

THE ANNOTATED SHAKESPEARE

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

HAMLET



FULLY ANNOTATED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION, BY BURTON RAFFEL

WITH AN ESSAY BY HAROLD BLOOM

The Tragedy of

Hamlet

PRINCE OF DENMARK

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Burton Raffel, General Editor

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For my four sisters: Catherine, Teresa, Joan, and Martha

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ABOUT THIS BOOK



Written four centuries ago, in a fairly early form of Modern English, *Hamlet* is a notoriously dense, complex text of remarkable depth and beauty. Many of the play's social and historical underpinnings necessarily need explanation for the modern reader. But what needs even more, and far more detailed, explanation are the very words.

'A did comply with his dug, before 'a sucked it. Thus has he, and many more of the same bevy that I know the drossy age dotes on, only got the tune of the time and, out of a habit of encounter, a kind of yeasty collection, which carries them through and through the most fanned and winnowed opinions. And do but blow them to their trial, the bubbles are out.

This is Hamlet himself, in act 5, scene 2, speaking to his friend and companion, Horatio, about Osric, an outrageously fashionable courtier who has just left them. Hamlet is profoundly disgusted by Osric's speech and behavior. But in the most basic of all senses of "meaning," what is this fiercely contemptuous speech all about? What is it (what are its words) *saying*? Longtime schol-

ars of Elizabethan literature have learned to fully understand; they delight in teaching the play to those less well learned. But what can the unlearned, trying to read *Hamlet*, make of what surely often seems to them, in passages like that just quoted, a kind of weirdly surrealistic jumble?

Hamlet. 'A¹ did comply² with his dug,³ before 'a sucked it. Thus has he, and many more of the same bevy⁴ that I know the drossy⁵ age dotes on, only got⁶ the tune⁷ of the time and, out of an habit of encounter,⁸ a kind of yeasty collection,⁹ which carries them through and through¹⁰ the most fanned and winnowed¹¹ opinions. And do but blow them to their trial,¹² the bubbles are out.¹³

I believe annotations of this sort create the necessary bridges from Shakespeare's four-centuries-old English across to ours. The only "difficult" word I have not explained is "dote"; the omission is deliberate. Many readers new to matters Elizabethan will already understand this still-current, and largely unchanged, word. "Tune,"

1 he

2 observe the formalities of politeness

3 the nipple of his nurse's breast

4 company, crowd (primarily used with reference to women)

5 scum-filled, rubbish-ridden

6 "only got" = "have/have acquired/caught only"

7 style, frame of mind

8 "an habit of encounter" = "a settled/habitual/rote way of face-to-face meeting"

9 "yeasty collection" = "fermenting/restlessly turbid/frothy/foaming collection/summary/abstract"

10 "through and through" = "from beginning to end, over and over again"

11 "fanned and winnowed" = "(long since) thoroughly blown about and sifted"

12 examination, test, proof

13 popped, extinguished

meaning “melody,” is of course a word familiar to all speakers of the language. But its sense, here, “style, frame of mind,” will not similarly be clear. The same is true of such familiar expressions as “only got” and “through and through.” Some readers, to be sure, will comprehend their unusual, historical meanings without glosses. And when it comes to words like “dote,” those who are not familiar with the modern meaning will easily find a clear, simple definition in any modern dictionary. And they may be obliged to make fairly frequent use of such a dictionary: there are a good many words, in *Hamlet*, to be found in modern dictionaries and not glossed here. But there are just as surely readers who will not understand Shakespeare’s intended meaning, absent such glosses as I here offer. And it seems to me my editorial responsibility to guarantee as complete verbal accessibility as I am able to provide. I followed the same principle in compiling *The Annotated Milton*, published in 1999, and classroom experience has validated that decision. Classes of mixed upper-level undergraduates and graduate students have more quickly and thoroughly transcended language barriers than ever before. This allows the teacher to move more promptly and confidently to the nonlinguistic matters that have made Milton a great and important poet. Shakespeare’s language is more or less equally difficult. No one who has not understood the *words of Hamlet* can either fully or properly come to grips with the imperishable matter of the play.

Not all of *Hamlet* will appear so impenetrable. But the inevitable forces of linguistic change, operant in all living tongues, have inevitably created wide degrees of obstacles to ready comprehension—not only sharply different meanings but subtle, partial shifts in meaning which allow us to think that we understand when, alas, we do not. Speakers of Dutch and German, too, expe-

rience this shifting of the linguistic ground. Like Early Modern English (ca. 1600) and the Modern English now current, those languages are too close for those who know only one language, and not the other, to be able readily to recognize just what they correctly understand and what they do not. In the very first scene of *Hamlet*, for example, when the sentry Francisco directs Barnardo, arriving on the castle's guard platform in the darkness of night, to "Stand and unfold yourself," we can pretty reasonably guess what "unfold" might have meant, in Shakespeare's time. To make things both plain and definite, however, I have in this edition glossed "unfold" as "reveal, disclose, identify," giving the neophyte modern reader the security of certainty as well as what is I think a useful sense of the word's range, in Shakespeare's time. But I have also glossed "stand," because it is precisely the sort of misleading "false friend" I have been talking about. It does not in fact mean what we mean by "stand," which is "stand up" as opposed to "sit down." Rather, it means "halt, stop"—which might perhaps be guessed at, but equally well might not even be noticed by a modern reader, who knows perfectly well what "stand" means to him or her.

I have sometimes annotated prosody (metrics), though only when that has seemed truly necessary or particularly helpful. My standard for the few prosodic usages I have glossed is not so much ad hoc as it is founded both in long experience in the classroom (I taught my first university class in fall 1948) and my clear perception of a powerful paradigm shift in general literacy. Books have been, not surprisingly, the place where people have learned to read. It seems to me apparent that for almost a century books have been losing that position, being to a significant extent replaced first by movies and now, even more meaningfully, by a variety of electronically generated screens. Inevitably, those screens

are heavily visual and minimally language-oriented. This is not the place to descant on such subjects, but the subtitle of my essay “Freshman Decomposition” seems to me to say what needs saying: “not the same freshmen.” (The essay appears in *Palo Alto Review*, Fall 2001.) In glossing prosody, as in glossing words, I believe we have no choice but to deal with the students we actually have, not with the largely no longer extant students we either once had or deeply wish we still had. It is my belief that we will not have such students again.

The notation used in discussing prosody, as in indicating pronunciation, follows the extremely simple form used in my *From Stress to Stress: An Autobiography of English Prosody* (see “Further Reading,” near the end of this book). Syllables with metrical stress are capitalized; all other syllables are in lowercase.

I have annotated, as well, a limited number of such other matters, sometimes of interpretation, sometimes of general or historical relevance, as have seemed to me seriously worthy of inclusion. These annotations have been most carefully restricted: this is not a book of literary commentary. It is for that reason that the glossing of metaphors has been severely restricted. There is almost literally no end to discussion and/or analysis of metaphor, especially in Shakespeare. To yield to temptation might well be to double or triple the size of this book—and would also change it from a historically oriented language guide to a work of an unsteadily mixed nature. In the process, I believe, neither language nor literature would be well or clearly served.

In the interests of compactness and brevity, I have employed in my annotations (as consistently as I am able) a number of stylistic and typographical devices:

- Words or phrases separated by either a comma or a forward slash (/) are supplementary to one another. I have used the former sign in brief (usually one- or two-word) annotations, and the latter sign in longer annotations.
- Alternative but complementary meanings are usually indicated by *and*; contrasting meanings by *or*; and meanings that might be both complementary and contrasting by *and/or*. These meanings are placed in parentheses, to highlight them for the reader. Instances of special interest are set off with lowercase arabic numerals, (1), (2), and so on.
- Except for proper nouns, the word at the beginning of all annotations is in lowercase.
- Unresolved uncertainties are followed by a question mark, set in parentheses (?). Textual differences have been annotated only when the differences seem either marked or of unusual interest.
- Annotations of more common words have not been repeated. The note annotating the first instance of more common words is followed by the sign ★. Readers may easily track down the first annotation, using the brief “Finding List” at the back of the book.
- When particularly relevant, “translations” into twenty-first-century English have been added, in parentheses.

The most important typographical device here employed is ★ placed after the first (and only) gloss of words and phrases very frequently used in Hamlet. I have provided an alphabetically arranged listing of such words and phrases in the “Finding List” at the back of the book. This distinctly telegraphic listing contains no annotations—simply the words or phrases themselves and the page and note numbers where the annotation of the words or phrases can be found.

INTRODUCTION



History is littered with “solutions” to the ineffable, entrancing, will-o’-the-wisp “meaning” of *Hamlet*. Perhaps the most charming of all was that of the delightfully insane fellow, who shall here go nameless, so convinced that the answer to the perpetual puzzle lay hidden under the stones in Elsinore castle—and he knew just which stones, too—that he persuaded the benevolent Danes to let him turn over exactly those stones, still lying quietly in place after all these centuries. He turned them over, one by one. And he looked. And what he found was dust, and dirt, and a few bugs.

No one, I think, can or ever will “solve” *Hamlet*. In the first of the three sections that follow, I want to discuss the pre-history of the play—or, more exactly, what we know and what we do not know about that history. It has, as I shall explain, a profound relevance for puzzling out the meaning of what William Shakespeare wrote. In the second section, I want to discuss aspects of the play’s two chief characters, Hamlet and Ophelia. There is no need to set out even the general range of more than three hundred years of proposed “solutions.” The earlier period is neatly recorded, with generous (and quite fascinating) excerpts in Horace Howard Fur-

ness's 1877 Variorum Edition. Modern criticism is summarized and analyzed, with remarkable objectivity, in Gottschalk's 1972 study. In the third and last section of this Introduction, I will briefly discuss textual sources and the editorial principles responsible for the text of the play as here presented.

The Pre-History of Hamlet

The first link in the Hamlet story is the likely but unprovable assumption that, at some distant and unknown time, a bloody family feud much like other bloody family feuds occurred somewhere in Scandinavia. Storytelling was without question a prime art, in all ancient heroic societies, and Scandinavia (from Iceland all the way across to Finland) developed some of the world's finest tales. (We know most of them under the general heading of "sagas.") The particular blood feud that began the Hamlet story, however, had a rather special twist of high fictive interest. The central figure was seeking revenge against an uncle who had murdered the young man's father, who was also the murderer's brother. Too powerless to be able, as yet, to effect that revenge, the young man sought refuge, successfully, in pretended madness.

Amhlaide is how Hamlet was named, in the next link in the story, which is also our first written record of the principal character's name, though not yet of the tale proper. We do not have a whole work, but only a fragmentary mention in still another account, Snorri Sturluson's *Prose Edda*, dated to ca. 1230. Snorri's mention of Amhlaide attributes it to what he tells us is an Irish lament, probably of the tenth century A.D. Clearly, the name Amhlaide is a Celtic adaptation, based on a Scandinavian original. In this lament, put into the mouth of a mourning widow, Amh-

laide is described as a Dane, and as the killer, in a historically verified battle that took place in 919, of the widow's husband, a king named Niall. This first documentary record indicates the living nature of the Hamlet tale, though without further knowledge of the lament itself we have no idea of exactly what its narrative nature may have been. Nor do we know what the general shape of the Hamlet tale proper then was, or whether it took something like its later form first in Ireland or after it had been exported back to Scandinavia. Plainly, however, there had been an exportation of the tale to Ireland, whatever form it may have taken: this was yet another link in the haze-filled background of the Hamlet tale. Stories of no large inherent interest do not travel well. This one obviously did.

But by the time of the next link in the story's development, datable to Denmark and to the early thirteenth century, we can see that the Hamlet story has advanced a large step toward Shakespeare's play. An ecclesiastic in the service of a Danish bishop, Saxo Grammaticus (ca. 1150–1216), compiled a *Historia* (or *Gesta*) *Danica*, "Stories/Deeds of the Danes." Saxo wrote in Latin; he may have been working from assorted sources also in Latin, though we do not know. Now we are given a prince, Amletha, whose father, the king of Denmark, was murdered by his brother, Fengo. Fengo then married his brother's widow, Gerutha. Fengo plainly meant to finish his capture of the throne by murdering Amletha, but the prince pretended insanity (one did not, could not, kill the mad) and produced a veritable storm of crazed acts to verify his invented but protective madness. He would throw himself into muck and rub filth all over his face and clothes. Taken to a forest by his uncle's men, to test his sanity more closely, Amletha was careful to mount his horse backwards, setting the reins on the

horse's tail. Confronted by an apparently amorous young woman, set in his way at his uncle's command, Amletha avoids this trap, too, eventually making the hard-pressed young woman (the germ of the character we know as Ophelia) his comrade, though not his lover.

There is the germ of the character we know as Polonius, too. A friend of Fengo's more subtly tempts Amletha, using the young man's mother as bait. The friend is hidden in the mother's chambers, lying under a pile of straw. Amletha acts out his "madness" by leaping and jumping and thrashing, and—the moment he "accidentally" discovers a "lump" in the straw—Amletha stabs the king's friend to death. Fengo questions Amletha and is told a fanciful (but essentially truthful) story of the friend falling into the castle's privy sewer. After having drowned in its filth and ordure, reports Amletha craftily, he was finally found and eaten by pigs. By this time exceedingly suspicious of his nephew, Fengo ships Amletha off to England, accompanied by two courtiers. The Danish king's message to the English king is direct and simple: kill Amletha. On the voyage, as in Shakespeare's play, Amletha steals the escorts' documents and substitutes his own, which now ask the English king to kill the escorts.

But neither Amletha nor his escorts are promptly killed. And here the story veers sharply from the tale we know. Amletha becomes a sort of prophet to the English king, then becomes the husband of the king's daughter, and, as a result, his escorts are indeed hanged. A year later, Amletha returns to Denmark and, after a renewed masquerade of madness, kills Fengo and assumes the throne himself.

Saxo's story is brutal and blunt. Many of its details, and a good deal of its narrative, are totally unlike Shakespeare's tale, and there

is little subtlety. Other writers subsequently mentioned and sometimes adapted Saxo; we need not examine them, since there is no evidence whatever that either Shakespeare or the writer of the next and final pre-Shakespearean link ever did.

This all-important link in the Hamlet story, alas, is lost, apparently beyond recall. It is an earlier Elizabethan play, approximately datable because it was sharply criticized in 1589 by Thomas Nash (1567–1601). The title of this play was *Hamlet*. We do not know how long it had at that point been on the Elizabethan stage; we do not know for certain who was its author, though circumstantial evidence favors the melodramatist, Thomas Kyd (1558–94), a friend to both Christopher Marlowe and the young Shakespeare. Most seriously of all, we do not have so much as a fragment of this play's text, nor do we know how it handled the old tale. Knowing what we do of Kyd's surviving work, and also from what we learn in the documentation on his arrest, in 1593, first on the grounds of public libel and, subsequently, on the added and much more serious charge of blasphemy (he was imprisoned, tortured, and finally cleared, though he died just a year and a half after his release), we can perhaps speculate, though only vaguely, about what his *Hamlet*—if it was indeed his—"must" have been like. But these seem to me fundamentally empty speculations: the "must-have-beens" of history, like the dews of morning, tend to evaporate under our breath, as we lean close and try to make ingenious use of them. In matters textual, literary, and above all verbal, ingenuity is no substitute for reality.

How much of the many "alterations" in Shakespeare's retelling of the old story come from the old play, or from his own fertile imagination, or from sources of which we have no knowledge, it is therefore quite impossible to say. And as if the picture was not

muddled enough, there is yet another stage to be accounted for, as best we can, in this pre-history of *Hamlet*. Once again, there is no exactitude in the dating, but at some point after 1598 Shakespeare appears to have been called upon, as he more than likely often was (being a “house” dramatist), to “update” the lost predecessor-*Hamlet*. That play had been very popular; Shakespeare’s company owned the “rights”; and so good a “property” fairly called for exploitation. We do not know how long thereafter Shakespeare decided, if he did decide, or was asked, to entirely re-do the old play (if—and we do not know for sure—that was what he did in the end do). In a remark more or less datable to the period 1599–1601, Gabriel Harvey (good friend of Edmund Spenser) noted the popularity of “Shakespeare’s . . . tragedie of Hamlet, Prince of Denmarke . . .” Was this a reference to a revision, or to a “new” version? Shakespeare’s own *Hamlet* seems to have been on the Elizabethan stage by 1602, when an apparent reference was made to it by George Chapman and, still more concretely, a prepublication notice was filed, describing it as having been “latelie Acted by the Chamberleyne his servantes,” this being a reference to Shakespeare’s company (transformed, somewhat later, into the “King’s company”).

An apparently pirated edition, now known as the First Quarto (a reference to page size and binding style), appeared in 1603. It is clearly what is called a “bad quarto,” though even a bad text can be made use of, in formulating editorial decisions. In 1604, fairly clearly in response to the distinctly mangled First Quarto, appeared the Second Quarto, almost twice the length and, it is agreed, a much fairer representation of the play. Reprintings of the latter occurred, until finally, in 1623, the Folio edition was printed, apparently from a manuscript source—though no one

knows whether this was Shakespeare's manuscript or (since he had died in 1616), more probably, one owned by his company. Again, there is no way of knowing. The Folio text is the longest of all; it is however not carefully, accurately printed. Textual editors are obliged, accordingly, to work back and forth between it and the Second Quarto, occasionally turning to the First Quarto, in order to arrive as closely as possible to Shakespeare's text. That process is still going on. How close any modern text actually is to what Shakespeare wrote, or to the final state of what he wrote, remains a matter of continued examination and dispute. There is no manuscript material, absolutely nothing in Shakespeare's own hand.

My procedure, since this an edition primarily intended for use in schools and colleges, and secondarily by those not attending school and desiring more textual help than anything but an annotated edition can supply, has been as follows: I have focused bilaterally, on one hand making use of the three seventeenth-century sources just described, and on the other consulting those modern editions most widely in use. My desire is to include in my finished text everything that, after consideration of the (forever inconclusive) evidence, is likely to have been written by Shakespeare. Fairly extensive passages have been drawn from the Second Quarto, because the probably more authoritative Folio omits them. Transcription and typesetting errors abound in all the play's sources, as they usually do in seventeenth-century printed books. To reach a conflated, consensus edition involves constant checking, back and forth, in order to produce a unified, historically sensible text. For the reader's enlightenment, I have footnoted my most severely difficult choices.

A "perfect text" remains an impossibility—not something

hard to attain, but something forever out of the question. Indeed, editors have sometimes assumed the existence of two quite distinct and somehow equally authoritative Shakespearian *Hamlets*, or even three, and united them in one volume, as individually distinct reading texts. This seems to me to destroy rather than enhance reading—much like laying out the basic linguistic and cultural elements of a work written in a language other than English and declaring, “Reader, I stop here. These are your essential materials, the stuff from which the literary work you propose to read was in fact constructed. Now that you have these materials, you are on your own. Proceed, therefore, to shape this disassembled book by Zola, or Tolstoy, or Homer, as you please.” E. Talbot Donaldson introduces his *prose* translation of the *Beowulf* poem in exactly these terms: “Rather than create a new and lesser poem for the reader, it seems better to offer him in prose the literal materials from which he can re-create the poem” (Norton Critical Edition, xvi).

But we are none of us Shakespeare any more than we are Emile Zola or Leo Tolstoy or the *Beowulf* poet. Breaking *Hamlet* into what we as editors think are its component parts, and then presenting each of those parts, can be useful to scholars, and to other editors. But it is the exact opposite of what I here try to offer—a cohesive, sensible and unitary text, about as close to what Shakespeare actually wrote as, alas, we are ever going to get. I see no point, from the perspective of the common reader, or the student, to deliberately de-composing Shakespeare’s play.

The Roles of Hamlet and Ophelia

One of the great theatrical directors of the twentieth century, Konstantin Stanislavsky, said in 1938 that being called upon to

play the lead role in *Hamlet* remained (he was addressing theater people) the “greatest stumbling block in our profession” (*Shakespeare in the Soviet Union*, 148). What other male lead role has been played, over the years, by so many world-famous actresses—among others, Sarah Siddons, in the eighteenth century; Sarah Bernhardt, in the nineteenth century; Judith Anderson and Eva Le Galliene, in the twentieth century? In addition to the characterological difficulties (and attractions) of the role, however, there are important structural aspects, as well.

The characters of *Hamlet* are deftly realized. We as audience (or readers: Charles Lamb famously declared that the play should *only* be read, for it was impossible ever to stage it) are always aware, precisely and clearly, of what we need to know in order to keep the dramatic action in motion. But the dimensions of the characters vary immensely, and only two—Hamlet and Ophelia—seem to me deeply three-dimensional. That is, Claudius, Polonius, Laertes, Horatio, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and the many lesser personages are solidly founded, consistent, totally functional. In theater terminology, they hold the stage, they *work*. (The latter must also be said of Gertrude, though in my judgment her portrayal is less convincing as a whole.) There needs to be no particular mystery attached to these characters, nor is there. The greater mystery is of course Hamlet; the lesser and rather neglected (or misperceived) mystery is Ophelia. And the actors portraying these latter two roles are inevitably put in the position of having to deal with, to represent, to make dramatically functional, what is in the end not quite representable.

My 1996 essay, “Hamlet and the Tradition of the Novel,” deals with this from a literary rather than from a dramatic perspective. Let me initially approach the problem, here, from a heavily actor-

oriented viewpoint. Although Hamlet makes a lessened appearance on stage, in the fourth of the play's five acts, he is nevertheless by a rough count on stage (usually but not always with other characters) during 66 percent of a performance of the full text. No other character in the play comes close to this large a stage presence. His solo appearances, of course, in his justly famous monologues, are both a special dramatic challenge and a magnificent dramatic opportunity. Ophelia, indeed, appears only 17 percent of the time, and never alone. Hamlet's is a strikingly large on-stage presence, especially juxtaposed against similarly derived estimates for some of the others among Shakespeare's more famous plays. In *King Lear*, Lear himself is on stage roughly 48 percent of the time, and never alone. Othello is on stage 59 percent of the time (and never alone)—but he is not, at least in these terms, the major figure in his play, for Iago is on stage roughly 64 percent of the time. And the play's famous monologues belong exclusively to Iago. Macbeth appears almost exactly as often as does Othello, but he, too, with characters having on-stage presences very nearly as powerful, namely Lady Macbeth and Macduff, who appear, respectively, roughly 30 percent and 25 percent of the time. Not only do all three have solo moments on-stage, but so, too, do two other characters, Banquo and, at the play's close, Malcolm. Even soaringly preeminent Prospero, in *The Tempest*, appears roughly 52 percent of the time, and once again shares the stage with Ariel, at 31 percent, Miranda, at 27 percent, and Caliban, at 25 percent. Prospero, like Hamlet, has solo appearances, but so, too, does Caliban. (Note, too, that while *The Tempest* is a fairly short play, *Hamlet* is Shakespeare's longest.) Finally, in a late problem play of more or less the same date as *Hamlet* (1604), *Measure for Measure*, we find a distinctly even-handed sharing of

on-stage time: Isabella and the Duke both are to be seen roughly 44 percent of the time, and Angelo 30 percent. All of these figures are no more than approximations, but they are similarly derived and at least comparable, each to the other. And they emphatically support and emphasize Hamlet's massive performance visibility.

We do not know, once again, why Hamlet hesitates as he does. If we speculate that he is neurotically unable to act, what do we do with his instantaneous dispatching of Polonius or his brilliantly and promptly executed counterplot, in defeating the King's plan to have his patently dangerous nephew executed immediately upon his landing in England? If we speculate that Hamlet is in love with Ophelia, because he at some points says he is (and what's more was so all along), how do we deal with his express disclaimers and his clear indication, after the fact, that his graveside declamation of eternal love for her was provoked by Laertes' ridiculously overblown rhetoric, just before? If Hamlet is the tool, for better or worse, of the Ghost, and spurred by his burning desire to revenge the father-figure that the Ghost says he is, how can it be that, in the final scene, Hamlet does not attack the King, even after his mother's death, until after he learns that he himself, like Laertes (who informs him of the plot), has been fatally poisoned? As he rushes at the King, he *still* advances no explanation for so doing other than his own poisoning. Only when the King, seriously wounded, appeals for help, claiming not to be mortally hurt, does the by-now thoroughly aroused Hamlet declare that Claudius is "incestuous [and] murd'rous," adding, in his fury, that Claudius is also "damnèd," hardly in truth a revenge issue. Hamlet is a marvelously witty man: even in his most "maddened" moments, he sparks off puns and bright words like the word-loving human volcano he is. What is it he has visibly lost, in

his so-called madness—which he himself tells us, as he tells Horatio, is faked—other than his garters, his hairbrush, and whatever concern he has previously displayed for others, notably Ophelia and his mother, the Queen?

The questions, the puzzles, can be further prolonged. But the actor representing Hamlet must persuade us at every point that his character's actions are authentic—not so much “realistic,” for the Elizabethan stage is not that of George Bernard Shaw, but *true*. And true, that is, in terms of the conventions and dramatic realities of Shakespeare's stage, not ours. I do not find it possible to doubt Shakespeare, who is at his superb best in this play. Nor is it simply his utterly magnificent ability to deploy the English language that so completely persuades me, as it has been persuading people for the four centuries of the play's glowing, brilliant existence. “The play's the thing,” says Hamlet, and indeed it is. The play is totally convincing—but of what? “Ay, there's the rub,” as Hamlet also says.

Ophelia has been misperceived, I think, but not from authorial prejudice against women (which in my judgment is not to be found in Shakespeare). Rather, Ophelia has been misperceived because insufficient attention has been paid to her character according to the standards of *her* time, rather than ours. She is as I have said on stage less than 20 percent of the time; it is thus neither difficult nor wearying to trace the complete outline of her characterization, appearance by appearance.

We first meet Ophelia in act 1, scene 3, when Laertes, about to take sail for France, says farewell to her. She is young, female, formally restricted in many ways by custom and habit to a more or less semi-subservient role—but her very first words to her brother tell us that here is a humble maiden with a difference. “Let

me hear from you," says her brother. Does Ophelia tamely, servilely agree? Not a bit of it. "Do you doubt that?" she throws back at him. He tells her at great length, and in conventionally masculine language, to be wary of Hamlet, ending, "No more." Does she accept his distinctly condescending words? "No more but so?" she challenges. He then launches into almost thirty-five lines of "more," to which she responds with seven terse, forthright lines well worth quoting in full: "I shall the effect of this good lesson [mere politeness? Laertes is not very bright and does not ever say much worth remembering] keep / As watchman to my heart. But, good my brother, / Do not, as some ungracious pastors do, / Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven, / Whiles, like a puffed and reckless libertine, / Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads, / And recks not his own rede." For a supposedly timid, obsequious female, this is remarkably blunt—and would, I have little doubt, have been so perceived by contemporary audiences. For Ophelia and Laertes represent, as so often in Shakespeare, a pointed pair in carefully set contrast, he the bold-talking male, she the obviously brainier, necessarily restrained but at the same time distinctly unimpressed female.

Ophelia is necessarily much less free of her speech, in the following exchanges with her father. According to the conventions of Shakespeare's time, a brother does not exercise the same dispositive power over a younger, female sibling that a father wields (though once a father dies, the brother, absent a husband, assumes a paternalistic role). "I do not know, my lord," Ophelia quite properly tells her father, "what I should think." Polonius is brusque and lordly with her. She does not, however, simply crumple, nor does she fawn. "My lord," she tells him, "he hath importuned me with love / In honorable fashion." Her father is scorn-

ful. “And [he has] given countenance to his speech, my lord,” she presses on, “With almost all the holy vows of heaven.” Her father harangues her at length and she bows, as in the end she and the audience know she must, with a simple “I shall obey, my lord.”

In act 2, scene 1, she rushes to her father, frightened and understandably dismayed by Hamlet’s wild behavior and appearance. “O my lord, my lord, I have been so affrighted.” She proceeds to tell all: Hamlet has appeared before her, looking “as if he had been loosed out of hell / To speak of horrors.” “Did you cause this, he demands? “No, my good lord,” she says. “But as you did command, / I did repel his letters and denied / His access to me.” She is at no point obsequious, but she is, nevertheless, a sequestered, inexperienced girl. There are serious questions, as I have said, about Hamlet’s love for her. There do not seem to be any such questions about her love for him—and his sudden wild appearance *ought* under all the circumstances to be frightening.

We do not next see Ophelia until act 3, scene 1, in which after a polite pair of brief speeches by her and a pair of abrupt, unpleasant ones from Hamlet—the second one denying ever making presents to her—she confronts him, quietly but firmly: “My honored lord, you know right well you did, / And with them words of so sweet breath composed / As made the things more rich. Their perfume lost, / Take these again, for to the noble mind / Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind. / There, my lord.” And she hands him back his presents, obliging him thereby to grudgingly accept them. This is clearly forceful in both language and action. Hamlet continues his rude, abrupt speech, but Ophelia still meets him ably, matching him on his own high standard of eloquent argument. (He has been trained in a university; she of course has not.) “Could beauty, my lord, have better com-

merce than with honesty?" Hamlet admits, "I did love you once." Her response, once again, is direct and stalwart: "Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so." He reprimands her for having believed him. She is sadly but bravely up to this retort, too: "I was the more deceived." As Hamlet works himself into an apparent (?) fit, she grows desperate—for it is as I have noted plain that she has loved him all along. "O, help him, you sweet heavens!" she cries, and then, "O heavenly powers, restore him!" These, too, are not the speeches of a feeble-willed woman; their agitation is easy both to understand and to appreciate. And when at last Hamlet storms out, she speaks twelve nobly mournful lines, ending: "O, woe is me, / T'have seen what I have seen, see what I see!" Where is the weakness in any of this?

Later in scene 2 of the same act, Hamlet sprawls next to her, as they watch the play within a play. She meets his overexcited repartee with dignified, courteous cordiality. When he asks if she thinks he is talking "dirty" to her, she replies only, "I think nothing, my lord." He wisecracks on; "you are merry, my lord," she observes. When he (deliberately?) mistakes how long ago his father died, she quietly corrects him. When the play within a play begins, he comments liberally, and very freely; she patiently disavows his remarks: "You are naught [wicked, naughty], you are naught. I'll mark [pay attention to] the play." Later, she remarks, as he chatters on, "You are as good as a chorus, my lord," she tells him. "You are keen, my lord, you are keen." As he waxes both witty and bawdy, and becomes explicitly licentious (in speech, at least), she turns it and him away with "Still better, and worse." Hers is, in short, a sturdy, sane, courageous stand under very heavy male fire.

Hamlet kills her father; Ophelia, deeply shaken, unravels. Act 4, scene 5, her mad scene, does not show us the same young

woman earlier and consistently encountered. Is this anything but a sadly appropriate response from a young woman of Shakespeare's time, not of ours, deprived, first, of the man she loves and then of her father? (For whatever use he might be in these circumstances, her brother is abroad.) Ophelia's world has been shaken, and then it has been cracked. There is, for her and for other Elizabethan women in similar circumstances, no pathway out of despair and hopelessness. As Horatio says of Hamlet, immediately after his death, "Now cracks a noble heart." In Shakespeare's time, as in ours and all other times, the paths of men and women do not often run in exactly the same directions, except to the common graves that hold us all.

This Text

As I have said, I present, here, a conservative and consensual text of the play. I have not followed any single seventeenth-century or any modern text, but in a sense I have followed all of them. That is, there is no radical departure, in this edition, from what seem to me the agreed-upon editorial standards of this time, most especially in the United States. Choices, of course, have had to be made, and I have made them, using the textual resources cited in "Further Reading," at the end of this book. I have carefully consulted those resources. I have however not noted each and every such choice, but only those that seem, for one reason or another, particularly worth attention in an edition meant primarily for nonscholar readers.

I have been free only with what might be called the lesser and more mechanical aspects of the play. As in virtually all modern editions, I have modernized spelling, except where that might in-

terfere with Shakespeare's prosody. Final *-ed* is given an accent—è—when, and *only* when, *-ed* is syllabified. Absence of that accent mark indicates nonsyllabification. There are in a few cases accent marks on other words, once again for prosodic reasons.

I have repunctuated wherever I thought it necessary, and sometimes reparagraphed. I have added occasional minor stage directions, mostly indications for the general reader as to just who is speaking to whom. There is no firm Elizabethan standard in any of these matters, though I have tried to be as respectful as possible of what is to be found in the early-seventeenth-century texts of *Hamlet*. Elizabethan printers cannot be equated with modern ones. Neither can the standards of modern authorship be retroactively applied to writers who did not, in the modern sense of the word, consider themselves to be "authors."

Having many times taught this play, and many others by Shakespeare, my single goal has been to make an edition that readers and, in particular, students (and students at all levels) will find as fully accessible as this somewhat disordered early-seventeenth-century text can be faithfully made.

The Tragedy of

Hamlet

THE PRINCE OF DENMARK

CHARACTERS (DRAMATIS PERSONAE)

Hamlet (Prince of Denmark)

Claudius (King of Denmark, Hamlet's uncle, brother of the recently dead King)

Ghost (Hamlet's father, the former King)

Gertrude (Hamlet's mother, now married to Claudius)

Polonius (councillor / adviser to the King)

Laertes (Polonius's son)

Ophelia (Polonius's daughter)

Horatio (friend, companion, and fellow-student of Hamlet)

Rosencrantz and *Guildestern* (fellow-students and former friends of Hamlet)

Fortinbras (Prince of Norway. N.B.: just as Hamlet's father is also named Hamlet, so Fortinbras's father, too, is named Fortinbras)

Voltemand and *Cornelius* (Danish councillors, ambassadors to Norway)

Marcellus, *Barnardo*, *Francisco* (members of the King's guard)

Osric (a singularly foppish courtier)

Reynaldo (Polonius's servant)

Players (actors)

Gentlemen (courtiers)

Priest

Clown 1 and *Clown 2* (gravediggers)

Captain (in the army led by Fortinbras)

English ambassadors (to Denmark)

Others

Act I



SCENE I

The castle, in Elsinore: a guard platform—that is, a raised surface

ENTER (AT OPPOSITE ENDS OF THE STAGE) BARNARDO
AND FRANCISCO, TWO SENTINELS

Barnardo Who's there?

Francisco Nay, answer me. Stand and unfold¹ yourself.

Barnardo Long live the king!²

Francisco Barnardo?

Barnardo He. 5

Francisco You come most carefully³ upon your hour.⁴

Barnardo 'Tis now struck twelve. Get thee to bed, Francisco.

Francisco For this relief much thanks: 'tis bitter cold,
And I am sick at heart.⁵

Barnardo Have you had quiet guard?

Francisco Not a mouse stirring. 10

1 halt and reveal/disclose/identify*

2 a password? a declaration of loyalty? More likely the latter.

3 attentively, dutifully

4 on time

5 inwardly weary

Barnardo Well, good night.

If you do meet Horatio and Marcellus,
The rivals⁶ of my watch, bid them make haste.

ENTER HORATIO AND MARCELLUS

Francisco I think I hear them. Stand, ho!⁷ Who's there?

Horatio Friends to this ground.⁸

15 *Marcellus* And liegemen⁹ to the Dane.¹⁰

Francisco Give you good night.¹¹

Marcellus O, farewell,¹² honest soldier:
Who hath relieved you?

Francisco Barnardo has my place.
Give you good night.

EXIT FRANCISCO

Marcellus Holla!¹³ Barnardo!

Barnardo Say,¹⁴
What, is Horatio there?

6 partners, colleagues

7 halt

8 land, region, country

9 faithful subjects/followers

10 kings were spoken of as identical with the countries/regions they ruled:
“Norway” = both the king and the country; “Denmark” or “the Dane” =
Denmark

11 may God give you a good night (farewell)

12 virtuous, honorable

13 not “hello,” but an exclamation of pleasure

14 “say” = the stress of the final iambic foot: GIVE you good NIGHT. /
HOLLA barNARdo. / SAY. What is *printed* as *three* lines is thus, metrically
(prosodically), only one iambic pentameter line. The lines are separated and
differently indented in order to indicate (1) the separate speakers and (2) the
prosody.

- Horatio* A piece of him.
- Barnardo* Welcome, Horatio. Welcome, good Marcellus. 20
- Marcellus* What, has this thing appeared again to-night?
- Barnardo* I have seen nothing.
- Marcellus* Horatio says 'tis but our fantasy,¹⁵
 And will not let belief take hold of him
 Touching¹⁶ this dreaded sight, twice seen of us; 25
 Therefore I have entreated him along
 With us, to watch the minutes¹⁷ of this night,
 That if again this apparition come,
 He may approve¹⁸ our eyes and speak to it.
- Horatio* Tush, tush, 'twill not appear.
- Barnardo* Sit down awhile; 30
 And let us once again assail¹⁹ your ears,
 That are so fortified against our story
 What we have two nights seen.
- Horatio* Well, sit we down,
 And let us hear Barnardo speak of this.
- Barnardo* Last night of all,²⁰ 35
 When yond same star that's westward from the pole²¹
 Had made his course t'illuminate²² that part of heaven
 Where now it burns, Marcellus and myself,

15 fancy, imagination*

16 concerning, about

17 probably not literally "minutes," but "moments, small stretches of time"

18 confirm, attest to with authority

19 address, attack

20 most of all

21 pole star

22 to light up (the apostrophe is here a metrical convention, indicating that the consonant which it follows is not to be scanned—that is, is not included in the metrical accounting)

The bell then beating one²³ –

ENTER GHOST

- 40 *Marcellus* Peace,²⁴ break thee off. Look where it²⁵ comes again!
Barnardo In the same figure like²⁶ like the king that's dead.
Marcellus Thou art a scholar;²⁷ speak to it, Horatio.
Barnardo Looks 'a²⁸ not like the king? Mark²⁹ it, Horatio.
Horatio Most like. It harrows³⁰ me with fear and wonder.
Barnardo It would³¹ be spoke to.
- 45 *Marcellus* Speak to³² it, Horatio.
Horatio What art thou that usurp'st this time of night,
 Together with that fair³³ and warlike form
 In which the majesty of buried Denmark³⁴
 Did sometimes march?³⁵ By³⁶ heaven I charge³⁷ thee, speak!
Marcellus It is offended.
- 50 *Barnardo* See, it stalks³⁸ away!
Horatio Stay!³⁹ speak, speak! I charge thee, speak!

23 public clocks were largely unknown; the hours were generally told
 ["toll'd"] by bells

24 hush, be silent

25 the use of "it" rather than "he" emphasizes the Ghost's non-humaness

26 shape/form

27 a university student, an educated person

28 he*

29 observe, notice*

30 pierces, cuts through (the harrow, set with iron teeth, is attached to a plow)

31 wants to

32 some texts have "question it"

33 pleasing*

34 again, the dead king of Denmark, Hamlet's father, also named Hamlet

35 march, walk

36 in the name of

37 command, exhort*

38 walks proudly

39 stop*

EXIT GHOST

'Tis gone, and will not⁴⁰ answer.

Barnardo How now,⁴¹ Horatio! You tremble and look pale.

Is not this something more than fantasy?

What think you on't?⁴²

55

Horatio Before my God, I might not this believe

Without the sensible and true avouch⁴³

Of mine own eyes.

Marcellus Is it not like the king?

Horatio As thou art to thyself.

Such was the very armor he had on

60

When he the ambitious Norway combated;⁴⁴

So frowned he once, when in an angry parle,⁴⁵

He smote the sledded Polacks⁴⁶ on the ice.

'Tis strange.

Marcellus Thus twice before, and jump at this dead⁴⁷ hour,

65

With martial stalk hath he gone by our watch.

Horatio In what particular⁴⁸ thought to work⁴⁹ I know not;

But in the gross and scope of my opinion,⁵⁰

This bodes some strange eruption to our state.⁵¹

40 does not wish to

41 ah-ha!

42 of it

43 perceptible and truthful confirmation

44 COMbaTED

45 conference with an enemy

46 Polish troops on sledges

47 exactly/precisely at this profoundly quiet, still

48 single/individual/private*

49 accomplish, carry out

50 so far as I am able to understand

51 this indicates/predicts some violent outbreak in our state

70 *Marcellus* Good now,⁵² sit down, and tell me, he that knows,⁵³
 Why this same strict and most observant watch⁵⁴
 So nightly toils the subject⁵⁵ of the land,
 And why such daily cast of brazen⁵⁶ cannon,
 And foreign mart⁵⁷ for implements of war,
 75 Why such impress⁵⁸ of shipwrights, whose sore⁵⁹ task
 Does not divide the Sunday from the week⁶⁰ –
 What might be toward⁶¹ that this sweaty⁶² haste
 Doth make the night joint-laborer⁶³ with the day?
 Who is't that can inform me?

Horatio That can I –

80 At least, the whisper⁶⁴ goes so. Our last king,
 Whose image even but now appeared to us,
 Was, as you know, by Fortinbras of Norway
 Pricked on by a most emulate⁶⁵ pride,
 Dared to the combat, in which our valiant Hamlet –
 85 For so this side of our known world esteemed⁶⁶ him –
 Did slay this Fortinbras, who, by a sealed compact,⁶⁷

52 good/honored sir, now

53 if you know

54 the same watch that he and his fellows keep every night is being enforced all over Denmark

55 encloses/entangles the subjects/inhabitants

56 casting (as in a foundry) of brass

57 trade

58 conscription, involuntary service

59 laborious, painful

60 Sunday, the traditional day of rest, is for them only another working day

61 coming, approaching, impending

62 laborious

63 co-worker

64 rumor

65 envious, covetous, imitative

66 considered, judged

67 an agreement/covenant/contract attested/certified by a formal wax seal

Well ratified by law and heraldry,⁶⁸
 Did forfeit with his life⁶⁹ all those his lands
 Which he stood seized of,⁷⁰ to the conqueror:
 Against the which, a moiety competent⁷¹ 90
 Was gagèd⁷² by our king, which had⁷³ returned
 To the inheritance of Fortinbras,
 Had he been vanquisher – as, by the same cov'nant⁷⁴
 And carriage of the article designed⁷⁵
 His fell to Hamlet. Now, sir, young Fortinbras, 95
 Of unimproved mettle⁷⁶ hot and full,
 Hath in the skirts⁷⁷ of Norway here and there
 Sharked up⁷⁸ a list of lawless resolute⁷⁹
 For food and diet⁸⁰ to some enterprise
 That hath a stomach in't;⁸¹ which is no other – 100
 As it doth well appear unto our state⁸² –
 But⁸³ to recover of us, by strong hand
 And terms compulsory, those foresaid lands
 So by his father lost. And this, I take it,

68 “heraldry” probably means, here, the traditional practices of knighthood

69 along with his life

70 possessed

71 an equal amount

72 wagered, risked, staked

73 would have

74 agreement, contract

75 and meaning of the intended/planned terms/conditions

76 untried/wild temperament/spirit

77 outskirts, borders

78 collected hastily/indiscriminately

79 a roster of men of determination/desperadoes

80 as the means to provide meat/substance for

81 relish, boldness, courage, bravery (“food and diet” are keyed to “stomach,” then regarded as the center of passion and emotion) in it

82 realm, country*

83 except

105 Is the main motive of our preparations,
 The source of this our watch and the chief head⁸⁴
 Of this post-haste and romage⁸⁵ in the land.

