

Act 2 Scene 2

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Summarizer (Moe):

The second half of the scene starts with Claudius, Gertrude and Polonius concluding their talk regarding Hamlet, the reason for his madness, and what to do about him. They come to the conclusion that the reason he is mad seems to stem from his rejected love towards Ophelia. To test their hypothesis and also to find out if Hamlet is hiding anything, they come up with a plan to use Ophelia to talk to Hamlet to discover why he is depressed while they overhear their entire conversation by hiding behind the curtains. After they conclude their conversation with Polonius, King Claudius and Queen Gertrude exit the scene. Hamlet then enters the scene reading a book and Polonius tries to initiate in small talk with him to understand his madness. Hamlet pretends to be mad but Polonius understands that there is a deeper meaning to his words. For example, when Hamlet pretends not to know who Polonius is and calls him a “Fishmonger”(2.2.172), a person who sells fish, Polonius understands that he is calling him a pimp due to the way he’s using his daughter as bait for Hamlet. After their conversation Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Hamlet’s old friends, enter and Hamlet greets them so cheerfully ditching his crazy persona. But during their conversation Hamlet picks up that they are actually sent by the King to spy on him and distances himself from them. Hamlet then greets the actors that will play *The Murder of Gonzago* in order to assess if Claudius truly is guilty by analyzing his reaction to the murder scene that resembles the King’s murder. And as they are rehearsing Hamlet has a moment of questioning himself as he sees the actor cry over this fake murder scene when he himself cannot bring himself to feel such misery and instead is procrastinating his revenge plan.

Characterization: STEAL (Shannon)

Says:

“You cannot, sir, take from me anything that I will more willingly part withal, except my life, except my life, except my life.” (2, 2, 214-216”

In this quote, Hamlet is explaining that Polonius cannot take away something from him that he already does not care about it. Then, when Hamlet says “except my life”, he is implying that he does not value his own life. Hamlet doesn't want it and would happily part with it. He does not want to live.

This is a moment where the audience sees Hamlet as vulnerable and this moment hints at the fact that his “madness” may not be an act. This is a symptom of melancholy.

Characterization: STEAL (Shannon)

Says:

“What a piece of work is a 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?” (2, 2, 303-308)**

Here, Hamlet explains how the world views humans and the human species. He claims people describe them as admirable, angels, godly, and as the beauty of the world. However when he says “And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust” he reveals that he does not think the same. Hamlet thinks of humans and mankind just as dust. He believes humans to be unimportant. **Here, we can see that Hamlet is truly starting to lack purpose and is starting to become corrupt due to the fact that he does not seem to care about anything including his life. (2, 2, 214-216)**

Characterization: STEAL (Shannon)

Thinks:

“(aside) These tedious old fools!”(2, 2, 218)

Once Polonius leaves, Hamlet says to himself that Polonius is a fool. When analyzing this insult, we as readers can come to the conclusion that Hamlet knows what Polonius is up to. He knows that Polonius only came to talk to him because he is trying to get to the bottom of Hamlet’s insanity and spy on him.

The audience is left uncertain - wondering if these symptoms of melancholy are an act because Hamlet knows that Polonius is a spy OR Is this a moment where the play is exploring the impact of “illness identity” or melancholic depression resulting from trauma?

Characterization: STEAL (Shannon)

Effects On Others:

“he is far gone, far gone: and truly in my youth I suffered much extremity for love,” (2, 2, 187-188)

Hamlet gives the impression to Polonius that he is insane because of love. When Polonius says “he is far gone” he is implying that his mental state is far from reality. Also, when he mentions “I suffered much extremity for love”, Polonius is trying to relate himself to what he thinks Hamlet is feeling. He reveals that he too used to be crazy for love when he was younger.

Characterization: STEAL (Shannon)

Effects On Others:

“How pregnant sometimes his replies are. A happiness that often madness hits on, which reason and sanity could not so prosperously be delivered of.” (2, 2, 207-210)

When Polonius says “how pregnant sometimes his replies are”, he is implying that, in his opinion, **Hamlet’s responses are deep in meaning and full of thoughts.** Polonius reveals to the readers that although he knows Hamlet has gone mad, he thinks that he is still thinking philosophically. When Polonius says **“A happiness that often madness hits on”**, he means that only insane people are capable of having such a way with words as Hamlet does currently.

