

Cameron Rose

Composition Honors

Period 1

3-5-12

Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue. But if you mouth it, as many of our players do, I had as liefe the town-crier spoke my lines.

In these first four lines, Hamlet wants the players to speak their lines the way he read it to them, but not just to repeat it (the way people read in class). I think that Hamlet wanted this play to be perfect because he's trying to elicit a reaction out of Claudius. Shakespeare probably wanted his plays to be extraordinary (with emphasis on the extra). I assume that, like movies now, most plays in Shakespeare's time were structured similar (how it's performed, plot, etc...). He most likely wanted to break away from that pattern and do something different. Most people probably didn't put too much emotion into their lines and just said them to say them.

Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus, but use all gently; for in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, whirlwind of your passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness. O, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags,

to split the ears of the groundlings, who, for the most part, are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise. I would have such a fellow whipped for o'erdoing Termagant. It out-Herods Herod. Pray you avoid it.

Here, Hamlet is basically saying, use boldness but not overbearing. To elaborate, for the sake of adding more “words, words, words” to this paper, the emotion that the players may feel while performing must not cause them to be so emotional to point where it affects their performance and ruins the play. If they did, then he would have them whipped. Lots of plays when Shakespeare was writing probably had a lot of loud sounds and dumb, pointless acting to get the attention of the groundlings (the commoners directly in front of the stage).

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: for anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure. Now this overdone, or come tardy off, though it make the unskilful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve; the censure of the which one must in your allowance o'erweigh a whole theatre of others. O, there be players that I have seen play, and heard others praise, and that highly, not to speak it

profanely, that, neither having the accent of Christians, nor the gait of Christian, pagan, nor man, have so strutted and bellowed that I have thought some of Nature's journeymen had made men, and not made them well, they imitated humanity so abominably.

Hamlet gives them one rule to help follow to help any misunderstanding. “Suit the action to the word, the word to the action; with this special observanc, that you o’erstep no the modesty of nature:” In other words, act natural. It’s hard to act natural when you’re acting something that’s not natural to you. With this rule, Hamlet tries to ensure that the players just don’t overdo it. Shakespeare was probably sick and tired of people overacting and wants his plays to reflect reality. I think that Shakespeare wanted plays, acted by players that were true to what he wanted, and were enjoyable, but had truth in them that related to real life.