Barnardo I think it be no other but e'en⁸⁶ so:

Well may it sort⁸⁷ that this portentous⁸⁸ figure
 110 Comes armèd through our watch so like the king
 That was and is the question⁸⁹ of these wars.

Horatio A mote it is to trouble the mind's eye.⁹⁰

In the most high and palmy⁹¹ state of Rome,
 A little ere the mightiest Julius fell,
 115 The graves stood tenantless and the sheeted dead⁹²
 Did squeak and gibber⁹³ in the Roman streets,
 As⁹⁴ stars with trains of fire and dews of blood,
 Disasters⁹⁵ in the sun, and the moist star⁹⁶
 Upon whose influence⁹⁷ Neptune's empire⁹⁸ stands
 120 Was sick almost to doomsday with eclipse.⁹⁹

84 source, origin

85 hurry/speed and commotion/bustle

86 even

87 be appropriate

88 ominous, awesome

89 subject

90 Matthew 7.3: "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?"

91 triumphant, flourishing

92 winding sheets/shrouds were usually white

93 unintelligible/inarticulate speech

94 while

95 unfavorable astrological aspects/positions

96 the moon

97 ethereal fluids were thought to flow from astral bodies, influencing people, things, and events

98 the ocean

99 almost to darkness (Matthew 24.29: on Christ's return "shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light")

And even the like precursor¹⁰⁰ of fierce¹⁰¹ events,
 As harbingers preceding still¹⁰² the fates¹⁰³
 And prologue to the omen coming on,¹⁰⁴
 Have heaven and earth together demonstrated
 Unto our climatures¹⁰⁵ and countrymen. 125

ENTER GHOST

But soft, behold! Lo, where it comes again!
 I'll cross it,¹⁰⁶ though it blast¹⁰⁷ me. Stay, illusion!¹⁰⁸

GHOST SPREADS ITS ARMS

If thou hast any sound, or use of voice,
 Speak to me. 130
 If there be any good thing to be done,
 That may to thee do ease and grace to me,
 Speak to me.
 If thou art privy to thy country's fate,
 Which, happily, foreknowing may avoid,
 O, speak! 135
 Or if thou hast uphoarded in thy life
 Extorted¹⁰⁹ treasure in the womb of earth,
 For which, they say, you spirits oft walk in death,

100 presaging, foreshadowing

101 some texts have "feared"

102 always*

103 the three goddesses controlling human destiny

104 advancing

105 region, climate

106 intersect its path, confront it

107 blight, wither, curse

108 deception, delusion

109 acquired illicitly, by force

THE COCK CROWS

Speak of it. Stay, and speak! Stop it, Marcellus.

140 *Marcellus* Shall I strike at it with my partisan?¹¹⁰

Horatio Do, if it will not stand.

Barnardo 'Tis here!

Horatio 'Tis here!

EXIT GHOST

Marcellus 'Tis gone!

We do it wrong, being¹¹¹ so majestic,

To offer it the show of violence,¹¹²

145 For it is, as the air, invulnerable,

And our vain blows malicious mockery.

Barnardo It was about to speak, when the cock crew.

Horatio And then it started like a guilty thing

Upon¹¹³ a fearful summons. I have heard

150 The cock, that is the trumpet to the morn,

Doth with his lofty and shrill-sounding throat

Awake the god of day, and at his warning,

Whether in sea or fire, in earth or air,¹¹⁴

The extravagant and erring spirit¹¹⁵ hies

155 To his confine.¹¹⁶ And of the truth herein

This present object made probation.¹¹⁷

110 long-handled weapon with lateral blade(s)

111 it being

112 VIOLENCE

113 because of, after

114 fire, water, earth, air: then considered the four basic elements

115 straggling, fantastically absurd/excessive and wandering ghost

116 hurries to his place of confinement (usually the grave)

117 proof

- Marcellus* It faded on the crowing of the cock.
 Some say that ever 'gainst¹¹⁸ that season comes
 Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
 The bird of dawning singeth all night long, 160
 And then, they say, no spirit dares stir abroad,
 The nights are wholesome, then, no planets strike,¹¹⁹
 No fairy takes,¹²⁰ nor witch hath power to charm,¹²¹
 So hallowed and so gracious¹²² is the time.
- Horatio* So have I heard and do in part believe it. 165
 But, look, the morn, in russet¹²³ mantle clad,
 Walks o'er the dew of¹²⁴ yon high eastward hill.
 Break we our watch up;¹²⁵ and by my advice,
 Let us impart what we have seen to-night
 Unto young Hamlet; for, upon my life, 170
 This spirit, dumb to us, will speak to him.
 Do you consent we shall acquaint him with it,
 As needful in our loves, fitting our duty?
- Marcellus* Let's do't, I pray; and I this morning know
 Where we shall find him most convenient.¹²⁶ 175

EXEUNT

- 118 always near/in anticipation of
 119 smite (as with a weapon), afflict, attack, wound, kill
 120 bewitches
 121 enchant
 122 holy/sanctified and full of grace
 123 reddish/yellowish brown
 124 on (dew was thought to fall from the heavens)
 125 let us stop, interrupt our watch
 126 conveniently

SCENE 2

The castle

ENTER CLAUDIUS (KING OF DENMARK), GERTRUDE
(THE QUEEN), HAMLET (SON OF THE QUEEN AND THE
RECENTLY DECEASED KING, ALSO NAMED HAMLET),
POLONIUS (COUNCILLOR OF STATE), LAERTES
(POLONIUS'S SON), CORNELIUS AND VOLTEMAND
(AMBASSADORIAL MESSENGERS), AND OTHERS

Claudius Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death
The memory be green, and that it us befitted¹
To bear our hearts in grief and our whole kingdom
To be contracted² in one brow of woe,
5 Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature
That we with wisest sorrow think on him,
Together with remembrance of ourselves.
Therefore our sometime³ sister, now our queen,
The imperial jointress⁴ to this warlike state,
10 Have we, as 'twere with a defeated⁵ joy,
With an auspicious and a dropping⁶ eye,
With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,
In equal scale weighing delight and dole,⁷
Taken to wife. Nor have we herein barred

1 was proper/appropriate

2 narrowed, shrunken

3 previously, formerly

4 legal heir of property (not power) settled on her, upon her marriage to her late royal husband

5 spoiled, defaced, disfigured

6 a propitious/favored by fortune and a depressed/sunken

7 sorrow, grief, mourning

Your better wisdoms, which have freely gone 15
 With this affair along. For all, our thanks.
 Now follows that you know young Fortinbras,
 Holding a weak supposal of our worth,⁸
 Or thinking by our late dear brother's death
 Our state to be disjoint and out of frame,⁹ 20
 Collegued¹⁰ with this dream of his advantage,¹¹
 He hath not failed to pester us with message
 Importing¹² the surrender of those lands
 Lost by his father, with all bonds¹³ of law,
 To our most valiant brother. So much for him. 25
 Now for ourself and for this time of meeting.
 Thus much the business is: we have here writ
 To Norway, uncle of young Fortinbras, –
 Who, impotent¹⁴ and bed-rid, scarcely hears
 Of this his nephew's purpose, – to suppress 30
 His further gait¹⁵ herein, in that the levies,¹⁶
 The lists and full proportions,¹⁷ are all made
 Out of his subject:¹⁸ And we here dispatch
 You, good Cornelius, and you, Voltimand,
 For bearers of this greeting to old Norway; 35

8 a weak opinion of our (my) character/qualities

9 coming apart and out of order

10 joined (colLEAGUed)

11 superiority, superior position

12 with messages (*or* messengers/envoys) carrying/conveying

13 according to all agreements, covenants, contracts

14 decrepit, weak

15 Fortinbras's further movement

16 because the enlistments

17 the rolls and (their) abundant/copious size/numbers

18 Norway's subjects

Giving to you no further personal power
 To business with the king, more than the scope
 Of these delated articles¹⁹ allow.

Farewell, and let your haste commend your duty.

40 *Cornelius, Voltimand* In that and all things will we show our duty.

Claudius We doubt it nothing. Heartily farewell.

EXEUNT VOLTIMAND AND CORNELIUS

And now, Laertes, what's the news with you?

You told us of some suit.²⁰ What is't, Laertes?

You cannot speak of reason to the Dane²¹

45 And lose your voice.²² What wouldst thou beg, Laertes,

That shall not be my offer, not thy asking?²³

The head is not more native²⁴ to the heart,

The hand more instrumental²⁵ to the mouth,

Than is the throne of Denmark to thy father.

What wouldst thou have, Laertes?

50 *Laertes* My dread²⁶ lord,

Your leave and favor²⁷ to return to France,²⁸

From whence though willingly I came to Denmark

To show my duty in your coronation,

19 expanded/explanatory writings/documents

20 petition, request

21 Claudius himself

22 waste your breath

23 that would not be given to Laertes by the King, without Laertes having to ask

24 naturally connected, closely related

25 useful, of service

26 revered*

27 permission and indulgence

28 guests customarily required an aristocratic host's permission to leave

- Yet now, I must confess, that duty done,
 My thoughts and wishes bend again toward France 55
 And bow them to your gracious leave and pardon.²⁹
- Claudius* Have you your father's leave? What says Polonius?
- Polonius* He hath, my lord, wrung from me my slow³⁰ leave
 By laborsome petition,³¹ and at last
 Upon his will I sealed my hard³² consent. 60
 I do beseech you, give him leave to go.
- Claudius* Take thy fair³³ hour, Laertes. Time be thine,
 And thy best graces³⁴ spend it at thy will!
 But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son – ³⁵
- Hamlet* (*aside*) A little more than kin, and less than kind.³⁶ 65
- Claudius* How is it that the clouds³⁷ still hang on you?
- Hamlet* Not so, my lord. I am too much i' the sun.³⁸
- Gertrude* Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted color³⁹ off,
 And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.
 Do not for ever with thy vailèd⁴⁰ lids 70
 Seek for thy noble father in the dust.

29 permission, indulgence

30 reluctant

31 entreaty, supplication

32 upon his desire I granted (figuratively, "set my seal upon") my difficult-to-give

33 advantageous, favorable

34 luck

35 cousin: used freely for relatives less close than a brother or sister; son: a son by marriage was termed a son, just as a daughter by marriage was termed a daughter*

36 kin: relative; kind: kindly, showing goodwill (*and* having the same nature)

37 darkness, gloom

38 the light of royal attention (*and* in the position of "son")

39 dark appearance

40 lowered, cast down

Thou know'st 'tis common; all that lives must die,
 Passing through nature to eternity.⁴¹

Hamlet Ay, madam, it is common.⁴²

Gertrude If it be,

75 Why seems it so particular with⁴³ thee?

Hamlet Seems, madam! nay it is; I know not "seems."

'Tis not alone my inky⁴⁴ cloak, good mother,

Nor customary suits⁴⁵ of solemn black,

Nor windy suspiration of forced⁴⁶ breath,

80 No, nor the fruitful⁴⁷ river in the eye,

Nor the dejected havior⁴⁸ of the visage,

Together with all forms, moods, shapes of grief,

That can denote⁴⁹ me truly. These indeed seem,

For they are actions that a man might play,⁵⁰

85 But I have that within which passeth⁵¹ show;

These but the trappings and the suits of woe.

Claudius 'Tis sweet and commendable in your nature, Hamlet,

To give these mourning duties to your father,

But you must know your father lost a father,

90 That father lost, lost his, and the survivor bound

In filial obligation for some term

41 iyTERniTIE/

42 universal (*and* vulgar)

43 personal/peculiar to

44 black (the color of mourning)

45 clothing

46 sighing of artificial/laborious/constrained

47 copious, abundant

48 bearing, deportment

49 describe, distinguish

50 act the part of, trifle/sport with

51 exceeds, surpasses*

To do obsequious⁵² sorrow: But to persever
 In obstinate condolment is a course⁵³
 Of ímpious stubbornness. 'Tis unmanly grief,
 It shows a will most incorrect⁵⁴ to heaven, 95
 A heart unfortified, a mind impatient,
 An understanding simple and unschooled.⁵⁵
 For what we know must be, and is, as common
 As any the most vulgar thing to sense,⁵⁶
 Why should we in our peevish opposition 100
 Take it to heart? Fie, 'tis a fault to heaven,
 A fault against the dead, a fault to nature,
 To reason most absurd, whose common theme
 Is death of fathers, and who still hath cried,
 From the first corse⁵⁷ till he that died to-day, 105
 "This must be so." We pray you, throw to earth
 This unprevailing⁵⁸ woe, and think of us
 As of a father, for let the world take note
 You are the most immediate⁵⁹ to our throne,
 And with no less nobility of love 110
 Than that which dearest father bears his son
 Do I impart⁶⁰ toward you. For your intent
 In going back to school in Wittenberg,

52 obsequious: that which is appropriate for funerals (obsequy: funeral rites)

53 lamentation/grieving is a way of acting

54 uncorrected, unchastened

55 feeble/weak and undisciplined

56 common/ordinary to the senses

57 corpse*

58 ineffectual, useless

59 direct successor

60 make this known, relate, tell

- It is most retrograde⁶¹ to our desire,
 115 And we beseech you: bend you⁶² to remain
 Here, in the cheer and comfort of our eye,
 Our chiefest courtier, cousin, and our son.
Gertrude Let not thy mother lose⁶³ her prayers, Hamlet.
 I pray thee, stay with us, go not to Wittenberg.
 120 *Hamlet* I shall in all my best⁶⁴ obey you, madam.
Claudius Why, 'tis a loving and a fair reply:
 Be as ourself in Denmark. Madam, come.
 This gentle⁶⁵ and unforced accord of Hamlet
 Sits smiling to my heart, in grace⁶⁶ whereof
 125 No jocund health⁶⁷ that Denmark drinks to-day,
 But the great cannon to the clouds shall tell,
 And the king's rouse⁶⁸ the heavens shall bruit⁶⁹ again,
 Re-speaking earthly thunder. Come away.

TRUMPETS. EXEUNT ALL BUT HAMLET

- Hamlet* O, that this too too solid⁷⁰ flesh would melt,
 130 Thaw and resolve⁷¹ itself into a dew!
 Or that the Everlasting had not fixed
 His canon⁷² 'gainst self-slaughter! O God, God,

61 contrary, repugnant, opposed

62 turn your mind

63 waste, forfeit

64 as best I can

65 gentlemanly, well-bred*

66 thanks, thanksgiving

67 cheerful toast

68 full draught/bumper of liquor

69 clamor, create a din, make a great noise

70 some texts have "sullied"

71 dissolve

72 rule, law

How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable
 Seem to me all the uses⁷³ of this world!
 Fie on't, ah fie, 'tis an unweeded garden 135
 That grows to seed: things rank and gross in nature⁷⁴
 Possess it merely.⁷⁵ That it should come to this –
 But two months dead – nay, not so much, not two –
 So excellent a king,⁷⁶ that was to this⁷⁷
 Hyperion to a satyr,⁷⁸ so loving to my mother 140
 That he might not betwixt⁷⁹ the winds of heaven
 Visit⁸⁰ her face too roughly. Heaven and earth!
 Must I remember? Why, she would hang on him
 As if increase of appetite⁸¹ had grown
 By what it fed on – and yet, within a month – 145
 Let me not think on't: frailty, thy name is woman!
 A little month, or ere⁸² those shoes were old
 With which she followed my poor father's body
 Like Niobe,⁸³ all tears – why she, even she –
 O God, a beast that wants discourse⁸⁴ of reason 150
 Would have mourned longer – married with my uncle,

73 habits, practices, customs

74 of nature / character

75 absolutely, altogether, unconditionally

76 Hamlet's father

77 Hamlet's uncle

78 the Sun God compared to a wood demon (half beast, half human)

79 allow, think fit / proper

80 come to, afflict

81 desire, craving

82 before*

83 mother of six sons and six daughters, who taunted the gods because of her fertility; they responded by killing all her children; Niobe was turned to stone but went on weeping

84 lacks the faculty / power

My father's brother, but no more like my father
 Than I to Hercules. Within a month,
 Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous⁸⁵ tears
 155 Had left the flushing in her gallèd eyes,⁸⁶
 She married. O, most wicked speed, to post
 With such dexterity⁸⁷ to incestuous⁸⁸ sheets!
 It is not nor it cannot come to good.
 But break, my heart; for I must hold my tongue.

ENTER HORATIO, MARCELLUS, AND BARNARDO

Horatio Hail to your lordship!

160 *Hamlet* I am glad to see you well.

Horatio! Or I do forget myself.⁸⁹

Horatio The same, my lord, and your poor servant ever.

Hamlet Sir, my good friend; I'll change that name⁹⁰ with you:

And what make you from Wittenberg,⁹¹ Horatio? (*turning*)

165 *Marcellus*.⁹²

Marcellus My good lord.

Hamlet I am very glad to see you.⁹³ Good even, sir.⁹⁴

But what, in faith, make you from Wittenberg?

85 wicked

86 stopped creating the rushing of blood to her sore/irriated eyes

87 to hurry with such facility

88 Leviticus 20.21: "And if a man shall take his brother's wife, it is an unclean thing"

89 unless I have forgotten myself/who I am

90 exchange the name of "servant" with you: to put oneself in the role of a "servant" was an expression of good manners, a form of greeting or leave-taking

91 what are you doing away from Wittenberg?

92 an acknowledgment of recognition and a greeting

93 spoken to Marcellus

94 spoken to Barnardo? or to Marcellus? or both?

- Horatio* A truant disposition,⁹⁵ good my lord.
- Hamlet* I would not hear⁹⁶ your enemy say so, 170
 Nor shall you do mine ear that violence,
 To make it truster⁹⁷ of your own report
 Against yourself. I know you are no truant.
 But what is your affair⁹⁸ in Elsinore?
 We'll teach you to drink deep ere you depart.⁹⁹ 175
- Horatio* My lord, I came to see your father's funeral.
- Hamlet* I pray thee, do not mock me, fellow-student.
 I think it was to see my mother's wedding.
- Horatio* Indeed, my lord, it followed hard upon.
- Hamlet* Thrift, thrift, Horatio! The funeral baked meats¹⁰⁰ 180
 Did coldly furnish forth¹⁰¹ the marriage tables.
 Would I had met my dearest foe in heaven¹⁰²
 Or¹⁰³ ever I had seen that day, Horatio!
 My father! Methinks¹⁰⁴ I see my father.
- Horatio* Where, my lord?
- Hamlet* In my mind's eye, Horatio. 185
- Horatio* I saw him once. 'A was a goodly¹⁰⁵ king.
- Hamlet* 'A was a man, take him for all in all,

95 a lazy/loitering nature/mood

96 listen to

97 believer, reliant on

98 business*

99 a negative comment on the King's "deep drinking"

100 meat pies

101 with cold feeling/cold temperatures supply/provide for

102 meeting a "dearest foe" in heaven would mean he is not in hell, where one wishes him to be

103 "or," here = "ere," before

104 I think, it seems to me*

105 gracious, courteous, kindly

I shall not look upon his like again.

Horatio My lord, I think I saw him yesternight.

190 *Hamlet* Saw? Who?

Horatio My lord, the King your father.

Hamlet The King my father!

Horatio Season your admiration¹⁰⁶ for awhile

With an attent¹⁰⁷ ear, till I may deliver,¹⁰⁸

Upon the witness of these gentlemen,

This marvel to you.

195 *Hamlet* For God's love, let me hear.

Horatio Two nights together¹⁰⁹ had these gentlemen,

Marcellus and Barnardo, on their watch

In the dead vast and middle of the night,

Been thus encountered. A figure like your father,

200 Armèd at point¹¹⁰ exactly, cap-a-pe,¹¹¹

Appears before them, and with solemn march¹¹²

Goes slow and stately by them. Thrice he walked

By their oppressed¹¹³ and fear-surprisèd eyes,

Within his truncheon's length,¹¹⁴ whilst they, distilled

205 Almost to jelly with the act¹¹⁵ of fear,

Stand dumb and speak not to him. This to me

In dreadful¹¹⁶ secrecy impart they did,

106 moderate your wonder

107 attentive

108 set forth, describe

109 consecutively

110 at the ready

111 head to toe

112 step, movement

113 startled, overwhelmed

114 in the space of a spear-shaft

115 melted/dissolved by the operation

116 fearful, reverential

And I with them the third night kept the watch,
 Where, as they had delivered – both in time,
 Form of the thing, each word made true and good – 210
 The apparition comes. I knew¹¹⁷ your father:
 These hands¹¹⁸ are not more like.

Hamlet But where was this?

Marcellus My lord, upon the platform where we watched.

Hamlet Did you not speak to it?

Horatio My lord, I did,
 But answer made it none. Yet once methought 215
 It lifted up its head and did address¹¹⁹
 Itself to motion, like as it would speak,
 But even¹²⁰ then the morning cock crew loud,
 And at the sound it shrunk in haste away,
 And vanished from our sight.

Hamlet 'Tis very strange. 220

Horatio As I do live, my honored lord, 'tis true,
 And we did think it writ down in our duty¹²¹
 To let you know of it.

Hamlet Indeed, indeed, sirs. But this troubles me.
 Hold¹²² you the watch to-night?

All We do, my lord. 225

Hamlet Armed, say you?

All Armed, my lord.

Hamlet From top to toe?

117 recognized

118 his own, held out in front of him

119 commit, turn

120 just

121 part of our office/responsibility

122 keep

All My lord, from head to foot.

Hamlet Then saw you not his face?

230 *Horatio* O, yes, my lord. He wore his beaver¹²³ up.

Hamlet What, looked he frowningly?

Horatio A countenance more in sorrow than in anger.

Hamlet Pale or red?

Horatio Nay, very pale.

Hamlet And fixed his eyes upon you?

Horatio Most constantly.

235 *Hamlet* I would I had been there.

Horatio It would have much amazed you.

Hamlet Very like, very like. Stayed it long?

Horatio While one with moderate haste might tell¹²⁴ a hundred.

Marcellus, Barnardo Longer, longer.

Horatio Not when I saw't.

240 *Hamlet* His beard was grizzled, no?

Horatio It was, as I have seen it in his life,

A sable silvered.¹²⁵

Hamlet I will watch to-night;

Perchance 'twill walk again.

Horatio I warrant¹²⁶ it will.

245 *Hamlet* If it assume my noble father's person,
I'll speak to it, though hell itself should gape
And bid me hold my peace. I pray you all,
If you have hitherto concealed this sight,
Let it be tenable¹²⁷ in your silence still,

123 bottom of a helmet's face-guard

124 count

125 a silvered sable

126 guarantee, promise

127 kept, held

And whatsoever else shall hap¹²⁸ to-night,
 Give it an understanding, but no tongue: 250
 I will requite your loves. So, fare you well.
 Upon the platform, 'twixt eleven and twelve,
 I'll visit you.

All Our duty¹²⁹ to your honour.

Hamlet Your loves,¹³⁰ as mine to you. Farewell.

EXEUNT ALL BUT HAMLET

My father's spirit – in arms! All is not well. 255
 I doubt¹³¹ some foul play. Would the night were come!
 Till then sit still, my soul. Foul deeds will rise,
 Though all the earth o'erwhelm¹³² them, to men's eyes.

EXIT

128 chance to happen

129 respect (a formulaic greeting or farewell)

130 Hamlet rejects the formula. He wishes more than "duty": as he has already said, he wants to have their "love," meaning affectionate rather than obligatory loyalty

131 fear, suspect*

132 cover, bury

SCENE 3

A room

ENTER LAERTES AND OPHELIA

Laertes My necessaries are embarked. Farewell.

And, sister, as the winds give benefit¹

And convoy is assistant,² do not sleep,

But let me hear from you.

Ophelia Do you doubt that?

5 *Laertes* For³ Hamlet and the trifling of his favor,⁴

Hold it a fashion and a toy in blood,⁵

A violet in the youth of primy nature,⁶

Forward,⁷ not permanent, sweet, not lasting,

The perfume and suppliance⁸ of a minute.

No more.

Ophelia No more but so?

10 *Laertes* Think it no more.

For nature crescent does not grow alone⁹

In thews and bulk,¹⁰ but, as this temple waxes,¹¹

The inward service¹² of the mind and soul

1 when the winds are favorable

2 means of transportation are available

3 as for

4 dallying of his attention

5 a pretense and fooling about of disposition/mood (modern usage: "of young hormones")

6 a flowering of a young man in his prime

7 precocious, ahead of its time

8 diversion, pastime

9 for growing nature does not grow only

10 bodily strength/muscles and size

11 this body grows*

12 performance, duties

Grows wide withal.¹³ Perhaps he loves you now,
 And now no soil nor cautel¹⁴ doth besmirch¹⁵ 15
 The virtue of his will.¹⁶ But you must fear:
 His greatness weighed,¹⁷ his will is not his own,
 For he himself is subject to his birth.
 He may not, as unvalued persons¹⁸ do,
 Carve¹⁹ for himself, for on his choice depends 20
 The safety and health of this whole state,
 And therefore must his choice be circumscribed
 Unto the voice and yielding of that body²⁰
 Whereof he is the head. Then if he says he loves you,
 It fits your wisdom so far to believe it 25
 As he in his particular act and place
 May give his saying deed,²¹ which is no further
 Than the main voice²² of Denmark goes withal.²³
 Then weigh what loss your honor may sustain,
 If with too credent ear you list²⁴ his songs, 30
 Or lose your heart, or your chaste treasure open
 To his unmastered importunity.²⁵
 Fear it, Ophelia, fear it, my dear sister,

13 increased in range/extent along with the rest

14 moral stain/tarnish nor trickery/craftiness

15 discolor, dim the luster of

16 desire

17 his high rank considered

18 people not of high rank

19 take his pleasure

20 consent of that body (the state)

21 may transform his words into actions

22 principal voice (the King)

23 goes along with

24 trusting ear you listen to

25 untamed relentless urging

And keep you in the rear of²⁶ your affection,
 35 Out of the shot²⁷ and danger of desire.
 The chariest²⁸ maid is prodigal enough,
 If she unmask²⁹ her beauty to the moon.
 Virtue itself 'scapes not calumnious strokes.³⁰
 The canker galls³¹ the infants of the spring
 40 Too oft before their buttons be disclosed,³²
 And in the morn and liquid dew of youth
 Contagious blastments are most imminent.³³
 Be wary, then; best safety lies in fear.
 Youth to itself rebels, though none else near.
 45 *Ophelia* I shall the effect³⁴ of this good lesson keep,
 As watchman to my heart. But, good my brother,
 Do not, as some ungracious³⁵ pastors do,
 Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven,
 Whiles, like a puffed³⁶ and reckless libertine,
 50 Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads,
 And recks not his own rede.³⁷

ENTER POLONIUS

Laertes

O, fear me not.

26 in the back ranks (a military reference continued in the next line)

27 shooting

28 most cautious

29 uncover, reveal

30 slanderous blows

31 the rotting disease injures

32 their buds are opened

33 diseases are most threatening

34 meaning, drift, tenor

35 unattractive, graceless, discourteous

36 vain, inflated

37 pays no attention to his own advice

I stay too long. But here my father comes.

A double blessing is a double grace:³⁸

Occasion smiles upon a second leave.³⁹

Polonius Yet here, Laertes? Aboard, aboard, for shame! 55

The wind sits in the shoulder of your sail,

And you are stayed for.⁴⁰ There – my blessing with thee,

And these few precepts in thy memory

Look thou character.⁴¹ Give thy thoughts no tongue,

Nor any unproportioned thought his act.⁴² 60

Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar.⁴³

Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,⁴⁴

Grapple⁴⁵ them to thy soul with hoops of steel,

But do not dull thy palm⁴⁶ with entertainment⁴⁷

Of each new-hatched, unfledged courage.⁴⁸ Beware 65

Of entrance to a quarrel, but being in

Bear't⁴⁹ that the opposèd may beware of thee.

Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice;

Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment.

Costly thy habit⁵⁰ as thy purse can buy, 70

38 having had his father's blessing, he is about to have it again

39 circumstances smile upon a second leave-taking

40 waited for

41 be attentive/careful that you engrave/write

42 disproportionate/out-of-balance thought its action/deed

43 affable/courteous, but never coarse/lacking in good taste

44 association with you tested

45 grasp, take hold of

46 but do not blunt/tarnish your grip/success

47 receiving, accommodating

48 callow/crude/undeveloped person

49 carry/acquit yourself

50 clothing, dress*

But not expressed in fancy⁵¹ – rich, not gaudy;
 For the apparel oft proclaims the man,
 And they in France of the best rank and station
 Are of a most select and generous chief⁵² in that.

75 Neither a borrower nor a lender be,
 For loan oft loses both itself and friend,
 And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.⁵³
 This above all: to thine own self be true,
 And it must follow, as the night the day,
 80 Thou canst not then be false to any man.
 Farewell: my blessing season⁵⁴ this in thee!

Laertes Most humbly do I take my leave, my lord.

Polonius The time invites you. Go, your servants tend.⁵⁵

Laertes Farewell, Ophelia; and remember well
 What I have said to you.

85 *Ophelia* 'Tis in my memory locked,
 And you yourself shall keep the key of it.

Laertes Farewell.

EXIT LAERTES

Polonius What is't, Ophelia, he hath said to you?

Ophelia So please you, something touching⁵⁶ the Lord Hamlet.

90 *Polonius* Marry,⁵⁷ well bethought.⁵⁸

51 whims, caprices

52 a most excellent and gallant/noble chief position

53 thrift*

54 ripen, mature

55 await you

56 relating to, concerning*

57 an exclamation (originally an oath employing the Virgin Mary's name)*

58 considered

- 'Tis told me, he hath very oft of late
 Given private time to you, and you yourself
 Have of your audience been most free and bounteous.⁵⁹
 If it be so, as so 'tis put on⁶⁰ me,
 And that in way of caution, I must tell you 95
 You do not understand yourself so clearly
 As it behooves⁶¹ my daughter and your honor.
 What is between you? Give me up the truth.
- Ophelia* He hath, my lord, of late made many tenders⁶²
 Of his affection to me. 100
- Polonius* Affection! pooh! you speak like a green girl,
 Unsifted⁶³ in such perilous circumstance.
 Do you believe his tenders, as you call them?
- Ophelia* I do not know, my lord, what I should think.
- Polonius* Marry, I will teach you. Think yourself a baby 105
 That you have ta'en⁶⁴ these tenders for true pay,⁶⁵
 Which are not sterling.⁶⁶ Tender yourself more dearly;⁶⁷
 Or – not to crack the wind of the poor phrase,
 Running it⁶⁸ thus – you'll tender me a fool.⁶⁹

59 of your reception of visits been most generous and liberal

60 told to, confided in

61 befits, is appropriate for

62 offers

63 inexperienced

64 taken

65 payment (Polonius is punning on commercial “tenders”; in commerce “payment” = “satisfaction”)

66 (1) English currency (as in “pound sterling”); (2) pure, excellent

67 (1) worth more, as a person; (2) worth more, more costly, in commercial terms

68 one “cracks the wind” of a horse by “running it” too hard: Polonius not only puns incessantly, but comments on himself punning

69 (1) a fool (Ophelia herself); (2) a baby

- 110 *Ophelia* My lord, he hath importuned me with love
 In honorable fashion.⁷⁰
- Polonius* Ay, fashion you may call it. Go to, go to.⁷¹
- Ophelia* And hath given countenance⁷² to his speech, my lord,
 With almost all the holy vows of heaven.
- 115 *Polonius* Ay, springes to catch woodcocks.⁷³ I do know,
 When the blood burns, how prodigal⁷⁴ the soul
 Lends the tongue vow.⁷⁵ These blazes, daughter,
 Giving more light than heat, extinct⁷⁶ in both,
 Even in their promise, as it is a-making,
- 120 You must not take for fire. From this time
 Be something scanter of your maiden presence.⁷⁷
 Set your entreatments⁷⁸ at a higher rate
 Than a command to parley.⁷⁹ For⁸⁰ Lord Hamlet,
 Believe so much in him, that he is young
- 125 And with a larger tether⁸¹ may he walk
 Than may be given you. In few,⁸² *Ophelia*,
 Do not believe his vows, for they are brokers,⁸³

70 (1) manner; (2) making, shaping, forming

71 you can't be serious!

72 moral support

73 snares, traps to catch (1) foolish birds, (2) fools

74 lavishly, recklessly

75 the emotions/passions bestowed on the tongue solemn promises

76 extinguished

77 more restricted of your virginal presence

78 (1) conversations; (2) negotiations

79 hold discussions, as for a truce or treaty

80 as for

81 the rope/cord with which an animal is tied

82 in a few words, in short

83 middlemen, pimps

Not of that dye⁸⁴ which their investments⁸⁵ show,
 But mere implorators of unholy suits,⁸⁶
 Breathing like sanctified and pious bawds,⁸⁷ 130
 The better to beguile. This is for all:⁸⁸
 I would not, in plain terms, from this time forth,
 Have you so slander any moment leisure,⁸⁹
 As to give words or talk with the Lord Hamlet.
 Look to't, I charge you.⁹⁰ Come⁹¹ your ways. 135
Ophelia I shall obey, my lord.

EXEUNT

84 color, nature

85 (1) clothing; (2) money or capital put into a business

86 entreators of unholy causes

87 speaking like sanctified and pious pimps/brothel keepers

88 in sum, finally, once and for all

89 disgrace any moment of leisure

90 attend to it, I command you

91 recover, change

SCENE 4

The castle in Elsinore—a guard platform

ENTER HAMLET, HORATIO, AND MARCELLUS

Hamlet The air bites shrewdly;¹ it is very cold.*Horatio* It is a nipping and an eager² air.*Hamlet* What hour now?*Horatio* I think it lacks of twelve.*Marcellus* No, it is struck.

5 *Horatio* Indeed? I heard it not. It then draws near the season³
Wherein the spirit held his wont to walk.⁴

A FLOURISH OF TRUMPETS, AND TWO PIECES
(OF ORDNANCE) GO OFF

What does this mean, my lord?

Hamlet The king doth wake to-night and takes his rouse,⁵Keeps wassail and the swagg'ring up-spring reels,⁶10 And as he drains his draughts of Rhenish⁷ down,

The kettle-drum and trumpet thus bray out

The triumph of his pledge.⁸*Horatio* Is it a custom?*Hamlet* Ay, marry, is't,

But to my mind, though I am native here

1 fiercely, wickedly

2 sharp and a keen

3 time

4 made it his habit/custom to walk

5 is awake tonight and is having his drinking bout

6 observes/celebrates sitting and drinking and the showy, leaping, lively dances

7 Rhenish wine

8 toast, drinking to someone's health

And to the manner⁹ born, it is a custom 15
 More honored in the breach¹⁰ than the observance.
 This heavy-headed revel east and west
 Makes us traduced and taxed of¹¹ other nations.
 They clepe¹² us drunkards, and with swinish¹³ phrase
 Soil our addition,¹⁴ and indeed it takes 20
 From¹⁵ our achievements, though performed at height,¹⁶
 The pith and marrow of our attribute.¹⁷
 So oft it chances in particular men
 That for some vicious mole of nature¹⁸ in them,
 As¹⁹ in their birth, wherein they are not guilty, 25
 (Since nature cannot choose his²⁰ origin)
 By the o'ergrowth of some complexion,²¹
 Oft breaking down the pales and forts²² of reason,
 Or by some habit that too much o'er-leavens²³
 The form of plausible manners that²⁴ these men – 30
 Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect,

9 custom, usage

10 breaking

11 maligned/slandered by

12 call

13 gross, coarse

14 name

15 injures

16 though carried out at the highest level

17 the essence and vital part of our reputation

18 defective/debased fault/blemish of character/disposition

19 as if

20 its

21 habit of body or mind (COMPLEXiON)

22 fences/boundaries and fortified positions

23 permeates, ferments, corrupts

24 the form of behavior that can be approved of, so that

Being nature's livery or fortune's star,²⁵
 Their virtues else,²⁶ be they as pure as grace,
 As infinite as man may undergo²⁷ –
 35 Shall in the general²⁸ censure take corruption
 From that particular fault. The dram²⁹ of evil
 Doth all the noble substance often doubt,³⁰
 To his own scandal.³¹

Horatio Look, my lord, it comes!

ENTER GHOST

Hamlet Angels and ministers³² of grace defend us!
 40 Be thou a spirit of health,³³ or goblin damned,
 Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell,
 Be thy intents wicked or charitable,³⁴
 Thou com'st in such a questionable³⁵ shape
 That I will speak to thee. I'll call thee Hamlet,
 45 King, father, royal Dane. O, answer me!
 Let me not burst in ignorance, but tell
 Why thy canonized bones, hearsed³⁶ in death,
 Have burst their cerements,³⁷ why the sepulcher

25 badge / outerwear, *or* controlling astrological influence

26 otherwise

27 enjoy, partake of

28 overall

29 small quantity

30 the noble essence call into question

31 to its own discredit, disgrace

32 servants

33 goodness

34 loving God and man

35 capable of being asked questions (QUESTIONABLE)

36 thy consecrated bones, confined

37 waxed wrappings / shrouds

Wherein we saw thee quietly inurned³⁸
 Hath oped his ponderous and marble jaws, 50
 To cast thee up again. What may this mean,
 That thou, dead corse, again in cômplete steel,³⁹
 Revisits thus the glimpses of the moon,⁴⁰
 Making night hideous and we fools of nature⁴¹
 So horridly to shake our disposition⁴² 55
 With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls?
 Say, why is this? Wherefore? What should we do?

GHOST BECKONS HAMLET

Horatio It beckons you to go away with it,
 As if it some impartment⁴³ did desire
 To you alone.

Marcellus Look, with what courteous action⁴⁴ 60
 It waves you to a more removèd ground.⁴⁵
 But do not go with it.

Horatio No, by no means.

Hamlet It will not speak. Then I will follow it.

Horatio Do not, my lord.

Hamlet Why, what should be the fear?
 I do not set my life at a pin's fee,⁴⁶ 65

38 motionlessly entombed

39 a full suit of armor

40 the transient/flickering traces/flashes of the moon

41 making night dreadful and we playthings/toys of nature

42 that we shake our constitutions

43 communication

44 gesture

45 distant/secluded place

46 cost, price

And for my soul, what can it do to that,
Being a thing immortal as itself?

It waves me forth again. I'll follow it.

Horatio What if it tempt you toward the flood,⁴⁷ my lord,

70 Or to the dreadful summit of the cliff
That beetles o'er his base⁴⁸ into the sea,
And there assume some other horrible form,
Which might deprive your sovereignty of⁴⁹ reason
And draw you into madness? Think of it.
75 The very place puts toys of desperation,⁵⁰
Without more motive,⁵¹ into every brain
That looks so many fathoms to the sea
And hears it roar beneath.

Hamlet It waves me still.

(to Ghost)

Go on; I'll follow thee.

Marcellus You shall not go, my lord.

80 *Hamlet* Hold off your hands.

Horatio Be ruled.⁵² You shall not go.

Hamlet My fate cries out

And makes each petty artere⁵³ in this body
As hardy⁵⁴ as the Nemean lion's nerve.⁵⁵

47 sea

48 scowls over its bottom/foundation

49 your control over

50 tricks/fantastic notions of despair/recklessness

51 without more cause

52 guided, restrained

53 sinew, muscle (ARtere)

54 bold, vigorous

55 muscles/strength of the [magically invulnerable] lion killed by Hercules

Still am I called. Unhand me, gentlemen.

By heaven, I'll make a ghost of him that lets me!⁵⁶

85

I say, away!

(to Ghost)

Go on. I'll follow thee.

EXEUNT GHOST AND HAMLET

Horatio He waxes desperate with imagination.⁵⁷

Marcellus Let's follow. 'Tis not fit thus to obey him.

Horatio Have after.⁵⁸ To what issue⁵⁹ will this come?

Marcellus Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.

90

Horatio Heaven will direct⁶⁰ it.

Marcellus Nay, let's follow him.

EXEUNT

56 stops me

57 fancy, fantasy

58 let's go after him

59 outcome, result

60 guide, regulate, straighten out

SCENE 5

On the upper walls of the castle

ENTER GHOST AND HAMLET

Hamlet Whither wilt thou lead me? Speak. I'll go no further.*Ghost* Mark me.*Hamlet* I will.*Ghost* My hour is almost come,
When I to sulf'rous and tormenting flames
Must render up myself.*Hamlet* Alas, poor ghost!5 *Ghost* Pity me not, but lend thy serious hearing
To what I shall unfold.*Hamlet* Speak; I am bound¹ to hear.*Ghost* So art thou to revenge, when thou shalt hear.*Hamlet* What?²10 *Ghost* I am thy father's spirit,
Doomed for a certain term³ to walk the night,
And for the day confined to fast⁴ in fires,
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature⁵
Are burnt and purged away. But that I am forbid
To tell the secrets of my prison-house,
15 I could a tale unfold whose lightest⁶ word
Would harrow⁷ up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,

1 duty bound

2 revenge what?

3 condemned/sentenced for a fixed period

4 "Flesh triumphed in the wicked on earth, and hell is of the flesh, though the spirit also be agonized" (H. O. Taylor, *The Mediaeval Mind*, 1:471)

5 sins committed in my earthly life

6 slightest

7 cut through, pierce, lacerate

Make thy two eyes, like stars, start⁸ from their spheres,⁹
 Thy knotted and combinèd¹⁰ locks to part¹¹
 And each particular hair to stand on end,
 Like quills upon the fretful porpentine.¹² 20
 But this eternal blazon must not be¹³
 To ears of flesh and blood. List, list, O, list!
 If thou didst ever thy dear father love –

Hamlet O God!

