

Representation of deceitful society through the characters in shakespeare's hamle...

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In today's society, people often put on a show and act like a different person when attempting to fit in. However, Shakespeare was a man well ahead of his time and incorporated the use of acting and faking many times throughout his plays in order to portray certain symbolism. In the play Hamlet, Shakespeare uses the pattern of "act/acting" imagery and the main characters, Hamlet, Claudius, and Polonius, as men who put on an act when needed in order to represent how crooked and shady their society truly has become.

Hamlet, as well as many other characters, has many situations when he acts fake, or notices others doing it. Polonius tells his daughter how a young man can pretend that they are in love in order to get what they want from a woman. He tells her that because Hamlet is young so his affection for her could change, and that she is acting like an immature girl and should understand better than that: "Affection, puh! You speak like a green girl / Unsifted in such perilous circumstance. / Do you believe his "tenders," as you call them?". Right as the play begins, Polonius calls out Hamlet for putting on a show. He tries to show how this world is corrupt because he has made Ophelia fall for him while he was faking the whole time. Furthermore, as Hamlet is talking to Ophelia, he calls women in general fake and compares them to paintings. He tells her that they just put use cosmetics to fool men. He tells her to go away and never marry anyone as no one should get married: "Have heard of your paintings too, well / enough. God has given you one face and you / make yourselves another. You jig and amble, and / you lisp, you nickname God's creatures and make / your wantonness

your ignorance. Go to, I'll no / more on't. It hath made me mad. I say, we will have / no more marriages".

There are two types of actions occurring in the scene. The first type is shown as Hamlet putting on a fake show. He pretends to hate Ophelia even though he truly loves her. Secondly, he is mad at the world as a place due to the fact that women cover their faces with makeup just to hide their insecurities.

Hamlet believes that if women can hide their faces with makeup, they could also be hiding more secrets from men. He teaches the actors how to act to get a reaction out of Claudius. Hamlet wants to see and conform to all the people that Claudius was the one who killed his father and he wants to get revenge on him. He tells them not to exaggerate anything and not to be too tame but be natural with all of their actings: " Be not too tame neither, but let your own / discretion be your tutor. Suit the action to the / word, the word to the action, with this special / observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of / nature". Hamlet wants the actors to be perfect on the play so he can get his revenge for his father; he uses acting here again to show how rotten this whole situation is through the players' actions.

Claudius is worried he can not fake being a good guy in heaven, so he is wondering if he can be forgiven and still carry his crimes that he has committed. In the real world, he knows he can get away with it, but not in heaven: " That cannot be, since I am still possessed / Of those effects for which I did the murder: / My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen. / May one be pardoned and retain th' offense? / In the corrupted currents of this world, / Offense's gilded hand may shove by justice, / And oft 'tis seen the

wicked prize itself / Buys out the law. But 'tis not so above". Claudius is the most crooked character in the play and here he tries to understand his mistakes and he hopes that even though he has committed sins he can be forgiven and still go to heaven. Polonius talks to Hamlet after he hears that he has started to lose his mind, and Hamlet looks like a completely different person. Thus, Polonius believes that Hamlet has become lovesick: " He knew me not at first; he said I was a fishmonger. He is far gone. And truly, in my youth, I suffered much extremity for love, very near this". Hamlet wants people to think he has lost his mind so he is acting like this just to convince Polonius; this is part of his greater plan and he sees pretending to be someone who he is not as his solution. After Hamlet goes insane with Gertrude, he acts upon it and kills Polonius. This news travels far and quickly as it reaches Polonius' son, Laertes. He comes back full of anger and Claudius wants to use this anger to his advantage: " Laertes, was your father dear to you? / Or are you like the painting of a sorrow, / A face without a heart?". Claudius here plays with Laertes emotions and tempts him if he has a heart or is acting as if he does. Claudius wants to redirect this anger towards Hamlet and get rid of him so he accuses Laertes of faking as if his grief is an illusion.

Throughout the play, Shakespeare also uses the words act and action directly to relate back to the theme of pretending and acting. While Hamlet and Horatio are walking around a graveyard, they notice a gravedigger singing while he is doing his job. Hamlet picks up a skull and starts to analyze his possible life: " There's another. Why may not that be the / skull

of a lawyer? Where be his quiddities now, his / quillities, his cases, his tenures, and his tricks? Why / does he suffer this mad knave now to knock him / about the sconce with a dirty shovel and will not tell / him of his action of battery?”. Hamlet is making an imaginary life for this character and is wondering if he could have been a lawyer, and if he allowed someone to kill him with a dirty shovel. Similarly, the smarter gravedigger is doing his job and talking with the other gravedigger about Ophelia’s death and if it was a suicide: “ It must be se offendendo; it cannot be / else. For here lies the point: if I drown myself / wittingly, it argues an act, and an act hath three / branches — it is to act, to do, to perform. Argal, she / drowned herself wittingly”. Here the gravedigger is making the case that Ophelia knew exactly what was going on, and to commit the act of suicide there are phases you have to go through, which he points out she did them exactly. This demonstrates how devious their society is, showing that even after she has died people still criticize her about it.

Throughout the play, Shakespeare attempts to show how crooked, deceitful and devious the characters and the world he has created is. He uses a theme pattern of pretending/acting imagery as well as literary word patterns. The play Hamlet can represent how Shakespeare viewed the world at the time, and it has relevance even to this day. This can also be acknowledged by multiple sources that Shakespeare himself, actually did use parts of true stories to write Hamlet. People can learn by reading Hamlet that madness and grief can lead to such a shady society and the fatal flaws of these characters leading them towards it.