THE TRAGICAL HISTORY OF HAMLET, PRINCE OF DENMARK

The Second Quarto
(1604–5)

LIST OF ROLES

HAMLET	*Prince of Denmark*
GHOST	*of Hamlet's father, the late King Hamlet of Denmark*
KING Claudius	*of Denmark, brother of the late King*
QUEEN Gertrude	*Hamlet's mother and his father's widow, now married to King Claudius*
POLONIUS	*King Claudius' councillor*
LAERTES	*Polonius' son*
OPHELIA	*Polonius' daughter*
REYNALDO	*Polonius' man*
FOLLOWERS	*of Laertes*
HORATIO	*Hamlet's friend and fellow student*
ROSENCRANTZ GUILDENSTERN	*other fellow students*
VOLTEMAND CORNELIUS	*Danish ambassadors to Norway*
BARNARDO FRANCISCO MARCELLUS	*sentinels*
OSRIC	*a courtier*
PLAYERS	*playing* Prologue, Player King, Player Queen *and* Lucianus
GRAVEDIGGER	*a clown*
SECOND MAN	*another clown*
PRIEST	
LORDS	
GENTLEMEN	
MESSENGERS	
SAILORS	
FORTINBRAS	*Prince of Norway*
CAPTAIN	*in Norwegian army*
AMBASSADORS	*from England*

Attendants, Courtiers, Trumpets, Kettledrums, Drums, Officers, Norwegian Soldiers

HAMLET

1.1 *Enter* BARNARDO ~~*and* FRANCISCO, *two sentinels.*~~

~~BARNARDO~~

~~Who's there?~~

~~FRANCISCO~~

~~Nay, answer me. Stand and~~ unfold yourself.

1.1 Q2 has no act or scene divisions; F has them up to 1.3, then marks 2.1 and 2.2; subsequent divisions are from Q6 or from eighteenth-century editions. We have followed the traditional divisions in this text, but see Appendix 4. The three texts: this scene runs to 131 lines in Q1 (scene 1), 174 lines in Q2, 156 lines in F (line-counts throughout are from our edited texts). The most substantial difference, common to Q1 and F, is that the conversation immediately before the second appearance of the Ghost is shorter: only Q2 contains Horatio's analogy between the current state of Denmark and the state of Rome before the murder of Julius Caesar at this point (see 107–24 and n.). Because we are editing all three texts of *Hamlet* (in two volumes), our procedures in the textual notes vary somewhat from standard Arden series 3 format: see Appendix 3. Location and timing: these matters are indicated in Q2 (if at all) in the dialogue, never in the stage directions; Shakespeare's stage at the Globe was unlocalized and was lit by natural light. It is clear from 5 that the scene begins between midnight and 1.00 a.m., and from 165–6 that it ends at dawn. We learn from 139 that the sentries are armed, from 1.2.212 that the setting is the battlements (*platform*) of the royal castle, and from 1.2.173 that the castle is in Elsinore. Although night-time scenes would have been a challenge in daylight performances at the Globe, Shakespeare used them frequently (see Jones, 'Sequences'); the actors would have carried lanterns or torches to indicate that it is supposed to be dark.

0.1 ***sentinels*** sentries, watchmen. It is revealed at 6 that Barnardo has come to relieve Francisco, and he should perhaps enter after him.

1 **Who's there?** This famous opening line was used by Peter Brook for the title of his 1996 *Hamlet*-derived play in French, *Qui est là?* His 2000 adaptation of *Hamlet* ended with it.

2 **Nay, answer me** Francisco, the watchman on guard, understandably disputes the right of Barnardo, the newcomer, to question him, creating an atmosphere of unease. Daniell points out the similarity to *JC* 1.3.41, where the newcomer, Cassius, challenges Caska (*sic*) with 'Who's there?' **unfold yourself** 'tell me who you are'; the first of the play's many metaphors from clothing.

TITLE (The Tragical History of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark)] *(title-page), Q1 (title-page and head title);* The Tragedie of HAMLET *Prince of Denmarke. Q2 (head and running titles), F (head title); The Tragedy of Hamlet. Q1 (running title), F (running title and catalogue)* **1.1**] *F (Actus Primus. Scœna Prima.); not in Q21*

BARNARDO
Long live the King.
FRANCISCO Barnardo?
BARNARDO He.
FRANCISCO
You come most carefully upon your hour.
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.
BARNARDO
Have you had quiet guard?
FRANCISCO Not a mouse stirring.
BARNARDO
Well, goodnight.
If you do meet Horatio and Marcellus,
The rivals of my watch, bid them make haste.

3 **Long . . . King** This statement (ironical in the context) is used as a kind of password.
Barnardo? F's question mark seems appropriate here.
4 'You are very punctual.' This is sometimes spoken reprovingly, as if Barnardo is only just on time.
5 **'Tis . . . twelve** i.e. twelve has already struck. The fact that both here and in 1.4 (and indeed in a similar context in *MW* 5.1) the characters claim that the hour has already struck may indicate that these scenes began with a sound effect imitating a bell-tower clock.
struck Here and at 1.4.4 Riv prints 'strook', a variant of Q2/F 'strooke', though Q1's 'strucke' would seem to challenge the implication that 'strook' preserves an authentic pronunciation.
6 **'Tis bitter cold** attempts to pin down the time of year when the play begins have proved inconclusive. Guilfoyle, however, draws an analogy between this opening scene and the typical 'Shepherds' Play' in the medieval cycle plays where the shepherds, like *Hamlet*'s sentries, wait on a cold night for a supernatural event (see 157 and n. and p. 71).
7 **I . . . heart** Francisco's 'sickness' is not explained, unless by the subsequent discussion of the Ghost.
8 **Not . . . stirring** proverbial (Dent, M1236.1)
11 **rivals** partners (which is Q1's reading). Both Horatio and Marcellus seem here to be members of the castle's guard, but it transpires from Marcellus' speech at 25–8 that Horatio is present by special invitation. Hamlet greets Horatio in the next scene as a *fellow student*, visiting from Wittenberg (1.2.164, 176), and he addresses

3 Barnardo?] *F; Barnardo. Q2* 9–11] *prose F* 11 rivals] *F;* partners *Q1*

Enter HORATIO *and* MARCELLUS.

~~FRANCISCO~~ BARNARDO
~~I think I hear them.~~ Stand ho, who is there?

HORATIO
Friends to this ground.

~~MARCELLUS~~ ~~And liegemen to the Dane.~~

~~FRANCISCO~~
~~Give you goodnight.~~

~~MARCELLUS~~
~~O farewell, honest soldiers, who hath relieved you?~~ 15

~~FRANCISCO~~
~~Barnardo hath my place. Give you goodnight.~~ *Exit.*

MARCELLUS
Holla, Barnardo!

BARNARDO
Say, what, is Horatio there?

HORATIO
A piece of him.

Horatio, Marcellus and Barnardo as 'friends, scholars and soldiers' at 1.5.140 (see List of Roles, 10n. and 15n.)

bid . . . haste The sense of tension and anxiety increases.

13 **liegemen . . . Dane** men who have sworn allegiance to the King of Denmark (in contrast to the *Switzers* at 4.5.97?)

14 **Give you goodnight** 'May God give you (i.e. I wish you) a good (quiet) night.'

15 **soldiers** The plural in Q2 perhaps indicates that someone (Marcellus, Shakespeare, the scribe or compositor) expected the two new arrivals to replace Barnardo and Francisco, rather than that one watchman, Francisco, should be replaced by the other three.

16 SD This is the last we see of Francisco in either Q2 or F; in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century theatrical tradition, however, he reappeared in 4.6 (see 4.6.0.1n.), Marcellus reappeared in 4.5 (see 4.5.96 SD2n.), Barnardo in 4.7 (see 4.7.36.1n.) and all three in 5.2 (see 5.2.202.3n.). The original actors of these parts would very likely have doubled in other roles: see Appendix 5.

17 **Holla** earlier form of hallo/hello: a greeting or a shout to attract attention

18 **Say . . . there** It is presumed that Barnardo cannot see Horatio in the darkness.

A . . . him Perhaps Horatio offers his hand as a literal *piece* or perhaps he implies that the cold night has reduced him to a shrunken fragment of his real self.

12 ho] *om. F* who is] who's *F* 15 soldiers] souldier *Q1F* 16 hath] *Q1;* ha's *F*

BARNARDO
Welcome Horatio, welcome good Marcellus.
HORATIO
What, has this thing appeared again tonight?
BARNARDO
I have seen nothing.
MARCELLUS
Horatio says 'tis but our fantasy
And will not let belief take hold of him
Touching this dreaded sight twice seen of us.
Therefore I have entreated him along
With us to watch the minutes of this night
That, if again this apparition come,
He may approve our eyes and speak to it.
HORATIO
Tush, tush, 'twill not appear.
BARNARDO ~~Sit down awhile,~~
Yet ~~And~~ let us once again assail your ears

20 SP Q1 agrees with F; MacDonald, who usually favours F, follows Q2 here, commenting: 'Better, I think; for the tone is scoffing, and Horatio is the incredulous one who has not seen it.'
20 **this thing** The lack of definition – see *this dreaded sight* (24), *this apparition* (27) and *it* (28) – serves to enhance the suspense, as does the alternation between *'a* and *it* from 42.
22 **fantasy** imagination
23 **will . . . him** 'will not allow himself to believe'
24 **Touching** concerning
twice . . . us which has been seen by us twice
26 **watch . . . night** stay awake or keep watch through the night
28 **approve our eyes** confirm or corroborate what we saw
29 **Tush** an expression of contempt
Sit down awhile Editors have worried that this behaviour is inappropriate for sentries (the request is repeated at 32 and 69, and it also occurs three times in both Q1 and F). It is possible that only Barnardo and Horatio sit, Marcellus remaining sentry-like. On stage, it raises the question of whether there is something for them to sit on or whether they just sit on the ground; in their study of the earliest staging of the play, Gurr and Ichikawa suggest that they 'hunch down' (126); a bench was used at the reconstructed London Globe in 2000. The words are deleted in the earliest promptbooks we have of *Hamlet*, those of John Ward dating from the 1740s (see Thompson, 'Ward', 144).
30 **assail** attack. The first of the play's many metaphorical references to assaults on ears, inspired presumably by the literal facts of the elder

20 SP] *Mar. Q1F*

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,
~~When yond same star that's westward from the pole~~
~~Had made his course t'illume that part of heaven~~
~~Where now it burns,~~ Marcellus and myself,
The bell then beating one –

Enter GHOST.

Hamlet's murder: see 1.5.59–70. For further discussion of this motif, see Thompson & Thompson, 102–4, and P. Berry, 'Ear'.

31 **fortified** i.e. Horatio is incredulous.

32 **What** i.e. with what
Sit we down See 29n.

33 Perhaps the implication is that Horatio has previously heard Marcellus' version of the story.

34 **Last . . . all** i.e. the most recent night ('only last night')

35 **yond same star** Astronomers have recently argued that, if Shakespeare had a specific star in mind, he might be alluding to the supernova in Cassiopeia which was first seen in Wittenberg in 1572 and also discovered independently by the Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe: see Olson et al.; for a further possible link between *Hamlet* and Brahe, see List of Roles, 11n.
pole pole-star or northern star: the star in the constellation *Ursa Minor* (Latin: Little Bear) which lies so close to the northern pole of the heavens that it seems to remain still in the sky while the other stars revolve around it

36 **his** its
t'illume to illuminate, enlighten. This is Shakespeare's only use of *illume*, and the only usage cited by *OED*. Q1 has the more familiar 'Illumine' and Q6 'modernizes' to 'enlighten', but see the similar Shakespearean coinage 'relume' at *Oth* 5.2.13.

38 **beating** striking. Q1's 'towling' (tolling), as Staunton says, 'perhaps imparts additional solemnity'.

38.1 We learn from 59 that the Ghost is in armour; a fuller description of both its appearance and its behaviour is provided at 1.2.198–240. Foakes ('Ghost') points out that the costume, unusual if not unique for a ghost on the Elizabethan stage, might have emphasized the character's association with an obsolete kind of militarism, in contrast to the contemporary military uniforms worn by the sentinels; all the other characters in Shakespeare's plays who are associated with body armour appear in plays set in the past, whether the period of classical Greece and Rome or that of the War of the Roses. Modern productions usually make use of 'spectral' lighting, music and other 'special

32 have two nights] *Q1;* two Nights haue *F* 36 t'illume] *F;* to / Illumine *Q1* 38 beating] *F;* towling *Q1* 38.1] *after* of: *39 F* GHOST] *Q1; the Ghost F*

MARCELLUS
Peace, break thee off, look where it comes again.
BARNARDO
In the same figure like the King that's dead.
MARCELLUS
Thou art a scholar – speak to it, Horatio.
BARNARDO
Looks 'a not like the King? Mark it, Horatio.
HORATIO
Most like. It harrows me with fear and wonder.
BARNARDO
It would be spoke to.
MARCELLUS
Speak to it, Horatio.

effects' to enhance the appearances and disappearances of the Ghost (see Hapgood). It is possible that the Ghost originally ascended through a trapdoor, like the spirits in George Chapman's *Bussy d'Ambois* (1604) and Ben Jonson's *Catiline* (1611), but, as Jenkins says (LN), the dialogue suggests movement across the stage. Despite the arguments in favour of the trap advanced by Gurr and Ichikawa (126), the Ghost used one of the doors at the back of the stage at the London Globe in 2000.

40 **same figure** identical shape, appearance. *Same* could refer to the likeness to the King or to the previous appearances of the Ghost.

41 Marcellus makes the conventional assumptions that (a) a ghost cannot speak until spoken to, and (b) an educated man – perhaps one who speaks Latin – will be better equipped to make this attempt.

42 **'a** he. A colloquial form common in Middle English, especially in the south and west of England, which occurs frequently in Q2 but only once in F; Hope (1.3.2c) notes that Shakespeare's linguistic roots in this dialect area make him one of the final citations for the usage in *OED*, but that the form is 'highly unstable textually' and liable to be changed to 'he' by scribes and compositors.
Mark it observe it closely.

43 ***harrows** Q2's 'horrowes' is usually assumed to be an obsolete form of F's 'harrowes', a word which recurs in both texts at 1.5.16. The metaphor derives from the agricultural implement that breaks up the ground after ploughing, and *OED* records these as the earliest examples of the transferred use. *OED* also implies that there is no direct connection with 'the harrowing of Hell', where 'harrow' derives from 'to harry' (to raid or despoil), but, given the context of Shakespeare's usages, there might have been a link in his mind.

44 **Speak to it** Q2's reading picks up *speak to it* (41) and *It would be spoke to*; Q1/F 'Question it' implies a more formal interrogation.

39 off] *(of) F, Q1* 41 scholar –] *(scholler,) Q1, F (*Scholler;*)* 42 'a] it *Q1F* 43 harrows] *F;* horrowes *Q2;* horrors *Q1* 44 Speak to] Question *Q1F*

HORATIO

What art thou that usurp'st this time of night
Together with that fair and warlike form
In which the majesty of buried Denmark
Did sometimes march? By heaven, I charge thee
speak.

MARCELLUS

It is offended.

BARNARDO See, it stalks away.

HORATIO

Stay, speak, speak, I charge thee speak. *Exit Ghost.*

MARCELLUS

'Tis gone and will not answer.

BARNARDO

How now, Horatio, you tremble and look pale.
Is not this something more than fantasy?
What think you on't?

HORATIO

Before my God, I might not this believe
Without the sensible and true avouch

45–7 **usurp'st . . . Denmark** 'misappropriate both the time of night and the appearance of the dead King' (ironic, since it transpires that it is the present king who is in effect the usurper). At this point Horatio concedes that the Ghost looks like the former King, but not that it is him.

47 **majesty . . . Denmark** i.e. dead King of Denmark (a synecdoche which identifies the fate of the country with that of its king)

48 **sometimes** formerly, i.e. when he was alive

49 **offended** Perhaps the Ghost is offended by Horatio's *usurp'st*, by his over-importunate use of *charge* (should a subject command a king?), or, as at 139–45, by an apparent threat of violence.
stalks moves in a stiff or stately way; see 65, where Marcellus adds the notion that the Ghost's walk has a military style about it.

54 **on't** of it

55 **Before** i.e. I swear before
might not would not be able to

56–7 **sensible . . . eyes** true testimony based on the evidence of my senses; 'to believe one's (own) eyes' was proverbial (Dent, E264.1; see also B268). (*Avouch* does not occur as a noun in Shakespeare other than in all three texts of *Hamlet*, which *OED* records as the first use of the word.)

56 **sensible** Hope (1.2.2b) points out that *sensible* is used objectively here, meaning 'able to be sensed or felt', and

50 SD *Ghost*] *Q1; the Ghost F*

Of mine own eyes.

MARCELLUS Is it not like the King?

HORATIO

As thou art to thyself.
Such was the very armour he had on
When he the ambitious Norway combated. 60
~~So frowned he once, when in an angry parle~~
~~He smote the sledded Polacks on the ice.~~
'Tis strange.

MARCELLUS

Thus twice before, and jump at this dead hour,

compares Macbeth's use of the same word in relation to the visionary dagger (*Mac* 2.1.36); see also *dreadful* at 1.2.206 and 1.4.70.

59 **the very armour** The assumption here seems to be that Horatio recognizes the armour, which is mentioned again at 1.2.199, just as Hamlet later recognizes 'My father in his habit as he lived' (3.4.133), but this raises problems of chronology (and Horatio's age) when we learn that the event referred to happened 30 years previously (5.1.135–53); see 79–94n. and List of Roles, 10n.

60 **Norway** King of Norway
combated The stress is on the first syllable.

61 **So . . . once** Again, the particularity of the memory is striking, if not unnerving.
parle (one syllable) parley, usually a negotiation rather than a truce; here apparently a hostile encounter

62 ***sledded Polacks** a notoriously difficult phrase which is almost identical in all three early texts (see t.n.). Most recent editors emend 'pollax' to 'Polacks', i.e. Poles, and interpret 'sledded/sleaded' as 'using sleds or sledges', since this makes sense of the reference to ice. The word *Polack* occurs again at 2.2.63 and 75, 4.4.22 and 5.2.360; it is not derogatory (as it has become in modern North American usage).
In favour of 'pole-axe' (the weapon), however, in Christopher Marlowe and Thomas Nashe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage* (*c.* 1585, printed in 1594), Aeneas describes the destruction of Troy: 'Old men with swords thrust through their aged sides, / Kneeling for mercie to a Greekish lad / Who with steele Pol-axes dasht out their braines' (*Dido*, 2.1.198–9). The 'Greekish lad' is Pyrrhus and Shakespeare drew on this scene for the Player's speech in 2.2. But it is not clear what 'sleaded' would mean: perhaps 'leaded' or 'studded' (as in modern 'sledgehammer'?: *OED* cites a 1495 reference to 'Slege hamers of yron').

64 **jump** precisely (the same meaning as F's 'iust')
dead still, midnight (see 'the dead waste and middle of the night' at 1.2.197, and similar phrases ('dead of night', 'dead midnight', etc.)

60 he the] *Q1;* th' *F* 62 smote] *(*smot*) Q1F* sledded] *F;* sleaded *Q21* Polacks] *Malone;* pollax *Q21;* Pollax *F;* Poleaxe *F4;* Pole-axe *Rowe;* Polack *Pope* 64 jump] *Q1;* iust *F*

With martial stalk hath he gone by our watch.

HORATIO

In what particular thought to work, I know not,
But in the gross and scope of mine opinion
This bodes some strange eruption to our state.

MARCELLUS

Horatio stay ~~Good now, sit down~~, and tell me he that knows
Why this same strict and most observant watch
So nightly toils the subject of the land,
And with such daily cost of brazen cannon
And foreign mart for implements of war,

65 **by our watch** past us as we stood on watch. Staunton adopts Q1's more graphic reading 'through our watch' – which was perhaps inspired by 109.

66 The phrasing is obscure. Horatio seems to mean either 'I don't know what particular theory about the Ghost to pursue' or perhaps 'I don't know what the specific object of the Ghost's return might be'.

67 **gross and scope** broad view, general drift. Noted by Wright as the first example of the play's 66 uses of the rhetorical figure of hendiadys.
mine Many editors emend Q2 in line with Q1/F, but *mine* is perfectly acceptable before a word beginning with a vowel; see 'Mine own, and not mine own', *MND* 4.1.192.

68 **eruption . . . state** political revolt or disturbance. In Horatio's opinion here and in the ensuing conversation, including the analogy with the death of Julius Caesar (112–24), it is assumed that the Ghost's appearance relates to future rather than to past events. (In view of the Ghost's description of his disfigurement at 1.5.59–73, it is perhaps worth noting that *eruption* could also refer to a skin condition.)

69–124 It seems curious that the men, in all three texts, seem to recover from the shock of seeing the Ghost and move so quickly to the indirectly related topic of Denmark's preparations for war, though this preoccupation makes the Ghost's reappearance more effective.

69 **Good now** 'An expression of entreaty, *good* being a vocative with the omission of the noun' (Jenkins), i.e. 'good friends' or 'good Horatio'
sit down See 29 and n.

70 **watch** wakefulness, vigilance

71 **toils the subject** imposes toil on the inhabitants

72 **with** Most editors (including Jenkins, who usually favours Q2) adopt Q1/F 'why', assuming ellipsis of 'there is', but *with* makes acceptable sense.
cost The word makes good sense in parallel with *foreign mart* in 73: as Jennens explains, 'They might not have the art of casting cannon; if so, they consequently must buy it.' But many editors (again including Jenkins) prefer F's 'Cast', meaning casting or manufacturing (a unique usage, according to *OED*).

73 **foreign mart** expenditure abroad. Q1 and Q2 agree on the spelling 'forraine' here, and on 'ship-writes' at 74, suggesting that Q2 is following Q1.

65 by] *F;* through *Q1, Staunton* 67 mine] my *Q1F* 72 with] why *Q1F* cost] *Q1;* Cast *F* 73 foreign] *(*forraine*) Q1, F (*Forraigne*)*

Why such impress of shipwrights, whose sore task
Does not divide the Sunday from the week.
~~What might be toward that this sweaty haste~~
~~Doth make the night joint labourer with the day?~~
Who is't that can inform me?
HORATIO That can I.
At least the whisper goes so. Our last King,
Whose image even but now appeared to us,
Was as you know by Fortinbras of Norway –
Thereto pricked on by a most emulate pride –
Dared to the combat, in which our ~~valiant~~ Hamlet
~~(For so this side of our known world esteemed him)~~
Did slay this Fortinbras, who by a sealed compact
Well ratified by law and heraldry
Did forfeit with his life all these his lands
Which he stood seized of to the conqueror;

74 **impress** forced labour, conscription
75 i.e. they work all seven days without the traditional day of rest.
76 **toward** anticipated, in prospect
79 **whisper** rumour. This might suggest that Horatio is not after all speaking from personal knowledge.
79–94 **Our . . . Hamlet** It becomes apparent at 5.1.135–53 that the events Horatio recounts happened 30 years before the play begins, though one might otherwise suppose that they were recent and that Horatio was old enough to remember them. His confident knowledge of Danish politics here might suggest he is a local, but in the next scene Hamlet greets him as a fellow student on a visit from Wittenberg (see List of Roles, 10n.). One recent production, directed by Trevor Nunn at London's Old Vic in 2004, avoided this problem by transferring these lines to Barnardo.
81 **Fortinbras** See List of Roles, 27n.
82 'incited to it by a competitive sense of honour or self-esteem' (*emulate* is a unique usage according to *OED*)
83 **the combat** i.e. that [famous] single combat
84 **this . . . world** i.e. all Europe
85 **sealed compact** sworn agreement; the stress is on the second syllable of *compact*.
86 'thoroughly sanctioned by legal and chivalric conventions' (Q2's 'heraldy' is an obsolete form which also appears at 2.2.394; Dover Wilson and Spencer retain it). Malone quotes Puttenham on 'the Figure of Twinnes': Shakespeare expresses one thing by two substantives'; Wright notes *law and heraldry* as another example of hendiadys (see 67n.).
88 **stood seized of** held in legal possession. Editors regularly explain that this agreement refers to the personal estates of the two kings, not to their entire kingdoms; nevertheless it is a pact that would in some sense disinherit one of their sons.

74 shipwrights] *(*ship-writes*) Q1, F (*Ship-wrights*)* 83 combat,] *(*combat;*), Q1 (*combate,*);* Combate. *F* 86 heraldry] *(*heraldy*), Q1F* 87 these] those *Q1F* 88 of] *Q1;* on *F*

~~Against the which a moiety competent~~
~~Was gaged by our King, which had return~~
~~To the inheritance of Fortinbras~~
~~Had he been vanquisher, as by the same co-mart~~
~~And carriage of the article design~~
~~His fell to Hamlet~~. Now, sir, young Fortinbras,
Of unimproved mettle, hot and full,
Hath in the skirts of Norway here and there
Sharked up a list of lawless resolutes
~~For food and diet to some enterprise~~

89 **moiety competent** equivalent portion (of land)
90 **gaged** gagèd (disyllabic); wagered
had return was to revert. *Return* (often emended to F's 'return'd') seems misleading if it implies that Fortinbras and his heirs would recover lands they had previously owned.
92 **co-mart** This Q2 reading (a unique word according to *OED*) is defended by Malone and by Caldecott, who offers the analogy of 'co-mates' at *AYL* 2.1.1. It is accepted by Dover Wilson and by Edwards, who usually favours F; the latter calls it 'a nonce-word having something to do with "bargain"'; White dismisses it as having 'a trading purpose not well suited to a royal combat for a province'; some editors (including Jenkins) prefer F's 'Cou'nant' (covenant); Q6 quite sensibly emends by repeating *compact* from 85.
93 **carriage . . . design** an obscure phrase (identical in F) which must mean something like 'fulfilment of the agreed terms'. F2 and many editors emend *design* to 'designed'; RP suggests 'articled design' as another graphic possibility.
94 **His fell to** his (land) would be forfeit to
sir Perhaps Horatio directs his speech primarily to Marcellus, whose question he is answering.
95 **unimproved mettle** untried or perhaps undisciplined spirit; 'untried' allows for a pun on 'metal' (see 3.2.106n.), and the assumption may be that Fortinbras is eager to *prove* his *mettle*. Shakespeare does not use *unimproved* elsewhere and *OED* lists this as a unique usage; Q1's 'inapproved' gives the easier meaning 'unproven'.
96 **skirts** outskirts, distant parts (with a derogatory overtone)
97 **Sharked up** seized (in a predatory way). Klein points out that *Sharked* begins a series of metaphors from eating, being followed by *food and diet* in 98 and *stomach* in 99.
list quantity or troop
lawless F's 'Landlesse' indicates an army of younger sons rather than one of (potential) criminals. Jenkins points out that the followers of Fortinbras are not particularly *lawless* when they do appear and suggests that it is Laertes who, in 4.5, fulfils this idea of a revenging son accompanied by an unruly mob.
resolutes resolved (but desperate?) men

90 return] return'd *F* 92 co-mart] *(comart);* Cou'nant *F;* compact *Q6* 93 article design] *F;* articles deseign *Q3;* article design'd *F2;* articles design'd *Pope* 95 unimproued] *F;* inapproued *Q1* 97 lawless] *Q1;* Landlesse *F*

~~That hath a stomach in't, which is no other,~~
~~As it doth well appear unto our state,~~
So ~~But~~ to recover of us by strong hand
And terms compulsatory those foresaid lands
So by his father lost. And this, I take it,
Is the main motive of our preparations,
The source of this our watch, and the chief head
Of this post-haste and rummage in the land.

BARNARDO

I think it be no other but e'en so.
Well may it sort that this portentous figure
Comes armed through our watch so like the King

99 **stomach** appetite (i.e. the *resolutes* will serve as fodder for the enterprise). Dowden suggests 'For food and diet' means 'paid only by what they eat', but notes that the lack of a comma after *diet* in Q2 and Q1 may mean the *resolutes* are *food* for the *enterprise*.
100 **our state** the Danish authorities
101 **of** from
strong hand close to the literal meaning of 'Fortinbras' (strong in arm)
102 **compulsatory** Both this and F's 'Compulsatiue' are recorded by *OED* as first uses of now obsolete forms of 'compulsory'; Shakespeare does not use the common modern form.
105 **head** source, origin
106 **post-haste** rapid activity, urgency
rummage disturbance, commotion. This word, originally used in the context of arranging or rearranging a ship's cargo, is now obsolete as a noun but still in use as a verb (to search or ransack) and as an adjective in 'rummage sale' (a sale of junk or odds and ends). The spellings in Q2 and F (see t.n.) may suggest a link with the description of events in Rome that follows.
107–24 These lines are printed only in Q2; F-favouring editors such as Edwards and Hibbard argue that Shakespeare intended to delete them, the former on the grounds that this 'is not a strong or necessary speech', the latter arguing that 'they do not advance the action in any way' and were merely intended as an advertisement for Shakespeare's own *Julius Caesar*. That play, probably written just before *Hamlet* in 1599, makes considerable use of the supernatural omens and occurrences related here (see 3.4.99.1n., and Daniell, 87–8). Gielgud, however, makes the point that if these lines are cut the second appearance of the Ghost follows too quickly after the first and fails to surprise the audience (see Gilder, 36).
107 **e'en** even (monosyllabic)
108 **sort** accord (with Horatio's explanation)
portentous in the literal sense: heralding or foreboding some calamity. Hibbard points out that Shakespeare's only other use of the word is at *JC* 1.3.31, where Caska describes the strange sights before the death of Caesar as 'portentous things'.
109 **armed** armèd
through See 65n.

100 As] And *F* 102 compulsatory] Compulsatiue *F* 106 post-haste] (post hast), *F* rummage] *Q2u* (Romeage), *Q2c* (Romadge), *F* (Romage) 107–24] *not in Q1F* 107 e'en so] (enso)

That was and is the question of these wars.

HORATIO

A mote it is to trouble the mind's eye.
In the most high and palmy state of Rome
A little ere the mightiest Julius fell
The graves stood tenantless and the sheeted dead
Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets;
~~At stars with trains of fire and dews of blood,~~

110 **question** cause, focus of the dispute

111 **mote** piece of grit or dust. Horatio presumably doesn't mean to underestimate the significance of the Ghost but to see it as a serious cause for concern. Shaheen cites the biblical parable, 'Let me pul out the mote that is in thine eye' (Luke, 6.42) and 'Why seest thou the mote, that is in thy brother's eye?' (Matthew, 7.3).

mind's eye This instance and Hamlet's line at 1.2.184 are the first uses of this phrase recorded by *OED*, but the basic metaphor is a traditional one in classical, medieval and Renaissance texts.

112 **palmy** flourishing, worthy to 'bear the palm', a traditional symbol of triumph (a Shakespearean coinage, according to *OED*)

114–15 The portents described by Shakespeare's Caska and Cassius on the night before Caesar's death include 'gliding ghosts' and open graves; Calphurnia also recounts a report that 'graves have yawned and yielded up their dead' (*JC* 1.3.63, 74; 2.2.18); Shakespeare is using Plutarch ('Life of Julius Caesar' in North's translation; Bullough 5.83) as his source for this material, but see also note on *doomsday* at 119.

114 **sheeted** dressed in the winding sheets in which they had been buried

115 **Did . . . gibber** made inarticulate noises (perhaps evoking those made by bats). Spencer asserts the 'g' in *gibber* is hard as in 'give', but *OED* admits 'jibber' as an alternative though more rare spelling and this has become the more common modern pronunciation.

116 ***At stars** Q2's 'As starres' seems to begin a grammatical construction which is never finished; it could be interpreted loosely as meaning 'people also observed stars . . .', but the Oxf emendation is neat and plausible. Jennens in 1773 was the first editor to print a row of asterisks between 115 and 116, suggesting that a line 'somewhat like *Tremendous prodigies in heav'n appeared*' had been mistakenly omitted. MacDonald suggests inserting line 121 between 115 and 116; Spencer suggests inserting 121–5 between 115 and 116; Rolfe suggests inserting a line from *JC* (2.2.19): 'Fierce fiery warriors fight upon the clouds.'

trains . . . blood The stars are seen as having luminous tails like comets, and as being either spotted with blood or drizzling blood; see the 'fiery warriors' in the sky in Calphurnia's report which 'drizzled blood upon the Capitol' (*JC* 2.2.21). Dew was formerly regarded as something which fell from the sky and could be harmful: see Titinius' despairing cry 'Clouds, dews and dangers come; our deeds are done!' (*JC* 5.3.64).

111 mote] *(moth)* 116 At] *Oxf;* As *Q2*

~~Disasters in the sun; and the moist star~~
~~Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands~~
~~Was sick almost to doomsday with eclipse.~~
~~And even the like precurse of feared events,~~
~~As harbingers preceding still the fates~~
~~And prologue to the omen coming on,~~
~~Have heaven and earth together demonstrated~~
~~Unto our climatures and countrymen.~~

Enter GHOST.

But soft, behold, lo where it comes again;
I'll cross it though it blast me. Stay, illusion.
It spreads his arms.
If thou hast any sound or use of voice,

117 **Disasters** in a literal sense: unfavourable aspects of a star or planet
117–18 **the moist . . . stands** i.e. the moon, controller of the tides, called 'governess of floods' at *MND* 2.1.103
118 **Neptune** Roman god of the sea
119 **almost to doomsday** almost as if it were the end of the world (the Day of Judgement when the prophesied second coming of Christ would be heralded or accompanied by eclipses). As Shaheen points out, the use of the word *doomsday* suggests biblical parallels for this speech in addition to the classical ones, notably Matthew, 27.52 ('And the graues did open themselues, and many bodies of the Saints which slept, arose'), and Acts, 2.19 ('Wonders in heaven above, and tokens in the earth beneath').
120 **precurse** precursor(s), warning signs; the sole example of this word given by *OED*
***feared** Q2's 'feare' is generally thought to be a misreading of 'feard'. Tronch-Pérez, however, retains 'fear' as a noun modifying *events* and cites *AC* 1.3.101–2, 'Upon your sword / Sit laurel victory', as a similar construction.
121 **harbingers** literally, those who go before to prepare the way
still always
122 **omen** strictly, 'sign of a terrible event', but it must mean the terrible event itself here
124 **climatures** climes, regions
124.1 The doubly disturbing effect of having a Ghost appear twice is something Shakespeare repeats effectively with Banquo in *Mac* 3.4.
125 **soft** enough, be quiet
126 **cross it** cross its path, impede its progress (also suggests 'make the sign of the cross', a traditional way of attempting to ward off the supernatural)
blast blight, destroy
126 SD Q2's version seems most likely to refer to the Ghost, though from Q6 onwards the question has been raised as to whether *It* refers to Horatio, who perhaps stretches out his arms in his attempt to *cross* the Ghost.

120 feared] *Parrott-Craig (Collier);* feare *Q2;* fearce *Q3* 126 SD] *opp. 126–7; not in Q1F; He spreads his arms. Q6* 128–9] *Pope; one line Q2F*

Speak to me.
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.
~~Or if thou hast uphoarded in thy life~~
~~Extorted treasure in the womb of earth~~
~~For which they say your spirits oft walk in death~~
Speak of it, stay and speak. *The cock crows.*
Stop it, Marcellus!

MARCELLUS
Shall I strike it with my partisan?

HORATIO
Do, if it will not stand.

BARNARDO 'Tis here.

HORATIO 'Tis here. [*Exit Ghost.*]

132 **art privy** to have private knowledge of
fate destiny (implicitly ominous here)
133 **happily** (1) perhaps; (2) fortunately
foreknowing advance knowledge
135 **uphoarded** hoarded up, accumulated
136 **Extorted** wrongfully obtained
womb of earth The earth is seen (ironically) as a burying place as well as a place of origin: the fact that *womb* rhymes with 'tomb' is perhaps one reason why this figure is so familiar; see 'The earth that's nature's mother is her tomb: / What is her burying grave, that is her womb' (*RJ* 2.3.9–10).
137 **your** an indefinite version of the possessive like *your philosophy* (see 1.5.166 and n.) and 'your water is a sore decayer of your whoreson dead body' (5.1.161–2); perhaps more informal than F's 'you' (see Hope 1.3.2b).
138 SD John Ward's promptbook (see 29n.) has 'one Ready to Crow' as a 'warning entry' some 30 lines before this SD (Thompson, 'Ward', 144); modern productions normally use a recorded sound effect, but an actor was used to mimic the sound at the London Globe in 2000.
139 **partisan** long-handled spear or halberd. (The metaphorical sense of 'adherent' or 'party member' also occurs in the sixteenth century, though not in Shakespeare.)
140 **stand** i.e. stay to be questioned
140–1 **'Tis . . . gone** Many nineteenth- and twentieth-century productions have made use of sound effects or even multiple ghosts to enhance the impression that the Ghost is ubiquitous (see Rosenberg; Hapgood).

130–1] *Q1; one line F* 133–4] *one line Q1F* 137 your] you *Q1F* 138 SD] *opp. 137–8; not in Q1F*
139 it] at it *F* 140 SD] *Sisson; opp.* [1]heere *Q1; opp. 141 F*

MARCELLUS

'Tis gone.
We do it wrong being so majestical
To offer it the show of violence,
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
Upon a fearful summons. ~~I have heard~~
~~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,~~
~~Th'extravagant and erring spirit hies~~
~~To his confine, and of the truth herein~~
~~This present object made probation.~~

142 **being so majestical** i.e. given that its (the Ghost's) behaviour is so much that of 'the majesty of buried Denmark'. Woudhuysen points out that Shakespeare uses the more archaic form *majestical* in his plays up to and including *Hamlet*, thereafter using 'majestic' (in *LLL* 5.1.11n.).

145 **malicious mockery** a derisory show, or mere imitation of hostility

147–8 **And . . . summons** a sort of retrospective stage direction for the Ghost's actions at 137

148–54 **I . . . confine** Puck expresses a similar belief at *MND* 3.2.378–87, distinguishing between ghosts of those who have been buried in churchyards and 'damned spirits' who have not received proper funerals (see Greenblatt's discussion of this distinction in *Purgatory*, 162).

149 **trumpet** trumpeter, herald

151 **god of day** the sun-god, Phoebus Apollo in classical mythology. In the next speech Shakespeare indicates that the characters are Christians; this mixture of classical and Christian allusions was common at the time (see 119n. and 1.5.33 and n.).

152 **sea . . . air** the four elements, according to contemporary science

153 **extravagant and erring** wandering beyond its proper bounds. *OED* lists this as the first use of *extravagant* in this sense.
hies hurries, hastens

154 **confine** (1) proper home; (2) place of confinement

154–5 **of . . . probation** (*probation* has four syllables); 'this recent sight proves the truth of that supposition'.

149 morn] day *F*; morning *Q1* 150 shrill-sounding] (shrill sounding), *F*; shrill crowing *Q1*

MARCELLUS

It faded on the crowing of the cock.
Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated
This bird of dawning singeth all night long,
And then, they say, no spirit dare stir abroad,
The nights are wholesome, then no planets strike,
No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm,
So hallowed and so gracious is that time.

HORATIO

So have I heard and do in part believe it.
But look, the morn in russet mantle clad

157 **gainst** just before, in anticipation of
that season i.e. late December, in the Christian calendar (see 6n.). Despite the fact that Marcellus seems to be saying that ghosts cannot *walk abroad* at this time, earlier editors sometimes took his words as an indication that the play begins in midwinter; this, however, gave them a problem with the flowers Ophelia distributes in 4.5, and those she is said to pick in 4.7.

159 **This . . . dawning** the cock, as at 138 SD and 156

160 **dare stir abroad** i.e. dare move beyond its *confine* (154); Spencer finds F's 'walke' more appropriate, but Edwards follows Q2 and uses these variants to illustrate 'how Shakespeare's language was progressively weakened' in the process of textual transmission (Edwards, 29–30).

