As he is very potent with such spirits,
Abuses me to damn me! I'll have grounds
More relative than this. The play's the thing
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King. *Exit.*

[3.1] *Enter* KING, QUEEN, POLONIUS, OPHELIA, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN [*and*] *Lords.*

KING

And can you by no drift of conference
Get from him why he puts on this confusion,
Grating so harshly all his days of quiet

537 **potent . . . spirits** influential with people who are melancholy. It was believed that such people were particularly susceptible to demonic powers.
538 **Abuses** deceives
539 **More relative** more relevant, more convincing or conclusive
this i.e. the word of the Ghost (and my own suspicions)
3.1 The three texts: this scene runs to 40 lines in Q1 (scene 8), 187 lines in Q2 and 189 lines in F. It is so much shorter in Q1 because it covers only the material up to 41; Hamlet's 'To be or not to be' soliloquy, his encounter with Ofelia and the reactions of the King and Corambis to what they have observed have already been staged in the previous scene (see headnote to 2.2). Location and timing: this scene takes place in the same location as 2.2 – *the lobby* mentioned at 2.2.158. It is now the following day: *tomorrow night* of 2.2.476 has become *This night* (21); Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are reporting on their first meeting with Hamlet and the plan to *loose* Ophelia to him (2.2.159) is put into effect.
0.2 The '*Lords*' specified in Q2 and F have no function other than to serve as silent attendants; neither text specifies an exit for them. If they come on at all they need to be taken off either at 28 or at 41. Their presence might imply a relatively public occasion, but Spencer notes the absence of a *Flourish* for the royal entry in Q2, as compared with the openings of 1.2 and 2.2, and suggests that this may indicate a more private interview (which would be more appropriate for the report on the spying activities of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern).
1 **And** As often in Shakespeare's plays, the characters enter in the midst of a conversation which is supposed to have begun offstage. This could be another explanation for the lack of a *Flourish*.
drift of conference direction of the conversation
2 **puts on** assumes; see Hamlet's warning that he may 'put an antic disposition on' (1.5.170). The King seems to suspect that Hamlet's madness is faked, that his behaviour is wilful rather than involuntary, but *put on* could be used in a more neutral sense, as at *AYL* 5.4.179: 'The Duke hath put on a religious life.'
confusion mental perturbation
3 **Grating** literally 'roughening', i.e. disturbing, troubling

3.1] *Q6* 0.2 *and*] *Q1F* 1 conference] circumstance *F*

With turbulent and dangerous lunacy?

ROSENCRANTZ

He does confess he feels himself distracted
But from what cause 'a will by no means speak.

GUILDENSTERN

Nor do we find him forward to be sounded
But with a crafty madness keeps aloof
When we would bring him on to some confession
Of his true state.

QUEEN Did he receive you well?

ROSENCRANTZ

Most like a gentleman.

GUILDENSTERN

But with much forcing of his disposition.

ROSENCRANTZ

~~Niggard of question,~~ but of our demands
Most free in his reply.

QUEEN

Did you assay him to any pastime?

5 **distracted** seriously disturbed; see 1.5.97 (a stronger meaning than the modern one)
6 **'a** he
7 **forward** readily disposed
sounded probed, questioned (see 2.1.41)
8 **crafty madness** Guildenstern may make the common assumption that madness imparts cunning, or he may think it is a cunning disguise of Hamlet's *true state* (10). Hamlet himself speaks of being *mad in craft* at 3.4.186.
keeps aloof keeps himself at a distance
12 **disposition** real inclination
13–14 **Niggard . . . reply** Rosencrantz seems to mean 'reluctant to initiate conversation, but generous in his responses to our questions'. Warburton advocated emending to 'Most free of question, but of our demands / Niggard in his reply', which would certainly yield an easier meaning, and which is closer to the Q1 version: 'But still he puts us off and by no means / Would make an answer to that we exposed' (8.7–8). As it stands, this statement modifies Guildenstern's report of Hamlet's aloofness, but is hardly accurate as a report of what happened in 2.2.219–305: as Stoppard's Rosencrantz puts it: 'Twenty-seven questions he got out in ten minutes, and answered three' (Stoppard, 40). It is notable that the pair do not mention Hamlet's suspicion – and their confession – that they were sent for.
15 **assay him** to encourage him to try
pastime recreation, (pleasant) way of passing the time

6 'a] he *F*

ROSENCRANTZ
Madam, it so fell out that certain players
We o'er~~raught~~ on the way. Of these we told him
And there did seem in him a kind of joy
To hear of it. They are here about the Court
And, as I think, they have already order
This night to play before him.
POLONIUS 'Tis most true,
And he beseeched me to entreat your majesties
To hear and see the matter.
KING
With all my heart, and it doth much content me
To hear him so inclined.
Good gentlemen, give him a further edge
And drive his purpose into these delights.
ROSENCRANTZ
We shall, my lord.
Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern [*and Lords*].
KING Sweet Gertrude, leave us two.
For we have closely sent for Hamlet hither
That he, as 'twere by accident, may here

17 **o'erraught** overtook (the past tense of 'to overreach')
20 **have already order** have already been given the commission
23 **hear and see** This formulation may alert audiences and readers to the importance of the dumb-show.
26 **give . . . edge** incite him more forcefully
27 **drive . . . delights** encourage his intention to undertake these pleasures
28 **two** F's 'too' is adopted by most editors (including Jenkins), but *leave us two* provides a perfectly acceptable meaning: 'leave the two of us alone' (assuming that the King simply ignores Ophelia).
29 **closely** privately – or even 'secretly', i.e. without Hamlet realizing he is being manipulated. When he appears he does not make any mention of the fact that he is responding to a message from the King, though some performers make a show of looking carefully around them (see, for example, Branagh, 76). This slight awkwardness may relate to the larger problem of the placing of 'To be or not to be' (see pp. 18–19).

19 here] *om. F* 24] *F; Q2 lines* hart, / me / 25–7] *F lines* Gentlemen, / purpose on / delights. / 27 into] on / To *F* 28 SD *and Lords*] *this edn* two] too *F* 30 here] there *F*

Affront Ophelia. Her father and myself –
We'll so bestow ourselves that, seeing unseen,
We ~~may of their encounter~~ frankly judge
~~And gather by him as he is behaved~~
If't be ~~th'affliction of~~ his love or no
That thus he suffers for.

QUEEN I shall obey you.
And for your part, Ophelia, I do wish
That your good beauties be the happy cause
Of Hamlet's wildness. So shall I hope your virtues
Will bring him to his wonted way again
To both your honours.

OPHELIA Madam, I wish it may. [*Exit Queen.*]

POLONIUS
Ophelia, walk you here. (Gracious, so please you,
We will bestow ourselves.) Read on this book

31 **Affront** confront, encounter (*OED*'s first usage)
myself – Some editors argue that F's 'lawful espials' was inserted in Shakespeare's manuscript but overlooked by the Q2 compositor; they print either *Affront Ophelia* or 'Lawful espials' as a separate short line.
32 **We'll** F's 'Will' makes slightly smoother syntax in this awkward sentence. Q2's *We* may be an anticipation of the next line.
bestow position
34 **And . . . behaved** and ascertain from his behaviour
37–41 **I . . . honours** The Queen makes it clear that, unlike Laertes and Polonius in 1.3, she has no objection to Ophelia's relationship with Hamlet.
38, 39 **beauties, virtues** The contrast suggested by the Queen anticipates (in a more optimistic vein) the opening of Hamlet's tirade against Ophelia at 102–14.
38 **happy** fortuitous
40 **wonted way** normal behaviour
41 **To . . . honours** to the honour and credit of you both (*honours* may hint at marriage: see *honourable fashion* at 1.3.110).
I . . . may i.e. I hope you are right.
41 SD *There is no SD in Q2 or F, but the Queen must leave at this point, having been asked to go at 28 and agreed that she will at 36. Edwards takes the *Lords* off with the Queen here (see 28 SD).
42 **Gracious** your grace (addressed to the King); unique as a form of address in Shakespeare, though phrases like 'gracious lord' and 'gracious sovereign' are common
43 **this book** presumably a prayer-book, from the references to *devotion* in 46 and *orisons* in 88

31 myself –] *(*my selfe,*);* my selfe (lawful espials) *F* 32 We'll] Will *F* 37 your] *F;* my *Q3* 41 SD] *Theobald* 42 ²you] ye *F*

That show of such an exercise may colour
Your loneliness. We are oft too blame in this –
'Tis too much proved that with devotion's visage
And pious action we do sugar o'er
The devil himself.

KING O, 'tis too true.
[*aside*] How smart a lash that speech doth give my conscience!
The harlot's cheek beautied with plastering art
Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it
Than is my deed to my most painted word.
O heavy burden!

44 **exercise** act of private devotion
colour provide an excuse for, camouflage
45 ***loneliness** solitariness. Q2's 'lowlines' does not seem appropriate and is an easy misreading. Andrews, however, retains, glossing it as 'pious humility'.
too blame Thus both Q2 and F; editors usually print 'to blame', but *OED* notes that 'In the 16–17th c. the *to* was misunderstood as *too* and *blame* taken as an adjective = blameworthy, culpable' (*v.* 6). See a possible similar usage at 5.2.305 and see F *Oth* 3.3.214, 'I am much too blame'; *MV* 5.1.166, 'You were too blame'; and *1H4* 3.1.171, 'you are too wilful-blame'. See also Blake, 4.3.1.5a where this phrase is glossed 'to be blamed'.
46 **'Tis . . . proved** it is too often demonstrated
devotion's visage pretence (face) of religion
47 **sugar o'er** cover with sugar, i.e. render superficially attractive
48 **O . . . true** The King's whole speech is often marked '*aside*' (e.g. by Jenkins, Edwards and Hibbard), but Klein points out that it would be odd for him simply to turn away and that these four words are more likely a controlled response to Polonius before the private revelation.
49–53 The King's first direct confession of guilt to the audience is absent from Q1 and has often been omitted in performance (since at least 1676). It confirms the Ghost's story while lacking any specific reference to what *deed* is on the King's *conscience*.
49 **smart** sharp, stinging
50–2 The King takes up Polonius' notion of 'sugar[ing] o'er / The devil himself' and his suggestion of a deceptively attractive *visage* in reflecting on the contrast between his own words and deeds: he sets up a simile whereby the prostitute's (*harlot's*) cheek is as ugly compared with its covering layer of make-up as his actions are compared with his deceiving language.
50 **beautied** made beautiful
plastering art The disparagement of make-up is typical of Elizabethan satires on women and is taken up again by Hamlet at 141–3 (see Jenkins, LN).
51 **to . . .** it in comparison with the make-up which enhances it (but Spencer suggests that *the thing* refers to the servant who helps the prostitute with her make-up, in which case *to* means 'from the point of view of')

45 loneliness] *F;* lowlines *Q2* 47 sugar] surge *F* 48 too] *om. F* 49 SD] *Pope*

POLONIUS

I hear him coming – withdraw, my lord.
[*King and Polonius hide behind an arras.*]

Enter HAMLET.

HAMLET

To be, or not to be – that is the question; 55
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune

54 **withdraw** Jenkins adopts F's 'let's withdraw', either on metrical grounds or because it is more deferential to the King. Dessen and Thomson give examples of plays where characters are instructed to 'withdraw behind the Arras' or 'withdraw behind the hangings' (under 'withdraw').

54 SD *No exit SD in Q2; F's '*Exeunt*' could be misleading, since it is clear in all three texts that they remain within earshot – and that the most famous of all soliloquies is not, strictly speaking, a soliloquy at all: three other characters are present, although Hamlet speaks as if he is alone. Derek Jacobi aroused considerable controversy by speaking the speech directly to Ophelia in Toby Robertson's production at the London Old Vic in 1977; Jonathan Pryce did the same at the Royal Court in 1980 (see Dawson, 219). *TxC* points out that this scene is unusual in having a re-entry direction for the characters who have been hiding in both Q2 and F.

54.1 Q2's placing of Hamlet's entry before 54 rather than after it has allowed editors to argue that he sees the King and Polonius 'withdrawing' and that this motivates his suspicion at 129. It would be very unusual for Shakespeare, or any dramatist of this period, not to clarify the situation if Hamlet is consciously directing his soliloquy or his subsequent speeches at listeners; compare, for example, the moment in George Chapman's *The Conspiracy of Charles Duke of Byron* (1608), where La Fin signals his 'fake soliloquy' by beginning with the words 'A fained passion in his [Byron's] hearing now / Which he thinks I perceaue not . . . Would sound / How deepe he stands affected with that scruple', and later pretends shock: 'What! Did your highness hear?' (2.1.1–5, 24).

55–187 For Q1's earlier placing of this soliloquy and the remainder of the scene, see pp. 18–25.

55 **the question** Perhaps surprisingly after so much debate, editors and critics still disagree as to whether *the question* for Hamlet is (a) whether life in general is worth living, (b) whether he should take his own life, (c) whether he should act against the King. One reason for this, as Hibbard notes, is that the speech is cast in very general terms.

57 **slings and arrows** The sling is that which propels the missile (a hand-sling or catapult), so 'slings and bows' would be a more symmetrical formulation, but 'sling' can be read as a metonymy for 'missile'. Jenkins suggests *slings* might be a misprint for 'stings' (like 'extent'/'exlent' at 2.2.219), but he also notes that John

54 withdraw] let's withdraw *F* 54 SD] *Oxf*[1] *subst.*; *Exeunt. F* 54.1] *F; after 53 Q2*

Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
And by opposing end them; to die: to sleep –
No more, and by a sleep to say we end
The heartache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to: 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished – to die: to sleep –
To sleep, perchance to dream – ay, there's the rub,
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil
Must give us pause: there's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life.
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,

Fletcher has *slings and arrows* in his *Valentinian* (1614; 1.3.230), presumably echoing *Hamlet*.

outrageous excessively or grossly offensive

58 **take . . . troubles** A *sea of troubles* was proverbial (Dent, S177.1); the notion of taking arms against a sea has been (a) deplored as a mixed metaphor, (b) commended as expressing Hamlet's sense of futility.

59 **by . . . them** 'bring them to an end by actively taking them on'. Hamlet implies either that suicide is the only alternative to suffering (he would end his troubles by ending himself) or that action against the King would result in his own death (as indeed eventually it does).

60 **No more** i.e. to die is no more than to sleep. The line is parodied in Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Scornful Lady* (1613), when Sir Roger says to Welford, 'Have patience Sir, until our fellowe *Nicholas* bee deceast, that is, a sleepe: for so the word is taken; to sleepe to die, to die to sleepe: a very Figure Sir' (2.1.39–41; see pp. 57–8 for early parodic references to *Hamlet*).

62 **That . . . to** that are the normal heritage of humanity

consummation completion, climax

64 **rub** impediment, disincentive (from the game of bowls, where a *rub* is an obstacle of some kind which diverts the bowl from its proper course, as at *R2* 3.3.3–4:'Madam, we'll play at bowls. / 'Twill make me think the world is full of rubs')

66 **this mortal coil** '(1) this turmoil and trouble of living, (2) this mortal flesh . . . which encloses within its coils or folds our essential being and has to be *shuffled off* at death as a snake sloughs its old skin' (Hibbard). The phrase seems to have been coined by Shakespeare: see *OED* coil *sb.* 2.4b.

67 **give us pause** cause us to hesitate

respect consideration

68 that allows calamitous experiences to last so long. But 'it is not easy to exclude the feeling that *long life* is itself being regarded as a *calamity*' (Jenkins).

69–75 The catalogue of complaints is similar to that given in *Son* 66 which begins: 'Tired with all these for restful death I cry.' It is easier to imagine the persona of *Son* being troubled by such things than a prince like Hamlet.

69 **time** Hamlet seems to mean 'the time or world we live in' rather than a personified Time; see 'The time is out of joint' (1.5.186).

59 die: to] *Q1* (Die, to), *F* (dye, to); die to *Q2* sleep –] *Q1* (sleepe,); sleepe *Q2F* 61 heartache] (hart-ake), *F* (Heart-ake) 63 wished – to] *F* (wish'd. To); wisht to *Q2*

Th'oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office and the spurns
That patient merit of th'unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin. Who would fardels bear
To grunt and sweat under a weary life
But that the dread of something after death
(The undiscovered country from whose bourn
No traveller returns) puzzles the will

70 **contumely** insolence, insulting behaviour or treatment

71 **despised** F's 'dispriz'd' (un- or undervalued) is generally preferred, e.g. by Jenkins, who argues for it on the grounds that it is the more difficult reading and therefore less likely to be a scribal or compositorial error. Q2's 'despiz'd' also makes acceptable sense, though Shakespeare usually puts the stress on the second syllable.

72–3 **the spurns . . . takes** the rejections or setbacks that a patient and deserving person receives from worthless or despicable (*unworthy*) people. Some translators of this speech have substituted their own topical references, for example Boris Pasternak's early version, which included complaints about 'red tape', 'foul-mouthed petty officials, and the kicks of the worthless kicking the worthy' (see Stříbrný, 98).

74 **his quietus make** pay his complete account (i.e. end his life); *quietus est* (Latin) was a phrase used to confirm that a bill or debt had been paid. The financial metaphor picks up the Ghost's reference to his *reckoning* and *account* at 1.5.78.

75 **bare** unsheathed, or perhaps puny
bodkin stiletto or dagger. Shakespeare does not use this word often: he may be remembering Chaucer's description of the murder of Caesar in 'The Monk's Tale', where the conspirators 'caste the place in which he sholde dye, / With boydekyns, as I shal yow devyse' (2701–2) and then 'This false Brutus and his othere foon hym hente, / And striked hym with boydekyns anon' (2705–7). Dessen and Thomson (under 'bodkin') note that the word is used twice in SDs in plays of the period to indicate 'a small instrument used by women'.
fardels burdens

76 **To grunt** so as to grunt; eighteenth-century editors deplored *grunt* as vulgar and inappropriate (as they did *guts* at 3.4.210 and *hugger-mugger* at 4.5.84).