Ghost Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder. 25

Hamlet Murder!

Ghost Murder most foul, as in the best it is,
 But this most foul, strange and unnatural.

Hamlet Haste me to know't, that I, with wings as swift
 As meditation¹⁴ or the thoughts of love, 30
 May sweep to my revenge.

Ghost I find thee apt,
 And duller¹⁵ shouldst thou be than the fat weed
 That roots itself in ease on Lethe wharf,¹⁶
 Wouldst thou not stir¹⁷ in this. Now, Hamlet, hear.
 'Tis given out that, sleeping in my orchard,¹⁸ 35
 A serpent stung me. So the whole ear of Denmark

8 leap, burst

9 in Ptolemaic astronomy, the stars are planets and exist inside hollow spheres

10 interconnected and joined

11 separate, divide

12 irritable/peevish porcupine

13 eternal description must not be given to/heard by

14 thought

15 more listless/lethargic

16 bank of the River Lethe (in Hades: one sip and the drinker's entire past is forgotten)

17 if you did not propose/want to act/move

18 garden

Is by a forgèd process¹⁹ of my death
 Rankly abused.²⁰ But know, thou noble youth,
 The serpent that did sting thy father's life
 Now wears his crown.

40 *Hamlet* O my prophetic soul!

My uncle!

Ghost Ay, that incestuous,²¹ that adulterate²² beast,
 With witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous²³ gifts –

O wicked wit and gifts, that have the power

45 So to seduce! – won to his shameful lust

The will of my most seeming-virtuous queen.

O Hamlet, what a falling-off was there

From me, whose love was of that dignity²⁴

That it went hand in hand even with²⁵ the vow

50 I made to her in marriage – and to decline²⁶

Upon a wretch whose natural gifts were poor

To²⁷ those of mine!

But virtue, as it never will be moved,

Though lewdness court it in a shape of heaven,

55 So lust, though to a radiant angel²⁸ linked,

Will sate itself in a celestial bed,

And prey²⁹ on garbage.

19 story

20 corruptly/grossly deceived/imposed upon

21 see act 1, scene 2, note 88

22 adulterous

23 treacherous

24 excellence, worth, honor

25 exactly in accord/parallel with

26 sink, descend

27 compared to

28 Satan

29 feed

But soft! methinks I scent the morning air.
 Brief let me be. Sleeping within my orchard,
 My custom always of the afternoon, 60
 Upon my secure³⁰ hour thy uncle stole,
 With juice of cursed hebenon³¹ in a vial,
 And in the porches³² of my ears did pour
 The leperous distilment,³³ whose effect
 Holds such an enmity³⁴ with blood of man 65
 That swift as quicksilver it courses³⁵ through
 The natural gates and alleys³⁶ of the body,
 And with a sudden vigor it doth posset³⁷
 And curd, like eager³⁸ droppings into milk,
 The thin³⁹ and wholesome blood. So did it mine, 70
 And a most instant tetter barked⁴⁰ about,
 Most lazar-like,⁴¹ with vile and loathsome crust,
 All my smooth body.
 Thus was I, sleeping, by a brother's hand
 Of⁴² life, of crown, of queen, at once dispatched,⁴³ 75
 Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin,

30 unsuspecting

31 a never precisely identified poisonous plant

32 vestibules, outer approaches to the ear

33 tainted distilled drops/liquid

34 hostility, hatred

35 runs, flows

36 openings/entrances and passages

37 strength/force it doth curdle

38 acrid, acidic

39 feeble, weak

40 pustule/scablike crustiness broke out/erupted

41 as in leprosy

42 "of" is used three times, in this line, in the sense of "from"

43 removed/dismitted by death

Unhouseled, disappointed, unaneled,⁴⁴
 No reckoning⁴⁵ made, but sent to my account
 With all my imperfections⁴⁶ on my head.
 80 O, horrible! O, horrible, most horrible!
 If thou hast nature⁴⁷ in thee, bear⁴⁸ it not,
 Let not the royal bed of Denmark be
 A couch⁴⁹ for luxury and damnèd incest.
 But howsoever thou pursuest this act,
 85 Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive
 Against thy mother aught. Leave her to heaven
 And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge,
 To prick and sting⁵⁰ her. Fare thee well at once!
 The glow-worm⁵¹ shows the matin to be near,
 90 And 'gins to pale his uneffectual⁵² fire.
 Adieu, adieu, adieu. Remember me.

EXIT

Hamlet O all you host of heaven! O earth! What else?
 And shall I couple⁵³ hell? O, fie! Hold,⁵⁴ hold, my heart,
 And you, my sinews,⁵⁵ grow not instant old,

44 not having received communion, unprepared, not having received the sacrament of extreme unction

45 an account to God of one's life and conduct

46 faults, blemishes

47 natural human feeling/affection

48 tolerate, endure

49 (1) a bed; (2) an animal's lair

50 pierce, cut

51 firefly

52 now relatively ineffective light

53 add on

54 stand fast, stay steady

55 nerves, muscles, strength

But bear me stiffly⁵⁶ up. Remember thee? 95
 Ay, thou poor ghost, while memory holds a seat
 In this distracted globe.⁵⁷ Remember thee?
 Yea, from the table⁵⁸ of my memory
 I'll wipe away all trivial fond⁵⁹ records,
 All saws of books,⁶⁰ all forms, all pressures⁶¹ past, 100
 That youth and observation copied there,
 And thy commandment all alone shall live
 Within the book and volume⁶² of my brain,
 Unmixed with baser matter.⁶³ Yes, by heaven!
 O most pernicious woman! 105
 O villain, villain, smiling, damnèd villain!
 My tables⁶⁴ – meet⁶⁵ it is I set it down
 That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain.
 At least I am sure it may be so in Denmark.

HAMLET WRITES

So, uncle, there you are. Now to my word: 110
 It is “Adieu, adieu, remember me.”
 I have sworn ’t.

VOICES FROM WITHIN

- 56 firmly, resolutely
 57 in his confused/perplexed/deranged skull
 58 writing tablet, slate
 59 unimportant/paltry, foolish
 60 maxims/sayings/proverbs from books
 61 shapes/images/impressions/stamps
 62 record and mass
 63 (1) substance; (2) thought, topic; (3) things written
 64 writing tablets, slates
 65 proper, fitting, appropriate*

Marcellus, Horatio My lord, my lord!

Marcellus Lord Hamlet!

Horatio Heavens

secure⁶⁶ him!

Hamlet So be it!

115 *Horatio* Hillo, ho, ho,⁶⁷ my lord!

Hamlet Hillo, ho, ho, boy! Come, bird, come.

ENTER HORATIO AND MARCELLUS

Marcellus How is't,⁶⁸ my noble lord?

Horatio What news, my lord?

Hamlet O, wonderful!

Horatio Good my lord,⁶⁹ tell it.

Hamlet No, you will reveal it.

Horatio Not I, my lord, by heaven.

120 *Marcellus* Nor I, my lord.

Hamlet How say you, then? Would heart of man once⁷⁰ think
it?

But you'll be secret?

Horatio, Marcellus Ay, by heaven, my lord.

Hamlet There's ne'er a villain dwelling in all Denmark (*pause*)

But he's an arrant knave.⁷¹

125 *Horatio* There needs no ghost, my lord, come from the grave
To tell us this.

Hamlet Why, right, you are in the right –

66 protect, guard

67 a falconer's call to his bird

68 what's happened

69 my good lord

70 ever

71 downright/unmitigated/notorious rogue

And so, without more circumstance⁷² at all,
 I hold it fit that we shake hands and part,
 You, as your business and desire shall point you;
 For every man has business and desire, 130
 Such as it is, and for mine own poor part,
 Look you, I'll go pray.

Horatio These are but wild and whirling words, my lord.

Hamlet I am sorry they offend you – heartily.

Yes, 'faith, heartily.

Horatio There's no offense, my lord. 135

Hamlet Yes, by Saint Patrick, but there is, Horatio,
 And much offense, too. Touching this vision here,
 It is an honest⁷³ ghost, that let me tell you.
 For⁷⁴ your desire to know what is between us,
 O'ermaster 't⁷⁵ as you may. And now, good friends, 140
 As you are friends, scholars and soldiers,
 Give me one poor⁷⁶ request.

Horatio What is't, my lord? We will.

Hamlet Never make known what you have seen to-night.

Horatio, Marcellus My lord, we will not.

Hamlet Nay, but swear't.

Horatio In faith, 145

My lord, not I.

Marcellus Nor I, my lord, in faith.

Hamlet Upon⁷⁷ my sword.

72 particulars, details

73 creditable, virtuous, respectable*

74 as for

75 overcome / conquer it

76 small, humble, insignificant

77 swear it upon

Marcellus We have sworn, my lord, already.

Hamlet Indeed,⁷⁸ upon my sword, indeed.

Ghost (*beneath the stage*) Swear.

Hamlet Ah, ha, boy! Say'st thou so? Art thou there,

150 Truepenny?⁷⁹

Come on, you hear this fellow in the cellarage.

Consent to swear.

Horatio Propose the oath, my lord.

Hamlet Never to speak of this that you have seen.

Swear by my sword.

155 *Ghost* (*beneath the stage*) Swear.

Hamlet Hic et ubique?⁸⁰ Then we'll shift our ground.⁸¹

Come hither, gentlemen,

And lay your hands again upon my sword.

Swear by my sword

160 Never to speak of this that you have heard

Ghost (*beneath the stage*) Swear by his sword.

Hamlet Well said, old mole! Canst work i' the earth so fast?

A worthy pioner!⁸² Once more remove,⁸³ good friends.

Horatio O day and night, but this is wondrous strange!

165 *Hamlet* And therefore as a stranger⁸⁴ give it welcome.

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,

Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.⁸⁵

78 in truth

79 trustworthy/honest person

80 Here and everywhere/anywhere?

81 location

82 soldier armed with a shovel

83 change position

84 Horatio is a stranger in Denmark

85 the philosophy studied at the university where both have studied

But come.

Here, as before: never, so help you mercy,
How strange or odd some'er I bear myself⁸⁶ – 170

As I perchance hereafter shall think meet

To put an antic disposition on,⁸⁷

That you, at such times seeing me, never shall,

With arms encumbered⁸⁸ – thus – or this headshake,
Or by pronouncing of some doubtful⁸⁹ phrase, 175

As “Well, well, we know,” or “We could, an if we would,”

Or “If we list⁹⁰ to speak,” or “There be, and if they might,”⁹¹

Or such ambiguous giving out,⁹² to note

That you know aught of me – this do swear,

So grace and mercy at your most need⁹³ help you. 180

Ghost (*beneath the stage*) Swear.

THEY SWEAR

Hamlet Rest, rest, perturbèd spirit! So, gentlemen,

With all my love I do commend me⁹⁴ to you,

And what so poor a man as Hamlet is

May do, to express his love and friending to you, 185

God willing, shall not lack. Let us go in together –

86 how strange or odd however I behave

87 to assume/pre tend to a grotesque/fantastic/clownish mood

88 folded

89 questionable

90 wished

91 there be those who, if they could

92 saying, reporting, pronouncing

93 greatest need

94 entrust/commit myself

ACT I • SCENE 5

And still your fingers on your lips, I pray.

The time is out of joint.⁹⁵ O cursèd spite,⁹⁶

That ever I was born to set it right!

190 Nay, come, let's go together.

EXEUNT

95 order

96 fortune

Act 2



SCENE I

A room

ENTER POLONIUS AND REYNALDO

Polonius Give him this money¹ and these notes, Reynaldo.

Reynaldo I will, my lord.

Polonius You shall do marvell's² wisely, good Reynaldo,
Before you visit him, to make inquire
Of his behavior.

Reynaldo My lord, I did intend it. 5

Polonius Marry, well said; very well said. Look you, sir,
Inquire me first what Danskers³ are in Paris,
And how, and who, what means,⁴ and where they keep,⁵
What company, at what expense,⁶ and finding

1 these coins

2 marvelously

3 Danes

4 financial resources, money, wealth

5 reside, lodge

6 cost

10 By this encompassment⁷ and drift⁸ of question
 That they do know my son, come you⁹ more nearer
 Than your particular demands¹⁰ will touch it.
 Take you,¹¹ as 'twere, some distant knowledge of him,
 As thus: "I know his father and his friends,
 15 And in part him." Do you mark this, Reynaldo?

Reynaldo Ay, very well, my lord.

Polonius "And in part him, but" – you may say – "not well:

But, if't be he I mean,¹² he's very wild,
 Addicted¹³ so and so." And there put on¹⁴ him
 20 What forgeries you please – marry, none so rank¹⁵
 As may dishonor him. Take heed of that.
 But, sir, such wanton, wild and usual slips¹⁶
 As are companions noted and most known¹⁷
 To youth and liberty.¹⁸

Reynaldo As gaming,¹⁹ my lord.

25 *Polonius* Ay, or drinking, fencing, swearing, quarrelling,
 Drabbing²⁰ – you may go so far.

Reynaldo My lord, that would dishonor him.

7 circling about

8 purpose, plan

9 you will come

10 detailed questions/requests

11 assume

12 if this is the man I'm talking about

13 prone to

14 attribute to

15 foul

16 such undisciplined/frolicsome errors/blunders

17 things associated with and most familiar

18 unrestrained conduct, free opportunity

19 like gambling

20 whoring

- Polonius* 'Faith, no; as you may season it in the charge.²¹
 You must not put another scandal²² on him,
 That he is open to incontinency.²³ 30
 That's not my meaning. But breathe his faults so quaintly²⁴
 That they may seem the taints of liberty,
 The flash and outbreak of a fiery mind,
 A savageness in unreclaimèd²⁵ blood
 Of general assault.²⁶
- Reynaldo* But, my good lord – 35
- Polonius* Wherefore should you²⁷ do this?
- Reynaldo* Ay, my lord,
 I would know that.
- Polonius* Marry, sir, here's my drift,²⁸
 And I believe, it is a fetch of warrant.²⁹
 You laying these slight sullies on my son,
 As 'twere a thing a little soiled i' the working³⁰ – 40
 Mark you:
 Your party in converse,³¹ him you would sound,³²
 Having ever seen in the prenominate crimes³³
 The youth you breathe of be guilty, be assured

21 adjust it in the accusation

22 rumor, injurious report

23 utter licentiousness

24 cleverly, cunningly

25 a wildness in unrestrained, uncultivated

26 universal onset

27 why are you supposed to

28 purpose, aim, goal

29 trick/contrivance that is justified

30 something that has become a little soiled, in performing some labor/process

31 person with whom you are conversing

32 the one you wish/want to probe

33 at any time having seen the youth you speak be guilty of the specified sins

45 He closes with you in this consequence,³⁴
 “Good sir,” or so,³⁵ or “friend,” or “gentleman” –
 According to the phrase or the addition³⁶
 Of man and country –

Reynaldo Very good, my lord.

Polonius And then, sir, does ‘a this – ‘a does –
 50 What was I about to say? By the mass, I was
 About to say something! Where did I leave?

Reynaldo At “closes in the consequence,” at “friend
 Or so” – and “gentleman.”

Polonius At “closes in the consequence,” ay, marry;
 55 He closes thus: “I know the gentleman;
 I saw him yesterday, or t’ other day,
 Or then, or then, with such, or such, and, as you say,
 There was a ‘gaming, there o’ertook in’s rouse,³⁷
 There falling out³⁸ at tennis.” Or perchance,
 60 “I saw him enter such a house of sale,”³⁹
 Videlicet,⁴⁰ a brothel, or so forth.
 See you now:⁴¹
 Your bait of falsehood takes this carp⁴² of truth,
 And thus do we of wisdom and of reach,⁴³

34 logical result, conclusion

35 something like that

36 form of address

37 I came upon him in his drinking bout/carousing

38 quarreling

39 place where commodities were sold cheaply

40 for example

41 think/take note

42 your bait of falsehood catches this fish

43 scheming, trickery

With windlasses⁴⁴ and with assays of bias,⁴⁵ 65
 By indirections find directions out.
 So by my former lecture and advice,⁴⁶
 Shall you my son. You have me,⁴⁷ have you not?
Reynaldo My lord, I have.
Polonius God bye⁴⁸ ye, fare ye well.
Reynaldo Good my lord. 70
Polonius Observe his inclination in yourself.⁴⁹
Reynaldo I shall, my lord.
Polonius And let him ply his music.⁵⁰
Reynaldo Well, my lord.
Polonius Farewell.

EXIT REYNALDO

ENTER OPHELIA

How now, Ophelia! What's the matter?
Ophelia O, my lord, my lord, I have been so affrighted! 75
Polonius With what, i' the name of God?
Ophelia My lord, as I was sewing in my closet,⁵¹
 Lord Hamlet, with his doublet all unbraced,⁵²

44 roundabout paths taken, in hunting, to surprise game animals

45 deliberately off-center attempts (for example, making a curved throw, in bowling, to hit something not as readily hittable by a straight throw)

46 discourse/lesson and counsel

47 you have understood me

48 redeem (some texts emend to "goodbye")

49 follow his propensities for yourself

50 (1) apply himself to/work at his music or (2) yield to his way of doing things

51 small private room

52 close-fitting body garment, all unfastened

No hat upon his head,⁵³ his stockings fouled,⁵⁴
 80 Ungarterèd, and down-gyved⁵⁵ to his ankle,
 Pale as his shirt; his knees knocking each other;
 And with a look so piteous in purpórt⁵⁶
 As if he had been loosèd out of hell
 To speak of horrors – he comes before me.

Polonius Mad for⁵⁷ thy love?

85 *Ophelia* My lord, I do not know;
 But truly, I do fear it.

Polonius What said he?

Ophelia He took me by the wrist and held me hard;
 Then goes he to the length of all his arm⁵⁸
 And, with his other hand thus o'er his brow,
 90 He falls to such perusal of my face
 As 'a would draw it. Long stayed he so.
 At last, a little shaking of mine arm,
 And thrice his head thus waving up and down,
 He raised a sigh so piteous⁵⁹ and profound
 95 As it did seem to shatter all his bulk⁶⁰
 And end his being. That done, he lets me go,
 And with his head over his shoulder turned,
 He seemed to find his way without his eyes,
 For out o' doors he went without their helps,
 100 And, to the last, bended their light on me.

53 hats were worn universally and everywhere, indoors and out

54 disgraceful, dirty

55 hanging down

56 outward bearing, effect

57 as a result/because of

58 then he straightens out his arm

59 PITyus

60 body

- Polonius* Come, go with me. I will go seek the king.
 This is the very ecstasy⁶¹ of love,
 Whose violent property fordoes itself⁶²
 And leads the will to desperate undertakings
 As oft as any passion under heaven 105
 That does afflict our natures. I am sorry.
 What, have you given him any hard words of late?
- Ophelia* No, my good lord. But as you did command,
 I did repel his letters and denied
 His access to me.
- Polonius* That hath made him mad.⁶³ 110
 I am sorry that with better heed and judgment
 I had not quoted him.⁶⁴ I feared he did but trifle,
 And meant to wrack⁶⁵ thee – but beshrew my jealousy!⁶⁶
 By heaven, it is as proper to our age
 To cast⁶⁷ beyond ourselves⁶⁸ in our opinions 115
 As it is common for the younger sort
 To lack discretion. Come, go we to the king.
 This must be known, which, being kept close, might move⁶⁹
 More grief to hide than hate to utter love.⁷⁰
 Come. 120

EXEUNT

- 61 frenzy, rapture, madness
 62 whose violent nature ruins/destroys itself
 63 crazed
 64 care/attention and judgment I did not take notice of
 65 ruin
 66 a plague upon my mistrust
 67 as peculiar/distinctive to older men to calculate
 68 more than we are capable of
 69 being kept from sight/secret might cause
 70 more harm to be hidden than it would cause hate to speak of love (as he and Ophelia are about to do, with the King)

SCENE 2

FLOURISH.¹ ENTER CLAUDIUS, GERTRUDE, ROSENCRANTZ,
GUILDENSTERN, AND ATTENDANTS

Claudius Welcome, dear Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

Moreover² that we much did long to see you,
The need we have to use you did provoke
Our hasty sending.³ Something have you heard
5 Of Hamlet's transformation: so call it,
Sith nor th' exterior nor the inward man
Resembles that it was.⁴ What it should be,
More than his father's death, that thus hath put⁵ him
So much from th' understanding of himself,
10 I cannot dream of. I entreat you both,
That, being of so⁶ young days brought up with him,
And sith so neighboured to his youth and havior,⁷
That you vouchsafe your rest⁸ here in our court
Some little time, so by your companies
15 To draw him on to pleasures, and to gather,
So much as from occasion you may glean,⁹
Whether aught to us unknown afflicts him thus,

1 fanfare, usually of brass instruments

2 besides

3 to employ you gave rise to our hurried sending of a message/messenger

4 since neither the outer nor the inner man resembles what it was

5 thrust, pushed

6 from such

7 so close to his behavior/deportment

8 grant/bestow your stay

9 as much as from circumstances/the course of events you may gather/ pick up

That, opened,¹⁰ lies within our remedy.¹¹

Gertrude Good gentlemen, he hath much talked of you;
 And sure I am two men there are not living 20
 To whom he more adheres.¹² If it will please you
 To show us so much gentry¹³ and good will
 As to expend your time with us awhile,
 For the supply and profit¹⁴ of our hope,
 Your visitation shall receive such thanks 25
 As fits a king's remembrance.

Rosencrantz Both your Majesties
 Might, by the sovereign power you have of¹⁵ us,
 Put your dread pleasures more into command
 Than to entreaty.

Guildestern But we both obey,
 And here give up ourselves, in the full bent,¹⁶ 30
 To lay our service freely at your feet,
 To be commanded.

Claudius Thanks, Rosencrantz and gentle Guildestern.

Gertrude Thanks, Guildestern and gentle Rosencrantz.
 And I beseech you instantly to visit 35
 My too much changèd son. Go, some of you,
 And bring these gentlemen where Hamlet is.

Guildestern Heavens make our presence and our practices¹⁷

10 uncovered, exposed

11 ability to cure

12 remains attached to

13 generosity, courtesy

14 support/assistance and advantage/good

15 over

16 full inclination, propensity, willingness

17 actions, performance

Pleasant and helpful to him!

Gertrude

Ay, amen!

EXEUNT ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN,
AND SOME ATTENDANTS

ENTER POLONIUS

40 *Polonius* The ambassadors from Norway, my good lord,
Are joyfully returned.

Claudius Thou still hast been the father of good news.

Polonius Have I, my lord? Assure you, my good liege,
I hold¹⁸ my duty, as I hold¹⁹ my soul,
45 Both to my God and to my gracious king –
And I do think, or else this brain of mine
Hunts not the trail of policy so sure²⁰
As it hath used to do, that I have found
The very²¹ cause of Hamlet's lunacy.

50 *Claudius* O, speak of that! That do I long to hear.

Polonius Give first admittance to th' ambassadors.

My news shall be the fruit²² to that great feast.

Claudius Thysel'f do grace²³ to them, and bring them in.

EXIT POLONIUS

He tells me, my dear Gertrude, he hath found
55 The head²⁴ and source of all your son's distemper.²⁵

18 abide by, observe

19 keep watch over

20 does not hunt the tracks/traces of diplomacy/statecraft as reliably/steadily

21 true, real*

22 dessert

23 favor

24 chief part

25 disordered/deranged condition, illness, disease

Gertrude I doubt it is no other but the main,²⁶
 His father's death, and our o'erhasty marriage.
Claudius Well, we shall sift²⁷ him.

ENTER POLONIUS, WITH VOLTIMAND AND CORNELIUS

Welcome, my good friends!

Say, Voltimand, what²⁸ from our brother Norway?

Voltimand Most fair return of greetings and desires.²⁹ 60

Upon our first, he sent out³⁰ to suppress

His nephew's levies,³¹ which to him appeared

To be a preparation 'gainst the Polack,

But better looked into, he truly found

It was against your highness. Whereat grieved, 65

That so his sickness, age and impotence

Was falsely borne in hand,³² sends out arrests³³

On Fortinbras; which he, in brief, obeys,

Receives rebuke from Norway, and in fine³⁴

Makes vow before his uncle never more 70

To give the assay³⁵ of arms against your majesty.

Whereon old Norway, overcome with joy,

Gives him threescore thousand³⁶ crowns in annual fee³⁷

26 the principal/essential/ chief one

27 test, question, examine

28 what response/news

29 requests

30 upon our first interview/meeting, he sent out orders

31 enrollment of men as soldiers

32 alleged, pretended

33 orders to stop/halt

34 finally

35 make a trial

36 3,000 times 20 (a "score") = 60,000 monetary units of significant size, not readily converted to modern terms

37 annual payment, allotment

I will be brief. Your noble son is mad.
 Mad call I it; for to define true madness
 What is't but to be nothing else but mad?
 But let that go.

Gertrude More matter,⁴⁶ with less art.⁴⁷ 95

Polonius Madam, I swear I use no art at all.

That he is mad, 'tis true: 'tis true 'tis pity;
 And pity 'tis 'tis true – a foolish figure⁴⁸ –
 But farewell it, for I will use no art.

Mad let us grant him, then. And now remains 100

That we find out the cause of this effect,⁴⁹

Or rather say, the cause of this defect,

For this effect defective comes by cause.⁵⁰

Thus it remains, and the remainder thus.

Perpend.⁵¹ 105

I have a daughter – have while she is mine –

Who, in her duty and obedience, mark,

Hath given me this:

(shows a letter)

Now gather, and surmise.⁵²

(reads)

“To the celestial and my soul's idol, the most beautified
 Ophelia” – That's an ill phrase, a vile phrase; “beautified” 110

Is a vile phrase – but you shall hear. Thus:

46 substance*

47 learning, acquired skills

48 figure of speech

49 result

50 happens because it is caused to happen

51 consider

52 now infer/deduce and conceive/imagine

“In her excellent⁵³ white bosom, these, &c.”

Gertrude Came this from Hamlet to her?

Polonius Good madam, stay a while. I will be faithful.⁵⁴

115 “Doubt thou the stars are fire;
Doubt that the sun doth move;
Doubt truth to be a liar;
But never doubt I love.

120 “O dear Ophelia, I am ill at these numbers,⁵⁵
I have not art to reckon⁵⁶ my groans. But that
I love thee best, O most best, believe it. Adieu.
’Thine evermore, most dear lady, whilst
this machine is⁵⁷ to him, HAMLET.”

125 This, in obedience, hath my daughter shown me,
And, more above,⁵⁸ hath his solicitings,
As they fell out⁵⁹ by time, by means and place,
All given to mine ear.

Claudius But how hath she
Received his love?

Polonius What do you think of me?

Claudius As of a man faithful and honorable.

130 *Polonius* I would fain⁶⁰ prove so. But what might you think,
When I had seen this hot love on the wing –

53 exalted, honored

54 conscientious, reliable

55 unskilled/bad at this poetry

56 count, calculate

57 while this structure/body belongs

58 in addition

59 proceeded

60 rejoice to

As I perceived it, I must tell you that,
 Before my daughter told me – what might you,
 Or my dear Majesty your queen here, think,
 If I had played the desk or table-book,⁶¹ 135
 Or given my heart a-winking,⁶² mute and dumb,
 Or looked upon this love with idle⁶³ sight?
 What might you think? No, I went round⁶⁴ to work,
 And my young mistress⁶⁵ thus I did bespeak:⁶⁶
 “Lord Hamlet is a prince, out of thy star;⁶⁷ 140
 This must not be.” And then I precepts gave her,
 That she should lock herself from his resort,⁶⁸
 Admit no messengers, receive no tokens.⁶⁹
 Which done, she took the fruits of⁷⁰ my advice,
 And he, repelled – a short tale to make – 145
 Fell into a sadness, then into a fast,
 Thence to a watch,⁷¹ thence into a weakness,
 Thence to a lightness,⁷² and by this declension⁷³
 Into the madness wherein now he raves,
 And all we⁷⁴ mourn for.

61 a book containing tablets used for writing memoranda

62 allowed my heart to wink (that is, closed his eyes)

63 trifling, lazy

64 thoroughly

65 lady

66 speak to

67 beyond your rank/social sphere

68 visits

69 gifts

70 she profited from

71 vigil, wakefulness

72 lightheadedness

73 declining, falling away

74 all of us

- 150 *Claudius* (to *Gertrude*) Do you think 'tis this?
Gertrude It may be, very like.⁷⁵
Polonius Hath there been such a time, I would fain know that,
 That I have positively said “’Tis so,”
 When it proved otherwise?
Claudius Not that I know.
Polonius (pointing to his head and shoulder)
 155 Take this from this, if this be otherwise.
 If circumstances⁷⁶ lead me, I will find
 Where truth is hid, though it were hid indeed
 Within the center.⁷⁷
Claudius How may we try⁷⁸ it further?
Polonius You know, sometimes he walks four hours together⁷⁹
 Here in the lobby.⁸⁰
 160 *Gertrude* So he does indeed.
Polonius At such a time I’ll loose my daughter to him.
 Be you and I behind an arras⁸¹ then.
 Mark the encounter. If he love her not,
 And be not from his reason fall’n thereon,⁸²
 165 Let me be no assistant⁸³ for a state,
 But keep a farm and carters.⁸⁴

75 likely, probably

76 facts, circumstantial evidence

77 the center of the earth

78 test, sift, examine

79 continuously, at a time

80 corridor

81 tapestry, hanging screen

82 because of that

83 aide

84 conduct/maintain a farm and cart drivers (meaning “mere” cart-drivers, or “low fellows, boors”)

Claudius

We will try it.

ENTER HAMLET, READING

Gertrude But look where sadly⁸⁵ the poor wretch comes,
reading.

Polonius Away, I do beseech you, both away:
I'll board him presently.⁸⁶ O, give me leave!⁸⁷

EXEUNT CLAUDIUS, GERTRUDE, AND ATTENDANTS

How does my good Lord Hamlet? 170

Hamlet Well, God-a-mercy.

Polonius Do you know me, my lord?

Hamlet Excellent well. You are a fishmonger.⁸⁸

Polonius Not I, my lord.

Hamlet Then I would you were so honest a man. 175

Polonius Honest, my lord!

Hamlet Ay, sir; to be honest, as this world goes, is to be one man
picked out of ten thousand.

Polonius That's very true, my lord.

Hamlet For if the sun breed⁸⁹ maggots in a dead dog, being a 180
good⁹⁰ kissing carrion⁹¹ – Have you a daughter?

85 soberly, gravely

86 on the spot, immediately

87 leave me

88 literally, one who sells fish. But “fish” = “flesh,” and “monger” = “dealer/trafficker in a disreputable trade”: what Hamlet is saying, slyly, is that Polonius is a pimp

89 if the sun hatch, produce (it was thought to make dead matter “give birth to” living matter)

90 some texts have “god,” referring to the sun-god

91 being good at kissing a dead body/rotting flesh/worthless flesh

Polonius I have, my lord.

Hamlet Let her not walk i' th' sun. Conception is a blessing; but
as your daughter may conceive, friend, look to 't.⁹²

185 *Polonius* (*aside*) How say you by that? Still harping on my
daughter. Yet he knew me not at first. 'A said I was a
fishmonger. 'A is far gone, far gone. And truly, in my youth I
suffered much extremity⁹³ for love – very near this. I'll speak
to him again. – What do you read, my lord?

190 *Hamlet* Words, words, words.

Polonius What is the matter, my lord?

Hamlet Between who?

Polonius I mean, the matter that you read, my lord.

Hamlet Slanders, sir, for the satirical rogue says here that old
195 men have grey beards, that their faces are wrinkled, their eyes
purging thick amber⁹⁴ and plum-tree gum⁹⁵ and that they
have a plentiful lack of wit, together with most weak hams.⁹⁶
All which, sir, though I most powerfully and potently⁹⁷
believe, yet I hold it not honesty to have it thus set down, for
200 yourself, sir, should be old as I am – if like a crab you could
go backward.

Polonius (*aside*) Though this be madness, yet there is method in
't. Will you walk out of the air,⁹⁸ my lord?

Hamlet Into my grave.

205 *Polonius* Indeed, that is out o' the air. (*aside*) How pregnant

92 beware

93 severe urgency

94 their eyes leaking thick spermaceti (made from sperm whale oil)

95 resin, sap

96 muscles in the back of the thigh and buttocks

97 strongly, with good reason

98 the outside air (thought to be unhealthy for those who were ill)

sometimes his replies are! A happiness that often madness hits on, which reason and sanity could not so prosperously be delivered of. I will leave him, and suddenly contrive⁹⁹ the means of meeting between him and my daughter. – My honorable lord, I will most humbly take my leave of you. 210

Hamlet You cannot, sir, take from me anything that I will more willingly part withal – except my life – except my life – except my life.

Polonius Fare you well, my lord.

ENTER GUILDENSTERN AND ROSENCRANTZ

Hamlet These tedious old fools! 215

Polonius (*leaving*) You go to seek the Lord Hamlet? There he is.

Rosencrantz (*to Polonius*) God save you,¹⁰⁰ sir!

EXIT POLONIUS

Guildenstern My honored lord!

Rosencrantz My most dear lord! 220

Hamlet My excellent good friends! How dost thou, Guildenstern? Ah, Rosencrantz! Good lads, how do ye both?

Rosencrantz As the indifferent¹⁰¹ children of the earth.

Guildenstern Happy, in that we are not over-happy.

On Fortune's cap we are not the very button.¹⁰² 225

Hamlet Nor the soles of her shoe?

Rosencrantz Neither, my lord.

99 instantly plan

100 a formal acknowledgment

101 unimportant

102 topmost ornament

Hamlet Then you live about her waist, or in the middle of her favors?¹⁰³

230 *Guildenstern* 'Faith, her privates¹⁰⁴ we.

Hamlet In the secret parts¹⁰⁵ of Fortune? O, most true! She is a strumpet. What's the news?

Rosencrantz None, my lord, but that the world's grown honest.

Hamlet Then is doomsday near: but your news is not true.

235 Let me question more in particular: what have you, my good friends, deserved at the hands of Fortune, that she sends you to prison hither?

Guildenstern Prison, my lord?

Hamlet Denmark's a prison.

240 *Rosencrantz* Then is the world one.

Hamlet A goodly¹⁰⁶ one; in which there are many confines, wards,¹⁰⁷ and dungeons, Denmark being one o' the worst.

Rosencrantz We think not so, my lord.

245 *Hamlet* Why, then, 'tis none to you,¹⁰⁸ for there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so. To me it is a prison.

Rosencrantz Why then, your ambition makes it one. 'Tis¹⁰⁹ too narrow for your mind.

250 *Hamlet* O God, I could be bounded in a nut shell and count myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams.

103 attractions, charms

104 low-ranking men/soldiers (*and* private parts/genitalia)

105 in the hidden/unseen regions/portions

106 large

107 places of confinement/prisons, divisions within a prison

108 it is not one to you

109 Denmark is

- Guildestern* Which dreams indeed are ambition, for the very substance of the ambitious is merely the shadow of a dream.¹¹⁰ 255
- Hamlet* A dream itself is but a shadow.
- Rosencrantz* Truly, and I hold¹¹¹ ambition of so airy and light a quality that it is but a shadow's shadow.
- Hamlet* Then are our beggars bodies, and our monarchs and outstretched¹¹² heroes but the beggars' shadows.¹¹³ – 260
Shall we to the court? for, by my fay, I cannot reason.¹¹⁴
- Rosencrantz, Guildestern* We'll wait upon you.¹¹⁵
- Hamlet* No such matter: I will not sort¹¹⁶ you with the rest of my servants, for, to speak to you like an honest man, I am most dreadfully attended.¹¹⁷ But, in the beaten way¹¹⁸ of 265
friendship, what make you at Elsinore?
- Rosencrantz* To visit you, my lord; no other occasion.¹¹⁹
- Hamlet* Beggar that I am, I am even poor in thanks, but I thank you – and sure, dear friends, my thanks are too dear a halfpenny.¹²⁰ Were you not sent for? Is it your own inclining? 270

110 the dream precedes the substance: ambition dreams of what it does not yet possess, and when (and if) it possess the dream, it has nothing more than its “shadow” (the reflected image)

111 consider, think, believe

112 stretched out/overextended men of vast ambition (heroes can be great shadows without any substance)

113 beggars, being unambitious, have substance rather than mere “dreams”

114 argue, discourse (as university students, which all three men were, had been taught to do)

115 we will attend/serve you

116 classify

117 waited on, served

118 well-traveled road/path

119 cause, reason

120 too costly/expensive at a halfpenny

Is it a free¹²¹ visitation? Come, deal justly with me. Come, come. Nay, speak.

Guildestern What should we say, my lord?

Hamlet Why, anything, but to the purpose.¹²² You were
275 sent for, and there is a kind of confession in your looks which
your modesties¹²³ have not craft enough to color.¹²⁴ I know
the good king and queen have sent for you.

Rosencrantz To what end, my lord?

Hamlet That you must teach me. But let me conjure you,
280 by the rights of our fellowship,¹²⁵ by the consonancy¹²⁶ of
our youth, by the obligation of our ever-preserved love, and
by what more dear a better proposer could charge you
withal, be even¹²⁷ and direct with me, whether you were sent
for or no.

285 *Rosencrantz* (*aside to Guildestern*) What say you?

Hamlet (*aside*) Nay, then, I have an eye of you.¹²⁸ – If you
love me, hold not off.

Guildestern My lord, we were sent for.

Hamlet I will tell you why: so shall my anticipation prevent
290 your discovery,¹²⁹ and your secrecy to¹³⁰ the king and queen

121 voluntary, unrestricted

122 except on the subject being discussed

123 self-control/honesty of thought and feeling

124 skill/cunning enough to misrepresent, disguise

125 students were members of the “corporate” fellowship of a university

126 harmony, concord

127 what more precious someone better equipped to frame an argument could
lay upon/command you with, be straight

128 I am keeping an eye on you

129 revealing/disclosing it

130 being in the confidence of

moult¹³¹ no feather. I have of late – but wherefore I know
 not – lost my mirth, foregone all custom of exercise, and
 indeed it goes so heavily with my disposition¹³² that
 this goodly frame,¹³³ the earth, seems to me a sterile
 promontory,¹³⁴ this most excellent canopy,¹³⁵ the air, look 295
 you, this brave o’erhanging firmament,¹³⁶ this majestic roof
 fretted¹³⁷ with golden fire, why, it appears no other thing to
 me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapors.¹³⁸ What
 a piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how infinite in
 faculties, in form and moving how express and admirable,¹³⁹ 300
 in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god –
 the beauty¹⁴⁰ of the world, the paragon¹⁴¹ of animals! And
 yet, to me, what is this quintessence¹⁴² of dust? Man delights
 not me – nor woman neither, though by your smiling you
 seem to say so. 305

Rosencrantz My lord, there was no such stuff¹⁴³ in my thoughts.

Hamlet Why did you laugh, then, when I said “man delights
 not me”?

131 cause to fall off

132 sluggishly/laboriously/woefully with my mood/turn of mind

133 lovely/huge structure

134 barren projection of land, jutting out into the sea

135 shelter/covering

136 this splendid/handsome arch/vault of heaven

137 adorned

138 mass of exhalations (very negative connotation)

139 exact and to be wondered at/astonished by

140 ornament

141 supreme model

142 most essential essence

143 matter, rubbish, nonsense

Rosencrantz To think, my lord, if you delight not in man, what
 310 lenten entertainment the players¹⁴⁴ shall receive from you.
 We coted¹⁴⁵ them on the way; and hither are they coming, to
 offer you service.¹⁴⁶

Hamlet He that plays the king shall be welcome; his majesty
 shall have tribute¹⁴⁷ of me; the adventurous knight shall use
 315 his foil and target;¹⁴⁸ the lover shall not sigh gratis; the
 humorous¹⁴⁹ man shall end his part in peace; the clown shall
 make those laugh whose lungs are tickle o' the sere;¹⁵⁰ and
 the lady shall say her mind freely, or the blank verse shall
 halt¹⁵¹ for't. What players¹⁵² are they?

320 *Rosencrantz* Even those you were wont¹⁵³ to take delight in, the
 tragedians of the city.¹⁵⁴

Hamlet How chances it they travel? Their residence,¹⁵⁵
 both in reputation and profit, was better both ways.

Rosencrantz I think their inhibition¹⁵⁶ comes by the means of
 325 the late innovation.¹⁵⁷

144 meager/dismal reception/welcome the actors

145 overtook, outstripped (a term used of hunting dogs)

146 their work/performance

147 homage, usually fiscal, paid to a king by one of his subjects; here used to mean "money"

148 small sword, blunt edged, with a button on the sharp point, and a small, round shield

149 odd, moody, capricious (that is, full of "humors")

150 loose/easy on the catch of a gun-lock (in current usage, "easy on the trigger")

151 go lame/limp, be defective

152 troop/company of actors

153 precisely those you were used/accustomed to

154 London

155 usual place (location and status)

156 prohibition? trouble? (see note 157, immediately below)

157 change, revolution, rebellion, insurrection (referring either to the success of

Hamlet Do they hold the same estimation¹⁵⁸ they did when
I was in the city? Are they so followed?¹⁵⁹

Rosencrantz No, indeed, are they not.

Hamlet How comes it? Do they grow rusty?

Rosencrantz Nay, their endeavour keeps in the wonted pace,¹⁶⁰ 330
but there is, sir, an eyrie¹⁶¹ of children, little eyases, that cry
out¹⁶² on the top of question, and are most tyrannically
clapped¹⁶³ for't. These are now the fashion, and so berattle¹⁶⁴
the common stages¹⁶⁵ – so they call them – that many
wearing rapiers¹⁶⁶ are afraid of goose-quills¹⁶⁷ and dare 335
scarce come thither.

