous cycle of nature, where death reduces the human body to its basic components. The imagery of dust serves as a metaphor for the inevitable disintegration and recycling of matter, emphasizing the perpetual cycle in which all elements are constantly blending and separating.

Khayyam persistently explores themes of mortality, contrasting the once-vibrant aspects of life with the present state of death. His depiction of a child sifting through the dust of King Keyqobad underscores how even the most illustrious figures are ultimately reduced to merely being components in soil. This vivid imagery highlights the essence of death as the ultimate reduction of the grandeur to the insignificant. Similarly, in Hamlet's world, Caesar's body transforms into clay, used to seal a hole and keep out the wind. Both Khayyam and Shakespeare convey a profound sense of how death diminishes the human body to a state of a utilitarian, material existence.

In the writings of both poets, everything is ultimately reduced to dust, illustrating a shared perspective on the permanence of death and the nature of material existence. The imagery of dust in their works underscores the finality of death and the inherent truth of matter. Both Hamlet and Khayyam express an intrinsic belief that life ceases when the brain shuts down and the spirit departs from the body, rejecting the notion of a divine or eternal soul separate from the body. This perspective reveals their alignment with a naturalist and a materialistic viewpoint. Had they truly believed in an afterlife, eternal consciousness, or the soul's separation from the body, the physical processes affecting the body would have seemed less significant.

Shakespeare and Khayyam not only share a common understanding of the human condition in the face of death but also employ similar poetic imagery to explore it. Their treatment of themes such as death, faith, God, and life demonstrates how they are both influenced by and respond to the same existential concerns.

Both poets reflect on the absurdity of fate by contemplating objects once belonging to great but now deceased individuals, whether it be a grand monarch or a beloved partner. This reflection often leads to a sense of irony and an unsettling awareness of their own material mortality. Shakespeare and Khayyam use static objects, like skulls or wine bowls, as symbols to convey the transient nature of life, its futility, and the unending cycle of birth and death. Existential motifs such as "thrownness," "absurdity," "anxiety," and "alienation," central to existentialist thought, are evident in both *Hamlet* and the *Rubaiyat*.

When Hamlet or Khayyam contemplates a wine jug, spigot, or beer barrel, they engage in a process of deduction that reveals not only the object's overall appearance but also its constituent materials. Both poets exhibit a peculiar awareness of the broader reality after deeply considering these objects. Hamlet, for instance, becomes almost cynical when he muses about the possibility of Alexander the Great's remains being present in a beer barrel's faucet. His reflection suggests that Alexander, once a powerful ruler, is now reduced to a mere component of the material world, closing a gap in his erstwhile dominion. This transformation serves as a sobering reminder of the fate awaiting everyone after death.

Both poets express a certain astonishment at the thought that everyday objects might once have belonged to a long-dead lover or a mighty ruler. Hamlet, in particular, is acutely aware of the vast expanse of geological time, where human bodies merge with the earth's particulate matter, contributing to a slow process of fossilization. Similarly, Khayyam posits that all lives—past and present—ultimately converge on a single material plane, underscoring the inherent futility of existence. For both poets, this realization highlights the absurdity of our shared fate, as an unpleasant precursor of their own inevitable destiny.

Ultimately, my thesis not only highlights the common concerns and imagery used by these two great bards, who lived in different times and geographies but also demonstrates that they practiced an attitude that can be described as existentialist centuries ago. They perceived memories of the deceased in the integrity of the objects they observed and underscored existential human conditions with a sort of intellectual honesty. What united them in this regard was their similar sensitivity to existence and the continuous cycle of nature. I hope that in the future, these two writers can be studied comparatively in a much more comprehensive way, accompanied by a detailed analysis of the cultural, political, religious, and historical conditions that influenced them. Such a study could focus on the entire works of Shakespeare and Khayyam with philosophical sensitivity, rather than being limited to specific sections from *Hamlet* and *Rubaiyat*. This approach would offer a more nuanced understanding of the common concerns and sensitivities of these two writers, one from the West and the other from the East, who have secured significant places in the history of world literature beyond their own geographies. It would provide readers with inspiring perspectives through a deeper comprehension of comparative literature, enriched by philosophical debates.