78 **bourn** boundary

79 **No traveller returns** The Ghost has made a rather notable return, but Hamlet presumably means that under normal circumstances death is irreversible; he seems to be speculating about a mortal making a brief visit to the *undiscovered country* of death and then returning to ordinary life, rather than the contrary. Famous counter-examples would include Alcestis and Lazarus, in classical and Christian legend respectively.
puzzles bewilders, paralyses (a stronger sense than the modern one)

70 Th'oppressor's] The Oppressors *F* proud] poore *F* 71 despised] dispriz'd *F* 73 th'unworthy] the vnworthy *F* 75 would] would these *F*

And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of.
Thus conscience does make cowards –
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pitch and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry
And lose the name of action. Soft you now,
The fair Ophelia! Nymph, in thy orisons
Be all my sins remembered.

OPHELIA Good my lord,
How does your honour for this many a day?

82 **conscience** Some commentators argue that *conscience* means 'introspection' here rather than a sense of morality (see Jenkins, LN). Certainly the context indicates that Hamlet means 'fear of punishment after death' rather than 'innate sense of good and bad'.
make cowards – cause us to be cowards. Q1/F's 'of vs all' is included by Jenkins, presumably on metrical grounds; the Q2 reading requires the actor to pause.

83 **native hue** natural colour. Hamlet perhaps suggests a personification of Resolution as a person whose normally healthy complexion is disguised by pallor.

84 ***sicklied o'er** unhealthily covered. (The first recorded use of the verb 'to sickly' in *OED*; subsequent uses show the influence of F's 'sicklied' rather than Q2's 'sickled'.) The relation between a covering or painting and the substance under it is taken up again (as at 46–8 and 50–2), though here it is the covering that is problematic.
pale . . . thought pallid tinge of contemplation

85 **pitch** height, scope. Jenkins quotes 'How high a pitch his resolution soars!' (*R2* 1.1.109) for the association of *pitch* with *resolution* (83). Clark, Glover and Wright point out that the 1676, 1683, 1695 and 1703 Quartos 'have, contrary to their custom' followed F in reading 'pith' (meaning importance, gravity) here, 'which may possibly indicate that "pith" was the reading according to the stage tradition'.
moment significance, importance

87 **Soft you** be quiet, wait a moment (Hamlet sees Ophelia for the first time and breaks off his speech)

88–9 **Nymph . . . remembered** '*Hamlet*, at the sight of *Ophelia*, does not immediately recollect, that he is to personate madness, but makes her an address grave and solemn, such as the forgoing meditation excited in his thoughts' (Johnson). Others, however, find his tone ironic or even sarcastic. In Q2, this is the first time that Hamlet and Ophelia encounter each other onstage, though some productions and films anticipate their meeting by including a silent Ophelia in 1.2 or miming the encounter in her closet (see 1.2.0.3n. and 2.1.74–97n.).

88 **orisons** prayers

90 Ophelia implies here and at 93 that she has not seen Hamlet for a long time, although strictly speaking she saw him yesterday, as she reported at 2.1.74–97. The *many a day* may refer to the lapse

82 cowards] cowardes of vs all *Q1F* 84 sicklied] *F*; sickled *Q2* 85 pitch] pith *F* 86 awry] away *F*

HAMLET
I humbly thank you, well.
OPHELIA
My lord, I have remembrances of yours
That I have longed long to redeliver.
I pray you now receive them.
HAMLET
No, not I. I never gave you aught.
OPHELIA
My honoured lord, you know right well you did,
And with them words of so sweet breath composed
As made these things more rich. Their perfume lost,
Take these again, for to the noble mind
Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.
There, my lord.

in time between Act 1 and Act 2 (see headnote to 2.1), or, as Edwards suggests, Ophelia may be represented as nervous or embarrassed by her role in this scene and hence too flustered to be accurate.

91 **well** 'The F repetition [see t.n.] – variously interpreted as showing impatience, boredom, depression, or irony – appears to be no more than an actor's elaboration' (Jenkins).

92 **remembrances** gifts, mementoes, love-tokens, as at *Oth* 3.3.295: 'This was her first remembrance from the Moor.' Hamlet's hostile attitude to Ophelia in this scene has troubled commentators (see 54.1n.); the fact that she clearly has these *remembrances* with her for what is supposedly a chance encounter may arouse his suspicion.

93 **longed** longèd

95 Hamlet's lie may be motivated by hurt pride: she has refused to see him and tried to return his gifts so he pretends he never gave her anything. Some performers, from Junius Brutus Booth in the 1820s, have made it clear at this point that Hamlet is aware of the eavesdroppers (see Hapgood). See 54.1, 129 and nn.
aught anything

96 **you know** Tronch-Pérez argues that F's 'I know' makes Ophelia 'a more determined character', but this seems arguable, since in Q2 she is directly accusing Hamlet of lying. See also 3.2.238n.

97 **of . . . composed** Ophelia means that the words or messages with the gifts were eloquent and charming.

98 **Their perfume lost** now that their attraction has gone (because of your unkindness)

99–100 **for . . . unkind** Dent records 'A gift is valued by the mind of the giver' as proverbial (G97).

100 **wax** become (in estimation)

101 **There, my lord** Ophelia presumably hands over (or tries to hand over) the gifts.

91 you, well] you: well, well, well *F* 95 not I] no *F* 96 [1]you] I *F* 98 these] the *F* Their] then *F* lost] left *F*

HAMLET Ha! Ha! Are you honest?
OPHELIA My lord?
HAMLET Are you fair?
OPHELIA What means your lordship?
HAMLET That if you be honest and fair you should admit no discourse to your beauty.
OPHELIA Could Beauty, my lord, have better commerce than with Honesty?
HAMLET Ay, truly. For the power of Beauty will sooner transform Honesty from what it is to a bawd than the force of Honesty can translate Beauty into his likeness. This was sometime a paradox, but now the time gives it proof. I did love you once.
OPHELIA Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.
HAMLET You should not have believed me. ~~For virtue~~

102–48 Hamlet responds to Ophelia's couplet with a shift into prose which allows for a more rapid question-and-answer dialogue.
102 Hamlet's uneasy (perhaps aggressive) response, like his lie at 95, may be motivated by his sense that Ophelia has rejected him – and is continuing to do so by returning the gifts.
102–4 **honest . . . fair** Beauty and chastity (or 'honesty') were conventionally valued as the most important qualities for women, though they were often seen as being incompatible or difficult to reconcile, as in the proverb 'Beauty and honesty seldom meet' (Tilley, B163), Celia's cynical remark about Nature's gifts to women, 'those that she makes fair, she scarce makes honest; and those that she makes honest, she makes very ill-favouredly' (*AYL* 1.2.36–8), and Nestor's retort to Hector, 'tell him that my lady / Was fairer than his grandam, and as chaste / As may be in the world' (*TC* 1.3.297–9).
106–7 **you . . . beauty** i.e. your honesty ought to permit no one to have converse with your beauty. Although the terms vary (see t.n.), the meaning is much the same in all three texts – that beauty is a potential threat to chastity.
108–9 **Beauty . . . Honesty** Ophelia perhaps attempts to move the focus away from herself by using abstract personifications.
108 **commerce** relationships, dealings. Hamlet seizes on the implication of sex as a commercial transaction in his response.
111 **bawd** pander, pimp; the word could be used of a person of either sex.
112 **translate** transform, change
113 **sometime** formerly, once
paradox absurd statement
116 **You . . . me** Ironically, Hamlet echoes Polonius' advice, 'Do not believe his vows' (1.3.126).

106–7 you should . . . beauty] Your beauty should admit no discourse to your honesty *Q1;* your Honesty should admit no discourse to your Beautie *F* 108–9] *F; Q2 lines* comerse / honestie? / 109 with] *Q1;* your *F*

~~– cannot so inoculate our old stock but we shall relish of –~~
~~– it.~~ I loved you not.

OPHELIA I was the more deceived.

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

OPHELIA At home, my lord.

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

116–18 **For virtue . . . it** The metaphor is from grafting plants: a trace of sinfulness will linger in the old stem even after virtue is grafted on to it.

117 ***inoculate** engraft. From F; Q2's 'euocutat' is a likely misreading, combining a minim error and *t/l* confusion. (Jennens follows Q3's 'euacuate' but this makes less sense of the grafting metaphor.)

relish retain a taste or trace

120 ***to** omitted in Q2 but necessary for the sense

nunnery convent, i.e. a religious community vowed to chastity. It has been suggested that *nunnery* is used here in a slang sense meaning 'brothel' (see Jenkins, LN); Folg and Norton record this meaning, though it does not seem very relevant, given that Hamlet is trying to deter Ophelia from 'breeding'. In Q1 Hamlet tells Ofelia to go to a nunnery eight times, compared with five times in Q2 and F.

121–8 **I . . . us** Hamlet's self-accusations are presumably rhetorical exaggeration.

121 **indifferent honest** reasonably or moderately virtuous

122 **accuse me** accuse myself

124 **beck** summons (as in modern 'beck and call'). Hamlet means that the *offences* are familiar ones in his repertory.

127 **We** humanity, or perhaps more specifically men, in general

128 **arrant** downright; see 1.5.123 and n.

knaves Jenkins adopts F's 'Knaves all', noting that it is supported by Q1.

Go thy ways be on your way, go away

129 **Where's your father** Some commentators and producers indicate that Hamlet's question is motivated by the suspicion that he is being spied on. (See Dover Wilson, who has Hamlet enter at 2.2.156 so that he overhears the plot.) See also 54.1, 147 and nn.

132 **in's** in his

117 inoculate] *F;* euocutat *Q2;* euacuate *Q3* 120 to] *F; not in Q2* 125 in, imagination] in imagination *F* 127 earth and heaven] heauen and earth *Q1F* 128 knaves] knaues all *Q1F* 131–2] *F; Q2 lines* him, / house, / Farewell. / 132 nowhere] *(*no where*) Q1;* no way *F*

OPHELIA [*aside*] O help him, you sweet heavens!
HAMLET If thou dost marry, I'll give thee this plague for thy dowry: be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny. Get thee to a nunnery. Farewell. Or, if thou wilt needs marry, marry a fool, for wise men know well enough what monsters you make of them. To a nunnery go, and quickly too. Farewell.
OPHELIA [*aside*] Heavenly powers restore him.
HAMLET I have heard of your paintings well enough. God hath given you one face and you make yourselves another. You jig and amble and you lisp, you nickname God's creatures and make your wantonness

132, 137, 139 **Farewell** Hamlet keeps turning to go but then thinks of something further to say; he behaves in a similar way in his encounter with his mother in the 'closet scene' (see 3.4.178n.).
133, 140 Ophelia assumes Hamlet is genuinely mad.
134–5 **this . . . dowry** this curse in place of a dowry or marriage portion (usually provided by the woman's father)
136 **calumny** slander
138 **monsters** i.e. cuckolds (victims of marital infidelity), who were depicted as men with horns
138, 141–4 **you . . . your . . . you** Hamlet shifts from his specific castigation of Ophelia to attacking women in general. His formulation *I have heard* signals the conventional nature of his charges: criticism of make-up is a standard element in Elizabethan/Jacobean misogyny (see e.g. John Webster's *Duchess of Malfi* (1614), 2.1.21–60, where Bosola berates an old woman for her 'scurvy face-physic', and, for a discussion of cosmetics in real life as well as onstage, see Garner).
143 **You . . . amble** The criticism is directed towards the way women move or hold their bodies.
***lisp** speak in an affected way (see Rosalind's satirical advice to Jacques at *AYL* 4.1.31–2: 'Look you lisp, and wear strange suits'). Q2's 'list' has no relevant meaning.
144 **nickname God's creatures** It is not clear why this (found in all three texts) is so offensive, unless it is on the analogy of making a new face, i.e. presuming to reject what God has determined; or the implication may be that the names are obscene or *gross* as at 4.7.168. See, however, the comparably odd inclusion of fishing in Octavius Caesar's list of Antony's vices: 'he fishes, drinks, and wastes / The lamps of night in revel' (*AC* 1.4.4–5): perhaps in both cases the speaker is made slightly absurd by his inclusion of a relatively trivial charge.
144–5 **make . . . ignorance** i.e. use *ignorance* as an excuse for foolish or immoral behaviour (*wantonness*).

133 SD] *this edn* 136–7 nunnery. Farewell] (Nunry, farewell); Nunnery. Go, Farewell *F* 140 SD] *this edn* Heavenly] O heauenly *F* 141 paintings] paintings too *Q1*; pratlings too *F* 142 hath] *Q1*; has *F* face] *Q1*; pace *F* yourselves] *Q1*; your selfe *F* 143 jig and] (gig &); fig, and you *Q1*; gidge, you *F* lisp,] *F*; list *Q2* 143–4 you nickname] and you nickname *Q1*; and nickname *F* 144 wantonness] wantonnesse, your *Q1F*

ignorance. Go to, I'll no more on't. It hath made me mad. I say we will have no more marriage. Those that are married already – all but one – shall live. The rest shall keep as they are. To a nunnery, go! *Exit.*

OPHELIA

O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!
The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's eye, tongue, sword,
Th'expectation and rose of the fair state,
The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
Th'observed of all observers, quite, quite down.
And I, of ladies most deject and wretched,
That sucked the honey of his musicked vows,

145 **I'll . . . on't** I won't put up with it any longer

145–6 **It . . . mad** Unless he is just saying, 'It has made me angry', this claim raises the question of Hamlet's level of self-awareness: is he sincerely claiming mental disturbance or is this his *antic disposition*?

146 **more** Q2's 'mo' (its only use of the word) is an archaic form (see Blake, 3.2.3.4).

147 **one** Hamlet presumably means the King. Performers who know they are being spied on (see 129n.) sometimes shout this line provocatively.

150 Ophelia gives Hamlet some of the attributes of the ideal Renaissance prince: *sword* presumably goes with *soldier* but *eye* and *tongue* could go with either *courtier* or *scholar*. The order of the terms owes more to rhetoric than to logic (see 2.2.81–2n.).

151 **expectation and rose** rose-like expectation or hope (hendiadys). *Rose* is used to symbolize youth and beauty, as in Hotspur's description of Richard II as 'that sweet lovely rose' (*1H4* 1.3.173) or in the poet addressing the young man of *Son* 109.14 as 'my rose'. The terms imply that Ophelia sees Hamlet as the heir to the throne. Jenkins adopts F's 'expectansie', perhaps on metrical grounds.

152 **glass of fashion** mirror or model of style. See Hotspur's widow on her husband: 'He was indeed the glass / Wherein the noble youth did dress themselves . . . He was the mark and glass, copy and book, / That fashion'd others' (*2H4* 2.3.21–2, 31–2).
mould of form pattern of behaviour

153 **Th'observed . . . observers** the admired object of all eyes; the object of general scutiny
down destroyed, ruined

154 **deject** cast down (picking up *down* in 153). The usual *-ed* ending of a preterite or past participle may be omitted when the word ends in *-t* (Blake, 4.2.4.1b); Hope (2.1.8c) cites an analogous use of 'twit' for 'twitted' at *2H6* 3.1.178.

155 **musicked** Jenkins prefers F's 'Musicke', arguing that Q2's 'musickt' could be an error induced by 'suckt' or by a final *e* being read as *d*. *OED* has no citations of 'music' as a verb before 1713, whereas nouns are commonly used as modifiers. The meaning either way is that Hamlet's promises were like honey or music to Ophelia.

146 more] *(mo), Q1F* marriage] marriages *Q1F* 151 expectation] expectansie *F* 154 And] Haue *F* 155 musicked] *(musickt);* Musicke *F*

Now see what noble and most sovereign reason
Like sweet bells jangled out of time and harsh –
That unmatched form and stature of blown youth
Blasted with ecstasy. O woe is me
T'have seen what I have seen, see what I see.
[*King and Polonius step forward from behind the arras.*]

KING

Love! His affections do not that way tend.
Nor what he spake, though it lacked form a little,
Was not like madness. There's something in his soul
O'er which his melancholy sits on brood
And I do doubt the hatch and the disclose

156 **what** Jenkins prefers F's 'that', which is in parallel with *That* in 158, but Ophelia's syntax may be more disjointed here.
sovereign reason The reason is seen as ruling the other faculties (see 1.4.73 and n.).

157 **time** Jenkins after some debate (LN) prefers F's 'tune' and cites what could be a similar minim error at *Mac* 4.3.235, where F reads 'This time goes manly', usually emended to 'tune'. It seems, however, just as appropriate to speak of *bells* being *out of time* as 'out of tune'.

158 **stature . . . youth** form or image of youth in its full bloom. Ophelia's representation of Hamlet's youthful potential here makes him seem younger than 30 (see 5.1.135–53 and List of Roles, 1n.). F has 'Feature' for *stature*, also meaning 'form' or 'fashion'.

159 **Blasted with ecstasy** devastated by madness
woe is me it is a misery to me, it makes me miserable

160 The corrected state of this page in Q2 has an *Exit* for Ophelia at this point, and she does leave at the equivalent moment in scene 7 of Q1, but Polonius addresses her below at 177–9. In early performance tradition (from at least 1676) she did sometimes leave here and his lines to her were cut; the alternative (from 1723) was for her to leave and then return as if summoned by *How now, Ophelia?* at 177. Williams ('Directions', 43) suggests that she should exit after 179. If she remains onstage she is often out of earshot of the King's speech (she '*goes up the stage*' in Oxberry's 1827 acting edition), or too distressed to listen to it.

161 The King is perhaps reacting to Hamlet's expressions of distaste for life and reluctance to pass it on by 'breeding'.
affections passions

162–3 **Nor . . . not** The double negative is not uncommon in Shakespeare (see Blake, 6.2 and 6.2.7, and Hope, 2.1.9).