161 **wholesome** Night air was usually thought of as unhealthy: see *JC* 2.1.264–5, where Portia upbraids Brutus that he should 'steal out of his wholesome bed / To dare the vile contagion of the night'.
strike exert evil or destructive influences

162 **No fairy takes** no supernatural being has effective power. MacDonald asks, 'Does it mean "carries off any child, leaving a changeling" or "affect with evil", as a disease might infect or *take*?' He prints F's 'talkes' but, despite the fact that Q2's usage of *take* without an object is unique, almost all other editors prefer it.

163 **hallowed** made holy, sanctified

164 **and . . . it** Horatio continues to be characterized as slightly sceptical about ghost-lore in general, though he now believes in this one.

165–6 The cock has duly heralded the dawn which is visible 165 lines after the scene began around midnight. This would not have been a problem on the non-illusionist Elizabethan stage but raises questions for modern lighting designers. The movement from midnight to dawn is even swifter in *MA* 5.3, where there are only nine lines between the appeal to 'Midnight' to 'assist our moan' (16) and the observation that 'the gentle day . . . Dapples the drowsy east with spots of grey' (25–7). These two lines were transferred to Horatio's closing speech, after Hamlet's death, in Peter Brook's 2000 production.

157 say] *Q1*; sayes *F* 159 This] The *Q1F* 160 dare stir] dare walke *Q1*; can walke *F* 162 takes] *Q1*; talkes *F* 163 that] *Q1*; the *F*

Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastward hill.
Break we our watch up and by my advice
Let us impart what we have seen tonight
Unto young Hamlet, for upon my life
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. *Exeunt.*

1.2 *Flourish. Enter* Claudius, KING *of Denmark,* Gertrude *the* QUEEN, *Council – as* POLONIUS *and his son* LAERTES [*and*] HAMLET, *with others* [*including* VOLTEMAND *and* CORNELIUS].

166 **eastward** Hibbard prefers F's 'Easterne' which is found elsewhere in Shakespeare (especially in relation to the dawn), but RP points out that 'eastward ho' was common currency in Thames boatmen's English.

167 **Break . . . up** let us bring our guard duty to an end
by my advice i.e. I suggest

169 **young Hamlet** the first mention of the play's hero, assumed to be the son of the deceased king, *our valiant Hamlet* (83), as *young Fortinbras* (94) is the son of the deceased King of Norway (see List of Roles, 1n.).

174 **convenient** The adjectival form was acceptable as an adverb at the time: see Blake, 5.1.2.1.

1.2 The three texts: this scene runs to 169 lines in Q1 (scene 2), 256 lines in Q2 and 255 lines in F. The King's opening speech in Q1 begins at what is line 27 in Q2/F, omitting his announcement of his marriage to the dead King's widow. Many subsequent speeches are shorter in Q1, notably the King's conversation with Leartes (*sic*) and his father at 42–63, his speech to Hamlet at 87–117 and Hamlet's soliloquy at 129–59. Location and timing: while there would have been minimal changes of props on stage at the Globe (perhaps two thrones would have been brought on for the King and Queen), the assumption is that this scene takes place in a formal, indoor Court setting. From the arrival of Horatio, Marcellus and Barnardo at 159.1 we may deduce that this is the day after the night represented in 1.1, but time is moving quickly: they say they will seek Hamlet *this morning* (1.1.173), but at 166 he greets them with *Good even* (see n.).

0.1 ***Flourish*** a fanfare of trumpets to announce the entry of the King
Claudius This entry direction and the

166 eastward] Easterne *F* 173 Let's] *Q1;* Let *F* 174 convenient] conueniently *Q1F* 1.2] *F (Scena Secunda.); not in Q2I* 0.1 *Flourish*] *not in Q1F* 0.1–3 Claudius . . . HAMLET] *King, Queene, Hamlet, Leartes, Corambis, and the two Ambassadors Q1; Claudius King of Denmarke, Gertrude the Queene, Hamlet, Polonius, Laertes, and his Sister Ophelia F* 0.2 Gertrude] *F; Gertrad Q2* Council – as] *(Counsaile: as)* 0.3 *and*] *this edn with others*] *(Cum Alijs); with Attendants Q1; Lords Attendant F* 0.3–4 *including* . . . CORNELIUS] *Riv; and the two Ambassadors Q1*

KING

Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death
The memory be green, and that it us befitted
To bear our hearts in grief, and our whole kingdom
To be contracted in one brow of woe,
Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature
That we with wisest sorrow think on him
Together with remembrance of ourselves.

first speech prefix are the only times the King is named in Q2; his name is never used in the dialogue and he is simply *King* in all subsequent directions and prefixes: see List of Roles, 3n. (F is even more sparing with the name, using it only in this entry direction.)

0.2 **Gertrude** See List of Roles, 4n.
Council – as councillors – namely (though Dover Wilson argues Q2's 'Counsaile: as' is an error for 'Councillors')

0.3 HAMLET Q2's entry direction ends with '*Hamlet, Cum Alijs*', perhaps indicating that he is visibly separated from the King and Queen by this as well as by his mourning clothes; in F he is listed immediately after his mother and stepfather.
others Q2's '*Alijs*' must include the ambassadors, Cornelius and Voltemand (unless they are considered as part of the *Council*), since they are addressed at the end of the King's opening speech; F brings them on rather awkwardly after 25. Unlike F, Q2 does not include Ophelia in this entry: she does not speak in this scene in either text, but her silent presence is often significant in productions and films; in Michael Almereyda's 2000 film, for example, Ophelia is present and trying to pass a small package to Hamlet but is prevented by Laertes (Almereyda, 12). F also specifies '*Lords Attendant*' and it is usual for this scene to be performed as a big public occasion with as many extras as the company can muster.

1–39 The King's opening speech has often been admired as a demonstration of his political skill in (a) putting a positive 'spin' on his own rather delicate position and (b) dealing firmly with the threat from Fortinbras (see Jenkins, LN). He is certainly masterly in his deployment of second person pronouns – *our*, *us*, *we* – which slide from the royal 'we' to include the whole Court in his discourse.

2 **that** i.e. consequently
us befitted would have been appropriate for us

3–4 **our . . . woe** The King describes the kingdom as being like a person whose face is twisted or contorted in mourning – personifications and synecdoches of this kind are frequent in the play; see 'the majesty of buried Denmark' (1.1.47) and 9n.

5 **discretion . . . nature** rational judgement competed with natural emotion

6–7 'our most intense mourning for him has led us to no foolish neglect of ourselves'. Dent (W532) cites 'He is not wise that is not wise for himself' as proverbial. Fortinbras strikes a similar note at 5.2.372: 'with sorrow I embrace my fortune.'

1 SP] *Q1F; Claud. Q2*

Therefore our sometime sister, now our Queen,
Th'imperial jointress to this warlike state,
Have we, as 'twere with a defeated joy,
With an auspicious and a dropping eye,
With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,
In equal scale weighing delight and dole,
Taken to wife. Nor have we herein barred
Your better wisdoms, which have freely gone
With this affair along. For all, our thanks.
Now follows that you know: young Fortinbras,
Holding a weak supposal of our worth
Or thinking by our late dear brother's death
Our state to be disjoint and out of frame –

8 **sister** i.e. sister-in-law. The abbreviation was familiar, but the King's use of it at this point raises the suggestion of incest: see 157 and n., and the opening scene of *Cym*, where we are told of the King's desire to match his daughter with 'his wife's sole son' (*Cym* 1.1.5).

9 **jointress** legally, a widow who holds a jointure – a lifetime right in some property. This is not literally true here, but Gertrude was previously 'married to Denmark' in the person of her former husband and the present King is consolidating his position by marrying his predecessor's widow.
warlike See the *warlike form* of the deceased King at 1.1.46. His successor is presumably alluding to the preparations for war described by Marcellus and Horatio at 1.1.69–106.

10–14 **Have . . . wife** The predicate of this sentence is separated from the subject by a lengthy parenthesis as the King builds to his climax.

10 **defeated** frustrated, disfigured

11 proverbial: 'To cry with one eye and laugh with the other' (Tilley, E248). See the description of Paulina at the end of *WT* having 'one eye declined for the loss of her husband, another elevated that the Oracle was fulfilled' (5.2.75–7).

13 'balancing joy against an equivalent quantity of sorrow (*dole*)'

14–16 **Nor . . . along** The King reminds his councillors that they have apparently approved of his marriage to his brother's widow and his accession to the throne.

14 **barred** excluded

17–25 The King summarizes the political situation. Editors' glossing of *that you know* in 17 as 'that which you should know', on the grounds that there is no point in the King telling the members of his Council what they know already, seems unnecessarily literal: the audience does need to be told. *That you know* could also be glossed 'a further piece of business which you know needs our attention'.

18 'supposing that our [military] position is weak'

19 **by** because of

20 **disjoint . . . frame** The underlying metaphors are from carpentry, but Shakespeare applies them to social and political disruption elsewhere; see 'But let the frame of things disjoint' (*Mac*

8 sometime] sometimes *F* 9 to] of *F* 11 an . . . a] one . . . one *F* 17 know:] *Ard*[1] *(Walker);* knowe *Q2F*

Co-leagued with this dream of his advantage –
He hath not failed to pester us with message
Importing the surrender of those lands
Lost by his father with all bands of law
To our most valiant brother. So much for him.
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 impotent and bedrid scarcely hears~~
Of this his nephew's purpose – to suppress
His further gait herein, ~~in that the levies,~~
~~The lists and full proportions are all made~~
~~Out of his subject;~~ and we here dispatch
You, good Cornelius, and you, Voltemand,
For bearers of this greeting to old Norway,
Giving to you no further personal power

3.2.16). 'Joint' also picks up *jointress* in 9 above and anticipates Hamlet's 'The time is out of joint' (1.5.186).

21 Fortinbras's erroneous view of Denmark's weakness is accompanied by (*co-leagued with*) a fantasy of his own advancement.
Co-leagued co-leaguèd; Oxf adopts this spelling (which actually appears first in Capell) in order to avoid the suggestion of modern 'colleague' in the more usual 'colleagued'.

22 **He** Fortinbras: the King repeats the subject for the sake of clarity.
message possible as a general term or plural, meaning here 'demands'

23 **Importing . . .** of calling on us to give up

24 **bands** F's 'Bonds' means the same: 'binding agreements'.

28 **Norway . . . Fortinbras** In Norway as in Denmark, the brother of the dead king (*Fortinbras of Norway*, 1.1.81) has apparently succeeded to the throne rather than the son.

29 **impotent** incapable, helpless. The King of Norway refers to his 'sickness, age and impotence' in his message to the Danish King at 2.2.66.

31 **gait** proceeding

31–2 **levies . . . proportions** i.e. the men, money and other resources

32–3 **made / Out of** conscripted or requisitioned for the campaign from among

33 **his subject** those who are subject to him: the people of Norway (see 1.1.71 and n.)

35 **For bearers** as carriers or messengers

21 Co-leagued] *(*Coleagued*), Capell;* Colleagued *F* this] the *F* 24 bands] Bonds *F* 25 him.] him. */ Enter Voltemand and Cornelius. F* 33 subject] *F;* subjects *Q5* 34 Voltemand] *F; Valtemand Q2* 35 bearers] bearing *F*

To business with the King more than the scope
Of these delated articles allow.
Farewell, and let your haste commend your duty.

CORNELIUS, VOLTEMAND

In that and all things will we show our duty.

KING

We doubt it nothing. Heartily farewell.
[*Exeunt Voltemand and Cornelius.*]
And now, Laertes, what's the news with you?
You told us of some suit – what is't, Laertes?
You cannot speak of reason to the Dane
And lose your voice. What wouldst thou beg, Laertes,
That shall not be my offer, not thy asking?

37 **To business** to do business, i.e. negotiate
than All three texts read 'then', a common spelling of *than* in sixteenth-century usage.

38 **these delated articles** these terms or conditions I am handing over to you. The King presumably presents or gestures towards some documents that lay down his terms.
delated F reads 'dilated': 'Which of these two is right, I cannot tell. *Dilated* means *expanded* and would refer to *the scope*; *delated* means *committed* – to them, to limit them' (MacDonald). On the relation between these two words in *Ham* and *Oth*, see Parker, 'Dilation'.

39 **let . . . duty** i.e. prove your duty by the speed with which you accomplish your mission.

40 SP F attributes this line to Voltemand alone and Q1 to 'Gent', but *we* occurs in all three texts, perhaps indicating that both ambassadors speak together, though this usually seems awkward in performance and *we* could merely be inclusive.

41 **We . . . nothing** 'We (I) have complete confidence in you.'

42–50 **And . . . Laertes?** Sometimes in performance Hamlet seems about to address the King, who deliberately turns away from him to Laertes; the King may appear ingratiating by his repetition of Laertes' name and flattery of his father; alternatively he may be coaxing a shy Laertes to speak up.

42, 45 **you, thou** The King mainly uses the more formal *you* to Laertes and to Hamlet at 66 and 87–117, while the Queen uses the more familiar *thou* to Hamlet at 68–73; see also 1.3.4n.

43 **suit** formal request (literally, what is sought)

44 **speak of reason** make a reasonable request
the Dane the King of Denmark (see Hamlet's later declaration that he is *Hamlet the Dane* at 5.1.247)

45 **lose your voice** not have your request granted

46 The King claims he will give Laertes what he wants before he asks for it. Spencer quotes Isaiah, 65.24: 'Whenever they call, I will answer them; while they are yet but thinking how to speak, I will hear them.'

37 than] *(then) Q1F* 38 these delated] these dilated *F;* those related *Q1* 40 SP] *(Cor. Vo.); Gent. Q1; Volt. F* 41 SD] *F (Exit Voltemand and Cornelius.); not in Q21*

The head is not more native to the heart,
The hand more instrumental to the mouth,
Than is the throne of Denmark to thy father.
What wouldst thou have, Laertes?

LAERTES My dread lord,
Your leave and favour to return to France,
From whence though willingly I came to Denmark
To show my duty in your coronation,
Yet now I must confess, that duty done,
My thoughts and wishes bend again toward France
And bow them to your gracious leave and pardon.

KING
Have you your father's leave? What says Polonius?

POLONIUS
He hath, my lord, wrung from me my slow leave
By laboursome petition, and at last
Upon his will I sealed my hard consent.
I do beseech you give him leave to go.

KING
Take thy fair hour, Laertes, time be thine

47–9 The King flatters Polonius by designating the *throne of Denmark* as merely *instrumental* or serviceable to his wishes.
47 **native** naturally connected with or obliged to
50 **dread** respected, feared
51 **leave and favour** another example of hendiadys which can be unpacked to mean 'the favour of your permission', though Wright is doubtful: see 1.1.67n.
53 Unlike Horatio at 175, Laertes does not mention the funeral of the old king as a motive for his visit in either Q2 or F, though he does in Q1.
55–6 'Although my desires turn towards France, I submit them to your permission.' See the similar association of verbs at *KL* 3.6.106: 'that which makes me bend makes the King bow.'
59 **laboursome petition** See 'Your laboursome and dainty trims' (*Cym* 3.4.164); Shakespeare does not use 'laborious', which has become the standard modern form, though it is recorded by *OED* from 1390.
60 'I gave my hard-won consent to his wishes.' The words *will* and *seal* suggest that Polonius sees his permission as comparable to a legal document.

50 My dread] My gratious *Q1*; Dread my *F* 55 toward] for *Q1*; towards *F* 58 He hath] *Q1F*; Hath *Q2* 58–60 wrung . . . consent] wrung from me a forced graunt *Q1*; *om. F*

And thy best graces spend it at thy will.
But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son –

HAMLET

A little more than kin, and less than kind. 65

KING

How is it that the clouds still hang on you?

HAMLET

Not so much, my lord, I am too much in the 'son'.

QUEEN

Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted colour off

63 'and may your good qualities (help you to) use the time as you wish'. The King's words can be interpreted as a kind of dismissal and Q1 provides an exit for Leartes at this point; producers and editors of Q2/F have to decide whether to take him off here or leave him onstage until the general *Exeunt* at 128. In some productions (e.g. Gielgud 1936, as recorded in Gilder, 30), the King dismisses the entire Court at this point, rendering 64–128 a more 'private' sequence.

64 **cousin** used loosely in this period to denote a number of kinship relationships more distant than parent, child or sibling
son Hamlet's comment implies that he objects to this word, which the King repeats at 117 (and three more times in Q1).

65 Characteristically, Hamlet's first line is a play on words, indicating that the King is claiming an excess of kinship in designating himself father as well as uncle while acting in a way which could be construed as 'unkind' or unnatural. 'The nearer in kin, the less in kindness' was proverbial (Tilley, K38); Steevens quotes parallels in Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton's *Gorboduc* (1561), where the Queen remarks to one of her sons, 'A father? No. / In kind a father, not in kindliness' (1.1), and in Lyly's *Mother Bombie* (1591), where Maestius says to his supposed sister Serena, 'the greater the kindred is, the less the kindness must be' (3.1). Many editors mark this speech as an aside (like Cordelia's first words), and the fact that the King continues with his sentence structure supports this. But it could also be a deliberate piece of rudeness or confrontation – and was played as such by Colin Keith-Johnston in the first modern-dress *Hamlet* staged by Barry Jackson and H.K. Ayliff at the Kingsway theatre in London in 1925 (see Dawson, 88).

67 **'son'** *Eastward Ho* (1605) by George Chapman, Ben Jonson and John Marston, which contains several allusions to *Ham*, includes 'son/sun' puns at 3.2.122–5. See 179–80n. and pp. 57–8.

68 **nighted colour** (1) black (mourning) clothes (see 'Winter'd garments' in *AYL* 3.2.102), (2) mournful behaviour. F's 'nightly' could equally well mean 'night-like', but is rejected by most editors apart from MacDonald and Hibbard (whose commitment to F is greater than that of Edwards).

64] *Exit. Q1, opp. 64* 67 'much] *om. F* in the 'son'] *Cam'; in the sonne Q2; i'th'Sun F* 68 nighted] nightly *F*

And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.
Do not for ever with thy vailed lids
Seek for thy noble father in the dust.
Thou knowst 'tis common all that lives must die,
Passing through nature to eternity.

HAMLET

Ay, madam, it is common.

QUEEN

If it be
Why seems it so particular with thee?

HAMLET

'Seems', madam – nay it is, I know not 'seems'.
'Tis not alone my inky cloak, cold mother,
Nor customary suits of solemn black,
Nor windy suspiration of forced breath,

69 **Denmark** most obviously (1) the King, but possibly (2) the country

70 **vailed lids** vailèd; lowered eyelids. Q2's 'vailed' is more popular with editors than F's 'veyled' (veiled), though the latter is acceptable if we assume that the downcast lids 'veil' the eyes (see Thompson & Thompson, 99–100, 128). The Queen sees in Hamlet's metaphorically downcast (*dropping*, 11) eyes a literal attempt to find his father's body in the ground – the first of the play's many references to the physical facts of corporeal decay: see, for example, 2.2.178–9 and 273–4, 4.3.19–30 and 5.1.154–205.

72–4 **Thou . . . common** proverbial: Dent, D142

74 **common** Hamlet again takes up the word and twists it against the speaker; he is sometimes quite aggressive in performance as he turns the Queen's banal statement into an accusation that she has acted in an all too predictable or commonplace way – perhaps even that she has been sexually promiscuous.

77 **not alone** not only. The subsequent list of four parallel items with *nor* between each is a classic example of the rhetorical device of syndeton.

cold mother Q2's reading is preserved in the Restoration and eighteenth-century 'players' quartos' and was presumably spoken by actors, although most editors prefer F's 'good Mother'. Hamlet could be accusing Gertrude of being *cold* in her failure to display grief. Andrews, following Q2, reads 'coold', arguing that Hamlet implies his mother's affection towards him and his father has 'cooled'. Oxf's 'good-mother' is a term for stepmother or mother-in-law, used sarcastically here (and perhaps at 3.2.106 and 3.4.26).

78 **customary suits** conventional garments

79 **suspiration** sighing, breathing deeply

forced This most obviously applies to the *breath* forcibly expelled in sighs, but it could also imply that the sighs are insincere.

70 vailed] veyled *F* 72 lives] *F;* live *F2* 77 cold mother] *(coold mother);* could smother *Q3, Q4;* good Mother *F;* good-mother *Oxf*

No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
Nor the dejected haviour of the visage,
Together with all forms, moods, shapes of grief,
That can denote me truly. These indeed 'seem',
For they are actions that a man might play,
But I have that within which passes show,
These but the trappings and the suits of woe.

KING

'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,
That father lost lost his, and the survivor bound
In filial obligation for some term
To do obsequious sorrow; but to persever
In obstinate condolement is a course

80 **fruitful** copious
81 **dejected haviour** downcast, depressed demeanour
visage face
82 **moods** This must mean something like shows or outward appearances.
83 ***denote** Q2's 'deuote' is an easy scribal or compositorial mistake – a minim misreading, 'foul case' or turned letter – and does not make sense in the context.
84 **might play** would be able to act
85 See the extended discussion of internal and external grief at *R2* 4.1.276–99.
passes surpasses. F (unusually) has the more old-fashioned 'passeth'. As Edwards points out, *passes* is easier to say.
86 **trappings** superficial appearances, accoutrements
87–117 The King's speech against 'obstinate condolement' is echoed in a different vein in Feste's 'catechism' of Olivia in *TN* 1.5.63–9.
87 **commendable** The stress is on the first syllable.
90 **bound** was obliged, committed
92 **obsequious** dutiful in regard to the dead (*OED a.* 1b). The adjective, from 'obsequies' (as at 5.1.215), is now more common in its later meaning, 'flattering'.
persever (stressed on second syllable) persist, continue
93 **condolement** grieving. *OED* cites this and a line in the final speech of John Marston's *Antonio's Revenge* (5.3.174) as the earliest uses of this word; it dates both plays to 1602 (but see pp. 51–2). The case for a Shakespearean coinage is supported by the large number of words ending in '-ment' which appear for the first time in *Hamlet*: Elze noted a few of these in his edition, but a full list would include *blastment* (1.3.41), *entreatment* (1.3.121), *investment* (1.3.127), *impartment* (1.4.59), *distilment* (1.5.64), *encompassment* (2.1.10), *annexment* (3.3.21), *strewment* (5.1.222), *definement* (5.2.98) and *extolment* (5.2.101).

82 moods] *F;* modes *Q9* shapes] *(*chapes*), Q3;* shewes *F* 83 denote] *F;* deuote *Q2* 85 passes] passeth *F*

Of impious stubbornness, 'tis unmanly grief,
It shows a will most incorrect to heaven,
A heart unfortified, or mind impatient,
An understanding simple and unschooled;
For what we know must be, and is as common
As any the most vulgar thing to sense –
Why should we in our peevish opposition
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 corpse till he that died today
'This must be so.' We pray you throw to earth

94 **impious** irreligious, profane. Klein notes the growth of the King's displeasure in his chain of negative prefixes: *impious*, *unmanly*, *incorrect*, *unfortified*, *impatient*, *unschooled*.
unmanly a prominent concern in the play and in its theatrical and critical history: see 2.2.520n.
95 The assumption is that people should accept death and the timing of it as the will of God. (The King has his own reasons for insisting that this particular death was a natural one, ordained by heaven.)
incorrect disobedient
96 **unfortified** (with Christian counsel)
or Jenkins emends to F's 'a' here, presumably on the grounds that 'or' was misread as 'a' (as in *sate/sort* at 1.5.56), but *or* also makes sense.
impatient not capable of suffering
99 'as the most familiar and obvious thing in the world'
102 **fault to nature** refusal to accept a natural law
103 **whose** i.e. nature's
theme topic
104 **still** always, incessantly
105 **first corpse** In Judaeo-Christian tradition, the first person to die was Abel, killed by his brother Cain (Genesis, 4.11–12): an unfortunate (and presumably unconscious) reference on the King's part here, but one he returns to consciously at 3.3.37–8 and which Hamlet mentions at 5.1.72–3. This archetypal murder was often in Shakespeare's mind while he was writing his English history plays where civil wars turn relatives against each other: see *1H6* 1.3.39–40, *R2* 1.1.104 and 5.6.43, *2H4* 1.1.155–60 and *KJ* 3.3.79.
106 **'This . . . so'** In Peter Brook's 2000 production, the King repeated these words as he accepted his death-wound in the final scene.
We . . . earth perhaps a subjunctive ('we pray that you may throw to earth'), or more likely an imperative ('we require that you throw to earth')
throw to earth Hibbard suggests a metaphor from wrestling, but, given the talk of *dust* at 71, the King may be saying 'bury your grief'. The phrase also evokes the Christian burial service 'earth to earth'.

96 or] a *F* 105 corpse] *Oxf*; course *Q2*; Coarse *F*

This unprevailing woe, and think of us
As of a father, for let the world take note
You are the most immediate to our throne,
And with no less nobility of love
Than that which dearest father bears his son
Do I impart toward you. For your intent
In going back to school in Wittenberg
It is most retrograde to our desire,
And we beseech you bend you to remain
Here in the cheer and comfort of our eye,
Our chiefest courtier, cousin, and our son.

QUEEN

Let not thy mother lose her prayers, Hamlet.

107 **unprevailing** ineffective (*OED*'s first usage)
us The King again uses the royal plural.

109 'you are my heir'. The King seems to be claiming publicly that he has been rightfully elected, but Hamlet implies at 3.4.97–9 and at 5.2.64 that he has *stolen* the crown and that he, Hamlet, should have been king by now rather than crown prince.

110–12 **And . . . you.** The construction is awkward (*with* seems redundant), but the King clearly means to claim that he loves Hamlet like a son. Hibbard finds evidence of duplicity in the contorted syntax.

113 **school** university. The assumption is that, like Laertes, and like Horatio at 164–75, Hamlet wishes to continue with the overseas studies he interrupted to attend his father's funeral, his mother's marriage and the new King's coronation. We learn at 5.1.135–53 that Hamlet is 30 – which would make him an unusually mature student by Elizabethan standards. It is Shakespeare's addition to the story to designate all the young men as students – most obviously Hamlet, Horatio, Laertes, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, but also implicitly Marcellus and Barnardo (see List of Roles).
Wittenberg city in Germany, home of a university founded in 1502 and attended in reality by Martin Luther (who became a member of its staff in 1509 and nailed his famous 95 theses to the door of the Schlosskirke in 1517) and in fiction by Dr Faustus: the town is mentioned several times in Marlowe's *Dr Faustus* (*c.* 1592).

114 **retrograde** contrary (literally, a step backwards; the word could also, in astronomy, refer to the movement of a planet, apparently against the zodiac)

115 **bend . . . remain** subordinate your wishes to ours by staying (see the use of *bend* in 55)

117 **cousin** See 64 and n. In this line, *cousin* could be a direct address to Hamlet.

118 **lose her prayers** fail to achieve what she requests

112 toward] towards *F* you. For] *F*; you for *Q2* 114 retrograde] (retrogard), *F*

I pray thee stay with us, go not to Wittenberg.

HAMLET

I shall in all my best obey you, madam.

KING

Why, 'tis a loving and a fair reply.
Be as ourself in Denmark. Madam, come –
This gentle and unforced accord of Hamlet
Sits smiling to my heart, in grace whereof
No jocund health that Denmark drinks today
But the great cannon to the clouds shall tell
And the King's rouse the heaven shall bruit again,
Re-speaking earthly thunder. Come away.

Flourish. Exeunt all but Hamlet.

HAMLET

O that this too too sallied flesh would melt,

119 **pray thee** F has 'prythee' (consistently according to *TxC*, but see 176 and n.). Jackson notes that all the 'good' quartos published up to 1600 show an almost exclusive preference for 'pray thee' over the more colloquial 'prithee', but the latter becomes the norm from Q2 *Hamlet* on. Q2 actually has six 'prithees' to two 'pray thees'.

120 Hamlet pointedly responds to the entreaty of his mother, not that of the King, and employs the more formal *you* (see 42, 45n.).

122 **Be as ourself** behave as if you were king

124 **Sits smiling to** has a happy effect on, pleases
grace thanks, gratitude

125–8 **No . . . thunder** 'The king's intemperance is very strongly impressed; everything that happens to him gives him occasion to drink' (Johnson).

125 **jocund** joyful

126 **tell** announce, count (or enumerate: see 236n.), i.e. artillery will be fired to mark the occasions. In 1.4.6 SD–12 trumpets and kettledrums are specified as well as *pieces* or guns.

127 **rouse** toast, ceremonial drink, perhaps an abbreviated form of 'carouse'
bruit make a noise, echo

128 **Re-speaking** echoing (*OED*'s first usage)

129–59 Hamlet's first soliloquy reveals pent-up emotion through its exclamations, questions and expressions of pain. See our discussion of the soliloquies on pp. 18–25.

129 **sallied** assailed, besieged. Q1 also reads 'sallied' – 'O that this too much griev'd and sallied flesh'. F's 'solid' provides a more specific sense for *melt* (and see *2H4* 3.1.47–9: 'and the continent, / Weary of solid firmness, melt itself / Into the sea') but which chimes unhappily for some readers with Gertrude's later statement that

119 pray thee] prythee *F* 127 heaven] Heauens *F* 128 Re-speaking] (Respeaking) SD *Flourish*] *not in Q1F* 129 sallied] *Q1*; solid *F*

Thaw and resolve itself into a dew,
Or that the Everlasting had not fixed
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter. O God, God,
How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
Fie on't, ah, fie, 'tis an unweeded garden
That grows to seed, things rank and gross in nature

Hamlet is *fat* (see 5.2.269n.). Many editors emend *sallied* to 'sullied', meaning 'contaminated': see the Princess's reference to her 'maiden honour' as an 'unsullied lily' in *LLL* 5.2.351–2, where both Q and F texts read 'unsallied'. MacDonald glosses *sallied* as 'sullied', which, despite his commitment to F, he thinks 'nearer the depth of Hamlet's mood' than *solid*.

melt The idea of annihilation by melting or dissolving also occurs in *R2* ('O that I were a mockery king of snow / . . . To melt myself away in water-drops', 4.1.260–2) and in *AC* 'Here I am Antony, / Yet cannot hold this visible shape', 4.14.13–14).

130 **resolve** dissolve

132 **canon** divine law. Noting Pope's spelling 'cannon' here, and the correction to 'canon' in John Hughes's text of 1723, Theobald comments that Shakespeare 'intended the *Injunction*, rather than the *Artillery* of Heaven' (Theobald, *Restored*, 16–17). 'This is an unhappy word to use here. I fear the truth is that the noise of the cannon in the king's speech [126] was still ringing in the Poet's ears' (Hunter, 2.218). Caldecott observes that '*ordinance*, which has the same sense as *canon*, differs also from *ordnance*, or artillery in one letter only; and this difference in pronunciation is no way felt.' Booth picks up the canon/cannon echo as an example of the 'casual, substantively inconsequential relationships among words and ideas in Shakespeare' whose 'undelivered meanings' contribute to the richness of the effect (Booth, 43).

***self-slaughter** Q2's 'seale slaughter' is clearly erroneous. There is no specific biblical prohibition of suicide, although the sixth commandment, against murder, would cover it. Imogen also believes that 'Against self-slaughter / There is a prohibition so divine / That cravens my weak hand' (*Cym* 3.4.75–7). For Shakespeare, this was clearly a major difference between Christian and pagan belief systems: see 5.1.1–29, and Edgar's attempts to cure his father's despair in *KL*, and contrast the heroic suicides at the end of *JC* and *AC*.

134 **uses** doings, in the sense of opportunities or activities

135 **Fie** a strong exclamation of shock, reproach, disgust

135–7 **'tis . . . merely** Dent cites 'Weeds come forth on the fattest soil if it is untilled' as proverbial (W241). For other examples of the neglected garden as a metaphor for social disorder, see *R2* 3.4.29–47 and *H5* 5.2.31–67.

136 **rank** excessively (offensively) vigorous in growth; see other uses of *rank* and *ranker* at 2.1.20, 3.2.250, 3.3.36, 3.4.90 and 150 and 4.4.21.

in nature probably 'in their own beings' rather than 'as they occur in nature'

132 self-slaughter] *F*; seale slaughter *Q2* God, God,] God, O God! *F* 133 weary] (wary), *F* 134 Seem] Seemes *F* 135 ah, fie] Oh fie, fie *F*

Possess it merely. That it should come thus:
But two months dead – nay not so much, not two –
So excellent a king, that was to this
Hyperion to a satyr, so loving to my mother
That he might not beteem the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth,
Must I remember? Why, she should hang on him
As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on. And yet within a month
(Let me not think on't – Frailty, thy name is Woman),

137 **merely** completely, absolutely
come thus work out this way. Apart from Pope, most editors prefer F's 'come to this'.
138 **two months** Ophelia claims it is *twice two months* since the death of Hamlet's father at 3.2.121: in the light of Hamlet's reduction of the time to *A little month* at 147, it is easier to suppose that he is being deliberately inaccurate here in order to exaggerate how quickly his father has been forgotten than to suppose that there is a two-month gap between these scenes.
139 **to this** compared to this (his uncle, the new king)
140 **Hyperion** Greek god of the sun. Spencer notes resignedly that, because of the influence of this line and Hamlet's later reference at 3.4.54, the customary English pronunciation has become 'high-peer-i-on' rather than the arguably more correct 'hipper-eye-on' or 'highper-eye-on'.
satyr grotesque creature, half human and half goat. Satyrs were companions of Bacchus/Dionysus in classical mythology and hence associated with drunkenness and lechery.
141 **might not** did not have the strength (*might*) to. Hope (2.1.2b) points out the shift from this sense of 'may' in Early Modern English to one meaning permission or possibility in Present-day English, but it still seems awkward with *beteem*.
beteem allow, permit. 'The context insists on this meaning, but it is a strained usage of a rare word' (Edwards). Shakespeare's only other use of *beteem* is in *MND*, where Hermia says the roses in her cheeks lack rain 'which I could well / Beteem them from the tempest of my eyes' (1.1.130–1); in this case it has the more normal meaning of 'grant' or 'afford'.
143 **should** Q2's reading implies admonition, where F's implies habitual action.
144–5 **As . . . on** as if her desire for him had increased by being satisfied. 'Appetite comes with eating' was proverbial (Dent, A286). Sexual desire is frequently seen as 'appetite' in Shakespeare (see *TN* 1.1.1–4 and 2.4.94–102, *AC* 2.2.246–8), but in this context the metaphor may prefigure Hamlet's obsession with the literal consumption of the dead by worms (see 2.2.178–9 and 4.3.19–30).
146 **Frailty . . . Woman** i.e. women embody or personify frailty or lack of constancy: a standard misogynistic attitude of Shakespeare's time and proverbial (Dent, W700.1), but see *MM* 2.4.121–86, where Isabella, admitting that women are 'ten times frail', nevertheless rejects Angelo's advances.

137 merely.] *F*; meerely *Q2* thus] to this *F* 141 beteem] beteene *F*; let e'en *Theobald* 143 should] would *Q1F*

A little month, or e'er those shoes were old
With which she followed my poor father's body,
Like Niobe, all tears. Why, she –
O God, a beast that wants discourse of reason
Would have mourned longer – married with my uncle,
My father's brother (but no more like my father
Than I to Hercules). Within a month,
Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears
Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,
She married. O most wicked speed! To post

147 **or . . . old** The assumption must be that the Queen's shoes were made of cloth or perhaps very fine leather, as worn by Elizabethan Court ladies indoors, and consequently quite fragile; more substantial shoes worn outdoors by ordinary people would not have been considered *old* after *a month* or *two months*.
or e'er even before (literally, 'before ever'); see 182.

149 **Niobe** Greek mythical figure who mourned for the deaths of her children until she was turned into a weeping stone statue; see Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6.146–312 (Latin text); 6.184–395 (Golding).
she F follows *she* with *even she*, seen by Jenkins as an actor's interpolation, though it does make the line metrically regular (see 223n.).

150 **God** F's 'Heauen' may be expurgation (as at 194), following the 1606 'Act to Restrain Abuses of Players'; see Appendix 2 and Taylor, 'Swounds'.
discourse of reason process or faculty of reasoning. *OED* lists uses of this formulaic phrase from 1413.

153 **Hercules** At this point, Hamlet sees himself as quite unlike this mythical hero, famous for his twelve superhuman 'labours' which included killing the many-headed Hydra and relieving Atlas of his burden, the globe, while Atlas stole the golden apples of the Hesperides (see Appendix 1 for Hamlet's later reference to this in the Folio text). Later, he seems prepared to vie with Hercules (see 1.4.83). The story of Amleth as told by Saxo Grammaticus ends with a complimentary version of the same comparison: 'Had fortune been as kind to [Amleth] as nature, he would have equalled the gods in glory, and surpassed the labours of Hercules by his deeds of prowess' (Bullough 7.79); in his more prolix version, Belleforest compares Hamblet with Hercules twice (Bullough 7.118, 123). Miola (*Tragedy*) argues, however, that Shakespeare may be drawing on Seneca's *Hercules Furens* (see pp. 70–1).

154 **unrighteous** false, wicked

155 **flushing** redness. *OED* gives this example under 'flushing' (*sb.* 2) meaning 'a sudden flowing of blood to the face', though the word can also mean 'a rushing of water', which perhaps goes better with F's 'flushing of'.
galled gallèd: irritated, sore

156 **post** move quickly, hurry

147 e'er] *(ere) F* 149 she –] *(she); she, euen she. F* 150 God] *Q1;* Heauen *F* 151 my] mine *F* 155 in] *Q1;* of *F*

With such dexterity to incestuous 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.
HAMLET I am glad to see you well – 160
Horatio, or I do forget myself.
HORATIO
The same, my lord, and your poor servant ever.
HAMLET
Sir, my good friend, I'll change that name with you.

157 **incestuous** For a man to marry his brother's wife was forbidden by Judaeo-Christian tradition (Leviticus, 18.16 and 20.21; Book of Common Prayer, 'Table of Kindred and Affinity'). The audience would presumably be aware that Henry VIII had gained papal permission to do just this when he married Katherine of Aragon (widow of his brother Arthur), though he subsequently claimed it was a sin after all when he wished to marry Anne Boleyn (mother of Queen Elizabeth), thereby precipitating the English Reformation (Shakespeare and John Fletcher were later to dramatize this event in *Henry VIII*). Interestingly, the Queen in *Fratricide Punished* (see pp. 45–6) mentions a papal dispensation for her second marriage in the equivalent of the closet scene (3.6; Bullough, 7.145–6). Within *Hamlet*, only Hamlet and the Ghost seem concerned about the charge of incest (see 1.5.42 and 83); the King himself, for example, does not list it among his sins in his attempt to pray in 3.3; the Queen sees her second marriage as merely 'hasty' (2.2.57) and the councillors have apparently 'gone along' with it (15–16).

158 **nor it cannot** an emphatic double negative (Hope, 2.1.9)

159 **break, my heart** See 5.2.343, 'Now cracks a noble heart', and *R2* 2.1.228, 'My heart is great, but it must break with silence.' The metaphor is biblical: see instances especially from the Psalms in Spencer, who notes 'The modern use of the phrase as referring sentimentally to amorous disappointment came much later.'

159.1 BARNARDO This is the only time Q2 spells the name 'Bernardo'.

160–1 Hamlet at first offers an impersonal general greeting, perhaps because he is still preoccupied with his own thoughts, then he recognizes Horatio.

163 **change . . . you** i.e. you are my friend, not my servant.

160–1 I . . . myself] *F; one line Q2; prose Q1* 162–3] *prose Q1; F lines* Lord, / euer. / friend, / you: /

And what make you from Wittenberg, Horatio?
Marcellus!