Works Cited

- Aminrazavi, Mehdi. *The Wine of Wisdom: The Life, Poetry, and Philosophy of Omar Khayyam*. Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Applebaum, Wilbur, ed. *Encyclopedia of the Scientific Revolution: From Copernicus to Newton*. Garland Publishing, 2000.
- Aristotle, *Poetics*. Translated by Anthony Kenny. Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Aurelius, Marcus. *Meditations*. A New Translation by Gregory Hays. Modern Library, 2003.
- Bakır, Kemal. “Nikolay A. Berdyaev ve Varoluşsal Felsefi Antropoloji.” *Doğu Batı Düşünce Dergisi*, vol. 93, 2020, pp. 25-45.
- Bal, Metin. “İntihar Sorununa Schopenhauer’in ve Camus’nün Felsefi Çözüm Önerileri.” *Dört Öge*, 2021, pp. 39-55.
- Bernasconi, Robert. “Felsefe ve Ölüm Kültürleri.” *Cogito*. vol. 40, 2004, pp. 177-191.
- Bezirci, Asım. “Önsöz.” *Varoluşçuluk* by Jean Paul Sartre, Say Yayınları, 2019, pp. 7-21.
- Black, Robert. “The Philosopher and Renaissance Culture.” *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy*, Edited by James Hankins. Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 13-30.
- Camus, Albert. *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Translated by Justin O’Brien. Penguin Books, 1979.
- Cantor, Paul. *Shakespeare: Hamlet*. Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Cooper, David E. “Existentialism as a Philosophical Movement.” *The Cambridge Companion To Existentialism*. Edited by Steven Crowell. Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 27-50.
- Daye, Necmeddun-i. *Sufilerin Seyri: Mirsadu’l-İbad*. Translated by Hakkı Uygur. İlk Harf Yayınevi, 2013.
- Demir, Aysel. “İnsanın Dünyaya Fırlatılmışlığı Temelinde Heidegger.” *Düşünbil*, vol 64, 2018, pp. 6-10.
- Eagleton, Terry. *William Shakespeare*. Basil Blackwell, 1986.

- Ertürk, Hasret. “Camus'de Ölüm ve İntihar.” *Doğu Batı Düşünce Dergisi*, vol. 93, 2020, pp. 121-131.
- “E. M. Cioran Röportajı (Christian Bussy, 1973)” *Youtube*, uploaded by Ümid Gurbanov, 28 January 2017, <https://youtu.be/AwyNDRIPUME?si=3bgPp2PjymVPH9su>.
- Flynn, Thomas. *Existentialism: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Greenblatt, Stephen. *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2004.
- Han, Byung-Chul. *The Palliative Society*, John Wiley & Sons, 2021.
- Hankins, James. “Humanism, Scholasticism, and Renaissance Philosophy.” *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy*, Edited by James Hankins. Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 30-49.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Translated by John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson. Basil Blackwell, 1985.
- Heidegger, Martin. *What is Metaphysics?* University of Freiburg, 1929. <https://www.stephenhicks.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/heideggerm-what-is-metaphysics.pdf> Accessed on 25 October 2024.
- Hidayet, Sadık. *Hayyam'ın Teraneleri*. Translated by Mehmet Kanar. Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2016.
- Illich, Ivan. “Ölüme Karşı Ölüm.” *Cogito*, vol. 40, 2004, pp. 107-121.
- Inati, Shams. *Ibn Sina's Remarks and Admonitions: Physics and Metaphysics*. Columbia University Press, 2014.
- Kaufmann, Walter. *Existentialism: from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, New York: Meridian Books, 1956.
- Kaufmann, Walter. *From Shakespeare to Existentialism*. Princeton University Press, 1980.
- Kennedy, A. *The Wine Song in Classical Arabic Poetry: Abu Nuwas and the Literary Tradition*. Clarendon Press, 1997.
- Khayyam, Omar. *Rubaiyat*. Translated by Juan Cole. I.B. Tauris, 2020.

- Khayyam, Omar. *The Quatrains of Omar Khayyam*. Translated by Edward Henry Whinfield. Trübner & Co, 1883.
- Kıyar, N. Karkın, N. “Mimesis’in Yapıbozumsal Dönüşümleri.” *İnönü Üniversitesi Sanat Ve Tasarım Dergisi*, 2013.
- Kierkegaard, Søren. *Fear and Trembling*. Edited and Translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton University Press, 1983.
- Kula, Tahsin. Erden, Müslime. “Ömer Hayyam ve Ölüm Kaygısı.” *Turkish Studies*, Volume 13/2, Winter 2018, p. 573-586.
- Leopold, Aldo. *A Sand County Almanac*. Oxford University Press, 1949.
- Levinas, Emmanuel. *God, Death and Time*. Translated by Bettina Bergo. Stanford University Press. 2000.
- Lewis, Rhodri. *Hamlet and the Vision of Darkness*. Princeton University Press, 2017.
- Malpas, Jeff. “Existentialism as Literature.” *The Cambridge Companion To Existentialism*. Edited by Steven Crowell. Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 291-322.
- McBride, William. “Existentialism as a Cultural Movement.” *The Cambridge Companion To Existentialism*. Edited by Steven Crowell. Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 50-73.
- Mermer, Ahmet. “Hayyam ve Rubailerinin Türk Edebiyatına Yansımaları.” *Hacı Bektaş Veli Araştırma Dergisi* 2003/26, pp. 235 - 242.
- Mitchell, W.J.T. “Quintessence of Dust: Hamlet and Humanity in Deep Time.” *Shakespeare in the Anthropocene*, vol. 13, 2018, pp. 127 – 137.
- Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. “Early Islamic Philosophy: The Independent Philosophers: Introduction.” *From Zoroaster to ‘Umar Khayyam*. Edited by S.H. Nasr & M. Aminrazavi. I.B. Tauris, 2008, pp. 409-411.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*. Translated by Ronald Speirs. Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Norman, Richard. *On Humanism*. Routledge, 2004.
- Ökten, Kaan. *Ölüm Kitabı*. Alfa Yayınları, 2022.