164 **sits on brood** The metaphor is of a brooding bird sitting on its eggs; see *hatch* in 165.

165–6 **And . . . danger** The King indicates he has heard and understood the threat in *all but one* at 147, though his articulation of his thought is necessarily vague.

165 **doubt** fear
hatch outcome; literally the emergence of a young bird from its shell.

156 what] that *F* 157 jangled] *F*; jangl'd, *Capell* time] tune *F* 158 stature] Feature *F* 160 SD] *this edn; Enter King and Polonius. Q2uF; Exit. / Enter King and Polonius. Q2c, Q1 subst.*

Will be some danger – which for to prevent
I have in quick determination
Thus set it down. He shall with speed to England
For the demand of our neglected tribute.
~~Haply the seas and countries different~~
~~With variable objects shall expel~~
~~This something-settled matter in his heart~~
~~Whereon his brains still beating puts him thus~~
~~From fashion of himself.~~ What think you on't?

POLONIUS

It shall do well. But yet do I believe
The origin and commencement of his grief
Sprung from neglected love. How now, Ophelia?
You need not tell us what Lord Hamlet said –
We heard it all. My lord, do as you please,
But if you hold it fit after the play
Let his Queen-mother all alone entreat him

Shakespeare also uses this metaphor in relation to the awakening of evil or conspiracy at *JC* 2.1.33 and *MM* 2.2.98.

disclose disclosure; synonymous with *hatch* (see also 5.1.276)

168 **set it down** made a decision about it

169 **neglected tribute** Some editors note a possible topical allusion here to the 'Danegeld', but this is not really necessary.

170 **Haply** perhaps

171 **variable objects** various sights, 'a change of scene'

172 **something-settled** somewhat obsessive

173 **brains . . . beating** relentless concentration; see *Tem* 1.2.176: 'For still 'tis beating in my mind.'

puts Blake (3.2.1.1g) notes that *brains* often takes a singular verb, while Hope (2.1.8a) argues that the noun clause ('the fact that his brains are still beating') is the subject of *puts* rather than the plural noun.

174 **fashion of himself** his usual behaviour

177–9 **How . . . all** These lines could be taken to imply that Ophelia did not know her father and the King were spying, though this is difficult to reconcile with her presence onstage during the first part of the scene and the Queen's words to her at 37–41. In performance, Polonius' speech can be made to express either kindness (he spares Ophelia the pain of having to recount her experience) or cruelty (he dismisses her and her pain without further thought).

179 **do . . . please** i.e. you will act on your own judgement (Polonius puts his proposal deferentially)

181 **his Queen-mother** his mother who is the Queen

166 for] *om. F* 172 something-settled] *(*something setled*) F* 173–6] *F; Q2 lines* beating / himselfe. / on't? / well. / greefe, / 176 his] this *F*

To show his grief. Let her be round with him
And I'll be placed, so please you, in the ear
Of all their conference. If she find him not,
To England send him or confine him where
Your wisdom best shall think.

KING It shall be so.
Madness in great ones must not unwatched go. *Exeunt.*

[3.2] *Enter* HAMLET *and three of the* Players.

HAMLET Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you – trippingly on the tongue. But if you mouth

182 **grief** grievance
round forthright
183–4 **in . . . Of** so as to overhear. Later, Polonius attributes the suggestion that he should eavesdrop on this conversation to the King: see 3.3.30 and n.
184 **find him not** fails to find out what is wrong with him
187 ***unwatched** Q2's 'vnmatcht' could perhaps mean 'not provided with a counterpart', i.e. 'unopposed', but elsewhere Shakespeare's four uses of 'unmatched' all mean 'matchless' (including the use at 158, which might have influenced Q2's reading).
3.2 The three texts: this scene runs to 237 lines in Q1 (scene 9) and 389 in both Q2 and F; the same elements are present in all three texts but in abbreviated form in Q1 apart from some added examples of how clowns extemporize. Location and timing: this scene takes place in an indoor Court setting large enough to accommodate the performance of *The Murder of Gonzago*. There is often a dais for the courtiers as well as one for the players to use as a stage; chairs, stools or benches may be provided for the onstage audience (see 87n.). It is the evening of the day represented in 3.1, though some hours may have elapsed.
0.1 *three* Only one is required to speak at this point but three are needed for the play at 128–253 (excluding the '*three or four*' extras in the dumb-show). Although editors tend to comment that three are unnecessary, the actors would be available and Hamlet's speeches may work better addressed to a small group than to just one man; most recent productions seem to proceed on this assumption.
1 **the speech** Perhaps 'the speech I have asked you to insert' (see 2.2.476–8 and *my lines* at 4), but Hamlet seems to be giving advice about acting in general. Onstage, the players' reactions range from reverential (Hamlet is seen as Shakespeare's spokesman) to tolerant (the princely amateur tries to teach the professionals their job).
1–2 **as . . . you** T. Stern suggests (11) that this reflects the regular Elizabethan rehearsal system whereby an actor would practise his part in the presence of an 'instructor' such as the author, prompter, manager or another actor.
2 **trippingly** lightly. Shakespeare most often uses this word in relation to dancing: see *MND* 5.1.389–90, 'And this ditty after me / Sing, and dance it

182 grief] Greefes *F* 183 placed, . . . you,] *F3;* plac'd so, please you *F* 187 unwatched] *F;* vnmatcht *Q2*
3.2] *Capell* 0.1 *three of the*] *the Q1; two or three of the F* 1 pronounced] *F (*pronounc'd*);* pronoun'd *Q2*

it as many of our players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus, but use all gently; for, in the very torrent, tempest and, as I may say, whirlwind of your passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness. ~~O, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings, who for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise. I would have such~~

trippingly', and *Tem* 4.1.46–7: 'Each one, tripping on his toe, / Will be here with mop and mow.'

mouth declaim; Hamlet's stated preference for a low-key, naturalistic mode of delivery here seems to contrast with his admiration of the speech about Pyrrhus in 2.2 which is usually delivered as a somewhat stylized declamation. Some performers even imitate here the gestures used earlier by the First Player (see Hapgood). Shakespeare evokes exaggerated acting styles at *MND* 1.2.22–38, where Bottom gives us an example of 'Ercles' vein', and at *1H4* 2.4.380–3, where Falstaff promises to act his part 'in King Cambyses' vein'.

3 **our players** (Danish – or English) players in general (Q1/F's 'your' is a more colloquial usage)

I . . . lief I would be as glad if

town-crier one appointed to make public announcements by shouting them in the streets

5 **thus** Hamlet presumably imitates the excessive gestures he condemns.

use all gently do everything with moderation

7 **acquire and beget** adopt and inculcate

9 **robustious** boisterous. *OED* sees the word formed from 'robust' plus '-ious' and describes it as 'common' in the seventeenth century. Shakespeare's only other usage is in *H5*, where the Constable of France compares the English soldiers with mastiffs 'in robustious and rough coming on' (3.7.149).

periwig-pated fellow man with a periwig on his head. The assumption is that wigs at this time were associated with stage costuming, not everyday wear as they became later in the seventeenth century.

10 ***tatters** See t.n. for Q2's variant spelling.

groundlings those who paid the lowest price for admission to the theatre and stood in the *ground* or yard around the stage (*OED*'s first use); the word has come back into use at the reconstructed London Globe.

11 **are capable of** have the capacity to appreciate

12 **inexplicable dumb-shows** meaningless spectacles. A dumb-show was usually, as at 128 SD and 128.1–11, a sort of preface in which the actors mimed some action relevant to the plot of the play to follow. Shakespeare's other references to them are derogatory (see *MA* 2.3.210–11 and *MV* 1.2.70–1),

3 our] your *Q1F* town-crier] Town-Cryer had *F* 4 with] *Q1; om. F* 6 whirlwind of your] the Whirle-winde of *F* 9 hear] *Q1;* see *F* 10 tatters] *F (*tatters*), Q21 (*totters*)* 12 would] *Q1;* could *F*

~~a fellow whipped for o'erdoing Termagant – it out-Herods Herod.~~ Pray you avoid it.

PLAYER I warrant your honour.

HAMLET Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor. Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance – that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature. For anything so o'erdone is from the purpose of playing whose end, both at the first and now, was and is to hold as 'twere the mirror up to Nature to show Virtue her feature, Scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the

and they had by 1599 'almost completely disappeared from more refined plays and were mainly to be found in the type of popular drama ridiculed by Hamlet' (Mehl, 114), but *Hamlet* seems to have given them a new lease of life and they appear in Jacobean plays by John Marston, Thomas Middleton and John Webster.
and noise At the London Globe in 2000, Mark Rylance paused after *dumb-shows*, and duly elicited a noisy response from the *groundlings* he had insulted.

13 **Termagant** an imaginary deity believed by medieval Christians to be worshipped by Muslims; the word was used generally of a violent, ranting person. See Falstaff's reference to Douglas as 'that hot termagant Scot' (*1H4* 5.4.112–13). Diana Whaley points out that, despite the natural inference from this passage (and the claims of *Hamlet* editors) that *Termagant* was a dramatic personage, no such character exists in the extant English pre-Shakespearean drama. She suggests, however, that there may have been such a character in the tradition of St. Nicholas drama, of which French versions survive (Whaley, 23–39).

14 **Herod** King of Judea at the time of Christ's birth, he ordered a massacre of children in fear of a rival. Herod was regularly represented in the medieval cycle plays as a ranting tyrant.

15 SP Many editors specify 'First Player', but Q2 and F have 'Player' and Q1 'players', so we have left this open.

15 **I . . . honour** i.e. I can promise or assure your lordship (that we will avoid it).

16 **tame** weak, understated

17, 18 **action** gesture

19 **modesty of nature** natural restraints or limits

20 **from** remote from, contrary to
playing acting

22 **Nature** human action or behaviour
feature appearance, shape

23 **Scorn . . . image** 'the scornful person what she looks like to others'; RP suggests the relevance of *MA* 3.1, where Beatrice overhears Hero and Ursula deliberately discussing her scorn for men.

23–4 **very . . . time** Taken by Edwards as hendiadys (= aged body of the time), but it could mean more generally 'essential reality of this moment in time'.

13–14 out-Herods] *(out Herods)* 19 o'erstep] ore-stop *F* 20 o'erdone] ouer-done *F* 22 her] her owne *F*

time his form and pressure. ~~Now this overdone, or come tardy off, though it makes the unskilful laugh,~~ ~~cannot but make the judicious grieve, the censure of which one must in your allowance o'erweigh a whole theatre of others.~~ O, there be players that I have seen play and heard others praised ~~and~~ that ~~highly not to speak it profanely, that neither having th'accent of Christians nor the gait of Christian, pagan nor man~~ have so strutted and bellowed that I have thought some of Nature's journeymen had made men, and not made them well, they imitated humanity so abhominably.

PLAYER I hope we have reformed that ~~indifferently~~ with us.

HAMLET O, reform it altogether, ~~and let those that play~~

sufficiently

24 **form and pressure** likeness and impression
24–5 **this . . . off** if this is exaggerated or performed inadequately (*tardy* literally means 'slow')
25 **unskilful** i.e. those who know nothing about acting
26–7 **the censure . . . one** the judgement of one of whom (the judicious)
27 **in your allowance** by your admission
29 **heard others praised** perhaps 'heard that others had praised'
30 **profanely** Hamlet acknowledges that it might be profane to categorize these actors as not Christian, pagan or human.
accent sound, pronunciation
31 **gait** bearing
Christian . . . man These categories are presumably intended to cover all kinds of human beings: 'Christian, pagan nor any other kind of man'. Oxf and Hibbard emend F's 'or Norman' to 'nor no man'; Q1's version (see t.n.) is adopted by White in his Q2-based edition. Marlowe uses a comparable formula, 'any Christian, Heathen, Turke, or Jew' in *Edward II* (1592; 5.4.75).
33 **Nature's journeymen** i.e. not Nature herself but some of her hired workers. A *journeyman* was one who had completed his apprenticeship at a trade but had not yet become a master at it.
34 **abhominably** This spelling, which seems to have been favoured by Shakespeare (*OED* notes that it appears 18 times in F), allows for a play on *ab homine* (from or contrary to man); see also Holofernes' contempt for the version without the 'h' at *LLL* 5.1.23–4. Although this etymology is incorrect (the real root is *ab omen*), *OED* points out that it has 'permanently affected the meaning of the word'.
35 **indifferently** somewhat, to a moderate extent
with us i.e. in our company
36–7 **those . . . clowns** There is no clown in this group of players; his absence is even more conspicuous in Q1, where Hamlet ends this speech with 'Maisters tell him of it' (9.38). Shakespeare's company may in reality have lacked a clown when *Hamlet* was first performed, having recently lost the popular Will Kempe (see 118n.)

25 makes] make *F* 26 of] of the *F* 29 praised] praise *F* 30 th'accent] the accent *F* 31 nor man] Nor Turke *Q1*; or Norman *F* 35 us] vs, Sir *F*

~~your clowns speak no more than is set down for them.~~ ~~For there be of them that will themselves laugh to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too,~~ ~~though in the meantime some necessary question of the play be then to be considered.~~ ~~That's villainous and shows a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it.~~

Go, make you ready. [*Exeunt Players.*]

Enter POLONIUS, GUILDENSTERN *and* ROSENCRANTZ:

How now, my lord, will the King hear this piece of work?

POLONIUS And the Queen too, and that presently.

HAMLET Bid the players make haste. [*Exit Polonius.*]

Will you two help to hasten them?

ROSENCRANTZ Ay, my lord.

Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

HAMLET

What ho, Horatio!

Enter HORATIO.

HORATIO Here, sweet lord, at your service.

and not yet acquired Robert Armin (see Wiles, 57–60, and Thompson, 'Jest'). Hamlet later laments the death of Yorick, his father's jester (see 5.1.171n.).

38 **there . . . that** there are some of them who

38–9 **set on** incite

39 **barren** devoid of judgement; see *unskilful* at 25

40 **necessary question** important issue

42 It is at this point (after *uses it*) that Q1 has some examples of the sort of jokes that clowns add to their parts; Caldecott printed them in square brackets in 1832 and Spencer includes them; Michael Pennington spoke them in John Barton's RSC production in 1980 (see Pennington, 24–5).

43 SD *not in Q2, but Hamlet clearly dismisses the players

46 **presently** immediately

47 SD *not in Q2, though Hamlet asks Polonius to go

48 **Will . . . them** Perhaps Hamlet deliberately dismisses Rosencrantz and Guildenstern because he wants to be alone with Horatio to finalize his plans.

43 SD] *Q1F subst.* 43.1] *F subst.; after 45 Q2* 44–5] *F lines* Lord, / Worke? / 47 SD] *F; not in Q2*1 48 SP] *Both. F* Ay] We will *F* SD] *(Exeunt they two.); Exeunt. F* 49 ho] (howe), *F* (hoa) SD] *after 48 F*

HAMLET
Horatio, thou art e'en as just a man
As e'er my conversation coped withal.
HORATIO
O my dear lord –
HAMLET Nay, do not think I flatter,
For what advancement may I hope from thee
That no revenue hast but thy good spirits
To feed and clothe thee? ~~Why should the poor be flattered?~~
~~No, let the candied tongue lick absurd pomp~~
~~And crook the pregnant hinges of the knee~~
~~Where thrift may follow fawning.~~ Dost thou hear?
Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice
And could of men distinguish her election
Sh'ath sealed thee for herself. ~~For thou hast been~~

50–70 **Horatio . . . thee** Hamlet praises Horatio as the ideal friend, listing a number of virtues not unlike those Henry V attributes to Lord Scroop at the moment when he reveals his former friend's treachery (*H5* 2.2.127–37).
50 **e'en** even, absolutely
just Editors regularly gloss as 'well balanced' or 'honourable', but 'judicious' is also relevant.
51 **conversation** experience of social intercourse
coped encountered
52 **O . . . lord** Horatio indicates a modest denial of Hamlet's praise.
54 **revenue** (stress on second syllable) source of income
56–8 **let . . . fawning** 'let the sweet-tongued flatterer direct his attention to ridiculous pomposity and bend his ever-ready knees where profit will result from his fawning behaviour'. The association of *fawning* with *candy* has been noted as a Shakespearean 'image cluster' (e.g. by Spurgeon and Armstrong) that often also includes dogs, as when Hotspur recalls the former flattery of Bolingbroke: 'Why, what a candy deal of courtesy / This fawning greyhound then did proffer me!' (*1H4* 1.3.247–8). F's 'faining' (feigning) is often rejected, though it too makes sense.
56 **candied** sugared
57 **crook** bend (as at *Oth* 1.1.45: 'a duteous and knee-crooking knave')
pregnant prompt, readily inclined (see 'supple knee' at *R2* 1.4.33)
58 **thrift** financial advantage (as at 177, and see 1.2.179n.)
Dost thou hear an intensive: 'please pay attention to this' (as at 2.2.461, 473).
60 'and could discriminate in her choice among men'
61 **Sh'ath sealed** she has selected or chosen (literally 'put a legal seal (on something or someone) as a sign of ownership')

52 SP2] *F; Q2 only in G4v catchword* 56 tongue lick] tongue, like *F* 58 fawning] faining *F* 59 her] my *F* 61 Sh'ath] *Q5;* S'hath *Q2;* Hath *F*

~~As one in suffering all that suffers nothing~~ —
~~A man that Fortune's buffets and rewards~~ —
~~Hast ta'en with equal thanks. And blest are those~~ —
~~Whose blood and judgement are so well co-meddled~~ — 65
~~That they are not a pipe for Fortune's finger~~ —
~~To sound what stop she please~~. Give me that man
That is not passion's slave and I will wear him
In my heart's core – ay, in my heart of heart –
As I do thee. Something too much of this: 70
There is a play tonight before the King –
One scene of it comes near the circumstance
Which I have told thee of my father's death.
I prithee when thou seest that act afoot,
Even with the very comment of thy soul 75
Observe my uncle. If his occulted guilt
Do not itself unkennel in one speech

62 'like a person who, having experienced everything, responds stoically to it all'
63 **buffets** blows
64 **with equal thanks** i.e. in the same equable spirit
65 **blood and judgement** passion and reason
co-meddled mixed together; a rare word, but *OED* (under 'commeddle') also gives an example from Webster's *White Devil* (1612; 3.3.39) which was presumably influenced by *Hamlet*. F's 'co-mingled' is synonymous.
66 **pipe** Hamlet returns to this idea when the players re-enter with literal pipes at 336.1
67 **she** Fortune was usually depicted as female (see 2.2.224–31, 431–5 and nn.).
69 **core** centre, but also perhaps a play on *cor*, Latin for 'heart'
70 **Something** an intensifier: 'altogether'
72 **scene** episode or sequence
circumstance details of the manner of
73 **Which . . . thee** Although Hamlet refused to share the Ghost's revelations with his companions in 1.5, it seems that he has subsequently told Horatio the whole story. In *Fratricide Punished* (1.6) he does this at the equivalent of the end of 1.5, as soon as they are alone together (Bullough, 7.134–5).
74 **that act afoot** that action being performed
75 **the . . . soul** the most concentrated attention of your entire being. Q2's 'thy soule' is usually adopted by editors who sometimes argue explicitly that Hamlet wants Horatio's judgement to back his own; F's 'my Soule' has also been defended as implying that Hamlet wants his friend's attention to be as intense as his own.
76 **occulted** concealed
77 **itself unkennel** reveal itself. The King's guilt is seen as an animal emerging from its lair. RP suggests *unkennel* might also evoke the overflowing of a 'kennel' or gutter,

64 Hast] Hath *F* 65 co-meddled] *(comedled)*; co-mingled *F* 75 thy] my *F* 76 my] mine *F*

It is a damned ghost that we have seen
And my imaginations are as foul
As Vulcan's stithy. Give him heedful note,
For I mine eyes will rivet to his face
And after we will both our judgements join
In censure of his seeming.