MARCELLUS My good lord.

HAMLET

I am very glad to see you. [*to Barnardo*] Good even, sir. –
But what in faith make you from Wittenberg?

HORATIO

A truant disposition, good my lord.

HAMLET

I would not hear your enemy say so,
Nor shall you do my ear that violence
To make it truster of your own report
Against yourself. I know you are no truant;
But what is your affair in Elsinore?
We'll teach you for to drink ere you depart.

HORATIO

My lord, I came to see your father's funeral.

164 **make you from** are you doing away from. Hamlet turns aside to greet Marcellus before receiving Horatio's response at 168. In all three texts it is slightly puzzling that Horatio, who seemed to have an insider's knowledge of Danish politics at 1.1.78–106, now seems to be on a brief and unsanctioned (*truant* in 168) visit from the university in Wittenberg. It is also surprising that Hamlet has not been aware of his presence before this moment if he has been at court since the funeral, two months or more ago (see List of Roles, 10n.).

166 **Good even, sir** presumably addressed to Barnardo, whom Hamlet does not recognize
even evening/afternoon (used at any time after midday)

167 **in faith** in truth, really

168 **truant** time-wasting, delinquent
good my lord a particularly deferential form of address (Blake, 8.1.4) conveying apology in this case. See also 2.2.460; 3.1.89; 3.2.288, 300, 306 and 328; 5.1.254 and 5.2.91.

169 **hear** F's 'haue' avoids the *hear / ear* internal rhyme. The meaning is the same: 'I would not let even your enemy say such a thing without objecting.'

170–2 **Nor . . . yourself.** 'you won't make me believe your statement which slanders yourself.'

170 another *ear* metaphor: see 1.1.30 and n.

173 **Elsinore** modern Helsingor; the first mention of the play's specific location

174 Hamlet deplores the Danish custom of heavy drinking at 1.4.13–38, so perhaps this is spoken ironically.
for to drink to drink deeply; editors (including Jenkins) prefer Q1/F's 'to drinke deepe'.

166 SD] *White* 169 hear] haue *F* 170 my] mine *F* 174 for to drink] to drinke deepe *Q1F*

HAMLET
I prithee 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 meats
Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.
Would I had met my dearest foe in heaven
Or ever I had seen that day, Horatio.
My father, methinks I see my father.
HORATIO
Where, my lord?
HAMLET In my mind's eye, Horatio.

176 **prithee** F's 'pray thee' is unusual (see 119 and n.).
student Jenkins sees in the shared spelling 'studient' evidence of Q2 following Q1, but Hibbard argues that 'studient' was a common Elizabethan spelling. (They also disagree about 'gelly' at 204.)
177 ***see** omitted in Q2 but necessary for both sense and metre
178 **followed hard upon** happened very quickly afterwards
179 **Thrift** At 3.2.57–8 Hamlet expresses contempt for people who 'crook the pregnant hinges of the knee / Where thrift may follow fawning', and at 3.2.176–7 the Player Queen asserts that '*The instances that second marriage move / Are base respects of thrift, but none of love.*' In a highly political production performed in Bucharest in 1989, the Romanian translation of *thrift* as 'economia' was received as an attack on the Communist dictator Ceaușescu, who used this term for austerity measures imposed on the people while indulging in a lavish lifestyle himself (see Stříbrný, 134).
179–80 **the . . . tables** i.e. the leftovers of the food cooked for the funeral were available to be served cold for the wedding (*meat*, as in Old English, could and still can mean 'food' in a general sense). Hamlet again exaggerates to make his point, having already claimed that his father had been dead for *But two months* (138 and n.) and that (at least) *A little month* passed before the wedding (147). This statement is parodied twice in *Eastward Ho* (see 67n. and pp. 57–8).
181 **dearest** most significant, most bitter (see *AYL* 1.3.31, 'my father hated his father dearly'). This line is a curious way of intensifying 'I would rather have died'; it anticipates Hamlet's reluctance in 3.3 to send the King to heaven.
182 **Or ever** See 147 and n.
184 **Where, my lord** Horatio and Marcellus sometimes look around in alarm at this point, assuming Hamlet is literally seeing the Ghost.
mind's eye see 1.1.111 and n.

176 prithee] (prethee), *Q1* (pre thee); pray thee *F* student] (studient) *Q1*, *F* (Student) 177 see] *Q1F; not in Q2* 182 Or . . . had] Ere euer I had *Q1*; Ere I had euer *F* 184 Where] *Q1*; Oh where *F*

HORATIO
I saw him once – 'a was a goodly king.
HAMLET
'A was a man, take him for all in all,
I shall not look upon his like again.
HORATIO
My lord, I think I saw him yesternight.
HAMLET
Saw, who?
HORATIO My lord, the King your father.
HAMLET
The King my father?
HORATIO
Season your admiration for a while
With an attent ear till I may deliver
Upon the witness of these gentlemen
This marvel to you.
HAMLET For God's love let me hear!
HORATIO
Two nights together had these gentlemen,

185 **I . . . once** This again raises the question of Horatio's age: see 1.1.79–94 and n., and 210 below.
186 **a man** Clearly Hamlet regards his father as an ideal of manhood; see Antony's eulogy of the dead Brutus: 'Nature might stand up / And say to all the world, "This was a man!"' (*JC* 5.5.74–5).
188 **yesternight** last night. This and similar expressions – 'yestereve', 'yestermorn', 'yesteryear' – now survive only in poetic or archaic uses, unlike 'yesterday'.
189 **Saw, who?** For punctuation, see t.n. Modern performers usually make this a question, as in Q6.
191 **Season** moderate, qualify
admiration wonder, astonishment
192 **attent** attentive. It is a little illogical that an *ear* should *season . . . admiration*, but Horatio is saying, 'Stop exclaiming at the wonder and listen to the full story.'
deliver communicate, express
195–8 **had . . . encountered** Blake notes that the formulation could be either active, 'these gentlemen had encountered something', or passive, 'something had appeared to these gentlemen' (Blake, 4.3.9a).

185 'a] he *Q1F* goodly] *F*; gallant *Q1* 186 'A] He *Q1F* 189 Saw, who?] *Q1*; Saw? Who? *F*; Saw who? *Q6* 194 God's] *Q1*; Heauens *F*

Marcellus and Barnardo, on their watch
In the dead waste and middle of the night
Been thus encountered: a figure like your father
~~Armed at point, exactly cap-à-pie,~~ armed
Appears before them and with solemn march
Goes slow and stately by them; ~~thrice he walked~~
~~By their oppressed and fear-surprised eyes~~
~~Within his truncheon's length, whilst they, distilled~~
~~Almost to jelly with the act of fear,~~
~~Stand dumb and speak not to him~~. This to me
In dreadful secrecy impart they did,

197 **dead waste** lifeless desolation. The Q1 reading (see t.n.) has been adopted by some editors (Cam, Dowden, Kittredge) in place of Q2 and F's 'wast'; they usually cite Prospero's reference to 'that vast of night' (*Tem* 1.2.328) to support their case. Other editors who do not adopt 'vast' feel obliged to discuss it (Jenkins, Edwards, Hibbard). As Edwards notes, the meaning is much the same (but *waste* allows a pun on 'waist' = middle).

199 **at point** in readiness (as at *KL* 1.4.317)
cap-à-pie from head to foot (from Old French *cap-a-pie*: in modern French *de pied en cap*)

201 **slow** slowly; Blake (5.1.2.2v) cites other instances where only the last of a group of adverbs has the ending '-ly', e.g. 'he demean'd himself rough, rude and wildly' (*CE* 5.1.88).

202 **fear-surprised** fear-surprisèd; suddenly attacked or affected by fear. For a similar use of 'surprised' in a sense stronger than the modern one, see *Tit* 1.1.288: 'Treason, my lord – Lavinia is surprised.'

203 **truncheon's** A truncheon was a military staff. This implies either that the Ghost was a truncheon's length away from them, or that he measured his pace with his truncheon.
distilled dissolved, reduced. F has 'bestil'd' (bestilled), defended by Capell and Caldecott. MacDonald argues: 'Either word would do: the *distilling* off of the animal spirits would leave the man a jelly; the cold of fear would *bestil* them and him to a jelly . . . But I judge *bestil'd* the better, as the truer to the operation of fear.' Edwards, Hibbard and Oxf, however, follow Q2.

204 **jelly** Perhaps the assumption is that they are quivering with fear, or that their bones have given way (as in 'spineless').
act effect

205–6 **This . . . did** Horatio's sentence structure is inverted with the object *This* and the adverbial phrase 'to me / In dreadful secrecy' both preceding the verb and subject *impart they did*.

206 **dreadful** As Hope points out (1.2.2b), this carries an objective rather than a subjective sense: the secrecy was laden with dread (see *dreadful* used subjectively at 1.4.70 and *sensible* used objectively at 1.1.56).

197 waste] *(wast) F;* vast *Q1, Q4;* waist *Malone* 199 Armed at point] Armed to poynt *Q1;* Arm'd at all points *F* cap-à-pie] *(Capapea) Q1, F (Cap a Pe)* 202 fear-surprised] *(feare surprised), F;* feare oppressed *Q1* 203 distilled] *Q1;* bestil'd *F* 204 jelly] *(gelly) Q1, F (Ielly)*

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,
The apparition comes. I knew your father,
These hands are not more like.

HAMLET But where was this?

MARCELLUS

My lord, upon the platform where we watch.

HAMLET

Did you not speak to it?

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

HAMLET 'Tis very strange.

~~HORATIO~~

~~As I do live, my honoured lord, 'tis true;~~
~~And we did think it writ down in our duty~~
~~To let you know of it.~~

208–10 **as . . . comes** The phrasing is awkward though the meaning is clear, i.e. that the Ghost appeared exactly at the time and in the shape that they had described.

211 **These . . . like** 'my hands are not more like each other than the Ghost was like your father.'

212 **platform** battlements or terrace (of a castle)
watch keep the watch. Q2's present tense implies a habitual pattern ('where we usually watch'); Q1/F's 'watcht'/'watched' implies a reference to this specific occasion.

215 **it head** The more usual possessives would have been 'its' or 'his', but Shakespeare sometimes uses the older, uninflected genitive *it* as in 'The hedge-sparrow fed the cuckoo so long / That it's had it head bit off by it young' (*KL* 1.4.206–7); see Hope, 1.3.2c. The oscillation between *it* and *he* for the Ghost throughout this conversation is both understandable and unsettling.

215–16 **address . . . speak** 'begin to make motions as if it was about to speak'

221 **writ . . . duty** required by the loyalty we owe you

208 Where, as] *Q5*; Whereas *Q2F*; Where as *Q1* 212 watch] watched *Q1F* 215 it] *F*; his *Q1*; its *Q4*

HAMLET
Indeed, sirs, but this troubles me.
Hold you the watch tonight?
HORATIO, MARCELLUS, BARNARDO
We do, my lord.
HAMLET
Armed, say you?
HORATIO, MARCELLUS, BARNARDO
Armed, my lord.
HAMLET
From top to toe?
HORATIO, MARCELLUS, BARNARDO
My lord, from head to foot.
HAMLET
Then saw you not his face.
HORATIO
O yes, my lord, he wore his beaver up.
HAMLET
What looked he – frowningly?
HORATIO
A countenance more in sorrow than in anger.
HAMLET
Pale, or red?

223 **Indeed** Q1/F's repetition is seen as an actor's interpolation by Jenkins, but again it regularizes the metre (see 149n.).
224 SP ***F's 'Both'**, here and at 225 and 226, perhaps implies that Marcellus and Barnardo, the official watchmen, reply, but not Horatio, who was there by invitation (see 1.1.25); again, the role of Horatio seems inconsistent (see List of Roles, 10n.). Barnardo does not, in any case, appear in 1.4 or 1.5, possibly because the actor is doubling Reynaldo in 2.1 (see doubling chart in Appendix 5).
227 This is a statement in Q2 (but not in Q1/F) implying that Hamlet has deduced this fact from what he has been told.
228 **beaver** visor (of a helmet)
229 **What** how (as in Q1)
frowningly See 1.1.61: *So frowned he.*
230 **countenance** face, expression

223 Indeed] Indeed, indeed *Q1F* 224 SP, 225 SP2, 226 SP2] *this edn; All. Q2†; Both. F* 227 face.] face? *Q1F* 229 What] How *Q1*; What, *F*

HORATIO
Nay, very pale.
HAMLET And fixed his eyes upon you?
HORATIO
Most constantly.
HAMLET I would I had been there.
HORATIO
It would have much amazed you.
HAMLET Very like.
Stayed it long?
HORATIO
While one with moderate haste might tell a hundred.
MARCELLUS, BARNARDO
Longer, longer.
HORATIO
Not when I saw't.
~~HAMLET His beard was grizzled, no?~~
~~HORATIO~~
~~It was as I have seen it in his life.~~
~~A sable silvered.~~
HAMLET I will watch tonight.

232 **Nay** emphatic: Horatio rejects the alternative *red*.
234 **Very like** perhaps, possibly (as at 2.2.149, where this phrase occurs in apposition to *It may be*). Q1/F's repetition is another actor's interpolation for Jenkins. Some actors of Hamlet use the words to express impatience, some scepticism.
236 **one . . . tell** a person . . . count (see *R3* 1.4.116–18: 'this passionate humour . . . was wont to hold me but while one tells twenty')
237 SP Q2's '*Both*' (i.e. Marcellus and Barnardo) seems definitely preferable to F's '*All*' here, given that Horatio disagrees.
238 **grizzled** grey or mixed with grey. Most editors read 'grizzled', though Hibbard makes a case for F's 'grisly' as an alternative spelling of 'grizzly' which is what he prints.
no i.e. 'wasn't it?'; a negative tag expecting an affirmative answer (Blake, 6.2.3.4a)
240 **A sable silvered** a mixture of black and silver-grey (see *Son* 12.4, 'sable curls all silvered o'er with white'). Sable is literally a fur derived from the small animal of the same name. In Q1

234 like] like, very like *Q1F* 237 SP] *(Both.); Mar. Q1; All. F* 238 grizzled] (grissl'd), *Q1* (grisleld); grisly *F* 240–1 I . . . again] *one line Q1F* 240 I will] *Q1;* Ile *F* tonight] (to nigh), *Q1F*

Perchance 'twill walk again.
HORATIO I warrant it will.
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 tenable in your silence still
And whatsomever else shall hap tonight

Hamlet refers to his 'sable suit' at the equivalent of 77, rather than to his *inky cloak*; later, during the play scene in all three texts, he says, 'let the devil wear black, for I'll have a suit of sables', making the point that sable, while black, is also luxurious (see below 3.2.122–3 and n.)

241 **walk** generally preferred to F's 'wake', though either seems acceptable **warrant** guarantee; monosyllabic, as Q2's 'warn't' indicates (see 3.4.5 and e.g. *Oth* 3.3.3)

242 **assume . . . person** take on or enact my father's role. Hamlet seems cautious about the Ghost's relationship to his father here, using a theatrical analogy, but he refers to it as *My father's spirit* at 253.

243 **though . . . gape** Hamlet's personification evokes hellmouth (a familiar stage property from medieval and Renaissance drama – one is listed in the Admiral's Men's effects in 1598). Christopher Marlowe has two similar lines at climactic moments, Zabina's 'Gape earth and let the fiends infernal view / A hell as hopeless and as full of fear / As are the blasted banks of Erebus' (*1 Tamburlaine* (1587), 5.1.241–3), and Faustus' final cry, 'Ugly hell gape not' (*Dr Faustus* (*c.* 1592), 5.3.183). Shaheen argues that the biblical parallel here is with the Bishops' Bible, since its translation of Isaiah, 5.14, reads, 'Therefore gapeth hell', where the Geneva Bible has 'Hell hath inlarged itself'. Hamlet may also be indicating that he is prepared to risk damnation by conversing with a spirit who could be a devil.

244 **hold my peace** be silent

246 **tenable** capable of being held (maintained as a secret). This is Shakespeare's only use of the word (though Helena mentions an 'intemible' (F) or 'intenible' (F2) – i.e. bottomless – sieve at *AW* 1.3.199), but F's 'treble' is usually assumed to be an error, though it is defended by Caldecott – 'a threefold obligation of silence' – and MacDonald, who suggests Hamlet points to each of the three men in turn and cites *Cym*, 'your three motives to the battle' (5.5.389) – meaning 'the motives of you three' – as a comparable usage. 'Treble' might also mean 'conceal it trebly'.

247–9 *And* introduces a further conditional clause, following on from *If* in 245 ('If you have concealed . . . and if you continue to do so . . . I will requite you').

247 **whatsomever** F's 'whatsoeuer' has sometimes been regarded as a modernization but is actually more common in Shakespeare, as *TxC* notes. See also *howsomever* at 1.5.84 and *some'er* at 1.5.168.

241 walk] *Q1*; wake *F* warrant] (warn't), *Q1*; warrant you *F* 246 tenable] *Q1*; treble *F* 247 whatsomever] whatsoeuer *Q1F*

Give it an understanding but no tongue,
I will requite your loves. So, fare you well.
Upon the platform 'twixt eleven and twelve
I'll visit you.

HORATIO, MARCELLUS, BARNARDO

Our duty to your honour.

HAMLET

Your loves, as mine to you, farewell.

Exeunt [*all but Hamlet*].

My father's spirit – in arms! All is not well;
I ~~doubt~~ some foul play. Would the night were come.
Till then sit still my soul – foul deeds will rise
Though all the earth o'erwhelm them to men's eyes. *Exit.*

1.3 *Enter* LAERTES *and* OPHELIA *his sister.*

248 Hamlet has moved from imagining hell bidding him be silent to urging the others to keep quiet about the Ghost.
249 **requite** repay, reward
252 Hamlet rejects the colder *duty*, as he rejected Horatio's *servant* at 163. This note at the end of the scene is comparable to the moment after the quarrel between Brutus and Cassius in *JC*, when Cassius takes his leave with 'Good night, my lord', but Brutus insists 'Good night, good brother' (4.3.235).
254 **doubt** suspect, fear
255–6 **foul . . . eyes** i.e. crimes will eventually be revealed, even though the whole world attempts to submerge or bury them. See 2.2.528–9: 'For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak / With most miraculous organ', and the proverbial 'Murder will out' (Dent, M1315). The others have not mentioned their theory about the connection between the Ghost's appearance and Denmark's preparations for war; Hamlet's notion of *foul play* seems immediately a more personal one, following on from his first soliloquy.
255 ***foul** Q2's 'fonde' is plausibly explained as a misreading. Andrews, however, retains it and glosses 'foolish or mad'. The repetition of *foul* from 254 makes 'fonde' attractive, but this sense seems strained (and misleading to a modern auditor or reader).
1.3 The three texts: this scene runs to 71 lines in Q1 (scene 3), 135 lines in Q2 and 136 lines in F. Leartes' advice to Ofelia is much briefer in Q1, as is the closing dialogue between Corambis (Q1's name for Polonius) and Ofelia. Location and timing: this scene takes place later on the same day as 1.2, where Laertes' departure was discussed, and before the night appointed

249 So, fare] *(so farre), Q1F* you] *Q1;* ye *F* 250 eleven] *(a leauen), Q1F* 251 SP] *this edn; All. Q21F* duty] *F;* duties *Q1* 252 loves] *Q1;* loue *F* SD] *Q6 (Exeunt. / Manet* Hamlet. *opp. 251–2); Exeunt. Q21F, opp. 251* 255 foul] *Q1F;* fonde *Q2* 256 o'erwhelm] *(ore-whelme), Q1F* 1.3] *F (Scena Tertia.); not in Q21* 0.1 *his sister*] *not in Q1F*

LAERTES

My necessaries are embarked; farewell.
And sister, as the winds give benefit
And convey is assistant, do not sleep
But let me hear from you.

OPHELIA Do you doubt that?

LAERTES

For Hamlet and the trifling of his favour,
Hold it a fashion and a toy in blood,
A violet in the youth of primy nature,
Forward, not permanent, sweet, not lasting,
The perfume and suppliance of a minute,

for Hamlet's encounter with the Ghost. Unlike 1.1 and 1.2, it is a relatively intimate domestic scene that is assumed to take place in the home of Polonius.

0.1 ***his sister*** The relationship is established in Laertes' opening speech in all three texts. If she has not been a silent presence in 1.2 (see 1.2.0.3n.), this is Ophelia's first appearance. Some productions anticipate her appearance in 4.5 by having her practise the lute in this scene.

1 **necessaries are embarked** luggage is on board ship; see *Oth* 2.1.281: 'I must fetch his necessaries ashore.'

2 **as** at such times as, whenever

3 ***convey is assistant** means of conveyance or communication are available. Q2's 'conuay, in assistant' seems erroneous.

4 **But let** without letting
you . . . you Laertes and Ophelia consistently use the more formal pronouns to each other in this scene; Polonius uses *thee* and *thou* to Laertes from 56 to 80 (see 56n.), and in Q1 Laertes uses 'thee' to his sister. During Shakespeare's lifetime the former plural form 'you' was usurping many of the functions of the singular 'thou' and the distinctions between the two forms were not always marked, either by Shakespeare or by his printers (see Blake, 3.3.2.1.1, and Hope, 1.3.2b).

5 **For Hamlet** as regarding Hamlet
trifling . . . favour playful level of his attention to you

6 **fashion** passing fancy
toy in blood superficial sensual attraction

7 **primy** a Shakespearean coinage meaning 'in its prime' or perhaps 'spring-like'; see 'For love is crowned with the prime / In spring-time' (*AYL* 5.3.35–6) and 'When I behold the violet past prime' (*Son* 12.3). It may carry a sense of 'lustful' here (see *Oth* 3.3.406, 'as prime as goats') and also implies that Hamlet is younger than the 30 years insisted upon at 5.1.135–53 (see List of Roles, 1n.).

8 **Forward** premature (and therefore, as in a flower, fragile and unlikely to last long)

9 'that which supplies the volatile sensory pleasure of a moment'. Shakespeare uses *perfume* to stand in for the fleeting pleasures of spring in *Son* 104.7: 'Three April perfumes in three hot Junes burned.' *Perfume and suppliance*

3 convey] *(conuay)*; Conuoy *F* is] *F*; in *Q2* 5 favour] fauours *F* 8 Forward] Froward *F* 9–10 The . . . No more.] *one line F* 9 perfume and] *om. F*

No more.

OPHELIA No more but so.

LAERTES Think it no more.

~~For nature crescent does not grow alone~~
~~In thews and bulks, but as this temple waxes~~
~~The inward service of the mind and soul~~
~~Grows wide withal.~~ Perhaps he loves you now,
~~And now no soil nor cautel doth besmirch~~
~~The virtue of his will~~, but you must fear,
His greatness weighed, his will is not his own.
He may not, as unvalued persons do,

is another example of hendiadys: Wright points out that Laertes uses the figure seven times in this speech, which he sees as revealing 'his own uncertain and divided sensibility' which perceives 'doubleness in everything' (Wright, 176–7).
suppliance Jenkins glosses 'something which fills up (a vacancy); pastime'; Spencer glosses simply 'pastime'.

10 **No . . . so** 'No more than that.' Ophelia's four words are a statement in all three texts but many editors and performers make them a question. The phrase *no more*, repeated three times in this line, reverberates through the play until Laertes' 'I can no more' (5.2.305).

11–14 **For . . . withal** Laertes' general meaning is that the mind and soul change and mature as well as the body.

11 **crescent** growing, as it grows

12 **thews and bulks** physical sinews and strength. F has 'Bulke', and it is possible an extra 's' may have been picked up from one of the other words ending in 's' in this line, or from confusion about an attached comma in some hands; Shakespeare does not use 'bulks' elsewhere.
this temple the body (seen as the temple of the soul)
waxes grows larger

13 **inward service** inner life (continuing the religious metaphor)

14 **Grows wide withal** becomes enlarged or developed at the same time. Again, the focus is on Hamlet's immaturity.

15 **soil** impurity, stain
cautel craft or deceit. Shakespeare also uses the adjective, as in Brutus' reference to 'men cautelous' (*JC* 2.1.129).
besmirch deface, contaminate (*OED*'s first usage; see also *unsmirched* at 4.5.119)

16 **The . . . will** the sincerity or purity of his intentions (though *will* may also carry a sexual sense)

17 **His greatness weighed** when you consider his high position (as crown prince). F has another line after *own* (see t.n.); this is included by Jenkins, presumably on the grounds that Q2 omitted it in error, though the syntax makes sense without it.

18 **unvalued** i.e. unimportant or ordinary

11 crescent] (cressant) *F* 12 bulks] Bulke *F* this] his *F* 16 will] feare *F* 17–18 own. / He] owne; / For hee himselfe is subiect to his Birth: / Hee *F*

Carve for himself, for on his choice depends
The ~~safety~~ and health of this whole state,
~~And therefore must his choice be circumscribed~~
~~Unto the voice and yielding of that body~~
~~Whereof he is the head. Then if he says he loves you~~
~~It fits your wisdom so far to believe it~~
~~As he in his particular act and place~~
~~May give his saying deed, which is no further~~
~~Than the main voice of Denmark goes withal.~~
Then weigh what loss your honour may sustain
If with too credent ear you list his songs
Or lose your heart, or your chaste treasure open

19 **Carve for himself** i.e. make his own choice (the metaphor is from serving or helping oneself at table and had become proverbial: see Dent, C100). The belief that Ophelia would be an inappropriate partner for Hamlet which is reiterated by Polonius later in this scene is not shared by the Queen: see 3.1.37–41 and 5.1.233–5.

20 **safety** F's 'sanctity' is retained by Edwards; Theobald (*Restored*) suggested 'sanity' on the analogy of 'Reason and Sanitie' in F at 2.2.207 (where Q2 has 'reason and sanctity'). It goes better with *health* and is adopted by Jenkins and Hibbard, but *safety* makes acceptable sense. Dowden points to a trisyllabic pronunciation of *safety* in Spenser's *FQ* (5.4.46), but acknowledges that it is usually disyllabic in Shakespeare, as at 42. Warburton's suggestion (see t.n.) improves the metre.

21–2 **circumscribed / Unto** The idiom is rare compared with 'circumscribed by'; *OED* cites no other examples.

22 **voice and yielding** vote and consent

23 **he . . . head** Laertes assumes that Hamlet is indeed heir to the throne (see 1.2.109 and n.).

24 'you would be wise to believe it only so far'

25 **his . . . place** i.e. his specific role and situation

26 **May . . . deed** 'Saying and doing are two things' was proverbial (Dent, S119); this is the first of the play's many oppositions of actions and words.

27 'than he has the general agreement (*main voice*) of the country'
withal in addition (to his own choice)

29 **credent** credulous (*OED*'s first usage)
list listen to. The Hamlet we actually encounter in the play seems unlikely to serenade Ophelia, but see his letter to her read out by Polonius at 2.2.108–21.

30 **lose** Q2's 'loose' is probably just a variant spelling, though it could mean 'open up' or 'unlock'.
chaste treasure i.e. the treasure of your chastity. Laertes assumes, as does Polonius later in this scene (see *maiden presence* at 120), that Ophelia is still a virgin; some productions and films indicate, contrary to any evidence in the text, that her relationship with Hamlet is already a sexual one – which they may perhaps deduce from the songs she sings in 4.5 (see 4.5.23–40 and n.).

20 safety and] sanctity and *F*; sanity and *Hanmer (Theobald)*; safety and the *Warburton* this whole] the weole *F* 25 particular . . . place] peculiar Sect and force *F* 30 lose] (loose), *F*

To his unmastered importunity.
Fear it, Ophelia, fear it, my dear sister,
And keep you in the rear of your affection
Out of the shot and danger of desire.
The chariest maid is prodigal enough
If she unmask her beauty to the moon.
~~Virtue itself scapes not calumnious strokes.~~
~~The canker galls the infants of the spring~~
~~Too oft before their buttons be disclosed,~~
~~And in the morn and liquid dew of youth~~
~~Contagious blastments are most imminent.~~
Be wary then: best safety lies in fear,
Youth to itself rebels, though none else near.

31 **unmastered importunity** undisciplined persistence. Perhaps Laertes tells us as much about himself as about Hamlet in these lines.
33–4 The metaphor is from military action, as if Hamlet is besieging Ophelia.
34 **shot** range of a bow or gun
35, 37, 38 These lines are prefaced with double quotation marks in Q2, indicating that they are sententious or quasi-proverbial. Dent cites 'Envy (calumny) shoots at the fairest mark' (E175) and 'The canker soonest eats the fairest rose' (C56).
35 **chariest** most cautious, shy
prodigal extravagant, wasteful (also at 115)
36 **unmask . . . moon** the moon is an emblem of chastity. Laertes exaggerates here; an Elizabethan Court lady would, however, have literally masked her face and hands from the sun; see Rosalind's horror at Phoebe's tanned skin at *AYL* 4.3.24–7. In this context, a fuller 'unmasking' in the bedchamber is probably implied.
37 **scapes** avoids. This aphetic variant of 'escapes' was common up to the end of the seventeenth century.
calumnious slanderous, defamatory (see Hamlet's use of 'calumny' at 3.1.136)
38 **canker** caterpillar or other insect pest. The word is also used by Shakespeare to mean a disease that consumes people – 'cancer' in modern spelling. In F, but not in Q2, Hamlet later refers to the King as 'this canker' (see 5.2.69 and n.).
galls damages
infants i.e. young flowers, as at *LLL* 1.1.101, 'the first-born infants of the spring'
39 **buttons be disclosed** buds are open
40 **in . . . youth** in their earliest state, which is like a dew-sprinkled morning (hendiadys again). The metaphor works both ways here: the flower buds, standing in for vulnerable youthful affections, are themselves seen as young people.
41 **Contagious blastments** infectious blightings (*blastments* is a Shakespearean coinage: see 1.2.93n.)
imminent immediately threatening
43 'Young people can betray themselves without need of outside provocation.' Laertes seems to be saying that the passions of youth are so volatile that they chafe against self-restraint even when no temptation is present.

33 you in] within *F* 39 their] the *F*

OPHELIA

I shall the effect of this good lesson 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, a puffed and reckless libertine,
Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads
~~And recks not his own rede.~~

LAERTES O fear me not.
I stay too long.

Enter POLONIUS.

But here my father comes.

44–5 **I . . . heart** In performance, Ophelia may begin by mocking the solemnity of Laertes' *lesson* or lecture.
44 **effect** meaning, moral
45 **watchman . . . heart** guardian to my affections
46–50 **Do . . . rede** 'Practise what you preach' was proverbial (Dent, P537a).
46 **ungracious** irreligious (lacking divine grace)
pastors priests (literally, shepherds)
48 **Whiles** F's 'Whilst like' improves the metre; 'whilst' has been claimed as a modernization but *TxC* notes that both texts agree on *while* 17 times but on *whilst* only three times.
puffed swollen or bloated (presumably as the result of a dissipated lifestyle; Falstaff is described as 'a puffed man' at *MW* 5.5.151); Jenkins and Hibbard gloss 'inflated with pride'.
libertine a dissolute or licentious man (as *OED* notes, 'rarely applied to a woman')
49 **Himself** We might expect 'Yourself', following on from *Do not* in 46, or 'Themselves' if the reference is to the *ungracious pastors* (also in 46); perhaps *Himself* includes both. Blake (3.3.2.3a) classifies this as a non-reflexive emphatic pronoun.
primrose . . . dalliance flower-strewn road of pleasure, often seen as the way to hell: see the Porter's reference in *Mac* 2.3.18–19 to 'the primrose way to th'everlasting bonfire' and that of the Clown in *AW* to 'the flow'ry way that leads to the broad gate and the great fire' (4.5.52–4).
50 **recks . . . rede** pays no attention to his own teaching
fear me not do not be afraid on my account, don't worry about me. Laertes picks up the notion of *fear* from his speech to Ophelia: see 16 and 32.
51 **stay too long** linger, delay too long. Laertes is sometimes represented as being impatient with what he sees as the beginning of a moral lecture: Ophelia has listened to him but he is not prepared to listen to her.

44 the effect] th'effect *F* 45 watchman] watchmen *F* 47 steep] *Q2cF;* step *Q2u* 48 Whiles,] *(*Whiles*);* Whilst like *F;* While *Q1* 51 SD] *Sisson; opp.* reed *50 Q2; after 53 Q1; after 50 F; after* comes *51 Capell*

A double blessing is a double grace:
Occasion smiles upon a second leave.

POLONIUS

Yet here, Laertes? Aboard, aboard for shame!
The wind sits in the shoulder of your sail
And you are stayed for. There, my blessing with thee,
And these few precepts in thy memory
Look thou character: give thy thoughts no tongue
Nor any unproportioned thought his act.
Be thou familiar but by no means vulgar;

53 i.e. I am fortunate in having a second opportunity of saying goodbye to my father. *Occasion* (Opportunity) is often personified in Shakespeare. The whole line sounds quasi-proverbial and is perhaps intended to counter the more natural assumption that it is unlucky (or at least embarrassing) to meet someone again just after you have bidden them farewell.

54 **for shame** '"For shame" attached to an imperative (or a word of injunction) creates an admonition' (Edwards).

55 i.e. you have a following wind

56 **stayed for** awaited
There Some gesture probably accompanies this word: an embrace, a shake of the hand, a pat on the back or head. Theobald provides an explicit SD, '*Laying his hand on Laertes's head*', and comments, 'The Manner, in which a Comic Actor behav'd upon this Occasion, was sure to raise a Laugh of Pleasure in the Audience; and the oldest *Quarto*'s, in the Pointing [punctuation], are a confirmation that thus the Poet intended it, and thus the Stage express'd it.' It is rare, however, to see a comic Polonius on the modern stage.
thee The shift in pronoun may reflect a change to a more intimate tone (see 4n.).

57 **these few precepts** Sometimes in performance Polonius reads the *precepts* from a paper which he gives to Laertes at the end of the speech. Perhaps surprisingly, Q2 does not mark 58–79 as 'sentences' (see 35, 37, 38n.), though Q1 does. Dent points out that 'every idea in the speech is a commonplace' (28) and that as many as 20 proverbs may be relevant (xxvi, n. 29); he cites such examples as 'Keep well thy friends when thou hast gotten them' (F752), 'Try (your friend) before you trust' (T595), 'Give not your (right) hand to every man' (H68), 'Hear much but speak little' (M1277), 'A man should hear all parts ere he judge any' (M299), 'Apparel makes the man' (A283) and 'Who lends to a friend loses double' (F725). Shakespeare stages a similar occasion in the opening scene of *AW* when the Countess gives some parting advice to her son Bertram (1.1.60–9).

58 **character** (stressed on second syllable) inscribe, write (see *Hamlet's character* at 4.7.49)

59 'Do not act on any thought that is not properly developed or controlled.'
his its

60 **familiar . . . vulgar** friendly but not promiscuous

54 aboard for] *F;* aboord, for *Q1* 56 for. There,] *Theobald subst.;* for, there *Q21;* for there: *F* thee] *Q1;* you *F* 58 Look] See *F*

Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
Grapple them unto thy soul with hoops of steel,
But do not dull thy palm with entertainment
Of each new-hatched, unfledged courage. Beware
Of entrance to a quarrel but, being in,
Bear't that th'opposed may beware of thee.
Give every man thy ear but few thy voice;
Take each man's censure but reserve thy judgement.
Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy
But not expressed in fancy – rich, not gaudy;
For the apparel oft proclaims the man
~~And they in France of the best rank and station~~

61 **their adoption tried** their suitability for adoption as friends proven

62 The metaphor moves from boarding an enemy ship (*Grapple*, used literally at 4.6.17–18) to manufacturing a barrel (strengthening the wood with *hoops of steel*). Iago uses similar metaphors to describe his (false) friendship with Roderigo: 'I confess me knit to thy deserving with cables of perdurable toughness' (*Oth* 1.3.339–40).

63 **dull thy palm** literally, desensitize your hand (by shaking hands with everyone), or perhaps more broadly, make your gesture meaningless

64 **new-hatched** newly born (as a bird just hatched from an egg)
unfledged untried (unable to fly)
courage gallant or dashing fellow (*OED* 1b). Thus Q2 and Q1; F's 'Comrade' is easier, but *m/u* is a possible minim misreading. RP points out that the word intended may have been 'comrague' or 'comrogue', a term meaning 'fellow rogue' ('often jocularly confused with *comrade*' – *OED*) which occurs in John Webster's *Appius and Virginia* (1624; 4.2.8), Ben Jonson's *Masque of Augurs* (1622; 49) and in Thomas Dekker and John Ford's *The Welsh Ambassador* (1623; 3.2.110, 4.2.76 and 5.2.73).

66 **Bear't that** manage it so that
th'opposed your opponent

68 **censure** opinion (not necessarily negative)

69 **habit** dress, clothing

70 **fancy** frivolous fashion
rich, not gaudy expensive but not ostentatious. Sometimes in performance Polonius draws a contrast between his own garments and those of Laertes, but this makes nonsense of the context in which Laertes is dressed for sea travel, presumably wearing a *sea-gown* of the kind Hamlet refers to at 5.2.13 and may himself be wearing in 5.1 (see 5.1.246–7n.).

71 'a man's true nature is often shown by his clothes'

61 Those] *Q1*; The *F* 62 unto] to *Q1F* 64 new-hatched] (new hatcht); new *Q1*; vnhatch't *F* courage] *Q1*; Comrade *F* 67 'thy] thine *F* 69 buy] *Q2c1F*; by *Q2u*

~~Are of all most select and generous chief in that.~~
Neither a borrower nor a lender, boy,
For loan oft loses both itself and friend
And borrowing dulleth th'edge of husbandry.
This above all, to thine own self be true
And it must follow as the night the day
Thou canst not then be false to any man.
Farewell, my blessing season this in thee.

LAERTES

Most humbly do I take my leave, my lord.

POLONIUS

The time invests you. Go, your servants tend.

LAERTES

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

73 ***Are . . . that** A difficult line, problematic in both Q2 and F, which must mean something like '[the French] are particularly distinguished in this respect [i.e. their choice of dress].' We adopt Q1/F's 'Are' for Q2's 'Or' and emend 'a' to *all* in both Q2 and F, an emendation suggested in 1938 and printed by Oxf; *TxC* speculates that the compositor may have been misled by something that looked like 'are/or of almost' and compares 4.7.133, 'Most generous and free from all contriving'.

74 **boy** F's 'be' is an easier reading, but Polonius could be addressing his son as *boy* and suppressing the obvious verb.

75 ***loan** Q2's 'loue', a fairly obvious reversed letter or minim error, had a surprisingly long history of being uncorrected through the seventeenth-century quartos until Q8 in 1683.

76 ***dulleth th'edge** Most editors (including Jenkins) prefer F's 'duls the edge' as better grammar; RP suggests 'dulleth'edge', which is probably how the Parrott–Craig conjecture would be heard.
edge blade (as of a knife)
husbandry thrift, good household management

80 **season** ripen, mature
this my advice

82 **invests** If this Q2 reading is correct, it could mean something like 'vests power in you' or 'makes an investment in you' (as at *KL* 1.1.131: 'I do invest you jointly with my power'); Jenkins retains and glosses 'besieges, presses upon', noting that this is a unique usage but one which 'has the character of a Shakespearean metaphor'. F's easier reading (see t.n.) is often preferred.
tend attend, are waiting

73 Are] *Q1F;* Or *Q2* of . . . chief] *Oxf (Cripps);* of a most select and generous, chiefe *Q2;* of a most select and generall chiefe *Q1;* of a most select and generous cheff *F;* most select and generous, chief *Rowe;* most select and generous *White;* of a most select and generous choice *Collier²* (choice *(Steevens))* 74 boy] be *F* 75 loan] *F* (lone)*;* loue *Q2* 76 dulleth th'edge] *(Parrott-Craig);* dulleth edge *Q2;* dulleth the edge *Q3;* duls the edge *F;* dulleth'edge *(RP)* 82 invests] inuites *F*

OPHELIA 'Tis in my memory locked
And you yourself shall keep the key of it.
LAERTES
Farewell. *Exit.*
POLONIUS
What is't, Ophelia, he hath said to you?
OPHELIA
So please you, something touching the Lord Hamlet.
POLONIUS
Marry, well bethought:
'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.
If it be so – as so 'tis put on me,
And that in way of caution – I must tell you
You do not understand yourself so clearly
As it behoves my daughter and your honour.
What is between you? Give me up the truth.

