

Hamlet Act 4 Scene 1

Throughout this scene we see the aftermath of Hamlet's murder of Polonius and the effect which it has specifically on Gertrude who witnessed the murder. Additionally, Claudius's manipulation of Gertrude is also shown in this scene as he manipulates her into silence as he punishes Hamlet.

The effect that the murder has had on Gertrude is first shown as she describes Hamlet as "mad as the sea and the wind". Though the use of this simile is that it shows how Gertrude has begun to agree with the other characters' opinion of Hamlet as opposed to earlier in the play where Gertrude was protective of Hamlet and was certain the cause of his madness was Ophelia and could be easily fixed. The words "sea" and "wind" both have connotations of nature which could suggest that Gertrude has started to believe that Hamlet's madness is caused naturally as opposed to having a definitive cause such as Ophelia. This demonstrates Claudius's manipulation of Gertrude as he has been encouraging this view on Hamlet as a way of discrediting him; however, the main opposer of this opinion was Gertrude who now does firmly believe that Hamlet is mad. Moreover, the words "sea" and "wind" also connote ideas of destruction, this is also supported through the use of the word "mad" which suggests a sense of uncountable and unpredictable. This may relate to how after the murder of Polonius Gertrude now views Hamlet's madness as something that can no longer be controlled and as began to cause Hamlet's downfall.

The manipulation of Gertrude continues as Claudius discredits Hamlet by stating "his liberty is full of threats to us all". This statement shows the manipulation of Gertrude as the generalisation of "us all" may be read as Claudius convincing Gertrude to see Hamlet as a greater effect who may not harm just them but also the other citizens of Denmark, which as the Queen Gertrude has a duty to protect. This shows the struggle that is often shown throughout the play of duty vs the individual as fulfilling her duty of queen Gertrude will be making a large personal sacrifice of harming her son's social status. Moreover, this statement is coming from the dominant male in Gertrude's life so she must obey him and agree with his orders, this shows her manipulation as she is not able to oppose the view point and defend her son so is forced into agreement and silence.