

Hamlet: Act 2, Scene 1

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Summary

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Where it takes place: A room in Polonius' house

Characters: Polonius, Reynaldo, and Ophelia

Act 2, Scene 1

Act 2, scene 1, explores the idea of appearance versus reality. In this scene, it goes more in-depth exploring where people's loyalties lie. During the scene, the audience better understands the character Polonius and the way he pressures others to do his dirty work for him. He also takes advantage of others for his gain. This scene starts with Polonius making his servant Reynaldo spy on his son, Laertes, to see if his son is making good decisions, and he encourages Reynaldo to lie to Laertes to catch him doing wrong decisions. As Reynaldo leaves to spy on Laertes, Ophelia appears very distraught because she was just with Hamlet. She talks about how weird he was acting, and how his clothes were dirty and disoriented. Her father then thinks Hamlet has gone mad because of love. He then pressures her to go talk to the King about what just happened with Hamlet. By going to the King, Polonius can potentially create problems for Ophelia and Hamlet's relationship in the future because she chose to be more loyal to her father than Hamlet.

Characterization

Polonius and Ophelia

Ophelia:

My lord, as I was sewing in my closet,
Lord Hamlet, with his doublet all unbraced;
No hat upon his head; his stockings fouled,
Ungartered, and down-gyvèd to his ankle;
Pale as his shirt; his knees knocking each other;
And with a look so piteous in purport
As if he had been loosèd out of hell
To speak of horrors—he comes before me.

Ophelia is describing Hamlet's appearance, which is dirty and unkept. (2. 1. 77-84)

Indirect characterization

Polonius and Ophelia - Hamlet

Polonius:

Mad for thy love?

Ophelia:

My lord, I do not know.

But truly, I do fear it.

Polonius and Ophelia are speculating that Hamlet's lost reason due to his love for Ophelia, and that that is the reason for this behaviour. (2. 1. 85-86)

Indirect characterization

Polonius and Ophelia - Hamlet

Polonius:

“This is the very ecstasy of love,
Whose violent property fordoes itself
And leads the will to desperate undertakings
As oft as any passion under heaven
That does afflict our natures”

Polonius is basing this statement off of his own speculation that Hamlet is madly in love with Ophelia. He is characterizing Hamlet as insane. (2. 1. 102-105)

Indirect characterization

Polonius and Ophelia - Hamlet

- What this scene shows us about Hamlet is that he is deeply in love for Ophelia and due to her rejecting his advances (as Polonius ordered her to earlier) he is acting irrationally.
- This scene also characterizes Hamlet as being mentally ill or at the very least not mentally sound.
- This scene also has Polonius admitting that he was originally wrong about Hamlet's intentions. He is quick to judge and makes assumptions about people, which can lead to how people perceive these people. Something to ask ourselves:

**DOES THIS "LABELLING" or DO SOCIETAL JUDGEMENTS IMPACT
IDENTITY FORMATION? IS THIS A CAUSE FOR AN UPCOMING THESIS?**

Style

Style

Aside - Is when a character's dialogue is spoken, but is not heard by the other characters in the scene. **This is used to get the scenes purpose and point across by providing information that otherwise would not be available for the audience to know.** I also gives us an observation of Polonius' character to help us understand him better. **ASIDES AND SOLILOQUIES ARE USED REGULARLY IN HAMLET TO HELP THE AUDIENCE MAKE IMPORTANT INFERENCES**

In this scene Polonius' describe his plan to his servant to tell whether or not Polonius' suspicions of a partying Laertes were true and then he interjects with, "And I believe it is a fetch of wit" (2.1.39). We find out that Polonius' is self centred because he thinks he is so smart because of his plan. He believes his plan is clearly amazing, to prove his wit that he interrupts himself to say it and it shows how selfish Polonius is. **He can get so caught up in making himself look good that he ends up forgetting what he was saying during one of his explanation.** " And then, sir, does he this - he does - What was I about to say?" (2.1.49-50). This aside shows Polonius' arrogance, and that he not only is snotty but not smart at all.

THE HIGHLIGHTED SECTION COULD GIVE HINTS AND CLUES FOR AN UPCOMING THESIS: AGAIN, DO SOCIETAL PRESSURES IMPACT IDENTITY FORMATION (for him it is the pressure of living up to the role of being an advisor to the king and an advisor/protector to his family in a paternalistic society) ?

cont'd

Oxymoron - “Your bait of falsehood takes this carp of truth” Polonius (68) Oxymoron is a figure of speech in which two opposite ideas are joined to create an effect. Polonius is claims that if they spread incorrect rumors about Laertes they will find out the truth about him. Polonius does not care if he breaks his trust with Laertes and dishonors him in the process of lying, this is because Polonius only wants the truth. **THIS IS CONNECTED TO THE MOTIF OF UNCERTAINTY - SPECIFICALLY, UNCERTAINTY ASSOCIATED WITH APPEARANCE VS REALITY: POLONIUS REVEALS AGAIN HOW ONE CAN NOT EVER BE CERTAIN OF WHO TO TRUST.**

Simile - “and with a look so piteous in purport/ As if he had been loosed out of hell” (90 - 91)

Imagery - “My lord, as I was sewing in my closet,/Lord Hamlet, with his doublet all unbraced;/No hat upon his head; his stockings fouled/Ungartered, and down-gyvèd to his ankle/ Pale as his shirt; his knees knocking each other. / And with a look so piteous in purport / As if he had been loosed out of hell” (80)

When Ophelia saw Hamlet he looked not himself and was acting kind of crazy. She adds a lot of different details about Hamlet's appearance to emphasize how Hamlet looked out of sorts. **When Hamlet saw Ophelia that was just after he saw the ghost, his father. This shows what hamlet's reaction was after meeting the ghost. He also just received confirmation that his mother was not as loyal as he believed. He also assumes that Ophelia is equally as disloyal because she has been refusing to speak with me (due to her father's rules). That's why he was out of sorts and not himself but, Ophelia and Polonius don't know of that. AGAIN THIS CONNECTS TO THE MOTIF OF UNCERTAINTY + APPEARANCE VS REALITY - THIS COULD SUPPORT A THESIS EXPLORING HOW UNCERTAINTY IMPACTS IDENTITY FORMATION (CONNECTED TO THE UNCERTAINTY OF MANKING QUESTION PROMPT).**

Connector

Connecting through a feminist lens:

Ophelia (because her gender is objectified) is forced to not talk to Hamlet even though she clearly wants to be loyal to Hamlet because Polonius is convinced Hamlet is sick with lust towards Ophelia. Ophelia's obedience to her father results in Hamlet's corruption. **HERE, OPHELIA ALLOWS COLLECTIVE IDENTITY (GENDER IDENTITY, WHICH IS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT) TAKE PRECEDENCE OVER INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY. THIS IMPACTS HER RELATIONSHIP WITH HAMLET, WHICH ULTIMATELY CORRUPTS BOTH OF THEM.** It's also important to note that Hamlet does not consider how Ophelia and his mother are impacted by their gender. - he just assumes they are disloyal.