87 Polonius' question puts Ophelia in a difficult position: she has just promised to keep Laertes' advice secret, but this was her offer rather than his request and would presumably give way to filial duty.
88 **touching** concerning
89, 104 **Marry** by (the Virgin) Mary – a mild oath
89 **bethought** thought of
90–2 Polonius puts the meetings into a highly formal context, implying that it is improper (or at least unusual) for a prince to give an unmarried girl *private time* and for her to grant him 'free and bounteous audience'.
90, 98 **of late** recently. The implication would seem to be that Hamlet and Ophelia have been spending time together quite recently, that is since his return from Wittenberg, but this is not very compatible with his preoccupation with his father's death. The inconsistency is comparable with the contradictions in the role of Horatio (see 1.2.164n.).
92 **audience** hearing, attention
93–4 Rather a loose construction: Polonius may be saying, 'those who suggested this to me did so to warn me' (implied by the dashes after *so* and *caution* in Jenkins's and Hibbard's punctuation), or he may be saying, 'I'm telling you this to warn you.'
93 **put on me** suggested to me
95 **understand yourself** appreciate your position
96 **behoves** is appropriate for
honour reputation. Q1's reading (see t.n.) reflects the father's self-interest more directly.

96 behoves . . . honour] *F*; befits my honor, and your credite *Q1*

OPHELIA
He hath, my lord, of late made many tenders
Of his affection to me.
POLONIUS
Affection? Pooh, you speak like a green girl
Unsifted 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
That you have ta'en these tenders for true pay
Which are not sterling. Tender yourself more dearly
Or – not to crack the wind of the poor phrase,
Wronging it thus – you'll tender me a fool.

98 **tenders** offers. Polonius picks the word up and mocks it at 102 and 105–8, apparently questioning whether Hamlet's offers have any legal or financial backing. There may be a suppressed pun on 'tender' as a synonym of *green* in 100: see *R2* 2.3.41–2, 'My gracious lord, I tender you my service, / Such as it is, being tender, raw and young.'
99 **affection** passion (stronger than the modern sense, as in 'I heard him swear his affection' (*MA* 2.1.159)
100 **green** inexperienced
101 **Unsifted** untried, untested (*OED* sift *v.* 2)
circumstance matters, circumstances. Shakespeare often uses the singular where modern usage would dictate the plural.
105 **ta'en** taken; monosyllabic, as 'tane', the regular spelling in Q2 and the other texts, implies
106 **sterling** real, lawful (English) money
Tender . . . dearly (1) take better care of yourself; (2) offer yourself at a higher rate
107 Polonius' metaphor sees the phrase as a broken-winded horse.
108 ***Wronging** We follow Johnson and Jennens in adopting Pope's emendation of Q2's 'Wrong' as making better sense with the least disturbance of the text, although 'Wringing' is an attractive conjecture; most editors (including Jenkins) adopt 'Running', an emendation of F's 'Roaming' (see t.n.). Blake suggests 'Wrong' could be taken with what follows rather than with what precedes it, so that line 108 would mean 'If you corrupt your conduct in this way, you will make a fool of me' (Blake, 4.3.3c).
tender . . . fool (1) make a fool of me; (2) present yourself to me as a fool. Ophelia defends herself against the latter accusation in her reply.

104 I will] Ile *F* 105 these] his *F* 108 Wronging] *Pope;* Wrong *Q2;* Roaming *F;* Wringing *Theobald (Warburton);* Running *Collier*^{2}

OPHELIA
My lord, he hath importuned me with love
In honourable fashion.
POLONIUS
Ay, 'fashion' you may call it. Go to, go to.
OPHELIA
And hath given countenance to his speech, my lord,
With almost all the holy vows of heaven.
POLONIUS
Ay, springes to catch woodcocks – I do know
When the blood burns how prodigal the soul
Lends the tongue vows. These blazes, daughter,
Giving more light than heat, extinct in both
Even in their promise as it is a-making,
You must not take for fire. From this time
Be something scanter of your maiden presence;

109 **importuned** (accented on second syllable) persistently solicited (see 31 and n.)
111 **'fashion'** Polonius seizes on the word, as he did on her *affections* and *tenders*, and twists it from a neutral meaning (manner or style) to a negative one (passing fancy, as at 6).
Go to a contemptuous or dismissive expression: what nonsense, don't be silly
112 **countenance** (probably disyllabic: count'nance) support, credit
114 **springes** (pronounced to rhyme with 'hinges') snares, traps
woodcocks These birds were proverbially thought to be easy to catch (Tilley has 'A springe to catch a woodcock', S788): characters in Shakespeare use the word derogatively of other people they are tricking at *TN* 2.5.82, and *AW* 4.1.89. See also Laertes' reference to himself as 'a woodcock to mine own springe' at 5.2.291.
115 **When . . . burns** when sexual desire is aroused
115–16 **how . . . vows** how generous the soul is in lending the tongue promises. Curiously, the interchange of terms in Q1/F (see t.n.) seems to make little difference to the meaning: Polonius /Corambis assumes that vows arising from desire are insincere – that the words come from the tongue only, not from the heart or soul.
116 **blazes** flashes of rhetoric (Hamlet's vows)
117–18 **extinct . . . a-making** the promise of both light and heat vanishes even as it is being made.
119 **take** mistake
fire disyllabic: 'fi-er'
120 **something scanter** somewhat more sparing (less generous)

112–13] *Rowe; Q2F line* speech / heauen. / 113 almost all the holy] all the *F* 114 springes] *Q1F;* springs *Q2* 115–16 soul . . . tongue] tongue lends the heart *Q1;* Soule / Giues the tongue *F* 118 a-making] (a making) *F* 119 From] For *F* time] time Daughter *F* 120 something] somewhat *F*

Set your entreatments at a higher rate
Than a command to parle. For Lord Hamlet,
Believe so much in him that he is young
And with a larger tether may he walk
Than may be given you. In few, Ophelia,
~~Do not believe his vows, for they are brokers.~~
~~Not of that dye which their investments show~~
~~But mere implorators of unholy suits~~
~~Breathing like sanctified and pious bonds~~

121 **entreatments** negotiations, perhaps also suggesting 'entreaties' = solicitations. The word is a Shakespearean coinage: see 1.2.93n.
122 **command to parle** literally, 'call to discuss terms': to call for a parley can imply a willingness to capitulate. Polonius is saying, 'Don't let him see you whenever he wants to.'
123 **in** of
young See 7 and n.
124 **larger** longer, wider (implying the area of grazing within range of a tethered animal)
125 **In few** in brief
126–30 **Do . . . beguile** a dense and highly figurative passage whose interpretation is rendered even more difficult by textual variants and emendations. In the Q2 text we have emended only 'imploratotors' to *implorators* (assuming 'to' is repeated erroneously, but see 128n.) and 'beguide' (not found in *OED*) to *beguile*. Hamlet's vows are personified as *brokers* acting on behalf of his *suits* – his requests for sexual favours. The vows act like (breathe like) another set of personified verbal or written promises, *bonds*, which are pretending to be *sanctified and pious* in order to *beguile* Ophelia. In this reading the focus is on the near-synonymous triplet of *vows* – *suits* – *bonds* as the main focus of the passage (see longer discussion in Thompson & Thompson, 115–16).
126 **brokers** go-betweens, especially in financial and sexual matters. See *Luc* 173, where the speaker admits that she knew her seducer's 'vows were ever brokers to defiling'.
127 **that dye** that colour
their investments their garments. The assumption is that the clothes worn by the personified *vows* are deceptive: perhaps, using traditional terms, we should imagine white garments concealing black intentions? *Investments* in this sense seems to be a Shakespearean coinage, first occurring in *2H4* 4.1.45: 'Whose white investments figure innocence' (see also 1.2.93n.)
128 **implorators** intercessors, solicitors. *TxC* argues for 'imploratators', a version of Q2's 'imploratotors', on the grounds that it is hard to be dogmatic in emending a unique Shakespearean coinage and that the resulting line forms an acceptable hexameter. We think, however, that *implorators* would be easier for an actor to say and for an audience to understand.
unholy suits immoral or wicked requests
129 **bonds** Theobald's popular emendation to 'bawds' destroys the *vows* – *suits* – *bonds* triplet (see 126–30n.), but 'bawds' does go nicely with *brokers* (see 126n.).

122 parle] parley *F* 124 tether] *F;* tider *Q2* 127 that dye] the eye *F* 128 implorators] *F, Q4;* imploratotors *Q2;* imploratators *Oxf* 129 bonds] *F;* bawds *Pope² (Theobald)*

~~The better to beguile. This is for all,~~
I would not in plain terms from this time forth
Have you so slander any moment leisure
As to give words or talk with the Lord Hamlet.
Look to't, I charge you. Come your ways.

OPHELIA
I shall obey, my lord. *Exeunt.*

[1.4] *Enter* HAMLET, HORATIO *and* MARCELLUS.

HAMLET
The air bites shrewdly; it is very cold.

HORATIO
It is nipping, and an eager air.

130 **This . . . all** 'this is once for all', i.e. this is the first and last time I am going to tell you this.
132 **slander** bring into disrepute, abuse
moment leisure moment's leisure (which is the modernized Q3 reading, as compared with Q2's 'zero genitive': see Hope, 1.1.4f)
133 **words or talk** The terms seem synonymous, but Polonius may mean to cover both direct face-to-face contact and indirect contact through letters and messages. He has concentrated on the former here, but at 2.1.105–7 Ophelia clearly believes that she has been told to *repel* Hamlet's *letters*.
134 **Look to't** pay attention to this
Come your ways come away, i.e. let us go
1.4 There is no scene division at this point in Q1, Q2 or F, but Capell's introduction of one is justified by the *Exeunt* of the Polonius family, the entry of a different group of characters and the evident change of location. The three texts: this scene consists of 61 lines in Q1 (scene 4), 91 lines in Q2 and 66 lines in F. The most significant differences are that 22 lines from Hamlet's speech (17–38) and four lines from Horatio's speech (75–8) are not present in Q1 or F. Location and timing: this is the same location, the *platform* or battlements of the castle, as in 1.1, and it is again midnight, exactly 24 hours later.
0.1 Although Barnardo has featured in 1.1 and has confirmed that he is a member of the watch *tonight* in 1.2, he is absent from this scene in all three texts, leaving a group of three characters to encounter the Ghost, as in 1.1 (see also 1.2.224 SPn.).
1 ***shrewdly** severely, bitterly. Q2's spelling 'shroudly' is attractive for its (fortuitous) association with 'shroud', but it does not occur elsewhere, whereas 'shrodly' is recorded as an obsolete spelling of *shrewdly*.
2 **nipping** All editors prefer F's 'a nipping' to Q2's *nipping*, but the latter could make sense, referring to the tem-

130 beguile] *F;* beguide *Q2* 132 moment] *F;* moments *Q3;* moment's *Pope* 1.4] *Capell* 1 shrewdly] *(*shroudly*), F;* shrewd *Q1* it . . . cold] is it very cold? *F* 2 nipping] An nipping *Q1;* a nipping *F*

HAMLET
What hour now?
HORATIO I think it lacks of twelve.
MARCELLUS
No, it is struck.
HORATIO Indeed, I heard it not.
It then draws near the season
Wherein the spirit held his wont to walk.
A flourish of trumpets and two pieces goes off.
What does this mean, my lord?
HAMLET
The King doth wake tonight and takes his rouse,
~~Keeps wassail and the swaggering upspring reels;~~

perature, i.e. 'it is bitter (cold)'.
eager keen, sharp. From Old French *aigre* = sour.

3 **hour** disyllabic: 'how-er'
lacks of is just short of, i.e. is just before

4 **struck** Again Riv prints 'strook' (see 1.1.5n.).
Indeed, Q2's semicolon after 'Indeede' could be replaced by a question mark.

5 **season** time

6 **held his wont** observed his (its) custom or habit

6 SD Q2's SD indicates a fanfare and the discharging of two *pieces* (of artillery). This SD and its careful placing are unique to Q2, though Q1 has '*Sound Trumpets*' at 3. The noise confirms the King's promise at 1.2.123–8 to have the cannon sound at every *jocund health* he drinks in celebration of Hamlet's obedience in staying in Denmark. As we learn at 11 below, kettledrums are also used.

7 Horatio's questions, here and at 12, seem to confirm his role as a visitor rather than a native as he appeared by his knowledge of Danish politics in 1.1 (see 1.1.79–94n., 1.2.164n. and List of Roles, 10n.).

8 **wake** stay up late
takes his rouse drinks deeply, carouses

9 **Keeps wassail** To 'keep wassail' was a formulaic or idiomatic expression meaning to drink numerous toasts (and hence often to become disorderly).
the . . . reels a difficult expression found in virtually identical form in all three texts. The general meaning is that a riotous form of dancing accompanies the drinking. Most editors take *reels* to be a verb, with *The King* as the subject and *the . . . upspring* as the name of a lively dance (Elze says the word literally translates the German *Hupfauf*, which was 'the last and consequently the wildest dance at the old German merrymakings', and Klein considers this plausible), but Hibbard takes *upspring* as an adjective qualifying *reels* (= revels) and reads the whole line to follow on from *Keeps* (i.e. holds) 'blustering new-fangled revels'. See also Jenkins (LN).

4–5] *Ard*^{2}; *Q2F line* strooke. / season, / 5 It then] then it *F* 6 SD] *opp. 6–7; not in Q1F* 9 wassail] (wassell) *Q1*; wassels *F* swaggering] (swaggring), *Q1F*

And as he drains his draughts of Rhenish down
The kettledrum and trumpet thus bray out
The triumph of his pledge.

HORATIO Is it a custom?

HAMLET

Ay, marry is't,
But to my mind, though I am native here
And to the manner born, it is a custom
More honoured in the breach than the observance.
This heavy-headed revel east and west
Makes us traduced and taxed of other nations:

10 **Rhenish** wine from the Rhine region of Germany

11 **kettledrum and trumpet** instruments associated with Denmark. As RP points out, these would be safer and cheaper than the repeated discharge of *pieces*.
bray out make a loud, harsh noise. The choice of verb and its associations with animals, especially donkeys, is not complimentary to the instruments.

12 **triumph . . . pledge** public celebration of his promise (presumably as made at 1.2.125–8, though Hibbard suggests 'his promise to drain the cup in one draught')

13 **marry** by (the Virgin) Mary – a mild oath

14 **But** perhaps more emphatic than F's 'And' which could be a mistaken anticipation of 15.

15 **to . . . born** accustomed to this tradition from birth. Hamlet clearly disapproves of the custom and expects Horatio to agree with him. (The phrase, heard as 'to the manor born', has curiously become familiar in a different sense – born to a life of privilege.)

16 **More . . . observance** 'which it is more honourable to break than to observe'

17–38 **This . . . scandal** These 22 lines on Danish drunkenness are unique to Q2. It was formerly argued that they might have been deemed offensive after 1603 when James I acceded to the throne, since his wife was Anne of Denmark, but this would make for rather inconsistent expurgation, because it is only in F that Hamlet calls Denmark a prison (see p. 52 and Appendix 1). Recent editors (e.g. Edwards, Hibbard) argue that the lines were omitted from both Q1 and F as 'undramatic' ones that 'slow the action down'. The syntax is complex, but Elze claims this is deliberate to show Hamlet 'absorbed in thought . . . He is continually losing the thread of his speech and does not finish a single sentence.' RP points out an analogy with a similarly convoluted speech about motivation and personality in *Cor* 4.7.37–49. The cut (if it is one) is comparable to that in 1.1 where Horatio's leisurely analogy of 'the most high and palmy state of Rome' is similarly interrupted by the appearance of the Ghost (see 1.1.107–24 and n.). Again the effect of the longer version may be to increase the impact.

17 **This . . . revel** this drunken revelling
east and west i.e. universally (modifying *traduced and taxed*)

18 **traduced and taxed of** defamed and censored by

14 But] And *F* 17–38 This . . . scandal –] *not in Q1F* 17 heavy-headed] *(*heauy headed*)*

call They ~~clepe~~ us drunkards and with swinish phrase
Soil our addition, ~~and indeed it takes~~ 20
~~From our achievements, though performed at height,~~
~~The pith and marrow of our attribute.~~
~~So oft it chances in particular men~~
~~That, for some vicious mole of nature in them,~~
~~As in their birth wherein they are not guilty~~ 25
~~(Since nature cannot choose his origin),~~
~~By their o'ergrowth of some complexion~~
~~Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason,~~
~~Or by some habit that too much o'erleavens~~

19 **clepe** call
19–20 **with . . . addition** tarnish our reputation by calling us pigs. 'As drunk as a swine' was proverbial (Dent, S1042).
20 **addition** name, reputation; see similar uses at *Mac* 1.3.106 and 3.1.99 and *Cor* 1.9.65.
takes detracts
21 **though . . . height** although these may be outstanding
22 **The . . . attribute** the very essence or heart of our good name
23–38 This is a difficult section of the speech which comes to a climax with one of the most notoriously obscure passages in the entire canon. The general drift is clear enough and even proverbial: 'One ill condition mars all the good' (Dent, C585). Hamlet is elaborating on the idea that a single fault (*some vicious mole*, *the stamp of one defect* or finally *that particular fault*) can corrupt or destroy the reputation of an individual person as the fault of drunkenness destroys the reputation of the Danes as a nation. But the long sentence from 23 to 38 is convoluted and some details of the expression are complex. It has been argued, especially by those who think Shakespeare intended to delete these lines, that he gave up on the speech, leaving it unfinished (see Nosworthy, *Occasional*, 141). If so, it deserves attention as an example of an unrevised draft, illustrating perhaps that Shakespeare wrote in phrases and metre first and left sorting out the structure and syntax until later.
23 So in the same way
24 **mole of nature** (1) natural mark (birthmark) or blemish, (2) hidden undermining presence (as literally at 1.5.161)
25 **As** for example
26 **his** its (the regular neuter form in this period; see Hope 1.3.2c)
27 **their . . . complexion** the overdevelopment of some element in their natural constitution. *Complexion* is a quasi-technical term referring to the combination of the four 'humours', the sanguine, phlegmatic, choleric and melancholic, which were supposed to be maintained in harmony.
28 **pales and forts** defences (palisades) and fortifications
29–30 **o'er-leavens . . . manners** causes an excess in what would otherwise be acceptable behaviour (over-leavened bread rises or swells too much). Imogen uses a similar metaphor at *Cym* 3.4.60–3: 'So thou, Posthumus / Wilt lay the leaven on all proper men; / Goodly and gallant shall be false and perjur'd / From thy great fail.' Shaheen cites a biblical analogy in 1 Corinthians, 5.6–8.

19 clepe] *(clip), Q5* 27 their] the *Pope*

~~The form of plausive manners — that these men,~~ 30
~~Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect~~
~~(Being Nature's livery or Fortune's star);~~
~~His virtues else, be they as pure as grace,~~
~~As infinite as man may undergo,~~
~~Shall in the general censure take corruption~~ 35
~~From that particular fault: the dram of eale~~
~~Doth all the noble substance of a doubt~~
~~To his own scandal~~

Enter GHOST.

HORATIO Look, my lord, it comes.

HAMLET
Angels and ministers of grace defend us!

30 **plausive** applauded, approved
32 **Nature's . . . Fortune's** The stock opposition of heredity and environment; see Rosalind and Celia's debate on this topic in *AYL* 1.2.30–54.
livery dress or uniform (perhaps picking up *habit* in 29, since *habit* usually means 'dress' rather than 'custom' in Shakespeare)
star in a transferred sense: something supposedly caused by astrological influence
33 **else** in other respects
34 **undergo** sustain, enjoy
35–6 **take corruption / From** become infected or misconstrued because of
36–8 **the dram . . . scandal** a famously obscure passage (see 23–38n.). Theobald comments: 'In reality, I do not know a Passage, throughout all our Poet's Works, more intricate and deprav'd in the Text, of less Meaning to outward Appearance, or more likely to baffle the Attempts of Criticism in its Aid. It is certain, there is neither *Sense*, *Grammar*, nor *English*, as it now stands' (*Restored*, 35). The general meaning is clear (see 23–38n.): a very small quantity (*dram*) of badness can damage a good thing or person (*noble substance*) to the extent of bringing it or them into disrepute (*scandal*). But it is difficult to derive this meaning very precisely from the words on the Q2 page because of (a) the absence of a verb apart from the unsatisfactory *Doth*, (b) the otherwise unknown word *eale*, much emended (see t.n.), usually to 'evil' on the analogy of Q2's spelling 'deale' for *devil* at 2.2.534, (c) the phrase *of a doubt*, also much emended (see t.n.). The sentence may be left unfinished because of the appearance of the Ghost, and this is an attractive option in performance.
38.1 Gurr and Ichikawa (131) again suggest that the Ghost enters and leaves by the centre trap (see 1.1.38.1n.).
39 **ministers** agents, messengers. 'Angels and ministers of grace' is another example of hendiadys, i.e. 'Angels who minister grace' (Wright, 186).

33 His] Their *Pope* 36 eale] ease *Q3;* Base *Theobald;* ill *Jennens;* evil *Keightley;* e'il *Kittredge;* ev'l *Riv* 37 of a doubt] of worth out *Theobald;* of a worth dout *Malone;* often dout *Steevens*[3]*;* to a doubt *Sisson;* over-daub *Oxf* 38 To] Of *Sisson*

Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damned,
Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell,
Be thy intents wicked or charitable,
Thou com'st in such a questionable shape
That I will speak to thee. I'll call thee Hamlet,
King, father, royal Dane. O answer me,
Let me not burst in ignorance but tell
~~Why thy canonized bones hearsed in death~~
~~Have burst their cerements, why the sepulchre~~
~~Wherein we saw thee quietly interred~~
~~Hath oped his ponderous and marble jaws~~

40 **thou** Hamlet's immediate use of the familiar *thou* rather than the more formal 'you' is surprising, especially as his speech otherwise implies an element of conscious distancing or even incredulity. Perhaps *thou* indicates a dismissive scepticism, whereas 'you' would indicate his acceptance that the Ghost is indeed his father, as it seems to at 3.4.101–5. See also 1.3.4n.
goblin demon (a stronger meaning than the modern one; see *Paradise Lost*, 2.688, where Milton refers to Death as 'the Goblin')

41 **airs . . . blasts** The contrast is between gentle breezes and violent blighting gusts.

43 **questionable** inviting questions; see the opposite in *AYL* where Rosalind denies that Orlando has 'an unquestionable spirit' (3.2.365–6). Editors point out that *questionable* was not used to mean 'uncertain' or 'baffling' until the eighteenth century, but it is difficult for a modern audience or reader not to take it in this sense and Mahood identifies *questionable* as a pun here (*Wordplay*, 123).

47 **canonized** (three syllables, with stress on the second) blessed, consecrated (by Christian burial rites). Pursuing the *cannon/canon* pun noted at 1.2.132, Booth (49–50) points out that we have recently heard the cannon (see 6 SD and n.) and that the bones themselves seem to become projectiles here, bursting out of the grave. The repetition of *burst* (46, 48) is slightly awkward, an effect exaggerated in Q1, where it occurs three times in five lines.
hearsed hearsèd: enclosed in a hearse or coffin

48 **cerements** grave-clothes (pronounced 'seerments'); apparently a Shakespearean coinage from the more familiar 'cerecloth', meaning literally 'waxed cloth'. The word is not connected with 'ceremonies', the Q1 reading, which could be an aural or visual error.

49 **interred** buried. Most editors (including Jenkins) prefer F's 'enurn'd'; Jennens, however, comments: '*Interred* is certainly the most proper when spoken of a body buried without burning; though the other may be allowed as alluding to the *Roman* custom.' *Interred* also seems more consistent with the metaphor of the *sepulchre* opening its *jaws*.

50 **ponderous and marble** another example of hendiadys: 'ponderous (heavy) *because* marble'. Wright (171) points out that Edgar Allen Poe imi-

42 intents] *Q1;* euents *F* 45 O] *(ô), Q1;* Oh, oh *F* 48 cerements] *(cerements), F (cerments);* ceremonies *Q1* 49 interred] *Q1;* enurn'd *F*

~~To cast thee up again. What may this mean~~
Why thou dead corpse
~~That thou, dead corpse,~~ again in complete steel,
Revisits thus the glimpses of the moon,
~~Making night hideous, and we fools of nature~~
~~So horridly to shake our disposition~~ 55
~~With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls?~~
Say why is this? Wherefore? What should we do?
[*Ghost*] *beckons.*

HORATIO
It beckons you to go away with it
As if it some impartment did desire
To you alone.

MARCELLUS ~~Look with what courteous action~~ 60
~~It waves you to a more removed ground~~,

tated this line when he wrote of 'ponderous and ebony jaws' in the penultimate paragraph of 'The Fall of the House of Usher'.

51 **cast thee up** The tomb is personified (animalified?) as vomiting the Ghost from its mouth; perhaps a remote allusion to the story of Jonah and the whale.

52 **in complete steel** dressed entirely in steel, i.e. in full armour (presumably the same suit of armour recognized by Horatio at 1.1.59–60)

53 **Revisits** This should strictly read 'revisitest' or 'revisit'st', but the final 't' of the second-person form could be dropped when the verb ended in 't' (see Blake, 4.2.2b, and Hope, 2.1.8a).
glimpses pale or perhaps fitful gleams. The line seems to alleviate the horror with a more romantic touch. (*The Glimpses of the Moon* was used by Edith Wharton as the title of her 1922 novel which otherwise has nothing to do with *Hamlet*.) (Jenkins and Hibbard see in the shared spelling 'glimses' evidence of Q2 following Q1.)

54 **we . . . nature** i.e. turning us into ignorant or weak creatures limited by or victims of nature. For this use of *we* where we might expect 'us' before an infinitive, see Blake, 6.1.2.2.

55 **horridly** horrendously (a stronger meaning than modern 'horrid', possibly with a glance at the literal meaning of Latin *horridus*, bristling or with hair standing on end: see 1.5.19–20)
disposition equanimity, composure

56 **reaches** capacities

57 **What . . . do** what must we do (i.e. to help you or ourselves); see 1.1.127–38.

59 **impartment** communication (a Shakespearean coinage: see 1.2.93n.)

61, 79 **waves** gestures by waving its hand or arm. 'Shakespeare is thinking in terms of the theatre. The *platform* is out of doors in Elsinore, but at the Globe the Ghost stands by one of the

53 Revisits] *Q1F*; Reuisitst *F2* glimpses] *(glimses) Q1, F(glimpses)* 56 the] *Q1*; thee; *F* 57 SD] *F (Ghost beckens Hamlet.); Beckins. Q2; not in Q1* 61 waves] *Q1*; wafts *F*

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,
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, my lord,
Or to the dreadful summit of the cliff
That beetles o'er his base into the sea,
And there assume some other horrible form

stage exits and *waves forth* [68]' (Dover Wilson).
removed removèd; secluded
64 **what . . . fear** what is there to fear? For similar (and, judging from the absence of this usage in the *OED*, similarly rare) examples of *the fear* as a noun, see *Luc* 229, 'The guilt being great, the fear doth still exceed', and *Mac* 4.2.12, 'All is the fear, and nothing is the love.'
65 'I do not value my life at the worth of a pin' (proverbial: Dent, P334)
69–71 The notion of an evil spirit luring someone to the top of a cliff is evoked again at 4.6.67–72 of *KL*. Many film versions of *Hamlet* (Plumb, Rodolfi, Olivier, but most notably Kozintsev) make use of this suggestion and set the next scene literally overlooking the sea
69 **flood** sea
70 **dreadful** The usage here is subjective (unlike the objective use at 1.2.206): the *dread* is felt by the speaker rather than being an attribute of the cliff.
***summit** The word derives from Old French *sommette*, hence perhaps the Q2/F spellings (see t.n.). Q2/F have 'somnet' at 3.3.18, and this is the spelling at *KL* 4.6.57 (Q only), the only other occurrence of the word in the canon; both lines are omitted in Q1.
71 ***beetles . . . base** overhangs its bottom or foot. *Beetles* perhaps personifies the cliff, since it occurs otherwise only in the expression 'beetle-browed', meaning 'having bushy eyebrows'. A similar but more benign picture is evoked in *Tem* when Francisco describes Ferdinand swimming 'To th' shore, that o'er his wave-worn basis bowed, / As stooping to relieve him' (2.1.121–2).
72 **assume** subjunctive mood following *if* in 69 ('what if it should assume')

63 I will] will I *Q1F* 69 my lord] *Q2c1F;* my *Q2u* 70 summit] *Rowe;* somnet *Q2;* Sonnet *F* 71 beetles] *F;* beckles *Q1;* bettles *Q2* 72 assume] *Q1;* assumes *F*

Which might deprive your sovereignty of reason
And draw you into madness? ~~Think of it.~~
~~The very place puts toys of desperation~~
~~Without more motive into every brain~~
~~That looks so many fathoms to the sea~~
~~And hears it roar beneath.~~

HAMLET
It waves me still. Go on, I'll follow thee.

MARCELLUS
You shall not go, my lord.

HAMLET
Hold off your hands.

HORATIO
Be ruled, you shall not go.

HAMLET
My fate cries out
And makes each petty artery in this body

73 **deprive . . . reason** Editors gloss 'deprive you of the rule or supremacy of reason', but a modern ear or eye also understands 'deprive your highness of your reason'.

74 **madness** This is the first mention of a threat to Hamlet's sanity. It is reinforced in the next scene in three different ways: the Ghost's threat to 'harrow up thy soul' (1.5.16), the conjuration 'Taint not thy mind' (1.5.85), and Hamlet's hint that he may 'put an antic disposition on' (1.5.170).

75–8 **The . . . beneath** These lines are unique to Q2. Edwards argues that Shakespeare intended to delete them 'as confusing Horatio's main point' (Edwards 13–14), while Hibbard argues that they must be a deliberate cut because 'they have left no mark whatever on Q1' and 'the excision is a neat one, affecting neither sense nor metre'. A similar thought is expressed by Edgar in *KL*: 'I'll look no more/Lest my brain turn' (4.6.22–3).

75 **toys of desperation** not just vertigo, but whims to behave desperately (in the context, these are impulses to suicide which are in fact frivolous or unjustified)

77 **fathoms** A fathom is (appropriately) a nautical unit of measurement equivalent to about six feet or just under two metres.

80 **hands** Q2's plural accords with *unhand me, gentlemen* at 84.

81 **My . . . out** my destiny calls (i.e. I must do this)

82 **each petty** i.e. even the most insignificant
***artery** The spellings in all three texts (see t.n.) suggest disyllabic pronunciation, probably 'arter', but the modern form would have to be 'art'ry'. MacDonald defends 'arture', deriving it from Latin *artus* (= joint).

75–8] *not in Q1F* 79] *F; Q2 lines* still, / thee. / waves] wafts *F* 80 hands] hand *F* 82 artery] *Q5;* arture Q2; Artiue *Q1;* artyre *Q3, F;* attire *Q4*

As hardy as the Nemean lion's nerve.
Still am I called – unhand me, gentlemen –
By heaven I'll make a ghost of him that ~~lets~~ me!
I say away! – Go on! I'll follow thee.

Exeunt Ghost and Hamlet.

HORATIO
He waxes desperate with imagination.

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

HORATIO
Have after. To what issue will this come?

MARCELLUS
Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.

HORATIO
Heaven will direct it.

MARCELLUS Nay, let's follow him. *Exeunt.*

[1.5] *Enter* GHOST *and* HAMLET.

83 **Nemean lion** (stress on first syllable of *Nemean*, an anglicized pronunciation also found at *LLL* 4.1.86 and *TNK* 1.1.68); a supposedly invulnerable beast strangled by Hercules as the first of his twelve labours. In contrast to his earlier reference to Hercules at 1.2.153, Hamlet is now prepared to vie with the mythical hero.

84 **called** summoned (not necessarily verbally)
unhand take your hands off (*OED*'s first usage)

85 **make a ghost** Hamlet speaks as if he or someone else has just used the word *ghost*: see *R3* 1.2.36–7: 'Villains! set down the corse or by Saint Paul / I'll make a corse of him that disobeys!'
lets prevents. This otherwise obsolete sense survives in the formulaic phrase 'let or hindrance'.

87 **waxes** grows
***imagination** Q2's 'imagion' is not found elsewhere and could easily be a careless transcription/setting of 'imagination' as found in Q1 and F.

89 **Have after** Let us go after him.
issue outcome

90 **state** polity, kingdom (as opposed to 'condition')

91 **Heaven . . . him** Horatio seems at first to move away from his more interventionist position at 89, but his fatalism is presumably rejected by Marcellus (*Nay*) and they follow Hamlet.
it i.e. *the issue* of 89

1.5 There is no scene division at this point in Q1, Q2 or F, and the Ghost at the Globe may have re-entered by one door as Horatio left by another, but the change of both speakers and location justifies the division introduced by

87 imagination] *Q1F*; imagion *Q2* 1.5] *Capell*

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 sulphurous and tormenting flames
Must render up myself.
HAMLET Alas, poor ghost.
GHOST
Pity me not, but lend thy serious hearing
To what I shall unfold.
HAMLET Speak, I am bound to hear.
GHOST
So art thou to revenge when thou shalt hear.
HAMLET
What?
GHOST
I am thy father's spirit,
Doomed for a certain term to walk the night

Capell. The three texts: this scene runs to 158 lines in Q1 (scene 5), 188 in Q2 and 190 in F. The Ghost's speeches are shorter in Q1 as is Hamlet's speech after the Ghost's exit and his contributions to the conversation after the return of Horatio and Marcellus. Location and timing: the action is continuous with 1.4 but Hamlet's opening words imply that the location is supposed to have shifted to a different area of the battlements (see also 1.4.69–71n.).

2 **Mark me** pay attention to me
My . . . come i.e. it is nearly dawn. As in 1.1, the movement from midnight to dawn is rapid.

3 **sulphurous . . . flames** i.e. the flames of the Catholic purgatory, a place of spiritual purging preparatory to entry into heaven
sulphurous dissyllabic: sulph'rous

6, 15 **unfold** reveal (see 1.1.2), narrate

6–7 **Speak . . . hear** This exchange is quoted and parodied in Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Woman Hater* (1606) when Lazarello says, 'speake I am bound to heare', and the Count replies, 'So art thou to revenge, when thou shalt heare. / The fish head is gone, and we know not whither' (2.1.344–7): see pp. 57–8 for early parodic citations of *Hamlet*.

6 **bound** (1) destined, (2) committed, obliged

10 **walk the night** walk throughout the night

1 Whither] *Q1*; Where *F*

And for the day confined to fast in fires
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
Are burnt and purged away. But that I am forbid
To tell the secrets of my prison-house
I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,
~~Make thy two eyes like stars start from their spheres,~~
~~Thy knotted and combined locks to part~~
~~And each particular hair to stand on end~~
~~Like quills upon the fearful porpentine~~
But this eternal blazon must not be
To ears of flesh and blood. List, list, O list,

11 **fast in fires** a traditional punishment in purgatory, perhaps implying that old Hamlet was literally *full of bread* (3.3.80), since punishments were thought, as in the classical Hades, to fit the sins or crimes

12 **foul crimes** As at 76–9 and at 3.3.80–4, the degree of the former King's sinfulness is perhaps exaggerated to intensify the horror of his dying without the opportunity for confession and absolution.

13 **purged** This word again evokes the notion of purgatory.

16 **harrow up** tear up, uproot. The metaphor of digging something up (as with a harrow) picks up the idea of *foul deeds* being buried at the end of 1.2. See also 1.1.43n.

17 **spheres** sockets. Eyes are seen as being enclosed in their sockets as stars were thought to be enclosed in their spheres or orbits.

18 **knotted and combined** combinèd, i.e. combed and wound together. Hibbard argues that this means elaborately coiffed – 'During the first act Hamlet should be *the glass of fashion* [see 3.1.152]' – but this may not be compatible with his mourning garb.

19 ***on end** Jenkins argues that Q2's 'an' is not a variant of 'on' but the preposition 'a' (as in 'afoot' or 'awork') which takes an 'n' before a vowel.

20 **fearful** fear-inducing, terrifying. Edwards argues that F's 'fretfull' is stronger, reading *fearful* in the more common modern sense as 'frightened'.
porpentine porcupine (*porpentine* is Shakespeare's usual form) – assumed by the Elizabethans to be an aggressive animal which could shoot its quills out like darts

21 **eternal** relating to the realm of the supernatural. Shakespeare often associates the word with 'infernal', as in Cassius' reference to 'Th'eternal devil' (*JC* 1.2.158) and Emilia's evocation of 'some eternal villain' (*Oth* 4.2.132). See also 5.2.349.
blazon (1) itemized description, (2) public announcement
be be delivered

22 **List** listen. In Q1/F, the Ghost addresses Hamlet by name for the first time at this point (5.17).

18 knotted] *Q1*; knotty *F* 19 on] *(an)* 20 fearful] fretfull *Q1F* porpentine –] Porpentine, *Q2*; Porpentine: *F* 22 List, list, O list] Hamlet *Q1*; list *Hamlet*, oh list *F*

If thou didst ever thy dear father love –

HAMLET

O God!

GHOST

– Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder!

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 meditation or the thoughts of love
May sweep to my revenge.

GHOST ~~I find thee apt.~~
~~And duller shouldst thou be than the fat weed~~
~~That roots itself in ease on Lethe wharf –~~
~~Wouldst thou not stir in this~~ Now, Hamlet, hear:
'Tis given out that, sleeping in my orchard,

24 **God** F's 'Heauen' is a likely expurgation. *TxC* notes a 'clear preponderance' of 'O God' in Shakespeare.
27 **as . . . is** i.e. all murders are bad (but mine was especially bad).
29–30 'As swift as thought' was proverbial (Dent, T240).
31 **apt** responsive
32 **fat weed** Commentators have failed to identify any particular plant; *fat* seems to connote bloated or perhaps torpid.
33 **roots** Q2's reading (supported by Q1) suggests moral inactivity ('not stirring') whereas F's 'rots' which suggests moral decay. Hibbard, unusually, adopts *roots*, because it 'offers a strong antithesis to *stir* [34], and it fits perfectly with the other instances of "things rank and gross in nature" which are so frequent in the play.'
Lethe wharf the banks of the river Lethe, a river in the classical underworld from whose name we derive 'lethargic'; drinking its water induced forgetfulness and drowsiness. The *wharf* suggests a suppressed reference to Charon, who ferried souls across Lethe; the afterlife evoked here combines pagan and Christian elements, as does that evoked in Clarence's dream in *R3* 1.4.
35 **'Tis** *TxC* notes 1526 instances of ''Tis' in the canon as against 35 instances of 'It's' (the F reading).
given out announced publicly (presumably by the King and supporters)
sleeping . . . orchard while I was sleeping in my orchard. The qualifying

24 God] *Q1;* Heauen *F* 26 Murder!] *F (*Murther?*);* Murther. *Q2* 29 Haste] *Q1;* Hast, hast *F* know't] knowe it *Q1F* that I] that *Q1F* 33 roots] *Q1;* rots *F* 35 'Tis] *Q1;* It's *F* my] *Q1;* mine *F*

A serpent stung me. So the whole ear of Denmark
Is by a forged process of my death
Rankly abused. But know, thou noble youth,
The serpent that did sting thy father's life
Now wears his crown.