Style: Natasha

- Light and Dark Imagery (175-180)
- Death and Decay Imagery (175-180)
- Repetition (191)
- Imagery: Describing Polonius (196-200)
- Repetition (215-216)
- Antic Disposition: Hamlet quickly changes mood (223-225)
- Metaphor (228)
- Pun (233)
- Metaphor: Trapped inside own head (243)
- Amplification (284-287)

Style pt.2

- Simile (298-299)
- Simile (305-308)
- Oxymoron (320-323)
- Repetition (386-388)
- Onomatopoeia (391)

Connector - Kenneth

Shakespeare continually references the Bible throughout Hamlet. The Bible's influence in Hamlet is both obvious and subtle as Shakespeare inundated the scene with biblical references. . Shakespeare does this through his allusions like in line 400 where Shakespeare writes, “O Jephthah, judge of Israel, what a treasure hadst thou!”(400) This refers to the judge Jephthah, the biblical figure who sacrificed his daughter in order to win. This is a reference to Polonius' attempt to give up his daughter in order to guarantee that he has the king's support.

This connection makes the reader reflect on the corruption that results from one putting collective identity and social duties before individual morals and individual identity.

Connector - Kenneth

The idea that Ophelia may be given away simply at the whims of her father is fundamentally wrong yet at the time was considered quite normal. By using Hamlet's quiet insinuations, Shakespeare conveys his distaste with the concept of men being greater than women. He refers to Polonius as a "fishmonger"(170) and a "god kissing carrion"(180) to degrade his character and show that people who use their daughters as objects simply because they are females are despicable to him.

The irony in this, though, is that Hamlet is no better. If his madness is an act, and if he is acting mad for her knowing that she will communicate her observations to Polonius, then he is using her in the same way as Polonius. Also, his attempts to bait Claudius are similar to Polonius's attempts to bait his son. So, although Hamlet despises Polonius for his irrational choices, Hamlet is a parallel character to him in many ways. What message does Shakespeare communicate through this comparison?

Connector - Kenneth

Shakespeare may not even be a feminist at heart. He could be pandering to the Queen of England in order to curry more favour with her and her supporters. The Queen even in her last years refused to be seen as a pawn or used by men for anything. She was “true” to “her own self” even when she was told regularly that she should value the state and her collective identity before her personal identity and values.

Is Shakespeare, through the characterization of Ophelia showing the negative repercussions that occur when women prioritize gender expectations over personal wellbeing. AND through the characterization of Hamlet is he showing the corruption that occurs to one’s identity when societal interfere with personal choice.

Connector - Kenneth

Shakespeare's presentation of Hamlet as an insane man who secretly has his wits about him brings to mind the case of Anthony Montwheeler, an Oregon murderer. Tony stabbed his wife and then pretended to be insane in order to continue with his plan. Like Tony, Hamlet had realized that he will be given more freedom to secure his throne if he was thought to be mad. Like Montwheeler, he knew that his false illness would be the key to success. Also like Montwheeler, is this “false mental illness” may not be false after all because Montwheeler turned out to be “mad” enough to kill more people. Like him, although Hamlet is pretending to be mad, perhaps there is an element of unrecognized truth to his madness.

Connector - Kenneth

Unlike modern times, people had to be respectful and polite when talking to others. The ability to make degrading comments about other people was a skill well honed and which must be hidden. Hamlet's pretence of madness conveniently allows him to insult Polonius but even as he insults Polonius it remains veiled and could be considered merely the natterings of a mad man. Understanding this connection helps the reader to understand why Hamlet chooses to pretend that he is mad in order to buy time to determine how to avenge his father's death. This is consistent with Shakespeare's own writings which often poke fun at modern society but simply disguises it as nothing more than entertainment.

Connection to Psychology: Melancholic Depression

- persistent feelings of extreme sadness for a long period of time
- loss of interest in activities that were once enjoyable
- having a lack of energy or feeling fatigued
- feeling anxious or irritable
- eating too much or too little
- sleeping too much or too little
- difficulty concentrating, making decisions, and remembering things
- thinking or talking about death or suicide suicide attempt
- loss of pleasure in all or most daily activities
- lack of reactivity to positive news and events
- deep feelings of despair and worthlessness
- sleep disruptions
- significant weight loss
- persistent feeling of excessive or inappropriate guilt

Hamlet is showing some of these symptoms when we meet him in the court scene and the symptoms get worse after he sees the ghost. This makes the reader infer that his madness may be authentic and may result from an identity crisis. **CAUSES:** The uncertainty in his life caused by the death of his father and news about his mother, uncle, friends, and lover being disloyal? The pressures of being the heir to his father's throne? The fact that his father's ghost appointed him as his avenger even though murder goes against his nature?