Hamlet What, are they children? Who maintains¹⁶⁸ 'em?
How are they escoted?¹⁶⁹ Will they pursue the quality¹⁷⁰ no
longer than they can sing?¹⁷¹ Will they not say afterwards, if
they should grow themselves to common¹⁷² players – as it is 340

the children's acting companies or the earl of Essex's rebellion; most probably the former, in which case licensing problems could be the cause of the "inhibition")

158 appreciation, esteem, reputation

159 in the same way attended /admired

160 usual course

161 a bird of prey's nest

162 young, untrained hawks/falcons (shrill-voiced and noisy) who exclaim/
croak at the very highest level of speech

163 arbitrarily/vehemently applauded

164 rattle away at (in current usage, "put down")

165 the public (and adult) playhouses ("common": "low, vulgar")

166 who wear swords (as adult males of any standing did)

167 pens (wielded by those who support the children's acting companies)

168 supports, sustains

169 paid for (maintained)

170 profession, occupation

171 that is, once their boy soprano voices change

172 to become standard/adult

most like, if their means are no better¹⁷³ – their writers do them wrong to make them exclaim against their own succession?¹⁷⁴

345 *Rosencrantz* Faith, there has been much to do¹⁷⁵ on both sides, and the nation holds it no sin to tarre¹⁷⁶ them to controversy. There was, for a while, no money bid for argument,¹⁷⁷ unless the poet and the player went to cuffs¹⁷⁸ in the question.

Hamlet Is't possible?

Guildestern O, there has been much throwing about of brains.

350 *Hamlet* Do the boys carry it away?¹⁷⁹

Rosencrantz Ay, that they do, my lord – Hercules and his load¹⁸⁰ too.

Hamlet It is not very strange, for mine uncle is King of Denmark, and those that would make mouths¹⁸¹ at him while my father lived, give twenty, forty, fifty, an hundred ducats¹⁸² a-piece for his picture in little.¹⁸³ 'Sblood,¹⁸⁴ there is something in this more than natural, if philosophy¹⁸⁵ could find it out.

173 no better than other adults/adult actors

174 line of succession

175 fuss

176 incite, provoke, irritate

177 offered for subjects/themes

178 blows

179 gain the day, triumph

180 that is, the world: having sent Atlas to fetch the golden apples of the Hesperides, in Atlas's absence Hercules held up the world; the Globe Theatre had a sign showing Hercules with the "globe" on his shoulders

181 grimaces

182 gold coins

183 in miniature

184 God's blood (an oath)

185 wisdom, knowledge

A FLOURISH OF TRUMPETS¹⁸⁶

Guildestern There are the players.

Hamlet (to *Rosencrantz and Guildestern*) Gentlemen, you 360
are welcome to Elsinore. Your hands, come then: th'
appurtenance of welcome is fashion and ceremony.¹⁸⁷ Let
me comply¹⁸⁸ with you in this garb, lest my extent¹⁸⁹ to the
players, which, I tell you, must show fairly¹⁹⁰ outwards,
should more appear like entertainment¹⁹¹ than yours.¹⁹² You 365
are welcome. – But my uncle-father and aunt-mother are
deceived.

Guildestern In what, my dear lord?

Hamlet I am but mad north-north-west. When the wind is
southerly I know a hawk¹⁹³ from a handsaw.¹⁹⁴ 370

ENTER POLONIUS

Polonius Well be¹⁹⁵ with you, gentlemen!

Hamlet Hark you, *Guildestern*, and you¹⁹⁶ too: at each

186 traveling actors thus introduced themselves, when arriving in a new locale

187 that which belongs to/is properly an accessory to the act of welcoming
someone (manners, custom, gestures, actions) involves the proper
observance of respectful forms of behavior

188 observe the forms of civility/politeness/courtesy

189 in this style/manner, lest my scope/degree of welcome

190 clearly, distinctly

191 hospitality, welcoming

192 your welcome (to Elsinore)

193 quadrangular tool, with a handle, used by plasterers (also a bird trained for
hunting)

194 one-handed saw

195 may it be well

196 *Rosencrantz*

ear a hearer.¹⁹⁷ That great baby you see there is not yet out of his swaddling-clouts.¹⁹⁸

375 *Rosencrantz* Happily¹⁹⁹ he's the second time come to them, for they say an old man is twice²⁰⁰ a child.

Hamlet I will prophesy he comes to tell me of the players. Mark it. — You say right, sir.²⁰¹ A Monday morning, 'twas so indeed.

380 *Polonius* My lord, I have news to tell you.

Hamlet My lord, I have news to tell you. When Roscius²⁰² was an actor in Rome —

Polonius The actors are come hither, my lord.

Hamlet Buzz, buzz.

385 *Polonius* Upon mine honor —

Hamlet Then came each actor on his ass²⁰³ —

Polonius The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene
390 individable,²⁰⁴ or poem unlimited.²⁰⁵ Seneca²⁰⁶ cannot be

197 Hamlet here lowers his voice, to prevent Polonius from hearing, and warns Guildenstern and Rosencrantz to listen carefully

198 narrow, protective bandages wound around newborn infants, to prevent free movement

199 haply, perhaps*

200 for the second time

201 Hamlet invents a supposedly ongoing conversation

202 famous Roman comic actor

203 donkey

204 observing the classically derived three unities — place, time, and scene/setting

205 play free from restrictions (for example, the three unities)

206 Roman philosopher and author of distinctly rhetorical, often melodramatic tragedies

too heavy, nor Plautus²⁰⁷ too light. For the law of writ²⁰⁸ and the liberty,²⁰⁹ these are the only men.

Hamlet O Jephthah,²¹⁰ judge of Israel, what a treasure hadst thou!

Polonius What a treasure had he, my lord? 395

Hamlet Why,
 “One fair daughter and no more,
 The which he lovèd passing well.”

Polonius (*aside*) Still on my daughter.

Hamlet Am I not i’ the right, old Jephthah? 400

Polonius If you call me Jephthah, my lord, I have a daughter that I love passing well.

Hamlet Nay, that follows²¹¹ not.

Polonius What follows, then, my lord?

Hamlet Why, “As by lot, God wot,”²¹² and then, you know, “It 405
 came to pass, as most like it was.” The first row of the pious
 chanson²¹³ will show you more – for look here my
 abridgement²¹⁴ comes.

ENTER FOUR OR FIVE PLAYERS

207 Roman comic playwright

208 something written (*and/or* a legal document: the sense is obscure)

209 whether what these actors put on is conservative–classical or less–conservative–classical (?)

210 who sacrificed his daughter, most unwillingly – and accidentally – to fulfill a vow (see Judges 11)

211 Polonius having a daughter, as Jephthah did, does not necessarily mean that, like Jephthah, he loves her exceedingly well; after all, the Bible describes Jephthah as a “mighty man”

212 as by chance/fortune, God knows: Hamlet quotes, as he did a few lines earlier, from a then-familiar ballad, “Jephthah, Judge of Israel”

213 line of the devout/faithful song

214 those who will wile away the time for Hamlet

410 You are welcome, masters²¹⁵ – welcome, all. I am glad to see
 thee well. Welcome, good friends. O, old friend! Why, thy face
 is valenced²¹⁶ since I saw thee last. Com'st thou to beard me
 in Denmark? What, my young lady²¹⁷ and mistress! By'r²¹⁸
 lady, your ladyship is nearer to heaven²¹⁹ than when I saw
 you last, by the altitude of a chopine.²²⁰ Pray God, your
 415 voice, like a piece of uncurrent gold,²²¹ be not cracked
 within the ring.²²² – Masters, you are all welcome. We'll e'en
 to't²²³ like French falconers,²²⁴ fly at any thing we see. We'll
 have a speech straight.²²⁵ Come, give us a taste of your
 quality.²²⁶ Come, a passionate speech.

420 *First Player* What speech, my lord?

Hamlet I heard thee speak me a speech once, but it was
 never acted, or, if it was, not above²²⁷ once, for the play, I
 remember, pleased not the million.²²⁸ 'Twas caviare to the

215 distinguished artists, models of their art (and possibly also learned men,
 worthy of the Master of Arts [M.A.] degree)

216 draped, bordered, fringed (the actor thus addressed now has a beard)

217 a boy: no women appeared in public on the Elizabethan stage

218 by our

219 closer (the boy has grown taller)

220 height of a shoe with thick sole, often of cork

221 valid/acceptable/legal coin of gold

222 from the coin's outer edge all the way through to the circle/ring set
 around the king's head (the crack shows that some of the gold had been
 clipped away); Hamlet puns on the "ring" (sound) of a voice

223 we'll go directly/straight/at once to it

224 a slur on French, as opposed to English, falconers/huntsmen using falcons

225 correctly done, recited all the way through

226 art

227 not more than

228 the multitude, the crowd

general,²²⁹ but it was – as I received²³⁰ it, and others, whose
 judgments in such matters cried in the top of²³¹ mine – an 425
 excellent play, well digested²³² in the scenes, set down with as
 much modesty as cunning.²³³ I remember one²³⁴ said there
 were no sallets²³⁵ in the lines to make the matter savory, nor
 no matter in the phrase²³⁶ that might indict²³⁷ the author of
 affectation, but called it an honest method, as wholesome as 430
 sweet, and, by very much, more handsome than fine.²³⁸ One
 speech in't I chiefly loved. 'Twas Aeneas' tale to Dido, and
 thereabout of it²³⁹ especially where he speaks of Priam's
 slaughter. If it live in your memory, begin at this line – let me
 see, let me see – 435

“The rugged Pyrrhus, like th' Hyrcanian beast”²⁴⁰ –

'Tis not so²⁴¹ – It begins with Pyrrhus –

“The rugged²⁴² Pyrrhus, he whose sable arms,²⁴³

229 caviar was then new to England and not widely popular with the general public/multitude

230 accepted, regarded, believed, understood

231 were strongly uttered and above/better than

232 divided, arranged

233 as much control as skill, cleverness, art

234 someone

235 savory ingredients (from “salads”)

236 style, language, diction

237 charge, accuse

238 suitable/apt/reliable rather than fashionable/elegant/ornamented

239 somewhere near where

240 the tiger

241 it does not go like that

242 rough, unpolished, harsh

243 black armor

Black as his purpose, did the night resemble
 440 When he lay couchèd²⁴⁴ in th' ominous horse,²⁴⁵
 Hath now this dread and black complexion²⁴⁶ smeared
 With heraldry more dismal.²⁴⁷ Head to foot
 Now is he total gules,²⁴⁸ horridly tricked²⁴⁹
 With blood of fathers, mothers, daughters, sons,
 445 Baked and impasted with the parching²⁵⁰ streets,
 That lend a tyrannous²⁵¹ and a damnèd light
 To their lord's²⁵² murder. Roasted in wrath and fire,
 And thus o'er-sized with coagulate gore,²⁵³
 With eyes like carbuncles,²⁵⁴ the hellish Pyrrhus
 450 Old grandsire²⁵⁵ Priam seeks.”
 So, proceed you.

Polonius 'Fore God, my lord, well spoken, with good
 accent²⁵⁶ and good discretion.

First Player “Anon²⁵⁷ he finds him,
 455 Striking too short²⁵⁸ at Greeks. His ántique sword,
 Rebellious²⁵⁹ to his arm, lies where it falls,

244 lying in ambush

245 of ill omen, indicative of disaster-to-come Trojan horse

246 appearance

247 armorial signs/symbols more prophetic of disastrous, calamitous

248 stained red

249 adorned, decked

250 and encrusted with the hot, dry, scorching

251 oppressive, severe

252 Priam, king of Troy: the murder is just about to occur

253 covered over with clotted/congealed blood

254 sapphires and other reddish precious stones

255 grandfather, forefather

256 emphasis, stress

257 soon★

258 with limited/inadequate reach

259 resistant

Repugnant²⁶⁰ to command. Unequal matched,
 Pyrrhus at Priam drives,²⁶¹ in rage strikes wide,
 But with the whiff and wind of his fell²⁶² sword
 Th' unnervèd²⁶³ father²⁶⁴ falls. Then senseless Ilium,²⁶⁵ 460
 Seeming to feel this blow, with flaming top²⁶⁶
 Stoops to his base,²⁶⁷ and with a hideous crash
 Takes prisoner Pyrrhus' ear.²⁶⁸ For lo, his sword,
 Which was declining on the milky²⁶⁹ head
 Of reverend²⁷⁰ Priam, seemed i' the air to stick.²⁷¹ 465
 So as a painted tyrant²⁷² Pyrrhus stood,
 And like a neutral to his will and matter²⁷³
 Did nothing.
 But as we often see, against²⁷⁴ some storm,
 A silence in the heavens, the rack²⁷⁵ stand still, 470
 The bold winds speechless and the orb²⁷⁶ below

260 hostile, antagonistic

261 rushes, hurries, dashes

262 but because of the gust and rush of air of his savage/cruel/relentless

263 enfeebled, incapable

264 Hector's father, among others

265 the fortress of Troy, incapable of feeling/perception

266 the Greeks have set fire to the fortress, and at this moment, its "flaming" heights collapse

267 descends to its foundation

268 the sound is so overwhelming that Pyrrhus's ear is taken captive: he is literally stunned, for a moment

269 falling on the white/gentle

270 aged and venerable

271 to be rendered immobile/fixed

272 like a painting of a villain/despot

273 like a noncombatant, someone indifferent/uninvolved in his business/occupation

274 drawing toward, in preparation for

275 clouds

276 globe/earth

As hush as death, anon the dreadful thunder
 Doth rend the region,²⁷⁷ so after Pyrrhus' pause
 Arousèd vengeance sets him new a-work,
 475 And never did the Cyclops'²⁷⁸ hammers fall
 On Mars's armor, forged for proof eterne,²⁷⁹
 With less remorse than Pyrrhus' bleeding sword
 Now falls on Priam.
 Out, out, thou strumpet Fortune! All you gods
 480 In general synod²⁸⁰ take away her power;
 Break all the spokes and fellies²⁸¹ from her wheel,
 And bowl the round nave²⁸² down the hill of heaven,
 As low as to the fiends!"

Polonius This is too long.

485 *Hamlet* It shall to the barber's, with your beard. – Prithee,
 say on. He's for a jig²⁸³ or a tale of bawdry, or²⁸⁴ he sleeps. Say
 on: come to Hecuba.²⁸⁵

First Player "But who, O, who had seen the mobled²⁸⁶ queen –"

Hamlet "The mobled queen?"

490 *Polonius* That's good. "Mobled queen" is good.

277 the heavens/air

278 one-eyed giants, sons of Uranus

279 eternal invulnerability/impenetrability

280 assembly of your entire ranks

281 the curved pieces composing the outer rim of the wheel

282 hub

283 in for of a lively, comical performances at intermissions or at the end of a
 play

284 or else

285 old Priam's wife, the queen of Troy

286 having the face or head muffled

First Player “– Run barefoot up and down, threat’ning the
 flames
 With bisson rheum;²⁸⁷ a clout upon that head
 Where late the diadem²⁸⁸ stood, and for a robe
 About her lank and all o’er-teemèd loins,²⁸⁹
 A blanket, in the alarm of fear caught up – 495
 Who this had seen, with tongue in venom steeped²⁹⁰
 ’Gainst Fortune’s state would treason have pronounced.²⁹¹
 But if the gods themselves did see her, then
 When she saw Pyrrhus make malicious sport
 In mincing with his sword her husband’s limbs, 500
 The instant burst of clamor²⁹² that she made,
 Unless things mortal move them not at all
 Would have made milch²⁹³ the burning eyes of heaven,
 And passion²⁹⁴ in the gods.”

Polonius Look, whe’r²⁹⁵ he has not turned his color, and has 505
 tears in’s eyes. Prithee, no more.

Hamlet ’Tis well. I’ll have thee speak out the rest of this
 soon. (to *Polonius*) Good my lord, will you see the players well

287 blinding tears (the vast flow of which might extinguish the fires)

288 a piece of cloth/rag upon that head on which recently the crown

289 shrunken/flabby and overbred genitals (having experienced an excess of
 child-bearing)

290 have spoken bitter/virulent words

291 against Fortune’s greatness/power have treason spoken

292 outcry, din

293 pour like a nursemaid’s milk (“milch”: pronounced “miltch”)

294 would have made/created passion (“intense feelings”)

295 whether

bestowed?²⁹⁶ Do you hear, let them be well used, for they are
 510 the abstract²⁹⁷ and brief chronicles of the time. After your
 death you were better have a bad epitaph than their ill report
 while you live.

Polonius My lord, I will use them according to their desert.²⁹⁸

Hamlet God's bodkin,²⁹⁹ man, much better! Use every man
 515 after³⁰⁰ his desert, and who shall 'scape whipping?³⁰¹ Use
 them after your own honor and dignity. The less they deserve,
 the more merit is in your bounty.³⁰² Take³⁰³ them in.

Polonius Come, sirs.

Hamlet Follow him, friends. We'll hear a play to-morrow.
 520 (*aside to First Player*) Dost thou hear me, old friend; can you
 play "The Murder of Gonzago"?

First Player Ay, my lord.

Hamlet We'll ha't to-morrow night. You could, for a need,
 study a speech of some dozen or sixteen lines, which I would
 525 set down and insert in't, could you not?

First Player Ay, my lord.

Hamlet Very well. Follow that lord – and look you mock
 him not.

EXIT POLONIUS WITH ALL THE PLAYERS

296 put up, lodged

297 compendium, summary

298 deserving

299 God's dear body

300 according to

301 vagabonds were, by law, sentenced to whipping; traveling actors were often
 so accused and punished

302 virtue, kindness, generosity

303 escort, lead

(to *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*) My good friends, I'll leave
you till night. You are welcome to Elsinore. 530

Rosencrantz Good my lord!

EXEUNT ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN

Hamlet Ay, so. God be w' ye.³⁰⁴ — Now I am alone.

O, what a rogue and peasant³⁰⁵ slave³⁰⁶ am I!

Is it not monstrous that this player here,

But in a fiction, in a dream of passion, 535

Could force his soul so to his own conceit³⁰⁷

That from her working all his visage wanned,³⁰⁸

Tears in his eyes, distraction in's aspect,³⁰⁹

A broken voice, and his whole function suiting³¹⁰

With forms³¹¹ to his conceit? And all for nothing! 540

For Hecuba!

What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,

That he should weep for her? What would he do,

Had he the motive and the cue for passion

That I have? He would drown the stage with tears 545

And cleave the general ear³¹² with horrid speech,

Make mad the guilty and appeal the free,³¹³

304 "w' ye" = "with you" (a plural form of "you")

305 low fellow, rustic, boor, clown

306 servile rascal

307 imagination, conception

308 became pale, sickly

309 madness/confusion in his face/countenance

310 physical bearing adapted/falling in with

311 physical/bodily expressions

312 split/pierce the public ear

313 guiltless

Confound the ignorant, and amaze³¹⁴ indeed
The very faculties³¹⁵ of eyes and ears.

550

Yet I,

A dull and muddy-mettled³¹⁶ rascal, peak
Like John-a-dreams,³¹⁷ unpregnant of³¹⁸ my cause,
And can say nothing – no, not for a king,
Upon whose property and most dear life

555

A damned defeat³¹⁹ was made. Am I a coward?
Who calls me villain?³²⁰ Breaks my pate across?³²¹
Plucks off my beard, and blows it in my face?
Tweaks me by the nose? Gives me the lie i' the throat
As deep as to the lungs?³²² Who does me this?

560

Ha!

'Swounds,³²³ I should take it, for it cannot be
But I am pigeon-livered and lack gall³²⁴
To make oppression bitter, or ere this
I should ha' fatted all the region kites³²⁵

565

With this slave's offal.³²⁶ Bloody, bawdy villain!

314 put to shame the ignorant and astound/overwhelm with wonder indeed

315 even the faithful powers/capacities

316 and vague/confused

317 slink/droop like a proverbial dreamy fellow

318 not spurred on by

319 damned undoing, destruction, ruin

320 a base, low-born man

321 cracks/lays open my head from one side to the other

322 calls me a liar of profound, unmitigated proportions, a liar down to my very depths

323 God's (Jesus') wounds

324 meek/mild-tempered: pigeons were thought to lack "gall," or bile, a liver secretion, and therefore to be devoid of the spirit/capacity to resent insult/injury

325 hawks (and other scavenger birds) of the air/in the skies

326 this contemptible rascal [the King]'s entrails/intestines

Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless³²⁷ villain!
 O, vengeance!
 Why, what an ass am I! This is most brave,³²⁸
 That I, the son of a dear father murdered,
 Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell, 570
 Must like a whore unpack³²⁹ my heart with words,
 And fall a-cursing like a very drab,³³⁰
 A scullion!
 Fie upon't, foh! About,³³¹ my brains!
 Hum – 575
 I have heard that guilty creatures sitting at a play
 Have by the very cunning³³² of the scene
 Been struck so to the soul that presently³³³
 They have proclaimed their malefactions.³³⁴
 For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak 580
 With most miraculous organ.³³⁵ I'll have these players
 Play something like the murder of my father
 Before mine uncle. I'll observe his looks,
 I'll tent him to the quick.³³⁶ If he but blench,³³⁷
 I know my course. The spirit that I have seen 585
 May be a devil, and the devil hath power

327 unnatural, devoid of natural feeling

328 courageous, splendid

329 open, unload

330 whore

331 attend to it, do it (?) or turn about/go in the opposite direction (?)

332 skill, cleverness

333 at once, promptly*

334 evil doings

335 means of action/operation

336 probe him to the central/vital/most sensitive part

337 flinch, start

T' assume a pleasing shape – yea, and perhaps
 Out of³³⁸ my weakness and my melancholy,
 As he is very potent with such spirits,³³⁹
 590 Abuses³⁴⁰ me to damn me. I'll have grounds
 More relative³⁴¹ than this. The play's the thing
 Wherein I'll catch³⁴² the conscience of the king.

EXIT

338 from, because of

339 he is very powerful/effective with such emotions (that is, weakness and melancholy)

340 ill-uses, wrongs

341 reasons more credible/substantial

342 surprise, ensnare, lay hold of

Act 3



SCENE I

The castle

ENTER CLAUDIUS, GERTRUDE, POLONIUS, OPHELIA,
ROSENCRANTZ, AND GUILDENSTERN

Claudius And can you, by no drift of conference,¹
Get from him why he puts on² this confusion,
Grating so harshly³ all his days of quiet
With turbulent and dangerous⁴ lunacy?

Rosencrantz He does confess he feels himself distracted,⁵ 5
But from what cause he will by no means speak.

Guildenstern Nor do we find him forward to be sounded,⁶
But with a crafty⁷ madness keeps aloof

1 purposeful direction of speech

2 assumes (either honestly or deceptively)

3 irritating so disagreeably, unpleasingly

4 with violent and risky, injurious

5 perplexed, confused, mentally unstable

6 eager to be questioned, examined

7 skillful, ingenious

When we would bring him on to⁸ some confession
Of his true state.

10 *Gertrude* Did he receive you well?

Rosencrantz Most like a gentleman.

Guildestern But with much forcing⁹ of his disposition.

Rosencrantz Niggard of question,¹⁰ but of our demands¹¹

Most free in his reply.

Gertrude Did you assay him

15 To any pastime?¹²

Rosencrantz Madam, it so fell out¹³ that certain players

We o'er-raught¹⁴ on the way. Of these we told him,

And there did seem in him a kind of joy

To hear of it. They are about¹⁵ the court

20 And, as I think, they have already order¹⁶

This night to play before him.

Polonius 'Tis most true,

And he beseeched me to entreat your majesties

To hear and see the matter.¹⁷

Claudius With all my heart, and it doth much content me

25 To hear him so inclined.

Good gentlemen, give him a further edge¹⁸

8 persuade/induce him to

9 strain, effort

10 stingy of talk/speech

11 questions

12 tempt him to any amusement, entertainment, sport

13 chanced to happen

14 overtook, came past

15 around, near

16 an order

17 thing, business

18 keenness of desire

And drive his purpose¹⁹ into these delights.

Rosencrantz We shall, my lord.

EXEUNT ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN

Claudius Sweet Gertrude, leave us too,

For we have closely²⁰ sent for Hamlet hither,

That he, as 'twere by accident, may here 30

Affront²¹ Ophelia.

Her father and myself, lawful espials,²²

Will so bestow²³ ourselves that, seeing, unseen,

We may of their encounter frankly judge

And gather by him, as he is behaved, 35

If 't be th' affliction²⁴ of his love or no

That thus he suffers for.

Gertrude I shall obey you.

And for your part, Ophelia, I do wish

That your good beauties²⁵ be the happy²⁶ cause

Of Hamlet's wildness. So shall I hope your virtues 40

Will bring him to his wonted way²⁷ again,

To both your honors.

Ophelia Madam, I wish it may.

EXIT GERTRUDE

19 propel/urge on his intention, determination, resolution

20 privately, secretly

21 meet face to face with

22 permissible/justifiable/legitimate spies

23 locate, stow away

24 pain, calamity

25 including both her visual and her intellectual and moral beauties

26 fortunate, blessed

27 usual/customary path, manner

Polonius Ophelia, walk you here.²⁸ – Gracious,²⁹ so³⁰ please
you,

We will bestow ourselves. (*to Ophelia*) Read on this book,³¹

45 That show of such an exercise may color³²

Your loneliness. We are oft to blame³³ in this:

'Tis too much proved that with devotion's visage³⁴

And pious action we do sugar o'er

The devil himself.

Claudius (*aside*) O, 'tis too true!

50 How smart a lash that speech doth give my conscience!

The harlot's cheek, beautied with plastering art,

Is not more ugly to the thing³⁵ that helps it

Than is my deed to my most painted³⁶ word.

O heavy burden!

55 *Polonius* I hear him coming. Let's withdraw, my lord.

EXEUNT CLAUDIUS AND POLONIUS

ENTER HAMLET (THINKING HIMSELF ALONE)

Hamlet To be, or not to be: that is the question.

Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer³⁷

28 off to the very side of the stage: Elizabethan theatrical convention made her inconspicuous – almost invisible – and, while thus placed, not a participant in the action or discourse, which she cannot hear

29 my gracious King

30 if it

31 read in a book of a visibly religious nature

32 that the appearance/display of such an act of devotion may make plausible/believable

33 at fault

34 face, false appearance

35 ugly to the unpainted/natural beauty (which remains primary)

36 my deed compared to my most pretended, artificial

37 endure, submit to, be damaged/pained/destroyed by

The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,³⁸
 Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
 And by opposing end them? To die, to sleep 60
 No more, and by a sleep to say we end
 The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
 That flesh is heir to. 'Tis a consummation
 Devoutly to be wished.³⁹ To die, to sleep –
 To sleep, perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub,⁴⁰ 65
 For in that sleep of death what⁴¹ dreams may come
 When we have shuffled off⁴² this mortal coil⁴³
 Must give us pause. There's the respect⁴⁴
 That makes calamity of so⁴⁵ long life –
 For who would bear the whips and scorns⁴⁶ of time, 70
 The oppressor's wrong,⁴⁷ the proud man's contumely,⁴⁸
 The pangs of despised⁴⁹ love, the law's delay,
 The insolence of office⁵⁰ and the spurns⁵¹
 That patient merit of th' unworthy takes,⁵²
 When he himself might his quietus⁵³ make 75

38 of excessive, furious, violent, cruel fortune

39 a completion/conclusion/end devoutly to be wished for

40 obstacle, difficulty

41 what kind of

42 "shuffled off" = "removed, gotten rid of"

43 when we have gotten rid of this clutter/fuss (*and* coil of rope/cable)

44 issue, matter, point, detail

45 a calamity of such a

46 lashes/thrusts (rapid movements in fencing) and mockery/contempt

47 wrongdoing

48 the arrogant/lordly/exalted man's insolent/insulting abuse

49 some texts have "desprized," meaning "unvalued"

50 officeholders, officialdom

51 disdainful/contemptuous rejections

52 common/ordinary person receives/endures

53 discharge from debt/life

Hamlet I humbly thank you.⁶⁷ Well, well, well.⁶⁸

Ophelia My lord, I have remembrances⁶⁹ of yours,
That I have longèd long to re-deliver.
I pray you now receive them.

Hamlet No, not I 95
I never gave you aught.

Ophelia My honored lord, you know right well you did,
And with them words of so sweet breath composed⁷⁰
As made the things more rich. Their perfume lost,
Take these again, for to the noble⁷¹ mind 100
Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.
There, my lord.

SHE GIVES HIM BACK HIS GIFTS

Hamlet Ha, ha! Are you honest?

Ophelia My lord?

Hamlet Are you fair?⁷² 105

Ophelia What means your lordship?

Hamlet That if you be honest and fair, your honesty should
admit no discourse to⁷³ your beauty.

Ophelia Could beauty, my lord, have better commerce⁷⁴ than
with honesty? 110

Hamlet Ay, truly; for the power of beauty will sooner transform

67 a very formal, aloof acknowledgment

68 in part an answer to her query?

69 keepsakes, tokens, gifts

70 in such sweet speech/volition/will, written

71 idealistic, highly moral

72 beautiful

73 should allow/receive no familiar intimacy with

74 dealings

honesty from what it is to a bawd⁷⁵ than the force of honesty can translate beauty into his likeness.⁷⁶ This was sometime a paradox,⁷⁷ but now the time gives it proof.⁷⁸ I did love you

115 once.

Ophelia Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.

Hamlet You should not have believed me, for virtue cannot so inoculate our old stock⁷⁹ but we shall relish of it.⁸⁰ I loved you not.

120 *Ophelia* I was the more deceived.

Hamlet Get thee to a nunnery. Why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners? I am myself indifferent⁸¹ honest, but yet I could accuse me of such things that it were better my mother had not borne me. I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious, with
125 more offences at my beck⁸² than I have thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in. What should such fellows as I do,⁸³ crawling between earth and heaven? We are arrant knaves,⁸⁴ all: believe none of us. Go thy ways to a nunnery. Where's your father?

130 *Ophelia* At home, my lord.

Hamlet Let the doors be shut upon him, that he may play the fool nowhere but in's own house. Farewell.

Ophelia O, help him, you sweet heavens!

75 pimp, procuress

76 can transform/transmute beauty into its likeness

77 this was once something contrary to received opinion/belief

78 the current state of things shows that it has been proven

79 engraft a trunk/stem of a tree (or a human lineage/family line)

80 preserve traces of the "old stock," our original natures

81 more or less, tolerably

82 command

83 fellows (negative/low connotations) like me work at/be actively involved in

84 notorious/downright/unmitigated rogues

Hamlet If thou dost marry, I'll give thee this plague for thy
 dowry: be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not 135
 escape calumny.⁸⁵ Get thee to a nunnery, go: farewell. Or, if
 thou wilt needs marry, marry a fool, for wise men know well
 enough what monsters⁸⁶ you⁸⁷ make of them. To a nunnery,
 go, and quickly too. Farewell.

Ophelia O heavenly powers, restore him! 140

Hamlet I have heard of your paintings⁸⁸ too, well enough. God
 has given you one face, and you make yourselves another.
 You jig, you amble, and you lisp,⁸⁹ and nickname God's
 creatures,⁹⁰ and make your wantonness your ignorance.⁹¹ Go
 to,⁹² I'll no more on't;⁹³ it hath made me mad. I say, we will 145
 have no mo⁹⁴ marriage. Those that are married already – all
 but one⁹⁵ – shall live. The rest shall keep⁹⁶ as they are. To a
 nunnery, go.

EXIT HAMLET

Ophelia O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!
 The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye – tongue – sword, 150

85 slander

86 cuckolds (because cuckolds were supposed to grow horns on their heads)

87 women in general (as in Hamlet's next speech)

88 cosmetic painting of a woman's face

89 you dance a lively, up-and-down dance, you dance in a smooth, easy
 manner, you pretend to lisp (affectation of childlike nature)

90 another affectation

91 you pretend that your lewdness/unchastity is ignorance

92 come, come! (exclamation of disapproval)

93 I want no more to do with it

94 more

95 the king

96 remain

Th' expectancy and rose of the fair state,⁹⁷
 The glass of fashion⁹⁸ and the mold of form,⁹⁹
 Th' observed of¹⁰⁰ all observers, quite, quite down!¹⁰¹
 And I, of ladies most deject and wretched,
 155 That sucked the honey of his musicked¹⁰² vows,
 Now see that noble and most sovereign reason,¹⁰³
 Like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh,
 That unmatched form and feature of blown youth
 Blasted with ecstasy,¹⁰⁴ O, woe is me,
 160 T' have seen what I have seen, see what I see!

ENTER CLAUDIUS AND POLONIUS

Claudius Love? His affections do not that way tend,
 Nor what he spake, though it lacked form a little,
 Was not like madness. There's something in his soul,
 O'er which his melancholy sits on brood,
 165 And I do doubt the hatch and the disclose¹⁰⁵
 Will be some danger, which for to prevent
 I have in quick determination
 Thus set it down.¹⁰⁶ He shall with speed to England,¹⁰⁷

97 the source of hope and the peerless/matchless person of an unblemished nation

98 mirror of behavior/demeanor

99 pattern/model of rank, quality, excellence, manners

100 he who was celebrated/respected by

101 descended, fallen

102 harmonious

103 most superlative mental power

104 that unmatched image of blossoming/flowering youth and comeliness blighted by madness

105 hatching, and I do fear/suspect that what will emerge from this hatching

106 authoritative decision decided (*and* written)

107 he must and will hurry to England

For the demand of our neglected tribute.¹⁰⁸
 Haply the seas and countries different, 170
 With variable objects,¹⁰⁹ shall expel
 This something-settled¹¹⁰ matter in his heart,
 Whereon¹¹¹ his brains still beating puts¹¹² him thus
 From fashion of himself.¹¹³ What think you on't?
Polonius It shall do well. But yet do I believe 175
 The origin and commencement of his grief
 Sprung from neglected love. (*to his daughter*) How now,
 Ophelia!
 You need not tell us what Lord Hamlet said:
 We heard it all. (*to the King*) My lord, do as you please,
 But, if you hold it fit,¹¹⁴ after the play 180
 Let his queen mother all alone entreat him
 To show his grief. Let her be round¹¹⁵ with him;
 And I'll be placed, so please you, in the ear¹¹⁶
 Of all their conference. If she find him not,¹¹⁷
 To England send him, or confine¹¹⁸ him where 185
 Your wisdom best shall think.

108 for the urgent/peremptory request of our disregarded/still unpaid tax/
 homage (the "Danegeld")

109 different countries and diverse material things

110 to some extent fixed/established

111 on which

112 always thrashing/dashing upon pushes, shoves

113 away from his normal behavior

114 think it proper/suitable

115 blunt, straightforward

116 within hearing

117 does not find out/learn about him

118 shut up, banish, imprison

ACT 3 • SCENE I

Claudius

It shall be so:

Madness in great ones must not unwatched go.

EXEUNT

SCENE 2

The castle

ENTER HAMLET AND PLAYERS

Hamlet Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly¹ on the tongue. But if you mouth it² as many of your players³ do, I had as lief⁴ the town-crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw⁵ the air too much with your hand – thus – but use all gently,⁶ for in the very torrent, tempest, and – as I 5
 may say – the whirlwind of passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness.⁷ O, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow⁸ tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings,⁹ who for the most part are capable of 10
 nothing but inexplicable¹⁰ dumbshows and noise.¹¹ I would

1 lightly, nimbly

2 declaim it, pompously/oratorically

3 players in general (that is, not necessarily speaking of these players)

4 as willingly

5 also do not gesticulate to and fro

6 perform everything like men of good breeding/birth/gentlemen

7 come to possess/get and generate/create a restraint/moderation that may give your words/speech smoothness

8 boisterous, wig-wearing fellow (negative/low connotation)

9 burst the ears of those in the cheap places, on the bare ground in front of the stage, without seating (implying less wealth and less education/learning)

10 nonverbal (and therefore unable to be explained in words)

11 acting without any words (in current usage, “mime-shows”) and clamor/loud shouting

have such a fellow whipped for o'erdoing Termagant.¹² It
out-herods Herod.¹³ Pray you, avoid it.

First Player I warrant¹⁴ your honor.

- 15 *Hamlet* 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.¹⁵ For anything so o'erdone is from the
purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now,¹⁶
20 was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature, to virtue
her own feature,¹⁷ scorn¹⁸ her own image, and the very age
and of the time his form and pressure.¹⁹ Now this overdone,
or come off,²⁰ though it make the unskilful laugh cannot
but²¹ make the judicious grieve – the censure of the which
25 one must in your allowance²² o'erweigh a whole theater of
others. O, there be players that I have seen play, and heard
others praise, and that highly – not to speak it profanely²³ –

12 a violent character in the Mystery Plays, biblical folk-dramas popular in
England, thirteenth–sixteenth centuries

13 ruler of Galilee, who presided at the trial of Jesus: represented in the Mystery
Plays as almost hysterically violent

14 promise, guarantee

15 rule, do not transgress against the moderation of nature

16 aim/goal, both originally and now

17 shape, form

18 (a noun)

19 the age and essence/reality of the time itself its printed (“pressed-down-
on”) stamp/image/character

20 come off sluggishly/sloppily

21 though it make the ignorant/unwise laugh, can only

22 the condemnation/critical disapproval of whom must in your balancing of
pro and con

23 to treat the sacred irreverently (that is, that God and only God created
humankind)

that, neither having th' accent of Christians nor the gait²⁴ of
 Christian, pagan, nor man, have so strutted and bellowed that
 I have thought some of nature's journeymen²⁵ had made 30
 men, and not made them well, they imitated humanity so
 abominably.

First Player I hope we have reformed that indifferently²⁶ with
 us, sir.

Hamlet O, reform it altogether. And let those that play your 35
 clowns²⁷ speak no more than is set down for them, for there
 be of them that will themselves laugh, to set on some quantity
 of barren²⁸ spectators to laugh too, though, in the meantime,
 some necessary question²⁹ of the play be then to be
 considered. That's villanous,³⁰ and shows a most pitiful 40
 ambition in the fool that uses it. Go, make you ready.

EXEUNT PLAYERS

ENTER POLONIUS, ROSENCRANTZ, AND GUILDENSTERN

(*to Polonius*) How now, my lord! Will the king hear this piece
 of work?

Polonius And the queen too, and that presently.

Hamlet (*to Polonius*) Bid the players make haste. 45

EXIT POLONIUS

24 carriage, manner of walking

25 a worker out of his apprenticeship but not yet certified as a master craftsman

26 corrected/improved that to a considerable/tolerable degree

27 fools, jesters

28 dull

29 subject, matter

30 shameful, atrocious, detestable

Will you two help to hasten them?

Rosencrantz Ay, my lord.

EXEUNT ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN

Hamlet What ho! Horatio!

ENTER HORATIO

Horatio Here, sweet³¹ lord, at your service.

50 *Hamlet* Horatio, thou art e'en as just³² a man
As e'er my conversation coped withal.³³

Horatio O, my dear lord –

Hamlet Nay, do not think I flatter,
For what advancement³⁴ may I hope from thee
That no revenue hast but thy good spirits,
55 To feed and clothe thee? Why should the poor be flattered?
No, let the candied tongue lick absurd³⁵ pomp,
And crook the pregnant³⁶ hinges of the knee
Where thrift may follow fawning.³⁷ Dost thou hear?
Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice
60 And could of men distinguish her election,³⁸
S'hath sealed³⁹ thee for herself, for thou hast been

31 dear

32 uniformly/regularly impartial/even-tempered

33 my experience in society/acquaintance has encountered/met with

34 promotion, preferment (political profit)

35 let the sugared/flattering/fawning/lying tongue lick ridiculous/silly

36 bend/bow the ready

37 there where prosperity/success may follow pretense of servile fondness (as a dog wags its tail)

38 make distinctions about her careful choice

39 she hath marked/decided on

As one, in suff'ring all, that suffers⁴⁰ nothing,
 A man that Fortune's buffets⁴¹ and rewards
 Hast ta'en with equal thanks. And blest are those
 Whose blood⁴² and judgment are so well commedled⁴³ 65
 That they are not a pipe⁴⁴ for Fortune's finger
 To sound⁴⁵ what stop she please. Give me that man
 That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him
 In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart,
 As I do thee. – Something⁴⁶ too much of this. – 70
 There is a play to-night before the king.
 One scene of it comes near⁴⁷ the circumstance
 Which I have told thee, of my father's death.
 I prithee, when thou seest that act afoot,⁴⁸
 Even with the very comment⁴⁹ of thy soul 75
 Observe mine uncle. If his occuted⁵⁰ guilt
 Do not itself unkennel⁵¹ in one speech,
 It is a damnèd ghost⁵² that we have seen,

40 like one who, while experiencing/passing through everything, has been damaged/injured

41 blows

42 disposition, temper, mood, passion

43 commingled, mixed together

44 tube-like musical instrument made of reed or wood, blown on at one end, while the fingers cover and uncover holes ("stops") to produce variable pitches

45 blow, play

46 rather, a little

47 close to

48 performance/scene going on

49 true/reliable critical powers

50 hidden, secret

51 bring out into the light (literally, to come out of a lair, like a hunted animal)

52 a spirit from hell

And my imaginations are as foul⁵³
 80 As Vulcan's stithy.⁵⁴ Give him heedful⁵⁵ note,
 For I mine eyes will rivet to his face,
 And after we will both our judgments join
 In censure of his seeming.⁵⁶

Horatio Well,⁵⁷ my lord.
 If 'a steal aught the whilst this play is playing,
 85 And 'scape detecting, I will pay the theft.

ENTER TRUMPETS AND KETTLEDRUMS

FLOURISH SOUNDS

Hamlet They are coming to the play; I must be idle.⁵⁸
 Get you a place.

ENTER KING, QUEEN, POLONIUS, OPHELIA,
 ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, LORDS ATTENDANT,
 AND GUARDS CARRYING TORCHES

Claudius How fares⁵⁹ our cousin Hamlet?

Hamlet Excellent, i' faith, of the chameleon's dish.⁶⁰ I eat the
 90 air, promise-crammed. You cannot feed capons⁶¹ so.

Claudius I have nothing with⁶² this answer, Hamlet. These
 words are not mine.

53 dirty, polluted

54 the god of metalworking's smithy/forge

55 careful/attentive/watchful notice

56 judgment/opinion (negative connotations) of his appearance

57 that's good/fine

58 frivolous, lightheaded

59 does (or eats)

60 air (which chameleons had long been thought to feed upon)

61 castrated cocks, crammed with food to make them better eating

62 I obtain, understand nothing by/from

- Hamlet* No, nor mine now. (*to Polonius*) My lord, you played⁶³ once i' the university, you say?
- Polonius* That did I, my lord, and was accounted a good actor. 95
- Hamlet* What did you enact?
- Polonius* I did enact Julius Caesar. I was killed i' the Capitol.⁶⁴ Brutus killed me.
- Hamlet* It was a brute part of him to kill so capital⁶⁵ a calf there.—Be the players ready? 100
- Rosencrantz* Ay, my lord. They stay upon your patience.⁶⁶
- Gertrude* Come hither, my dear Hamlet. Sit by me.
- Hamlet* (*approaches Ophelia*) No, good mother. Here's metal more attractive.⁶⁷
- Polonius* (*to King*) O, ho! Do you mark that? 105
- Hamlet* Lady, shall I lie in your lap?⁶⁸

HE LIES AT OPHELIA'S FEET

- Ophelia* No, my lord.
- Hamlet* I mean, my head upon your lap?
- Ophelia* Ay, my lord.
- Hamlet* Do you think I meant country matters?⁶⁹ 110
- Ophelia* I think nothing, my lord.
- Hamlet* That's a fair thought to lie⁷⁰ between maids' legs.
- Ophelia* What is, my lord?