HAMLET O my prophetic soul! 40
My uncle!

GHOST
Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast,
With witchcraft of his wits, ~~with traitorous gifts—~~
~~O wicked wit and gifts that have the power~~
~~So to seduce!~~— won to his shameful lust 45

phrase refers forward to *me* in 36 (see Blake, 3.3.6.3). The murder victim is not asleep in either Saxo or Belleforest (see Bullough 7.62 and 87).
orchard garden; the term was formerly used in a general sense, not necessarily implying the cultivation of fruit trees as it does today.

36–8 **ear . . . abused** See 59–73 and 1.1.30n.

37 **forged process** forgèd; false account

38 **Rankly** grossly, offensively
youth Again there is an insistence that Hamlet is young (see 1.3.7n. and List of Roles, 1n.).

39 **sting . . . life** poisoned your father (the Ghost continues the serpent metaphor from 36); *sting*, not 'bite', because of the Elizabethan belief that the tongue was the source of a snake's poison rather than the teeth

40 **prophetic** foreknowing, speculative; Hamlet has not expressed a specific suspicion that the present King murdered his father, though this confirms and justifies his hostile attitude in 1.2.

42 **incestuous** see 1.2.157n.
adulterate literally, defiled or stained by adultery. The word can also mean 'corrupted' in a more general way; Shakespeare uses it in its literal sense in *Luc* 1645, *CE* 2.2.139 and *R3* 4.4.69, and in a more general sense in *Son* 121.5 and *LC* 175. It is notoriously unclear whether the Ghost means to say that his wife embarked on an adulterous relationship with his brother before his death: the strength of his feeling in this speech seems to imply that she did, but his relative lenience towards her at 84–8 and at 3.4.108–11 might indicate otherwise, as does the behaviour of the Queen in the dumb-show and *The Murder of Gonzago* in 3.2.

43 **wits** Most editors emend to 'wit' to match the singular in 44.
gifts often glossed as 'natural gifts', i.e. personal qualities or talents, which is clearly what it means at 51, but the more obvious meaning of 'presents' could also be acceptable here and is supported by *TGV* 3.1.89 ('Win her with gifts, if she respect not words') and indeed by the SD for the dumb-show at 3.2.128.9–10.

40–1] *Riv; Q2F line* Crowne. / Vncle? / 41 My] *Q1;* mine *F* uncle!] *Q1;* Vncle? *Q2F* 43 wits] *F;* wit *Pope* with] *Q1;* hath *F* 45 to his] to to this *F*

The will of my most seeming-virtuous Queen.
O Hamlet, what falling off was there,
From me whose love was of that dignity
That it went hand in hand even with the vow
I made to her in marriage, and to decline
Upon a wretch whose natural gifts were poor
To those of mine.
But Virtue, as it never will be moved
Though Lewdness court it in a shape of heaven,
So Lust, though to a radiant angel linked,
Will sate itself in a celestial bed
And prey on garbage.
But soft, methinks I scent the morning air.
Brief let me be. Sleeping within my orchard –

46 **will** sexual desire. The word carries a stronger meaning than the modern 'inclination'; see *Son* 135 and 136, where Shakespeare puns on this meaning and his own first name.
47 **what falling off** what a desertion or decline in standards. F's 'what a falling' improves both grammar and metre, but Jenkins, while printing 'what a falling', compares Q2's 'what piece of work is a man' at 2.2.269.
48 **dignity** worth
49 **even . . . vow** with the very vow (i.e. I took my marriage vows seriously)
50–1 **and . . . Upon** i.e. and that she should descend to
53–7 'While Virtue could not be seduced even if Lewdness wooed it in the guise of an angel, Lust is capable of glutting its appetite in a heavenly bed and then turning to prey on filth.' Iachimo uses similar metaphors when he is accusing Posthumus of deserting Imogen for prostitutes: 'The cloyed will – / That satiate yet unsatisfied desire . . . – ravening first the lamb, / Longs after for the garbage' (*Cym* 1.7.47–50).
55 ***Lust** Q2's 'but' is a plausible misreading, but not a plausible word in this context.
angel Jenkins sees the influence of Q1 on Q2's spelling ('Angle').
56 ***sate** satiate. This F reading is supported by Q1's 'fate', a possible misreading of long *s*, and by the use of 'satiate' in the *Cym* example quoted above; Q2's 'sort' is difficult to justify (though Andrews retains, glossing it as 'situate, place') and is an easy misreading of 'a' as 'or' (see 1.2.96).
57 **garbage** entrails, foul remains (a stronger meaning than the modern 'rubbish')
58 **soft** wait (see, listen). The Ghost interrupts himself, remembering the need for haste.
scent . . . air The assumption is that the Ghost must return to hell or purgatory at dawn; see 1.1.146–55.

47 what] what a *F* 52–3] *Pope; one line Q2F* 55 Lust] *Q1F;* but *Q2* angel] *(*Angle*), Q1 (*angle*), F (*Angell*)* 56 sate] *F;* sort *Q2;* fate *Q1* 56–7] *one line F* 58 morning] mornings *Q1F* 59 my] *Q1;* mine *F*

My custom always of the afternoon –
Upon my secure hour thy uncle stole
With juice of cursed hebona in a vial
And in the porches of my ears did pour
The leperous distilment whose effect
Holds such an enmity with blood of man
That swift as quicksilver it courses through
The natural gates and alleys of the body
And with a sudden vigour it doth possess
And curd like eager droppings into milk
The thin and wholesome blood. So did it mine

60 Caliban tells of Prospero's similar habit: "tis a custom with him / I'th' afternoon to sleep' (*Tem* 3.2.89–90).
61 **secure** free from care, relaxed. The implication is that this was a time when there was no need to take any precautions.
62 **juice . . . hebona** poison. Marlowe mentions 'the jouyce of Hebon' as a poison in *The Jew of Malta* (1589; 3.4.101), but the specific nature of this poison has not been identified; these names may be just exotic variants of the more homely 'henbane', the plant *hyoscamus niger*, whose Latin name also suggests ebony (*niger* = black).
vial (phial) small container for liquid
63–70 The King's body becomes first a house, then a town or city. Perhaps the sack of Troy is already present behind these lines.
63 **porches . . . ears** i.e. my ears, viewed as the porches of the house which is my head/body. Modern medicine tells us that such a method of poisoning would not actually be effective, but Bullough suggests that Shakespeare took the idea from accounts of the murder of the Duke of Urbino in 1538, allegedly done in this way (Bullough 7:29–33; see p. 61). Another source might be Marlowe's villain Lightborn in *Edward II* (1592) who describes a method of killing he claims to have learned in Naples: 'whilst one is a sleepe, to take a quill, / And blowe a little powder in his eares' (5.4.34–5).
64 **leperous distilment** distillation or essence causing (the appearance of) leprosy, i.e. scales and discoloration of the skin. Q2 has 'leaprous', a spelling it shares with Q1. *Distilment* is a Shakespearean coinage (see 1.2.93n.); curiously, Johnson's 1773 error, 'instilment', became an attested word in the nineteenth century.
65 **with blood** Thus in all three texts; one might be tempted to print 'wi'th' blood'.
66 **quicksilver** the liquid metal mercury
68 **possess** This must mean something like 'take control of' or 'overpower'; Shakespeare uses the verb elsewhere in relation to sickness or disease, as in 'I will possess him with yellowness' (*MW* 1.3.97). F's 'posset' means the same thing as *curd*: the idea is that the poison causes the blood to curdle or clot like sour milk.
69 **eager droppings** sour or bitter drops
70 **thin and wholesome** hendiadys: 'thin because wholesome (or vice versa?)' (Wright, 186)

62 hebona] *Q1;* Hebenon *F* 63 my] *Q1;* mine *F* 64 leperous] (leaprous) *Q1, F* (leaperous) 68 possess] posset *F* 69 eager] *Q1;* Aygre *F*

~~And a most instant tetter barked about~~
~~Most lazar-like with vile and loathsome crust~~
~~All my smooth body.~~
Thus was I sleeping by a brother's hand
Of life, of crown, of queen at once dispatched,
Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin,
~~Unhouseled, disappointed, unaneled,~~
No reckoning made but sent to my account
With all my imperfections on my head.
Hamlet O horrible, O horrible, most horrible!
Ghost If thou hast nature in thee bear it not,
Let not the royal bed of Denmark be

71–3 'an immediate blistering (*tetter*) resembling leprosy (*lazar-like*) encrusted my smooth skin like the bark of a tree.' The metaphor suggests an Ovidian metamorphosis, as when Daphne is transformed into a tree (Book 1), but it also anticipates the decomposition of the body after death.
75 **dispatched** deprived
76 **in . . . sin** 'in the height of my sinful state' (see 12n. and the similar metaphor at 3.3.81)
77 **Unhouseled** without having taken the sacrament ('housel' is an old name for the 'host' or consecrated element of Christian mass or communion)
disappointed improperly appointed, unprepared
unaneled not anointed, i.e. without having taken extreme unction – the special sacrament for the dying. (The syllable *nel* is pronounced like 'kneel'.) Taken together, these three adjectives emphasize that the Ghost has been deprived of the 'last rites' due to a dying Christian.
78 **No reckoning made** given no chance to settle my affairs (with God, by confessing my sins)
80 Johnson, who claimed to be following the hint of 'a learned lady', notes in an appendix that this line might be spoken by Hamlet; Rann's edition was the first to reassign it (though Q1 has Hamlet interject 'O God' at this point). Editors have conjectured that Johnson's lady was either Elizabeth Montagu or Elizabeth Carter, but Oya (23) points out that in fact the suggestion had been made to Garrick in a letter from P[eter] W[halley] dated 20 February 1744 (see Boaden, 23) and he spoke the line on stage. Subsequent Hamlets, including Kemble, Kean, Irving, Gielgud, Olivier (in the 1948 film) and Jacobi (in the 1980 BBC television version) have also used it effectively to break the Ghost's monologue. Kiasashvili (186) records that, without having access to any of these sources, Ivane Machabeli independently gave the line to Hamlet, the only significant change in his otherwise faithful Georgian translation of 1886.
81 **nature** natural feeling

71 barked] *Q1;* bak'd *F* 72 lazar-like] *(*Lazerlike*), F* 75 of queen] *Q1;* and Queene *F* 77 Unhouseled] *(*Vnhuzled*), F (*Vnhouzzled*)* unaneled] *(*vnanueld*), F (*vnnaneld*)* 78 reckoning] *(*reckning*), Q1F* 80–1 O . . . If] *F;* HAMLET O . . . GHOST If *Rann (Johnson)*

A couch for luxury and damned incest.
But howsomever thou pursues this act
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 sting her. Fare thee well at once:
The glow-worm shows the matin to be near
And 'gins to pale his uneffectual fire.
Adieu, adieu, adieu, remember me. [*Exit.*]

HAMLET

O all you host of heaven, O earth – what else? –
And shall I couple hell? O fie! Hold, hold, my heart,
And you, my sinews, grow not instant old

83 **luxury** lust, lechery (as always in Shakespeare)
damned Some editors (including Edwards and Hibbard) suggest that this is pronounced damnèd, but the standard modern monosyllable is acceptable.
incest See 1.2.157n.

84 **howsomever** howsoever (see 1.2.247n.)
pursues F's 'pursuest' is strictly grammatical but *pursues* is easier to say (see *Revisits* at 1.4.53 and n.).

85 **Taint . . . mind** do not let your mind become contaminated. It is of course a major point of discussion whether Hamlet's *mind* does become *tainted* in the course of the play; see pp. 26–32.

86 **aught** anything (as at 177)
leave . . . heaven i.e. let God judge and punish her. Again, the Ghost seems to assume that she is not equally guilty.

87–8 **thorns . . . her** There is possibly a suppressed reference to the supposed source of the nightingale's wakefulness: 'Everything did banish moan, / Save the nightingale alone: / She, poor bird, as all forlorn, / Lean'd her breast up-till a thorn' (*PP* 20.7–11).

88 **at once** immediately

89–90 i.e. the fact that the faint light of the glow-worm is diminishing shows that morning (*matin*) is approaching. This is Shakespeare's only use of the word *matin* and it may be chosen for its religious connotations, 'matins' being a church service that takes place in the morning.

91 **Adieu** farewell (literally '[I commend you] to God' in French)

91 SD *It seems possible that at the Globe the Ghost would have descended through a trap-door, especially in the light of his voice coming from *under the stage* at 149 (see Gurr & Ichikawa, 131). John Ward's prompt-book has 'Ring for Trap to be ready' and 'Ghost Ready below' at the appropriate points (see Thompson, 'Ward', 144), but at the London Globe in 2000 the Ghost used one of the stage doors.

93 **couple** join, link (not necessarily just two things)
fie an expression of disgust or reproach

94 **sinews** tendons, muscles
grow . . . old don't become feeble as if with sudden ageing

84 howsomever] howsoeuer *Q1F* pursues] pursuest *F* 85 Taint] (Tain't), *F* 90 'gins] *Q2u* (gines), *Q2cF* (gins) 91 Adieu, adieu, adieu] Hamlet adue, adue, adue *Q1*; Adue, adue, *Hamlet F* SD] *Q1F* 93 Hold, hold] hold *F*

But bear me swiftly up. Remember thee?
Ay, thou poor ghost, whiles memory holds a seat
In this distracted globe. Remember thee?
Yea, from the table of my memory
I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past
That youth and observation copied there
And thy commandment all alone shall live
Within the book and volume of my brain
Unmixed with baser matter. Yes, by heaven,
O most pernicious woman,
O villain, villain, smiling damned villain,
My tables! Meet it is I set it down
That one may smile and smile and be a villain –

95 **swiftly** Presumably the implication is that Hamlet will move quickly to his revenge (see 29–31), but most editors prefer F's 'stiffely' meaning 'strongly', which is supported by *H5* 3.1.7: 'Stiffen the sinews.'

96–7 **whiles . . . globe** (1) while [my] memory has any power over my shattered frame; (2) while memory [in general] is a force in this disordered world. Yet a third meaning may have occurred to the earliest auditors at the Globe.

98 **table** Hamlet envisages his memory as a wax writing tablet on which items can be inscribed or erased (see 107 and *Son* 122).

99 **fond** foolish
records (stressed on second syllable) recollections

100 **saws of books** commonplaces or maxims copied from books
forms . . . pressures familiar formulas and impressions: literally shapes drawn on the tablet. See 'to show . . . the very age and body of the time his form and pressure' (3.2.22–4).

101 'that I noted in my youth through observation'

103 Hamlet's mind is now a book – a familiar metaphor, as when Orsino tells Cesario/Viola, 'I have unclasp'd / To thee the book even of my secret soul' (*TN* 1.4.13–14); for further discussion of this metaphor, see Thompson & Thompson, 165–70.
volume in one sense synonymous with *book*, but also carrying the sense of size or spaciousness

104 **baser** less valuable

106 **damned** damnèd

107 **tables** Hamlet now produces a literal writing tablet or notebook (see *1H6* 2.4.100, 'I'll note you in my book of memory'). Earlier editors used to worry about Hamlet's apparent naïvety in feeling this trite observation was worth recording (see Var for examples).
Meet fitting, appropriate (as at 169)

108 The idea is traditional: see Chaucer's 'smylere with the knyf under the cloke' (*Knight's Tale*, 1999) and also clearly a possibility in England: see Richard of Gloucester's 'I can smile, and murder whiles I smile' (*3H6* 3.2.182).

95 swiftly] stiffely *F* 96 whiles] while *F* 104 Yes] Yes, yes *Q1F* 107 tables] *Q1*; Tables, my Tables *F*

At least I am sure it may be so in Denmark.
So, uncle, there you are. Now to my word.
It is 'Adieu, adieu, remember me.'
I have sworn't.

Enter HORATIO *and* MARCELLUS.

HORATIO
My lord, my lord!
MARCELLUS Lord Hamlet!
HORATIO Heavens secure him!
HAMLET
So be it.
MARCELLUS Illo, ho, ho, my lord!
HAMLET
Hillo, ho, ho, boy, come and come!

110 **So . . . are** Hamlet perhaps contemplates with satisfaction the note in which he has summed up his uncle's villainy. From here on the lines invite the actor to exhibit a kind of manic exhilaration (see Horatio's comment at 132). The shift from fear or horror to jocularity contrasts strangely with Brutus' response to the ghost of Caesar where he moves in 10 lines from horror at the 'monstrous apparition' which 'mak'st my blood cold and my hair to stare' to the stoical 'Well, I will see thee at Philippi then' (*JC* 4.3.275–85).
to my word i.e. I must keep my promise to the Ghost (but Hibbard and Jenkins read *word* as 'watchword' or 'motto'). Between here and 115 Hamlet may perform some private ritual of swearing before the others enter: see 114 and n.

112 F's placing of the SD indicates that we hear Horatio and Marcellus calling before they appear. In the supposed darkness of the stage, they do not see Hamlet until he answers them at 115.

113 **secure** safeguard, save (from the possibly malign influence of the Ghost)

114 **So be it** Spoken by Hamlet in Q2 where it seems to conclude his private pact with the Ghost (or perhaps just his act of writing); spoken by Marcellus in F where it is an assent to Horatio's *Heavens secure him*.

114–15 **Illo . . . Hillo** listed by *OED* as variants of holla/hallo. In all three texts the others enter hallooing or calling for Hamlet. His reply, 'ho, boy, come and come', compares their cries (perhaps mockingly) to those of a falconer calling to his preying bird to return. (F's reading makes this more obvious.)

109 I am] *Q1*; I'm *F* 111–12] *one line F* 112.1] *opp.* lord. / Hamlet. *113 Q1*; *after* Lord, my Lord. *113 F* 113 SP1] *Q1*; *Hor. & Mar. within. F* Heavens] *Q1*; Heauen *F* 114 SP1] *Mar. F* SP2] *Hor. Q1F* 115 SP] *F*; *Mar. Q1* and] boy *Q1*; bird *F*

MARCELLUS
How is't, my noble lord?
HORATIO What news, my lord?
HAMLET
O, wonderful.
HORATIO Good my lord, tell it.
HAMLET
No, you will reveal it.
HORATIO
Not I, my lord, by heaven.
MARCELLUS Nor I, my lord.
HAMLET
How say you then – would heart of man once think it? –
But you'll be secret?
HORATIO, MARCELLUS Ay, by heaven.
HAMLET
There's never a villain dwelling in all Denmark
But he's an arrant knave.
HORATIO
There needs no ghost, my lord, come from the grave
To tell us this.
HAMLET Why, right, you are in the right!
And so without more circumstance at all

116 **How is't** How is it (with you), i.e. are you all right?
117–18 **Good . . . reveal it** It becomes clear at 3.2.72–3 that Hamlet does subsequently confide in Horatio, though not, presumably, in Marcellus. Beginning with Kemble, many Hamlets have seemed distrustful of Marcellus at this point, anticipating the later distrust of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern (see Hapgood). The banality or tautology of 122–3 may indicate that Hamlet deflects what might have begun as a serious response.
120 **once** i.e. ever
123 **arrant** veritable, downright (an 'opprobrious intensive' (*OED*) always used by Shakespeare with nouns like knave, traitor, thief, whore)
124–5 **There . . . this** Horatio is disappointed by the banality of Hamlet's revelation.
124 **come** to come
126 **circumstance** elaboration of detail

118 you will] you'l *Q1F* 121 SP] *(Booth.)* heaven] heauen, my lord *Q1F* 122] *Q1F; Q2 lines* villaine, / Denmarke / never] *Q1*; nere *F* 124–5 There . . . this] *prose Q1F* 125 in the] *Q1*; i'th' *F*

I hold it fit that we shake hands and part –
You as your business and desire shall point you
(For every man hath business and desire
Such as it is) and for my own poor part
I will 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 offence, my lord.

HAMLET

Yes, by Saint Patrick, but there is, Horatio,
And much offence too. Touching this vision here
It is an honest ghost – that let me tell you.
For your desire to know what is between us
O'ermaster it as you may. And now, good friends,

127 **shake hands** a gesture (or metaphor) of parting rather than of meeting, most strikingly at *AC* 4.12.19–20: 'Fortune and Antony part here; even here / Do we shake hands.'

128 **point** direct

130 **poor** Hamlet uses this word three times from here to the end of the scene in all three texts (see 141 and 182), apparently emphasizing his relatively powerless position; unlike the experience of *every man*, his *business and desire* have been diverted by his uncle's actions.

131 **I . . . pray** Hamlet continues with the parting formulas begun at 127.

132 Horatio's response indicates that he does not approve of Hamlet's desire to put an end to the conversation.
whirling excited, extravagant

135 **Saint Patrick** Editors suggest he is appropriate, either as a saint associated with purgatory (see also Greenblatt, *Purgatory*, 233–4), or because he is supposed to have banished snakes from Ireland (see *serpent* in 39). This line (present in all three texts) is Shakespeare's only reference to the saint or the name apart from references to Friar Patrick in *TGV*.

136 **Touching** concerning

137 **honest** Hamlet claims (jocularly? certainly temporarily) to have resolved the issue he raised at 1.4.40 as to whether the Ghost is a *spirit of health* or a *goblin damned*, though its status in purgatory renders it neither angel nor devil. Perhaps *honest* just means 'genuine' or 'truthful'.

138 **what . . . us** i.e. what has passed (or been agreed) between me and the Ghost

128 desire] desiers *Q1F* 129 hath] *Q1;* ha's *F* 130 my] *Q1;* mine *F* 131 I will] ile *Q1;* Looke you, Ile *F* 132 whirling] *Q1;* hurling *F* 133 I am] *Q1;* I'm *F* 135 Horatio] *Q1;* my Lord *F* 136 too.] *Rowe;* to, *Q2,* (too,) *Q1F* 139 O'ermaster it] *Q1,* Oremastret *Q2,* O'remaster't *F*

As you are friends, scholars and soldiers,
Give me one poor request.

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

HAMLET
Never make known what you have seen tonight.

HORATIO, MARCELLUS
My lord, we will not.

HAMLET
Nay, but swear't.

HORATIO In faith, my lord, not I.

MARCELLUS
Nor I, my lord, in faith.

HAMLET Upon my sword.

MARCELLUS
We have sworn, my lord, already.

HAMLET
Indeed, upon my sword, indeed.

GHOST (*Cries under the stage.*)
Swear.

140 **friends . . . soldiers** See 1.1.11n. and Ophelia's lament at 3.1.150.

145–6 **not I . . . Nor I** Horatio and Marcellus are probably saying 'we will not make it known', not 'we will not swear', despite Hamlet's insistence at 152.

146 **Upon my sword** The hilt of a sword could be used to stand in for a crucifix, as at *R2* 1.3.179.

149 SD ***under the stage*** In the Elizabethan theatre the space under the stage was associated with hell, as for example in the dumb-show before Act 4 of Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton's *Gorboduc* (1561): 'there came from under the stage, as though out of hell, three furies.' There are several references in plays of the period to properties or characters ascending or descending through a trapdoor and to noises emanating from below (see Dessen & Thomson, 'under the stage'), though the only other example of Shakespeare's use of the latter effect is the SD '*Music of the Hoboys is under the Stage*' for the unearthly music signifying Hercules' desertion of Antony at *AC* 4.3.12. It turned out, however, not to be practicable to have the Ghost speak from under the stage at the London Globe in 2000: the actor could not be heard by the audience; nor could he hear his cues. Wherever the voice comes from, the Ghost seems to add to or even participate in Hamlet's wildness (see 110n.).

149 SD] *Ghost cries vnder the Stage. after 148; after 149 Q1; opp. 149 F*

HAMLET

Ha, ha, boy, sayst thou so? Art thou there, truepenny? 150
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.

GHOST

Swear. 155

~~HAMLET~~ [They swear.]

~~*Hic et ubique*? Then we'll shift our ground.~~
~~Come hither, gentlemen, and lay your hands~~
~~Again upon my sword. Swear by my sword~~

150 **truepenny** honest fellow; Tom Truepenny is the name of a character in Nicholas Udall's play *Ralph Roister Doister* (*c.* 1553).

151 **Come on** Hamlet presumably gestures the others to move away from the sound of the Ghost's voice.
you . . . fellow It is not clear from the dialogue whether anyone other than Hamlet does hear the Ghost, though it might be argued that if his companions can see the Ghost they can also hear him, unlike the Queen in 3.4. Q1's version of this line, 'come you here, this fellow in the selleridge', could be interpreted as an aural error ('here' for 'hear'), or it could be taken to imply that Horatio and Marcellus do not in fact hear anything.
cellarage cellars (plural), a term more appropriate to the stage than to the *platform* setting of the fiction. Hibbard suggests *cellarage* might have been a technical term for the space under the stage, though *OED* does not have any examples of such a usage; nor does it occur in Dessen and Thomson.

152 **Propose the oath** Horatio and Marcellus may be puzzled as to what exactly they are being asked to swear to, or they may merely be signalling their readiness to swear.

156 ***Hic et ubique*** here and everywhere (Latin). All three texts use an ampersand at this point, and they also agree on the spelling 'can'st' at 161, and the initial capitals in 'Gentleman' at 157, 'Mole' at 161 and 'Pioner' at 162. Ubiquity is traditionally a property shared by God and the devil. Sebastian evokes the same idea when confronted by his twin at the end of *TN*: 'I never had a brother; / Nor can there be that deity in my nature / Of here and everywhere' (5.1.222–4).

158 **Again** Jenkins, who argues that Horatio and Marcellus swear three times during this sequence, takes this as meaning that Hamlet repeats the ritual rather than that he begins again, but see 180 and n.

150 Ha, ha] *Q1;* Ah ha *F* 150–1] *prose F* 151 cellarage] *(*Sellerige*) Q1, F (*selleredge*)* 153 seen,] *(*seene*); *seene. *F* 156 *et*] *(&) Q1F* our] *Q1;* for *F* 157–9] *this edn; Q2 lines* Gentlemen / sword, / sword / heard. / *; F lines* Gentlemen, / sword, / heard: / 157 gentlemen] *(*Gentlemen*) Q1F* 158–9 Swear . . . heard] Neuer to speake of this that you haue heard: / Sweare by my Sword *F*

~~Never to speak of this that you have heard.~~

~~GHOST~~

~~Swear by his sword.~~

~~HAMLET~~

~~Well said, old mole, canst work i'th' earth so fast?~~
~~A worthy pioner! Once more remove, good friends.~~

HORATIO

O day and night, but this is wondrous strange.

HAMLET

And therefore as a stranger give it welcome:
There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy. But come,
Here as before: never – so help you mercy,
How strange or odd some'er I bear myself
(As I perchance hereafter shall think meet
To put an antic disposition on) –

159 **heard** Q1's 'seene' (as at 153) is more logical, since Horatio and Marcellus have seen the Ghost but perhaps not heard it speak unless they have heard the repeated *Swear* from 149 (see 151n.).

161–2 **mole . . . pioner** Hamlet compares the Ghost to a burrowing animal or to a soldier who digs to lay mines. De Grazia demonstrates how Hegel and Marx used Hamlet's metaphor of the mole to represent the emergence of modern consciousness (de Grazia, 'Teleology'; and see pp. 26–9).

162 **pioner** We preserve this Q2 spelling to distinguish the military sense (see 161–2n.) from the modern 'pioneer' (see also *enginer* at 3.4.204).

164 Hamlet alludes to the proverb 'Give the stranger welcome' (Dent, S914). He predicts his own *strange* behaviour at 168.

166 **your** Probably used colloquially (Blake, 3.3.4.5c) in a general rather than a personal sense (see *Your worm* at 4.3.21 and *your water* at 5.1.161–2), though actors sometimes stress *your*, implying an attack on Horatio's (limited) beliefs about the natural world. (F's 'our' is assumed to be an error by Edwards but not by Hibbard.)

166–77 **But . . . me** The syntax is disjointed in all three texts, perhaps reflecting Hamlet's distraction as he both interrupts and repeats himself.

167 **never . . . mercy** 'never, as you hope to obtain [God's] mercy'

168 **How . . . some'er** howsoever, however (see 1.2.247n.)

169 **think meet** decide, see fit

170 **antic disposition** wild, fantastic or clownish manner or behaviour. *OED* records this as its second instance of *antic* in this sense, the first being in Marlowe's *Edward II* where Gaveston imagines that 'My men like Satyres grazing on the lawnes, / Shall with their Goate feete daunce an antic hay' (1.1.59–60).

159 heard] *F;* seene *Q1* 160] Sweare. *Q1F* 161 mole] *(*Mole*) Q1F* canst] *(*can'st*) Q1F* earth] *Q1;* ground *F* 162 pioner] *(*Pioner*) Q1F* 166 your] *Q1;* our *F* 168 some'er] *(*so mere*);* soere *Q1;* so ere *F*

That you at such times seeing me never shall
With arms encumbered thus, or this headshake,
Or by pronouncing of some doubtful phrase
As 'Well, well, we know', or 'We could an if we would',
Or 'If we list to speak', or 'There be an if they might',
Or such ambiguous giving out to note
That you know aught of me. This do swear,
So grace and mercy at your most need help you.

GHOST

Swear.

HAMLET

Rest, rest, perturbed spirit. So, gentlemen,
With all my love I do commend me to you,
And what so poor a man as Hamlet is
May do t'express his love and friending to you

172 Hamlet enacts gestures which would characterize one who has a secret s/he is prepared to reveal.
encumbered folded (?), a unique usage of the word (which occurs in all three texts). The following *thus* calls for a gesture that will clarify the meaning.
173 **doubtful** ambiguous
174 **Well, well** Jenkins sees this duplication in Q2 and Q1 as having 'all the air of an actor's repetition'.
could . . . would could [tell] if we wanted to
174, 175 **an if** if (intensive). All three texts have 'and if' but editorial convention prefers *an* in contexts where 'and' could be misleading: see *OED conj.* 2c.
175 **list** wished
There . . . might 'There are those (namely ourselves) who could explain if they chose to'
176 **giving out** pronouncement (as at 35)
to note to indicate. *To* is redundant, since *note* is governed by *never shall* in 171.
177 **This do swear** Hamlet cuts through the syntactical confusion (see 166–77n.) by starting again. Q1 and F resolve this problem differently by substituting 'this not to doe' for Q2's 'this doe sweare'.
178 'as you hope for grace and mercy to help you when you need them most'
180 **Rest . . . spirit** The Ghost is able to rest once revenge has been sworn (or, ideally, accomplished: see Brutus' dying words, 'Caesar, now be still', at *JC* 5.5.50). The implication is that Horatio and Marcellus have taken an oath by now, though none of the three texts indicates precisely when this happens.
183 **friending** friendship; Shakespeare's only usage of this word (also in F)

171 times] *Q1;* time *F* 172 this] *Q1;* thus, *F* 174 Well, well] *Q1;* well *F* 175 they] *Q1;* there *F* 177–8 do swear, . . . you.] not to doe, so grace, and mercie / At your most need helpe you, sweare / *Q1;* not to doe: / So grace and mercy at your most neede helpe you: / Sweare. *F* 181 With all] (Withall), *F;* In all *Q1*

God willing shall not lack. Let us go in together
And still your fingers on your lips, I pray.
The time is out of joint; O cursed spite
That ever I was born to set it right!
Nay, come, let's go together. *Exeunt.*

[2.1] *Enter old* POLONIUS *with his man* [REYNALDO] *or two.*

POLONIUS
Give him this money and these notes, Reynaldo.

185 **still** always
fingers . . . lips as a sign of secrecy
186–7 Some performers make this a kind of aside in which Hamlet speaks to himself (see Hapgood). The metaphor is from the practice of setting broken bones to mend.
186 **The time** the age, i.e. things in general
cursed cursèd
spite ill or outrageous fortune
188 **Nay, come** Presumably the others wait for Hamlet to precede them offstage but he insists on their going together. See his previous insistence that Horatio is his friend, not his servant, and that the relationship between them all is one of love, not duty (1.2.163, 252).
2.1 The three texts: this scene runs to 64 lines in Q1 (scene 6) and 117 lines in Q2 and F. The general gist of it is much the same in each but virtually all the speeches are shorter in Q1, whose verse before Ofelia's entry is very irregular. Location and timing: presumably the scene, like 1.3, takes place in the house of Polonius. 'Shakespeare gives several indications of a lapse of time between Acts 1 and 2. Laertes is settled in Paris, Ophelia has refused to see Hamlet or receive his letters (Scene 1). The King and Queen have been alarmed by Hamlet's behaviour and have sent for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who have reached Elsinore. The ambassadors have been to Norway and have returned (Scene 2)' (Edwards). On a literalist interpretation, it may be that two months have elapsed, given that at 3.2.121 Ophelia claims it is *twice two months* since the death of Hamlet's father, but Hamlet's *two months* at 1.2.138 could be merely rhetorical.
0.1–2 Q2's entry direction has been taken as evidence that the text derives from an authorial manuscript: '*old Polonius*' elaborates on his first appearance in 1.2 and '*his man or two*' indicates uncertainty at the time of composition but, as the scene stands, only one *man* is needed.
*REYNALDO See List of Roles, 8n.
1 **him** The audience or reader's guess that Polonius is talking about his son Laertes is confirmed in his speech at 6–15.
notes messages, letters (perhaps letters of introduction?); not 'banknotes', which is a later usage

2.1] *Q6; Actus Secundus. F; not in Q2/1* 0.1–2] *Enter Corambis, and Montano. Q1; Enter Polonius, and Reynoldo. F* 0.1 REYNALDO] *this edn* 1 this] *Q1;* his *F*

REYNALDO I will, my lord.
POLONIUS
You shall do marvellous wisely, good Reynaldo,
Before you visit him to make inquire
Of his behaviour.
REYNALDO My lord, I did intend it.
POLONIUS
Marry, well said, very well said. Look you, sir,
Inquire me first what ~~Danskers are~~ in Paris,
And how, and who, what means, and where they keep,
What company, at what expense, and finding
~~By this encompassment and drift of question~~

2 **my lord** Reynaldo's use of this mode of address in all but one of his 13 one-line speeches might seem to indicate a sycophantic attitude, but Gérard Depardieu made him a sinister, powerful character in his memorable cameo in Branagh's 1996 film. On stage, Alec Guinness is credited with 'discovering' the role in the London Old Vic production directed by Tyrone Guthrie in 1937 with Laurence Olivier as Hamlet (see Trewin, xii and 47).
3 **shall do** should be sure to do
marvellous used adverbially: marvellously, wonderfully. The Q2 and F spellings (see t.n.) probably reflect disyllabic pronunciation: the word appears as 'maruel's' in both texts of *TC* at 1.2.133; see also 'trauells' for 'travailous' at Q1622 *Oth* (1.3.140).
4 **inquire** an example of a verb used as a noun without the usual *-y* suffix, a frequent phenomenon in Early Modern English defined by modern linguists as 'zero-morpheme derivation' (see Hope, 1.2.8 and Glossary).
6 **Look you, sir** i.e. take care you do this. Polonius seems anxious to insist on Reynaldo's attention, as at 15.
7 **me** for me (ethical dative: see Hope, 1.3.2i)
Danskers Danes. Spencer calls this an 'unusually correct' form, though some have argued that it really means 'citizens of Gdansk or Danzig' (a city now in Poland, well known to travelling English actors in Shakespeare's time); this is the only example listed in *OED*, though there is a cross-reference to Spenser's description of Concord in the Temple of Venus: 'for on her head a crowne / She wore much like vnto a Danisk hood' (*FQ*, 4.10.31), where 'Danisk' apparently means Danish.
8 **how** i.e. how they live
what means what are their resources
keep live, frequent
10 **encompassment and drift** 'perhaps two techniques, but not really parallel' (Wright, 176, who identifies this as hendiadys and notes that Polonius over-uses the device, as does Laertes at 1.3.11–43).
encompassment act of encompassing, i.e. of talking around the topic (a Shakespearean coinage: see 1.2.93n.)
drift general direction (as at 37)

3 marvellous] (meruiles), *Q3*; maruels *F*; marv'lous *Oxf* 4 to make inquire] you make inquiry *F*

If ~~That~~ they do know my son, come you more nearer
~~Than your particular demands will touch it;~~
~~Take you as 'twere some distant knowledge of him;~~
As thus, 'I know his father and his friends
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 he's very wild,
Addicted so and so', and there put on him
What forgeries you please. ~~Marry, none so rank~~
~~As may dishonour him – take heed of that –~~
For ~~But,~~ sir, such wanton, wild and usual slips
As are companions noted and most known
To youth and liberty.
REYNALDO As gaming, my lord?
POLONIUS
Ay, or drinking, fencing, swearing,
whoring Quarrelling, ~~drabbing~~ – you may go so far.

11–12 **come . . . demands** 'approach the topic more closely than these particular questions'
more nearer an emphatic double comparative: see Hope, 1.2.3.
13 **Take you** you may assume
15 **do . . . this** are you paying attention to this
19 **Addicted . . . so** devoted to such and such pursuits or pastimes. *Addicted* has no pejorative implication.
20 **forgeries** fabrications, inventions
rank offensive; see other uses of *rank* and *ranker* at 1.2.136, 3.2.250, 3.3.36, 3.4.90 and 150 and 4.4.21.
22 **usual slips** common flaws or failings
23 **noted** well known, notorious
24 **youth and liberty** the unrestrained behaviour of young men (hendiadys)
gaming gambling
25 **fencing** While the ability to fence was valued in young aristocrats in Elizabethan England, fencing schools were seen as a typical resort of the wilder kind of young men; see Sir Andrew Aguecheek's regret: 'I would I had bestowed that time in the tongues [languages] that I have in fencing, dancing and bearbaiting' (*TN* 1.3.90–2).
26 **Quarrelling** For satirical accounts of the elaborate codes of quarrelling practised by young men of Shakespeare's time, see Touchstone's account of a quarrel 'upon the seventh cause' (*AYL* 5.4.45–101) and Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist* (1610), 3.3, where young Kastril arrives in London to learn how to quarrel.
drabbing patronizing prostitutes

14 As] *Q1*; And *F*

REYNALDO My lord, that would dishonour him.
POLONIUS
Faith, as you may season it in the charge.
~~You must not put another scandal on him~~
~~That he is open to incontinency~~
~~That's not my meaning – but breathe his faults so~~
~~quaintly~~
That they may seem the taints of liberty,
The flash and outbreak of a fiery mind,
~~A savageness in unreclaimed blood~~
~~Of general assault.~~
REYNALDO But my good lord –
POLONIUS
Wherefore should you do this?
REYNALDO Ay, my lord,
I would know that.
POLONIUS Marry, sir, here's my drift –
~~And I believe it is a fetch of wit~~

(drabs). Polonius' assumption that this last accusation in particular will not harm his son's reputation is in stark contrast to the attitude both he and Laertes have shown towards Ophelia's *honour* in 1.3: an example of the 'double standard' whereby men are granted a sexual licence denied to women.

28 'not necessarily, that depends on how you can modify (make light of) the accusation'

30 **incontinency** Polonius seems to be drawing a distinction between acceptable and unacceptable levels of sexual licence (Edwards argues that he thinks naïvely that Laertes may visit prostitutes without actually having sex with them).

31 **quaintly** artfully ('quaint' does not come to mean 'old-fashioned' until late in the eighteenth century)

32 **taints of liberty** faults of too much freedom

33 This indulgent view of Laertes' misdemeanours is expressed in the same terms as Lepidus' excuses for Antony: 'His faults, in him, seem as the spots of heaven, / More fiery by night's blackness' (*AC* 1.4.12–13). See also 5.2.234n.

34 a wildness typical of immature spirits

unreclaimed unreclaimèd; untamed, wild. (See *RJ* 4.2.47, where Capulet rejoices that 'this same wayward girl is so reclaimed'.)