HORATIO Well, my lord
If 'a steal aught the whilst this play is playing
And scape detected I will pay the theft.

Enter Trumpets and Kettledrums, KING, QUEEN, POLONIUS, OPHELIA [, ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN].

although *OED* does not list this meaning for the verb. (*Unkennel* oddly echoes *uncle* in 76.)
one speech implicitly the speech Hamlet has had inserted (see 2.2.476–8 and n.), if *in* means 'during'; the implication might, however, be that the King will actually *proclaim* [*his*] *malefaction* like the *guilty creatures* Hamlet mentioned at 2.2.523–7.

78 **damned** damnèd. See 1.4.40 and n.

79 **my imaginations** i.e. my suspicions, based on the Ghost's words
foul polluted, offensive

80 **Vulcan's stithy** The workshop or forge of Vulcan, the blacksmith-god; it was reputedly situated underneath Mount Etna and hence associated with the notion of hell. Theobald emended to 'smithy' on the grounds that a stithy (which he takes to mean 'anvil') is 'not the dirtiest thing in a Smith's shop'.
heedful attentive; F has 'needfull' (necessary); either seems acceptable.

83 **In . . . seeming** in deducing what we can from his appearance or behaviour

83–5 **Well . . . theft** Horatio agrees to Hamlet's proposal which commits him to observation and deduction but not to any specific action.

84 **'a** he
aught anything

85 **detected** i.e. being detected; Jenkins adopts F's 'detecting'.
pay the theft i.e. recompense the owner of the stolen goods

85.1–2 *This entry SD heralds the beginning of the sequence in *Hamlet* which requires the largest number of actors (see Appendix 5). Q2 omits Rosencrantz and Guildenstern; the former speaks at 103, the latter not until after their re-entry at 287.1, but one would expect them both to be present, given their discussion of the play with Hamlet, their role in inviting the King and Queen, and their continuing scrutiny of Hamlet. They are named in F's more elaborate SD (see t.n.), which includes '*Torches*' to remind the audience that it is now supposed to be night. Dessen and Thomson note (under 'drum') that Q2's specification of '*Kettle Drummes*' is unique for a SD, though of course Hamlet has referred to 'the kettledrum and trumpet' in the dialogue at 1.4.11.

80 stithy] *F* (Stythe) heedful] needfull *F* 83 In] To *F* 84 'a] he *F* 85 detected] detecting *F* 85.1–2 *Enter* . . . OPHELIA] *Enter King, Queene, Corambis Q1; Enter King, Queene, Polonius, Ophelia F* 85.2 ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN] *and other Lords. Q1; Rosincrance, Guildensterne, and other Lords attendant with his Guard carrying Torches. Danish March. Sound a Flourish. F*

HAMLET [*to Horatio*] They are coming to the play. I must be idle. Get you a place.

KING How fares our cousin Hamlet?

HAMLET Excellent, i'faith! Of the chameleon's dish – I eat the air, promise-crammed. You cannot feed capons so.

KING I have nothing with this answer, Hamlet. These words are not mine.

HAMLET No, nor mine now, my lord. [*to Polonius*] You played once i'th' university, you say?

POLONIUS That did I, my lord, and was accounted a good actor.

HAMLET What did you enact?

87 **be idle** i.e. resume my *antic disposition* (see *idle* at 3.4.10 and in Q1 (7.88) where Corambis uses the word to describe Hamlet's love for Ofelia). Some performers, notably Macready, have behaved in an exaggerated and manic fashion as the courtiers enter (see Hapgood).
Get . . . place find yourself somewhere to sit. This implies that chairs, stools or benches have been set up, perhaps during Hamlet's opening discussion with the players.

88 **How fares** The King (repeating the sense of his first words to Hamlet in their previous encounter at 1.2.64–6) means 'How are you?', but Hamlet picks up a pun on *fare* meaning food.

89 **Of . . . dish** i.e. I eat the same food as the chameleon (which was thought to live on air: Hamlet perhaps alludes to the proverb 'Love is a chameleon that feeds on air' (Dent, L505.1), which Shakespeare had used in *TGV* 2.1.167–8 and 2.4.25–8). There may be a further implied pun on *air* (90) and 'heir'.

90 **promise-crammed** (I am) stuffed with promises. (The implied complaint seems to relate to Hamlet's statement that he *lack[s] advancement* at 331 – a conversation which comes earlier in Q1.)
capons cockerels castrated and fattened for eating

92 **I . . . with** I get nothing out of

93 **are not mine** don't answer my question, mean nothing to me

94 **now, my lord** Q2's punctuation implies these words are addressed to the King; F's 'Now my Lord' addresses them to Polonius; most editors conflate, following Q2 in putting *now* with *mine*, but following F in the direction of *my lord*.

95 **i'th' university** On its title-page, Q1 claims that *Hamlet* had been acted 'by his Highnesse seruants in the Cittie of London: as also in the two Vniuersities of Cambridge and Oxford'. (See pp. 55–6 for a discussion of this claim.)

86–7] *Spencer; Q2F line* idle, / place. / 86 SD] *this edn* 89–95] *F; Q2 lines* yfaith, / ayre, / so. / *Hamlet*, / mine. / Lord. / say, / 94 mine now] mine. Now *F* SD] *Rowe* 96 did I] I did *F* 98 What] *Q1;* And what *F*

POLONIUS I did enact Julius Caesar. I was killed i'th' Capitol. Brutus killed me.

HAMLET It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a calf there. Be the players ready?

ROSENCRANTZ Ay, my lord, they stay upon your patience.

QUEEN Come hither, my dear Hamlet, sit by me.

HAMLET No, good mother, here's metal more attractive.

POLONIUS [*to King*] O ho, do you mark that!

HAMLET Lady, shall I lie in your lap?

OPHELIA No, my lord.

99–102 The puns on *Brutus/brute* and *Capitol/capital* are in all three texts. They may allude to Shakespeare's recent *JC* in which John Heminges (now Polonius) probably played Caesar and Richard Burbage (now Hamlet) played Brutus (see Appendix 5). Williams ('Romans', 47–8) notes another parallel between Hamlet and Brutus (Lucius Junius), referred to in *H5* 2.4.38 as 'Covering discretion with a coat of folly'.

100 **Capitol** Caesar was killed in the Senate House, but Shakespeare equates the two locations in *JC*, an error he may have taken from Chaucer's 'Monk's Tale': 'This Julius to the Capitolie wente / Upon a day, as he was wont to goon / And in the Capitolie anon hym hente / This false Brutus and his othere foon' (3893–6).

101 **brute part of** brutal action by (with *part* as a pun on an actor's *part* or role) **calf** fool (*OED* calf I 1c)

103–4 **stay . . . patience** i.e. are waiting for you to tell them to begin

105 SP For the first time, Q2 has '*Ger.*', using it throughout 3.4 and 4.1 but reverting to '*Quee.*' in 4.5.

106 No Hibbard notes that Hamlet could not watch the King if he sat next to the Queen, who would be between them. In a long stage tradition, inaugurated by Edmund Kean in 1814, Hamlet began watching the play stretched out at Ophelia's feet but crawled gradually towards the King; the 'Kean crawl' survived until at least Asta Nielsen's screen performance in 1920 (see Figs 13 and 14 and p. 102).

metal more attractive (1) more magnetic substance; (2) more appealing proposition. The spellings 'metal' and 'mettle' were used indistinguishably. The exchange with Ophelia has caused criticism and embarrassment: Theobald says, 'if ever the Poet deserved Whipping for low and indecent Ribaldry, it was for this Passage; ill-tim'd in all its Circumstances, and unbefitting the Dignity of his Characters, as well as of his Audience' (*Restored*, 87). (See Taylor & Thompson.)

109–10 Ophelia indicates that she understands *lie in your lap* in a sexual sense – a meaning Hamlet denies. He aims to entrap like Ferdinand in Webster's *Duchess of Malfi* (1614) who tells his

99–102] *F; Q2 lines* Capitall, / mee. / there, / readie? / 105 dear] good *F* 106 metal] *(*mettle*) F, Q5 (*metall*); a* mettle *Q1* 107 SD] *Capell subst.* 109–10] *Ofel.* No my Lord. / *Ham.* Vpon your lap, what do you thinke I meant contrary matters? *Q1; Ophe.* No my Lord. / *Ham.* I meane, my Head vpon your Lap? / *Ophe.* I my Lord. *Ham.* Do you thinke I meant Country matters? *F*

HAMLET Do you think I meant country matters?
OPHELIA I think nothing, my lord.
HAMLET That's a fair thought to lie between maids' legs.
OPHELIA What is, my lord?
HAMLET Nothing.
OPHELIA You are merry, my lord.
HAMLET Who, I?
OPHELIA Ay, my lord.
HAMLET O God, your only jig-maker! What should a man do but be merry, for look you how cheerfully my mother looks, and my father died within's two hours!
OPHELIA Nay, 'tis twice two months, my lord.
HAMLET So long? ~~Nay, then, let the devil wear black, for I'll have a suit of sables!~~ O heavens – die two months

sister, 'woemen like that part, which (like the Lamprey) / Hath nev'r a bone in it' and then, when she shows that she understands the sexual innuendo, rebukes her, 'Nay, / I meane the Tongue' (1.1.375–9). That a sexual sense for *lap* was current is clear from Marlowe's *Jew of Malta* (*c.* 1589), where Bellamira tempts Barabas' servant, 'Now, gentle *Ithimore*, lye in my lap', quickly followed by 'let's in and sleepe together' (4.2.82, 129); the invitation is repeated at 4.4.27–9, where Ithamore responds, 'let musicke rumble, / Whilst I in thy incony lap doe tumble.' In F Ophelia's 'No my Lord' is followed by Hamlet's clarification and her acceptance (see t.n.). This more decorous sense is present in the more playful context of *1H4* 3.1.207–8 and 222–3.

110 **country matters** a vulgar reference, i.e. one suitable for rustics (with a pun on 'cunt' as in Ben Jonson's reference to 'the Low Country' in *Everyman Out* (1599; 3.1.375)).

111, 114 **nothing** 'Thing' could be a euphemism for a man's penis; alternatively *nothing* (the figure nought) could refer to a woman's vagina; again Hamlet teases or insults Ophelia.

118 **your only jig-maker** your best comedian, entertainer: Hamlet bitterly casts himself as the clown. There may be an allusion to Will Kempe, the Chamberlain's Men's famous *jig-maker*, who left the company in 1599 to undertake his marathon jig from London to Norwich (see 36–7n. and 266n.).

120 **within's** within this (i.e. these)

120–1 **two hours . . . months** Hamlet's *two hours* is rhetorical; if we assume that Ophelia is accurate, two months have passed since Hamlet lamented his father 'But two months dead' (1.2.138), so it is another two months since Hamlet encountered the Ghost (see headnote to 2.1). Klein suggests an allusion to theatrical time: the 'two hours' traffic of our stage' (*RJ* Prologue 12).

122–3 **let . . . sables** i.e. if my father has been dead so long the devil can have my mourning clothes and I'll wear furs (sable fur is also dark brown or black).

123 **sables** The word also recalls the *sable arms* of Pyrrhus at 2.2.390.

122 devil] (deule), *Q1* (diuell), *F* (Diuel) for] *Q1F*; 'fore *Warburton*

ago and not forgotten yet? Then there's hope a great
man's memory may outlive his life half a year! ~~But, by'r~~ 125
~~Lady, 'a must build churches then, or else shall 'a suffer~~
~~not thinking on = with the hobby-horse whose epitaph~~
~~is 'For O! For O! The hobby-horse is forgot!'~~

The trumpets sounds. ~~*Dumb-show follows.*~~

~~*Enter* [Players *as*] *a king and a queen, the queen embracing him*~~
~~*and he her. He takes her up and declines his head upon her*~~

125–6 **by'r Lady** by Our Lady (the Virgin Mary); see 2.2.363.

126 **'a . . . 'a** he . . . he

build churches See Benedick's comparable cynicism in *MA*: 'If a man do not erect in this age his own tomb ere he dies, he shall live no longer in monument than the bell rings, and the widow weeps' (5.2.73–5).

127 **not thinking on** not being thought about

hobby-horse a pantomime-type horse costume worn by a morris dancer; 'the hobby-horse is forgot' seems to have been a popular catchphrase (see, for example, the running joke in Thomas Dekker's *The Witch of Edmonton* (1621), 2.1 and 3.4). The point may be that the popular hobby-horse had to be left out of May games and other festivals because of Puritan disapproval.

epitaph literally epitaph, but also refrain or catchphrase (see Jenkins, LN, and Edwards)

128 **'For . . . forgot!'** apparently a line from a lost ballad which Shakespeare also quotes in *LLL* (3.1.28–9)

128 SD, 128.1–11 The F SD differs in some details (see t.n.). It specifies '*some two or three Mutes*' to return with the poisoner as compared with Q2's '*some three or foure*'; both directions seem 'permissive' and extravagant with personnel, though presumably two people are needed to remove the body unless the poisoner and the Queen do it at the end of the show. Q1's specification that Lucianus enters '*with poyson in a Viall*' (see t.n.) underlines the re-enactment of the Ghost's story at 1.5.59–70.

Dumb-show follows The dumb-show has often been omitted in performance, partly in order to avoid the problem of the King's failure to react to it, but this leaves the audience ignorant of the outcome and especially of the role of the Queen.

128.2 ***takes her up*** The assumption seems to be that she has knelt (as in F's SD) and that he offers his hand to help her

125 by'r] *(ber)* 126 'a . . . 'a] he . . . he *F* 128 SD, 128.1–11 *The . . . love.*] *Enter in a Dumbe Shew, the King and the Queene, he sits downe in an Arbor, she leaues him: Then enters Lucianus with poyson in a Viall, and powres it in his eares, and goes away: Then the Queene commeth and findes him dead: and goes away with the other. Q1; Hoboyes play. The dumbe shew enters. / Enter a King and Queene, very louingly; the Queene embracing him. She kneeles, and makes shew of Protestation vnto him. He takes her vp, and declines his head vpon her neck. Layes him downe vpon a Banke of Flowers. She seeing him a-sleepe, leaues him. Anon comes in a Fellow, takes off his Crowne, kisses it, and powres poyson in the Kings eares, and Exits. The Queene returnes, findes the King dead, and makes passionate Action. The Poysoner, with some two or three Mutes comes in againe, seeming to lament with her. The dead body is carried away: The Poysoner Wooes the Queene with Gifts, she seemes loath and vnwilling awhile, but in the end, accepts his loue. F* 128.1 Players *as*] *this edn*

neck. He lies him down upon a bank of flowers. She seeing him asleep leaves him. Anon come in [*a* Player *as*] *another man, takes off his crown, kisses it, pours poison in the* 128.5
sleeper's ears and leaves him. The queen returns, finds the king dead, makes passionate action. The poisoner with some three or four [Players] *come in again, seem to condole with her. The dead body is carried away. The poisoner woos the queen with gifts. She seems harsh awhile but in the end* 128.10
accepts love. [*Exeunt.*]

OPHELIA What means this, my lord?

HAMLET Marry, this munching mallico! It means 130
mischief.

OPHELIA Belike this show imports the argument of the play.

Enter [*a* Player *as the*] Prologue.

HAMLET We shall know by this fellow. The players

up (see the kneeling Richard's challenge to Lady Anne at *R3* 1.2.187: 'Take up the sword again, or take up me').

128.3 ***He . . . flowers*** An inventory of 1598 shows that the Admiral's Men possessed 'ij mose [mossy] banckes' as stage properties. Q1's staging – '*he sits downe in an Arbor*' – might imply the use of a 'discovery space' or inner stage; this would remove the necessity for the subsequent carrying away of the body.

128.7 ***makes passionate action*** i.e. makes gestures to convey the intensity of her grief

128.8 ***condole*** commiserate. The word is synonymous with F's '*lament*', but Shakespeare apparently ridicules it in the mouths of Bottom in *MND* 1.2.24 and 38 and Pistol in *H5* 2.1.126. (But see *condolement* at 1.2.93 above.)

