

Mirror-stage vs. Polonius behind the curtain

Hamlet's Killing of Ophelia's Father as a Negative Version of the Lacanian Mirror Stage: In comparing the moment when Hamlet kills the father of Ophelia to the Lacanian mirror stage, we can identify several parallels that highlight the negative aspects of this encounter. We have partly explored some of these parallels. Here they are again in the form of a table:



Lacanian Mirror Stage

Child
M-Other (Mother)
Reflective surface
Gaze and eye
Embrace of image
Identification

Negative Version in Hamlet

Hamlet (a man)
A Father behind the curtain
Opaque curtain
Hidden ear
One kills the other
Betrayal and confrontation

In Hamlet's situation, we see a negative deviation from the mirror stage: Instead of a child, we have a grown man, Hamlet, who is confronted by the presence of Ophelia's father. Instead of a nurturing M-Other figure, we have "A" father hidden behind a curtain, symbolizing a secretive and oppressive presence of a ghost /this is how we imagine the ghost, hah). The reflective surface of the mirror is replaced by an opaque uneven wavy curtain, representing again a lack of self-reflection and clarity. Instead of a gaze and eye contact, there is a hidden ear, signifying a covert mode of surveillance and information gathering. The ear is a negative gaze. It pulls instead of pushing. Moreover, in the Lacanian mirror stage, the child embraces and identifies with the image in the mirror, whereas in Hamlet's case, one person kills the other, resulting in a violent confrontation rather than a harmonious embrace. However, this discloses /dis-cloth the true nature of the child's embrace: Death drive aimed to annihilate the Doppelgänger. This ob-scene act of betrayal and confrontation disrupts the process of identification and further complicates Hamlet's sense of self.

Furthermore, we can draw a connection to political subjectivity by considering the concept of "*Big Brother is listening!*" This phrase alludes to the idea that surveillance and constant monitoring can create a form of subjectivity where listening replaces the gaze.