35 **Of general assault** which assails or affects most men

38 **fetch of wit** witty stratagem. Jenkins suggests that Q2's *wit* is a misreading of an abbreviation for F's 'warrant' (meaning 'approved'), as 'wait' is at 3.4.5.

28 Faith] Faith no *F* 34–5 A . . . assault] *one line F* 36–7 Ay . . . that] *Steevens*^{2}*; one line Q2F* 38 wit] warrant *F*

You laying these slight sallies on my son
~~As 'twere a thing a little soiled with working,~~
Mark you, your party in converse (him you would sound)
~~Having ever~~ seen in the ~~prenominate~~ crimes
The youth you breathe of guilty, be assured
He closes with you in this consequence:
'Good sir' (or so), or 'friend' or 'gentleman',
~~According to the phrase or the addition~~
~~Of man and country.~~

REYNALDO Very good, my lord.

POLONIUS
And then, sir, does 'a this, 'a does –
What was I about to say? By the mass, I was about to say something! Where did I leave?

39 **sallies** attacks, criticisms; F's 'sulleyes' means blemishes; either seems acceptable (see also 1.2.129n.).
40 'as if he were an object that had become somewhat dirtied with handling'. Jenkins adopts F's 'i'th' working'.
41 **Mark you** an extrametrical interjection, like *See you now* at 59; some editors print it as a separate line.
your . . . converse the person with whom you are conversing (*converse* is stressed on the second syllable)
him . . . sound he whom you wish to probe
42–3 Polonius' word order is convoluted: 'in the prenominate crimes' depends on 'guilty'.
42 **Having ever** if he has ever
prenominate aforementioned
43 **breathe of** speak about
44 **closes . . . consequence** confides in you as follows
45 **or so** or whatever
46 **phrase** form of words
addition form of address or title. *TxC* speculates that Q2's 'addistion' may have meant 'addiction', used in the sense of 'inclination' at *H5* 1.1.54 and *Oth* 2.2.6.
48–50 Most recent editors (including Jenkins, Edwards, Hibbard) treat this entire speech as prose. We assume rather that Polonius begins in verse, consistently with the preceding dialogue, then lapses into prose when he realizes he has lost his thread.
48 **'a** he (as at 56). See 3.3.73
49–50 **What . . . leave** Some performers of Polonius tease the audience by seeming genuinely to forget their lines here. (See 2.2.349n.; and pp. 42–3 on the play's self-consciousness about issues of memory.)
49 **By the mass** a mild oath, not unusual in a play with a Protestant setting, like *By'r Lady* at 2.2.363 (though this one is expurgated in F)

39 sallies] sulleyes *Q3, F* 40 with] i'th' *F;* wi' th' *Alexander* 46 or] and *F* addition] *F;* addistion *Q2* 48–50] *this edn; Q2 lines* say? / something, / leaue? */ ; F lines* this? / say? / leaue? / 48 'a this,] he this? *F* 'a does –] He does: *F* 49 By the mass] *om. F*

REYNALDO At 'closes in the consequence'.

POLONIUS

At 'closes in the consequence', ay, marry.
He closes thus: 'I know the gentleman,
I saw him yesterday, or th'other day,
Or then, or then, with such or such, and as you say
There was 'a gaming, there o'ertook in's rouse,
~~There falling out at tennis', or perchance~~
'I saw him enter such a house of sale',
Videlicet a brothel, or so forth. See you now
Your bait of falsehood take this carp of truth,
And thus do we of wisdom and of reach,
~~With windlasses and with assays of bias~~,
By indirections find directions out:
So by my former lecture and advice

51 Some performers of Reynaldo have been taking notes and read back from them here. Jenkins argues that F's additional line (see t.n.) is an actor's interpolation and Polonius ignores it.

56 ***o'ertook in's rouse** overcome while carousing (i.e. drunk); F's reading and punctuation seem more idiomatic than Q2's.

57 **tennis** like fencing (see 25 and n.), notorious for attracting the wilder young men; see Prince Hal's claim that the tennis-court keeper will be familiar with the minimal supply of shirts owned by Poins (*2H4* 2.2.16–19).

59 ***Videlicet*** namely, that is to say (Latin); Q1's 'viz'. may indicate that the word was shortened to the standard abbreviation in performance.

60 **carp** a freshwater fish, often attaining considerable age and size. Q2's *take* follows on from *See* in 59: 'watch your bait catch'.

61 **we . . . reach** we who are wise and have wide-ranging comprehension

62 **windlasses** Literally, a windlass is a winching mechanism; metaphorically, 'to windlass' could mean to decoy or snare an animal by making a circuitous leeward approach. MacDonald asks 'Would it be absurd to suggest that, so-doing, the hunter "laces the wind"? Shakspere [*sic*] . . . speaks of "threading [dark-eyed] night" [*KL* 2.1.119].' Golding uses 'windlass' in a simile comparing a man's movements with those of a fox (7.1015; he also uses it of Mercury at 2.891).
assays of bias indirect attempts; the metaphor is from lawn bowls, where the *bias* is a weight which causes the bowl to take a curved path towards its target.

63 'by indirect methods find out the way things are going'. Dent cites 'Tell a lie and find a truth' as proverbial (L237).

64 **lecture** lesson, teaching

51 At 'closes] *F*; He closeth with him *Q1* consequence'.] consequence: / At friend, or so, and Gentleman. *F* 53 closes] closeth with him *Q1*; closes with you *F* 54 th'other] tother *Q1F* 55 such or] such and *F* 56 'a] he *F* gaming, there] *F*; gaming there, *Q2* o'ertook] *F* (o'retooke); or tooke *Q2* 59 *Videlicet*] (Videlizet), *F*; viz. *Q1* 60 take] takes *F* carp] Cape *F*

Shall you my son. You have me, have you not?

REYNALDO

My lord, I have.

POLONIUS God buy ye, fare ye well.

~~REYNALDO Good my lord.~~

~~POLONIUS~~

~~Observe his inclination in yourself.~~

~~REYNALDO~~

~~I shall, my lord~~.

~~POLONIUS~~ ~~And let him ply his music~~.

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.

POLONIUS

With what, i'th' name of God?

OPHELIA

My lord, as I was sewing in my closet

65 **have me** comprehend me

66 **God buy ye** a not uncommon abbreviation of 'God be with you' ('goodbye') found in both Q2 (see 2.2.484 and 4.5.192) and F; Hibbard points out the potential for confusion with the meaning 'God redeem you'.

68 Variously interpreted: 'accommodate yourself to his bent' (Jenkins); 'do yourself as he is inclined' (Hibbard); 'observe [his habits] personally' (Edwards). The last seems most likely.

69 **ply his music** attend to his study of music – another gentlemanly skill

71 SD1 Jenkins defends the placing of Reynaldo's '*Exit*' before Polonius' *Farewell* (in all three texts) on the grounds that characteristically the latter is thinking of further things to say.

74–97 This encounter is described, not staged, in all three texts, but some productions (and films) presented it in dumb-show, and it became a popular subject for illustration. Its attraction may be the opportunity to present Hamlet in disordered dress (see 2.2.164.1n.).

74 **closet** as in 3.4, a private chamber

66 ye . . . ye] you . . . you *F* 71 SD1] *Dyce (after Singer); opp. 70 Q21F* SD2] *Singer; after 70 Q21F* 72 O my lord,] Alas *F* 73 i'th'] in the *F* God] Heauen *F* 74 closet] Chamber *F*

Lord Hamlet, with his doublet all unbraced,
~~No hat upon his head, his stockings fouled,~~
~~Ungartered and down-gyved to his ankle,~~
Pale as his shirt, his knees knocking each other,
And with a look so piteous in purport
As if he had been loosed out of hell
To speak of horrors, he comes before me.

POLONIUS
Mad for thy love?

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 arm

used for prayer, reading, etc.; not necessarily a bedroom. F's 'Chamber' evokes a similar location, but Q1's 'gallery' (6.42) would be a more public space. (See 3.2.323n. and Jardine, Orlin and Stewart on the meaning of *closet* in Elizabethan England.)

75–7 **doublet . . . ankle** See Rosalind's taunting of Orlando on how a genuine lover should appear: 'your hose should be ungartered, your bonnet unbanded, your sleeve unbuttoned, your shoe untied, and every thing about you demonstrating a careless desolation' (*AYL* 3.2.369–72).

75 **doublet** jacket. Shakespeare here as elsewhere imagines his characters as being dressed in English Elizabethan clothes; see, for example, Caska's description of Caesar's action: 'he pluck'd me ope his doublet and offer'd them his throat to cut' (*JC* 1.2.260–2).
unbraced unfastened, expressing vulnerability as well as carelessness (see Cassius' claim to have 'thus unbraced . . . bared my bosom to the thunder-stone', *JC* 1.3.48–9)

76 **No . . . head** Elizabethans normally wore hats indoors; see some play on this at 5.2.79–90.
fouled unwashed

77 Garters are bands, worn above or below the knee, to hold stockings up, and it is the stockings that would be *down-gyved* – falling down and resembling *gyves* or fetters.
down-gyved down-gyvèd (a Shakespearean coinage)

79–81 At this point the otherwise slightly comic picture of the melodramatic lover becomes frightening: Hamlet, for the audience, if not for Ophelia, resembles his father's Ghost.

79 **in purport** in its implications

80 **loosed** loosèd; released

85 'then he stepped back an arm's length'

77 down-gyved] *F2;* downe gyved *Q2F;* downe gyred *Q3* 82–3 My . . . it] *one line F*

And with his other hand thus o'er his brow
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 piteous and profound
~~As~~ it did seem to shatter all his bulk
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)
And to the last bended their light on me.

POLONIUS

Come, go with me: I will go seek the King.
This is the very ecstasy of love,
~~Whose violent property fordoes itself~~
~~And leads the will to desperate undertakings~~
~~As oft as any passions under heaven~~
~~That does afflict our natures.~~ I am sorry –
What, have you given him any hard words of late?

86, 90 **thus** Presumably Ophelia imitates Hamlet's gestures.
87 **perusal** detailed examination
88 **As** as if
92 **bulk** frame, body; see 1.3.12 and *R3* 1.4.40, where Clarence imagines the sea smothering his soul 'within my panting bulk'.
97 **bended their light** i.e. focused their attention
98 **Come . . . me** Ophelia does not appear in the next scene in Q2 and F when Polonius relates this matter to the King; she is given an entry direction but no dialogue until much later in the equivalent scene in Q1. See also 114.
99 **ecstasy** madness
100 'whose capacity for violence causes self-destruction'
101 **desperate** despairing (perhaps suicidal)
102 **passions** Jenkins adopts F's 'passion'.
103, 108 **I am sorry** Ophelia's account has given her the temporary solace that her father now believes in the sincerity of Hamlet's affection and regrets the scepticism he displayed in 1.3; some performers of Polonius display affection here.

88 'a] he *F* 92 As] That *F* 94 shoulder] *Q1;* shoulders *Q3, F* 96 helps] helpe *Q1F* 98 Come] *om. F* 102 passions] passion *F*

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.
I am sorry that with better heed and judgement
I had not ~~quoted~~ him. I feared he did but trifle
And meant to wrack thee – but beshrew my jealousy –
~~By heaven it is as proper to our age~~
~~To cast beyond ourselves in our opinions~~
~~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 move
More grief to hide than hate to utter love.
Come. *Exeunt.*

106–7 **denied / His access** Modern English would say 'denied him access'.
107 **That . . . mad** Polonius is confident of the cause of Hamlet's behaviour but an audience or reader may wonder whether it is a manifestation of the *antic disposition* he promised to adopt (1.5.170) – in which case it might seem a cruel experiment.
109 ***quoted** Q2's 'coted' may mean 'outstripped', i.e. outmanoeuvred, as at 2.2.283, which is just about acceptable. But 'coted' is a frequent Shakespearean spelling of 'quoted', the F reading, which means 'observed' or 'judged' and makes better sense in the context.
trifle play (with your affection)
110 **wrack** ruin (by seducing)
beshrew my jealousy shame upon (i.e. I now regret) my suspicions
111 **proper to** appropriate to, characteristic of
112 **cast beyond ourselves** overreach ourselves, i.e. read too much into things. Johnson comments, 'This is not the remark of a weak man'; Polonius shows more self-awareness and humility here than some performers and critics allow him.
114 **Come . . . King** See 98n.
115 **known** i.e. made known (to the King)
close secret
115–16 **might . . . love** i.e. it might cause more pain to hide this love than distress to reveal it.

108 heed] speed *F* 109 quoted] *(coted), F* feared] feare *F* 111 By heaven] *Q1;* It seemes *F* 117 Come] *om. F*

[2.2] *Flourish. Enter* KING *and* QUEEN, ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN [*and other Courtiers*] 2.2.0.1 *and*] *om. F*

KING

Welcome, dear Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.
Moreover that we much did long to see you
The need we have to use you did provoke
Our hasty sending. Something have you heard
Of Hamlet's transformation – so call it
Sith nor th'exterior nor the inward man
Resembles that it was. What it should be
More than his father's death, that thus hath put him
So much from th'understanding of himself
I cannot dream of. I entreat you both

2.2 The three texts: this scene runs to 435 lines in Q1 (scene 7), 540 lines in Q2 and 600 lines in F, making it the longest scene in the play in all three texts, though Q1's versions of the various segments of the scene are all abbreviated. F extends Hamlet's conversation with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern (see 234–5n., 299n. and Appendix 1). Q1 differs radically from the other texts in containing in this scene, between Hamlet's *fishmonger* conversation with Polonius/Corambis and his first meeting with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, his 'To be or not to be' soliloquy and his encounter with Ophelia, which are delayed until the next scene in Q2 and F (see 164.1n.). Location and timing: like 1.2, this scene is assumed to take place in a formal, indoor Court setting, referred to as *the lobby* at 158, though some references later suggest an outdoor setting (see 158n.). From the arrival of Polonius with his offer of news about Hamlet at 46–9, we may deduce that it takes place very soon after 2.1; the announcement of the return of the ambassadors at 40 marks the passage of time since their departure at 1.2.41.

0.1–2 ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN See List of Roles, 11n. and 12n.

0.2 ***other Courtiers*** Although Q2 mentions only Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, the presence of at least one other is implied by the Queen's addressing *some of you* at 36.

2 **Moreover** in addition to the fact

4 **sending** sending for you, summoning of you

5 **transformation** Polonius more bluntly calls it *lunacy* at 49.
so call it i.e. so we may call it

6 **Sith nor** because neither

7–10 **What . . . of** The King seems here completely confident that his own crime has not been discovered.

10 **dream** F's 'deeme' is defended by Hibbard as meaning 'judge, decide'.

2.2] *F (Scena Secunda.); not in Q2Q1* 0.1 *Flourish.*] *not in Q1F* ROSENCRANTZ] *throughout play, Malone; Rosencraus Q2; Rossencraft Q1; Rosincran[c]e F and*] *om. F* 0.2 GUILDENSTERN] *throughout play Q6, Q2 (Guyldensterne), F (Guildensterne); Gilderstone Q1* 0.2 *and other Courtiers*] *this edn; not in Q2Q1; Cum alijs F* 5 so] so I *F* 6 Sith nor] Since not *F* 10 dream] deeme *F*

That, being of so young days brought up with him
And sith so neighboured to his youth and haviour,
That you vouchsafe your rest here in our Court
Some little time, so by your companies
To draw him on to pleasures and to gather
So much as from occasion you may glean,
Whether aught to us unknown afflicts him thus
That opened lies within our remedy.

QUEEN

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

ROSENCRANTZ Both your majesties
Might by the sovereign power you have of us

11 **of** from
12 **sith** possibly temporal (= 'since'), but also causal (= 'because')
neighboured to familiar with. Q2's spelling (see t.n.) probably reflects pronunciation: see Holofernes' discussion of this point in *LLL* 5.1.22–3.
youth and haviour youthful behaviour (hendiadys)
13 **That** The King repeats *That* from 11.
vouchsafe your rest consent to remain
14 **your companies** the company of both of you (like *your modesties* at 246)
15 **draw . . . to** encourage him to participate in
16 **occasion** opportunity
glean pick up (the metaphor is from collecting the remains of grain from a recently reaped field)
18 **opened** revealed
20 **is** Verb endings in *-s* or *-es* for plural subjects are common in Shakespeare: see Hope, 2.1.8.
21 **more adheres** is more closely bound (by friendship). The Queen seems to share the King's confidence that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Hamlet's closest friends, raising another question about the role of Horatio (List of Roles, 10n., 11n. and 12n.).
22 **gentry** courtesy
24 **supply . . . hope** help and advancement of what we hope for
27 **of us** over us, concerning us; see Blake, 5.4.2, *of*.

12 sith] since *F* neighboured] *(*nabored*), F* haviour] humour *F* 16 occasion] Occasions *F* 17] *om. F* 20 is] are *F*

Put your dread pleasures more into command
Than to entreaty.

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

KING
Thanks, Rosencrantz, and gentle Guildenstern.

QUEEN
Thanks, Guildenstern, and gentle Rosencrantz.
And I beseech you instantly to visit
My too much changed son. ~~Go some of you~~
~~And bring these gentlemen where Hamlet is.~~

GUILDENSTERN
Heavens make our presence and our practices
Pleasant and helpful to him.

QUEEN Ay, amen.

Exeunt Rosencrantz, Guildenstern [*and one or more Courtiers*].

28 **your dread pleasures** i.e. the desires of you who can cause dread or fear. Edwards notes this as a comic extension of the common phrase 'my dread lord'.
into into the form of
29 **both** This could relate either to the courtiers ('we both obey you') or to the King and Queen ('we obey you both').
30 **in . . . bent** completely, to the full extent; the metaphor is from bending a bow.
33–4 In all three texts the Queen repeats the King's thanks, reversing the order of the names. In performance her line was frequently omitted from 1676 onwards. The reversal can be played simply as an example of courtesy, giving the two courtiers equal priority, or as a correction of the King, who has got the names wrong. In Tom Stoppard's play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1967) it is Rosencrantz himself who first confuses the names when the two men introduce themselves to the Players and the confusion continues throughout the play. (In a talk given in Bochum in 2000, the dramatist Peter Whelan recalled playing 'either Rosencrantz or Guildenstern' in an early one-act version of Stoppard's play which was then called *Guildenstern and Rosencrantz Are Dead*.)
36 **changed** changèd
some of you one of you; *some* can be used as an indefinite singular pronoun (Blake, 3.3.2.7j); see *R2* 4.1.268: 'Go some of you, and fetch a looking-glass.'
38 **practices** activities (but, as Edwards points out, the word could also mean 'stratagems', as at 4.7.65)
39 SD One additional courtier would be

29 But] *om. F* 31 service] Seruices *F* 36] *F lines* Sonne. / ye, / you] ye *F* 37 these] the *F* 39 Ay] *om. F* SD *Exeunt . . . Guildenstern*] *(Exeunt Ros. and Guyld.); Exit. F, after* him *and . . . Courtiers*] *this edn; Attendants with them / Capell*

Enter POLONIUS.

POLONIUS
Th'ambassadors from Norway, my good lord,
Are joyfully returned.
KING
Thou still hast been the father of good news.
POLONIUS
Have I, my lord? I assure my good liege
I hold my duty as I hold my soul,
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 sure
As it hath used to do, that I have found
The very cause of Hamlet's lunacy.
KING
O, speak of that, that do I long to hear.
POLONIUS
Give first admittance to th'ambassadors.
My news shall be the fruit to that great feast.

enough – see 36n. – but since Capell 'Attendants' have often been specified (perhaps because *some* at 36 has been misunderstood).

39.1 In Q1 Polonius/Corambis is accompanied by Ofelia, as we might expect from the end of the previous scene, but she does not speak until Hamlet addresses her after 'To be or not to be'.

41 **joyfully** i.e. bearing a positive report

42 **still** always

43 F's reading (see t.n.) is preferable metrically (see Hibbard, who prints 'I assure you my good liege' on the grounds that Q2 omits 'you' while F omits 'I').

45 **and to** Citing F's 'one to', MacDonald writes: 'I cannot tell which is the right reading: if the [second] Quarto's, it means "I hold my duty precious as my soul, whether to my God or my king"; if the Folio's, it is a little confused by the attempt of Polonius to make a fine euphuistic speech: – "I hold my duty as I hold my soul – both at the command of my God, one at the command of my king".' The F reading is not popular, though it would provide editors with a differentiation they are keen to make between worldly and divine devotion.

47 **Hunts . . . policy** follows the track of the (political) investigation (the analogy is that of a man or dog tracking prey). *Policy*, like *practices* at 38, was often used with negative connotations; see Mowbray's statement in *2H4* that the King's offer of terms to the rebels 'proceeds from policy, not love' (4.1.148).

52 **fruit** sweet conclusion, dessert

43 ²I . . . liege] I assure your grace *Q1*; Assure you, my good Liege *F* 45 and] *Q1*; one *F* 48 it hath] it had *Q1*; I haue *F* 50 do I] I do *F* 52 fruit] Newes *F*

KING

Thyself do grace to them and bring them in.
He tells me, my dear Gertrude, he hath found
The head and source of all your son's distemper.

QUEEN

I doubt it is no other but the main –
His father's death and our hasty marriage.

KING

Well, we shall sift him.

Enter VOLTEMAND *and* CORNELIUS.

Welcome, my good friends.
Say, Voltemand, what from our brother Norway?

VOLTEMAND

Most fair return of greetings and desires.

53 **do grace to them** give them a courtly welcome. Polonius may exit here, or he may just go to one of the stage doors to summon the ambassadors.

54 **dear Gertrude** Edwards prefers this Q2 reading to F's 'sweet Queene', which he sees as an example of a playhouse scribe attempting to maintain the decorum of royalty at the expense of domestic intimacy.

55 **head** origin (as in 'well-head')
distemper illness, being 'out of temper'

56–7 The Queen's straightforward analysis contrasts with the King's claims at 7–10 and 17 that he is completely mystified. It may be significant that in this private moment she says nothing of the murder, perhaps because she is unaware of it.

56 **doubt** suspect
main major cause

57 F's 'our o're-hasty' is generally adopted (e.g. by Jenkins), but Jennens retains Q2, which requires *our* to be disyllabic (see *hour* at 1.4.3).

58 **sift him** examine him (Polonius) closely

58 SD The King addresses Voltemand by name immediately; he is the only one to speak in this scene in all three texts, but we may assume his companion is Cornelius as in 1.2. If Polonius left the stage at 53 he returns here.

59 **brother** because king (like the King of France's references to 'our brother England' at *H5* 2.4.75 and 115)

60–80 The fact that this speech is very similar in all three texts caused White ('Two *Hamlets*', 478) and others who espouse the 'reported text' theory of Q1 to argue that the actor playing Voltemand/Voltemar was involved in the reporting, or that his part was available to the reporters (see Appendix 2).

60 **return** reciprocation
desires good wishes

54 dear Gertrude] *(deere Gertrard);* sweet Queene, that *F* 57 hasty] o're-hasty *F* 58 SD] *Dyce subst.; Enter Embassadors. after 57 Q2; Enter the Ambassadors. Q1; Enter Polonius, Voltumand, and Cornelius. F* my] *om. F*

Upon our first he sent out to suppress
His nephew's levies, which to him appeared
To be a preparation 'gainst the ~~Polack;~~ Polish
But, better looked into, he truly found
It was against your highness; whereat, grieved
~~That so his sickness, age and impotence~~
~~Was falsely borne in hand~~, sends out arrests
On Fortinbras, which he in brief obeys,
Receives rebuke from Norway ~~and, in fine,~~
Makes vow before his uncle never more
To give th'assay of arms against your majesty.
~~Whereon old Norway, overcome with joy,~~
~~Gives him threescore thousand crowns in annual fee~~
~~And his commission to employ those soldiers~~
~~So levied (as before) against the Polack;~~
~~With an entreaty herein further shown~~
~~That it might please you to give quiet pass~~

61 **Upon our first** i.e. at our first meeting, or in response to our first representation of the problem
62 **His nephew's levies** the actions taken by his nephew to levy forces, or the forces levied by his nephew (i.e. the *lawless resolutes* of 1.1.97)
63 **the Polack** Poland or the King of Poland (see 1.1.62n.)
64 **truly** This adverb modifies *was* in 65.
65 **whereat** whereupon, because of this
66 **impotence** helplessness
67 **Was** The combination of illness, age and disability is treated as a single phenomenon.
Falsely . . . hand abused or deluded with incorrect information
arrests orders to cease activities
69 **in fine** finally. The phrase could also mean 'in short'.
71 **give . . . arms** make trial (*assay*) of armed combat
73 **threescore thousand crowns** The 'three thousand' of Q1/F may make more sense financially, depending on how we interpret the *twenty thousand ducats* Hamlet estimates as the cost of Fortinbras's campaign at 4.4.24. (The discrepancy is analogous to the numbers of 'talents' mentioned at different points in *Tim.*) Pope omitted *score* on metrical grounds, but Theobald responded that '2 Syllables may, by Pronounciation, be *resolv'd* and *melted* into one, as two Notes are *slur'd* in *Musick.*' (Dover Wilson assumes *him* should have been deleted; Edwards assumes *score* should have been deleted.)
fee payment, income
74 **commission** authorization
75 **as before** 'as previously [levied]', or perhaps 'as previously described'
76, 80 **herein . . . therein** Voltemand presumably produces a document detailing this request.
77 **quiet pass** peaceful (i.e. unopposed) passage

73 threescore] three *Q1F*

~~Through your dominions for this enterprise~~
~~On such regards of safety and allowance~~
~~As therein are set down.~~

KING It likes us well,
And at our more considered time we'll read,
Answer and think upon this business;
Meantime, we thank you for your well-took labour.
Go to your rest, at night we'll feast together.
Most welcome home.

Exeunt Voltemand, Cornelius [*and Courtiers*].

POLONIUS ~~This business is well ended.~~
My liege and madam, to expostulate
What majesty should be, what duty is,
Why day is day, night night, and time is time,
Were nothing but to waste night, day and time;
Therefore, brevity is the soul of wit

77–8 **pass . . . dominions** Fortinbras is taking advantage of this permission when he appears at 4.4.1 below; it is assumed that he has to go through Denmark on his route from Norway to Poland (Jenkins, LN). Eventually he is poised to take over Denmark without any fighting.
79 'with such conditions for our safety and for the permission granted'
80 **likes** pleases
81 **at . . . time** when we have more time to consider
81–2 **read . . . think** The order of the verbs seems illogical (*Answer* before *think*), but see 3.1.150 and n. Fortinbras' reference to *licence* at 4.4.2 indicates that the King does indeed *answer*.
82 **business** trisyllabic
83–4 The nearly rhyming couplet (*labour/together*) signals the King's dismissal of the ambassadors.
83 **well-took** well-undertaken
84 **at night** tonight
85 SD Hibbard argues that the attendants or *Courtiers* should also leave at this point; Jenkins keeps them on until 167, but it seems unlikely that the King, Queen and Polonius would want to discuss the state of Hamlet's mind and emotions in public.
86–104 Polonius' verbosity is usually played for laughs but it could also reflect genuine embarrassment about both Hamlet's madness and its supposed cause.
86 **expostulate** discourse upon, dilate at length; see Exeter urging the King and Queen to flee in *3H6*: 'Nay, stay not to expostulate; make speed' (2.5.135).
90 **Therefore, brevity** F's reading (see t.n.) is generally preferred (e.g. by Jenkins) as an improvement to syntax and logic. Polonius may, however, hesitate after *Therefore* as if he had meant to say something else.
wit wisdom

78 this] that *Q1*; his *F* 83 thank] *Q1Fc*; take *Fu* well-took] (well tooke), *F*, *Q1* (well / Tooke) 85 SD *Exeunt . . . Cornelius*] (*Exeunt Embassadors*) *Q1*, *Exit Ambass. F and Courtiers*] *Alexander subst.* well ended] very well dispatched *Q1*; very well ended *F* 90 Therefore] Therefore, since *F*

And tediousness the limbs and outward flourishes.
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.

QUEEN More matter with less art.

POLONIUS

Madam, I swear I use no art at all.
That he's mad, 'tis true, 'tis true 'tis pity,
And pity 'tis 'tis true: a foolish figure!
But farewell it, for I will use no art.
Mad let us grant him then, and now remains
That we find out the cause of this effect –
~~Or rather say the cause of this defect,~~
~~For this effect defective comes by cause:~~
~~Thus it remains, and the remainder thus~~ Perpend,
I have a daughter – have while she is mine –
Who in her duty and obedience, mark,
Hath given me this. Now gather and surmise.

91 **tediousness** long-windedness
93–4 Perhaps Polonius means that it would be mad to try to define madness, rather than simply label (*call*) it.
95 **matter** substance
art artfulness. Despite his denial (*let that go*), the Queen picks up on Polonius' elaborate style of speech.
97 **he's** Jenkins prefers F's 'he is', presumably on metrical grounds.
98 **figure** figure of speech. 'It is no figure at all. It is hardly even a play with the words' (MacDonald).
102 **defect** disability
103 'because this effect in Hamlet, which is a defect, does have a cause'. This play on *effect/defect* is echoed in *Eastward Ho*, 1.2.61–3: see pp. 57–8.
104 **Thus . . . thus** Picking up *remains* in 100, Polonius seems to mean something like 'This is the situation, and here is how we can explore the cause.' Jenkins comments: 'He loses the thread of his argument and nonsensically repeats himself.'
104 **Perpend** consider, pay attention (like *mark* in 106). Extrametrical; some editors give *Perpend* a separate line.
105 **while . . . mine** i.e. until she marries
107 **gather and surmise** 'understand what I am about to say and draw your own conclusion'. Some productions take *gather* literally as an invitation to the King and Queen to come closer to Polonius and look at the letter with him.

97 he's] he is *F* 98 'tis 'tis] it is *F* 104] *F; Q2 lines* thus / Perpend, / 105 while] *Q1;* whil'st *F*

[*Reads.*] *To the celestial and my soul's idol, the most beautified Ophelia* – that's an ill phrase, a vile phrase, 'beautified' is a vile phrase, but you shall hear – *thus in her excellent white bosom, these*, etc.

QUEEN

Came this from Hamlet to her?

POLONIUS

Good madam, stay awhile: I will be faithful.

108–21 This is the first of three letters from Hamlet to be read aloud during the play; see 4.6.13–28 and 4.7.43–6. Editors and critics have been troubled by the literary quality of this letter, which they see as unworthy of Hamlet; some attribute it to his *antic disposition*, though again this would seem cruel (see 2.1.107n.) and moreover it has been emphasized that Ophelia has refused to receive recent letters. In Branagh's 1996 film, and in the 1999 London Young Vic production, Ophelia, who was present in this scene (see 2.1.114n.), was required to read the letter herself. Her presence might lead some viewers to expect the Q1 placing of 'To be or not to be' (see 164.1n.). Roffe lists nine metrical and musical adaptations of this letter from 1786 to 1861 (see Appendix 6).

108–11 ***To*** **. . . etc.** Q2 indents this and prints all of it in italics, not distinguishing between what Polonius reads and his comments on it. This is clearly the superscription; the letter itself begins at 114, where Q2 has the heading 'Letter'.

109–10 **that's . . . phrase** It is not clear why Polonius finds the word *beautified* objectionable, though Hibbard suggests he may understand it as meaning 'made beautiful with cosmetics'; Shakespeare uses it straightforwardly in *TGV* when the First Outlaw describes Valentine as 'beautified / With goodly shape' (4.1.55–6), and it occurs twice in *E3*: 'Our house, my liege, is like a country swain ... yet inly beautified' (1.2.145–7) and 'Like as the wind doth beautify a sail' (2.1.280). It has been proposed that Shakespeare here recalls his offence at the description of him in Greene's *Groats-worth of Wit* (1592) as 'an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers' (Chambers, *Shakespeare*, 2.188). Q1 gives the superscription '*To the beautifull Ofelia*' after the contents of the letter.

110–11 ***thus*** **. . .** ***these*** Presumably Polonius summarizes something like 'thus I commend these words to your exceptionally white bosom'; see Proteus' (false) promise to deliver Valentine's letters 'Even in the milk-white bosom of thy love' (*TGV* 3.1.250). Jenkins, however, prefers F's 'These . . . these', arguing that both pronouns refer to the letters, and Blake gives F's reading as an example of emphatic repetition (3.3.2.4f).

etc. Either Hamlet, in writing the superscription, or, more likely, Polonius, in reading it, abbreviates the commendations.

113 **stay** wait

I . . . faithful 'I will keep my word (to tell you everything)', or perhaps 'I will

108 SD] *Q6; The Letter. F* 109–10 that's . . . hear] *roman F; italic Q2* 110 hear – *thus in*] these in *F;* hear – *These to / Rowe;* hear; – *These in / Capell;* hear. Thus: *In / Malone;* hear – *these; in Ard*^{2} 111 etc.] *(&c.); om. F; roman Q6*

[*Reads.*] *Doubt thou the stars are fire,*
Doubt that the sun doth move,
Doubt truth to be a liar,
But never doubt I love.
O dear Ophelia, I am ill at these numbers. I have not art to reckon my groans, but that I love thee best, O most best, believe it. Adieu. Thine evermore, most dear lady, ~~*whilst this machine is to him*~~, *Hamlet.*
This in obedience hath my daughter shown me;
~~And more about hath his solicitings~~
~~As they fell out, by time, by means and place,~~
~~All given to my ear.~~
KING But how hath she
Received his love?
POLONIUS What do you think of me?
KING
As of a man faithful and honourable.

read the entire letter'

114–17 The gist of this stanza is: 'You may question the unquestionable, but do not question that I love you.' The second line has given editors trouble, since it refers to the Ptolemaic belief that the sun moved around the earth – a belief that Shakespeare (if not Hamlet) knew to be outmoded.

116 ***Doubt*** The meaning of '*Doubt*' shifts from 'question' to 'suspect' here.

118 ***ill . . . numbers*** incompetent at writing these verses; Hamlet's self-doubt in this context contrasts with his confidence later in this scene that he can 'set down' 'a speech of some dozen lines, or sixteen lines' to be inserted into *The Murder of Gonzago* (477–8).

119 ***reckon*** count up, enumerate; express in verse
most best very best, absolutely best. This could be read as an intensive of the previous '*best*', or as a mode of address (apostrophe) to Ophelia herself, as F's capitalized '*Best*' might imply. 'Most' without any degree of comparison has become obsolete (Blake, 5.1.3.1v; Hope, 1.2.3).

120 ***Adieu*** farewell: the word used by the Ghost at 1.5.91 and repeated by Hamlet at 1.5.111

121 ***machine*** physical frame: the body seen as a combination of parts (as in Hamlet's speech at 269–73). This is Shakespeare's only use of the word *machine* (and *OED*'s first use of the word in a metaphorical sense); it perhaps prompted the title of Heiner Muller's 1979 adaptation, *Hamletmachine* (see p. 121).
is to belongs to (i.e. while he is alive)

123 **more about** furthermore, in addition; F's 'more aboue' is often preferred (e.g. by Jenkins).

124 **fell out** happened, took place

114 SD] *Rowe; 'Letter.' Q2, opp. 114; not in Q1F* 122 This] *F; Pol.* This *Q2* shown] shew'd *F* 123 about] aboue *F* solicitings] soliciting *F* 125–6] *Capell; Q2F line* eare. / loue? / me? /

POLONIUS

I would fain prove so. But what might you think
When I had seen this hot love on the wing –
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,-~~
~~Or given my heart a working mute and dumb,~~
~~Or looked upon this love with idle sight,~~
What might you think? No, I went round to work
And my young mistress thus I did bespeak:
'Lord Hamlet is a prince out of thy star.
This must not be.' And then I prescripts gave her
That she should lock herself from his resort,
Admit no messengers, receive no tokens;
Which done, she took the fruits of my advice,

128 **fain** willingly (as at 150)
129 **hot** impetuous, urgent
on the wing i.e. developing very quickly
130 **As** because
perceived Polonius seems here to take credit for having observed *this hot love* for himself, whereas at 1.3.90 he says to Ophelia that he has been *told* about it before she confirms it herself.
133 **played . . . table-book** 'conveyed intelligence between them' (Warburton, cited by Hibbard) or 'taken note and said nothing' (Edwards); Polonius seems to be making a distinction between some kind of active collaboration in this line and a more passive pretence of ignorance in 134–5.
desk In the Elizabethan sense, a *desk* was usually a box with a sloping top which would be placed on a table for writing rather than the item of furniture we would mean today.
134 i.e. forced my heart to remain silent (?). Dover Wilson defends Q2's *working* as referring to any kind of mental operation and cites *LLL* 4.1.33, 'the working of the heart', and *Son* 93.11, 'thy heart's workings', but most editors including Jenkins prefer F's 'winking' meaning a deliberate closing of the eyes.
135 **with idle sight** i.e. seeing it but doing nothing about it
136 **round** wholeheartedly
137 **bespeak** address, speak to
138 **out . . . star** outside your destiny, beyond your (social) sphere, i.e. out of the question as a marriage partner
139 **prescripts** instructions
140 ***his resort** access by him. Q2's 'her resort' seems an error caused by misreading 'his' as 'hir', or by picking up 'her' either from earlier in the line or from 139.
142 **fruits** benefits

134 working] winking *F* 138 star] *Q1F;* Sphere *F2* 139 prescripts] Precepts *F* 140 his] *F;* her *Q2*

And he, repelled, a short tale to make,
Fell into a sadness, then into a fast,
Thence to a watch, thence into a weakness,
Thence to lightness, and by this declension
Into the madness wherein now he raves,
And all we mourn for.

KING
Do you think this?

QUEEN
It may be, very like.

POLONIUS
Hath there been such a time – I would fain know that –
That I have positively said 'tis so
When it proved otherwise?

KING
Not that I know.

POLONIUS
Take this from this if this be otherwise.

143 **repelled** repellèd; Jenkins supports *repelled* (against F's 'repulsed') by reference to Ophelia's use of *repel* at 2.1.106.

144–7 Polonius describes the classic symptoms of love-melancholy; see the description of Romeo (*RJ* 1.1.131–40). 'Into' and 'to' are interchangeable here.

145 ***watch** sleeplessness. Q2's 'wath' is erroneous.

146 **lightness** lightheadedness
declension deterioration (see 162n.). Polonius may also glance at the grammatical sense (the diagrammatic arrangement of the forms of a noun), given his obsession with word-play in this sequence.

148 **all . . . for** all of us mourn for. Hibbard prints F's 'waile for' though he says it is more absurd than *mourn for* (perhaps because of the awkward alliteration with *we*); Edwards prints *mourn*, though he says 'wail' is stronger.

149 **It . . . like** The Queen's reply indicates that the King's question is addressed to her, but some performers play the line as if he is asking Polonius if he really believes what he has said.
very like probably, possibly (as at 1.2.234)

150–2 **Hath . . . otherwise** 'I would very much like to know if there has ever been a time when I have said positively that something is the case and it has turned out not to be (true).'

153 **Take this from this** Polonius presumably illustrates by gesture that he means 'take my head from my body' or possibly 'take my staff of office from my hand' (Dowden) 'if what I have said is not true.' (Compare Poins in *1H4* 1.2.156–8: 'If you and I do not rob them, cut this head off from my shoulders.')