128.10 ***harsh*** unresponsive

130 **munching mallico** An obscure phrase in all three texts (see t.n.), apparently meaning something like 'stealthy iniquity'. Tronch-Pérez supports Hanmer's suggestion that *mallico* may derive from Spanish *malhecho*, meaning 'a wicked act'; many editors prefer F's 'Miching', which they relate to the noun 'micher' meaning 'truant' at *1H4* 2.4.404. Fortunately, Hamlet follows this phrase with a further explanation (again in all three texts).

132 **Belike** perhaps

134 **this fellow** F has 'these Fellowes', presumably meaning the actors in general rather than the one playing the Prologue.

128.4 *a* Player *as*] *this edn* 128.8 Players] *this edn* 128.11 *Exeunt.*] *F; not in Q1* 130 this] this is *Q1F;* 'tis *Q3* munching] myching *Q1;* Miching *F* mallico] *(Mallico) Q1; Malicho F;* mallecho *Malone* It] that *Q1F* 133.1] *Theobald; opp.* fellow *134 Q2; opp. 129 Q1; after 141 F a* Player *as the*] *this edn* 134 this fellow] *Q1;* these Fellowes *F*

~~cannot keep council — they'll tell all.~~ 135
~~OPHELIA Will ²a tell us what this show meant?~~
~~HAMLET Ay, or any show that you will show him. Be not you ashamed to show, he'll not shame to tell you what it means.~~
~~OPHELIA You are naught, you are naught. I'll mark the play.~~ 140

PROLOGUE
For us and for our tragedy,
Here stooping to your clemency,
We beg your hearing patiently. [*Exit.*]

HAMLET Is this a prologue or the posy of a ring? 145
OPHELIA 'Tis brief, my lord.
HAMLET As woman's love.

Enter [Player] King *and* [Player] Queen.

PLAYER KING
Full thirty times hath Phoebus' cart gone round

135 ***keep council** There is no reason for Hamlet to break off his speech, so we assume Q1/F's 'counsell' has been omitted from Q2.
137 **any . . . show him** Hamlet implies that what Ophelia might *show* is intimate or sexual.
137–8 **Be not you** if you are not
140 **naught** offensive, indecent (the origin of the modern 'naughty')
mark attend to
143 ***stooping . . . clemency*** bowing to [implore] your mercy, generosity
145 **the . . . ring** the (necessarily brief) motto inscribed inside a ring. Hamlet implies that it is too perfunctory for a Prologue, as Ophelia agrees. *Posy* is a syncopated form of Q1/F's 'poesie'.
147.1 Q1 avoids the ambiguities in Q2/F (see t.n.) of having two Kings and two Queens onstage by calling the Players '*Duke*' and '*Dutchesse*' after the dumb-show, their correct titles according to Hamlet at 232–3.
148–253 As the speech about Pyrrhus (2.2.388–456) was set apart from the surrounding linguistic context by its elevated language, *The Murder of Gonzago* is set apart by its consistent use of rhymed couplets, which often require distortions of word order.
148–51 ***thirty . . . thirties*** Strictly, the first *thirty times* would indicate 30 days, while *thirty dozen moons* indicates 30 years. The stress on 30 years of marriage has not particularly caused commentators to seize on these lines as the insertion by Hamlet (whose parents must have been married for 30 years), but the speech he promised to

135 council] *Q1F; not in Q2* 136 'a] they *F;* he *Q1* 137 you will] you'l *Q1F* 144 SD] *Globe* 145 posy] (posie), *Q1F* (poesie) 147.1 [1]Player, [2]Player] *Pope subst.* King] *F; the Duke Q1* Queen] *Dutchesse Q1; his Queene F* 148+ SP] *Steevens²; King. Q2F; Duke Q1*

Neptune's salt wash and Tellus' orbed ground
~~*And thirty dozen moons with borrowed sheen*~~
~~*About the world have times twelve thirties been*~~
Since love our hearts and Hymen did our hands
Unite commutual in most sacred bands.

PLAYER QUEEN

So many journeys may the sun and moon
Make us again count o'er ere love be done.
But woe is me, you are so sick of late,
So far from cheer and from our former state,
~~*That I distrust you. Yet, though I distrust,*~~
~~*Discomfort you, my lord, it nothing must.*~~
~~*For women fear too much, even as they love,*~~
~~*And women's fear and love hold quantity*~~
~~*Either none, in neither aught, or in extremity.*~~
~~*Now what my love is proof hath made you know*~~

write at 2.2.476–8 has proved impossible to identify with any certainty (see 180–209n. and 248–53n.). (Q1 has 'forty', perhaps a more common round figure for 'a long time'.)

148 ***Phoebus' cart*** the chariot of the sun-god, i.e. the sun

149 ***Neptune's salt wash*** the sea, Neptune being its god
Tellus' orbed ground orbèd; the rounded (orbed) earth, Tellus being its goddess (Q2 has 'Tellus orb'd the ground', with 'orb'd' as an unlikely verb.)

150 ***borrowed sheen*** light reflected from the sun

152 ***Hymen*** the god of marriage (who appears rather mysteriously at *AYL* 5.4.105)

153 ***commutual*** reciprocally (*OED*'s first use)

154–66 This speech in Q2 contains three lines that are not in F: 160 and 165–6; there are also several variant readings. It has been argued that F incorporates Shakespeare's deletions and corrections (see Edwards, pp. 10–11).

158 ***distrust you*** fear for you

159 it must not discomfort you at all, my lord

160 This line (not in F) stands out in Q2 as an uncompleted couplet. It may be a 'false start' by Shakespeare, or it may be that its companion line has been omitted.

161 ***hold quantity*** are in proportion to each other

162 ***Either . . . aught*** Q2's *Either none* is extra-metrical, and it seems to mean the same as *in neither aught*: 'either there is no fear or love at all'.
or in extremity or there is an excess (of both)

163 ***love*** Q2's '*Lord*' makes very strained sense ('what has already been proved has made you know') and loses the parallel with 164. '*Lord*' is a likely error, perhaps repeated from 159.

149 *orbed*] *F;* orb'd the *Q2* 154+ SP] *Steevens²; Quee. Q2; Dutchesse (only four speeches) Q1; Bap. F, except Bapt. 176, Qu. 221* 157 *our*] your *F former*] forme *F* 160] *om. F* 161 *And*] For *F hold*] holds *F* 162 *Either none*] *om. F* 163 *love*] *F, Q5;* Lord *Q2*

~~*And, as my love is sized, my fear is so.*~~
~~*Where love is great, the littlest doubts are fear,*~~
~~*Where little fears grow great, great love grows there.*~~

PLAYER KING
Faith, I must leave thee, love, and shortly too,
My operant powers their functions leave to do,
And thou shalt live in this fair world behind
Honoured, beloved, and haply one as kind
For husband shalt thou –

PLAYER QUEEN *O, confound the rest!*
Such love must needs be treason in my breast.
In second husband let me be accurst:
None wed the second but who killed the first.

HAMLET That's wormwood!

PLAYER QUEEN
The instances that second marriage move
Are base respects of thrift, but none of love.
A second time I kill my husband dead
When second husband kisses me in bed.

PLAYER KING
I do believe you think what now you speak.

164 i.e. and my fear is as great (the same size) as my love
168 ***operant powers*** vital organs or faculties
leave to do cease to perform
171 ***shalt thou*** – Presumably the line would have ended in 'find' if it had not been interrupted. The assumption that she would find a second husband, despite being old enough to have been married for 30 years, makes her case parallel to that of Hamlet's mother. This King, unlike Hamlet, seems to regard it as natural, even desirable, that a widow will remarry.
confound destroy (i.e. don't utter)
175 In Q2 both the SP and Hamlet's words are printed in the right-hand margin, perhaps a way of indicating an aside. Some performers address this line to Horatio.
wormwood literally, the plant *artemisia absinthium*, used figuratively for something bitter or mortifying. Hamlet seems to be more attentive to the reactions of the Queen than to those of the King at this point. He accuses her of *kill[ing] a king* at 3.4.27, although the Ghost has not been specific about the extent of her involvement.
176 ***instances*** reasons
move motivate
177 ***thrift*** financial advantage (as at 58, and see 1.2.179n.)
180–209 Some commentators have found this speech to stand out from the rest of *The Murder of Gonzago* and have

165–6] *om. F* 168 *their*] my *F* 175] *opp. 174, 176; Ham.* O wormewood, wormewood! *after 179 Q1; Ham.* Wormwood, Wormwood. *after 174 F* 180 *you think*] you sweete *Q1;* you. Think *F*

But what we do determine oft we break.
Purpose is but the slave to memory,
Of violent birth but poor validity,
~~*Which now like fruit unripe sticks on the tree*~~
~~*But fall unshaken when they mellow be.*~~
~~*Most necessary 'tis that we forget*~~
~~*To pay ourselves what to ourselves is debt.*~~
What to ourselves in passion we propose,
The passion ending doth the purpose lose.
The violence of either grief or joy
Their own enactures with themselves destroy.
Where joy most revels grief doth most lament,
Grief joys, joy grieves, on slender accident.
This world is not ~~for aye~~ forever, nor 'tis not strange
That even our loves should with our fortunes change,
~~*For 'tis a question left us yet to prove*~~
~~*Whether Love lead Fortune or else Fortune Love.*~~
~~*The great man down, you mark his favourite flies,*~~

speculated that it is the one inserted by Hamlet (see 2.2.476–8), but, while its sentiments may be generally relevant to his situation, it does not really come 'near the circumstance . . . of [his] father's death' in the way he has promised Horatio at 72–3. (See 148–51n. and 248–53n.)

182 i.e. purposes are easily forgotten

183 ***Of violent birth*** robust to begin with
poor validity not well founded, i.e. without staying power

184 ****like fruit*** Q2's 'the fruite' works for 184 if we take *purpose* as the subject which *sticks* the unripe fruit on the tree, but breaks down in 185.

186–7 'It is essential that we forget the debts we owe to ourselves.' The idea that promises (such as the one not to remarry) must necessarily be forgotten could be seen as cynical or just realistic.

190–1 i.e. violent grief and joy destroy themselves in the very act of manifesting or fulfilling themselves. See *RJ* 2.6.9: 'These violent delights have violent ends.'

191 ***enactures*** actions – a Shakespearean coinage. F's word is also unique; both relate to *enact* at 99.

193 ****Grief . . . grieves*** i.e. grief turns into joy, joy turns into grief; see *R2* 1.3.258–61 for a comparable play on the reversal of *grief* and *joy*. *TxC* suggests Q2's copy may have read 'Greefes ioy, ioy griefes'.
slender accident the slightest occasion

194 ***aye*** ever

196 ***prove*** resolve, answer

197 ***lead*** dominates, is stronger than

198 ***down*** disgraced, out of favour
favourite flies favoured supporter runs away, abandons him

184 *like*] *F*; the *Q2* 190 *either*] other *F* 191 *enactures*] ennactors *F* 193 *joys*] *F*; ioy *Q2* *grieves*] *F*; griefes *Q2* 198 *favourite*] fauourites *F*

~~*The poor advanced makes friends of enemies,*~~
~~*And hitherto doth Love on Fortune tend,*~~
~~*For who not needs shall never lack a friend,*~~
~~*And who in want a hollow friend doth try*~~
~~*Directly seasons him his enemy.*~~
But orderly to end where I begun,
Our wills and fates do so contrary run
That our devices still are overthrown.
Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own:
So think thou wilt no second husband wed
But die thy thoughts when thy first lord is dead.

PLAYER QUEEN
Nor earth to me give food nor heaven light,
Sport and repose lock from me day and night.
~~*To desperation turn my trust and hope*~~
~~*And anchor's cheer in prison be my scope.*~~
~~*Each opposite that blanks the face of joy*~~
~~*Meet what I would have well and it destroy.*~~
Both here and hence pursue me lasting strife
If once I be a widow ever I be a wife.

HAMLET If she should break it now!

201 ***who not needs*** the person who has no need of one
202 ***try*** test, make trial of
203 ***seasons him*** turns him into
206 ***devices*** plans, intentions
still always
209 ***die thy thoughts*** either indicative ('your thoughts will or may die') or imperative ('let your thoughts die')
210 ***Nor . . . nor*** neither . . . nor
211 ***Sport*** recreation, entertainment
213 ***And anchor's cheer*** and the fare or diet of an anchorite, a hermit. (Theobald and others, e.g. Jenkins and Edwards, emend 'And' to 'An', but this is not strictly necessary.)
scope portion, limit
214 ***opposite*** opposing quality or force
blanks either (1) blenches, turns pale, or (2) makes blank. Shakespeare does not use ***blank*** as a verb elsewhere.
215 'encounter and destroy everything I want to go well'
216 ***and hence*** in the next world
217 ***I be . . . I be*** The first *I be* in Q2 may be a 'false start' or anticipatory error.
218 i.e. it would be particularly shocking if she were to break her vow after these emphatic words. As at 175, Q2 prints the SP and Hamlet's words in the right-hand margin.

210 *me give*] giue me *F* 212–13] *om. F* 213 *And anchor's*] (And Anchors); An Anchor's *Theobald;* And anchors' *Jennens* 217] If once a widdow, euer I be wife. *Q1F; If, once a widow, ever I be a wife. Ard²* 218] *Q1 subst., F; opp. 216–17 Q2*

PLAYER KING
'Tis deeply sworn. Sweet, leave me here awhile.
My spirits grow dull, and fain I would beguile 220
The tedious day with sleep.
PLAYER QUEEN *Sleep rock thy brain,*
And never come mischance between us twain.
Exit. [*He sleeps.*]

HAMLET Madam, how like you this play?
QUEEN The lady doth protest too much, methinks.
HAMLET O, but she'll keep her word. 225
KING Have you heard the argument? Is there no offence in't?
HAMLET No, no, they do but jest. Poison in jest. No offence i'th' world.
KING What do you call the play? 230
HAMLET *The Mousetrap.* ~~Marry, how tropically!~~ This

220 ***fain*** willingly
222 SD Q2 has '*Exeunt*' after '*twain*', but presumably the Player King feigns sleep, as F's SD indicates; the onstage audience treat this as an interval in which they can talk.
224 The Queen's response (in a line which subsequently became quasi-proverbial) can be played so as to indicate her discomfort, her self-control, or her innocence.
doth . . . much makes too many protestations (of her determination not to marry again)
226–7 These questions are perhaps addressed to Polonius rather than to Hamlet, though the latter replies. They have been taken as evidence that the King did not attend to the dumb-show, or alternatively as evidence that he did, and is now getting suspicious.
226, 229 **offence** The word echoes from Hamlet and Horatio's conversation about the Ghost at 1.5.136–9. In 1600 a monarch might be expected to find *offence* in a play which was less than circumspect on matters of state or religion, or which offered satirical comments that might be construed personally.
228 **Poison** This is the first time poison is specifically mentioned, though of course it has featured in the dumb-show.
231 ***The Mousetrap*** Having previously asked the Players for *The Murder of Gonzago* (see 2.2.474), Hamlet presumably invents this title with reference to his own intention of trapping the King.
Marry, how tropically i.e. Yes indeed, by what an appropriate trope or play on words. Jenkins defends Q2's punctuation (also found in Q1) against F's (see t.n.); Q1's 'trapically' suggests a play on 'trap'.

222 SD *Exit*] *Q1 (exit Lady), F; Exeunt Q2 He sleeps*] *F (Sleepes), opp. 221* 224 doth protest] protests *Q1F* 231 how tropically!] *Ard*^{2}; how tropically, *Q2;* how trapically: *Q1;* how? Tropically: *F*

play is the image of a murder done in Vienna. Gonzago is the duke's name, his wife Baptista. You shall see anon 'tis a knavish piece of work, but what of that? Your majesty and we that have free souls – it touches us not. 235
~~Let the galled jade wince, our withers are unwrung.~~

Enter Lucianus.

This is one Lucianus, nephew to the king.
OPHELIA You are as good as a chorus, my lord.
HAMLET I could interpret between you and your love if I could see the puppets dallying. 240

232–3 **Gonzago ... name** The play's title taken alone could be ambiguous; Gonzago is clearly the victim of the crime in Q2 and F; in the putative source he is one of the murderers (see p. 61 and Bullough, 7. 172–3). Q1 has '*Albertus*' as the victim's name, while in *Fratricide Punished* (which lacks any equivalent of 'Aeneas' talk to Dido' in 2.2) Hamlet names the victim as 'King Pyrrhus' (2.8; Bullough, 7.142). The use of *duke* here may relate to the putative source.

233 **Baptista** used as a male name for the father of Katherina and Bianca in Shakespeare's *TS*

235 **free** i.e. from guilt

236 **Let . . . wince** let the horse that is saddle-sore kick out (i.e. let the guilty person object or suffer). (Edwards retains Q2/ F's 'winch'; Q1's 'wince' is the same word according to *OED*.)
our . . . unwrung i.e. we are unaffected. The *withers* are the highest part of a horse's back, liable to be *galled* by the saddle; Dent cites 'Touch (rub) a galled horse on the back and he will wince (kick)' as proverbial (H700).

237 **nephew** The word is capitalized in Q2, perhaps for emphasis. Neither of the murderers is a nephew of the victim in the source given by Bullough, nor a brother – which would be more relevant to the King's crime. In *Fratricide Punished* Hamlet does indeed identify the poisoner as 'the King's brother' (2.8; Bullough, 7.142). Perhaps Hamlet is looking forward to (or even threatening) his own revenge on his uncle.

238 **as good as a** Tronch-Pérez finds this 'less direct and more submissive' than F's 'a good'. See also 3.1.96n.
chorus an actor whose role is to mediate the story to the audience; Shakespeare used this device in *H5*, *Per* and *WT*.