63 acted

64 Roman temple, located on a hill

65 it was a cruel/coarse role/affair for him to kill so preeminent, important

66 wait for your leave/permission

67 magnetic

68 a clearly sexual allusion

69 rural/peasantlike matters (another sexual allusion, with a pun on "cunt")

70 put/place (with an unmistakable pun)

Hamlet Nothing

115 *Ophelia* You are merry,⁷¹ my lord.

Hamlet Who, I?

Ophelia Ay, my lord.

Hamlet O God, your only jig-maker.⁷² What should a man do
but be merry? For look you how cheerfully my mother
120 looks, and my father died within's⁷³ two hours.

Ophelia Nay, 'tis twice two months, my lord.

Hamlet So long? Nay then, let the devil wear black,⁷⁴ for I'll
have a suit of sables.⁷⁵ O heavens! Die two months ago, and
not forgotten yet? Then there's hope a great man's memory
125 may outlive his life half a year. But by'r Lady, he must build
churches,⁷⁶ then, or else shall 'a suffer not⁷⁷ thinking on, with
the hobby-horse,⁷⁸ whose epitaph is "For O, for O,
the hobby-horse is forgot."

HAUTBOYS⁷⁹ PLAY. THE DUMB-SHOW⁸⁰ ENTERS

ENTER A KING AND A QUEEN VERY LOVINGLY, THE QUEEN
EMBRACING HIM, AND HE HER. SHE KNEELS, AND MAKES SHOW

71 pleasant, cheerful (with possibly a pun on "merry" = "tipsy")

72 the only composer of comic interludes

73 within this

74 the devil indeed wore black

75 black (though the soft, rich fur is dark brown; "black" is of course the color of mourning clothes)

76 he (the dead man) must have financed/arranged for the building of churches

77 not be permitted/allowed to be thought about

78 along with the hobby horse, a character in the traditional May games (and also the morris dance), popularly thought of as likely to be forgotten; the performer wore a wickerwork representation of a horse around the waist

79 oboes

80 mime

OF PROTESTATION⁸¹ UNTO HIM. HE TAKES HER UP, AND
 DECLINES⁸² HIS HEAD UPON HER NECK. HE LIES HIM DOWN
 UPON A BANK OF FLOWERS. SHE, SEEING HIM ASLEEP, LEAVES
 HIM. ANON COMES IN A FELLOW, TAKES OFF HIS⁸³ CROWN,
 KISSES IT, AND POURS POISON IN THE SLEEPER'S EARS, AND
 EXITS. THE QUEEN RETURNS, FINDS THE KING DEAD, AND
 MAKES PASSIONATE ACTION.⁸⁴ THE POISONER, WITH SOME
 THREE OR FOUR,⁸⁵ COMES IN AGAIN. THEY SEEM TO
 CONDOLE⁸⁶ WITH HER. THE DEAD BODY IS CARRIED AWAY. THE
 POISONER WOOS THE QUEEN WITH GIFTS. SHE SEEMS HARSH⁸⁷
 AWHILE, BUT IN THE END ACCEPTS LOVE.

EXEUNT

Ophelia What means this, my lord?

Hamlet Marry, this is miching mallecho.⁸⁸ It means mischief.

130

Ophelia Belike this show imports the argument⁸⁹ of the play.

ENTER PROLOGUE⁹⁰

Hamlet We shall know by this fellow. The players cannot keep
 counsel;⁹¹ they'll tell all.

Ophelia Will 'a tell us what this show meant?

81 a solemn oath/request

82 helps/raises her up and lowers

83 the sleeping king's

84 strongly emotional motions/gestures

85 three or four men

86 grieve, lament, express sympathy

87 disinclined

88 skulking/sneaking mischief/misdeeds: MEECHing MALecko

89 perhaps/possibly this performance/spectacle introduces/expresses the
 theme/subject

90 an actor who delivers/speaks the prologue of the play

91 keep a secret, hold their tongues

- 135 *Hamlet* Ay, or any show that you'll show him. Be not you
 ashamed to show, he'll not shame to tell you what it means.
- Ophelia* You are naught,⁹² you are naught: I'll mark the play.
- Prologue* For us, and for our tragedy,
 Here stooping⁹³ to your clemency,
- 140 We beg your hearing patiently.

EXIT

- Hamlet* Is this a prologue, or the posy of⁹⁴ a ring?
- Ophelia* 'Tis brief, my lord.
- Hamlet* As woman's love.

ENTER TWO PLAYERS, KING AND QUEEN

- Player King* Full thirty times hath Phoebus' cart⁹⁵ gone round
 145 Neptune's salt wash and Tellus' orbèd ground,⁹⁶
 And thirty dozen moons with borrowed sheen⁹⁷
 About the world have times twelve thirties⁹⁸ been,
 Since love our hearts, and Hymen⁹⁹ did our hands,
 Unite commutual in most sacred bands.¹⁰⁰
- 150 *Player Queen* So many journeys may the sun and moon
 Make us again count o'er ere love be done!
 But woe is me, you are so sick of late,

92 wicked, naughty

93 bowing, submitting

94 inscription on

95 the sun's chariot

96 the sea god's salt waves/water and the earth god's rounded lands

97 gleam, radiance

98 "times twelve thirties" = "twelve times thirty" (360 months = 30 years)

99 Greek god of marriage

100 mutually, reciprocally in most sacred bonds

So far from cheer and from your former state,
 That I distrust you.¹⁰¹ Yet though I distrust,
 Discomfort you, my lord, it nothing must,¹⁰² 155
 For women fear too much, even as they love,
 And women's fear and love hold quantity¹⁰³
 In neither aught, or in extremity.¹⁰⁴
 Now, what my love is, proof hath made you know;
 And as my love is sized, my fear is so.¹⁰⁵ 160
 Where love is great, the littlest doubts are fear;
 Where little fears grow great, great love grows there.
Player King 'Faith, I must leave thee, love, and shortly too;
 My operant powers their functions leave to do,¹⁰⁶
 And thou shalt live in this fair world behind,¹⁰⁷ 165
 Honored, beloved – and haply one as kind
 For husband shalt thou –
Player Queen O, confound¹⁰⁸ the rest!
 Such love must needs be treason in my breast.
 In second husband let me be accurst! 170
 None wed the second but who killed the first.
Hamlet (*aside*) That's wormwood.¹⁰⁹
Player Queen The instances that second marriage move¹¹⁰

101 doubt you, worry about you

102 the fact that *she* worries ought not to worry *him* (“discomfort”: “sadden, deprive of comfort”)

103 preserve/keep proportion (to each other)

104 neither in little things nor in large ones

105 just as my love is large, my fear is the same

106 my vital forces stop their work

107 after me

108 to hell with

109 bitter/unpleasant (wormwood: a singularly bitter herb)

110 causes/motives that second marriage originate

Are base respects of thrift,¹¹¹ but none of love:
 175 A second time I kill my husband dead
 When second husband kisses me in bed.
Player King I do believe you think what now you speak,
 But what we do determine oft we break.¹¹²
 Purpose is but the slave to memory,
 180 Of violent birth, but poor validity;¹¹³
 Which now, like fruit unripe, sticks on the tree,
 But fall, unshaken, when they mellow¹¹⁴ be.
 Most necessary 'tis that we forget
 To pay ourselves what to ourselves is debt.
 185 What to ourselves in passion we propose,
 The passion ending, doth the purpose lose.
 The violence¹¹⁵ of either grief or joy
 Their own enactures with themselves¹¹⁶ destroy:
 Where joy most revels,¹¹⁷ grief doth most lament:
 190 Grief joys, joy grieves, on slender accident.¹¹⁸
 This world is not for aye,¹¹⁹ nor 'tis not strange
 That even our loves should with our fortunes change,
 For 'tis a question left us yet to prove,
 Whether love lead¹²⁰ fortune, or else fortune¹²¹ love.

111 shabby/degrading/selfish considerations of an economic nature

112 decide upon/resolve often we fail to act upon

113 of vivid/intense birth, but poor soundness

114 ripe, mature

115 VIOLENCE

116 performance/actuation with their own violence/extreme natures

117 takes pleasure, enjoys itself, makes merry

118 slight/trifling chance/fortune

119 ever

120 shows the way for, guides

121 fortune leads

The great man down, you mark his favorite flies;¹²² 195
 The poor advanced¹²³ makes friends of enemies.
 And hitherto¹²⁴ doth love on fortune tend,¹²⁵
 For who not needs shall never lack a friend,
 And who in want a hollow friend doth try¹²⁶
 Directly seasons¹²⁷ him his enemy. 200
 But orderly¹²⁸ to end where I begun,
 Our wills and fates do so contrary¹²⁹ run
 That our devices¹³⁰ still are overthrown:
 Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own.
 So think thou wilt no second husband wed, 205
 But die¹³¹ thy thoughts when thy first lord¹³² is dead.
Player Queen Nor earth to me give food, nor heaven light,
 Sport and repose lock from me day and night –
 To desperation turn my trust and hope,
 An anchor's¹³³ cheer in prison be my scope¹³⁴ – 210
 Each opposite that blanks the face of joy
 Meet what I would have well, and it destroy¹³⁵ –

122 the person on whom he has showered regard and favors flees

123 the poor man raised up/promoted

124 thus far (in the long history of humanity)

125 attend, wait upon

126 an insincere friend puts to the proof

127 ripens, matures

128 in a disciplined/well-conducted manner

129 conTRArY

130 purposes, intentions

131 expire, perish

132 husband

133 anchorite/hermit's fare/food/entertainment

134 goal, desired end

135 may each adverse force that turns pale the face of joy have an encounter with what I want, and destroy it

Both here and hence¹³⁶ pursue me lasting strife –
 If once a widow, ever I be wife!

215 *Hamlet* If she should break it¹³⁷ now!

Player King 'Tis deeply sworn. Sweet, leave me here awhile.
 My spirits grow dull, and fain I would beguile
 The tedious day with sleep.¹³⁸

HE SLEEPS

Player Queen Sleep rock thy brain,¹³⁹
 And never come mischance between us twain!¹⁴⁰

EXIT

220 *Hamlet* (to *Gertrude*) Madam, how like you this play?

Gertrude The lady doth protest too much, methinks.

Hamlet O, but she'll keep her word.

Claudius Have you heard the argument?¹⁴¹ Is there no
 offence in 't?

225 *Hamlet* No, no, they do but jest, poison in jest – no
 offence i' the world.

Claudius What do you¹⁴² call the play?

Hamlet "The Mouse-trap." Marry, how? Tropically.¹⁴³ This
 play is the image¹⁴⁴ of a murder done in Vienna. Gonzago is

136 here on earth (in this life) and afterward (in life eternal)

137 her vow

138 listless/depressed, and I want to turn the wearisome day in a more
 pleasant/cheerful direction by sleeping

139 sleep soothe thy brain (as a child is soothed by being rocked)

140 bad luck, disaster between the two of us

141 the contents/story

142 what's the play called

143 metaphorically

144 copy, likeness, imitation

the duke's name; his wife, Baptista. You shall see anon. 'Tis a 230
 knavish piece of work – but what o' that? Your Majesty, and
 we that have free¹⁴⁵ souls, it touches us not. Let the galled
 jade wince:¹⁴⁶ our withers¹⁴⁷ are unwrung.¹⁴⁸

ENTER LUCIANUS

This is one Lucianus, nephew to the King.

Ophelia You are as good as a chorus,¹⁴⁹ my lord. 235

Hamlet I could interpret¹⁵⁰ between you and your love, if I
 could see the puppets dallying.¹⁵¹

Ophelia You are keen,¹⁵² my lord, you are keen.

Hamlet It would cost you a groaning to take off my edge.¹⁵³

Ophelia Still better,¹⁵⁴ and worse.¹⁵⁵ 240

Hamlet So you mistake¹⁵⁶ your husbands. (*to Player*) Begin,
 murderer. Leave thy damnable faces,¹⁵⁷ and begin. Come: the
 croaking raven doth bellow for revenge.

Lucianus Thoughts black, hands apt, drugs fit, and time
 agreeing,¹⁵⁸

145 honorable, innocent

146 let a chafed (made sore by harness/saddle rubbing), worn-out, worthless
 horse wince (in current usage, "if the shoe fits – and on us it doesn't –
 wear it")

147 high on a horse's back, between the shoulder blades

148 not hurt/wracked

149 an onstage performer who explains and annotates a play's action

150 supply the dialogue (as does a puppeteer, speaking on behalf of his puppets)

151 sporting (in current usage, "making out")

152 (1) sharp, bitter, (2) sexually aroused

153 at the loss of her virginity, to ease off/remove his sharpness/sexual desire

154 as a witticism

155 as a personal/social comment

156 miss take ("take in error")

157 leave off/stop making your horrible/worthy of damnation faces

158 appropriate, suitable/harmonious

- 245 Confederate season, else no creature seeing:¹⁵⁹
 Thou mixture rank, of¹⁶⁰ midnight weeds collected,
 With Hecate's¹⁶¹ ban thrice blasted, thrice infected,¹⁶²
 Thy natural magic and dire property¹⁶³
 On wholesome life usurp immediately.¹⁶⁴

HE POURS POISON INTO THE SLEEPER'S EARS

- 250 *Hamlet* He poisons him i' the garden for's estate.¹⁶⁵ His¹⁶⁶
 name's Gonzago. The story is extant, and written in very
 choice¹⁶⁷ Italian. You shall see anon how the murderer gets
 the love of Gonzago's wife.

Ophelia The king rises.

- 255 *Hamlet* What, frighted with false fire?¹⁶⁸

Gertrude How fares my lord?

Polonius Give o'er¹⁶⁹ the play.

Claudius Give me some light. Away!

Polonius Lights, lights, lights!

EXEUNT ALL BUT HAMLET AND HORATIO

159 cooperative time/occasion, no other creature seeing

160 coarse/loathsome/violent, from

161 deity of ghosts and magic (properly pronounced HECaTEE, the name is here pronounced HECate)

162 curse three times blighted/balefully affected, three times imbued/saturated/impregnated

163 innate magic and dreadful/terrible characteristic/nature

164 take immediate control/seize possession of healthy life

165 for his rank, fortune

166 the King's

167 fine, excellent

168 blank bullets

169 leave off, finish, stop

Hamlet Why, let the stricken¹⁷⁰ deer go weep, 260
 The hart ungallèd¹⁷¹ play,
 For some must watch, while some must sleep:
 So runs the world away.

Would not this, sir, and a forest of feathers¹⁷² – if the rest of
 my fortunes Turk¹⁷³ with me – with two Provincial roses on 265
 my razed¹⁷⁴ shoes, get me a fellowship in a cry of players?¹⁷⁵

Horatio Half a share.

Hamlet A whole one, I.¹⁷⁶

For thou dost know, O Damon¹⁷⁷ dear,
 This realm dismantled was 270
 Of Jove himself,¹⁷⁸ and now reigns here
 A very, very – pajock.¹⁷⁹

Horatio You might have rhymed.¹⁸⁰

Hamlet O good Horatio, I'll take¹⁸¹ the ghost's word for a
 thousand pound. Didst perceive? 275

Horatio Very well, my lord.

170 wounded

171 undistressed stag

172 actors' costumes included befeathered hats

173 change completely (the basis of the phrase is conversion from Christianity to Islam)

174 roses from Provence on my shoes, decorated with slashes

175 a partnership (as a playwright) in a pack of actors

176 say I

177 Hamlet is not being capricious: Damon and Pythias were proverbial friends in ancient Greece

178 of Hamlet's Jove-like father

179 peacock

180 the comment is not aimed not at Hamlet's poetic abilities but at the King: the predictable rhyme for "was" – and Hamlet visibly delays, at this point – would have been "ass"

181 accept a bet on

Hamlet Upon¹⁸² the talk of the poisoning?

Horatio I did very well note him.

Hamlet Ah, ha! Come, some music! Come, the recorders!¹⁸³

280 For if the king like not the comedy,
Why then, belike¹⁸⁴ he likes it not, perdy.¹⁸⁵

Come, some music!

ENTER ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN

Guildenstern Good my lord, vouchsafe¹⁸⁶ me a word with you.

Hamlet Sir, a whole history.

285 *Guildenstern* The king, sir –

Hamlet Ay, sir, what of¹⁸⁷ him?

Guildenstern Is in his retirement¹⁸⁸ marvellous distempered.¹⁸⁹

Hamlet With drink, sir?

Guildenstern No, my lord, rather with choler.¹⁹⁰

290 *Hamlet* Your wisdom should show itself more richer to
signify¹⁹¹ this to his doctor – for, for me to put him to his
purgation¹⁹² would perhaps plunge him into far more choler.

182 right after

183 wooden flutes played in a vertical position (modern flutes are made of metal and played transversely)

184 probably

185 by God (*par dieu*)

186 grant

187 about

188 withdrawal from this public location

189 astonishingly disordered/out of temper

190 anger

191 better/of more worth, to communicate

192 “choler” can mean (though here it obviously does not) an excess of bile (“biliousness”), which was treated by use of a cathartic; purgation: emptying the bowels

- Guildestern* Good my lord, put your discourse into some frame
and start¹⁹³ not so wildly from my affair.¹⁹⁴
- Hamlet* I am tame,¹⁹⁵ sir. Pronounce.¹⁹⁶ 295
- Guildestern* The queen, your mother, in most great affliction of
spirit, hath sent me to you.
- Hamlet* You are welcome.
- Guildestern* Nay, good my lord, this courtesy is not of the right
breed.¹⁹⁷ If it shall please you to make me a wholesome¹⁹⁸ 300
answer, I will do your mother's commandment. If not, your
pardon¹⁹⁹ and my return shall be the end of my business.
- Hamlet* Sir, I cannot.
- Rosencrantz* What, my lord?
- Hamlet* Make you a wholesome answer. My wit's diseased. 305
But, sir, such answer as I can make, you shall command – or,
rather, as you say, my mother. Therefore no more, but to the
matter. My mother, you say –
- Rosencrantz* Then thus she says: your behavior hath struck her
into amazement and admiration.²⁰⁰ 310
- Hamlet* O wonderful son, that can so stonish²⁰¹ a mother!
But is there no sequel at the heels of this mother's
admiration? Impart.²⁰²

193 order/logic and do not leap/jump

194 business

195 under control

196 speak

197 strain, species

198 sound

199 permission to leave

200 wonder

201 O son full of wonder, who can so astonish

202 communicate

Rosencrantz She desires to speak with you in her closet,²⁰³ ere
315 you go to bed.

Hamlet We shall obey, were she ten times our mother.²⁰⁴
Have you any further trade²⁰⁵ with us?

Rosencrantz My lord, you once did love me.

Hamlet So I do still, by these pickers and stealers.²⁰⁶

320 *Rosencrantz* Good my lord, what is your cause of distemper?²⁰⁷
You do surely bar the door upon your own liberty, if you
deny²⁰⁸ your griefs to your friend.

Hamlet Sir, I lack advancement.²⁰⁹

Rosencrantz How can that be, when you have the voice of the
325 King himself for your succession²¹⁰ in Denmark?

Hamlet Ay, but sir, “While the grass grows”²¹¹ – the
proverb is something musty.²¹²

ENTER PLAYERS WITH RECORDERS

O, the recorders! Let me see one. (*to Rosencrantz*) To
withdraw²¹³ with you – why do you go about to recover the

203 private room

204 a quixotic observation that no one appears to quite understand

205 commerce, dealings (an insult: someone who is “in trade” is of inferior social status)

206 hands: the catechism in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer warns, “keep my hands from picking and stealing”

207 mental disorder, derangement

208 refuse to admit/acknowledge

209 progress in status, upward movement, promotion

210 expressed will/choice of the King himself for your succession to the throne

211 while the grass grows, the horse starves

212 a bit antiquated/stale

213 to be intimate/private

- wind of me, as if you would drive me into a toil?²¹⁴ 330
- Guildestern* O, my lord, if my duty be too bold,²¹⁵ my love is too unmannerly.²¹⁶
- Hamlet* I do not well understand that. Will you play upon this pipe?
- Guildestern* My lord, I cannot. 335
- Hamlet* I pray you.
- Guildestern* Believe me, I cannot.
- Hamlet* I do beseech you.
- Guildestern* I know no touch of it,²¹⁷ my lord.
- Hamlet* 'Tis as easy as lying. Govern these ventages²¹⁸ with 340
your fingers and thumb, give it breath with your mouth, and it will discourse²¹⁹ most eloquent music. Look you, these are the stops.
- Guildestern* But these cannot I command to any utterance of harmony.²²⁰ I have not the skill. 345
- Hamlet* Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you make of me! You would play upon me; you would seem to know my stops; you would pluck out the heart of my mystery;²²¹ you would sound²²² me from my lowest note to

214 to get upwind of me (from hunting; smelling a person upwind of it, the hunted animal runs in the other direction, right into the "toil," a net or nets placed for capture)

215 actions/ words be too daring/presumptuous

216 my love makes me rude/discourteous/wanting in good manners

217 I do not know how to touch/play on it

218 manage/work these finger holes/stops

219 utter

220 control, master to any harmonious/pleasing/agreeable effect

221 secrets

222 measure, plumb, examine

350 the top of my compass²²³ – and there is much music,
 excellent voice, in this little organ,²²⁴ yet cannot you make it
 speak. 'Sblood, do you think I am easier to be played on than
 a pipe? Call me what instrument you will, though you can
 fret²²⁵ me, yet you cannot play upon me.

ENTER POLONIUS

355 God bless you, sir!

Polonius My lord, the Queen would speak with you, and
 presently.

Hamlet Do you see yonder cloud that's almost in shape of a
 camel?

360 *Polonius* By the mass, and 'tis like a camel, indeed.

Hamlet Methinks it is like a weasel.

Polonius It is backed like²²⁶ a weasel.

Hamlet Or like a whale.

Polonius Very like a whale.

365 *Hamlet* Then I will come to my mother by and by.²²⁷ (*aside*)

They fool me to the top of my bent.²²⁸ (*to Polonius*) I will
 come by and by.

Polonius I will say so.

Hamlet “By and by” is easily said.

EXIT POLONIUS

370 Leave me, friends.

223 range of musical tones

224 sounds/musical capacity in this little musical instrument

225 (1) distress, gnaw at, (2) put fret bars on (like a guitar)

226 forms a back similar to

227 soon, right away

228 make a fool of/dupe me to the fullest degree of tension in my bow

EXEUNT ALL BUT HAMLET

'Tis now the very witching time of night,
 When churchyards yawn²²⁹ and hell itself breathes out
 Contagion²³⁰ to this world. Now could I drink hot blood
 And do such bitter²³¹ business as the day
 Would quake to look on. Soft! Now to my mother. 375
 O heart, lose not thy nature. Let not ever
 The soul of Nero²³² enter this firm²³³ bosom.
 Let me be cruel, not unnatural.
 I will speak daggers to her, but use none.
 My tongue and soul in this be hypocrites.²³⁴ 380
 How in my words somever she be shent,²³⁵
 To give them seals²³⁶—never, my soul, consent!

EXIT

229 gape open

230 moral pestilence/plague/poison

231 painful, cruel, virulent

232 emperor of Rome, who murdered his mother, Agrippina

233 constant, steadfast

234 must be dissemblers/pretenders

235 howsoever she be disgraced in what I say

236 carry words into effect, /transform them into deeds (as seals legitimate and complete written documents)

SCENE 3

The castle

ENTER CLAUDIUS, ROSENCRANTZ, AND GUILDENSTERN

Claudius I like him not, nor stands it safe with us¹
 To let his madness range.² Therefore prepare you.
 I your commission will forthwith dispatch,³
 And he to England shall along with you.
 5 The terms of our estate⁴ may not endure
 Hazard so near us as doth hourly grow
 Out of his brows.

Guildenstern We will ourselves provide.⁵
 Most holy and religious⁶ fear it is
 To keep those many many bodies safe
 10 That live and feed upon⁷ your majesty.

Rosencrantz The single⁸ and peculiar life is bound,
 With all the strength and armor of the mind,
 To keep itself from noyance,⁹ but much more
 That spirit upon whose weal¹⁰ depends and rests
 15 The lives of many. The cess¹¹ of majesty
 Dies not alone; but, like a gulf¹² doth draw

1 I do not approve of him, nor does it remain safe for me

2 roam at large, extend itself

3 complete immediately

4 the circumstances of my rank/place

5 prepare/ready ourselves

6 pious/conscientious

7 by reliance on

8 individual

9 vexation, molestation ("annoyance")

10 welfare, well-being

11 cessation (death)

12 whirlpool

What's near it with it. It is a massy wheel,
 Fixed on the summit of the highest mount,
 To whose huge spokes ten thousand lesser things
 Are mortised and adjoined,¹³ which when it falls, 20
 Each small annexment (petty consequence!)
 Attends the boist'rous¹⁴ ruin. Never alone
 Did the king sigh, but with a general¹⁵ groan.
Claudius Arm¹⁶ you, I pray you, to this speedy voyage,
 For we will fetters¹⁷ put upon this fear, 25
 Which now goes too free-footed.
Rosencrantz, Guildenstern We will haste us.

EXEUNT ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN

ENTER POLONIUS

Polonius My lord, he's going to his mother's closet.
 Behind the arras I'll convey myself
 To hear the process.¹⁸ I'll warrant she'll tax him home,¹⁹
 And as you said – and wisely was it said – 30
 'Tis meet that some more audience than a mother
 (Since nature makes them partial) should o'erhear
 The speech, of vantage.²⁰ Fare you well, my liege.
 I'll call upon you ere you go to bed,

13 fastened/secured and united

14 adjunct/accessory of small, trivial/minor importance/little weight
 accompanies the painfully rough

15 universal

16 prepare yourselves for

17 chains, shackles

18 behind the hanging tapestry screen I'll place myself to hear what goes on

19 guarantee/predict she'll censure/reprove him pointedly/effectively/
 directly

20 from an advantageous location

And tell you what I know.

35 *Claudius*

Thanks, dear my lord.

EXIT POLONIUS

O, my offence is rank,²¹ it smells to heaven,
 It hath the primal eldest curse²² upon't,
 A brother's murder. Pray can I not,
 Though inclination be as sharp²³ as will.
 40 My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent,
 And like a man to double²⁴ business bound
 I stand in pause²⁵ where I shall first begin,
 And both neglect. What if this cursèd hand
 Were thicker than itself with brother's blood,
 45 Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens
 To wash it white as snow? Whereto serves mercy²⁶
 But to confront the visage of offence?²⁷
 And what's in prayer but this two-fold force,
 To be forestalled²⁸ ere we come to fall,
 50 Or pardoned being down?²⁹ Then I'll look up,
 My fault is past. But O, what form of prayer
 Can serve my turn?³⁰ "Forgive me my foul murder?"

21 gross, excessive, exceedingly great

22 Cain's murder of his brother, Abel

23 disposition/propensity/liking be as keen/eager/intense

24 deceitful, two-faced

25 ready/embarking on I stand in hesitation

26 what use is mercy

27 but to stand up to/defy the face/appearance of sin, wrong

28 for us to be prevented/stopped

29 or to be pardoned having fallen

30 purpose

That cannot be, since I am still possessed
 Of those effects³¹ for which I did the murder,
 My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen. 55
 May one be pardoned and retain th' offence?
 In the corrupted currents³² of this world
 Offence's gilded hand may shove by³³ justice,
 And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize³⁴ itself
 Buys out the law. But 'tis not so above. 60
 There is no shuffling,³⁵ there the action lies
 In his³⁶ true nature, and we ourselves compelled,
 Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults,³⁷
 To give in³⁸ evidence. What then? what rests?³⁹
 Try what repentance can:⁴⁰ what can it not? 65
 Yet what can it when one can not repent?
 O wretched state! O bosom⁴¹ black as death!
 O limèd⁴² soul, that, struggling to be free,
 Art more engaged!⁴³ Help, angels! Make assay!⁴⁴
 Bow, stubborn knees; and, heart with strings⁴⁵ of steel, 70

31 contemplated results/purposes

32 course of events

33 hand covered with gold may shove to the side/away

34 reward

35 there, there is no trickery/evasion

36 the act/deed is spread out in its

37 even confronting, face to face, our sins

38 deliver, hand in

39 remains

40 can do

41 not the physical chest, but the thoughts harbored inside: in the heart

42 trapped/snared (as birdlime spread on branches catches birds)

43 entangled

44 try

45 sinews, fibers

Be soft as sinews of the newborn babe!
All may be well.

RETIRES AND KNEELS

ENTER HAMLET

Hamlet Now might I do it pat,⁴⁶ now he is praying;
And now I'll do't. (*draws his sword*) And so⁴⁷ 'a goes to
heaven;

75 And so am I revenged. That would be scanned.⁴⁸
A villain kills my father; and for that,
I, his sole son, do this same villain send
To heaven.

O, this is hire and salary,⁴⁹ not revenge.

80 'A took my father grossly, full of bread,⁵⁰
With all his crimes broad blown, as flush as May;⁵¹
And how his audit stands who knows save heaven?

But in our circumstance and course of thought,⁵²

'Tis heavy with⁵³ him. And am I then revenged,
85 To take him in the purging of his soul,⁵⁴

When he is fit and seasoned for his passage?⁵⁵

No!

46 readily, conveniently

47 thus

48 that needs to be examined/considered

49 being hired to do a job, and then being paid for it

50 took my father indecently, in the midst of life's sensual indulgences

51 his sins plainly/amply/emphatically in bloom

52 our earthly condition and usual/customary way of thinking

53 serious, gloomy

54 to catch him in the midst of cleansing/purifying his soul

55 ready and prepared/ripened for the transition from this world to the next

Up, sword,⁵⁶ and know thou a more horrid hent.⁵⁷
(he sheathes his sword) When he is drunk asleep, or in his rage,
 Or in th'incestuous pleasure of his bed; 90
 At gaming, a-swearing, or about some act
 That has no relish⁵⁸ of salvation in't;
 Then trip him, that his heels may kick at heaven,⁵⁹
 And that his soul may be as damned and black
 As hell, whereto it goes. My mother stays:⁶⁰ 95
 This physic but prolongs thy sickly days.

EXIT

Claudius (rising) My words fly up, my thoughts remain below:
 Words without thoughts never to heaven go.

EXIT.

56 back in your sheathe, sword

57 plan

58 trace, tinge, flavor

59 so he is facing in the proper direction, which for him is toward hell

60 waits

SCENE 4

The queen's closet

ENTER GERTRUDE AND POLONIUS

Polonius 'A will come straight. Look you lay home to him.

Tell him his pranks have been too broad to bear with,
 And that your grace hath screened¹ and stood between
 Much heat² and him. I'll silence me even here.³

5 Pray you, be round with him.

Hamlet (*within*) Mother, mother, mother!

Gertrude I'll warrant you. Fear me not. Withdraw, I hear him
 coming.

POLONIUS HIDES BEHIND THE ARRAS

ENTER HAMLET

Hamlet Now, mother, what's the matter?

Gertrude Hamlet, thou hast thy father⁴ much offended.⁵

10 *Hamlet* Mother, you have my father⁶ much offended.

Gertrude Come, come, you answer with an idle⁷ tongue.

Hamlet Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue.

Gertrude Why, how now,⁸ Hamlet!

Hamlet What's the matter now?

1 protected, sheltered

2 anger

3 be still/silent exactly/precisely here

4 the King

5 sinned against/wronged (*and/or* displeased/angered/pained)

6 the deceased king

7 frivolous, trifling

8 what's this

Gertrude Have you forgot me?⁹

Hamlet No, by the rood,¹⁰ not so!

You are the queen, your husband's brother's wife; 15

And – would it were not so – you are my mother.

Gertrude Nay, then, I'll set those to you that can speak.¹¹

Hamlet Come, come, and sit you down. You shall not budge.

(HE PREVENTS HER FROM RISING)

You go not till I set you up a glass¹²

Where you may see the inmost part of you. 20

Gertrude What wilt thou do? thou wilt not murder me?

Help, ho!

Polonius (*behind the arras*) What, ho! Help, help, help!

Hamlet (*drawing his sword*) How now! A rat?¹³ Dead for a
ducat,¹⁴ dead!

(HE THRUSTS HIS SWORD THROUGH THE ARRAS)

Polonius (*behind*) O, I am slain!

Gertrude O me, what hast thou done? 25

Hamlet Nay, I know not. Is it the king?

Gertrude O, what a rash and bloody deed is this!

Hamlet A bloody deed? Almost as bad, good mother,
As kill a king, and marry with his brother.

9 forgotten who I am

10 the crucifix, the true cross

11 I'll have you dealt with by those in authority

12 mirror

13 (perhaps referring to the noises rats made, attracting men to seek them out and kill them)

14 I'll kill whoever it is, for the price of a ducat (or "I'll bet a ducat this kills whoever it is")

Gertrude As kill a king!

30 *Hamlet* Ay, lady, 'twas my word.

(LIFTS UP THE ARRAY AND REVEALS POLONIUS, DEAD)

Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell!

I took thee for thy better. Take thy fortune.¹⁵

Thou find'st to be too busy is some danger.¹⁶

(to his mother) Leave¹⁷ wringing of your hands. Peace!¹⁸ Sit
you down

35 And let me wring your heart, for so I shall,

If it be made of penetrable stuff,

If damnèd custom have not brazed¹⁹ it so

That it be proof and bulwark against sense.²⁰

Gertrude What have I done, that thou dar'st wag thy tongue

In noise so rude against me?

40 *Hamlet* Such an act

That blurs the grace and blush of modesty,²¹

Calls²² virtue hypocrite, takes off the rose²³

From the fair forehead of an innocent love

And sets a blister²⁴ there, makes marriage-vows

15 accept your luck

16 you've discovered/learned that to be prying/meddlesome/officious
involves/carries with it a degree of risk

17 stop

18 be still/silent

19 habit has not hardened it (like brass)

20 of tested and experienced strength (like armor) and a fortification against
emotion/feeling

21 stains/disfigures/befouls the attractive/becoming quality and glow of
proper womanly behavior

22 proclaims

23 beauty, fragrance (a sign of pure and virtuous love)

24 brand (prostitutes were branded on the forehead)

As false as dicers' oaths.²⁵ O, such a deed 45
 As from the body of contraction²⁶ plucks
 The very soul, and sweet religion makes
 A rhapsody²⁷ of words. Heaven's face doth glow
 O'er this solidity and compound mass²⁸
 With tristful visage,²⁹ as against the doom,³⁰ 50
 Is thought-sick³¹ at the act.

Gertrude Ay me, what act,
 That roars so loud, and thunders in the index?³²

Hamlet (*producing pictures*) Look here, upon this picture, and on
 this,
 The counterfeit presentment of two brothers.³³
 See what a grace was seated on this brow: 55
 Hyperion's³⁴ curls, the front³⁵ of Jove himself,
 An eye like Mars, to threaten and command;
 A station³⁶ like the herald Mercury³⁷
 New-lighted on a heaven-kissing³⁸ hill –

25 gamblers' vows/promises

26 marriage (which is a contract)

27 is turned/transformed into a confused mass/an exalted expression without
 rational, connected thought

28 this solid and composite mass (that is, the earth)

29 with sad/sorrowful face/features

30 as it would be if in full view of/facing the day of judgment

31 *compare* heart-sick or soul-sick

32 this prologue (of yours) (*compare* the pointing index finger, scanning down a
 listing/a table of contents)

33 imitated/copied image/likeness of two brothers: Hamlet's father and his
 father's brother, the King

34 Hyperion: a Titan, father of Helios, the sun god

35 face

36 stance, way/manner of standing

37 messenger/herald of the gods

38 newly alighted on a hill so very high that it touches the skies/heaven

60 A combination and a form³⁹ indeed
 Where every god did seem to set his seal,
 To give the world assurance of a man.
 This *was* your husband. Look you now what follows.
 Here *is* your husband, like a mildewed⁴⁰ ear,
 65 Blasting his wholesome⁴¹ brother. Have you eyes?
 Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed
 And batten on this moor?⁴² Ha! Have you eyes?
 You cannot call it love, for at your age
 The hey-day⁴³ in the blood is tame, it's humble
 70 And waits upon⁴⁴ the judgment, and what judgment
 Would step from this to this? Sense sure⁴⁵ you have,
 Else could you not have motion,⁴⁶ but sure that sense
 Is apoplexed,⁴⁷ for madness would not err,⁴⁸
 Nor sense to ecstasy was ne'er so thrall'd
 75 But it reserved some quantity of choice⁴⁹
 To serve in such a difference.⁵⁰ What devil was't
 That thus hath cozened you at hoodman-blind?⁵¹

39 shape, body

40 fungus-ridden

41 blighting (like an infectious disease) his healthy brother

42 give over/stop feeding and glut yourself on this waste ground/marsh

43 time of life with the highest level of excitement

44 of lowered urgency and waits for/defers to/serves

45 reliable perceptive faculties

46 be able to move

47 arrested, interfered with (an affliction believed to be caused by a sudden flow of blood to the brain)

48 go astray/wrong (that is, you cannot be mad, because this is not the sort of error that madness makes)

49 nor were the faculties of perception ever so enslaved by the raptures of passion that sense did not retain a certain amount of choice

50 to assist in such a dispute/quarrel

51 cheated/defrauded you at blindman's buff

Eyes without feeling, feeling without sight,
 Ears without hands or eyes, smelling sans all,⁵²
 Or but a sickly part of one true sense,⁵³ 80
 Could not so mope.⁵⁴

O shame, where is thy blush? Rebellious hell,
 If thou canst mutine⁵⁵ in a matron's bones,
 To flaming youth let virtue be as wax
 And melt in her own fire. Proclaim no shame 85
 When the compulsive ardor gives the charge,⁵⁶
 Since frost itself as actively doth burn⁵⁷
 And reason panders will.⁵⁸

Gertrude O Hamlet, speak no more.
 Thou turn'st mine eyes into⁵⁹ my very soul,
 And there I see such black and grainèd spots⁶⁰ 90
 As will not leave their tinct.⁶¹

Hamlet Nay, but to live
 In the rank sweat of an enseamed bed,
 Stewed in corruption,⁶² honeying and making love

52 without everything

53 even just a feeble/weak/unhealthy portion of real/genuine/honest sense

54 could not be so aimless/spiritless

55 incite to revolt, rebel, mutiny

56 the enforced/coercive heat of passion/desire signals/sounds the impetuous attack

57 even the frigidity/coldness (of a "matron" like Gertrude) burns just as actively

58 reason serves as a pimp/pander for emotion/will

59 "into" expresses a direction, rather than a destination: Gertrude's vision has been redirected to look inward

60 the blemishes created by grain-produced dyes (colorfast and very durable)

61 which will not give up/lose their hue/color

62 greasy bed, steeped, overheated ("stew" = "whore"; "the stews" = "whore-houses")

Over the nasty sty⁶³ –

Gertrude O, speak to me no more.

95 These words like daggers enter in mine ears.

No more, sweet Hamlet!

Hamlet A murderer and a villain,

A slave that is not twentieth part the tittle

Of your precedent lord⁶⁴ – a Vice⁶⁵ of kings,

A cutpurse of the empire and the rule,⁶⁶

100 That from a shelf the precious diadem⁶⁷ stole

And put it in his pocket –

Gertrude No more!

Hamlet A king of shreds and patches⁶⁸ –

ENTER GHOST

Save me, and hover o'er me with your wings,

You heavenly guards! What would your gracious figure?⁶⁹

105 *Gertrude* Alas, he's mad!

Hamlet Do you not come your tardy son to chide,

That, lapsed in time and passion, lets go by⁷⁰

Th' important acting⁷¹ of your dread command?

O, say!

63 sweet-talking and making love over the foul/filthy place of bestial lust, a whorehouse

64 a rascal/fellow who is not a twentieth of a tenth (an exceedingly small percentage) of your prior husband

65 Vice was a villainous clown in the *Morality Plays*

66 a pickpocket/thief of the kingdom and the kingship

67 crown

68 of fragments/bits and pieces and botched-up/clumsy repairs

69 form, shape

70 son to scold, who, fallen away both in time and in passion, allows to slip by

71 weighty/grave/urgent execution

- Ghost* Do not forget. This visitation 110
 Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose.⁷²
 But, look, amazement⁷³ on thy mother sits.
 O, step between her and her fighting soul!
 Conceit⁷⁴ in weakest bodies strongest works.
 Speak to her, Hamlet.
- Hamlet* How is it with you, lady? 115
- Gertrude* Alas, how is't with you,
 That you do bend your eye on vacancy⁷⁵
 And with th' incorporal air do hold discourse?⁷⁶
 Forth at⁷⁷ your eyes your spirits wildly peep,⁷⁸
 And as the sleeping soldiers in th' alarm,⁷⁹ 120
 Your bedded hair like life in excrements
 Start up, and stand an end.⁸⁰ O gentle son,
 Upon the heat and flame of thy distemper⁸¹
 Sprinkle cool patience.⁸² Whereon do you look?
- Hamlet* On him, on him! Look you, how pale he glares! 125
 His form and cause conjoined,⁸³ preaching to stones,
 Would make them capable.⁸⁴ (*to Ghost*) Do not look upon me,

72 sharpen, urge on your almost dulled purpose

73 bewilderment, distraction

74 thoughts, ideas

75 you direct/turn your eye on nothingness

76 and speak/talk with the immaterial/disembodied air

77 through, from

78 out of control/violently show themselves

79 at the call to arms

80 your hair, spread flat, rises and stands on end like living forms that spring up in outgrowths/outshoots

81 disordered/deranged condition

82 composure

83 his figure and motives combined

84 able to understand/respond

Lest with this piteous⁸⁵ action you convert
 My stern effects.⁸⁶ Then what I have to do
 130 Will want true color⁸⁷ – tears perchance for⁸⁸ blood.