143 repelled] *(repell'd); repulsed F* 145 watch] *Q3, F; wath Q2* 146 to] to a *F* 147 wherein] whereon *F* 148 mourn] waile *F* 149 Do . . . this?] Thinke you t'is so? *Q1;* Do you thinke 'tis this? *F* like] likely *F* 150 I would] I would very *Q1;* I'de *F*

~~If circumstances lead me I will find~~
~~Where truth is hid, though it were hid indeed~~ 155
~~Within the centre.~~
~~KING~~ ~~How may we try it further~~?
~~POLONIUS~~
~~You know sometimes he walks four hours together~~
~~Here in the lobby?~~
~~QUEEN~~ ~~So he does, indeed~~.
~~POLONIUS~~
~~At such a time I'll loose my daughter to him~~.
~~Be you and I behind an arras then~~, 160
~~Mark the encounter: if he love her not~~
~~And be not from his reason fallen thereon~~
~~Let me be no assistant for a state~~
~~But keep a farm and carters~~.
~~KING~~ ~~We will try it~~

154 **circumstances** relevant (circumstantial) evidence
156 **the centre** i.e. the centre of the earth, traditionally supposed to be inaccessible
try test
157 **four** not necessarily a precise figure: *four* could be used to mean 'several' (see Elze, 'Four hours').
together at a time
158 **lobby** ante-room or corridor, used as a waiting-room by visitors to the Court. At 203, however, Polonius implies that they are out of doors, as does Hamlet in his talk of 'this brave o'erhanging firmament' at 266. The open stage at the Globe allowed for such flexibility.
159 **loose** let loose; the word reminds us that Polonius has restrained Ophelia from seeing Hamlet. There might also be a sexual overtone to it, as when Page comments of the amorous Falstaff, 'If he should intend this voyage toward my wife, I would turn her loose to him' (*MW* 2.1.170–2).
160 **arras** tapestry or woven wall-hanging, used both for decoration and to exclude draughts. Polonius' assumption is that there is sufficient space between the *arras* and the wall for eavesdroppers to hide; at *1H4* 2.4.522 Falstaff is discovered asleep behind an arras. (The town of Arras, now in France, was a major centre for the manufacture of such tapestries, hence the name.)
162 **from . . . fallen** declined from rationality, descended into madness. Polonius has used the same metaphor of madness as a kind of falling at 144–7; it occurs again in Ophelia's lament for Hamlet at 3.1.149–53.
thereon because of it
163 **assistant . . . state** councillor with a role in government
164 **carters** men who drive carts; *OED* also notes (2b) that 'carter' was used 'as a type of low birth or breeding', citing George Puttenham's *The Art of*

157–8 You . . . lobby?] *F lines* sometimes / heere / Lobby. / 158 does] ha's *F* 164 But] And *F*

Enter HAMLET.

QUEEN
But look where sadly the poor wretch comes reading. 165
POLONIUS
Away, I do beseech you both, away.
I'll board him presently. O, give me leave.
Exeunt King and Queen.
How does my good lord Hamlet?
HAMLET Well, God-a-mercy.
POLONIUS Do you know me, my lord? 170
HAMLET Excellent well, you are a fishmonger.

English Poesie (1589): 'Continence in a king is of greater merit than in a carter.'

164.1 This is Hamlet's first appearance since he spoke of putting on *an antic disposition* (1.5.170), though of course Ophelia has described his appearance and behaviour in 2.1. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century performers often literalized her words, but this is no longer common (see Hapgood). In Q1 Hamlet's entry at this point 'poring upon a book' leads directly into 'To be or not to be', which is followed by the *fishmonger* dialogue. Dover Wilson brought him on at 156 so that he overheard the plot to use Ophelia against him, feeling that this was necessary in order to justify his behaviour to her in 3.1; this direction was followed by Olivier in his 1948 film and is noted by Norton.

165 **wretch** a term of endearment, as at 4.7.180
reading A number of suggestions have been made as to the identity of the book, often by commentators who wish to demonstrate that 'To be or not to be' is to be taken as a general reflection, inspired by Hamlet's reading, rather than a personal statement (see Var for examples), but Jenkins comments: 'Attempts to identify the book are pointless.' Similar arguments have focused on what book Ulysses is reading in *TC* 3.3; like Hamlet at 193–201, he claims to find material in his reading which is surprisingly relevant to his interlocutor – in itself enough to make one doubt that Shakespeare had a specific book in mind.

167 **board** accost, address
presently instantly
give me leave (please) excuse me. Capell suggests this is addressed to the King and Queen; Cam and Dowden suggest it is addressed to Hamlet; Jenkins suggests it is addressed to the attendants who are still onstage in his text and are slow to leave.

169 **God-a-mercy** God have mercy on you – a polite response to a greeting from a social inferior

171 **fishmonger** a comic mistake and presumably a deliberate one, establishing that Hamlet is feigning madness at this point. Since Malone, editors have argued about whether *fishmonger* carries connotations of 'fleshmonger' or bawd (see Jenkins, LN).

164.1 HAMLET] *Q1; Hamlet reading on a Booke F* 167 SD *Exeunt . . . Queen*] *Capell; Exit . . . Queene opp. 166 Q2, after* presently *167 F* 171 Excellent] Excellent, excellent *F* you are] y'are *Q1F*

POLONIUS Not I, my lord.
HAMLET Then I would you were so honest a man.
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 breed maggots in a dead dog, being a good kissing carrion – have you a daughter?
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.
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; and truly, in my youth I suffered much extremity for love, very near this. I'll speak to him again. – What do you read, my lord?
HAMLET Words, words, words.
POLONIUS What is the matter, my lord?

176 **ten thousand** 'A man among a thousand' was proverbial (Tilley, M217).
178–9 **For ... carrion** Some performers appear to be reading these words.
179 **good kissing carrion** good piece of decaying flesh (carcass) to kiss; Shakespeare often uses *carrion* to mean sexual corruption, as in Diomede's reference to Helen's 'contaminated carrion weight' (*TC* 4.1.72). (Hanmer and Warburton read 'God' for 'good', approved but not followed by Spencer.)
181 **i'th' sun** The suggestion is that the sun will cause her to breed, as it encourages the breeding of maggots in a dead dog. Hamlet may also allude to the sun/son pun (see 1.2.67), indicating that a son(-in-law) will make Ophelia pregnant.
182 **but as** Jenkins finds Q2's uncompleted thought more 'artful' than F's 'but not as', suggesting it implies 'but to your daughter it may be a blessing or otherwise according as she may conceive'.
184 **How ... that?** 'What do you say to that?' Polonius in effect addresses the audience here.
Still harping on constantly dwelling on; 'to harp on one string' was proverbial (Tilley, S936).
186 **far gone** seriously affected
187 **much extremity** inordinate stress
190–2 Polonius means 'What is the subject matter of the book?' Hamlet pretends he means 'What is the quarrel?'

175–6] *F; Q2¹ line* goes, / thousand. / 176 ten] *Q1;* two *F* 181–3] *F; Q2 lines* blessing, / to't. / 182 but] but not *F* 184 SD] *Capell* 185–6 'a said ... 'A] he said ... he *F* 186 gone] gone, farre gone *F*

HAMLET Between who?
POLONIUS I mean the matter that you read, my lord.
HAMLET Slanders, sir. For the satirical rogue says here that old men have grey beards, that their faces are wrinkled, their eyes purging thick amber and plumtree gum, and that they have a plentiful lack of wit together with most weak hams – all which, sir, though I most powerfully and potently believe, yet I hold it not honesty to have it thus set down. For yourself, sir, shall grow 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, my lord?
HAMLET Into my grave.
POLONIUS [*aside*] Indeed, that's out of the air. How

193 **Slanders** malicious statements, deliberate defamations (which might in fact be true or, as here, commonplace)
rogue Both *rogue* and F's variant 'slaue' occur in 485.
195 **purging** discharging
195–6 **amber . . . gum** both resins from trees
196 **wit** wisdom
197 **hams** thighs
198 **potently** mightily (virtually synonymous with *powerfully*, a redundant expression perhaps mocking Polonius)
199 **honesty** honest or honourable behaviour
199–201 **For . . . backward** Hamlet reverses their roles, pretending that he is old, Polonius young; crabs can move in any direction and are frequently seen to go backwards or sideways.
200 **old** as old
202–3 **Though . . . in't** See Laertes' comment on Ophelia, 'This nothing's more than matter' (4.5.168 and n.), and Edgar's comment on Lear, 'O matter and impertinency mixed, / Reason in madness' (*KL* 4.6.170–1). Whether characters are really mad (like Ophelia and Lear) or just pretending (like Hamlet at this point and Edgar elsewhere in *KL*), their speech can hardly descend into gibberish if they are to retain the interest and attention of the audience.
203, 205 **out . . . air** Polonius implies 'indoors' – fresh air being thought harmful to sick people – despite the fact that this encounter supposedly takes place in the indoor *lobby* (see 158n.), but Hamlet puts a grimly literal interpretation on his words. Dowden points out that the passage echoes a scene in Jonson's *Everyman In His Humour* (acted by Shakespeare, among others, in 1598) where Dame

192 that] *not in Q1F* read] *Q1;* meane *F* 193 rogue] Satyre *Q1;* slaue *F* 195 amber and] Amber, or *F* 196 lack] locke *F* 197 [1]most] *om. F* 199 yourself] you your selfe *F* 199–200 shall grow] shalbe *Q1;* should be *F* 202 SD] *Johnson* 202–3] *F lines* madnesse, / walke / Lord? / 205 SD] *Staunton* 205–9] *F lines* Ayre: / are? / happinesse, / on, / not / of. / him, / meeting / daughter. / humbly / you. / 205 that's] *Q1;* that is *F* of the] *Q1;* o'th' *F*

pregnant 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 my daughter.~~ — My lord, I will take my leave of you.

HAMLET You cannot take from me anything that I will not more willingly part withal – except my life, except my life, except my life. 210

POLONIUS Fare you well, my lord.

HAMLET These tedious old fools.

Enter GUILDENSTERN *and* ROSENCRANTZ.

POLONIUS You go to seek the Lord Hamlet? There he is. 215

ROSENCRANTZ [*to Polonius*] God save you, sir. [*Exit Polonius.*]

GUILDENSTERN My honoured lord.

ROSENCRANTZ My most dear lord.

HAMLET My excellent good friends. How dost thou,

Kitely asks her husband to 'come in, out of the air . . . the air will do you harm', and Kitely exclaims, 'The air!' (*Everyman In*, 3.2.46–52).

206 **pregnant** cogent, forcible; but Polonius also carries through the metaphorical train from *breed* (178) and *conception* (181) to *delivered of* (208)

happiness aptness, fortuitous relevance

207 ***sanity** Q2's 'sanctity' seems erroneous (though Andrews retains and glosses 'virtue, holiness of life').

208 **prosperously** effectively

208–9 **I . . . daughter** Q2 may have omitted the additional words in F (see t.n.), or this difference could be a sign that Shakespeare once intended the encounter with Ophelia to take place in this scene, as it does in Q1. Jenkins remarks that 'honourable' and 'most humbly' are out of character for Polonius and argues that they are 'fill-ups' in F by Compositor B.

210–11 **cannot . . . not** Hibbard accepts F's version as an authorial revision to avoid Q2's double negative, but the same difference is present in Q1 and Jenkins defends Q2's usage as Shakespearean (see also Hope, 2.1.9).

214 i.e. How tedious these old men are. In performance Hamlet sometimes pretends he is reading this line from his book.

219 ***excellent** Q2's 'extent' is generally dismissed as an error, probably a misreading of 'exlent', a common spelling at this time.

207 sanity] *F;* sanctity *Q2* 208 and] And sodainely contriue the meanes of meeting / Betweene him, and *F* 209 My] *Q1;* My Honourable *F* will] *Q1;* will most humbly *F* 210 cannot] cannot Sir *F* 211 not] *om. Q1F* 211–12 life . . . ³life] life, my life *F* 214.1] *Capell; opp. 212 Q2; after 209 Q1; after 215 F* 215 the] my *F* 216 SD1] *Malone* SD2 *Exit*] *Q1, opp. 215; not in Q2F Polonius*] *Capell* 217 My] Mine *F* 219–21] *F; Q2 lines Guyldersterne?* / both? / 219 excellent] *Q3, F;* extent *Q2*

Guildenstern? Ah, Rosencrantz! Good lads, how do you both?

ROSENCRANTZ As the indifferent children of the earth.

GUILDENSTERN Happy, in that we are not ever happy. On Fortune's cap we are not the very button.

HAMLET Nor the soles of her shoe.

ROSENCRANTZ Neither, my lord.

HAMLET Then you live about her waist, or in the middle of her favours.

GUILDENSTERN Faith, her privates we.

HAMLET In the secret parts of Fortune? O, most true – she is a strumpet. What news?

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

HAMLET Then is doomsday near – but your news is not

222 **indifferent** ordinary, at neither extreme

223 **ever happy** always happy. F's 'ouer-happy' is generally preferred.

224 ***Fortune's cap** Shakespeare does not use the expression 'Fortune's lap' elsewhere, and 'l' is an easy misreading of majuscule 'C'. In any case the contrast between *cap* and *shoe* establishes F's reading as correct. Richard Dutton points out that Fortune was usually depicted naked (certainly without cap or shoes), but that this may be a reference to the sign of the Fortune theatre that probably depicted 'Dame Fortune'. If so, it begins a series of extra- or subtextual references to contemporary theatres and acting companies which runs through Hamlet's mention of 'this majestical roof fretted with golden fire' (see 266–7 and 267n.) and the conversation about 'the tragedians of the city' and climaxes (but only in F: see Appendix 1) with a reference to the sign of the Globe.
button The assumption is that the *cap* would be topped by a button.

229 **privates** private (sexual) parts of the body, with perhaps also a sense of 'private individuals', holding no rank or office. (This is another example of a line from *Hamlet* used as a title: Frederic Manning's 1929 novel about the First World War was originally called *The Middle Parts of Fortune*; it was later reprinted as *Her Privates We*.)

231 **strumpet** prostitute (who bestows her favours indiscriminately) as at 431. This slightly edgy conversation may hint at Hamlet's suspicion, voiced at 240–2, that his friends have in effect 'prostituted' themselves to the King.

234 **Then . . . near** 'Because honesty is incompatible with the world's nature and hence must be destructive of it' (Jenkins); 'because nothing but the threat of doomsday could convert this world to honesty' (Hibbard).

220 Ah] *(A)*; Oh *F* 221 you] ye *F* 223–4] *F*; *Q2 lines* lap, / button. / 223 ever] ouer- *F* happy.] *F (*happy:*)*; happy *Q2* 224 cap] *F*; lap *Q2* 228 favours] fauour *F* 231 What] What's the *F* 232 but] but that *F*

Insert A (see next page – 255A)

true. But, in the beaten way of friendship, what make you at Elsinore?

ROSENCRANTZ To visit you, my lord, no other occasion.

HAMLET Beggar that I am, I am ever poor in thanks, but I thank you, and sure, dear friends, my thanks are too dear a halfpenny. Were you not sent for? Is it your own inclining? Is it a free visitation? Come, come, deal justly with me. Come, come, nay speak.

GUILDENSTERN What should we say, my lord?

HAMLET Anything but to th' purpose. You were sent for, and there is a kind of confession in your looks, which your modesties have not craft enough to colour. 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~~

234–5 **but . . . true** Hamlet denies that the world has grown honest. After *true*, F has a passage of some 30 lines in which Hamlet claims that 'Denmark's a Prison' and the three men discuss ambition; see Appendix 1. It is generally supposed that these lines were omitted from Q2 because of the offence they might cause to Anne of Denmark, wife of James I. There is no trace of the *prison* lines in Q1 but Hamlet does claim that he 'wants preferment'.

235 **beaten way** well-trodden track. Jenkins and Hibbard say this means Hamlet switches to 'plain words'; Edwards that he has neglected ordinary politeness.

235–6 **what make you** what are you doing

238 **Beggar . . . am** As before, Hamlet emphasizes his relatively powerless position (see 1.5.130n.).

ever Jenkins prefers F's 'euen' which makes a sharper point, and 'ever' for 'even' is an easy error, but Hamlet could be saying that he habitually fails to express gratitude.

239–40 **too . . . halfpenny** too expensive at (i.e. not worth) a halfpenny, but possibly too expensive *by* a halfpenny – if his friends are the King's agents and don't deserve them

244 **Anything . . . th'purpose** anything, so long as it is not to the point (sarcastic). F's reading was formerly favoured by editors as meaning 'Anything, so long as it is to the purpose'. In Q1 this conversation is much abbreviated when the two visitors remark immediately that 'We . . . would be very glad / You were as when we were at *Wittenberg*' (7.238–9).

246 **modesties** modest or decent natures

colour present deceptively, disguise

249–54 After briefly flattering his visitors by implying that they are not capable of deception, Hamlet resorts to sarcasm again: at least his phrasing suggests self-conscious inflation.

249 **conjure** earnestly entreat

235 true.] *F follows this sentence with 30 lines of additional dialogue (238-67)* 238 ever] euen *F* 241 come, deal] deale *F* 244 Anything but] Why any thing. But *F* to th'] to the *F* 245 of] *Q1; om. F*

(1) F 2.2.238–2.2.267 (follows the equivalent of Q2 2.2.235 'true')

(A)

HAMLET . . . 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?

GUILDENSTERNE Prison, my lord?

HAMLET Denmark's a prison.

ROSINCRANCE Then is the world one.

HAMLET A goodly one, in which there are many confines, wards and dungeons – Denmark being one o'th' worst.

ROSINCRANCE We think not so, my lord.

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

ROSINCRANCE Why, then your ambition makes it one: 'tis too narrow for your mind.

HAMLET O God, I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space – were it not that I have bad dreams.

Return to (B) on top of page 255

(1) It is generally supposed (e.g. by Jenkins and Edwards) that these lines were omitted from Q2 because of the offence they might cause to Anne of Denmark, wife of James I, but Hibbard argues that they could have been added in F to 'bring out more fully the evasiveness of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern' (Oxf¹, 112). The concept of the whole state as a prison dominated a number of productions of *Hamlet* in the former Soviet Union and eastern Europe during communist rule, most notably exemplified by the 'Iron Curtain *Hamlet*' directed by Nikolai Okhlopkov in Moscow in 1954 (see Stříbrný, 100); it is prominent in the Russian film directed by Grigori Kozintsev in 1964 (see p. 116 and Fig. 18).

4, 6, SPs Guildensterne and Rosincrance are F's consistent spellings.

7 **confines** places of confinement

8 **wards** divisions or departments within a prison

11–12 **there . . . so** i.e. whether Denmark seems like a prison or not depends on your mental attitude. See Jenkins, LN, where he quotes other examples of this commonplace, such as *FQ*, 6.9.30: 'It is the mind that maketh good or ill, / That maketh wretch or happy', and refers to the proverbial 'A man is weal or woe as he thinks himself so' (Tilley, M254).

18 **bad dreams** 'As nothing develops from *bad* in the subsequent dialogue, emendation to "had" is attractive' (Spencer). Jenkins, however, notes that bad dreams were a recognized symptom of melancholia.

~~you, by the rights of our fellowship, by the consonancy of our youth, by the obligation of our ever-preserved love, and by what more dear a better proposer can charge you withal~~ be even and direct with me whether you were sent for or no.

ROSENCRANTZ What say you?

HAMLET Nay then, I have an eye of you. If you love me, hold not off.

GUILDENSTERN My lord, we were sent for.

HAMLET I will tell you why. So shall my anticipation prevent your discovery and your secrecy to the King and Queen moult no feather. I have of late, but wherefore I know not, lost all my mirth, forgone all custom of exercises and, indeed, it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame the earth seems

250–1 **consonancy . . . youth** our childhood or youthful friendship

252–3 **by . . . withal** i.e. by whatever more significant exhortation a more skilful proposer of oaths than myself could put to you

253 **charge** exhort
even straightforward, 'on the level'

255 Rosencrantz presumably consults Guildenstern. (The line could conceivably be addressed to Hamlet, meaning 'What did you say?' or 'What do you mean?' but it would be inappropriately informal or even rude, and it wouldn't cue Hamlet's response.)

256 **Nay . . . you** Edwards and Hibbard mark this as an aside.
of on

257 **hold not off** do not hesitate to tell me

259–60 **my . . . discovery** my saying it first will save you from having to tell me your secret

261 **moult no feather** i.e. sustain no loss

261–74 **I have . . . dust** Edwards calls this speech 'a parade of fashionable melancholy' intended to mislead Hamlet's interlocutors; he may, however, be describing his real feelings while concealing the cause. The speech was transferred to Hamlet's first appearance, at the very beginning of the film, in Almereyda's 2000 version, possibly in part as a tribute to Bruce Robinson's 1987 film *Withnail and I* which ends with it.

263 **custom of exercises** customary activities (such as the fencing and tennis mentioned in relation to Laertes in 2.1). 'Exercise' could also refer to religious observance, as at 3.1.44. Hamlet's position here is contradicted by his words at 5.2.188–9.

263–4 **it . . . disposition** my spirits in general are so depressed

264 **frame** structure; *this goodly frame* might also be a reference to the Globe playhouse. See also Marlowe and Nashe's *Dido*, where in her last speech before she throws herself into the flames Dido calls on 'ye gods that guide the starrie frame' (5.1.302).

252 can] could *F* 260 and] of *F* 263 exercises] exercise *F* heavily] heauenly *F*

to me a sterile promontory, this most excellent canopy the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why it appeareth nothing to me but a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What piece of work is a man – how noble in reason; how infinite in faculties, in form and moving; how express and admirable in action; how like an angel in apprehension; how like a god; the beauty of the world; the paragon of animals. And yet to me what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not

265 **sterile promontory** barren headland. Edwards quotes Kittredge: 'a barren rocky point jutting out into the sea of eternity'.
canopy sky; see 'Where dwell'st thou? / Under the canopy' (*Cor* 4.5.39–40).
266 **look you** an intensive expression (see Blake, 8.3.2, 8.4.1), not necessarily denoting a Welsh speaker, as it might today, and as it clearly does in the speeches of Fluellen in *H5* and those of Hugh Evans in *MW*. (The phrase occurs earlier in Hamlet's speech in F: see t.n. at 1.5.131.)
brave fine, magnificent
firmament sky
267 **fretted** inlaid, decorated. For early audiences, Hamlet might be indicating the overhanging roof of the Globe playhouse (referred to as 'the heavens') as well as the sky above it.
268 **appeareth . . . but** Edwards conflates here: 'appeareth no other thing to me but'.
269–73 **What . . . animals** Dover Wilson explicitly defends Q2's punctuation (which we largely follow) here, as conveying 'the brooding Hamlet' through its semicolons and commas, as compared with the more declamatory style implied by the exclamations and question marks in F (see t.n. at 271–2).
269 **What . . . work** what a masterpiece of creation. Jenkins defends Q2 as idiomatic, and Kemble and Macready followed it onstage (see Hapgood).
270 **faculties** capabilities
270–1 **form and moving** shape and motion
271 **express** well-framed or well-modelled (listed by *OED* I 1b as a 'nonce-use')
272 **apprehension** understanding; see 4.1.11, where it means 'misunderstanding'.
273 **paragon** supreme example
274 **quintessence of dust** an oxymoron, like *paragon of animals* (see also the religious connotations of *dust* at 1.2.71) *Quintessence* means 'concentration', literally, the 'fifth essence', the substance of which heavenly bodies were thought to be composed, and which, according to alchemy, could be extracted from earthly elements by a process of distillation.

266 firmament] *om. F* 268 appeareth] appeares *F* nothing . . . but] no other thing . . . then *F* 269 What] What a *F* 270 faculties,] faculty? *F* 271 moving;] *(moouing,); mouing F* 271–2 admirable in action; how] *(admirable in action, how); admirable? in Action, how F* 272 angel in apprehension; . . . god;] *(Angell in apprehension, how like a God:); Angel? in apprehension, how like a God? F*

me – nor women neither, though by your smiling you seem to say so.

ROSENCRANTZ My lord, there was no such stuff in my thoughts.

HAMLET Why did ye laugh then, when I said man delights not me?

ROSENCRANTZ To think, my lord, if you delight not in man what lenten entertainment the players shall receive from you; we ~~coted~~ them on the way and hither are they coming to offer you service.

passed

HAMLET He that plays the King shall be welcome – his majesty shall have tribute on me – the Adventurous Knight shall use his foil and target, the Lover shall not sigh gratis, the Humorous Man shall end his part in peace, and the Lady shall say her mind freely or the

275 **nor women neither** Hamlet presumably used *man* in the general sense of 'humankind' but his companions understood him to mean 'the male sex'. Jenkins prefers F's singular 'woman'.

282 **lenten** niggardly (the Christian season of Lent being a time of fasting and denial). In Elizabethan England theatres were closed altogether during Lent.
entertainment reception, welcome (as at 312)
players actors. In the ensuing conversation it is assumed that the situation in Denmark is analogous to that in London around 1600, with the acting companies undertaking provincial tours (sometimes reluctantly) to recoup their finances.

283 **coted** caught up with and passed

285 **He . . . King** The King, like the other characters Hamlet names, is a stereotype of the stage. Unlike his uncle, this man pretending to be a king is welcome.

286 **tribute** payment; praise
on of; Jenkins defends Q2's reading as idiomatic (see also Blake, 5.4.2, *Of* and *On*).

287 **foil and target** sword and shield

288 **gratis** for nothing, without reward (i.e. unrequited). Q1 omits *not* in 287, and Hubbard argues that this version makes better sense.

288–9 **the Humorous . . . peace** i.e. the comic actor will not be interrupted. *Humorous* could, however, mean 'showing a particular humour, or psychological type', as it does in Le Beau's reference to the 'humorous' Duke in *AYL* (1.2.256) and in the 'humours' plays written by Jonson, Chapman and others. Both Q1 and F follow this with a separate reference to 'the Clowne'.

275 nor] no nor *Q1F* women] woman *Q1, Q3, F* 279 ye] you *Q1F* then] *Q1; om. F* 286 on] of *Q1F* 287 not] *F; not in Q1* 289 and] The clowne shall make them laugh / That are tickled in the lungs, or the blank verse shall halt for't / And *Q1;* the Clowne shall make those laugh whose lungs are tickled a'th'sere: and *F*

blank verse shall halt for't. What players are they?
ROSENCRANTZ Even those you were wont to take such delight in, the tragedians of the city.
HAMLET How chances it they travel? ~~Their residence, both in reputation and profit, was better both ways.~~
ROSENCRANTZ ~~I think their inhibition comes by the means of the late innovation.~~
HAMLET Do they hold the same estimation they did when I was in the city? Are they so followed?
ROSENCRANTZ No, indeed are they not.
HAMLET It is not very strange, for my uncle is King of

290 ***blank . . . it** Q2's 'black' seems a likely misreading. The general sense seems to be that the Lady, like the Humorous Man, will not be interrupted, 'or her delivery of blank verse will lose its rhythm'. Hibbard suggests that 'the boys playing female roles were more likely to be put out by comments from the audience than the more experienced adult players.'
291 **were wont** used
292 **tragedians** actors (not exclusively of tragedies)
293 **travel** tour (outside the city); see t.n. for travail/travel spellings; either could be used in Shakespeare's time for either meaning.
residence usual residence (i.e. in the city)
294 **both ways** i.e. both for their reputation and for their financial advantage
295–6 **their . . . innovation** i.e. the restriction on their performances (in the city) is because of recent and unusual events. Editors have interpreted *the late innovation* as a reference to political disturbances – perhaps the death of the elder Hamlet and the preparations for war in the Danish context, or the Essex rebellion in 1601 if an English topical allusion is intended. In the other texts the *innovation* could mean the revived fashion for children's companies: see 299n. (See pp. 52–3, Jenkins, LN, and Bednarz.)
297 **estimation** reputation, esteem
298 **the city** It is not clear which Danish city Hamlet might mean; again reference to London makes more sense.
Are . . . followed? Do they still retain their power to attract audiences?
299 F has a further passage of some 25 lines after *not* in which Hamlet asks why the players travel and Rosencrantz explains that it is because of the competition from the children's companies: see Appendix 1. It has been supposed that the lines were omitted from Q2 because this was no longer a topical issue in 1604, though it would have been even less topical in 1623. It is also strange that the reference to 'Hercules and his load' (the sign of the Globe theatre) should occur only in the 1623 text and not in the earlier ones that were printed closer to the time of the first performances.
300–3 **It . . . little** Hamlet compares the fickleness of the theatre audience with the behaviour of the Danish people in transferring their allegiance from his father to his uncle. (The logic of his

290 blank] *Q1F;* black *Q2* 291 such] *not in Q1F* 293 travel] *(*trauaile*)F,* trauell *Q1* 299 are they] they are *F* 299–300 not. / HAMLET It] *In F the two speeches are separated by 25 lines of dialogue not in Q2* 300 very] *om. F* my] mine *F*

Denmark, and those that would make mouths at him while my father lived give twenty, forty, fifty, a hundred ducats apiece for his picture in little. 'Sblood, there is something in this more than natural if philosophy could find it out. *A flourish*

GUILDENSTERN There are the players!

HAMLET Gentlemen, you are welcome to Elsinore. Your hands, come, then! ~~Th'appurtenance of welcome is fashion and ceremony. Let me comply with you in this garb, lest my extent to the players, which I tell you must show fairly outwards, should more appear like~~

argument is perhaps more obvious in F's version, where the rise of the children's companies (rather than the demise of the adult companies) is compared with the rise of the King.)

301 **make mouths** make derisive grimaces, pull faces

302–3 **twenty . . . ducats** Clearly the point is that Hamlet is naming extravagant sums. Shakespeare uses *ducat* in six plays as a monetary unit for continental Europe, especially Italy, as in *MV*; there does not seem to be a precise relation to the *crowns* of 73.

303 **picture in little** miniature portrait (an art highly prized in Elizabethan England). In F's version there is a more obvious reference to the child actors as 'miniatures'. A possible piece of stage business is for Hamlet to grab a locket with a picture of the King from one of his companions here and produce it at 3.4.51, but more often he grabs it from the Queen in that scene.

'Sblood abbreviation of 'God's blood'. F's omission is a likely expurgation.

304 **more than natural** outside natural laws, abnormal

philosophy science

305 SD This kind of fanfare (usually played 'within' on a trumpet or cornet) is most frequently used when important figures (such as royalty) enter or exit: see 'flourish' in Dessen and Thomson. The Players' offstage arrival is marked here, though they do not enter for another 50 lines in Q2 and F, 30 lines in Q1.

307–8 **Your hands** i.e. give me your hands. After the rather edgy preceding conversation, Hamlet reaffirms the greeting he gave Rosencrantz and Guildenstern at 219–21.

308 **Th'appurtenance** the proper accompaniment (that which appertains to)

309 **comply with you** exchange courtesies with you. *Comply* recalls the inflated tone of 249–54; in F, Hamlet also uses the word in relation to Osric at 5.2.150 (see Appendix 1).

310 **garb** manner (i.e. by shaking hands)

***lest my extent** Caldecott suggested emending *extent* to 'ostent', meaning 'ostentatious welcome', but F's reading is usually adopted. The scribe or compositor may have been misled by 'let mee' in 309.

extent extension of welcome

301 mouths] mops and moes *Q1*; mowes *F* 302 fifty] *om. F* a] an *F* 303 'Sblood] *om. F* 305 SD] *The Trumpets sound, Q1; Flourish for the Players. F* 308 then] *om. F* Th'appurtenance] The appurtenance *F* 309 this] the *F* 310 lest my] *F*; let me *Q2* 311 outwards] outward *F*

~~entertainment than yours.~~ You are welcome. But my uncle-father and aunt-mother are deceived.

GUILDENSTERN In what, my dear lord?

HAMLET I am but mad north-north-west. When the wind is southerly I know a hawk from a handsaw.

Enter POLONIUS.

POLONIUS Well be with you, gentlemen.

HAMLET Hark you, Guildenstern, and you too – at each ear a hearer. That great baby you see there is not yet out of his swaddling clouts.

ROSENCRANTZ Happily he is the second time come to them, for they say an old man is twice a child.

HAMLET I will prophesy he comes to tell me of the

312 **entertainment** See 282n.
yours i.e. the welcome Hamlet has given Rosencrantz and Guildenstern

313 **uncle-father and aunt-mother** While the King is Hamlet's uncle and has also become his stepfather, his mother the Queen has by the same marriage also become his aunt.

315 **I . . . north-north-west** either 'I am mad only when the wind is in the north-north-west', or 'I am only one point of the compass away from true sanity'. There is an allusion to this line in *Eastward Ho* (see pp. 57–8). (Stanley Cavell argues with some ingenuity that *Hamlet* is alluded to in Alfred Hitchcock's 1959 film *North by Northwest*.)

316 **handsaw** emended to 'hernshaw' (a kind of heron) by Hanmer in 1744 on the grounds that the two things mentioned should have a greater degree of similarity. John Ward also made this change in his prompt copy of Q6 which he annotated some time in the 1740s, and Phelps (99–100) records that 'When Mr. Barry Sullivan came out as Hamlet [London, 1861], many persons attended the Haymarket for the mere purpose of hearing him say "I know a hawk from a heron – pshaw!" instead of the ordinary reading.' More recent editors and producers have argued that the point of the remark is the complete dissimilarity between a hawk and a saw, and Dowden suggests *hawk* indicates Hamlet's awareness that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are spying on him.

317 **Well . . . you** i.e. I wish you well; an archaic impersonal construction, rare in Shakespeare (Blake, 4.4.1d)

318–19 **at . . . hearer** Hamlet encourages his companions to stand close to him on each side.

320 **swaddling clouts** swathing clothes, narrow strips of cloth wrapped around a baby to restrict its movement

321 **Happily** perhaps

322 **old . . . child** proverbial (Dent, M570)

320 swaddling] *Q1*; swathing *F* 321 he is] he's *F* 323 prophesy] (prophecy,); Prophesie. *F*

players. Mark it. – You say right, sir, o'Monday morning, 'twas then indeed.

POLONIUS My lord, I have news to tell you.

HAMLET My lord, I have news to tell you. When Roscius was an actor in Rome –

POLONIUS The actors are come hither, my lord.

HAMLET Buzz, buzz.

POLONIUS Upon my honour.

HAMLET

– Then came each actor on his ass.

POLONIUS The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, scene individable or poem unlimited. Seneca cannot be too heavy nor Plautus too

324 **Mark it** observe the outcome

324–5 **You . . . indeed** Hamlet teases Polonius by pretending to be in the midst of a conversation about a recent event.

327 **Roscius** Quintus Roscius, a famous actor in classical Rome, also mentioned by Shakespeare in *3H6* 5.6.10. Hamlet aims to disconcert Polonius by talking about acting before he announces the players. (William Betty, who played Hamlet in the early nineteenth century at the age of 13, was known as 'the infant Roscius': see p. 3 and Fig. 1.)

330 **Buzz, buzz** a contemptuous expression (Blake, 6.4.1), here indicating that Hamlet already knows Polonius' news.

332 Possibly a line from a ballad: *ass* rhymes with *pass* and *was* (see 355–6), but also suggests 'arse'.

334–5 **pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral** Polonius elaborates still further on the possible combinations of the classical genres in F (see t.n.). Some neoclassical critics, such as Philip Sidney in his *Apology for Poetry*, deplored the mixture of genres, but Shakespeare's own plays often broke these rules and both Q1 and Q2 are called *The Tragicall Historie of Hamlet* on their title-pages.

335–6 **scene . . . unlimited** Both phrases are obscure: *scene individable* may mean 'plays without scene-breaks' and *poem unlimited* may mean 'poetic drama unrestricted by rules', but Jenkins suggests they simply intensify the catalogue of absurd categories and convey 'all-inclusive' and 'unclassifiable' respectively.

336 **Seneca . . . Plautus** 'Plautus and Seneca are accounted the best for Comedy and Tragedy among the Latins' (Francis Meres, *Palladis Tamia*, 1598); Shakespeare's *Tit* is particularly influenced by the former and his *CE* by the latter. *TxC* suggests Q2's spelling 'Sceneca' may contain a pun on 'scena'.

324 o'] *(a) Q1;* for a *F* 325 then] so *Q1F* 328 was] *Q1; om. F* 331 my] mine *F* 332 came] can *F* 334–5 pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral] *(*Pastorall Comicall, Historicall Pastorall*); Pastorall,* Historicall, Historicall, Comicall, / Comicall historicall, Pastorall, Tragedy historicall: */ Q1;* Pastoricall-Comicall-Historicall-Pastorall: Tragicall-Historicall: Tragicall-Comicall-Historicall-Pastorall *F* 336 Seneca] *(Sceneca); Seneca Q1F*

light[~~for the law of writ and the liberty. These are the only men.~~

~~HAMLET *O Jephthah, judge of Israel, what a treasure hadst thou?*~~

~~POLONIUS What a treasure had he, my lord?~~

~~HAMLET Why,~~

~~One fair daughter and no more,~~
~~The which he loved passing well.~~

~~POLONIUS [*aside*] Still on my daughter.~~

~~HAMLET Am I not i'th' right, old Jephthah?~~

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

~~HAMLET Nay, that follows not.~~

~~POLONIUS What follows then, my lord?~~

~~HAMLET Why,~~

~~As by lot,~~

337 **for . . . liberty** for either strictly regulated or nonconforming drama (?). This is an obscure phrase which is often taken as modifying what follows, although neither Q2 nor F has a full stop after *light*. Q1's 'For the law hath writ those are the onely men' may indicate that it puzzled the reporter(s) if it is a reported text.

337–8 **These . . . men** probably 'these [actors] are the best available', though he could be referring to Seneca and Plautus as 'the only great dramatists'.

339 ***Jephthah*** An Old Testament figure, he sacrificed his virgin daughter (Judges, 11.30–40); Shakespeare also alludes to this story in *3H6* 5.1.93–4. Hibbard notes that this line is a fourteener and possibly a quotation on Shakespeare's part. (Fourteeners were lines with 14 syllables, an old-fashioned metre in 1600, though it was used by Chapman for his translation of Homer's *Iliad* which began appearing in 1598.)

343–4 Hamlet quotes from a ballad about Jephthah which survives in a seventeenth-century version (see Jenkins, LN, and Edwards).

344 **loved** lovèd

passing surpassingly, extremely

349 (1) Your analogy between yourself and Jephthah is false; (2) That isn't the next line in the ballad. The brief representation of Hamlet and Polonius reconstructing the ballad, followed at 385ff. by the much longer representation of Hamlet and the First Player reconstructing the Pyrrhus speech, has an odd resonance in the context of Q1 as a reported text, reconstructed by actors from memory (see pp. 80–6 and Appendix 2).

352–3, 355–6 Hamlet continues to quote from the ballad.

352–3 'as by chance (*lot*), God knows (*wot*)'

337 light for . . . liberty.] *F subst.*; light. For . . . liberty, *Johnson* writ] *F*; wit *Q6* 339, 346, 347 *Jephthah*, Jephthah] *F (Iephta); Ieptha Q2; Iepha Q1* 342–4] *Capell subst., distinguishing between* Why *and verse lines; Q1F line* more, / well. / ; *prose Q2* 345 SD] *Capell* 352–3] *Malone; prose Q21F*

~~God wot,~~
~~and then, you know,~~
~~It came to pass,~~
~~As most like it was.~~
~~The first row of the pious chanson will show you more,~~
~~for look where my abridgement comes.~~

Enter the Players.

You are welcome, masters, welcome all. I am glad to see thee well. Welcome, good friends. O old friend, why, thy face is valanced since I saw thee last! Com'st thou to beard me in Denmark? ~~What, my young lady and mistress! By'r Lady, your ladyship is nearer to heaven~~

355–6 'it happened, as was most likely'

357 **first . . . chanson** first line of the religious song; Q1's version (see t.n.) leads editors to interpret *row* as meaning 'verse'. F's reading, interpreted by Pope and other editors as meaning 'songs sung on bridges' or '*chansons de Pont Neuf*', is supported by Hunter, despite his general advocacy of Q1. Jenkins dismisses this as 'a cautionary tale' of unnecessary ingenuity.