239–40 i.e. I could act as a chorus between you and your love (or lover) if I could see the puppets performing. Hamlet sees himself as a puppet-master who would *interpret* or provide a commentary on the show. It seems possible that *puppets* has a sexual meaning, related to the use of 'poop' for the vagina (see Hulme, 114); Q1 has 'poopies'.

233 duke's] *Q1F;* King's *Hudson* 234 of that] A that *Q1;* o'that *F* 236 wince] *Q1;* winch *Q2F* 236.1] *F; after 237 Q2* 238 as good as a] *Q1;* a good *F*

OPHELIA You are keen, my lord, you are keen.

HAMLET It would cost you a groaning to take off mine edge.

OPHELIA Still better and worse.

HAMLET So you mistake your husbands. ~~Begin,~~ murderer: ~~leave thy damnable faces and begin.~~ Come, 'the croaking raven doth bellow for revenge.'

LUCIANUS

Thoughts black, hands apt, drugs fit, and time agreeing,
Considerate season else no creature seeing,

241 Ophelia puts off the innuendo as a joke.
keen sharp, incisive

242 **groaning** variously glossed as the cry of a woman losing her virginity (Jenkins, Hibbard) or the pain of childbirth (Spencer, Edwards)

242–3 **take . . . edge** put off or deter my jokes; blunt the edge of my sexual desire

244 **better and worse** wittier and more offensive; as Theobald puts it, 'his Wit is *smarter*, tho' his Meaning is more *blunt*' (*Restored*, 90).

245 **So . . . husbands** Hamlet alludes to the Christian wedding ceremony in which bride and groom promise to take each other 'for better or for worse'; he implies that women *mistake* their husbands, i.e. take other men. Spencer adopts Q1's 'must take' for *mistake*, and so do some productions, but the play on *take/mistake* has a precedent in *R2* 3.3.10–16.

246 **damnable faces** execrable grimaces

247 **'the croaking . . . revenge'** a version of two lines from *The True Tragedy of Richard III* (*c.* 1591): 'The screeching raven sits croaking for revenge, / Whole herds of beasts come bellowing for revenge' (Bullough, 3.339, 1892–3). This play was in the repertory of the Queen's Men, to which company Shakespeare probably belonged before 1592, and the lines are from Richard's speech before the battle of Bosworth in which he imagines his victims calling for revenge; the word 'revenge' occurs 16 times in the first 23 lines. In Shakespeare's own version of the sequence, the ghosts repeat the refrain 'despair and die' and the word 'revenge' is not used until Richard's waking soliloquy (*R3* 5.3.119–78 and 187). The murder of Gonzago is not in fact presented as a revenge killing in any of the three texts, but obviously this is appropriate to Hamlet's own situation.

248–53 Some commentators have suggested that these lines are the ones inserted by Hamlet (see 77n. and 180–209n.). Irving (see Fig. 16) and other performers of Hamlet have ('often', according to Rosenberg, 593) mouthed or spoken them along with the poisoner.

249 ***Considerate*** If this is right it must mean 'appropriate' or 'deliberately chosen'; Q1/F's 'Confederate' must mean 'conspiring'. Both usages are unusual and are not found elsewhere in Shakespeare. Assuming the use of a long 's', it would be easy to mistake one word for the other, especially in a printed form.
else . . . seeing no other person present as witness

242 mine] my *F* 245 mistake] *F*; must take *Q1*; mis-take *Capell* your] *Q1*; *om. F* 246 leave] poxe, leaue *Q1F* 247 'the . . . revenge'] *as quotation White* 249 *Considerate*] Confederate *Q1F*

Thou mixture rank, of midnight weeds collected,
With Hecate's ban thrice blasted, thrice infected,
Thy natural magic and dire property
On wholesome life usurps immediately.
[Pours the poison in his ears.]

HAMLET 'A poisons him i'th' garden for his estate. His name's Gonzago. The story is extant and written in very choice Italian. You shall see anon how the murderer gets the love of Gonzago's wife.

OPHELIA The King rises.

QUEEN How fares my lord?

POLONIUS Give o'er the play.

KING Give me some light, away.

POLONIUS Lights! Lights! Lights!

Exeunt all but Hamlet and Horatio.

250 ***rank*** offensive, malign; see other uses of ***rank*** and ***ranker*** at 1.2.136, 2.1.20, 3.3.36, 3.4.90, 146 and 150 and 4.4.21.
of . . . collected concocted from weeds gathered at midnight (and hence assumed to be more noxious); see also 4.7.143 and n.

251 ***Hecate*** goddess of witchcraft; the metre requires the name to have two syllables here, though it could also have three.
ban curse (Q1's 'bane' = poison)
thrice To repeat something three times often adds power in religious or superstitious contexts; see 'Thrice the brinded cat hath mewed' (*Mac* 4.1.1). Hecate was also known as 'triple Hecate' (see *MND* 5.1.378) because she was personified as Cynthia in heaven, Diana on earth and Proserpina in hell.
infected Q2's 'inuected' could conceivably mean 'cursed' (as in 'invective'), but *OED* does not record 'to invect' in this sense before 1614.

252 ***dire property*** evil power or capacity

253 ***usurps*** **[*On*]** supplants, takes wrongfully; see 1.1.45 and n.

253 SD *from F and clearly necessary

254 **'A** he
estate wealth, property

256 **anon** soon

258–9 Jenkins includes Hamlet's additional line from Q1/F (see t.n.), presumably on the grounds that it was an accidental omission in Q2.

260 **Give o'er** give up, abandon

261 If torches are used (see 85.1–2n.), the King may at this point snatch one of them from an attendant as he leaves, but presumably he is trying to retain his composure.

262 SP See t.n.; in performance the cry may be begun by Polonius/Corambis and taken up by others; alternatively, Polonius may demonstrate his loyalty to the King while the others watch silently.

251 *ban*] *F;* bane *Q1, Q5, F4* *infected*] *Q1, Q3, F;* inuected *Q2* 253 *usurps*] *Q1;* vsurpe *F* SD] *F; not in Q2; exit. Q1* 254 'A] He *Q1F* for his] *Q1;* for's *F* 255 written] writ *F* 256 very] *om. F* 258] *Cor.* The king rises, lights hoe. / *Exeunt King and Lordes.* / *Ham.* What, frighted with false fires? *Q1; Ophe.* The King rises. / *Ham.* What, frighted with false fire. *F* 262 SP] *All. F*

HAMLET
Why let the stricken deer go weep,
The hart ungalled play,
For some must watch while some must sleep.
Thus runs the world away.
Would not this, sir, and a forest of feathers, if the rest of my fortunes turn Turk with me, with provincial roses on my razed shoes, get me a fellowship in a cry of players?
HORATIO Half a share.
HAMLET A whole one, I.

262 SD In some productions the disconcerted players linger for a while until Hamlet dismisses them with a gesture or a courtier returns to usher them off. The abrupt end to the 'show' recalls the equally unceremonious dismissal of the 'Worthies' at *LLL* 5.2.715.

263–6 These lines seem to be a stanza from an otherwise unknown ballad. The contrast between the *stricken* (wounded) deer and the *ungalled* (uninjured) hart continues the metaphor of the *galled jade* introduced by Hamlet at 236 and presumably reflects on the contrast between the guilty King and the innocent Prince. Dent cites 'As the stricken deer withdraws himself to die' as proverbial (D189), so perhaps Hamlet is speculating optimistically on the consequences of the King's departure. Actors of Hamlet are usually excited and exultant, sometimes manic and even hysterical, at this point, recalling his behaviour after the encounter with the Ghost in 1.5 (see Rosenberg; Hapgood).

265 **watch** stay awake.

266 **Thus . . . away** i.e. This is the way of the world. Wiles reads this as an explicit reminder that Will Kempe had sold his share in the Chamberlain's Men and thus 'danced himself out of the world' (see 36–7n. and 118n.)

267 **this** i.e. my contribution to the play
forest of feathers Hamlet assumes that actors favoured extravagantly plumed hats.

268 **turn . . . me** desert me, betray me (like a Christian renouncing his faith to become a Muslim)

268–9 **provincial roses** rosettes in the French style of Provins or Provence – like the *feathers* of 267, an affected style (Jenkins, LN)

269 **razed** (fashionably) slashed
fellowship share, partnership; like the one Shakespeare had with the Chamberlain's Men whereby he received a share of their profits (see 266n.)
cry pack – a contemptuous expression

271 Horatio seems to evince some degree of scepticism about the scale of Hamlet's success, and his replies at 280 and 282 are non-committal. In general his response to Hamlet's elation is muted (see 5.2.56n. for his apparent neutrality later).

266 Thus] *Q1;* So *F* 268 with provincial] with two Prouinciall *F* 270 players] Players sir *F* 272 A whole one, I] *F;* Ay, a whole one *Hanmer;* A whole one; – ay *Rann (Malone)*

~~For thou dost know, O Damon dear,~~
~~This realm dismantled was~~
~~Of Jove himself, and now reigns here~~
~~A very, very pajock.~~
~~HORATIO You might have rhymed.~~
HAMLET O good Horatio, I'll take the Ghost's word for a thousand pound. Didst perceive?
HORATIO Very well, my lord.
HAMLET Upon the talk of the poisoning.
HORATIO I did very well note him.
HAMLET Ah ha! Come, some music! Come, the recorders!
For if the King like not the comedy
Why then belike he likes it not, perdie.
Come, some music!

273–6 As with the stanza at 263–6, no source has been identified.
273 **Damon** Hamlet apparently addresses Horatio as *Damon* in an allusion to the story of the ideal friendship between Damon and Pythias. (Richard Edwards's play, *Damon and Pithias*, was acted in 1564 and printed in 1571.)
274 **dismantled** deprived, divested (a metaphor from clothing)
275 **Jove himself** Hamlet is presumably comparing his father with Jove (see the comparisons with Hyperion, Jove, Mars and Mercury at 3.4.54–6).
276 **pajock** Horatio might expect Hamlet to end with 'ass'; Q2/F's 'paiock' is obscure: some commentators argue for a variant of 'peacock' (Jennens quotes Pope on the fable of the birds choosing a peacock as their king rather than an eagle; Caldecott cites a 1613 text which attributes to Circe the power to turn 'proud fooles into peacocks'); others for 'patchcock' or 'patchock', a word which is used uniquely by Edmund Spenser with reference to the degeneration of the English in Ireland (see Jenkins, LN).
284 **recorders** wind instruments, flutes. Hamlet calls for music again at 287; the players eventually appear with recorders at 336.1. (If casting allows, an attendant should presumably leave the stage to convey Hamlet's request, but it has not been customary to add a SD.)
286 Hamlet may be alluding to a line in Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (*c.* 1587) spoken by Hieronimo with reference to his own forthcoming play-within-the-play: 'And if the world like not this tragedy, / Hard is the hap of old Hieronimo' (4.1.197–8). Actual revenge killings occur in the course of Hieronimo's play: perhaps Hamlet changes 'tragedy' to *comedy* because he has not reached this point yet.
286 **belike** perhaps. Johnson prints '*belike* –' and comments, 'Hamlet was going on to draw the consequence, when the courtiers entered.'
perdie by god (French *pardieu*)

274–5] *F lines* himselfe, / heere. / 276 very, very] very, very – *Warburton* pajock] (paiock), *F* (Paiocke), *F2* (Pajocke); Paicock *Q6;* Pecock *Q9;* peacock *Pope* 283 Ah ha!] Oh, ha? *F*

Enter ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN.

GUILDENSTERN Good my lord, vouchsafe me a word with you.
HAMLET Sir, a whole history.
GUILDENSTERN The King, sir –
HAMLET Ay, sir, what of him?
GUILDENSTERN – is in his retirement marvellous distempered.
HAMLET With drink, sir?
GUILDENSTERN No, my lord, with choler.
HAMLET Your wisdom should show itself more richer to signify this to the doctor, for for me to put him to his purgation would perhaps plunge him into more choler.
GUILDENSTERN Good my lord, put your discourse into some frame and start not so wildly from my affair.

287.1 F's earlier placing (see t.n.) may suggest that the appearance of the two spying courtiers motivates Hamlet's further burst of manic behaviour (though Edwards suggests that he 'pointedly ignores' them). *TxC* takes Q1's agreement with the earlier placing of this SD as confirmation that it reflects stage practice.
288 **Good my lord** Guildenstern's mode of address is carefully deferential (see also 296, 300, Rosencrantz at 328, and see 1.2.168n.).
vouchsafe grant, condescend to give. It seems possible that Guildenstern's language is generally rather formal or pretentious here and that Hamlet mocks it in his replies, as he does with Osric at 5.2.68–163.
290 **history** story, narrative
293 **his retirement** his withdrawal to his private chambers
marvellous marvellously; see 2.1.3n.
294 **distempered** out of temper (but it could also mean 'drunk', which is how Hamlet takes it)
296 **choler** anger
297 **more richer** much more rich or resourceful. Shakespeare and his contemporaries often use double comparatives (see Blake, 3.2.3.4; Hope, 1.2.3).
298 **signify** communicate
299 **purgation** A purgation could be physical (medical) but Hamlet presumably also has in mind the spiritual sense (as in 'purgatory': see 3.3.85n.).
301 **frame** coherent shape or order
***start** F's reading is generally adopted and taken to mean 'shy away' or 'move quickly'. Q2's 'stare' might not be impossible as a description of Hamlet's attitude or behaviour (see *R2* 5.3.23–4, where Henry IV asks of Aumerle: 'What means / Our cousin, that he stares and looks so wildly?'), but 'stare from' is not idiomatic and *e/t* is an easy misreading.
from my affair away from my business or message

287.1] *after 282 F; after 285 Johnson* 296 with] rather with *F* 298 the] his *F* for for] *F;* for *F2* 299 more] farre more *F* 300–1] *F; Q2 lines* frame, / affaire. / 301 start] *F;* stare *Q2*

HAMLET I am tame, sir, pronounce.
GUILDENSTERN The Queen your mother in most great affliction of spirit hath sent me to you.
HAMLET You are welcome.
GUILDENSTERN Nay, good my lord, this courtesy is not of the right breed. If it shall please you to make me a wholesome answer, I will do your mother's commandment. If not, your pardon and my return shall be the end of business.
HAMLET Sir, I cannot.
ROSENCRANTZ What, my lord?
HAMLET Make you a wholesome answer. My wit's diseased. ~~But, sir, such answer as I can make you shall command. Or rather, as you say, my mother. Therefore no more.~~ But to the matter – my mother, you say?
ROSENCRANTZ Then thus she says. Your behaviour hath struck her into amazement and admiration.
HAMLET O wonderful son that can so 'stonish a mother! But is there no sequel at the heels of this mother's admiration? Impart.
ROSENCRANTZ She desires to speak with you in her closet ere you go to bed.

302 **tame** calm, subdued
pronounce i.e. deliver your message
305 We may assume from Guildenstern's response that Hamlet's words are not in fact courteous: perhaps he says them in an exaggerated way, or indicates that the sending of Guildenstern is the end of the matter.
307 **breed** (1) kind; (2) breeding in manners
308 **wholesome** healthy, i.e. sane
309 **pardon** permission to leave
312 SP Capell explains the abrupt switch of speaker in Q2 (see t.n.) by suggesting that Hamlet's *Sir, I cannot* is spoken 'somewhat brusquely, and the receiver [Guildenstern] makes a bow and retires: Hamlet answers to Rosencrantz without considering which of them spoke.'
315 **Or . . . mother** i.e. it is my mother who is doing the commanding (see 308–9)
318 **admiration** wonder (not necessarily approving)
319 **'stonish** astonish
323 **closet** a private chamber used for prayer, study or, in the case of Ophelia's closet at 2.1.74, needlework. A closet was not necessarily a bedroom, though it is often presented as

310 business] my Businesse *F* 312 SP] *Guild. F* 314 answer] answers *F* 315 as you] you *F* 319 'stonish] astonish *F* 321 Impart] *om. F*

HAMLET We shall obey, were she ten times our mother. Have you any further trade with us?

ROSENCRANTZ My lord, you once did love me.

HAMLET And do still, by these pickers and stealers.

ROSENCRANTZ Good my lord, what is your cause of distemper? You do surely bar the door upon your own liberty if you deny your griefs to your friend.

HAMLET Sir, I lack advancement.

ROSENCRANTZ How can that be, when you have the voice of the King himself for your succession in Denmark?

HAMLET Ay, sir, but while the grass grows – the proverb is something musty.

Enter the Players *with recorders.*

O, the recorders! Let me see one. ~~To withdraw with you, why do you go about to recover the wind of me, as~~

one onstage. Jardine (150) emphasizes the privacy of closets, but Orlin modifies this view by demonstrating from letters, diaries, wills and inventories that closets served a range of purposes.

324 **We . . . our** Hamlet's first use of the royal plural may be a deliberate distancing tactic.

325 **trade** business – perhaps used contemptuously

327 **pickers and stealers** hands; so-called from the Catechism in the Book of Common Prayer where the person being catechized promises to 'keep my hands from picking and stealing'

328–9 **your . . . distemper** the cause of your illness or disorder

329 **surely . . . upon** Hibbard defends F (see t.n.) as an authorial 'second thought' which adds 'a touch of wit'.

332–4 **when . . . Denmark** i.e. when the King himself has said you are to succeed him on the throne

335 **while . . . grows** Tilley cites 'While the grass grows the horse starves' (G423).

336 **something musty** either 'a stale thing' or 'somewhat stale'. Perhaps Hamlet means that his situation, as well as the proverb, is a familiar one.

336.1 In Q1 Hamlet simply produces a pipe himself.

337 **withdraw** be private – presumably Hamlet motions Rosencrantz and Guildenstern away from the players to address them more confidentially. Or perhaps he separates Guildenstern from Rosencrantz.

338 **recover . . . me** get to windward of me. In hunting this would be a deliberate tactic to cause the quarry to move away from the scent of the hunter and towards the trap he has prepared.