Gertrude To whom do you speak this?

Hamlet Do you see nothing
 there?

Gertrude Nothing at all. Yet all that is⁸⁹ I see.

Hamlet Nor did you nothing hear?

Gertrude No, nothing but ourselves.

Hamlet Why, look you there! Look how it⁹⁰ steals away!
 135 My father, in his habit as he lived!
 Look, where he goes, even now, out at the portal!⁹¹

EXIT GHOST

Gertrude This is the very coinage of your brain,
 This bodiless creation ecstasy
 Is very cunning⁹² in.

Hamlet Ecstasy?

140 My pulse as yours doth temperately⁹³ keep time,
 And makes as healthful music. It is not madness
 That I have uttered. Bring me to the test,

85 compassionate, tender (possibly “full of piety”?)

86 you turn back/away my severe/rigorous intended deeds

87 will be deprived of/lose/fall short of genuine reason/excuse/justification

88 instead of

89 is there

90 his continued use of “it,” rather than “he,” underlines Hamlet’s profound
 ambiguity toward the Ghost

91 doorway

92 in which madness is very sly/crafty/clever

93 moderately, mildly

And I the matter will re-word,⁹⁴ which madness
 Would gambol⁹⁵ from. Mother, for love of grace,
 Lay not that flattering unction⁹⁶ to your soul, 145
 That not your trespass,⁹⁷ but my madness speaks.
 It will but skin and film the ulcerous⁹⁸ place,
 Whiles rank corruption, mining⁹⁹ all within,
 Infects unseen. Confess yourself to heaven,
 Repent what's past, avoid what is to come; 150
 And do not spread the compost¹⁰⁰ on the weeds,
 To make them ranker. Forgive me this my virtue,
 For in the fatness of these pursy¹⁰¹ times
 Virtue itself of vice must pardon beg –
 Yea, curb and woo for leave to do him good.¹⁰² 155

Gertrude O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain.

Hamlet O, throw away the worser part of it
 And live the purer with the other half.
 Good night—but go not to mine uncle's bed.
 Assume¹⁰³ a virtue, if you have it not. 160
 That monster, custom, who all sense doth eat,
 Of habits devil,¹⁰⁴ is angel yet in this,

94 say again, repeat

95 leap, bound, spring away

96 self-gratifying soothing ointment (the action of anointing with oil, in certain rites of the church)

97 sin, fault (“Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us”)

98 it will only cover and film over the infected open sore (inner or outer)

99 digging under/away, undermining

100 mold, manure

101 purse-proud, wealthy

102 bow/cringe and woo for permission to do good for vice

103 adopt, simulate, pretend to

104 the devil (Satan) of habits

Hamlet Not this, by no means, that I bid¹¹⁶ you do:
 Let the bloat¹¹⁷ king tempt you again to bed,
 Pinch wanton¹¹⁸ on your cheek, call you his mouse,¹¹⁹
 And let him, for a pair of reechy kisses,
 Or paddling¹²⁰ in your neck with his damned fingers, 185
 Make you to ravel¹²¹ all this matter out,
 That I essentially¹²² am not in madness,
 But mad in craft.¹²³ 'Twere good you let him know,
 For who, that's but a queen – fair, sober, wise –
 Would from a paddock,¹²⁴ from a bat, a gib,¹²⁵ 190
 Such dear concernings hide?¹²⁶ Who would do so?
 No, in despite of sense¹²⁷ and secrecy,
 Unpeg¹²⁸ the basket on the house's top,
 Let the birds fly¹²⁹ and, like the famous¹³⁰ ape,
 To try conclusions,¹³¹ in the basket creep, 195

116 forbid

117 flabby, swollen (as a result of self-indulgence)

118 pinch lewdly/lasciviously

119 then, and later, a common term of endearment

120 squalid kisses, or toying, idly/fondly/playfully fingering

121 unwind, reel out (that is, give Hamlet away on “this matter”)

122 at bottom, intrinsically

123 but only mad in cunning/guile/ingenuity

124 toad

125 a castrated cat

126 hide such worthy/precious/glorious matters of importance

127 in contempt/disdain of sanity/intelligence/wisdom

128 unfasten, open

129 fly off/away

130 perhaps “famous” then, but unknown now: clearly, however, the experimentally minded ape crawls into the bird basket and falls off the housetop to his death

131 test the results, conduct an experiment

And break your own neck down.¹³²

Gertrude Be thou assured, if words be made of breath,
And breath of life, I have no life to breathe¹³³
What thou hast said to me.

Hamlet I must to England. You know that?

200 *Gertrude* Alack,¹³⁴

I had forgot. 'Tis so concluded on.¹³⁵

Hamlet There's letters sealed, and my two schoolfellows,
Whom I will trust as I will adders fanged,
They bear the mandate.¹³⁶ They must sweep my way
205 And marshal me to knavery.¹³⁷ Let it work,
For 'tis the sport to have the engineer
Hoist with his own petard¹³⁸ – and 't shall go hard
But I will delve one yard below their mines
And blow them at¹³⁹ the moon. O, 'tis most sweet
210 When in one line two crafts directly meet.¹⁴⁰
This man shall set me packing.¹⁴¹

132 on the way down

133 speak (that is, "repeat")

134 alas

135 decided

136 will trust as I will adders with fangs, carry the king's commission/orders

137 they must clear my way/provide me with an escort and usher/guide/
conduct me to trickery/roguery; Hamlet is clear that these things are to be
practiced *on* him, not *by* him

138 let it come to pass/be done, because it's fun and games to make the
designer/maker of military devices (bombs) be lifted/blown into the air by
his own bomb

139 it will turn out badly if I don't dig a yard below their barrels of gunpowder,
used like bombs, emplaced below a wall or fort and blow them nearly to

140 in a single/straight line two boats (*and/or* two ingenious/cunning/sly
arts/skills) come face to face (each traveling directly at the other)

141 this corpse will start me carrying/storing a load (*and* plotting, scheming)

I'll lug the guts into the neighbor room.
 Mother, good night. Indeed, this counsellor
 Is now most still, most secret and most grave,¹⁴²
 Who was in life a foolish, prating knave.¹⁴³
 Come, sir, to draw toward an end¹⁴⁴ with you.
 Good night, mother.

215

EXEUNT SEVERALLY, FIRST GERTRUDE, THEN HAMLET,
 DRAGGING POLONIUS

142 heavy, of great weight (*and* highly serious, requiring serious thought, as well as headed to his "grave")

143 chattering, / blabbing servant, menial

144 move (and pull) (and lead to) the completion of an action / purpose (*and* your death)

Act 4



SCENE I

The castle, that same night

ENTER CLAUDIUS, GERTRUDE, ROSENCRANTZ,
AND GUILDENSTERN

Claudius There's matter in these sighs. These profound heaves¹
You must translate: 'tis fit we understand them.
Where is your son?

Gertrude (to *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*) Bestow² this place on
us a little while.

EXEUNT ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN

5 Ah, my good lord, what have I seen to-night!

Claudius What, Gertrude? How does Hamlet?

Gertrude Mad as the sea and wind, when both contend
Which is the mightier. In his lawless fit,
Behind the arras hearing something stir,

¹ "profound heaves" = "deep, swelling sigh/wordless utterings"

² leave us

Whips out his rapier, cries, "A rat, a rat!" 10
 And in this brainish apprehension³ kills
 The unseen good old man.

Claudius O heavy deed!
 It had been so with us, had we⁴ been there.
 His liberty is full of threats to all,
 To you yourself, to us, to everyone. 15
 Alas, how shall this bloody deed be answered?
 It will be laid to us, whose providence
 Should have kept short, restrained and out of haunt⁵
 This mad young man. But so much was our love
 We would not⁶ understand what was most fit, 20
 But like the owner of a foul disease,
 To keep it from divulging, let it feed
 Even on the pith⁷ of life. Where is he gone?

Gertrude To draw apart⁸ the body he hath killed,
 O'er whom his very madness, like some ore⁹ 25
 Among a mineral of metals base,¹⁰
 Shows itself pure. 'A weeps for what is done.

Claudius O Gertrude, come away!¹¹
 The sun no sooner shall the mountains touch
 But we will ship him hence, and this vile deed 30

3 headstrong and entirely imagined notion

4 the same thing would have happened to me, had I

5 whose prudence/foresight should have restricted/limited and kept away
 from usual/customary places/company

6 did not wish/desire/want to

7 vital part, essence, substance

8 move/drag away/aside

9 mineral containing useful/precious metal (*and* "the metal itself")

10 of inferior quality, worthless

11 leave off (*or* "let us leave this public place")

We must, with all our majesty and skill,
Both countenance and excuse.¹² Ho, Guildenstern!

ENTER ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN

Friends both, go join you with¹³ some further aid.
Hamlet in madness hath Polonius slain,
35 And from his mother's closet hath he dragged him.
Go seek him out. Speak fair,¹⁴ and bring the body
Into the chapel.¹⁵ I pray you, haste in this.

EXEUNT ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN

Come, Gertrude, we'll call up our wisest friends,¹⁶
And let them know both what we mean to do
40 And what's untimely done. So haply slander,
Whose whisper o'er the world's diameter,
As level¹⁷ as the cannon to his blank,¹⁸
Transports his poisoned shot, may miss our name
And hit the woundless¹⁹ air. O, come away!
45 My soul is full of discord and dismay.

EXEUNT

12 support and apologize for

13 unite, combine in

14 gently, peacefully

15 a private place of worship, common in aristocratic houses

16 summon our wisest supporters

17 horizontally direct

18 the center of its target (a white – “blank” – space at a target's center)

19 incapable of being wounded, invulnerable

SCENE 2

The castle

ENTER HAMLET

Hamlet Safely stowed.*Rosencrantz, Guildenstern (from within)* Hamlet! Lord Hamlet!*Hamlet* But soft, what noise? who calls on Hamlet?

O, here they come.

ENTER ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN

Rosencrantz What have you done, my lord, with the dead body? 5*Hamlet* Compounded¹ it with dust, whereto 'tis kin.*Rosencrantz* Tell us where 'tis, that we may take it thence²

And bear it to the chapel.

Hamlet Do not believe it.*Rosencrantz* Believe what? 10*Hamlet* That I can keep your counsel and not mine own.Besides, to be demanded of a sponge!³ What replication⁴
should be made by the son of a king?*Rosencrantz* Take you me for a sponge, my lord?*Hamlet* Ay, sir, that soaks up the King's countenance,⁵ his 15rewards, his authorities. But such officers do the King best
service, in the end. He keeps them, like an ape,⁶ in the corner
of his jaw, first mouthed, to be last swallowed. When he needs

1 put it together with

2 from there/that place

3 peremptorily/imperiously requested by a mercenary hanger-on

4 reply, answer

5 goodwill, favor

6 as an ape does

20 what you have gleaned, it is but squeezing you and, sponge,
you shall be dry again.

Rosencrantz I understand you not, my lord.

Hamlet I am glad of it: a knavish speech sleeps⁷ in a foolish
ear.

Rosencrantz My lord, you must tell us where the body is, and go
25 with us to the King.

Hamlet The body is with the King, but the King is not
with the body.⁸ The King is a thing⁹ –

Guildestern A thing, my lord!

Hamlet Of nothing. Bring me to him. Hide fox, and all
30 after.¹⁰

HAMLET RUNS OFF. EXEUNT ALL

7 rests dormant/inert/inactive

8 Hamlet plays with a theory of kingship: the physical king (his “body”) and the power of the kingship are separate. Since the King’s powers extend to the entire castle (and indeed to the entire country), the corpse is necessarily “with the King.” But the corpse is not with the King’s body, that is, the King himself

9 a something, a material object, a piece of property (at which deeply disrespectful comment – almost heresy – Guildestern is shocked)
10 the cry, in a child’s game such as hide-and-peek

SCENE 3

The castle

ENTER CLAUDIUS, WITH TWO OR THREE ATTENDANT LORDS

Claudius I have sent to seek him, and to find the body.

How dangerous is it that this man goes loose!

Yet must not we put the strong¹ law on him:He's loved of the distracted² multitude,Who like³ not in their judgment, but their eyes, 5And where tis so, th' offender's scourge is weighed,⁴But never the offence. To bear⁵ all smooth and even,

This sudden sending him away must seem

Deliberate pause. Diseases desperate grown

By desperate appliance⁶ are relieved, 10

Or not at all.

ENTER ROSENCRANTZ, AND OTHERS

How now? What hath befallen?

Rosencrantz Where the dead body is bestowed, my lord,

We cannot get from him.

Claudius

But where is he?

Rosencrantz Without,⁷ my lord, guarded, to know⁸ your
pleasure.

1 place upon/apply/impose the emphatic/urgent/severe

2 confused

3 approve, are pleased

4 punishment is considered/measured

5 keep, sustain

6 measures, application, treatment

7 just outside

8 await/learn

Claudius Bring him before us.

15 *Rosencrantz* Ho! Bring in the lord.

ENTER HAMLET AND GUILDENSTERN

Claudius Now, Hamlet, where's Polonius?

Hamlet At supper.

Claudius At supper? Where?

Hamlet Not where he eats, but where 'a is eaten. A certain
 20 convocation of politic worms are e'en⁹ at him. Your¹⁰ worm
 is your only emperor for diet. We fat all creatures else¹¹ to fat
 us, and we fat ourselves for maggots. Your fat king and your
 lean beggar is but variable service¹² – two dishes, but to one
 table.

25 That's the end.

Claudius Alas, alas!

Hamlet A man may fish with the worm that hath eat¹³ of a
 king, and eat¹⁴ of the fish that hath fed of that worm.

Claudius What dost thou mean by this?

30 *Hamlet* Nothing but to show you how a king may go a
 progress¹⁵ through the guts of a beggar.

Claudius Where is Polonius?

Hamlet In heaven. Send thither to see. If your messenger find
 him not there, seek him i' th' other place yourself. But if

9 assembly/synod/meeting of shrewd/prudent/diplomatic worms are even now
 10 the

11 fatten all other creatures

12 only a matter of variation in courses being served

13 eaten (then and now "eat" is pronounced, in British English, "et")

14 pronounced in England as it is in the United States

15 a state journey, an official tour

indeed you find him not within this month, you shall nose¹⁶ 35
 him as you go up the stairs into the lobby.¹⁷

Claudius (to attendants) Go seek him there.

Hamlet 'A will stay till ye come.

EXEUNT ATTENDANTS

Claudius Hamlet, this deed, for thine especial safety –
 Which we do tender as¹⁸ we dearly grieve 40
 For that which thou hast done – must send thee hence
 With fiery quickness. Therefore prepare thyself.¹⁹
 The bark is ready, and the wind at help,
 Th' associates tend, and everything is bent²⁰
 For England.

Hamlet For England?

Claudius Ay, Hamlet.

Hamlet Good. 45

Claudius So is it, if thou knew'st our purposes.²¹

Hamlet I see a cherub²² that sees them. But, come, for
 England! Farewell, dear mother.

Claudius Thy loving father, Hamlet.

Hamlet My mother. Father and mother is man and wife. 50
 Man and wife is one flesh – and so: my mother. Come, for
 England!

EXIT

16 (1) smell, (2) confront, face, (3) rub/press the nose against, examine

17 passage, corridor, covered walk

18 offer just as

19 make yourself ready/pack what you will need

20 favorable/useful, your comrades wait, and everything is set/bound

21 intentions, plans

22 one of the second order of angels, especially endowed with knowledge

Claudius Follow him at foot;²³ tempt him with speed aboard.

Delay it not. I'll have him hence tonight.

55 Away! For everything is sealed and done

That else leans on th'affair. Pray you, make haste.

EXEUNT ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN

And, England, if my love thou hold'st at aught²⁴ –

As my great power thereof may give thee sense,²⁵

Since yet thy cicatrice looks raw and red

60 After²⁶ the Danish sword, and thy free awe

Pays homage to us²⁷ – thou mayst not coldly set

Our sovereign process,²⁸ which imports at full,

By letters congruing to²⁹ that effect,

The present death of Hamlet. Do it, England,

65 For like the hectic³⁰ in my blood he rages,

And thou must cure me. Till I know 'tis done,

Howe'er my haps,³¹ my joys were ne'er³² begun.

EXIT

23 close to him

24 favor/approval you consider of any worth whatever

25 as my (Denmark's) great strength/armies might make you aware

26 your scar (from a healed wound) still looks raw and red subsequent to/
following after England's encounter with

27 willing/voluntary terror/dread pays deference to us (acknowledgment of
superiority and money paid)

28 consider with indifference our authoritative/kingly command

29 conveys/communicates/states full/in detail by letters in harmony with

30 fever

31 fortune, fate

32 will never be

SCENE 4
A plain in Denmark

ENTER FORTINBRAS AND SOLDIERS

Fortinbras Go, captain, from me greet the Danish king.

Tell him that, by his licence, Fortinbras

Craves the conveyance¹ of a promised² march

Over his kingdom. You know the rendezvous.

If that his Majesty would aught with us,

We shall express our duty in his eye.³

And let him know so.

Captain I will do't, my lord.*Fortinbras* Go softly on.⁴

EXEUNT FORTINBRAS AND SOLDIERS

ENTER HAMLET, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN,
AND OTHERS*Hamlet* Good sir, whose powers⁵ are these?*Captain* They are of Norway, sir.*Hamlet* How purposed, sir, I pray you?*Captain* Against some part⁶ of Poland.*Hamlet* Who commands them, sir?*Captain* The nephew to old Norway, Fortinbras.

1 passage, with an escort

2 previously declared

3 I will set forth my due respect/homage in his sight/presence

4 proceed at a comfortable/easy pace

5 armies, forces

6 section, region

- 15 *Hamlet* Goes it against the main⁷ of Poland, sir,
Or for some frontier?
- Captain* Truly to speak, and with no addition,⁸
We go to gain a little patch of ground
That hath in it no profit but the name.⁹
- 20 To pay five ducats, five,¹⁰ I would not farm it,
Nor will it yield to Norway or the Pole
A ranker rate,¹¹ should it be sold in fee.¹²
- Hamlet* Why, then the Polack never will defend it.
- Captain* Yes, it is already garrisoned.
- 25 *Hamlet* Two thousand souls and twenty thousand ducats
Will not debate¹³ the question of this straw.¹⁴
This is th' imposthume¹⁵ of much wealth and peace,
That inward breaks, and shows no cause without
Why the man dies. I humbly thank you, sir.
- Captain* God bye you, sir.

EXIT

- 30 *Rosencrantz* Wilt please you go, my lord?
- Hamlet* I'll be with you straight. Go a little before.¹⁶

EXEUNT ALL BUT HAMLET

- 7 chief part
8 something added for reasons of style
9 (that is, making it part of Norway rather than part of Poland)
10 in rent
11 larger sum/amount
12 outright
13 abate, end, settle
14 trifle, insignificance
15 boil, pimple, ulcer
16 ahead

How all occasions do inform¹⁷ against me
 And spur my dull revenge! What is a man,
 If his chief good and market¹⁸ of his time
 Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more. 35
 Sure he that made us with such large discourse,¹⁹
 Looking before and after, gave us not
 That capability and god-like reason
 To fust²⁰ in us unused. Now, whether it be
 Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple²¹ 40
 Of thinking too precisely on th' event²² –
 A thought which, quartered, hath but one part wisdom
 And ever²³ three parts coward – I do not know
 Why yet I live to say “This thing’s to do,”
 Sith I have cause, and will, and strength, and means 45
 To do’t. Examples gross as earth exhort²⁴ me.
 Witness this army of such mass and charge²⁵
 Led by a delicate and tender²⁶ prince,
 Whose spirit with divine ambition puffed²⁷
 Makes mouths at²⁸ the invisible event,²⁹ 50

17 circumstances/ events lodge complaints

18 value

19 reasoning, understanding

20 turn moldy/stale

21 cowardly/frightened doubt/uncertainty

22 outcome, result

23 always

24 large/plain/obvious as earth incite/admonish/urge

25 great size and cost/price/expense

26 skillful/ingenious and youthful

27 driven, impelled

28 makes faces at/shows contempt for

29 the unseeable outcome

Exposing what is mortal and unsure
 To all that fortune, death and danger dare –
 Even for an egg-shell. Rightly³⁰ to be great
 Is not to stir without great argument,³¹
 55 But greatly to find quarrel in a straw
 When honor's at the stake. How stand I then,
 That have a father killed, a mother stained –
 Excitements of my reason and my blood³² –
 And let all sleep, while to my shame I see
 60 The imminent death of twenty thousand men
 That, for a fantasy and trick³³ of fame,
 Go to their graves like³⁴ beds, fight for a plot
 Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,³⁵
 Which³⁶ is not tomb enough and continent³⁷
 65 To hide the slain? O, from this time forth,
 My³⁸ thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth!

EXIT

30 correctly

31 reason, thought

32 incentives/excitements to action for my reason and my passions/emotions
(and family/race/kin)

33 phantom/illusion and sham appearance/deceptive show

34 as if to their

35 on which the many men fighting cannot (in so small a space) test the reason
for the action

36 which patch of ground

37 a big-enough tomb and container

38 let my

SCENE 5

The castle

ENTER GERTRUDE, HORATIO, AND A GENTLEMAN¹

Gertrude I will not speak with her.

Gentleman She is importunate, indeed distract.²

Her mood will needs be pitied.³

Gertrude What would she have?

Gentleman She speaks much of her father, says she hears

There's tricks⁴ i' the world, and hems, and beats her heart, 5

Spurns enviously at straws,⁵ speaks things in doubt⁶

That carry but half sense. Her speech is nothing,

Yet the unshaped⁷ use of it doth move

The hearers to collection.⁸ They aim at it,

And botch⁹ the words up fit¹⁰ to their own thoughts, 10

Which – as her winks, and nods, and gestures yield¹¹ them –

Indeed would make one think there might be thought,

Though nothing sure, yet much unhappily.¹²

1 a man of gentle birth serving as a court official

2 troubled in mind, confused

3 state of mind must be pitied

4 frauds, deceptions, shams, hoaxes

5 unpleasantly / with great ill-will kicks at / rejects trifles / things of no significance

6 uncertainly / hesitantly / fearfully

7 formless, shapeless

8 inferences

9 guess / try (some texts have “yawn,” meaning “gape”)

10 patch / clumsily mend the words according to

11 produce, deliver

12 unfortunately, regrettably

Horatio 'Twere good she were¹³ spoken with, for she may
strew¹⁴

15 Dangerous conjectures in ill-breeding¹⁵ minds.

Gertrude Let her come in.

EXIT HORATIO

(*aside*) To my sick soul, as sin's true nature is,
Each toy¹⁶ seems prologue to some great amiss.¹⁷
So full of artless jealousy¹⁸ is guilt,
20 It spills¹⁹ itself in fearing to be spilt.

ENTER OPHELIA

Ophelia Where is the beauteous Majesty of Denmark?

Gertrude How now, Ophelia!

Ophelia (*sings*)

How should I your true love know
From another one?

25 By his cockle hat²⁰ and staff,
And his sandal shoon.²¹

Gertrude Alas, sweet lady, what imports²² this song?

13 if she were

14 spread, sprinkle

15 unmannerly, given to mischief

16 trifle, minor/insignificant thing

17 fault, evil deed

18 clumsy/ignorant/simple-minded suspicion/mistrust/fear

19 destroys, ruins, kills

20 traditional headwear of religious pilgrim and lovers

21 sandals too were pilgrim and lover associated

22 means

Ophelia Say you? Nay, pray you, mark.

(SINGS)

He is dead and gone, lady,

He is dead and gone.

30

At his head a grass-green turf,

At his heels a stone.²³

O ho!

Gertrude Nay, but, Ophelia –

Ophelia Pray you, mark.

35

(SINGS)

White his shroud as the mountain snow –

ENTER CLAUDIUS

Gertrude Alas, look here, my lord.

Ophelia (*sings*)

Larded²⁴ with sweet flowers

Which bewept to the grave did [not²⁵] go

With true-love²⁶ showers.²⁷

40

Claudius How do you, pretty lady?

Ophelia Well, God 'ild²⁸ you! They say the owl was a baker's

23 burial stone, grave marker

24 covered, heaped high, decorated

25 a much-debated word, deleted in some texts

26 *either* Herb Paris, a kind of lily, *or* ornaments/symbols of true love

27 in showers (that, many/a lot of flowers) (the song, like the singer, is confused)

28 yield: reward

daughter.²⁹ Lord, we know what we are, but know not what
we may be. God be at your table!

45 *Claudius* Conceit³⁰ upon her father.

Ophelia Pray, let's have no words³¹ of³² this, but when they ask
you what it means, say you this:

(SINGS)

To-morrow is Saint Valentine's day,

All in the morning betime,³³

50 And I a maid at³⁴ your window,

To be your Valentine.

Then up he rose, and donned his clothes,

And duffed the chamber door,³⁵

Let in the maid, that out a maid³⁶

55 Never departed more.³⁷

Claudius Pretty Ophelia.

Ophelia Indeed, la, without an oath, I'll make an end on't:

(SINGS)

By Gis³⁸ and by Saint Charity,

29 a legend: a baker's daughter who refused to give Christ bread was transformed into an owl

30 morbid seizure of the mind

31 no speech/talk? or no argument?

32 about

33 early

34 standing? knocking?

35 opened the bedroom door

36 a virgin

37 again

38 shortened form of "Jesus"

Alack, and fie for shame!
 Young men will do't, if they come to't. 60
 By Cock,³⁹ they are to blame.

Quoth she, "before you tumbled me,⁴⁰
 You promised me to wed."

He answers:

"So would I ha' done, by yonder sun,
 An⁴¹ thou hadst not come to my bed." 65

Claudius How long hath she been thus?

Ophelia I hope all will be well. We must be patient, but I
 cannot choose but weep, to think they should lay him i' the
 cold ground. My brother shall know of it. And so I thank you 70
 for your good counsel. Come, my coach! Good night, ladies,
 good night. Sweet ladies, good night, good night.

EXIT

King Claudius Follow her close. Give her good watch,⁴²
 I pray you.

EXIT GENTLEMAN

O, this is the poison of deep grief: it springs 75
 All from her father's death. – And now behold!
 O Gertrude, Gertrude,
 When sorrows come, they come not single spies

39 (1) God, and (2) penis

40 threw me on the ground: had sexual intercourse with me

41 if

42 guard, vigilance

But in battalions. First, her father slain.
 80 Next, your son gone, and he most violent author⁴³
 Of his own just remove.⁴⁴ The people muddied,
 Thick⁴⁵ and unwholesome in their thoughts and whispers,
 For good Polonius' death – and we have done but greenly
 In hugger-mugger⁴⁶ to inter him. Poor Ophelia
 85 Divided from herself and her fair judgment,⁴⁷
 Without the which we are pictures, or mere beasts.⁴⁸
 Last, and as much containing⁴⁹ as all these,
 Her brother is⁵⁰ in secret come from France,
 Feeds on his wonder, keeps himself in clouds,⁵¹
 90 And wants not buzzers to infect⁵² his ear
 With pestilent speeches of⁵³ his father's death,
 Wherein necessity, of matter beggared,
 Will nothing stick our person to arraign
 In ear and ear.⁵⁴ O my dear Gertrude, this,
 95 Like to a murd'ring-piece, in many places

43 instigator, begetter

44 upright/fair/well-deserved departure/exile

45 muddled/confused, thick-headed/stupid

46 and, also, because of what we have done very unskillfully in secret/
disorderly fashion

47 obvious good sense/discernment

48 empty/soulless representations of human beings, or no more than animals/
brute creatures

49 containing as much

50 has

51 feeds on his perplexity/astonishment, keeps himself suspicious/lost in his
imaginings

52 does not lack rumormongers to influence/corrupt

53 with poisonous/noxious/deadly speeches about

54 deprived of any substance/facts, will in no way stop/delay/hesitate to
accuse me in one ear after another

Gives me superfluous death.⁵⁵

A NOISE WITHIN; ENTER A GENTLEMAN

Gertrude Alack, what noise is this?
Claudius Where are my Switzers?⁵⁶ Let them guard the door.
 (*to Gentleman*) What is the matter?
Gentleman Save yourself, my lord.
 The ocean, overpeering of his list,⁵⁷
 Eats not the flats with more impetuous⁵⁸ haste 100
 Than young Laertes, in a riotous head,
 O'erbears⁵⁹ your officers. The rabble call him lord,
 And, as⁶⁰ the world were now but to⁶¹ begin,
 Antiquity forgot, custom not known,
 The ratifiers and props of every word,⁶² 105
 They cry, "Choose we! Laertes shall be king!"
 Caps, hands, and tongues applaud it to the clouds:
 "Laertes shall be king, Laertes king!"
Gertrude How cheerfully on the false trail they cry!⁶³
 O, this is counter,⁶⁴ you false⁶⁵ Danish dogs!⁶⁶ 110

55 like a cannon firing scattering shot (like shrapnel), here and there and everywhere, pointlessly kills me

56 Swiss mercenaries, often used by European royalty as palace guards

57 looking down on/towering over/dominating his borders, shores

58 does not gnaw away at the level ground with more violent haste

59 with a noisy/unrestrained/turbulent insurgent mob, overcomes/overthrows
 60 as if

61 just be about to

62 they the ones who confirm/approve and uphold/every command/order

63 like hunting dogs following a scent

64 hunting dogs running away from, rather than toward, the hunted animal
 (that is, following the scent backward, along the path the prey has already taken)

65 treacherous/defective/mistaken

66 worthless cowards

(NOISE WITHIN)

Claudius The doors are broke.

ENTER LAERTES AND OTHERS

Laertes Where is this king? (*to others*) Sirs, stand you all without.⁶⁷*Others* No, let's come in!*Laertes* I pray you, give me leave.⁶⁸*Others* We will, we will.*Laertes* I thank you. Keep⁶⁹ the door.

EXEUNT OTHERS

115 *Laertes* O thou vile king,
Give me my father!

Gertrude Calmly, good Laertes.

Laertes That drop of blood that's calm proclaims me bastard,⁷⁰
Cries cuckold⁷¹ to my father, brands the harlot
Even here, between the chaste unsmirchèd brow
Of my true mother.⁷²

120 *Claudius* What is the cause, Laertes,
That⁷³ thy rebellion looks so giant-like?⁷⁴

67 all of you remain outside

68 your consent

69 watch/guard/defend

70 illegitimate, not my father's true son

71 that is, that Polonius was the husband of an unfaithful wife

72 brands (literally) the word "harlot," right here in the middle of the unsoiled, unstained forehead of my faithful, honest mother

73 why, Laertes, does

74 huge (like the rebellion of the ancient giants against the then-king of the gods)

(to Gertrude) Let him go, Gertrude. Do not fear⁷⁵ our person.
 There's such divinity doth hedge⁷⁶ a king
 That treason can but peep to⁷⁷ what it would,
 Acts little of his will.⁷⁸ Tell me, Laertes, 125
 Why thou art thus incensed. (to Gertrude) Let him go,
 Gertrude.

(to Laertes) Speak, man.

Laertes Where is my father?

Claudius Dead.

Gertrude But not by him.

Claudius (to Gertrude) Let him demand his fill.

Laertes How came he dead? I'll not be juggled⁷⁹ with. 130
 To hell allegiance!⁸⁰ Vows,⁸¹ to the blackest devil!
 Conscience and grace, to the profoundest pit!⁸²
 I dare⁸³ damnation. To this point I stand,
 That both the worlds I give to negligence,⁸⁴
 Let come what comes – only I'll be revenged 135
 Most thoroughly for my father.

Claudius Who shall stay you?

Laertes My will,⁸⁵ not all the world.

75 be afraid for

76 defend, surround, protect

77 look through a narrow aperture, or half-closed eyes, at what it wishes

78 and does little of what it wants

79 deceived by tricks, cheated, beguiled

80 I vow allegiance to hell

81 I make my vows

82 God's grace/favor/mercy I consign to the deepest pit

83 challenge, defy

84 I remain steadfast/firm, that earth and heaven I consign to indifference/
 neglect

85 by my will

O heat, dry up my brains! Tears seven times salt⁹⁵
 Burn out the sense and virtue⁹⁶ of mine eye! 155
 By heaven, thy madness shall be paid with weight,
 Till our scale turn the beam.⁹⁷ O rose of May,
 Dear maid, kind sister, sweet Ophelia!
 O heavens, is't possible a young maid's wits
 Should be as mortal as an old man's life?⁹⁸ 160
 Nature is fine⁹⁹ in love, and where 'tis fine
 It sends some precious instance¹⁰⁰ of itself
 After the thing it loves.

Ophelia (sings)

They bore him barefaced¹⁰¹ on the bier.¹⁰²
 Hey non nonny, nonny, hey nonny. 165
 And in his grave rained many a tear –
 Fare you well, my dove!

Laertes Hadst thou thy wits, and didst persuade revenge,
 It could not move¹⁰³ thus.

Ophelia You must sing “A-down a-down, an you call him a- 170
 down-a.” O, how the wheel becomes¹⁰⁴ it! It is the false

95 seven times as salty as salt

96 feeling and strength/power

97 in full, until the balance bar of our scale swings downward

98 the old man in question is Polonius

99 exquisitely fashioned, delicately structured

100 sign, token

101 face uncovered

102 movable stand for holding a corpse and for carrying it to the grave

103 urge/strongly advise revenge, it could not be as emotionally affecting as this

104 refrain fits, goes well with

steward that stole his master's daughter.

Laertes This nothing's more than matter.¹⁰⁵

Ophelia (to Laertes) There's rosemary, that's for remembrance.

175 Pray you, love, remember. And there is pansies. That's for thoughts.

Laertes A document¹⁰⁶ in madness, thoughts and remembrance fitted.

Ophelia (to Gertrude) There's fennel for you, and columbines.¹⁰⁷

180 *(to Claudius)* There's rue for you, and here's some for me.¹⁰⁸

We may call it herb of grace o' Sundays.¹⁰⁹ O you must wear your rue with a difference.¹¹⁰ There's a daisy.¹¹¹ I would give you some violets,¹¹² but they withered all when my father died. They say 'a made a good end.

(SINGS)

185 For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy.

Laertes Thought and affliction, passion, hell itself,
She turns to favor¹¹³ and to prettiness.

Ophelia (sings)

And will 'a not come again?

105 devoid of sense, this means more than words with meaning

106 lesson, warning

107 herbs sometimes associated with unfaithfulness in marriage

108 herb sometimes associated with repentance, sorrow

109 herb of virtue on Sundays

110 (?) heraldically, "difference" refers to a marker indicating a junior/lesser branch of a family, thus clearly separating that branch from the chief line, and that has been suggested as the meaning here

111 a flower sometimes associated with dissembling

112 sometimes associated with faithfulness

113 charm

And will 'a not come again?

No, no, he is dead,

190

Go to thy death-bed.

He never will come again.

His beard was as white as snow,

All flaxen was his poll.¹¹⁴

He is gone, he is gone,

195

And we cast away¹¹⁵ moan.

God ha' mercy on his soul!

And of all Christian souls, I pray¹¹⁶ God. God bye¹¹⁷ ye.

EXIT

Laertes Do you see this, O God?

Claudius Laertes, I must commune with your grief,

200

Or you deny me right.¹¹⁸ Go but apart,

Make choice of¹¹⁹ whom your wisest friends you will,

And they shall hear and judge 'twixt you and me.

If by direct or by collateral¹²⁰ hand

They find us touched,¹²¹ we will our kingdom give,

205

Our crown, our life, and all that we call ours,

To you in satisfaction.¹²² But if not,

114 the top of his head

115 throw away, discard

116 for all Christian souls, I pray to

117 redeem

118 share/participate in (*or confer/talk intimately about*) your grief, or else
you deny me justice

119 just go yourself, choose among

120 indirect, subordinate

121 me stained, connected

122 payment of a debt

Be you content to lend your patience to us,
 And we shall jointly labor with your soul
 To give it due content.

- 210 *Laertes* Let this be so.
 His means of death, his obscure funeral –
 No trophy,¹²³ sword, nor hatchment¹²⁴ o'er his bones,
 No noble¹²⁵ rite nor formal ostentation¹²⁶ –
 Cry to be heard, as 'twere from heaven to earth,
 That I must call't in question.¹²⁷
- 215 *Claudius* So you shall.
 And where th' offense¹²⁸ is, let the great axe¹²⁹ fall.
 I pray you, go with me.

EXEUNT

123 hidden/humble funeral – no monument/memorial

124 no tablet bearing the deceased's coat of arms (fastened on the front of his home and, after the funeral, on his tomb)

125 illustrious, splendid

126 display, show, ceremony

127 require an examination of it

128 crime, sin

129 the executioner's axe and/or God's axe

SCENE 6

The castle

ENTER HORATIO AND A GENTLEMAN

Horatio What¹ are they that would speak with me?*Gentleman* Seafaring men, sir. They say they have letters for you.*Horatio* Let them come in.

EXIT GENTLEMAN

I do not know from what part of the world

I should be greeted,² if not from Lord Hamlet.

5

ENTER SAILORS

First Sailor God bless you, sir.*Horatio* Let Him bless thee too.*First Sailor* 'A shall, sir, an't³ please Him. There's a letter for you, sir. It came from th' ambassador that was bound for England – if your name be Horatio, as I am let⁴ to know it is.

10

Horatio (*reads*) "Horatio, when thou shalt have overlooked⁵ this, give these fellows some means⁶ to the king. They have letters for him. Ere we were two days old at sea, a pirate of very warlike appointment⁷ gave us chase. Finding ourselves too slow of sail, we put on a compelled valor, and in the

15

1 of what nature, condition, class

2 addressed

3 if it

4 permitted, allowed

5 perused, read

6 opportunity for communicating with

7 outfitting

grapple⁸ I boarded them. On the instant they got clear⁹ of
 our ship, so I alone became their prisoner. They have dealt
 with me like thieves of mercy,¹⁰ but they knew what they
 did: I am to do a good turn for them. Let the King have the
 20 letters I have sent, and repair¹¹ thou to me with as much
 speed as thou wouldst fly¹² death. I have words to speak in
 thine ear will make thee dumb,¹³ yet are they much too light
 for the bore¹⁴ of the matter. These good fellows will bring
 thee where I am. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern hold their
 25 course for England: of them I have much to tell thee.
 Farewell.

“He that thou knowest thine, HAMLET.”

Come, I will give you way¹⁵ for these your letters,
 And do't the speedier, that¹⁶ you may direct me
 30 To him from whom you brought them.

EXEUNT

8 assumed a necessary/obligatory boldness/bravery/courage, and in the close-in combat

9 at that moment they got free

10 a turning-on-its-head of the proverbial phrase “angels of mercy”

11 make your way, come

12 flee from

13 strike you dumb/confound/nonplus you

14 too small/not heavy enough for the caliber/size

15 a means of delivery

16 and I will do it the speedier, so that

SCENE 7

The castle

ENTER CLAUDIUS AND LAERTES

Claudius Now must your conscience my acquittance seal,¹
 And you must put me in your heart for friend,
 Sith you have heard, and with a knowing² ear,
 That he which hath your noble father slain
 Pursued my life.

Laertes It well appears. But tell me 5
 Why you proceeded not against these feats,
 So crimeful and so capital³ in nature,
 As by your safety, wisdom, all things else,⁴
 You mainly were stirred up.

Claudius O, for two special reasons;
 Which may to you, perhaps, seem much unsinewed,⁵ 10
 But yet to me they are strong. The queen his mother
 Lives almost by his looks, and for myself –
 My virtue or my plague,⁶ be it either which⁷ –
 She is so conjunctive⁸ to my life and soul
 That, as the star moves not but in his sphere, 15

1 my release from debt (moral debt: therefore a declaration of his innocence)
 affirm/finalize

2 informed/knowledgeable/aware

3 surprising tricks/facts, so steeped in evil/sin and so deadly/deserving of
 death

4 all other things, you were

5 feeble, weak

6 my merit/moral excellence or my affliction/calamity

7 whichever of the two

8 connected, united

I could not but by her.⁹The other motive
 Why to a public count¹⁰ I might not go
 Is the great love the general gender¹¹ bear him,
 Who, dipping¹² all his faults in their affection,
 20 Would, like the spring that turneth wood to stone,¹³
 Convert his gyves to graces,¹⁴ so that my arrows,
 Too slightly timbered for so loud¹⁵ a wind,
 Would have reverted¹⁶ to my bow again,
 And not where I had aimed them.

25 *Laertes* And so have I a noble father lost,
 A sister driven into desp'rate terms,¹⁷
 Whose worth, if praises may go back¹⁸ again,
 Stood challenger on mount¹⁹ of all the age
 For her perfection. But my revenge will come.

30 *Claudius* Break not your sleeps for that. You must not think
 That we are²⁰ made of stuff so flat and dull²¹
 That we can let our beard be shook with danger.²²
 And I think it pastime. You shortly shall hear more.
 I loved your father, and we love ourself,
 35 And that, I hope, will teach you to imagine –

9 could not move except according to/in harmony with her

10 accounting, reckoning

11 the multitude, the common sort/people

12 immersing, dyeing

13 such springs were known in England, the water containing so much lime
 they could petrify wood

14 his shackles/fetters/chains to charms

15 made of wood too slender/insubstantial for so strong/clamorous

16 returned, come back

17 hopeless/awful condition/circumstances

18 back in time

19 on a high hill/military breastwork

20 I am

21 so insipid/slow-witted/stupid and listless/muffled/obtuse

22 pulled back and forth by mischief

ENTER A MESSENGER

How now? What news?

Messenger Letters, my lord, from Hamlet.

These to your Majesty, this to the Queen.

Claudius From Hamlet? Who brought them?

Messenger Sailors, my lord, they say. I saw them not:

They were given me by Claudio.²³ He received them 40

Of him that brought them.

Claudius Laertes, you shall hear them.

(*to Messenger*) Leave us.

EXIT MESSENGER

(*reads*) “High and mighty, you shall know I am set naked²⁴ on
your kingdom. To-morrow shall I beg leave to see your kingly
eyes, when I shall, first asking your pardon thereunto, recount 45
the occasion of my sudden and more strange return. Hamlet.”

What should this mean? Are all the rest come back?

Or is it some abuse, and no such thing?²⁵

Laertes Know you the hand?²⁶

Claudius ’Tis Hamlet’s character.²⁷

“Naked!”

And in a postscript here, he says “alone.” 50

Can you devise²⁸ me?