- Parvini, Neema. *Shakespeare and Contemporary Theory: New Historicism and Cultural Materialism*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2012.
- Plato. *The Last Days of Socrates: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo*. Translated by Hugh Tredennick and Harold Tarrant. Penguin Books, 1993.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Being and Nothingness*. Translated by Hazel E. Barnes. Pocket Books, 1978.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Existentialism is a Humanism*. Translated by Carol Macomber. Yale University Press, 2007.
- Scott, Casey. "The Philosophy of Death: Is it Rational to Fear Death?" *The Collector*, 1 Aug. 2021, www.thecollector.com/philosophy-of-death/. Accessed 29 July 2024.
- Sellars, John. *Stoicism*. Acumen Publishing, 2010.
- Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*. Edited by Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson, David Scott Kastan and H.R. Woudhuysen. The Arden Shakespeare Third Series Complete Works. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021.
- Shakespeare, William. *Julius Caesar*. Edited by Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson, David Scott Kastan and H.R. Woudhuysen. The Arden Shakespeare Third Series Complete Works. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021.
- Shakespeare, William. *King Lear*. Edited by Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson, David Scott Kastan and H.R. Woudhuysen. The Arden Shakespeare Third Series Complete Works. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021.
- Shakespeare, William. *Love's Labour's Lost*. Edited by Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson, David Scott Kastan and H.R. Woudhuysen. The Arden Shakespeare Third Series Complete Works. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021.
- Shakespeare, William. *Macbeth*. Edited by Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson, David Scott Kastan and H.R. Woudhuysen. The Arden Shakespeare Third Series Complete Works. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021.
- Shakespeare, William. *Othello*. Edited by Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson, David Scott Kastan and H.R. Woudhuysen. The Arden Shakespeare Third Series Complete Works. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021.

- Shelley, Percy Bysshe. "Ozymandias." *The Complete Poems of Percy Bysshe Shelley*. Edited by Peter F. L. Vaughan, Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Şahin, Rukiye. "Concept of Death in Sufi Thought." *International Periodical For The Languages, Literature and History of Turkish or Turkic*, Volume 9/5 Spring 2014, p. 1827-1834.
- Tekinay, Aslı. "From Shakespeare to Kierkegaard: An Existential Reading of Hamlet." *Doğuş Üniversitesi Dergisi*, 2001, pp. 115-124.
- Tunç, Abdurrahim. "Heidegger'in Dasein'ı ile Sartre'ın Varoluşçuluğu Üzerine." *Düşünbil*, vol 64, 2018, pp. 14-16.
- Urgan, Mina. *Shakespeare ve Hamlet*. Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2014.
- Usta, Sadık. *Dünyayı Değiştiren Düşünürler V: El-Kindi'den Ibn Sina'ya, Gazzali'den İbn Haldun'a İslam Felsefesi*. Kafka, 2019.
- Vaziri, Mostafa. *Liberation Philosophy: From the Buddha to Omar Khayyam*. Vernon Press, 2019.
- Watts, Michael. *The Philosophy of Heidegger*. Acumen Publishing, 2011.
- Williams, Bernard. "The Makropulos Case: Reflections on the Tedium of Immortality." *Problems of the Self: Philosophical Papers 1956-1972*, Cambridge University Press, 1973, pp. 82-100.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Translated by D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness. Routledge. 2002.
- Yalom, Irvin D. *Existential Psychotherapy*. Basic Books, 1980.
- Yasa, Metin. Türkmen, Dursun Ali. "Hayyam Ve Kötülük: Acı Eksenli Pesimizm İle Umut Eksenli Optimizm Arasında (Rubailer Örneği)." *Ondokuz Mayıs Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 23/23, 2007, pp. 135-151. <https://doi.org/10.17120/omuifd.41613>.