327 And] So I *F* 329 surely] freely *F* upon] of *F* 335 sir] *om. F* 336.1] *after 334; Enter one with a Recorder. F* 337 recorders] Recorder *F* one] *om. F*

~~if you would drive me into a toil?~~

~~GUILDENSTERN O my lord, if my duty be too bold, my love is too unmannerly.~~

~~HAMLET I do not well understand that.~~ Will you play upon this pipe?

GUILDENSTERN My lord, I cannot.

HAMLET I pray you.

GUILDENSTERN Believe me, I cannot.

HAMLET I do beseech you.

GUILDENSTERN I know no touch of it, my lord.

HAMLET It is as easy as lying. Govern these ventages with your fingers and thumb, give it breath with your mouth, and it will discourse most eloquent music. Look you, these are the stops.

GUILDENSTERN But these cannot I command to any utterance of harmony. I have not the skill.

HAMLET Why, look you now how unworthy a thing you

339 **toil** net or trap

340–1 **if . . . unmannerly** i.e. if I am too forward in doing what I see as my duty (asking you about your *distemper*), it is my love for you that causes me to forget my manners.

342 **I . . . that** Hamlet presumably implies that he has no confidence in Guildenstern's avowed love.

342–63 **Will . . . me** This was for Grigori Kozintsev, director of the 1964 Russian film version, 'the most important passage in the tragedy' defining the ultimate inability of the state and its informers to penetrate the *mystery* of the individual (quoted by Dawson, 187–8).

348 **know . . . it** do not have the skill to play it

349 **as . . . lying** 'I accept from Kittredge, but cannot confirm, that this was proverbial' (Jenkins).

Govern This is apparently a technical term: see 'He hath played on this prologue like a child on a recorder; a sound, but not in government' (*MND* 5.1.122–3).

ventages vents or holes

350 ***fingers and thumb** Attempts to explain Q2's reading (see t.n.) are unconvincing. Capell prints Q2 but does not gloss.

351–2, 355 **Look you** Hamlet has used this expression earlier in F (1.5.131) and Q1 (5.101); Edwards notes at that point that it is 'a characteristic turn of Hamlet's speech'.

352 **stops** the same as *ventages*: the holes which the musician's fingers must stop or block

354 **utterance of harmony** harmonious (musical) sound or expression

355 **unworthy** contemptible, easy to manipulate

349 It is] 'Tis *F* 350 fingers] finger *F* thumb] *F;* the vmber *Q2*; the thumb *Q3* 351 eloquent] excellent *F*

make of me: you would play upon me! You would seem to know my stops, you would pluck out the heart of my mystery, you would sound me from my lowest note to my compass. And there is much music, excellent voice, in this little organ. Yet cannot you make it speak. 'Sblood! Do you think I am easier to be played on than a pipe? Call me what instrument you will, though you fret me you cannot play upon me.

Enter POLONIUS.

God bless you, sir.

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

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

358 **mystery** (1) secret; (2) skill at a craft or trade (such as, here, playing an instrument)
sound me (1) play on me, cause me to make sounds; (2) explore my depths, probe me (see 2.1.41, 3.1.7)

358–9 **to my compass** to my limit; see 'Above the reach or compass of thy thought' (*2H6* 1.2.46). F's reading (see t.n.) makes the metaphor from music more explicit: see *OED* compass *sb.* I 10: 'the full range of tones which a voice or musical instrument is capable of producing'.

360 **organ** instrument, i.e. the recorder
speak i.e. make music

361 **'Sblood** an oath (by God's blood). Some performers break the recorder in rage at this point.

362–3 **Call . . . me** That the metaphor 'to play upon a person' was current is demonstrated by parallels in Ben Jonson's *Everyman Out* (1599; Induction, 319) and in Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton's *The Roaring Girl* (1611; 4.1.211–13).

362–3 ***you fret me** (1) you can manipulate my 'frets' (ridges to guide the fingers on lutes or other stringed instruments – not strictly relevant to wind instruments, as Hamlet seems to acknowledge); (2) you can make me angry. Q2's 'not' seems to be an error.

364 **God . . . sir** These words are presumably addressed to Polonius, although in all three texts he enters after they are spoken. If they are addressed to Guildenstern they may be pronounced as a sarcastic dismissal, or as part of Hamlet's generally manic behaviour. Jenkins raises but rejects the suggestion that they are addressed to a player as Hamlet returns the recorder.

366 **and presently** *and* emphasizes the sense of 'immediately'.

367–73 Since this scene is supposedly set indoors at night, it is generally played as if Hamlet is pretending to see

358 to] to the top of *F* 360 speak] *om. F* 361 'Sblood] Why *F*; Zownds *Q1* think] *Q1*; thinke, that *F* 363 fret me] *Ard*^{2}; fret me not *Q2*; can frett mee, yet *Q1*; can fret me, *F* 363.1] *Capell; after 364 Q2* 367 yonder] *Q1*; that *F* 368 of] *Q1*; like *F*

POLONIUS By th' mass and 'tis like a camel indeed.
HAMLET Methinks it is like a weasel. 370
POLONIUS It is backed like a weasel.
HAMLET Or like a whale?
POLONIUS Very like a whale.
HAMLET Then I will come to my mother, by and by. ~~–[*aside*] They fool me to the top of my bent.~~ – I will 375
come by and by. – Leave me, friends. – I will. Say so.
'By and by' is easily said. [*Exeunt all but Hamlet.*]
'Tis now the very witching time of night

clouds and Polonius is humouring what he assumes to be madness. It would have made different and better sense in the open-air Globe (where indeed, in 2000, spectators looked up at the sky as Hamlet gestured). It would be possible in a modern theatre to have the actors approach (or pretend to approach) a window.

371 Its back is like that of a weasel. Either Hamlet enjoys contradicting himself and exposing Polonius' insincerity, since a weasel is very unlike a camel, or we assume that the supposed cloud is changing very rapidly, like the one evoked by Antony at *AC* 4.14.1–11. If the former, Hamlet plays the same trick on Osric in 5.2.

374 **by and by** immediately

375 **to . . . bent** to my full extent. The metaphor is from bending a bow, as at 2.2.30.

376–7 **Leave . . . said** This is all part of Hamlet's speech in Q2 and can make sense as a mixture of address to the others and private reflection. Most editors and productions however follow F in giving 'I will say so' to Polonius, and moving 'Leave me friends' to after 'easily said'. *TxC* suggests that Q2's copy was confusing at this point; certainly H4^{v} omits '*Ham.*' from the catchwords '*Ham.* Then' at the bottom of H4^{r}, implying that Polonius speaks everything from 374 to the end of the scene.

377 SD *Q2 has an '*Exit*' for Hamlet at the end of the scene but no exit direction for any of the others; F has an '*Exit*' for Polonius after his line 'I will say so.' It seems logical in both texts that not only Polonius but also Horatio, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern should obey Hamlet's instruction, *Leave me, friends*, and that he should be alone onstage for his final speech. Q1's SDs are the fullest here with an '*Exit*' for Rossencraft and Gilderstone before the entry of Corambis, an '*exit*' for Corambis after 'Very like a whale', and an '*exit*' for Horatio after he and Hamlet have bidden each other goodnight; Q1 is the only text to pay any attention to Horatio or give him any dialogue after the equivalent of the entry of the others at 287 SD.

378 **witching time** hour appropriate for witchcraft (see *Mac* 2.1.49–52); another opportunity for a bell to chime or a clock to strike (see 1.1.5n., 1.4.3n. and 3.4.99.1n.).

369 mass] Misse *F* 'tis] it's *F* 370, 371 a weasel] *Q1F;* an Ouzle *Pope* 371 backed] *Q1F;* black *Q3* 374–7] *Pope; Q2 lines* and by, / & by, / friends. / said, / 374 SP] *Q1F; only in H4^{r} catchword Q2* I will] i'le *Q1;* will I *F* 375 SD] *Staunton; to* Hor. *Capell* 377 SD] *Steevens^{2} subst.; Exe. / Rowe*

When churchyards yawn and hell itself breaks out
Contagion to this world. Now could I drink hot blood
And do such business as the bitter day
Would quake to look on. Soft, now to my mother.
O heart, lose not thy nature. ~~Let not ever~~
~~The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom~~
Let me be cruel, not unnatural:
I will speak daggers to her but use none.
~~My tongue and soul in this be hypocrites.~~
~~How in my words somever she be shent~~
~~To give them seals never my soul consent.~~ *Exit.*

379 **yawn** open wide like mouths (to let out the dead)

379–80 **breaks out / Contagion** lets loose its pestilence or poison. Jenkins adopts F's 'breaths' for *breaks*, perhaps as a better parallel with *yawn*.

380 **drink hot blood** Witches were supposed to do this; it seems in the spirit of Lucianus' '*Thoughts black*' speech at 248–53. See also *E3*, where the Prince offers 'the blood of captive kings' as a 'restorative' to the wounded Audley (4.7.31–2). Edwards argues (52) that Hamlet is disgusted by the thought rather than relishing it.

381 **the bitter day** Perhaps 'the judgemental day', or even doomsday. F has 'bitter businesse as the day', which has been widely adopted (though not in the eighteenth century, when editors such as Warburton and Steevens objected to 'bitter business' as a 'burlesque' or 'vulgar' expression).

382 **Soft** be quiet, that's enough

383 **lose . . . nature** do not deny or betray your natural (filial) feelings

384 **Nero** the Roman emperor who had his mother Agrippina murdered. Shakespeare refers to the story that he subsequently ripped open her womb in *KJ* 5.2.152–3. Dowden points out that Agrippina was accused of poisoning her husband and living with her brother.

firm resolved (i.e against doing violence)

385 Hamlet presumably means that it will be *cruel* to attack his mother verbally but *unnatural* to attack her physically.

386 ***daggers** Most editors emend Q2's 'dagger' on the analogy of 'She speaks poniards' (*MA* 2.1.232–3); 'to speak daggers' or 'to look daggers' became proverbial (Dent, D8.1).

387 Hamlet seems to mean that he will behave hypocritically or deceitfully in merely scolding his mother when in his soul he wants to do her physical harm. Hibbard, however, paraphrases: 'let my soul pretend a savage purpose it does not feel, and let my words express it.'

388 **How . . . somever** however

shent rebuked, scolded (past participle of the archaic verb *shend*)

389 **To . . . seals** to act on them; the royal *seal* ratified the words of a decree or proclamation, requiring its enactment (see also 61n. and 3.4.59n.)

379 breaks] breaths *F* 381 business . . . bitter] bitter businesse as the *F* 382 Soft, now] Soft now, *F* 386 daggers] *Q1F*; dagger *Q2* 388 somever] *F*; soever *Q5* 389 SD] *Q1*; *om. F*

[3.3] *Enter* KING, ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN.

KING

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

safety of our estate

GUILDENSTERN We will ourselves provide.
Most holy and religious fear it is

3.3 The three texts: this scene runs to 33 lines in Q1 (scene 10) and 98 in both Q2 and F. Q1 omits the dialogue between the King and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern as well as the appearance of Polonius/Corambis; it begins at the equivalent of 36. Location and timing: this scene follows on immediately after 3.2. *Fratricide Punished* specifies the setting as 'A church and altar' (3.1; Bullough, 7.143) and many productions do something similar. This would be an appropriate setting for the King's attempt at prayer, though it raises questions about why Hamlet's route to the Queen's closet should pass through a church or chapel; such questions would not arise on the unlocalized Elizabethan stage.

1 **him** his condition or behaviour
nor . . . us and it is not consistent with our (my) safety

2 **range** roam freely

3 **commission** presumably the *grand commission* Hamlet describes intercepting at 5.2.18; it is never made absolutely clear whether Rosencrantz and Guildenstern know they are conducting Hamlet not just to exile but to his death (see 5.2.57n.).
dispatch prepare promptly

4 **along** go along; see 1.1.25.

5 **terms . . . estate** responsibilities of my position (as king)

6 **near us** F's 'dangerous' can hardly be a misreading; with 'lunacies' in 7 it provides a stronger reading.

7 **Out . . . brows** i.e. out of his mental disorder or threatening looks, the brow being seen as revealing one's state of mind, as at *R2* 4.1.331: 'I see your brows are full of discontent' (see also 3.4.40–2 and n.) F's 'Lunacies' for *brows* is printed by Hibbard, while Edwards defends *brows*, which he glosses as 'effrontery'; Jenkins (LN) rejects both 'Lunacies' here and 'dangerous' in 6 as 'stopgaps supplied, consciously or not, by a recollection of *dangerous lunacy* in 3.1.4'. (Seary, 164, endorses Theobald's emendation to 'lunes', adopted by Malone.)

7–23 **We . . . groan** In performance, the King sometimes displays impatience (or even, appropriately, embarrassment) during these speeches which attest to an Elizabethan ideal of kingship. See also the Messenger's rhetoric at 4.5.99–108.

7 **ourselves provide** prepare or equip ourselves

8 **fear** Guildenstern must mean something like 'concern': he is not accusing the King of being afraid but rather praising his caution.

3.3] *Capell* 6 near us] *Q5;* neer's *Q2;* dangerous *F* 7 brows] Lunacies *F;* Lunes *Theobald;* brawls *Cam' (early edns);* braves *Parrott-Craig (Dover Wilson)*

To keep those many many bodies safe
That live and feed upon your majesty.

~~ROSENCRANTZ~~

~~The single and peculiar life is bound~~
~~With all the strength and armour of the mind~~
~~To keep itself from noyance; but much more~~
~~That spirit upon whose weal depends and rests~~
~~The lives of many. The cess of majesty~~
~~Dies not alone, but like a gulf doth draw~~
~~What's near it with it; or it is a massy wheel~~
~~Fixed on the summit of the highest mount~~
~~To whose huge spokes ten thousand lesser things~~
~~Are mortised and adjoined, which when it falls~~
~~Each small annexment, petty consequence,~~
~~Attends the boisterous ruin. Never alone~~
~~Did the king sigh but with a general groan.~~

9–10 The slightly grotesque image of the *many many bodies* that *live and feed* on the King seems to anticipate Hamlet's insistence on the worms that feed on Polonius in 4.3.
11 **single and peculiar** i.e. private, individual
bound obliged
13 **noyance** annoyance, harm
14 **That spirit** i.e. the King
weal welfare
depends and rests A verb frequently takes a singular form when it precedes a plural subject (see Blake, 4.2.2d, or Hope, 2.1.8a).
15 **cess of majesty** cessation or decease of royalty. Given the age of Elizabeth I and her unwillingness to name an heir, this must have been a topical issue when *Hamlet* was written.
16 **gulf** whirlpool, maelstrom
draw pull in, attract
17 **massy** massive; see 2.2.433 and n. (F omits *or*, achieving a more regular metre.)
18 ***summit** See 1.4.70n.
20 **mortised** fastened securely (as with a mortise and tenon joint)
21 **annexment** annex, addition. 'This word seems to be Rosencrantz's gift to the English language' (Edwards); see also 1.2.93n.
petty consequence i.e. trivial thing connected with it
22 **Attends** accompanies
boisterous tumultuous; dissyllabic, as Q2's 'boystrous' indicates
***ruin** Andrews interprets Q2's 'raine' as meaning 'downpour', but *a/u* is an easy misreading. Jenkins prefers F.
22–3 **Never . . . groan** (a commonplace)
23 ***with** We assume an accidental omission in Q2.

14 weal] spirit *F* 15 cess] cease *F* 17 or it is] It is *F*; 'tis *Dyce*^{2}; O, 'tis *Cam*^{1} 18 summit] *Rowe*; somnet *Q2F* 19 huge] *F*; hough *Q2* 20 mortised] (morteist), *F* (mortiz'd) 22 boisterous] (boystrous) *F* 22 ruin] *F*; raine Q2 23 with] *F*; *not in Q2*

KING
Arm you, I pray you, to this speedy voyage
For we will fetters put about this fear
Which now goes too free-footed.
ROSENCRANTZ We will haste us.
Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

Enter POLONIUS.

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

O, my offence is rank: it smells to heaven;

24 **Arm** . . . to make yourselves ready for (but perhaps in this context carrying a hint of 'take arms or weapons')
speedy i.e. imminent or perhaps hastily planned
25 **fear** danger (cause of fear)
27 **closet** private chamber (see 3.2.323n.)
28 **arras** wall-hanging (see 2.2.160n.)
convey place, remove; often with a suggestion of something deceitful or clandestine; see *MW* 3.3.111–12, 'if you have a friend here, convey, convey him out'.
29 **process** proceedings
warrant guarantee, promise
tax him home reprove him thoroughly, call him to count for his behaviour
30 **as you said** It was in fact Polonius himself who made this suggestion at 3.1.182–4; 'his transfer of responsibility for the scheme is a matter of prudence as well as deference' (Edwards).
31 **meet** appropriate
33 **of vantage** This might mean 'in addition' (to the mother), as in *Oth* 4.3.83–4, 'as many to th' vantage as would store the world they played for'; or it might mean 'from an advantageous position', as in *Mac* 1.6.7, 'coign of vantage'.
36–72 In Q1, this speech begins, 'O that this wet that falles upon my face / Would wash the crime cleere from my conscience', perhaps indicating that in

25 about] vpon *F* 26 SP] *Both. F* SD] *(Exeunt Gent.) F* 35 SD] *Ard²; after* know. *Q2; om. F*

It hath the primal eldest curse upon't –
A brother's murder. Pray can I not:
Though inclination be as sharp as will,
My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent
And like a man to double business bound
I stand in pause where I shall first begin
And both neglect. What if this cursed hand
Were thicker than itself with brother's blood?
Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens
To wash it white as snow? Whereto serves mercy
~~But to confront the visage of offence?~~
~~And what's in prayer but this twofold force~~
~~To be forestalled ere we come to fall~~
~~Or pardoned, being down?~~ Then I'll look up:

some early stagings the King appeared to weep as he spoke. Angelo in *MM* has a comparable soliloquy in which he comments on his failure to repent and pray (2.4.1–17).