Laertes I’m lost in it, my lord. But let him come.

23 a court official, otherwise unnamed

24 destitute, unarmed, unprotected

25 deceit/imposture, and no such thing has in fact happened

26 handwriting

27 writing

28 explain/figure out/resolve it for

It warms the very sickness in my heart
 That I shall live and tell him to his teeth,
 “Thus did’st thou.”

55 *Claudius* If it be so, Laertes –
 As how should it be so? How otherwise? –
 Will you be ruled by me?

Laertes Ay, my lord,
 So you will not o’errule me to a peace.

Claudius To thine own peace. If he be now returned,
 60 As checking at his voyage,²⁹ and that he means
 No more to undertake it, I will work him
 To an exploit,³⁰ now ripe in my device,
 Under the which he shall not choose but fall,³¹
 And for his death no wind of blame shall breathe,
 65 But even his mother shall uncharge the practice³²
 And call it accident.

Laertes My lord, I will be ruled –
 The rather if you could devise it so
 That I might be the organ.³³

Claudius It falls right.³⁴
 You have been talked of since your travel much,
 70 And that in Hamlet’s hearing, for a quality³⁵
 Wherein, they say, you shine. Your sum of parts³⁶

29 it being the case that he has turned back from

30 bring/manipulate him to an act, deed

31 my plan, in the operation of which he cannot help but die

32 acquit the deed/scheme/treachery of any guilt (uncharge: not charge)

33 instrument/actively operating tool

34 it works out naturally/correctly/exactly

35 skill, ability

36 the totality of your talents/personal qualities/abilities

Did not together pluck such envy from him
 As did that one, and that, in my regard,
 Of the unworthiest siege.³⁷

Laertes What part is that, my lord?

Claudius A very riband³⁸ in the cap of youth, 75
 Yet needful too, for youth no less becomes
 The light and careless livery³⁹ that it wears
 Than settled age his sables and his weeds,⁴⁰
 Importing health and graveness.⁴¹ Two months since,
 Here was a gentleman of Normandy – 80
 I've seen myself, and served against, the French,
 And they can⁴² well on horseback—but this gallant⁴³
 Had witchcraft in't. He grew unto his seat,
 And to such wondrous doing brought his horse
 As he had been incorpsed and demi-natured 85
 With the brave⁴⁴ beast. So far he topped⁴⁵ my thought
 That I, in forgery⁴⁶ of shapes and tricks,⁴⁷
 Come short of what he did.

Laertes A Norman was't?

37 distinction, rank, status

38 a genuine ribbon

39 harmonizes with/befits the graceful/frivolous and negligent/artless style of dress

40 dark (usually black) clothing, as also worn for mourning

41 signifying spiritual/moral/mental soundness and importance/authority

42 know how/have the capacity to do

43 polished, courtierlike gentleman

44 made into one body with, and half-endowed with the nature of the splendid animal

45 exceeded

46 mentally inventing/fabricating (notions of what could be done on horseback)

47 forms, arrangements and feats of dexterity/skill

Claudius A Norman.

Laertes Upon my life, Lamord.

90 *Claudius* The very same.

Laertes I know him well. He is the brooch⁴⁸ indeed
And gem of all the nation.

Claudius He made confession of you,⁴⁹
And gave you such a masterly report⁵⁰

95 For art and exercise in your defence,
And for your rapier most especially,
That he cried out 'twould be a sight indeed
If one⁵¹ could match you. The scrimers⁵² of their nation,
He swore, had had neither motion, guard, nor eye,⁵³
100 If you opposed them. Sir, this report of his
Did Hamlet so envenom with his envy
That he could nothing do but wish and beg
Your sudden coming o'er, to play⁵⁴ with him.
Now, out of this –

Laertes What out of this, my lord?

105 *Claudius* Laertes, was your father dear to you?
Or are you like the painting⁵⁵ of a sorrow,
A face without a heart?

Laertes Why ask you this?

Claudius Not that I think you did not love your father,

48 ornament

49 acknowledged that he knew you

50 an account of your masterly capabilities

51 anyone

52 fencers

53 movements/moves, defensive stances, nor perception/ range of vision

54 perform, sport, practice

55 two-dimensional image

But that I know love is begun by time,
 And that I see, in passages of proof, 110
 Time qualifies⁵⁶ the spark and fire of it.
 There lives within the very flame of love
 A kind of wick or snuff⁵⁷ that will abate it,
 And nothing is at a like goodness still,⁵⁸
 For goodness, growing to a plurisy, 115
 Dies in his own too-much.⁵⁹ That we would do
 We should do when we would, for this “would” changes
 And hath abatements⁶⁰ and delays as many
 As there are tongues, are hands, are accidents,⁶¹
 And then this “should” is like a spendthrift sigh⁶² 120
 That hurts by easing. But to the quick o’ the ulcer.⁶³
 Hamlet comes back: what would you undertake
 To show yourself your father’s son in deed
 More than in words?

Laertes To cut his throat i’ the church.
Claudius No place, indeed, should murder sanctuarize.⁶⁴ 125
 Revenge should have no bounds. But, good Laertes,
 Will you do this? Keep close⁶⁵ within your chamber:

56 proven instances, time modifies/diminishes

57 charred part of the wick, no longer able to burn and thus negatively affecting the burning of the uncharred portion

58 that will lower/diminish/destroy it, and nothing is always of the same goodness

59 goodness, growing to a fullness/excess, dies in its own overabundance

60 decreases, diminishings

61 as there are interfering tongues, as there are hands, as there are accidents

62 foolish/wasteful sigh (sighing could thin the blood and kill, even though it “eased” sorrow/pain)

63 actively/vigorously alive part of the purulent open sore

64 shelter, protect (violence was forbidden on sacred ground)

65 stay shut up/secret

Hamlet returned shall know you are come home.
 We'll put on⁶⁶ those shall praise your excellence
 130 And set a double varnish on the fame⁶⁷
 The Frenchman gave you, bring you in fine together
 And wager on your heads.⁶⁸ He, being remiss,
 Most generous and free from all contriving,⁶⁹
 Will not peruse the foils,⁷⁰ so that, with ease,
 135 Or with a little shuffling,⁷¹ you may choose
 A sword unbated, and in a pass of practice
 Requite⁷² him for your father.

Laertes

I will do't:

And, for that purpose, I'll anoint⁷³ my sword.
 I bought an unction of a mountebank,⁷⁴
 140 So mortal that, but dip a knife in it,
 Where it draws blood no cataplasm so rare,⁷⁵
 Collected from all simples that have virtue
 Under the moon, can save the thing⁷⁶ from death
 That is but scratched withal.⁷⁷ I'll touch my point
 145 With this contagion, that if I gall him slightly,

66 urge/egg on

67 put a double shine/glow on the reputation

68 finally bring you together and bet on who will win

69 careless/inattentive, highly gallant and free of all plotting, scheming

70 swords used in fencing

71 shifting about, manipulation

72 not having its point covered, and in the thrusts of a practice bout repay

73 rub something on it

74 ointment/unguent from an itinerant quack (pretender to medical skill)

75 poultice/plaster ("medicine") so exceptional

76 herbs used for medicinal purposes, having power enhanced by the moon's magic, can save anything

77 therewith

It may⁷⁸ be death.

Claudius Let's further think of⁷⁹ this,

Weigh what convenience both of time and means

May fit us to our shape.⁸⁰ If this should fail,

And that our drift look through our bad performance,⁸¹ 150

'Twere better not essayed.⁸² Therefore this project

Should have a back or second, that might hold

If this should blast in proof.⁸³ Soft! let me see.

We'll make a solemn wager on your cunning.⁸⁴

I ha't!⁸⁵ 155

When in your motion⁸⁶ you are hot and dry –

As make your bouts more violent⁸⁷ to that end –

And that he calls for drink, I'll have prepared him

A chalice for the nonce,⁸⁸ whereon but sipping,

If he by chance escape your venom'd stuck,⁸⁹ 160

Our purpose may hold there.—But stay, what noise?

ENTER GERTRUDE

78 contagious poison, so that if I barely scratch him, it will have the power to kill

79 about

80 agreed-upon arrangements both of time and operation may be appropriate to our plan

81 our purpose/aim/object be visible/show through our defective actions

82 tried, attempted

83 backup or second plan, that might work if this should fail when put to the test

84 the abilities/skills of you and Hamlet

85 have it

86 bodily exertion

87 therefore make your fencing involve more physical exertion

88 drinking cup/goblet for the occasion

89 thrust

Gertrude One woe doth tread upon another's heel,
So fast they follow. Your sister's drowned, Laertes.

Laertes Drowned! O, where?

- 165 *Gertrude* There is a willow grows askant the brook,
That shows his hoar⁹⁰ leaves in the glassy stream.
Therewith fantastic garlands did she make
Of crow-flowers,⁹¹ nettles, daisies, and long purples⁹²
That liberal⁹³ shepherds give a grosser name,
170 But our cold maids⁹⁴ do dead men's fingers call them.
There on the pendent boughs her crownet weeds⁹⁵
Clambering to hang, an envious sliver⁹⁶ broke,
When down her weedy trophies⁹⁷ and herself
Fell in the weeping⁹⁸ brook. Her clothes spread wide,
175 And mermaid-like awhile they bore her up,
Which time she chanted snatches of old lauds,⁹⁹
As one incapable of her own distress,¹⁰⁰
Or like a creature native and indued
Unto that element.¹⁰¹ But long it could not be
180 Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,
Pulled the poor wretch from her melodious lay¹⁰²

90 that grows aslant the brook, which displays/exhibits its gray-white

91 buttercups

92 wild orchids with purple spikes (also known as dead men's fingers)

93 free-speaking, lewd

94 less heated virgins

95 hanging boughs her garlands woven with flowers

96 grudging/malicious twig/small branch

97 skillfully made decorative objects

98 tear-full (that is, both wet and sorrowing)

99 sang bits and pieces/portions of old hymns/songs of praise

100 not aware/insensible of her own anguish/affliction

101 brought up in water

102 song

To muddy death.

Laertes Alas, then, she is drowned?

Gertrude Drowned, drowned.

Laertes Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia,

And therefore I forbid¹⁰³ my tears. (*weeps*) But yet

185

It is our trick;¹⁰⁴ nature her custom¹⁰⁵ holds,

Let shame say what it will. When these are gone,

The woman¹⁰⁶ will be out. Adieu, my lord.

I have a speech o' fire, that fain would blaze,

But that this folly douts it.¹⁰⁷

EXIT LAERTES

Claudius Let's follow, Gertrude.

190

How much I had to do to calm his rage!

Now fear I this will give it start again.

Therefore let's follow.

EXEUNT

103 hold back, restrain

104 human beings' way

105 habit

106 these tears are gone, the woman in me

107 of weeping extinguishes it

Act 5



SCENE I *A churchyard*

ENTER TWO CLOWNS, THE FIRST ONE BEING
THE GRAVEDIGGER

Clown 1 Is she to be buried in Christian burial, when she wilfully seeks her own salvation?

Clown 2 I tell thee she is, and therefore make her grave straight. The crowner hath sat on her, and finds it¹ Christian burial.

5 *Clown 1* How can that be, unless she drowned herself in her own defense?

Clown 2 Why, 'tis found so.

Clown 1 It must be “se offendendo.”² It cannot be else. For here lies the point: if I drown myself wittingly, it argues an act,³
10 and an act hath three branches – it is,⁴ to act, to do, to

1 at once. The coroner has conducted his hearing on her, and determines, declares it

2 self-defense: an unlearned error for “se defendendo”

3 knowingly, consciously, it declares/determines

4 components, divisions—which are

perform. Argal,⁵ she drowned herself wittingly.

Clown 2 Nay, but hear you,⁶ Goodman⁷ Delver⁸ –

Clown 1 Give me leave.⁹ Here lies the water – good. Here stands the man – good. If the man go to this water, and drown himself, it is, will he, nill he,¹⁰ he goes. Mark you that. 15
But if the water come to him and drown him, he drowns not himself. Argal, he that is not guilty of his own death shortens not his own life.

Clown 2 But is this law?

Clown 1 Ay, marry, is't – crowner's quest¹¹ law. 20

Clown 2 Will you ha' the truth on't? If this had not been a gentlewoman,¹² she should have been buried out o' Christian burial.

Clown 1 Why, there thou say'st.¹³ And the more pity that great folk should have countenance¹⁴ in this world to drown or hang themselves, more than their even-Christen.¹⁵ Come, my spade. There is no ancient gentlemen but gard'ners, ditchers,¹⁶ and grave-makers. They hold up¹⁷ Adam's profession.¹⁸ 25

5 thus: an unlearned error for “ergo”

6 listen

7 a form of address: a yeoman

8 an occupational label: a digger

9 with your permission, allow me

10 if he wishes or he does not wish to: willy-nilly

11 inquest, inquiry

12 a lady, of good birth/breeding

13 that's exactly right

14 position, standing

15 fellow Christians

16 those who dig/repair ditches

17 preserve, abide by

18 “Whan Adam dalf [dug], / And Eve span [spun], / Who was thanne / A gentelman?” Cited in Thomas Walsingham (1322–88), *Historia Anglicana*: this little poem has a very long history

Clown 2 Was he a gentleman?

30 *Clown 1* 'A was the first that ever bore arms.¹⁹

Clown 2 Why, he had none.

Clown 1 What, art a heathen? How dost thou understand²⁰ the Scripture? The Scripture says Adam digged. Could he dig without arms? I'll put another question to thee. If thou

35 answerest me not to the purpose,²¹ confess thyself²² –

Clown 2 Go to.²³

Clown 1 What is he that builds stronger than either the mason, the shipwright, or the carpenter?

40 *Clown 2* The gallows-maker, for that frame²⁴ outlives a thousand tenants.

Clown 1 I like thy wit²⁵ well, in good faith. The gallows does well.²⁶ But how does it well?²⁷ It does well to those that do ill. Now thou dost ill to say the gallows is built stronger than the church. Argal, the gallows may do well to thee. To't²⁸

45 again, come.

Clown 2 Who builds stronger than a mason, a shipwright, or a carpenter?

Clown 1 Ay, tell me that, and unyoke.²⁹

19 possessed a heraldic coat of arms

20 interpret the language of

21 in terms of the point at issue/the matter in hand

22 confess thyself (admit the charge), and be hanged: a proverb

23 come, come

24 structure

25 cleverness, quickness

26 as an answer to riddling question he had asked

27 how does it work well/ do good (all Elizabethans loved wordplay)

28 try it

29 (you can) stop working

Clown 2 Marry, now I can tell.

Clown 1 To't. 50

Clown 2 Mass,³⁰ I cannot tell.

ENTER HAMLET AND HORATIO, AT A DISTANCE

Clown 1 Cudgel³¹ thy brains no more about it, for your dull ass will not mend his pace with³² beating. And when you are asked this question next, say "a grave-maker: the houses he makes last till doomsday." Go, get thee to Yaughan:³³ fetch me 55
a stoup³⁴ of liquor.

EXIT CLOWN 2

CLOWN I DIGS AND SINGS

In youth, when I did love, did love,

Methought it was very sweet

To contract³⁵ – O – the time for – a – my behave,³⁶

O, methought, there – a – was nothing – a – meet.³⁷ 60

Hamlet Has this fellow no feeling of³⁸ his business? 'A sings in grave-making.

Horatio Custom hath made it in him a property of easiness.³⁹

30 by the Mass

31 beat (cudgel: club)

32 because a stupid donkey will not improve/better his pace because of

33 the name of an innkeeper (?)

34 tankard (a tall mug with a handle and, often, a lid); *also* pail, bucket

35 agree, enter into

36 my use/benefit

37 suitable

38 emotions about

39 habit has made it, in him, something comfortable

Hamlet 'Tis e'en so. The hand of little employment hath the
65 daintier sense.⁴⁰

Clown 1 (*sings*)

But age, with his stealing⁴¹ steps,
Hath clawed me in his clutch,⁴²
And hath shipped me into the land,⁴³
As if I had never been such.⁴⁴

HE THROWS UP A SKULL

70 *Hamlet* That skull had a tongue in it, and could sing once.
How the knave jowls⁴⁵ it to the ground, as if 'twere Cain's
jaw-bone, that⁴⁶ did the first murder! This might be the pate
of a politician, which this ass now o'er-offices,⁴⁷ one⁴⁸ that
would circumvent⁴⁹ God, might it not?

75 *Horatio* It might, my lord.

Hamlet Or of a courtier; which could say "Good morrow,
sweet lord! How dost thou, sweet lord?" This might be Lord
Such-a-One, that⁵⁰ praised my Lord Such-a-One's horse,

40 leisure (that is, the hand that does not work much) has more fastidious feelings

41 thieving (*or* secret) steps, has

42 grip, grasp

43 packed me off into the countryside/rural regions (?)

44 what I once was

45 knocks, strikes

46 which did (Cain was supposed to have killed Abel with the jawbone of a donkey)

47 skull/head of a crafty schemer/intriguer, which this ignorant fellow now lords it over

48 the living man from whom the skull originated

49 get the better of ("o'er-reach")

50 the courtier? one (lesser?) lord speaking of another lord?

when 'a meant to beg⁵¹ it, might it not?

Horatio Ay, my lord.

80

Hamlet Why, e'en so. And now my Lady Worm's, chapless, and
knocked about the mazzard⁵² with a sexton's spade. Here's
fine revolution, an we had the trick⁵³ to see't. Did these
bones cost no more the breeding, but to play at loggats⁵⁴ with
'em? Mine⁵⁵ ache to think on't.

85

Clown 1 (*sings*)

A pick-axe, and a spade, a spade,

For and⁵⁶ a shrouding sheet.

O, a pit of clay for to be made

For such a guest is meet.

HE THROWS UP ANOTHER SKULL

Hamlet There's another. Why may not that be the skull of a
lawyer? Where be his quiddities⁵⁷ now, his quilleies, his cases,
his tenures, and his tricks?⁵⁸ Why does he⁵⁹ suffer ⁶⁰ this rude
knave now to knock him about the sconce⁶¹ with a dirty

90

51 beg for

52 her skull, having no lower jaw, and knocked about the head/face

53 cyclical change/overturning, if we had the art/skill

54 in the production, or just to play a game in which small pieces of wood were
thrown, to see who could get them closest to a designated target-object

55 my bones

56 and also, plus

57 quibbling, picky arguments ("quidditas?" = "what is the essence/nature of
_____?")

58 his citations to old cases, his land-lease contracts, and his strategems, clever
contrivances

59 the hypothetical lawyer

60 allow, permit

61 head

shovel, and will not tell him of his action of battery?⁶² Hum!
 95 This fellow⁶³ might be in's time a great buyer of land, with
 his statutes,⁶⁴ his recognizances,⁶⁵ his fines,⁶⁶ his double
 vouchers,⁶⁷ his recoveries.⁶⁸ Is this the fine of his fines, and
 the recovery⁶⁹ of his recoveries, to have his fine pate full of
 fine⁷⁰ dirt? Will his vouchers vouch⁷¹ him no more of his
 100 purchases, and double ones too, than the length and breadth
 of a pair of indentures?⁷² The very conveyances⁷³ of his lands
 will hardly lie in this box,⁷⁴ and must th' inheritor⁷⁵ himself
 have no more, ha?

Horatio Not a jot⁷⁶ more, my lord.

105 *Hamlet* Is not parchment made of sheepskins?

Horatio Ay, my lord, and of calf-skins too.

Hamlet They are sheep and calves which⁷⁷ seek out assurance⁷⁸

62 a lawsuit brought for assault

63 the next skull to be tossed up

64 governmental enactments/laws

65 his acknowledgments/ bonds

66 a fictitious, collusive suit, used instead of a straightforward conveyance of land

67 trickily substituting, in a legal proceeding, one person for another

68 a legal maneuver to get around entailed restrictions on the sale of land

69 end of his fines, and the restoring/regaining

70 delicately ground-up ("loose, powdery")

71 affirm, attest, guarantee

72 agreements, contracts, deeds

73 documents for transfers/purchases and sales of land, kept in a deed box

74 fit in this deed box/coffin

75 the "heir" (in the fictive transactions already referred to?)

76 a very small part of anything

77 who

78 (1) legal proof of a transfer of land, (2) the actual, uninterrupted ownership of land: it is foolish, considering the obvious evidence of human mortality, to expect that the first-named can guarantee the second

in that. I will speak to this fellow. (*to Clown 1*) Whose grave's this, sirrah?⁷⁹

Clown 1 Mine, sir.

110

(SINGS)

O, a pit of clay for to be made

For such a guest is meet.

Hamlet I think it be thine, indeed, for thou liest in't.

Clown 1 You lie out on't, sir, and therefore it is not yours. For my part, I do not lie in't, and yet it is mine.

115

Hamlet 'Thou dost lie in't, to be in't and say it is thine. 'Tis for the dead, not for the quick.⁸⁰ Therefore thou liest.

Clown 1 'Tis a quick lie, sir. 'Twill away again, from me to you.

Hamlet What man dost thou dig it for?

Clown 1 For no man, sir.

120

Hamlet What woman, then?

Clown 1 For none, neither.

Hamlet Who is to be buried in't?

Clown 1 One that was a woman, sir. But rest her soul, she's dead.

Hamlet (*to Horatio*) How absolute the knave is! We must speak by the card, or equivocation⁸¹ will undo us. By the Lord, Horatio, this three years I have took note of it. The age is grown so pickèd⁸² that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier, he galls his kibe.⁸³ — (*to Clown 1*)

79 form of address used for speaking down to someone

80 living (and quick-witted)

81 the mariner's chart (*or* his compass), or ambiguity

82 picky, finicky, fastidious

83 the peasant hurts/injures the sore on the back of the courtier's heel

130 How long hast thou been a grave-maker?

Clown 1 Of all the days i' the year, I came to't that day that our last king Hamlet overcame Fortinbras.⁸⁴

Hamlet How long is that since?

Clown 1 Cannot you tell that? Every fool can tell that. It was the
135 very day that young Hamlet was born, he that is mad, and sent into England.

Hamlet Ay, marry, why was he sent into England?

Clown 1 Why, because 'a was mad. 'A shall recover his wits there, or, if 'a do not, it's no great matter there.

140 *Hamlet* Why?

Clown 1 'Twill not be seen in him there. There the men are as mad as he.

Hamlet How came he mad?

Clown 1 Very strangely, they say.

145 *Hamlet* How strangely?

Clown 1 Faith, e'en⁸⁵ with losing his wits.

Hamlet Upon what ground?⁸⁶

Clown 1 Why, here in Denmark. I have been sexton here, man and boy, thirty years.

150 *Hamlet* How long will a man lie i' the earth ere he rot?

Clown 1 Faith, if he be not rotten before he die – as we have many pocky corses now-a-days, that will scarce hold the laying in⁸⁷ – 'a will last you some eight year or nine year. A tanner⁸⁸ will last you nine year.

84 the older Fortinbras

85 precisely

86 for what reason (or "earth, land")

87 since we have many syphilitic corpses these days, which will barely endure being laid in the grave

88 one who tans/cures hides/leather

- Hamlet* Why he more than another? 155
- Clown 1* Why, sir, his hide is so tanned with his trade, that he will keep out water a great while, and your water is a sore⁸⁹ decayer of your whoreson⁹⁰ dead body. Here's a skull now hath lien you⁹¹ i' th' earth three and twenty years.
- Hamlet* Whose was it? 160
- Clown 1* A whoreson mad fellow's it was. Whose do you think it was?
- Hamlet* Nay, I know not.
- Clown 1* A pestilence⁹² on him for a mad rogue! 'A poured a flagon of Rhenish on my head once. This same skull, sir, was 165
Yorick's skull, the king's jester.
- Hamlet* This?
- Clown 1* E'en that.
- Hamlet* Let me see. (*takes the skull*) Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio – a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent 170
fancy.⁹³ He hath borne me on his back a thousand times. And now how abhorred⁹⁴ in my imagination it is! My gorge rises at it.⁹⁵ Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft. (*to the skull*) Where be your gibes now? Your gambols?⁹⁶ Your songs? Your flashes of merriment, that were 175
wont to set the table on a roar?⁹⁷ Not one now, to mock your

89 grievous

90 a common imprecation, in current usage something like “bastard” or “s.o.b.”

91 been lying

92 plague

93 imagination, whimsy

94 disgusting, horrid: abHORRED (?)

95 the vomit rises in my throat, at the thought

96 where be your taunts/scoffing now? your leaping about/dancing?

97 habitually/usually set everyone at the table laughing loudly/boisterously

own grinning?⁹⁸ Quite chap-fallen?⁹⁹ Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favor¹⁰⁰ she must come. Make her laugh at that. Prithee,

180 *Horatio*, tell me one thing.

Horatio What's that, my lord?

Hamlet Dost thou think Alexander¹⁰¹ looked o' this fashion i' th' earth?

Horatio E'en so.

185 *Hamlet* And smelt so? Pah!

PUTS DOWN THE SKULL

Horatio E'en so, my lord.

Hamlet To what base¹⁰² uses we may return, Horatio! Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander, till he find it stopping a bung-hole?¹⁰³

190 *Horatio* 'Twere to consider too curiously,¹⁰⁴ to consider so.

Hamlet No, faith, not a jot; but to follow him thither with modesty enough, and likelihood to lead¹⁰⁵ it. As thus: Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth into dust, the dust is earth, of earth we make loam,¹⁰⁶ and

98 the "grinning" skull is proverbial

99 lower jaw hanging down, in despair and having no lower jaw ("chap" or "chop": lower jaw)

100 appearance, look, aspect, countenance (face)

101 Alexander the Great, 356–323 B.C.

102 lowly, degraded

103 hole at the top of a cask, "corked" by a "bung"

104 contemplate/think about too elaborately/ minutely

105 moderation/self-control, and probability/promise of success to conduct/direct/guide

106 compound of clay or other dirt, plus water, sand, and so on

why of that loam, whereto he was converted, might they not 195
stop a beer-barrel?¹⁰⁷

Imperious¹⁰⁸ Caesar, dead and turned to clay,
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away:
O, that that earth¹⁰⁹ which kept the world in awe,
Should patch a wall to expel the winter's flaw!¹¹⁰ 200
But soft! but soft awhile. Here comes the King,
The Queen, the courtiers.

ENTER BEARERS, WITH COFFIN, A PRIEST, LAERTES,
CLAUDIUS, GERTRUDE, THEIR ATTENDANTS, & C

Who is this they follow?
And with such maimèd rites?¹¹¹ This doth betoken¹¹²
The corse they follow did with desp'rate hand
Fordo its own life.¹¹³ 'Twas of some estate. 205
Couch¹¹⁴ we awhile, and mark.

RETIRES WITH HORATIO

Laertes What ceremony else?

Hamlet That is Laertes,

A very noble youth. Mark.

107 into which he was turned/transformed, might they not close/seal a beer-barrel

108 imperious (*and* imperial)

109 Alexander (men were made by God from/out of dust/dirt/earth)

110 keep out the winter's blast, gust

111 as mourners and with such crippled/cut-off/incomplete rites

112 point to, signal, be a sign of

113 did with despairing/hopeless/reckless hand end/do away with its own life

114 degree of rank/dignity/status. Let us hide, conceal

Laertes What ceremony else?

210 *Priest* Her obsequies¹¹⁵ have been as far enlarged
 As we have warranty. Her death was doubtful,¹¹⁶
 And but that great command o'ersways¹¹⁷ the order,
 She should in ground unsanctified have lodged¹¹⁸
 Till the last trumpet. For charitable prayers,
 215 Shards,¹¹⁹ flints and pebbles should be thrown on her,
 Yet here she is allowed her virgin crants,
 Her maiden strewments,¹²⁰ and the bringing home
 Of bell and burial.¹²¹

Laertes Must there no more be done?

Priest No more be done.

220 We should profane¹²² the service of the dead
 To sing sage requiem and such rest¹²³ to her
 As to peace-parted¹²⁴ souls.

Laertes Lay her i' the earth.
 And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
 May violets spring! I tell thee, churlish¹²⁵ priest,

115 funeral rites

116 authorization/official sanction. Her manner of death was questionable/
 ambiguous

117 eminent/high/elevated/lofty power/coercion overrules

118 resided

119 in spite of the fact that charitable prayers, fragments of broken earthenware,

120 her wreaths/garlands, her maiden flowers, and so on, scattered on the grave

121 bringing her home to heaven, with the ringing of church bells and church-
 sanctioned burial

122 desecrate, violate

123 solemn requiem and the same kind of repose/tranquillity to her

124 those who peacefully departed/were separated from earthly existence

125 rude, low-bred

A minist'ring angel shall my sister be 225
 When thou liest howling.¹²⁶

Hamlet What, the fair Ophelia!

Gertrude Sweets to the sweet. Farewell!

SCATTERING FLOWERS

I hoped thou shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife.
 I thought thy bride-bed to have decked,¹²⁷ sweet maid,
 And not have strewed thy grave.

Laertes O, treble woe 230

Fall ten times treble on that cursèd head
 Whose wicked deed¹²⁸ thy most ingenious sense¹²⁹
 Deprived thee of! Hold off the earth awhile,
 Till I have caught her once more in mine arms.¹³⁰

LEAPS INTO THE GRAVE

Now pile your dust upon the quick and dead 235
 Till of this flat¹³¹ a mountain you have made
 To o'ertop¹³² old Pelion¹³³ or the skyish head
 Of blue Olympus.

Hamlet (*advancing*) What is he whose grief 240
 Bears such an emphasis? whose phrase of sorrow

126 in hell

127 imagined/fancied I would adorn/beautify your bride-bed

128 killing Polonius

129 the intelligent/able/talented mind

130 coffins were often left open

131 level ground

132 rise above/higher than

133 giants piled this Greek mountain on Mount Ossa, then piled Ossa-Pelion on top of Mount Olympus, while trying to reach and overthrow the gods

Conjures the wand'ring stars¹³⁴ and makes them stand
 Like wonder-wounded hearers? This is I,
 Hamlet the Dane.

HE LEAPS INTO THE GRAVE¹³⁵

Laertes The devil take thy soul!

HE GRAPPLES¹³⁶ WITH HAMLET

Hamlet Thou pray'st not well.

245 I prithee, take thy fingers from my throat,
 For though I am not splenitive¹³⁷ and rash,
 Yet have I something in me dangerous,¹³⁸
 Which let thy wiseness fear. Hold off¹³⁹ thy hand.

Claudius Pluck them asunder.

Gertrude Hamlet, Hamlet!

All Gentlemen!

250 *Horatio* (to *Hamlet*) Good my lord, be quiet.¹⁴⁰

ATTENDANTS PART THEM

Hamlet Why, I will fight with him upon this theme
 Until my eyelids will no longer wag.

Gertrude O my son, what theme?

Hamlet I loved Ophelia. Forty thousand brothers
 255 Could not, with all their quantity of love,

134 strong/ imprecise rhetoric? whose sorrowful language calls upon/ invokes
 the wandering planets

135 some texts do not contain this stage direction

136 fights

137 irritable, peevish, ill-humored

138 unsafe, hazardous, injurious

139 take away

140 peaceful, still, silent

Make up my sum. (*to Laertes*) What wilt thou do for her?

Claudius O, he is mad, Laertes.

Gertrude For love of God, forbear¹⁴¹ him.

Hamlet 'Swounds, show me what thou'lt do.

Woo't¹⁴² weep? woo't fight? woo't fast? woo't tear¹⁴³ thyself? 260

Woo't drink up eisel?¹⁴⁴ eat a crocodile?

I'll do't. Dost thou come here to whine?

To outface¹⁴⁵ me with leaping in her grave?

Be buried quick with her, and so will I.

And if thou prate¹⁴⁶ of mountains, let them throw 265

Millions of acres on us, till our ground,¹⁴⁷

Singeing his pate against the burning zone,¹⁴⁸

Make Ossa like a wart! Nay, an thou'lt mouth,¹⁴⁹

I'll rant as well as thou.

Gertrude This is mere¹⁵⁰ madness,

And thus awhile the fit will work on him. 270

Anon, as patient as the female dove

When that her golden couplets are disclosed,¹⁵¹

His silence will sit drooping.

Hamlet (*to Laertes*) Hear you, sir.

141 hold/keep back

142 will you

143 lacerate, wound

144 vinegar

145 to make high-pitched, querulous noises? to outdo/defy

146 talk idly, chatter to no effect

147 the ground/earth piled on top of us

148 the orbit of the sun

149 declaim pompously, oratorically

150 pure, sheer, absolute

151 yellow/golden downy pair of chicks (doves were said to lay two eggs) are hatched

What is the reason that you use¹⁵² me thus?
 275 I loved you ever.¹⁵³ But it is no matter.
 Let Hercules himself do what he may,
 The cat will mew and dog will have his day.

EXIT

Claudius I pray you, good Horatio, wait upon¹⁵⁴ him.

EXIT HORATIO

(to *Laertes*) Strengthen your patience in¹⁵⁵ our last night's
 speech.
 280 We'll put the matter to the present push.¹⁵⁶
 Good Gertrude, set some watch over your son.
 This grave shall have a living¹⁵⁷ monument.
 An hour of quiet¹⁵⁸ shortly shall we see;
 Till then, in patience our proceeding¹⁵⁹ be.

EXEUNT

152 treat, behave toward

153 always

154 attend to

155 by means/in thoughts of

156 thrust, stroke, vigorous attempt

157 lasting, enduring

158 a time of peace/tranquillity

159 actions, doings

SCENE 2

The castle

ENTER HAMLET AND HORATIO

Hamlet So much for this, sir. Now shall you see¹ the other.

You do remember all the circumstance?

Horatio Remember it, my lord!

Hamlet Sir, in my heart there was a kind of fighting,

That would not let me sleep. Methought I lay 5

Worse than the mutines in the bilboes.² Rashly –

And praised be rashness for it. Let us know

Our indiscretion³ sometimes serves us well,

When our deep plots do pall.⁴ And that should teach us

There's a divinity that shapes our ends, 10

Rough-hew⁵ them how we will –

Horatio That is most certain.

Hamlet Up from my cabin,

My sea-gown scarfed⁶ about me, in the dark

Groped I to find out them, had my desire,⁷

Fingered their packet, and in fine⁸ withdrew 15

To mine own room again, making so bold,

1 learn, consider

2 the mutineers in long shackles (attached, on shipboard, to fixed iron bars)

3 let us keep in mind that our imprudence

4 when our weighty/dangerous plans weaken/fail

5 which should teach us there's a divinity that directs/orders our purposes/
destinies, rough-cut them

6 loose garment of coarse cloth wrapped around me like a scarf

7 to locate Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, did as I wished (found them
sleeping)

8 pilfered/stole their package of official documents, and in conclusion/finally

My fears forgetting manners, to unseal
 Their grand commission,⁹ where I found, Horatio –
 O royal knavery! – an exact command,
 20 Larded¹⁰ with many several sorts of reasons
 Importing¹¹ Denmark's health, and England's too,
 With, ho! such bugs and goblins in my life¹²
 That, on the supervise, no leisure bated¹³ –
 No, not to stay the grinding¹⁴ of the axe –
 My head should be struck off.

25 *Horatio* Is't possible?

Hamlet Here's the commission: read it at more leisure.

But wilt thou hear now how I did proceed?

Horatio I beseech you.

Hamlet Being thus be-netted round with villainies –

30 Ere I could make a prologue¹⁵ to my brains,
 They¹⁶ had begun the play – sat me down,
 Devised a new commission, wrote it fair.¹⁷
 I once did hold it, as our statist¹⁸ do,
 A baseness¹⁹ to write fair and labored much

9 high charge/instructions

10 an express/detailed command, garnished/fattened

11 suggesting reasons/matters of

12 bogeys/scarecrows/assorted imaginary terrors and dangers in my continued existence

13 upon reading (these instructions), no opportunity for delay allowed

14 to wait for the sharpening

15 an introduction, preface

16 his brains

17 clean, clear (like the writing of copyists and office clerks)

18 statesmen, politicians

19 something low, degraded, shabby

How to forget that learning,²⁰ but, sir, now 35
 It did me yeoman's²¹ service. Wilt thou know
 The effect of what I wrote?

Horatio Ay, good my lord.

Hamlet An earnest conjuration²² from the King,
 As England was his faithful tributary,
 As love between them like the palm might flourish,²³ 40
 As peace should still her wheaten²⁴ garland wear
 And stand a comma²⁵ 'tween their amities,²⁶
 And many such-like as's of great charge,²⁷
 That on the view and knowing of these contents,²⁸
 Without debatement further more or less,²⁹ 45
 He should those bearers³⁰ put to sudden death,
 Not shriving-time³¹ allowed.

Horatio How was this sealed?

Hamlet Why, even in that was heaven ordinant.³²

20 how to have an “interesting/impressive” handwriting rather than a readily legible one

21 good, efficient, useful

22 serious/weighty charge/call

23 “The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree”: Psalm 92.12

24 wheat as a symbol of prosperity/plenty is traditionally associated with representations of Peace

25 variously understood as “pause/interval,” or “link,” or “something tiny/insignificant” or “separate but still connected”

26 friendly relations

27 many repeated uses of “as,” of great weight/importance

28 that immediately after reading and becoming aware of this intention

29 without discussion/argument, completely/exactly as instructed

30 Rosencrantz and Guildenstern

31 confession and absolution

32 directing, ordaining

I had my father's signet in my purse,³³
 50 Which was the model of that Danish seal,³⁴
 Folded the writ up in form of th' other,³⁵
 Subscribed³⁶ it, gave't the impression,³⁷ placed it safely,³⁸
 The changeling³⁹ never known. Now, the next day
 Was our sea-fight, and what to this was sequent⁴⁰
 55 Thou know'st already.

Horatio So Guildenstern and Rosencrantz go to't.⁴¹

Hamlet Why, man, they did make love to this employment.

They are not near my conscience; their defeat
 Does by their own insinuation grow.⁴²
 60 'Tis dangerous when the baser nature comes
 Between the pass and fell incensèd points⁴³
 Of mighty opposites.⁴⁴

Horatio Why, what a king is this!

Hamlet Does it not, think'st thee, stand me now upon⁴⁵ —

He that hath killed my king and whored my mother,

33 small seal, usually set into a ring, in my money-pouch

34 a copy of the well-known (larger, somewhat more formal) Danish seal

35 the document I had written just like the original commission/instructions

36 signed it, using the King's name

37 sealed it with wax, on which the seal was "impressed/stamped"

38 securely back in Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's "packet"

39 thing substituted for another thing

40 following

41 die

42 not closely affecting my conscience; their undoing/ruin grows from their own stealthy self-introduction

43 when the inferior nature comes between the thrust (as in fencing) and the fierce/terrible/ruthless burning/angry blades, swords

44 here, Hamlet and the King

45 now become incumbent on/necessary for me

Popped⁴⁶ in between th' election and my hopes,⁴⁷ 65
 Thrown out his angle for my proper life,
 And with such coz'nage⁴⁸ – is't not perfect conscience
 To quit⁴⁹ him with this arm? And is't not to be damned
 To let this canker of our nature come
 In further evil?⁵⁰ 70

Horatio It must be shortly known to him from England
 What is the issue⁵¹ of the business there.

Hamlet It will be short.⁵² The interim⁵³ is mine,
 And a man's life's no more than to say⁵⁴ "one."
 But I am very sorry, good Horatio, 75
 That to Laertes I forgot myself,
 For by the image of my cause I see
 The portraiture⁵⁵ of his.⁵⁶ I'll court his favors.⁵⁷
 But sure the bravery⁵⁸ of his grief did put me
 Into a tow'ring passion.

Horatio Peace. Who comes here? 80

ENTER OSRIC, A COURTIER

46 come unexpectedly/suddenly

47 to be elected king himself

48 gone fishing for my own life, and with such perfect cheating/defrauding

49 faultless good conscience to repay him with this arm?

50 and wouldn't I be damned to allow this ulcer of human nature to achieve further evil?

51 outcome

52 a brief time

53 period between then and now

54 count

55 image

56 they both want revenge

57 goodwill

58 bravado, show, display

Osrice Your lordship is right welcome back to Denmark.

Hamlet I humbly thank you, sir. (*to Horatio*) Dost know this water-fly?

Horatio (*aside*) No, my good lord.

85 *Hamlet* (*aside*) Thy state is the more gracious, for 'tis a vice⁵⁹ to know him. He hath much land, and⁶⁰ fertile. Let a beast be lord of beasts, and his crib shall stand at the king's mess.⁶¹ 'Tis a chough,⁶² but as I say, spacious⁶³ in the possession of dirt.

Osrice Sweet lord, if your lordship were at leisure, I should
90 impart⁶⁴ a thing to you from his Majesty.

Hamlet I will receive it, sir, with all diligence of spirit.⁶⁵ Put your bonnet⁶⁶ to his⁶⁷ right use. 'Tis for the head.⁶⁸

Osrice I thank your lordship. It is very hot.

Hamlet No, believe me, 'tis very cold. The wind is northerly.

95 *Osrice* It is indifferent⁶⁹ cold, my lord, indeed.

Hamlet But yet methinks it is very sultry and hot – for my complexion.⁷⁰

Osrice Exceedingly, my lord. It is very sultry, as 'twere – I

59 situation/condition is all the more attractive/happy, for it is an indulgence in vice

60 and that

61 stall will stand at the King's table (a good-sized company of diners is implied)

62 he is like a small, chattering, crowlike bird

63 ample

64 make known, communicate

65 careful attention

66 men's and boys' caps

67 its

68 not for waving about, as Osrice has been doing

69 tolerably

70 nature, temperament

cannot tell how. But, my lord, his Majesty bade me signify to you that 'a has laid a great wager on your head. Sir, this is the matter – 100

Hamlet (indicating that *Osric* should put on his hat) I beseech you, remember.