358 **my abridgement** (1) that which will cut me off; (2) my entertainment (as at *MND* 5.1.39). Either way, Hamlet is referring to the arrival of the players.

358.1 Q2 does not specify how many players at this point; a minimum of three are needed for the play in 3.2, if the Prologue and Lucianus are doubled and a way is found of dispensing with the mutes. Two of them are addressed here by Hamlet, the First Player (assuming it is he who has grown the beard) and the boy, and he welcomes them as *all* at 359 and 366. RP points out that companies of four or five were characteristic of the first half of the sixteenth century and that Shakespeare may be evoking an earlier period of acting (and play-writing) here (see also 461n.). As was the case with Elizabethan professional companies, all the players are male, with a boy to play the women's parts.

360 **thee** Hamlet usually addresses this speech to the First Player (but see next note).

361 **valanced** curtained, draped (i.e. bearded). The assumption may be that the First Player is quite young (if he has only just grown his first beard), but he is often cast as an older, experienced actor, a decision which may stem in part from Hamlet's phrase *old friend* (360, repeated at 473–4), and from the assumption that his style of acting is old-fashioned (see 403n.).

362 **beard** show me your beard; defy me

my young lady i.e. the boy

363 ***By'r Lady** by Our Lady (i.e. the Virgin Mary); Jenkins argues Q2's 'by lady' may have been the Shakespearean

355–6] *Pope; prose Q2 1F* 357 row] *F;* verse *Q1* pious chanson] *Pons Chanson F;* godly Ballet *Q1* 358 abridgement comes] *Q1;* Abridgements come *F* 358.1 *the*] *not in Q1; foure or fiue F* 359 You are] Y'are *F* 360 old] my olde *Q1F* why] *not in Q1F* 361 valanced] *Q1;* valiant *F* 363 By'r Lady] *F;* by lady *Q2;* burlady *Q1* to] *om. F*

~~than when I saw you last by the altitude of a chopine. Pray God your voice, like a piece of uncurrent gold, be not cracked within the ring. Masters, you are all welcome. We'll e'en to't like French falconers, fly at anything we see.~~ We'll have a speech straight. Come, give us a taste of your quality. Come, a passionate speech.

1 PLAYER What speech, my good lord?

HAMLET I heard thee speak me a speech once – but it was never acted, or, if it was, not above once, for the play I remember pleased not the million, 'twas caviare to the general. But it was, as I received it, ~~and others whose judgements in such matters cried in the top of mine~~, an excellent play, ~~well digested in the scenes, set down~~

form. This was a mild oath and it is not unusual to find it in plays with a Protestant setting (like *By the mass* at 2.1.49).

nearer to heaven (1) taller (nearer to the sky); (2) older (nearer to death)

364 **chopine** shoe with a high platform sole

365–6 **uncurrent . . . ring** A gold coin clipped or cracked inside the ring surrounding the sovereign's head was no longer legal tender. Editors sometimes suggest a sexual meaning for *cracked* whereby Hamlet is saying that the breaking of his voice for a boy is like the losing of her virginity for a girl.

367 **We'll . . . to't** let's go straight into it

***French falconers** Q2's reading has not been satisfactorily explained, while Q1 and F agree. The assumption is that the French are enthusiastic at this sport.

fly launch our birds (i.e., in this context, try a speech). The implication is that the speech will be chosen at random, but in fact Hamlet makes a very specific request.

368 **straight** immediately

369 **quality** acting ability, skill

371 SP *F distinguishes this speech, and those beginning at 406, 440 and 443, with the SP '1. *Play.*' or '1. *Player*', whereas Q2 uses the ambiguous '*Play.*' or '*Player*' throughout this scene. It is generally assumed that the only player to speak in this scene is the leading actor of the company.

372 **me** for me

it i.e. the play containing the speech

374–5 **caviare . . . general** a delicacy not appreciated by the majority of people. (The spellings, 'cauiary' in Q1/2 and 'Cauiarie' in F, probably indicate four syllables in pronunciation.)

376 **cried . . . mine** excelled mine (?). Q1's 'Cried in the toppe of their iudgements' perhaps indicates that this slightly obscure expression might be understood as 'proclaimed in their authoritative opinions'.

377 **well digested . . . scenes** well organized into scenes

367 French] *Q1F;* friendly *Q2* falconers] *Q1F;* Fankners *Q2* 371 SP] *F (1.Play.); Player. Q2; Players Q1* good] *Q1; om. F* 376 judgements] *Q1;* iudgement *F*

~~with as much modesty as cunning. I remember one said~~
~~there were no sallets in the lines to make the matter~~
~~savoury nor no matter in the phrase that might indict~~ 380
~~the author of affection, but called it an honest method,~~
~~as wholesome as sweet, and by very much more~~
~~handsome than fine.~~ One speech in't I chiefly loved –
'twas Aeneas' talk to Dido, and thereabout of it
especially when he speaks of Priam's slaughter. If it live 385
in your memory begin at this line – let me see, let me
see –
of Troy

378 **modesty** restraint
cunning skill

379–80 **sallets . . . savoury** salads (usually glossed as 'spicy bits' but perhaps just a variety of ingredients) in the dialogue to make it well seasoned

380 **no . . . phrase** nothing in the manner of expression
indict accuse

381 **affection** affectation: *OED* V, which cites *LLL*, 'Three-piled hyperboles, spruce affection, / Figures pedantical' (5.2.407–8); both the 1598 quarto and the 1623 Folio texts of *LLL* read 'affection', but the two words were often confused in the late sixteenth century.
honest method straightforward (unpretentious) effort of composition

382–3 **more . . . fine** 'with more natural grace than artful workmanship' (Jenkins); the distinction recalls Polonius' advice to Laertes about richness and ornament in 1.3.

384 **Aeneas' . . . Dido** Aeneas tells Dido the story of the fall of Troy in Virgil's *Aeneid* 2, 506–58 (Jenkins, LN); Marlowe and Nashe had dramatized this in *Dido Queen of Carthage* (*c.* 1585). As Berry notes, Hamlet casts himself in Dido's role as choric listener (*Endings*, 60–1). Dryden attacks the ensuing speech in 'The grounds of criticism in Tragedy', prefaced to his 1679 adaptation of *Troilus and Cressida*, where he gives it as an example of 'the blown puffy style', not written by Shakespeare but quoted from 'some other poet': Dover Wilson points out, however, that Dryden drew on this speech when translating Virgil's account of Pyrrhus. Theobald claims it is authentic 'from its Subject . . . there is scarce a Play throughout all his Works, in which it was possible to introduce the Mention of them, where he has not by *Simile*, *Allusion*, or otherwise, hinted at the *Trojan* affairs, so fond was he of that story' (Theobald, *Restored*, 72–3). The most closely comparable passage in Shakespeare's previous work is at *Luc* 1366–1568, where after her rape the heroine looks at a painting of the fall of Troy which includes a representation of Pyrrhus killing Priam and the grief of Hecuba (1443–70).
talk Most editors, including Jenkins, prefer F's 'tale' = narration.
thereabout of it around that part of it

385 **Priam** the King of Troy

379 were] was *Q1F* 381 affection] affectation *F* 382–3 as wholesome . . . fine] as wholesome as sweete *Q1; om. F* 383 One] Come, a *Q1;* One cheefe *F* in't] in it *Q1F* 384 talk] tale *Q1F* 385 when] where *Q1F*

The rugged Pyrrhus like th' Hyrcanian beast ...
– 'Tis not so. It begins with Pyrrhus.
The rugged Pyrrhus, he whose sable arms,
Black as his purpose, did the night resemble
When he lay couched in th'ominous horse,
Hath now this dread and black complexion smeared
With heraldry more dismal, ~~head to foot.~~
~~Now is he total gules~~ horridly tricked
With blood of fathers, mothers, daughters, sons,
~~Baked and impasted with the parching streets~~

388 ***rugged*** fierce, savage
Pyrrhus the son of the Greek Achilles, who went to Troy to avenge his father's death on Priam and his family
th' Hyrcanian beast Hyrcania, near the Caspian Sea, was famous for its tigers; see York's accusation of Margaret: 'you are more inhuman, more inexorable – / O, ten times more – than tigers of Hyrcania' (*3H6* 1.4.154–5). Towards the end of Marlowe and Nashe's *Dido* the heroine upbraids Aeneas as unfeeling: 'Tygers of *Hircania* gave thee sucke' (5.1.159). In this context, the comparison with the *beast* associates Pyrrhus with savage or even heroic action, unlike the negative connotations of *beast* at 1.2.150, 1.5.42, 4.4.34 and 4.5.86.

389 **'Tis not so** See 349n. Hamlet's misremembering might be seen as an allusion to (and dismissal of?) the famous insult in Robert Greene's (posthumous) 1592 *Groatsworth of Wit*, where 'Shake-scene' is derided as 'an upstart Crow ... with his Tiger's heart wrapped in a Player's hide'. Loewenstein argues that in this passage Shakespeare 'canonizes' *Hamlet* in relation to classical precedents (especially Virgil), rejecting Marlowe, Greene and Kyd in a context in which the supposedly Danish players are firmly associated with English theatrical rivalries, as at 295–303.

390 ***sable arms*** black armour. See 1.2.240n. and 3.2.123n.

392 ***couched*** couchèd; crouched, hidden
th'ominous horse the unlucky or ill-omened giant wooden statue of a horse inside which the Greeks smuggled themselves into Troy. The version of the story told by Aeneas in Marlowe and Nashe's *Dido* (2.1.121–288) makes more of 'Epeus' pine-tree horse' (and of Sinon's treachery, which Shakespeare had stressed in *Luc* 1366–1568).

393 ***this . . . complexion*** this (already) terrifying and dark general appearance

394 ***heraldry more dismal*** The blood Pyrrhus has smeared on his face is seen as the equivalent of the heraldic markings on his armour.
dismal grim, dreadful

395 ***total gules*** red all over; *gules* is the heraldic term for 'red'. Marlowe and Nashe's Aeneas says, 'At last came Pyrrhus, fell and full of fire, / His harness dropping blood' (2.1.213–14).
tricked decorated (another heraldic term referring to the patterning of markings)

397 ***Baked . . . with*** (as if) cooked (by the heat of the streets) and made into a pastry or crust

388] *as verse line Q1; prose Q2F Hyrcanian*] (ircanian), *F;* arganian *Q1* 389 'Tis] *Q1;* It is *F* 390] *as verse Q1F; prose Q2* 392 *th'ominous*] the ominous *Q1F* 393 *this*] *F;* his *Q1* 394 *heraldry*] (heraldy), *Q1F dismal, . . . foot.*] (dismall . . . foote,); dismall, . . . foote, *Q1;* dismall: . . . foote *F* 395 *total*] *Q1;* to take *F gules*] guise *Q1;* Geulles *F*

~~*That lend a tyrannous and a damned light*~~
~~*To their lord's murder; roasted in wrath and fire,*~~
And thus o'ersized with coagulate gore,
With eyes like carbuncles, the hellish Pyrrhus
Old grandsire Priam seeks.
So proceed you.

POLONIUS 'Fore God, my lord, well spoken – with good accent and good discretion.

1 PLAYER *Anon he finds him,*
Striking too short at Greeks. His antique sword,
Rebellious to his arm, lies where it falls,
Repugnant to command. Unequal matched,

parching streets The streets are supposed to be scorching because the houses are on fire.

398 ***tyrannous*** fierce
damned damnèd

399 ***their lord's murder*** i.e. the imminent murder of Priam
roasted . . . fire This is presumably part of the description of ***the hellish Pyrrhus*** (401), in parallel with ***tricked*** (395), ***Baked and impasted*** (397) and ***o'ersized*** (400), though it could conceivably relate to ***the parching streets*** (397). Q1's reading (see t.n.) perhaps indicates that the reporter was confused here.

400 ***o'ersized*** o'ersizèd; covered over as with size, 'a glutinous or viscid wash applied to paper . . . to provide a suitable ground for painting' (*OED sb.* 2l). Hibbard, however, suggests: 'looking even bigger than his true size because of the clotted blood adhering to him'.
coagulate gore congealed or clotted blood

401 ***carbuncles*** large red gems, thought to glow in the dark

402 ***grandsire*** Priam was supposed to have 50 sons and numerous grandchildren.

403 **So proceed you** In some productions the Player displays impatience with the length of Hamlet's quotation and seems about to take over several times before he is invited to do so. The style in which he proceeds is often melodramatic, raising a problem of inconsistency with Hamlet's praise of naturalistic acting at the beginning of 3.1, but Bob Peck gave a memorably quiet and serious rendering of the speech in Buzz Goodbody's 1975 RSC production after Ben Kingsley as Hamlet had overplayed the first part (see Maher, 78, and Callaghan, 175). Some Hamlets continue to mouth or whisper the rest of the speech along with the Player.

404–5 **with . . . discretion** with good pronunciation and judgement

406 ***Anon*** soon (as at 424)

407 ***Striking too short*** The assumption is that Priam is too old to use his sword effectively and his thrusts fall short. Shakespeare makes fun of old men wielding swords at *2H6* 2.1.49, *RJ* 1.1.75 and *MW* 2.1.204–6.
antique (stress on first syllable) ancient (perhaps Q2/F's 'anticke' also suggests 'antic' = comic)

409 ***Repugnant to command*** refusing to do his bidding

398 *a damned*] damned *F* 399 *lord's murder*] vilde Murthers *F* *roasted in wrath*] *F;* Rifted in earth *Q1* 400 *o'ersized*] (ore-cised), *F* (o're-sized) *coagulate*] *F;* calagulate *Q1* 403] So goe on. *Q1; om. F* 406 SP] *F; Play. Q21* 407 *antique*] (anticke) *F, Q1* (antike) 409 *matched*] match *F*

Pyrrhus at Priam drives, in rage strikes wide,
But with the whiff and wind of his fell sword
Th'unnerved father falls. Then senseless Ilium
Seeming to feel this blow, with flaming top
Stoops to his base and with a hideous crash
Takes prisoner Pyrrhus' ear. For lo, his sword
Which was declining on the milky head
Of reverend Priam seemed i'th' air to stick.
So as a painted tyrant Pyrrhus stood
Like a neutral to his will and matter,

410 ***drives*** aims the thrusts of his sword

411 ***whiff and wind*** mere disturbance of the air. In Marlowe and Nashe's *Dido*, Achilles' son 'whiskt his sword about, / And with the wound thereof the King fell down' (2.1.253–4); most editors accept Collier's emendation of the 1594 Quarto 'wound' to 'wind' on the analogy of the present passage and the assumption that the idea is a commonplace: see *FQ*, 1.7.12, where the Red Cross Knight avoids a blow from a giant: '[he] lightly lept from vnderneath the blow: / Yet so exceeding was the villains power, / That with the wind it did him overthrow', and *TC* 5.3.41, where Troilus tells Hector that Greeks fall 'Even in the fan and wind of your fair sword'.
fell cruel

412 ***unnerved*** unnervèd; enfeebled
Then senseless Ilium* These words from F seem necessary for the sense. There is no version of 412–35 in Q1, perhaps indicating, as Jenkins argues, that this passage was cut or marked for cutting – though it would be odd for Polonius to complain about the length after just six lines. ***Ilium***, another name for Troy, is used by Shakespeare to mean the royal castle or citadel rather than the whole city, here and in *TC*.
senseless insensible (but *Seeming to feel*)

414 ***his*** its

415 ***Takes . . . ear*** By metonymy the ear stands for the man: Pyrrhus' action is arrested by the noise.

416 ***declining*** descending. Nestor uses the same verb to describe how he has seen Hector in a similar posture: 'When thou hast hung thy advanced sword i'th' air, / Not letting it decline on the declin'd' (*TC* 4.5.187–8).
milky i.e. white-haired

417 ***reverend*** The spellings 'reuerent' (Q2) and 'Reuerend' (F) were interchangeable at this time.
seemed . . . stick possibly a recollection of two moments in Marlowe and Nashe's *Dido*: Pyrrhus is described as standing 'with his faulchion's poynt raisde up at once' while Priam and Hecuba plead for their lives (2.1.229) and later 'leaning on his sword, he stood stone still, / Viewing the fire wherewith rich *Ilion* burnt' (2.1.263–4). Bevington (372) points out that Troilus similarly imagines his sword hovering in the air before descending on Diomedes at *TC* 5.2.178–83; there too the action is compared to the approach of a storm.

418 ***painted*** (1) as if in a painting; (2) coated in blood

419 'like one who is unable to act in spite of his desire and duty'

412 *Then . . . Ilium*] *F; not in Q2Q1* 413 *this*] his *F* 417 reverend] *(*reuerent*), F (*Reuerend*)* 419–20] *one line F* 419 *Like*] And like *F*

Did nothing.
But as we often see against some storm
A silence in the heavens, the rack stand still,
The bold winds speechless and the orb below
As hush as death, anon the dreadful thunder
Doth rend the region, so after Pyrrhus' pause
A roused vengeance sets him new a-work
And never did the Cyclops' hammers fall
~~*On Mars's armour, forged for proof eterne,*~~
With less remorse than Pyrrhus' bleeding sword
Now falls on Priam.
~~*Out, out, thou strumpet Fortune! All you gods*~~
~~*In general synod take away her power,*~~
~~*Break all the spokes and fellies from her wheel*~~
~~*And bowl the round nave down the hill of heaven*~~
~~*As low as to the fiends.*~~

421 ***see*** i.e. experience (in this case, hear)
against in advance of
422 ***rack*** cloud formation (as at *AC* 4.14.10)
423 ***orb*** globe, i.e. earth
424 ***As . . . death*** proverbial (Dent, 133.1)
hush silent; either an adjectival use of the verb (Hope, 1.2.8) or a past participle = hushed
425 ***rend the region*** tear through the sky. For ***region*** in this sense, see 514n., and Romeo's reference to 'the airy region' (*RJ* 2.2.21).
426 ***A roused vengeance*** rousèd. Since Collier (1843) many editors have printed 'Aroused vengeance', but both Q2 and F have 'A rowsed vengeance' which seems perfectly acceptable in the sense of 'an awakened desire for revenge'.
427 ***Cyclops*** The Cyclopes were three one-eyed giants who worked for Vulcan, the blacksmith-god; they are said to have made Achilles' armour in the *Iliad* and Aeneas' armour in the *Aeneid*.
428 ***Mars's*** This form of the possessive is necessary for the metre, which requires two syllables. Mars was the Roman god of war; it is assumed that the Cylops also made armour for him.
for proof eterne to be impenetrable for ever
429 ***bleeding*** i.e. dripping with blood
431 ***strumpet*** prostitute (as at 231)
432 ***synod*** general assembly, council; with one exception (*CE* 1.1.13), Shakespeare confines this word to meetings of gods.
433 ****fellies*** the bent pieces of wood forming the outside or rim of a wheel
her wheel Fortune is often depicted standing on a wheel; 'Fortune's wheel is ever turning' was proverbial (Tilley, F617).
434 ***nave*** central part or hub of a wheel; in this case, what is left when the spokes and rim have been broken off
hill of heaven presumably Mount Olympus, home of the gods (see 5.1.243)

426 *A roused*] *F;* Aroused *Collier a-work*] (a worke) *F* 428 *Mars's armour*] Mars his Armours *F* 433 *fellies*] *F4;* follies *Q2;* Fallies *F;* felloes *Q5*

POLONIUS This is too long.

HAMLET It shall to the barber's with your beard. Prithee say on – he's for a jig, or a tale of bawdry, or he sleeps. Say on, come to Hecuba.

1 PLAYER

But who – ah woe – had seen the mobled queen – 440

HAMLET 'The mobled queen'!

POLONIUS That's good.

1 PLAYER

– Run barefoot up and down, ~~threatening the flames~~
~~With bisson rheum~~, a clout upon that head
Where late the diadem stood and, for a robe, 445

436 The comparable speech in Marlowe and Nashe's *Dido* (2.1.121–288) is 167 lines, with four one-line interjections by Dido (see 384n.). Will Keen delivered it with considerable tragic power in the London Globe's production in 2003.

437 **It . . . beard** This does not necessarily imply that Polonius has a long beard; perhaps just that he is old (or that he is in need of a shave). DSK, however, suggests that *your* could refer to the *valanced* First Player and that Hamlet shares Polonius' impatience.

438 **jig** comic entertainment including dancing, often performed as an afterpiece to a tragedy
tale of bawdry dirty story

439 **Hecuba** Priam's wife, whose grief came to epitomize tragic sorrow; significantly, she does not appear in *TC* where these events are depicted satirically. However, after her rape, Shakespeare's Lucrece studies 'a piece / Of skilful painting, made for Priam's Troy' in which she sees Hecuba's grief: 'Lo here weeps Hecuba, here Priam dies' (*Luc* 1366–7, 1485).

440 ***who . . . had seen*** whoever might have seen
mobled That this (also found in Q1) was an unusual word is confirmed by F's 'inobled' (repeated three times) as well as by Polonius' comment. It is usually glossed as meaning 'muffled' or 'veiled' (and hence the phrase may evoke the figure of Nature, who was also represented as veiled, as in the 'Mutabilitie' cantos of *FQ*, 7.7.5–6), but generations of playgoers must have found it a vaguely impressive word without knowing what it meant. Edwards argues that the spelling 'mobbled', found in 1655, indicates the pronunciation. The F reading, 'inobled', appears also as a correction in Q8; it has subsequently been supported by some editors (e.g. Caldecott, MacDonald) as meaning either 'made noble' or its opposite, 'ignobled' (degraded).

444 ***bisson rheum*** blinding tears
clout cloth

445 ***diadem*** crown

437 to the] *Q1;* to'th *F* 440, 443 SP] *F (1. Play.); Play. Q2* 440 *ah woe*] (a woe); O who *Q1F* 440–1 *mobled . . .* mobled] *Q1;* inobled . . . Inobled *F;* ignobled *MacDonald (Tschischwitz)* 442 That's good.] Mobled Queene is good, faith very good. *Q1;* That's good: Inobled Queene is good. *F* 443] *F lines* downe, / flame / *flames*] flame *F* 444 *upon*] on *Q1;* about *F*

About her lank and all-o'erteemed loins,
A blanket in the alarm of fear caught up.
~~Who this had seen, with tongue in venom steeped,~~
~~'Gainst Fortune's state would treason have pronounced.~~
Oh ***~~But~~*** *if the gods themselves did see her then,* 450
When she saw Pyrrhus make malicious sport
In mincing with his sword her husband limbs,
The instant burst of clamour that she made
(Unless things mortal move them not at all)
Would have made ***~~milch~~*** *the burning eyes of heaven* 455
And passion in the gods. moist

POLONIUS Look where he has not turned his colour and has 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 460 players well bestowed? Do you hear, let them be well

446 ***lank . . . loins*** gaunt or withered loins which had borne (teemed with) an excessive number of children. (Not all of Priam's sons were also Hecuba's, but she was said to have given birth to as many as 20.)
o'erteemed o'erteemèd
447 ***alarm*** F's 'Alarum' carries the more specific meaning of a military emergency.
448 ***Who this had seen*** whoever had seen this
with . . . steeped with a tongue steeped in poison
449 'would have spoken treason against the rule of Fortune'
450–6 The construction of this conditional sentence changes somewhat so that ***the gods*** as subject gives way to 'the instant burst of clamour'.
452 ***mincing*** cutting into small pieces
husband Q2's form is an archaic uninflected form of the genitive (see Hope, 1.1.4–5).
455 would have made the sun and stars weep
456 ***And passion*** i.e. and aroused passion
457–8 **Look . . . more** Polonius is presumably close enough to the Player to claim to see the *tears* the audience cannot (and which may not, of course, exist). It may be that his impatience expressed at 436 ('This is too long') has turned to admiration, and that *Prithee no more* is spoken kindly. His addressing the Player as 'good heart' at this point in Q1 would support such an interpretation.
457 **Look where** see whether (how)
turned changed (i.e. gone pale)
461 **well bestowed** appropriately accommodated. As in *TS* Induction 1.101–3, a stress is placed on the quality of the hospitality offered to the visiting players, suggesting a nostalgic, almost feudal relationship between the players and their aristocratic patrons, unlike the more commercial or professional

446 *lank . . . o'erteemed*] *F;* weake and all ore-teeming *Q1* 447 *the alarm*] th'Alarum *F* 452 *husband*] husbandes *Q1F* 458 Prithee] Pray you *F* 459–60 'Tis . . . soon.] *prose F; one verse line Q2* 459 of this] *om. F* 460 SD] *Oxf* 461 you] ye *F*

used, for they are the abstract 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.

HAMLET God's bodkin, man, much better! Use every man after his desert and who shall scape whipping? ~~Use them after your own honour and dignity — the less they deserve the more merit is in your bounty.~~ Take them in.

POLONIUS Come, sirs.

HAMLET Follow him, friends. We'll hear a play tomorrow. [*aside to First Player*] Dost thou hear me, old friend? Can you play *The Murder of Gonzago*?

1 PLAYER Ay, my lord.

HAMLET We'll ha't tomorrow night. You could for need study a speech of some dozen lines, or sixteen lines,

one evoked by the earlier references to the contemporary London theatres (see 358.1n.).

Do you hear an intensive, meaning 'please pay attention to this' (like 'Dost thou hear me' at 473)

462–3 **abstract . . . time** i.e. they summarize or epitomize the age in which they live (but Jenkins defends Q2's combination of singular *abstract* with plural *chronicles*).

463 **you . . . have** it would be better for you if you had

465 **use** treat

467 **bodkin** an abbreviation of 'bodykin' = small (or dear) body.

468, 469 **after** according to

468 **scape** escape

whipping the standard punishment for vagabonds, a category which could include unlicensed players

473 **Dost . . . me** please listen (as at 461), here meaning 'can I have a word with you before you go?'

474 ***The ... Gonzago*** Hamlet claims at 3.2.256 that this is an Italian play, and it is clearly known to the players, but attempts to identify a literary source have proved fruitless (see 3.2.232–3n. and pp. 61–3). In performance, the First Player sometimes riffles through a few playbooks in his pack before producing the right title.

476–8 **You . . . not** It was not uncommon on the Elizabethan stage for old plays to be revived with 'additions' or insertions; Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* is perhaps the most famous example; first published in 1592, it was reprinted with additions in 1602.

476 **for need** as required

477 **study** learn

speech . . . lines No one has convincingly identified this speech in the play in 3.2; the most popular choices are the lines in the Player King's speech from '*Purpose is but the slave to memory*' to '*their ends none of our own*'

462 abstract] Abstracts *F* 464 live] *Q1;* liued *F* 467 bodkin] bodykins *F* much] farre *Q1; om. F* 468 shall] should *Q1F* 473 SD] *White subst.* 475, 479 SP] *Capell; Play. Q2F; players Q1* 476 for] for a *Q1F* 477 dozen lines] dozen *Q1F*

which I would set down and insert in't, could you not?

1 PLAYER Ay, my lord.

HAMLET Very well. Follow that lord – and look you mock him not. [*to other Players*] My good friends, I'll leave you till night. You are welcome to Elsinore.

ROSENCRANTZ Good my lord.

HAMLET

Ay so, God buy to you. *Exeunt* [*all but Hamlet*].
Now I am alone.
O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!
Is it not monstrous that this player here,

(3.2, 182–207) and Lucianus' speech from '*Thoughts black*' to '*usurps immediately*' (248–53), the first speech being too long and the second too short. It is possible that Hamlet's speech may not be in *The Murder of Gonzago* at all – that the actors don't reach it before the play is disrupted. In any case the insertion seems redundant, since the plot alone is self-evidently relevant. (Edwards sees *some dozen* as a false start in the manuscript that he associates with the confusion over the number of crowns at 73.)

480–1 **and . . . not** Perhaps Hamlet is regretting his own behaviour and discouraging the players from imitating him. Or perhaps he is warning them not to compete with him in this respect.

482 ***till** Q2's 'tell' seems erroneous (as at 4.5.156).

483 **Good my lord** a parting formula = farewell

484 **Ay . . . you** Dover Wilson suggests he speaks 'in a tone of sarcastic relief after [Rosencrantz and Guildenstern] have gone'.
God buy goodbye. See 2.1.66n. and 4.5.192.

484 SD Q1 and F take Polonius/Corambis off at the equivalent of 471 and the others at this point, while Q2 has the explicit '*Exeunt Pol. and Players*' after '*Elsonoure*' at 482. It would seem from Hamlet's repetition of *Follow that lord* at 480 that the other players do not leave before then. Hibbard has Polonius and the players leave after *mock him not* (480–1), leaving Hamlet's 'You . . . Elsinore' to be addressed to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who leave after the former's line. Some productions make it clear that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are suspicious of what Hamlet may be saying to the First Player and reluctant to leave him alone; thus his 'Ay so, God buy to you' urges them offstage. In any case neither they nor Polonius should hear Hamlet's request at 473–8.

485–540 This soliloquy, in which Hamlet shares with the audience his amazement at what we have just witnessed, is, as Emrys Jones points out, somewhat in the melodramatic style of Richard III, especially his 'Was ever woman in this humour wooed?' speech at 1.2.232–68 (Jones, *Scenic Form*, 104–5). For further discussion of Hamlet's soliloquies, see pp. 18–25.

485 **peasant slave** Q1's 'dunghill idiote slave' carries the same class-based self-insult.

486 **monstrous** unnatural, shocking

478 you] ye *F* 481 SD] *this edn* 482 till] *F;* tell *Q2* 484 God . . . you] God buy'ye *F* SD] *Q1; Exeunt Pol. and Players. (opp. 482), Exeunt. (opp. 483) Q2; Exeunt. (opp. 483), Manet Hamlet. (after 483) F* 485 rogue and peasant] *F;* dunghill idiote *Q1*

But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
Could force his soul so to his own conceit
That from her working all the visage wanned
– Tears in his eyes, distraction in his aspect,
A broken voice, and his whole function suiting
With forms to his conceit – and all for nothing –
For Hecuba?
What's Hecuba to him, or he to her,
That he should weep for her? What would he do
Had he the motive and that for passion
That I have? He would drown the stage with tears
And cleave the general ear with horrid speech,
Make mad the guilty and appal the free,
Confound the ignorant and amaze indeed

487 **But** merely
488 **force . . . conceit** 'i.e. bring his innermost being into such consonance with his conception of the part' (Hibbard, who adopts F's reading)
489 **from her working** because of her (his conceit's) activity or influence
all . . . wanned his whole face turned pale. Apparently the opposite of F (see t.n.), but either a sudden pallor or a sudden flush could be a sign of emotion. An oddly similar textual difference occurs at 3.4.48, where Q2 has 'heated visage' and F has 'tristfull visage'.
490 **distraction . . . aspect** frenzy, intensity of feeling, in his general appearance. F's elision emphasizes the usual Shakespearean pronunciation of *aspect* with the accent on the second syllable.
491–2 **his . . . conceit** everything about him completely matching in expression to what he is imagining (*whole function* means all his actions and emotions)
494 **to her** Jenkins dismisses F's reading as 'obviously an actor's (over-)emphasis', while Hibbard defends it as 'a case of authorial revision, made to eliminate the repetition of *her* in the Q2 version'.
496 **and . . . passion** Unemended, Q2 is defective in both sense and metre. It may be understood as meaning something like 'and that much cause for passion'; John Ward emended to 'and that cause for passion' in his promptbooks (see Thompson, 'Ward', 147), although he had access to the F reading, which is usually preferred (e.g. by Jenkins).
498 **general** universal
horrid causing horror (a stronger meaning than the modern one; see *horrible* at 1.5.80)
499 **appal the free** horrify the innocent (those free of guilt), or make them turn pale with fear: *OED* cites this line under *appale v.* 6.
500 **Confound the ignorant** discomfit, devastate those who are unaware (of the crime)
amaze stupefy, paralyse (again, a stronger meaning than the modern one)

488 own] whole *F* 489 the] his *F* wanned] warm'd *F* 490 in his aspect] in's Aspect *F* 494 her] Hecuba *Q1F* 496 that] the Cue *F*

The very faculties of eyes and ears. Yet I,
A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak
Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause,
And can say nothing. No, not for a king
Upon whose property and most dear life
A damned defeat was made. Am I a coward?
Who calls me villain, breaks my pate across,
Plucks off my beard and blows it in my face,
Tweaks me by the nose, gives me the lie i'th' throat
As deep as to the lungs? Who does me this,
Ha? 'Swounds, I should take it. For it cannot be
But I am pigeon-livered and lack gall

501 **very faculties** proper functions
502 **muddy-mettled** poor-spirited; *muddy* has the sense both of being inert and of lacking clarity, while *mettled* may suggest a pun on 'metal' – in this case tarnished metal.
peak mope or sneak about
503 **John-a-dreams** a stereotype of a dreamy, inactive man, comparable to the use of 'John-a-nokes' and 'John-a-stiles' as fictitious names for parties in a legal action
unpregnant of not properly stimulated by; see *pregnant* in the sense of 'cogent' at 206.
504 **say nothing** can't speak out. Hamlet must mean 'do nothing', since he goes on to chide himself for talking rather than acting, but it is perhaps ironic that he wants to imitate the Player rather than Pyrrhus.
505 **property** possibly literal (i.e. the kingdom of Denmark) or possibly 'that which was properly his' – his identity as king. Hibbard reads 'property and most dear life' as 'a kind of hendiadys' meaning 'the dearest thing he owned – his life'. In Q1, Hamlet mentions that he has 'a Crowne bereft him' as an additional motive at this point.
506 **damned defeat** accursed destruction
Am I a coward? This and the following rhetorical questions have sometimes provoked responses from the audience, notably in the case of David Warner's 1965 performance (see Hapgood, and p. 24).
507 **pate** head
508 **Plucks . . . beard** It is rare to see a bearded Hamlet (though a man of 30 might well have a beard) so this line is generally interpreted metaphorically (see Hamlet's words to Polonius at 437 and the King's reference to having his beard shaken at 4.7.33).
509 **gives . . . lie** accuses me of lying
509–10 **i'th' throat . . . lungs** 'To lie in one's throat' was proverbial (Tilley, T268); Hamlet intensifies it.
510 **Who . . . this** who does this to me
511 **'Swounds** by God's wounds
I . . . it 'I would accept this lying down'
511–12 **it . . . am** I must surely be
512 **pigeon-livered . . . gall** Pigeons were thought to be mild and gentle because their livers lacked *gall* or bile, the supposed source of anger.

501 faculties] faculty *F* 502 muddy-mettled] (muddy metteld), *F* 509 by the] by'th' *F* 511 'Swounds] Sure *Q1*; Why *F* 512 pigeon-livered] (pidgion liuerd), *F*

To make oppression bitter, or ere this
I should ha' fatted all the region kites
With this slave's offal – bloody, bawdy villain,
Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain.
Why, what an ass am I: this is most brave,
That I, the son of a dear murdered,
Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,
Must like a whore unpack my heart with words
And fall a-cursing like a very drab,

513 **To . . . bitter** Edwards glosses, 'to make Claudius's oppression bitter to himself', but Hamlet might mean 'to make my own oppression bitter enough for me to take action'.
ere before
514 **ha'** have
region kites the sky's birds of prey; Hope (1.1.4f) gives this as an example of 'zero genetive' (see also 1.3.132n.). For *region* meaning 'sky', see 425n. and compare 'region cloud' in *Son* 33.12.
515 **offal** literally, what falls off and is discarded – in the case of animal carcasses the entrails
bawdy lewd, immoral (see *bawdry* at 438)
516 **kindless** lacking natural feeling (see 1.2.65 and n.). Jenkins rejects F's 'Oh Vengeance!' after *villain* as an actor's addition, and Simon Russell Beale's gentle Hamlet could not bring himself to say it (Maher, 240); Edwards, however, argues that it is the turning-point of the speech.
517 **brave** admirable (sarcastic)
518 **a dear murdered** murderèd. Unemended, this must mean 'a person dear to me who has been murdered'. Many editors prefer the Q3 reading 'a deere father murthered' and justify this by pointing out that in Q1 Hamlet calls himself 'the sonne of my deare father' at this point. Halliwell defends Q2's phrase by analogy with 'the dear departed'; *TxC* suggests a pun on 'deer'.
519 **by . . . hell** Hamlet is either going for rhetorical inclusiveness, invoking the entire universe in his cause as he did when he asked whether he should *couple hell* to heaven and earth (1.5.92–3), or he is concerned whether the Ghost is 'a spirit of health or goblin damned' (1.4.40) – a topic to which he returns at 533–8. To be *Prompted by hell* would undercut the moral authority of his revenge.
520, 521 **whore, drab** Both words mean 'prostitute'. 'In the traditional opposition of genders in which "Women are words, men deeds", Hamlet's comparison of his verbal and deedless delay to the impotent anger of a *drab* sets up a link between his entire period of inactivity and delay and womanish wordiness, in contrast to such one-dimensional emblems of masculinity as Laertes and the aptly named Fort-in-bras' (Parker, *Fat Ladies*, 23). For a further discussion of gender issues in *Hamlet*, see pp. 26–32.
520 **unpack** unload, relieve

514 ha'] *(a)Q1;* haue *F* 515 offal – bloody, bawdy] Offall, bloudy: a Bawdy *F* 516 villain.] villaine! / Oh Vengeance! *F* 517 Why] *Q1;* Who? *F* this] *Q1;* I sure, this *F* 518 a dear murdered] my deare father *Q1;* a deere father murthered *Q3;* the Deere murthered *F*

Scullion A ~~stallion~~! Fie upon't, foh! About, my brains!
Hum, I have heard
That guilty creatures sitting at a play
Have by the very cunning of the scene
Been struck so to the soul that presently
They have proclaimed their malefactions.
For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak
With most miraculous organ. 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. If 'a do blench
I know my course. The spirit that I have seen
May be a de'il, and the de'il hath power
T'assume a pleasing shape. Yea, and perhaps
Out of my weakness and my melancholy,

522 **stallion** male prostitute (a meaning attested by *OED* from 1553); Q1/F's 'scalion'/'Scullion' means a kitchen-boy or low-level domestic servant.
Fie a strong expression of disgust
About get to work
523 **Hum** Hamlet presumably muses – but Hunter (2.235) argues against those who interpret *Hum* as indicating a pause for thought, pointing out that this is not, after all, Hamlet's first conception of his plan; see 529–31n.
523–9 **I . . . organ** A widow confesses in this way to having murdered her husband in the anonymous play *A Warning for Fair Women* which was acted by Shakespeare's company in 1599 (see p. 60).
524 **creatures** people
525 **very . . . scene** sheer ingenuity of the performance
526 **presently** immediately
528 'Murder will out' was proverbial (Dent, M1315).
529 **miraculous organ** unnatural or supernatural instrument
529–31 **I'll . . . uncle** Hamlet made this decision at 473–4; he explains it further here.
532 **tent . . . quick** probe him to his most sensitive point; the metaphor is from probing a wound.
'a he
blench usually glossed 'flinch', but it could also (*pace* Jenkins) be a variant of 'blanch' = turn pale; either would make sense.
534 **de'il** devil. Q2's spelling may suggest the Scots and Middle English monosyllabic form 'deil' (pronounced like 'deal'). Words for 'devil' occur nine times in Q2 (including the possibly erroneous instance at 3.4.160), six times as 'deuill' and once as 'deule' (the spelling found twice in the first 'Hand D' passage in *Sir Thomas More* which has been ascribed to Shakespeare).
536 **Out of** by exploiting

522–4] *Johnson; Q2 lines* foh. / heard, / play, /; *F lines* Braine. / Play, / 522 stallion] scalion *Q1;* Scullion *F* brains] *Q2c;* braues *Q2u;* braine *Q1F* 523 Hum] *not in Q1F* 532 'a do] he but *F* 534 a] the *Q1F* de'il . . . de'il] *(deale . . . deale);* Diuell . . . Diuel *F*