

## Hamlet - Act 1 Scene 3

### Summary Eric Carchidi

This scene takes place in Polonius's house, where Laertes is packed and ready to leave for France as he is saying his farewells to his sister, Ophelia. Through this conversation, we learn that Hamlet and Ophelia have been spending a lot of time together alone. Laertes is against the idea of Ophelia with Hamlet, so he warns Ophelia that Hamlet could not properly love her due to the fact that as heir to the throne his loyalties to the state take precedence over his loyalties to a woman. Once Laertes leaves, Polonius wants to know what Laertes and Ophelia were talking about. Polonius expresses even more concern towards Ophelia and Hamlet, but he argues that Hamlet is immature and that he is driven by lust, not love, so he forbids Ophelia from talking to him unsupervised.

### **Characterization: Jaydon**

**Effects on others:** Laertes doubts Hamlet's intentions with his younger sister Ophelia, he says that he may love her now but because he is the next heir to the throne, it causes problems for marriage. Hamlet, once he is crowned will still always have his obligations to the state. Being Kings means he may not be able to make personal choices for himself because the whole country depends on it and he has to agree to what the nation would want. The fact that Hamlet has this effect on Laertes makes the audience infer that Hamlet is a loyal person who is motivated/driven by his duty to his state and title.

"For he himself is subject to his birth.  
He may not, as unvalued persons do,  
Carve for himself, for on his choice depends  
The safety and health of this whole state.  
And therefore must his choice be circumscribed  
Unto the voice and yielding of that body  
Whereof he is the head. Then if he says he loves you"

Polonius' does not like the fact that Hamlet and Ophelia are together because of their differences. He cares a lot about their family status and how people view their families and that he doesn't want to be the laughing-stock "Running it thus-you'll tender me a fool". Polonius is worried that she will lose herself and that she should have self-restraint and because of that, it will affect the way people see him and their family. Polonius thinks that Hamlet has a bad influence on his daughter, which is causing her to not think and act out on love. This influence on Ophelia, he is afraid will give a bad image to their family's status. The effect that Hamlet has on Polonius makes the audience infer that Hamlet may be selfish, immature, and reckless.

THE JUXTAPOSITION OF THESE TWO PERSPECTIVES ON HAMLET CREATES UNCERTAINTY IN THE READER'S MIND: IS HAMLET LOYAL OR RECKLESS?

## **Connector: Bruna**

### **New Historicism - Hamlet to The Divinity of Kings**

When connecting Hamlet to The Divinity of Kings it reveals similarities between them. The Divinity of Kings meant that everything in the universe has a particular spot and rank arranged by God. Furthermore, it means that women are lower ranked than men, which results in women having to obey men. This connects to Hamlet when Polonius orders Ophelia to cut all ties with Hamlet because he thinks Hamlet has bad intentions with Ophelia, and because he is a king, and he doesn't know for sure if they can get married, due to the fact that at any moment he can marry someone else, which lets him believe that Hamlet is untrustworthy. As he orders her to stop seeing him she simply agrees with his terms even though she doesn't like it. So, although Hamlet feels distraught when Ophelia turns away from him, the audience recognizes that, due to her position in society, she has no choice. The audience may see a parallel with Gertrude too - what are her choices after her husband's death - what happens to a widow if her son is not ready to rule? King James's mother was run out of her country...this understanding of the historical context makes the audience more sympathetic toward Gertrude and Ophelia. Is Shakespeare challenging his audience to recognize the dangers of allowing gender identities to overpower personal identity?

### **Text to Text - Hamlet to Romeo and Juliet**

When connecting Hamlet to Romeo and Juliet, it made me wonder about the future of the story because Romeo and Juliet were forced to stop dating and communicating with each other due to the fact that their families have had a long hate-fueled feud with one another. Which later leads to disaster, and results in them killing themselves for love because of all outside pressure to not be together anymore. This made me think about the relationship of Hamlet and Ophelia in Hamlet (Act 1, scene 3) it makes me think about what can potentially happen later in the story if Ophelia obeys or disobeys her father on not seeing/dating Hamlet anymore, the dynamic of their relationship will change depending on her choice and it could prove fatal. I remember that Romeo and Juliet's tragic flaw is their impulsivity - they allow their lust or misplaced loyalties to cloud their judgement and this leads to tragedy.

## **Style: Quinn**

1. "Do not, as some ungracious pastors do,  
Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven  
Whiles, like a puffed and reckless libertine,  
Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads"  
(1.3.47-50)

**Simile: A comparison made using "like" or "as."**

This is an example of simile used by Ophelia in regards to the lesson that Laertes is trying to teach her. She compares him to a priest that preaches the word of God, yet commits sins himself regardless. She wants Laertes to heed his own advice to her and not by a hypocrite. This simile hints at appearance vs reality: are people really who they say they are?

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1. "Ay, springes to catch woodcocks. I do know"  
(1.4.115)

2. "Do not believe his vows, for they are brokers  
Not of that dye which their investments show,  
But mere implorators of unholy suits,"  
(1.3.127-129)

*Metaphor: A comparison made not using "like" or "as."*

Polonius (Ophelia's father) is using metaphor to compare Hamlet's vows of love to her to meaningless words to try and seduce her. He is asking her not to commit herself to Hamlet for fear that he is just using her, however also treating her as a child and speaking to her in a demeaning way. Shakespeare uses metaphor to show Polonius' strong opinions that he's placing on Ophelia.

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1. I shall the effect of this good lesson keep  
As watchman to my heart.  
(1.3.45-46)

*Simile: A comparison made using "like" or "as."*

Ophelia is using simile to state that she will take her brother's lesson to heart and tread lightly with Hamlet. Shakespeare's use of simile makes her statement more convincing.

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1. "Look thou character. Give thy thoughts no tongue,  
Nor any unproportioned thought his act.  
Be thou familiar but by no means vulgar.  
Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,  
Grapple them unto thy soul with hoops of steel,  
But do not dull thy palm with entertainment  
Of each new-hatched, unfledged comrade. Beware  
Of entrance to a quarrel, but being in,  
Bear 't that th' opposèd may beware of thee.

Give every man thy ear but few thy voice.  
Take each man's censure but reserve thy judgment.  
Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,  
But not expressed in fancy—rich, not gaudy,  
For the apparel oft proclaims the man,  
And they in France of the best rank and station  
Are of a most select and generous chief in that.  
Neither a borrower nor a lender be,  
For loan oft loses both itself and friend,  
And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.  
This above all: to thine own self be true"

*Repetition: A word, a phrase, or a full sentence, or a poetical line repeated to emphasize its significance in the entire text.*

Polonius is using repetition to impart a lesson on Laertes, giving him advice on how he should act in France and shaping him into the man he wants him to be. Shakespeare's use of repetition serves to show that Polonius has strong opinions on how he believes his children should behave, and he then imposes these opinions on Ophelia as well in regards to her relationship with Hamlet.

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