Osric Nay, good my lord: for mine ease,⁷¹ in good faith. Sir, here is newly come to court Laertes – believe me, an absolute gentleman, full of most excellent differences, of very soft society and great showing.⁷² Indeed, to speak feelingly of him, he is the card or calendar of gentry,⁷³ for you shall find in him the continent of what part a gentleman would see.⁷⁴ 105

Hamlet Sir, his definement suffers no perdition⁷⁵ in you, though I know to divide him inventorially would dozy th' arithmetic of memory,⁷⁶ and yet but yaw neither, in respect of his quick sail.⁷⁷ But, in the verity of extolment, I take him to be a soul of great article,⁷⁸ and his infusion of such dearth and rareness as, to make true diction of him, his semblable is his mirror, 115

71 *Osric* would rather not put on his hat; “ease” = “comfort” – but this is the highly conventional language of courtly politeness

72 a perfect/complete gentleman, full of most excellent distinctions, of very easy/pleasing manners and distinguished outward appearance

73 to speak warmly of him, he is the map/chart or guide/model of good breeding/courtesy

74 the container/receptacle of whatever aspect a gentleman might want to see

75 his characterization/description suffers no loss, diminution

76 list/enumerate separately each of his qualities would stupefy/confuse memory's computational/arithmetic capabilities

77 cause neither (arithmetic nor memory) to go off course (or still cause no straying from a straight course), in view of/because of his lively/vigorous sailing capacities/abilities

78 to praise (him) truthfully/sincerely/honestly, I consider him a soul of large size/capabilities

and who else would trace him, his umbrage,⁷⁹ nothing more.

Osric Your lordship speaks most infallibly⁸⁰ of him.

Hamlet The concernancy,⁸¹ sir? Why do we wrap the gentleman in our more rawer⁸² breath?

120 *Osric* Sir?

Horatio Is't not possible to understand in another tongue?⁸³ You will to't,⁸⁴ sir, really.

Hamlet What imports the nomination⁸⁵ of this gentleman?

Osric Of Laertes?

125 *Horatio* (*aside*) His purse is empty already. All's golden words are spent.⁸⁶

Hamlet Of him, sir.

Osric I know you are not ignorant –

Hamlet I would you did,⁸⁷ sir. Yet, in faith, if you did, it would

130 not much approve⁸⁸ me. Well, sir?

Osric You are not ignorant of what excellence Laertes is –

Hamlet I dare not confess that, lest I should compare⁸⁹ with him in excellence. But to know a man well were⁹⁰ to know himself.

79 his essence (*or* quality) of such scarcity and uncommonness/unusualness that, to speak truly of him, his only likeness is the image of himself, and he who/anyone who wishes to draw/copy him is his semblance/shadow

80 unfailingly, with utter certainty

81 business at hand, matter at issue

82 words/breath that is cruder, more uncultivated than is Laertes himself

83 another language (like plain English)

84 you'll get there

85 what signifies/means the naming

86 all his precious/important words are used up

87 wish you did know that I was not ignorant/unlearned

88 recommend/commend (*Osric* being himself a fool)

89 be compared

90 would be

- Osrice* I mean, sir, for his weapon.⁹¹ But in the imputation⁹² 135
 laid on him by them, in his meed he's unfellowed.⁹³
- Hamlet* What's his weapon?
- Osrice* Rapier and dagger.
- Hamlet* That's two of his weapons. But well.⁹⁴
- Osrice* The king, sir, hath wagered with him six Barbary horses, 140
 against the which he has impawned, as I take it, six French
 rapiers and poniards, with their assigns, as girdle, hangers, and
 so.⁹⁵ Three of the carriages,⁹⁶ in faith, are very dear to fancy,
 very responsive⁹⁷ to the hilts, most delicate⁹⁸ carriages, and of
 very liberal conceit.⁹⁹ 145
- Hamlet* What call you the carriages?
- Horatio* (*aside*) I knew you must be edified by the margent¹⁰⁰ ere
 you had done.
- Osrice* The carriages, sir, are the hangers.
- Hamlet* The phrase would be more german¹⁰¹ to the matter, if 150
 we could carry cannon by our sides.¹⁰² I would it might be

91 understood here as a plural: weapons

92 prestige/reputation

93 honor/distinction he has none who is his equal

94 well and good (never mind)

95 six Arab horses, against the which Laertes has risked, as I understand it, six
 French rapiers and daggers, with their accessories, as belts, straps/loops
 (which let the weapon hang from the weapon-belt), and so on

96 that which carries (a pompous way of saying "hangers")

97 very pleasing to/esteemed by good taste/critical judgment, very well
 matched with, harmonious

98 fine, subtle, ingenious

99 of free/inventive conception/design

100 instructed/spiritually improved by the commentary ("marginal
 comments")

101 germane, relevant

102 gun carriages: the support and transport structures for cannon

“hangers” till then. But, on.¹⁰³ Six Barbary horses against six French swords, their assigns, and three liberal-conceited carriages: that’s the French bet against the Danish. Why is this

155 “impawned,” as you call it?

Osrice The king, sir, hath laid, sir, that in a dozen passes¹⁰⁴ between yourself and him, he shall not exceed you¹⁰⁵ three hits. He hath laid on twelve for nine. And it would come to immediate trial,¹⁰⁶ if your lordship would vouchsafe¹⁰⁷ the

160 answer.

Hamlet How¹⁰⁸ if I answer “no”?

Osrice I mean, my lord, the opposition¹⁰⁹ of your person in trial.

Hamlet Sir, I will walk here in the hall. If it please his Majesty, ’tis
165 the breathing time¹¹⁰ of day with me. Let the foils be brought. The gentleman willing, and the King hold his purpose, I will win for him an¹¹¹ I can. If not, I will gain nothing but my shame and the odd¹¹² hits.

Osrice Shall I deliver you e’en¹¹³ so?

170 *Hamlet* To this effect, sir, after¹¹⁴ what flourish your nature will.

Osrice I commend¹¹⁵ my duty to your lordship.

103 to continue

104 bouts

105 outdo you by

106 determination, test

107 give

108 what

109 offering for combat

110 exercise time

111 if

112 extra

113 communicate your message/response exactly

114 according to

115 present, give

Hamlet Yours, yours.

EXIT OSRIC

He does well to commend it himself. There are no tongues else
for's turn.¹¹⁶

Horatio This lapwing runs away with the shell on his head.¹¹⁷ 175

Hamlet 'A did comply with his dug,¹¹⁸ before 'a sucked it. Thus
has he, and many more of the same bevy that I know the
drossy age dotes on, only got the tune¹¹⁹ of the time and, out
of an habit of encounter, a kind of yeasty collection, which
carries them through and through the most fanned and 180
winnowed¹²⁰ opinions. And do but blow them to their trial,
the bubbles are out.¹²¹

ENTER A LORD

Lord My lord, his Majesty commended him to you by young
Osric, who brings back to him that you attend¹²² him in the

116 no other voices to speak for his use/purpose (to commend/praise Osric)

117 proverbial: the lapwing is a kind of plover, the newly hatched chick of
which was thought to run about with the top half of the egg still on its
head

118 observe the forms of civility/politeness/courtesy with the nipple of his
nurse's breast

119 company/crowd (primarily used with reference to women) that I know
the scum-filled/rubbish-ridden age dotes on have caught/acquired only
the style/frame of mind

120 out of a settled/habitual/rote way of face-to-face meeting, a kind of
restlessly turbid/frothy/foaming collection/summary, which carries them
from beginning to end/over and over again through the most thoroughly
blown about and sifted

121 blow them to their examination/test/ proof, the bubbles are popped/
extinguished

122 await, wait upon

185 hall. He sends to know if your pleasure hold to play¹²³ with
 Laertes, or that you will take longer time.

Hamlet I am constant to my purposes. They follow the King's
 pleasure. If his fitness speaks,¹²⁴ mine is ready, now or
 whensoever, provided I be so able as now.

190 *Lord* The King and Queen and all are coming down.

Hamlet In happy time.¹²⁵

Lord The Queen desires you to use some gentle
 entertainment to Laertes before you fall to¹²⁶ play.

Hamlet She well instructs me.

EXIT LORD

195 *Horatio* You will lose this wager, my lord.

Hamlet I do not think so. Since he went into France, I have been
 in continual practice. I shall win at the odds. But thou
 wouldst not think how ill all's here about¹²⁷ my heart – but it
 is no matter.

200 *Horatio* Nay, good my lord –

Hamlet It is but foolery; but it is such a kind of gain-giving¹²⁸ as
 would perhaps trouble a woman.

Horatio If your mind dislike any thing, obey it. I will forestall
 their repair¹²⁹ hither, and say you are not fit.¹³⁰

123 sport now

124 if his readiness/convenience signals/addresses me

125 at a good/fortunate moment (a conventionally polite phrase)

126 gentle treatment/reception (“courtesy”) to Laertes before you pass/move
 into your sport

127 how badly everything feels, here around/near

128 misgiving

129 intercept, their making their way

130 ready, prepared

Hamlet Not a whit. We defy augury.¹³¹ There's a special
 providence in the fall of a sparrow.¹³² If it¹³³ be now, 'tis not
 to come. If it be not to come, it will be now. If it be not now,
 yet it will come. The readiness is all. Since no man, of aught
 he leaves, knows aught, what is't to leave betimes? Let be.¹³⁴ 205

ENTER CLAUDIUS, GERTRUDE, LAERTES, LORDS, OSRIC,
 AND ATTENDANTS WITH FOILS, & C

Claudius Come, Hamlet, come, and take this hand¹³⁵ from me. 210

CLAUDIUS PUTS LAERTES' HAND INTO HAMLET'S

Hamlet Give me your pardon, sir: I have done you wrong,
 But pardon't, as you are a gentleman.
 This presence¹³⁶ knows, and you must needs have heard,
 How I am punished with a sore distraction.¹³⁷
 What I have done 215
 That might your nature,¹³⁸ honor and exception
 Roughly awake,¹³⁹ I here proclaim was madness.
 Was't Hamlet wronged Laertes? Never Hamlet.
 If Hamlet from himself be ta'en away,
 And when he's not himself does wrong Laertes, 220

131 I reject/renounce/disdain predictions of the future

132 "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall
 on the ground without your Father": Matthew 10.29

133 the time of death

134 early/in a short time. Let it be

135 Laertes'

136 this company, those assembled here

137 painful/bitter/grievous/severe mental perturbation/madness

138 inherent human disposition, natural human feeling/affection

139 and disapproval violently rouse/make active

Then Hamlet does it not, Hamlet denies¹⁴⁰ it.

Who does it, then? His madness. If't be so,

Hamlet is of the faction that is wronged:

His madness is poor Hamlet's enemy.

225 Sir, in¹⁴¹ this audience,

Let my disclaiming from a purposed¹⁴² evil

Free me so far in your most generous thoughts

That¹⁴³ I have shot mine arrow o'er the house

And hurt my brother.

Laertes I am satisfied in nature,

230 Whose motive,¹⁴⁴ in this case, should stir me most

To my revenge. But in my terms of honor

I stand aloof, and will¹⁴⁵ no reconciliation

Till by some elder masters, of known honor,

I have a voice and precedent of peace,

235 To keep my name ungor'd.¹⁴⁶ But till that time,

I do receive your offered love like love

And will not wrong it.

Hamlet I embrace it freely;

And will this brothers' wager frankly play.¹⁴⁷

Give us the foils. Come on.

Laertes Come, one for me.

140 contradicts, forbids

141 in the presence of

142 let my renouncing of an intentional

143 that it will seem to you as if

144 in natural human feeling/affection, whose motivation

145 I stay/stop at a distance, and want

146 a judgment/opinion and proof that this adheres to tradition/custom (the rules of honor), to keep my name unwounded

147 freely/openly engage in

- Hamlet* I'll be your foil, Laertes. In mine ignorance 240
 Your skill shall, like a star i' the darkest night,
 Stick fiery off indeed.¹⁴⁸
- Laertes* You mock me, sir.
- Hamlet* No, by this hand.
- Claudius* Give them the foils, young Osric. Cousin Hamlet,
 You know the wager?
- Hamlet* Very well, my lord 245
 Your grace hath laid the odds o' th' weaker side.
- Claudius* I do not fear it; I have seen you both.
 But since he is bettered,¹⁴⁹ we have therefore odds.¹⁵⁰
- Laertes* This is too heavy. Let me see another.
- Hamlet* This likes me well. These foils have all a length? 250

THEY PREPARE TO FENCE

- Osric* Ay, my good lord.
- Claudius* Set me the stoups of wine¹⁵¹ upon that table.
 If Hamlet give¹⁵² the first or second hit,
 Or quit in answer¹⁵³ of the third exchange,
 Let all the battlements their ordnance fire.¹⁵⁴ 255
 The king shall drink to Hamlet's better breath,
 And in the cup an union¹⁵⁵ shall he throw,
 Richer than that which four successive kings

148 project far out indeed

149 improved, grown better

150 Hamlet needs only 9 hits out of 21 for the King to win

151 I wish the tankards/flacons of wine to be set

152 makes

153 balances the score, via a return hit

154 indented parapets/battle stations on top of the castle walls fire their cannon

155 Hamlet's free and easy breathing, and will throw a pearl in the cup

In Denmark's crown have worn. Give me the cups,
 260 And let the kettle¹⁵⁶ to the trumpet speak,
 The trumpet to the cannoneer without,
 The cannons to the heavens, the heavens to earth,
 "Now the king drinks to Hamlet." Come, begin.
 And you, the judges, bear a wary eye.

265 *Hamlet* Come on, sir.
Laertes Come, my lord.

THEY FENCE

Hamlet One.
Laertes No.
Hamlet Judgment.¹⁵⁷
Osric A hit, a very palpable¹⁵⁸ hit.
Laertes Well, again.
Claudius Stay. Give me drink. Hamlet, this pearl is thine.
 Here's to thy health.

TRUMPETS SOUND, AND CANNON SHOT WITHIN

Give him the cup.

270 *Hamlet* I'll play this bout first. Set it by awhile. Come.

THEY FENCE

Another hit. What say you?
Laertes A touch, a touch, I do confess't.
Claudius Our son shall win.

156 kettledrum

157 an appeal to the judge, Osric

158 tangible, patent, readily perceived

LAERTES WOUNDS HAMLET; THEN, IN SCUFFLING, THEY
EXCHANGE RAPIERS, AND HAMLET WOUNDS LAERTES

Claudius Part them. They are incensed.¹⁶⁵

Hamlet Nay, come. Again!

GERTRUDE FALLS

Osric Look to¹⁶⁶ the Queen there, ho!

290 *Horatio* They bleed on both sides. How is it,¹⁶⁷ my lord?

Osric How is't, Laertes?

Laertes Why, as a woodcock to mine own spring,¹⁶⁸ *Osric*.

I am justly killed with mine own treachery.

Hamlet How does the Queen?

Claudius She swoonds¹⁶⁹ to see them
bleed.

295 *Gertrude* No, no, the drink, the drink. – O my dear Hamlet! –
The drink, the drink! I am poisoned.

DIES

Hamlet O villany! Ho! Let the door be locked.

Treachery! Seek it out.

Laertes It¹⁷⁰ is here,¹⁷¹ *Hamlet*. *Hamlet*, thou art slain.

300 No med'cine in the world can do thee good:

165 excited, angry

166 attend to

167 how are you

168 bird in my own trap/snare

169 swoons, faints

170 the treachery *Hamlet* proposes to seek

171 a gesture is surely associated with this statement: a confession, if *Laertes* points to himself, but a more general accusation if he gestures toward the King

In thee there is not half an hour of life.
 The treacherous instrument is in thy hand,
 Unbated and envenomed. The foul practice¹⁷²
 Hath turned itself on me. Lo, here I lie,
 Never to rise again. Thy mother's poisoned. 305
 I can no more. The King, the King's to blame.

Hamlet The point envenomed too?
 Then venom, to thy work!¹⁷³

STABS CLAUDIUS

All Treason! Treason!

Claudius O, yet defend me, friends. I am but hurt.¹⁷⁴ 310

Hamlet Here, thou incestuous, murd'rous, damnèd Dane,
 Drink off¹⁷⁵ this potion. Is thy union¹⁷⁶ here?
 Follow my mother.

CLAUDIUS DIES

Laertes He is justly served.

It is a poison tempered¹⁷⁷ by himself.

Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet. 315

Mine and my father's death come not upon thee,¹⁷⁸

172 its point uncovered/bare and poisoned. The foul trick/scheme

173 Note that Hamlet now knows his mother is poisoned but does not attack the King until learning that he himself is poisoned. Nor does he mention either his father's or his mother's death as he attacks

174 still protect/guard/uphold me, friends. I am only hurt (not mortally wounded)

175 drink the rest of/finish

176 the pearl put there by the King (it has been suggested that "union" also alludes to the King's marriage to Gertrude)

177 mixed, blended, prepared

178 may my death and my father's not be charged to you, in heaven

Nor thine on me.

DIES

Hamlet Heaven make thee free of it.¹⁷⁹ I follow thee.

I am dead, Horatio. Wretched queen, adieu!

320 You that look pale and tremble at this chance,
That¹⁸⁰ are but mutes or audience to this act,
Had I but time – as this fell sergeant,¹⁸¹ death,
Is strict in his arrest¹⁸² – O, I could tell you –
But let it be. Horatio, I am dead;
325 Thou livest. Report me and my cause aright
To the unsatisfied.¹⁸³

Horatio Never believe it.

I am more an antique Roman¹⁸⁴ than a Dane.

Here's yet some liquor¹⁸⁵ left.

Hamlet As th' art a man,

Give me the cup. (*Horatio resists*) Let go. By heaven, I'll ha't!
330 (*Hamlet takes it*) O God, Horatio, what a wounded name,
Things standing thus unknown, shall live behind me!
If thou didst ever hold¹⁸⁶ me in thy heart
Absent thee from felicity¹⁸⁷ awhile,

179 and may heaven make you exempt you from my death

180 at this happening/circumstance, you that

181 since this fierce/ruthless/terrible officer/bailiff

182 stopping of things in motion

183 motives/purposes correctly/justly to those who do not know/who are in
doubt

184 I am quite prepared to commit suicide

185 containing the fatal poison

186 have

187 happiness, bliss (in heaven)

And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,
To tell my story.

MARCH AFAR OFF, AND SHOT WITHIN

What warlike noise is this? 335

Osric Young Fortinbras, with conquest come¹⁸⁸ from Poland,
To th' ambassadors of England gives
This warlike volley.

Hamlet O, I die, Horatio.
The potent poison quite o'er-crows¹⁸⁹ my spirit.
I cannot live to hear the news from England, 340
But I do prophesy th' election lights¹⁹⁰
On Fortinbras. He has my dying voice.
So tell him, with the occurrents, more and less,
Which have solicited.¹⁹¹ The rest is silence.

DIES

Horatio Now cracks a noble heart. Good night sweet prince, 345
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!
Why does the drum come hither?

ENTER FORTINBRAS, THE ENGLISH AMBASSADORS,
AND OTHERS

Fortinbras Where is¹⁹² this sight?

188 returning victorious from

189 is victorious over (as a fighting cock)

190 to be held in Denmark, now that the king is dead, falls/settles on (*and* – figuratively – shines on)

191 the events/details, both major and minor, which have drawn on/called them forth

192 from what source is/how did all this happen

Horatio What is it ye would see?
If aught of woe or wonder,¹⁹³ cease your search.

350 *Fortinbras* This quarry cries on havoc.¹⁹⁴ O proud Death,
What feast is toward¹⁹⁵ in thine eternal cell,
That thou so many princes at a shot
So bloodily hast struck?

Ambassador The sight is dismal,¹⁹⁶
And our affairs from England come too late.
355 The ears are senseless that should give us hearing,
To tell him his commandment is fulfilled,
That Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead.
Where should we have our thanks?

Horatio Not from his mouth,
Had it the ability of life to thank you.
360 He never gave commandment for their death.
But since, so jump¹⁹⁷ upon this bloody question –
You from the Polack wars, and you from England –
Are here arrived, give order that these bodies
High on a stage¹⁹⁸ be placèd to the view,
365 And let me speak to th' yet unknowing world
How these things came about. So shall you hear
Of carnal,¹⁹⁹ bloody, and unnatural acts,
Of accidental judgments, casual slaughters,²⁰⁰

193 astonishment

194 heap/pile of corpses (hunting usage) cries/screams of devastation/
destruction

195 approaching, impending, in preparation

196 sinister/malign/disastrous

197 exactly, precisely

198 platform, scaffold

199 carnivorous

200 accidental decisions, unplanned slaughters

Of deaths put on by cunning and forced cause,²⁰¹
 And, in this upshot, purposes mistook²⁰² 370
 Fall'n on th' inventors'²⁰³ heads. All this can I
 Truly deliver.²⁰⁴

Fortinbras Let us haste to hear it,
 And call the noblest to the audience.
 For me, with sorrow I embrace my fortune.²⁰⁵
 I have some rights of memory²⁰⁶ in this kingdom, 375
 Which now to claim my vantage doth invite me.²⁰⁷

Horatio Of that I shall have also cause to speak,
 And²⁰⁸ from his mouth whose voice will draw on more.²⁰⁹
 But let this same be presently performed,²¹⁰
 Even while men's minds are wild,²¹¹ lest more mischance 380
 On²¹² plots and errors happen.

Fortinbras Let four captains²¹³
 Bear Hamlet like a soldier to the stage,
 For he was likely, had he been put on,
 To have proved most royal.²¹⁴ And for his passage²¹⁵

- 201 deaths imposed/inflicted by crafty and distorted purposes/reasons
 202 and, in this result/conclusion, wrongly conceived/erroneous intentions
 203 those who designed these false/fictitious things
 204 truthfully utter/state/set forth
 205 I adopt/accept my luck
 206 some remembered and justifiable legal/moral claims
 207 my favorable opportunity/superior position/advantage does attract me
 208 reason/motivation/grounds, and to speak of words
 209 will lead/influence more voices
 210 let this aforesaid thing take place at once/immediately
 211 precisely now when men's minds are uncontrolled/violent
 212 more disasters concerning
 213 a military rank equivalent, in current usage, to "general"
 214 pushed forward/elected (to the throne *or* put on as a play [?]), to have
 shown himself appropriately kinglike
 215 death ("passage" out of bodily life and into "soul" life)

385 The soldiers' music and the rites of war
 Speak²¹⁶ loudly for him.
 Take up the bodies. Such a sight as this
 Becomes the field, but here shows much amiss.²¹⁷
 Go, bid the soldiers shoot.

EXEUNT, BEARING OFF THE DEAD BODIES, AFTER THE WHICH
 A PEAL²¹⁸ OF ORDNANCE IS SHOT OFF

216 will speak/sound/proclaim

217 befits/belongs on the battlefield, but here appears/seems very faulty/off
 the mark/wrong

218 volley, discharge

AN ESSAY BY HAROLD BLOOM



The last we see of Hamlet at the court in act 4 is his exit for England:

Hamlet For England?

Claudius Ay, Hamlet.

Hamlet Good.

Claudius So is't, if thou knew'st our purposes.

Hamlet I see a cherub that sees them. But, come, for
England! Farewell, dear mother.

Claudius Thy loving father, Hamlet.

Hamlet My mother. Father and mother is man and wife,
man and wife is one flesh – and so: my mother. Come, for
England!

EXIT

It is a critical commonplace to assert that the Hamlet of act 5 is a changed man: mature rather than youthful, certainly quieter, if not quietistic, and somehow more attuned to divinity. Perhaps the truth is that he is at last himself, no longer afflicted by mourning and melancholia, by murderous jealousy and incessant rage. Certainly he is no longer haunted by his father's ghost. It may be that

the desire for revenge is fading in him. In all of act 5 he does not speak once of his dead father directly. There is a single reference to “my father’s signet,” which serves to seal up the doom of those poor schoolfellows, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and there is the curious phrasing of “my king” rather than “my father” in the halfhearted rhetorical question the prince addresses to Horatio:

Does it not, think’st thee, stand me now upon –
 He that hath killed my king and whored my mother,
 Popped in between th’ election and my hopes,
 Thrown out his angle for my proper life,
 And with such coz’nage – is’t not perfect conscience
 To quit him with this arm?

When Horatio responds that Claudius will hear shortly from England, presumably that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have been executed, Hamlet rather ambiguously makes what might be read as a final vow of revenge:

It will be short. The interim is mine,
 And a man’s life’s no more than to say “one.”

However this is to be interpreted, Hamlet forms no plot, and is content with a wise passivity, knowing that Claudius must act. Except for the scheme of Claudius and Laertes, we and the prince might be confronted by a kind of endless standoff. What seems clear is that the urgency of the earlier Hamlet has gone. Instead, a mysterious and beautiful disinterestedness dominates this truer Hamlet, who compels a universal love precisely because he is beyond it, except for its exemplification by Horatio. What we overhear is an ethos so original that we still cannot assimilate it:

Sir, in my heart there was a kind of fighting,
 That would not let me sleep. Methought I lay
 Worse than the mutines in the bilboes. Rashly –
 And praised be rashness for it. Let us know
 Our indiscretion sometimes serves us well,
 When our deep plots do pall. And that should teach us
 There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
 Rough-hew them how we will –

Weakly read, that divinity is Jehovah, but more strongly “ends” here are not our intentions but rather our fates, and the contrast is between a force that can *shape* stone, and our wills that only hew roughly against implacable substance. Nor would a strong reading find Calvin in the echoes of the Gospel of Matthew as Hamlet sets aside his own: “Thou wouldst not think how ill all's here about my heart.” In his heart, there is again a kind of fighting, but the readiness, rather than the ripeness, is now all:

Not a whit. We defy augury. There's a special providence in
 the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come. If it be
 not to come, it will be now. If it be not now, yet it will
 come. The readiness is all. Since no man, of aught he
 leaves, knows aught, what is't to leave betimes? Let be.

The apparent nihilism more than negates the text cited from Matthew, yet the epistemological despair presents itself not as despair but as an achieved serenity. Above all else, these are not the accents of an avenger, or even of someone who still mourns, or who continues to suffer the selfish virtues of the natural heart. Not nihilism but authentic disinterestedness, and yet what is that? No

Elizabethan lore, no reading in Aristotle, or even in Montaigne, can help to answer that question. We know the ethos of disinterestedness only because we know Hamlet. Nor can we hope to know Hamlet any better by knowing Freud. The dead father indeed was, during four acts, more powerful than even the living one could be, but by act 5 the dead father is not even a numinous shadow. He is merely a precursor, Hamlet the Dane before this one, and this one matters much more. The tragic hero in Shakespeare, at his most universally moving, is a representation so original that conceptually *he contains us*, and fashions our psychology of motives permanently. Our map or general theory of the mind may be Freud's, but Freud, like all the rest of us, inherits the representation of mind, at its most subtle and excellent, from Shakespeare. Freud could say that the aim of all life was death, but not that readiness is all.

Originality in regard to Shakespeare is a bewildering notion, because we have no rival to set him against. "The originals are not original," Emerson liked to remark, but he withdrew that observation in respect to Shakespeare. If Shakespeare had a direct precursor it had to be Marlowe, who was scarcely six months older. Yet, in comparison to Shakespeare, Marlowe represents persons only by caricature. The Chaucer who could give us the Pardoner or the Wife of Bath appears to be Shakespeare's only authentic English precursor, if we forget the English renderings of the Bible. Yet we do not take our psychology from Chaucer or even from the Bible. Like Freud himself, we owe our psychology to Shakespeare. Before Shakespeare, representations in literature may change *as they speak*, but they do not change *because* of what they say. Shakespearean representation turns upon his persons listening to themselves simultaneously with our listening, and

learning and changing even as we learn and change. Falstaff delights himself as much as he delights us, and Hamlet modifies himself by studying his own modifications. Ever since, Falstaff has been the inescapable model for nearly all wit, and Hamlet the paradigm for all introspection. When Yorick's skull replaces the helmeted ghost, then the mature Hamlet has replaced the self-chastising revenger, and a different sense of death's power over life has been created, and in more than a play or a dramatic poem:

Hamlet To what base uses we may return, Horatio! Why may
not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander, till he
find it stopping a bung-hole?

Horatio 'Twere to consider too curiously, to consider so.

Hamlet No, faith, not a jot, but to follow him thither with
modesty enough, and likelihood to lead it.

Probability leads possibility, likelihood beckons imagination on, and Alexander is essentially a surrogate for the dead father, the Danish Alexander. Passionately reductive, Hamlet would consign his own dust to the same likelihood, but there we part from him, with Horatio as our own surrogate. Hamlet's unique praise of Horatio sets forever the paradigm of the Shakespearean reader or playgoer in relation to the Shakespearean tragic hero:

Dost thou hear?

Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice
And could of men distinguish her election,
S' hath sealed thee for herself, for thou hast been
As one, in suffering all, that suffers nothing,

Which means, not that Horatio and the reader do not suffer with Hamlet, but rather that truly they suffer nothing precisely

because they learn from Hamlet the disinterestedness they themselves cannot exemplify, though in possibility somehow share. And they survive, to tell Hamlet's story "of accidental judgments" not so accidental and perhaps not judgments, since disinterestedness does not judge, and there are no accidents.

Only Hamlet, at the last, is disinterested, since the hero we see in act 5, despite his protestations, is now beyond love, which is not to say that he never loved Gertrude, or Ophelia, or the dead father, or poor Yorick for that matter. Hamlet is an actor? Yes, earlier, but not in act 5, where he has ceased also to be a play director, and finally even abandons the profession of poet. Language, so dominant as such in the earlier Hamlet, gives almost the illusion of transparency in his last speech, if only because he verges upon saying what cannot be said:

You that look pale and tremble at this chance,
That are but mutes or audience to this act,
Had I but time – as this fell sergeant, death,
Is strict in his arrest – O, I could tell you –
But let it be.

Evidently he does know something of what he leaves, and we ache to know what he could tell us, since it is Shakespeare's power to persuade us that Hamlet has gained a crucial knowledge. One clue is the abiding theatrical trope of "but mutes or audience," which suggests that the knowledge is itself "of" illusion. But the trope is framed by two announcements to Horatio and so to us – "I am dead" – and no other figure in Shakespeare seems to stand so authoritatively on the threshold between the worlds of life and death. When the hero's last speech moves between "O, I die, Horatio" and "the rest is silence," there is a clear sense again that

much more might be said, concerning our world and not the “undiscovered country” of death. The hint is that Hamlet could tell us something he has learned about the nature of representation, because he has learned what it is that he himself represents.

Shakespeare gives Fortinbras the last word on this, but that word is irony, since Fortinbras represents only the formula of repetition: like father, like son. “The soldier’s music and the rite of war” speak loudly for the dead father, but not for this dead son, who had watched the army of Fortinbras march past to gain its little patch of ground and had mused that: “Rightly to be great / Is not to stir without great argument.” The reader’s last word has to be Horatio’s, who more truly than Fortinbras has Hamlet’s dying voice: “And from his mouth whose voice will draw on more,” which only in a minor key means draw more supporters to the election of Fortinbras. Horatio represents the audience, while Fortinbras represents all the dead fathers.

We love Hamlet, then, for whatever reasons Horatio loves him. Of Horatio we know best that what distinguishes him from Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and indeed from Polonius, Ophelia, Laertes, and Gertrude, is that Claudius *cannot use him*. Critics have remarked upon Horatio’s ambiguously shifting status at the court of Denmark, and the late William Empson confessed a certain irritation at Hamlet’s discovery of virtues in Horatio that the prince could not find in himself. Yet Shakespeare gives us a Hamlet we must love while knowing our inferiority, since he has the qualities we lack, and so he also gives us Horatio, our representative, who loves so stoically for the rest of us. Horatio is loyal, and limited; skeptical as befits a fellow student of the profoundly skeptical Hamlet, yet never skeptical about Hamlet. Take Horatio

out of the play, and you take us out of the play. The plot could be rearranged to spare the wretched Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, even to spare Laertes, let alone Fortinbras, but remove Horatio, and Hamlet becomes so estranged from us that we scarcely can hope to account for that universality of appeal which is his, and the play's, most original characteristic.

Horatio, then, represents by way of our positive association with him; it is a commonplace, but not less true for that, to say that Hamlet represents by negation. I think this negation is biblical in origin, which is why it seems so Freudian to us, because Freudian negation is biblical and not Hegelian, as it were. Hamlet is biblical rather than Homeric or Sophoclean. Like the Hebrew hero confronting Yahweh, Hamlet needs to be everything in himself yet knows the sense in which he is nothing in himself. What Hamlet takes back from repression is returned only cognitively, never affectively, so that in him thought is liberated from its sexual past, but at the high expense of a continued and augmenting sense of sexual disgust. And what Hamlet at first loves is what biblical and Freudian man loves: the image of authority, the dead father, and the object of the dead father's love, who is also the object of Claudius's love. When Hamlet matures, or returns fully to himself, he transcends the love of authority, and ceases to love at all, and perhaps he can be said to be dying throughout all of act 5, and not just in the scene of the duel.

In Freud, we love authority, but authority does not love us in return. Nowhere in the play are we told, by Hamlet or by anyone else, of the love of the dead king for his son, but only for Gertrude. That Hamlet hovers always beyond our comprehension must be granted, yet he is not so far beyond as to cause us to see him with the vision of Fortinbras, rather than the vision of Hora-

tio. We think of him not necessarily as royal, but more as noble, in the archaic sense of "noble," which is to be a seeing soul. It is surely no accident that Horatio is made to emphasize the word "noble" in his elegy for Hamlet, which contrasts angelic song to "the soldier's music" of Fortinbras. As a noble or seeing heart, Hamlet indeed sees feelingly. Short of T. S. Eliot's judgment that the play is an aesthetic failure, the oddest opinion in the *Hamlet* criticism of our time was that of W. H. Auden in his Ibsen essay, "Genius and Apostle," which contrasts Hamlet as a mere actor to Don Quixote as the antithesis of an actor:

Hamlet lacks faith in God and in himself. Consequently he must define his existence in terms of others, e.g., I am the man whose mother married his uncle who murdered his father. He would like to become what the Greek tragic hero is, a creature of situation. Hence his inability to act, for he can only "act," i.e., play at possibilities.

Harold Goddard, whose *The Meaning of Shakespeare* (1951) seems to me still the most illuminating single book on Shakespeare, remarked that "Hamlet is his own Falstaff." In Goddard's spirit, I might venture the formula that Brutus plus Falstaff equals Hamlet, though "equals" is hardly an accurate word here. A better formula was proposed by A. C. Bradley, when he suggested that Hamlet was the only Shakespearean character whom we could think had written Shakespeare's plays. Goddard built on this by saying of Shakespeare: "He is an unfallen Hamlet." From a scholarly or any formalist perspective, Goddard's aphorism is not criticism, but neither historical research nor formalist modes of criticism have helped us much in learning to describe the unasimulated originality that Shakespearean representation still con-

stitutes. Because we are formed by Shakespeare, paradoxically most fully where we cannot assimilate him, we are a little blinded by what might be called the originality of this originality. Only a few critics (A. D. Nuttall among them) have seen that the central element in this originality is its cognitive power. Without Shakespeare (and the Bible as his precursor text) we would not know of a literary representation that worked so as to compel “reality” (be it Platonic or Humean, Hegelian or Freudian) to reveal aspects of itself we previously could not discern. Such a representation cannot be considered antimimetic or an effect of language alone.

One way, by no means unproductive, of accounting for the force of Shakespearean representation is to see it as the supreme instance of what the late Paul de Man called a poetics of modernity, of a revisionism of older literary conventions that at once subsumed and canceled the illusions always present in all figurative language. Howard Felperin, working in de Man’s mode, adroitly reads Macbeth’s “modernity” as the dilemma of a figure totally unable to take his own nature for granted: “He cannot quite rest content in an action in which his role and his nature are determined in advance, but must continuously reinvent himself in the process of acting them out.” In such a view, Macbeth is a strong misreading of a figure like Herod in the old morality plays. I would go further and suggest that the drama *Macbeth* is an allusive triumph over more formidable precursors, just as *King Lear* is. The Shakespearean Sublime, too strong to find agonists in Seneca or in the native tradition (even in Marlowe), and too remote from Athenian drama to feel its force, confronts instead the Sublime of the Bible. What breaks loose in the apocalyptic cosmos of *Macbeth* or of *Lear* is an energy of the abyss or the original chaos that is ignored in the priestly first chapter of

Genesis, but which wars fiercely against Jehovah in crucial passages of Job, the Psalms, and Isaiah. To subsume and supersede the Bible could not have been the conscious ambition of Shakespeare, but if we are to measure the preternatural energies of *Macbeth* or of *Lear*, then we will require Job or Isaiah or certain Psalms as the standard of measurement.

What is the advance, cognitive and figurative, that Shakespearean representation achieves over biblical depiction? The question is absurdly difficult, yet anything but meaningless. If Shakespeare has a true Western rival, then he is either the Yahwist, the Hebrew Bible's great original, or the Homer of the *Iliad*. Can there *be* an advance over Jacob or Achilles as representations of reality, whatever that is taken to be? What the question reduces to is the unanswerable: can there be advances in reality? The arts, as Hazlitt insisted, are not progressive, and if reality is, then its progression suspiciously resembles a speeding up of what Freud called the death drive. Reality testing, like the reality principle, is Freud's only transcendentalism, his last vestige of Platonism. Freud's own originality, as he deeply sensed, tends to evaporate when brought too near either to the originality of the Yahwist or to the originality of Shakespeare. This may be the true cause of the disaster that is *Moses and Monotheism*, and of Freud's own passion for the lunatic thesis that Shakespeare's plays were written by the earl of Oxford.

By Nietzsche's genealogical test for the memorable, which is cognitive pain, Job is no more nor less forgettable than *Macbeth* or *Lear*. The rhetorical economy of Job's wife, in her one appearance, unmatched even out of context, is overwhelming within context, and may have set for Shakespeare one of the limits of representation:

So went Satan forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown.

And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes.

Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God, and die.

Lear's Queen, the mother of Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia, had she survived to accompany her husband onto the heath, hardly could have said more in less. In Shakespeare's tragedies there are moments of compressed urgency that represent uncanny yet persuasive change with biblical economy. The dying Edmund sees the bodies of Goneril and Regan brought in, and belatedly turns his lifetime about in four words: "Yet Edmund was belov'd." The phrase is a vain attempt to countermand his own order for the murder of Cordelia. "Yet Edmund was belov'd" – though loved by two fiends, the shock of knowing he *was* loved, unto death, undoes "mine own nature." One thinks of Hamlet's "Let be" that concludes his "We defy augury" speech, as he goes into the trap of Claudius's last plot. "Let be" epitomizes what I have called "disinterestedness," though Horatio's word "noble" may be more apt. That laconic "Let be," repeated as "Let it be" in Hamlet's death speech, is itself a kind of catastrophe creation, even as it marks another phase in Hamlet's release from what Freud called the family romance, and even as it compels another transference for our veneration to Hamlet. Catastrophe creation, family romance, transference: these are the stigmata and consequently the paradigms for imaginative originality in the Bible and, greatly shadowed, in Freud, and I suggest now that they can be useful

paradigms for the apprehension of originality in Shakespeare's tragic representations. The fantasy of rescuing the mother from degradation is palpable in Hamlet; less palpable and far more revelatory is the sense in which the prince has molded himself into a pragmatic changeling. The ghost is armed for war, and Hamlet, grappling with Laertes in the graveyard, accurately warns Laertes (being to that extent his father's son) that as the prince he has something dangerous in him. But is Hamlet psychically ever armed for war? Claudius, popping in between the election and Hamlet's hopes, could have shrewdly pled more than his nephew's youth and inexperience while properly arguing that his own nature was better qualified for the throne. Hamlet, in the graveyard, shocked back from beyond affect, accurately indicates whose true son he first became as changeling:

Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio – a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy. He hath bore me on his back a thousand times. And now how abhorred in my imagination it is! My gorge rises at it. Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft.

Harry Levin, for whom strong misreading is not serendipity but misfortune, advises us that "Hamlet without *Hamlet* has been thought about all too much." One might reply, in all mildness, that little memorable has been written about *Hamlet* that does not fall into the mode of "Hamlet without *Hamlet*." Far more even than *Lear* or *Macbeth*, the play is the figure; the question of *Hamlet* only can be Hamlet. He does not move in a Sublime cosmos, and truly has no world except himself, which would appear to be what he has learned in the interim between acts 4 and 5. Changelings who move from fantasy to fact are possible only in

romance, and alas Shakespeare wrote the tragedy of Hamlet, and not the romance of Hamlet instead. But the originality of Shakespearean representation in tragedy, and particularly in *Hamlet*, hardly can be overstressed. Shakespeare's version of the family romance always compounds it with two other paradigms for his exuberant originality: with a catastrophe that creates and with a carrying across from earlier ambivalences within the audience to an ambivalence that is a kind of taboo settling in about the tragic hero like an aura. At the close of *Hamlet*, only Horatio and Fortinbras are survivors. Fortinbras presumably will be another warrior-king of Denmark. Horatio does not go home with us, but vanishes into the aura of Hamlet's afterlight, perhaps to serve as witness of Hamlet's story over and over again. The hero leaves us with a sense that finally he has fathered himself, that he was beyond our touch though not beyond our affections, and that the catastrophes he helped provoke have brought about, not a new creation, but a fresh revelation of what was latent in reality but not evident without his own disaster.

As a coda, I return to my earlier implication that Shakespearean originality is the consequence of diction or a will over language changing his characters, and not of language itself. More than any other writer, Shakespeare is able to exemplify how meaning gets started rather than just renewed. Auden remarked that Falstaff is free of the superego; there is no over-I or above-I for that triumph of wit. Nietzsche, attempting to represent a man without a superego, gave us Zarathustra, a mixed achievement in himself, but a very poor representation when read side by side with Falstaff. Falstaff or Zarathustra? No conceivable reader would choose the Nietzschean rather than the Shakespearean

over-man. Falstaff indeed *is* how meaning gets started: by excess, overflow, emanation, contamination, the will to life. Zarathustra is a juggler of perspectives, a receptive will to interpretation. Poor Falstaff ends in tragedy; his catastrophe is his dreadfully authentic love for Hal. Zarathustra loves only a trope, the solar trajectory, and essentially is himself a trope; he is Nietzsche's metalepsis or transumption of the philosophical tradition. A formalist critic would say that Falstaff is a trope also, a gorgeous and glowing hyperbole. Say rather that Falstaff is a representation, in himself, of how meaning gets started, of how invention is accomplished and manifested. But we remember Falstaff as we want to remember him, triumphant in the tavern, and not rejected in the street. We remember Hamlet as he wanted us to remember him, as Horatio remembers him, without having to neglect his end. Perhaps Hamlet is a representation, in himself, not just of how meaning gets started, but also of how meaning itself is invention, of how meaning refuses to be deferred or to be ended. Perhaps again that is why we can imagine Hamlet as the author of *Hamlet*, as the original we call Shakespeare.

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