36 **rank** offensive, foul-smelling; see other uses of ***rank*** and ***ranker*** at 1.2.136; 2.1.20; 3.2.250; 3.4.90, 146 and 150; 4.4.21.

37 **primal eldest curse** The first murder in Judaeo-Christian tradition is Cain's killing of his brother Abel; see Genesis, 4.11–12, and 1.2.105 and n.

38 **A brother's murder** the murder of a brother. It is perhaps notable that the King does not mention incest as another *offence* here (see 1.2.157 and n.).

39 usually paraphrased 'although my desire to pray is as strong as my determination to do so', which seems tautologous: could it rather mean 'although my desire to pray is as strong as my will to sin'?

41 **to . . . bound** obliged to undertake two tasks at once (the problem is not that he can't do two things at once but that the two things are incompatible)

43–6 **What . . . snow** Hibbard points out the relevance of three proverbial sayings here: 'To wash one's hands of a thing', 'All the water in the sea cannot wash out this stain' and 'As white as snow' (Tilley, H122, W85, S591).

43 **cursed** cursèd

45 See Portia's claim, 'The quality of mercy is not strain'd, / It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven / Upon the place beneath' (*MV* 4.1.182–4).

46–7 **Whereto . . . offence** 'what is the function of mercy if it does not confront guilt'

48 **what's in prayer** what is the use of prayer
prayer two syllables

49 **forestalled** forestallèd; prevented

50 ***pardoned** i.e. to be pardoned. Q2's 'pardon' may be an error of omission: final *d* misread as *e* and then dropped. It could be interpreted as meaning 'to be given pardon', but it loses the parallel with *forestalled* in 49.
look up: Jenkins specifically rejects F's comma after *up* on the grounds that the King's resolve to *look up* is due to his confidence in the efficacy of prayer, not in his *fault* being *past*.

50 pardoned] *F*; pardon *Q2* up:] *(vp.), Q1 (vp,), F (vp,)*

My fault is past. But O, what form of prayer
Can serve my turn: 'Forgive me my foul murder'?
That cannot be, since I am still possessed
Of those effects for which I did the murder,
My crown, mine own ambition and my Queen.
May one be pardoned and retain th'offence?
In the corrupted currents of this world
Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice,
And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself
Buys out the law; but 'tis not so above:
There is no shuffling, there the action lies
In his true nature, and we ourselves compelled
Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults
To give in evidence. What then? What rests?
Try what repentance can – what can it not? –

51 **past** already committed (i.e. it is too late for sin to be *forestalled*, but there is still the possibility of *pardon*). A similar thought is expressed by Henry V on the night before Agincourt when he notes that his penitence for his father's 'fault' (also, in effect, regicide) 'comes after all' (*H5* 4.1.300): he cannot undo the murder of Richard II and he still possesses the *effects* of the crime.
54 **effects** advantages, benefits
55 **mine own ambition** i.e. the achievement of my ambition
56 **retain th'offence** i.e. keep the profits of the crime
57 **currents** i.e. procedures, ways of doing things
58 See *KL* 4.6.161–2, 'Plate sin with gold, / And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks.'
Offence's gilded hand the gold-bearing (and guilty) hand of an offender
***shove by** thrust aside, evade. Jenkins too follows F here; *shove by* is unique in Shakespeare, but see the Archbishop of York's complaint at *2H4* 4.2.36–7 about the 'particulars of our grief, / The which hath been with scorn shov'd from the court', and see 61n. (Q2's 'showe by' looks like a misreading, but it could mean 'appear next to'.)
61 **shuffling** trickery (as at 4.7.135). Jenkins points out that *shuffling* is a variant of 'shovelling', supporting *shove* in 58.
the action lies the case exists (a standard legal phrase)
62 **his** its
62–4 **we . . . evidence** i.e. we are forced to present evidence of the worst of our sins. Possibly there is a contrast here with English law in which accused people cannot be *compelled* to incriminate themselves.
63 **teeth and forehead** The metaphor picks up the idea of 'confront[ing] the visage of offence' in 47, and perhaps that of dangers growing out of Hamlet's *brows* at 7. Bared *teeth* and frowning brow are seen as expressing defiance or anger.
64 **rests** remains, is left (to say or do)
65 **can** i.e. can achieve

58 shove] *F*; showe *Q2*

Yet what can it, when one cannot repent?
O wretched state, O bosom black as death,
O limed soul that struggling to be free
Art more engaged. Help, angels, make assay.
Bow, stubborn knees, and heart with strings of steel
Be soft as sinews of the new-born babe.
All may be well.

Enter HAMLET.

HAMLET

Now might I do it. But now 'a is a-praying.
And now I'll do it [*Draws sword.*] – and so 'a goes to heaven,
And so am I revenged! That would be scanned:
A villain kills my father, and for that

68 **limed** limèd; trapped, as a bird with birdlime, a sticky substance spread on the branches of trees

69 **engaged** involved, entangled
assay effort. It is not clear whether the King is addressing the angels or himself here.

73–95 **Now .... goes** Johnson found this speech 'too horrible to be read or uttered'; other eighteenth- and nineteenth-century editors, such as Caldecott, justified its apparent barbarity as appropriate to the historical period represented. From Garrick onwards it has frequently been cut in performance. Hamlet's stated desire not only to kill his uncle but to send his soul to hell contrasts with Othello's words to Desdemona when he tells her to pray: 'I would not kill thy unprepared spirit . . . I would not kill thy soul' (*Oth* 5.2.31–2).

73 **But** F has 'pat' = conveniently, adopted by Jenkins without comment. *But* introduces Hamlet's doubt immediately.
'a is a-praying F's version may be easier to speak, but Hope points out (1.3.2c) that F has 'he' for Q2's ''a' three times in this speech (73, 74, 80) and that *'a* (assumed to relate to the dialect roots of Shakespeare, who is one of the latest citations for its usage in *OED*) is 'highly unstable textually, and liable to be changed to *he* by scribes and compositors'.

74 **And . . . it** Hamlet draws his sword at this point, as is explicit in Q1's 'come forth and work thy last'.

75 ***revenged** Q2's 'reuendge' may be a misreading of final *d* as *e*.

75 **would be scanned** needs to be scrutinized. The absence of punctuation after 'scand' in Q2 would, however, allow the syntax to continue: 'would be interpreted . . .'

69 Help, angels,] *Theobald (*help, angels!*);* helpe Angels *Q2;* Helpe Angels, *F* 70 Bow,] *Theobald;* Bowe *Q2F* 73 But] pat, *F* 'a] he *F* a-praying] *(*a praying*);* praying *F* 74 SD] *Capell subst.* 'a] he *F* 75 revenged] *F (*reueng'd*), Q1 (*reuenged*);* reuendge *Q2*

I, his sole son, do this same villain send
To heaven.
Why, this is base and silly, not revenge.
'A took my father grossly full of bread
With all his crimes broad blown, as flush as May,
~~And how his audit stands who knows, save heaven,~~
~~But in our circumstance and course of thought~~
'Tis heavy with him. And am I then revenged
To take him in the purging of his soul
When he is fit and seasoned for his passage?
No. [*Sheathes sword.*]
~~Up sword, and know thou a more horrid hent~~
When he is drunk, asleep or in his rage,

79 **Why . . . silly** F's reading (see t.n.) is generally adopted on the grounds that the Q2 reading is erroneous (see Jenkins, LN); Parrott–Craig defend Q2, pointing out that the F reading would be Shakespeare's only use of 'salary'; Mack and Boynton retain.
base and silly unworthy and weak-spirited. *Base* frequently means 'inferior' or 'illegitimate' in Shakespeare (see especially Edmund's complaint, 'Why bastard? Wherefore base?', at *KL* 1.2.6), while *silly* means 'feeble-minded' at *R2* 5.5.25.

80 **'A he**
grossly Although this relates grammatically to *took* ('he killed my father without any decency') it could also refer to the victim ('he killed my father in a state of gross sinfulness').
full of bread i.e. in a state of sensual satiety, not repentant or fasting. 'Fulnes of bread' is listed as a state of sin in Ezekiel, 16.49.

81 **broad blown** in full bloom. See 'in the blossoms of my sin' (1.5.76).
flush lusty, vigorous

82 **his** i.e. old Hamlet's
audit See *reckoning* and *account* at 1.5.78.
who . . . heaven Warburton conjectured on the basis of this line that Shakespeare's 'first sketch' of the play did not contain the Ghost, who 'had told [Hamlet], very circumstantially, how his audit stood' (in 1.5).

83 **circumstance . . . thought** knowledge which is necessarily limited or circumstantial

84 **'Tis . . . him** i.e. his *audit* or list of sins is a weighty or large one

85 **purging** The word implies a connection between prayer in this world and the possibility of purgatory to come (see 3.2.299).

86 **seasoned** prepared

88 **hent** This could mean 'grasp' (i.e. occasion to be grasped), or it could be a variant of 'hint' = opportunity. Hamlet presumably sheathes his sword at this point.

89 **drunk, asleep** the comma implies 'drunk or asleep'; F's lack of punctuation may imply 'dead drunk' (like Q1's 'drinking drunke'?).

77 sole] foule *F* 78–9] *one line F* 79 Why] Oh *F* base and silly] a benefit *Q1*; hyre and Sallery *F*; bait and salary *Cam*^{1} 80 'A] He *Q1F* 81 flush] fresh *F* 86–7] *one line F* 87 SD] *Cam*^{1} 89 drunk, asleep] drunke asleepe *F*

Or in th'incestuous pleasure of his bed,
At game a-swearing, or about some act
That has no relish of salvation in't.
Then trip him that his heels may kick at heaven
And that his soul may be as damned and black
As hell whereto it goes. My mother stays;
This physic but prolongs thy sickly days. *Exit.*

KING

My words fly up, my thoughts remain below.
Words without thoughts never to heaven go. *Exit.*

[3.4] *Enter* QUEEN *and* POLONIUS.

90 **incestuous** See 1.2.157n.

91 **At game a-swearing** 'There can be little doubt about the correctness of Q2 which is supported by Q1 as against F's paraphrase' (Edwards). This time it is F that implies two distinct activities, gambling and swearing, rather than 'swearing as he gambles' (see 89n.).

92 **relish** hint, trace (literally, 'flavour')

93–5 **Then . . . goes** Honigmann ('First Quarto') notes the parallel with *Oth* 2.1.186–7: 'Olympus-high and duck again as low / As hell's from heaven'.

93 **trip him** cause him to stumble and fall
kick at heaven usually glossed 'spurn heaven (as he plunges headlong into hell)', though it also seems to carry some sense of 'batter (ineffectively) at the gates of heaven'

95 **stays** is waiting

96 Although this line is rhetorically addressed to the King, it cannot be heard by him.
physic i.e. the King's prayer (or Hamlet's decision not to kill him at once?)

97–8 The King's final couplet reveals that his attempt to pray has failed, casting an ironic retrospective light on Hamlet's stated reasons for sparing him.

3.4 The three texts: it has been traditional since Q6 to end this scene, and indeed Act 3, with Hamlet's exit at 3.4.215, although the action in Q2 and F is arguably continuous until the exeunt of the King and Queen at what is traditionally designated the end of 4.1; in Q1 the action is continuous without a scene-break until the entry of Fortenbrasse (*sic*) at the beginning of what is traditionally designated 4.4; see headnote to 4.1 and Appendix 4 on this division. Up to Hamlet's exit, the scene runs to 103 lines in Q1 (scene 11), 215 lines in Q2 and 192 lines in F; F omits five passages from Hamlet's castigating speeches (see notes on 69–74, 76–9, 159–63 and 165–8) and his determination to outwit his *schoolfellows* (200–8). Q1 covers the same ground, but with some significant additions to the Queen's role: see 28n. and 195–7n. Location and timing: this scene follows immediately after 3.3 and takes place in the Queen's *closet* – a private room but not a bedroom, which would have been referred to as her 'chamber': see 3.2.323n. Since Barrymore gave the

91 game a-swearing] *(game a swearing); game swaring Q1; gaming, swearing F* 3.4] *Capell*
0.1 SD QUEEN] *Q1F; Gertrard Q2*

POLONIUS
'A will come straight. Look you lay home to him.
Tell him his pranks have been too broad to bear with,
And that your grace hath screened and stood between
Much heat and him. I'll silence me even here.
Pray you be round.
QUEEN I'll warrant you, fear me not. 5
Withdraw, I hear him coming.
[*Polonius hides behind the arras.*]

scene an Oedipal reading in 1922 (see Hapgood), modern productions have often included a bed (see also p. 100). The 2000 production at the Globe did not use a bed, though Hamlet dragged a sheet on from the discovery space when he talked of 'the rank sweat of an enseamed bed' (90); he used it later to wrap and drag the body. Jones compares this scene, in which an aggressive son confronts a guilty mother and forces her to confession, with the similarly structured but comic episode in *KJ* 1.1.217–76 (*Scenic*, 99–104).

1 **'A** he
straight immediately
lay . . . him accuse or reprove him thoroughly; see Polonius' 'I'll warrant she'll tax him home' at 3.3.29.

2 **pranks** reprehensible actions; a stronger meaning than the modern one of 'jokes'; see *1H6* 3.1.11–15, where the Duke of Gloucester accuses the Bishop of Winchester to his face of 'thy vile outrageous crimes . . . thy audacious wickedness, / Thy lewd, pestiferous and dissentious pranks'.
broad gross, excessive
bear with tolerate

3–4 **screened . . . heat** The metaphor is of a movable screen used to protect people from the direct heat of an open fire.

4 **I'll . . . here** Polonius presumably gestures towards the arras he mentioned at 3.3.28 and where he is to hide at 6 SD. Both Q2/F's 'silence' and Q1's 'shrowde' are ironically apt. Edwards wonders, 'Is it conceivable that this is the one place where an authoritative change, occurring to Shakespeare when the play was in production, is preserved only in the corrupt first quarto?'

5 **round** forthright; see his earlier 'Let her be round with him' at 3.1.182. Jenkins sees F's extrametrical 'with him' as recollected from 3.1.182 and dismisses the offstage cry (see t.n.) as 'a fairly obvious stage accretion' (i.e. an actor's insertion), but Edwards argues that the latter is 'very much in character'.

5 SP Q2 uses '*Ger.*' instead of '*Quee.*' consistently throughout this scene and the next.
***warrant you** Q2's 'wait you' does yield the meaning 'watch out for you', though this is an obsolete sense according to *OED* 3a, and a misreading of an abbreviation for F's 'warrant' is more likely. (See also 1.2.241 and 3.3.29 as cited at 1n.)

6.1 It seems logical for Hamlet to enter after Polonius has hidden and the Queen has said 'I hear him coming.'

1] *F lines* straight: / him, / 'A] He *F* 4 silence me] *F;* shrowde my selfe *Q1;* 'sconce me *Hanmer* even] e'ene *F* 5 round] round with him. / *Ham. within.* Mother, mother, mother *F* warrant] *F;* wait *Q2;* war'nt *Cam²* 6 SD] *Rowe subst.* 6.1] *F; after* round 5 *Q2*

Enter HAMLET.

HAMLET
Now, mother, what's the matter?
QUEEN
Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.
HAMLET
Mother, you have my father much offended.
QUEEN
Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue.
HAMLET
Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue.
QUEEN
Why, how now, Hamlet!
HAMLET
What's the matter now?
QUEEN
Have you forgot me?
HAMLET
No, by the rood, not so.

7 In Q1, Hamlet begins by asking, 'How is't with you mother?', the Queen replies, 'How is't with you?', and he answers, 'I'le tell you, but first weele make all safe', implying that he locks the door – a piece of business preserved in *Fratricide Punished* (3.5; Bullough, 7.145). Orlin demonstrates that a major feature of a *closet* in this period is that it can be locked.

8–9 **thou . . . you** The pronouns reflect the usual parent-to-child and child-to-parent contrast which is more or less sustained until the Queen echoes Hamlet's *you* at 112 (see also 101–5 and n.).

8, 9 **father** The Queen means the present King, Hamlet's stepfather; Hamlet refers to the previous King, his real father.

10 **idle** possibly just 'foolish' or 'frivolous' (as at 3.2.87), but the word at this time could have a stronger sense of 'void of meaning or sense' (*OED a.* 2b).

11 **Go, go** not a standard idiom; Hamlet continues to play on the Queen's words.

13 **forgot me** forgotten that I am your mother; the Queen implies that Hamlet is being disrespectful. Later in Q1 when she describes this encounter she claims, 'then he throwes and tosses me about, / As one forgetting that I was his mother' (11.108–9). A reference by Thomas Dekker in *Lanthorne and Candlelight* (1609, H2^{v}) to 'any mad Hamlet' who might 'smell villanie & rush in by violence' might also attest to the physical action in this scene.

the rood Christ's cross. Some nineteenth-century productions introduced a cross or other religious emblem in this scene; a *closet* was often a place for meditation and prayer.

11 a wicked] an idle *F*

You are the Queen, your husband's brother's wife,
And, would it were not so, you are my mother.

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

HAMLET
Come, come, and sit you down. You shall not budge.
You go not till I set you up a glass
Where you may see the inmost part of you.

QUEEN
What wilt thou do? Thou wilt not murder me –
Help, ho!

POLONIUS [*behind the arras*]
What ho! Help!

HAMLET
How now! A rat! Dead for a ducat, dead!
[*Kills Polonius.*]

POLONIUS
O, I am slain!

16 'If you won't respect me I'll have to confront you with others who can speak more forcefully.' Presumably she means the King.

17 **budge** move. The whole line indicates that Hamlet is forcing the Queen to sit down and prepare to listen to him. In Q1 she is explicit in her subsequent account of his behaviour (see 13n.) – but theatrical tradition has not needed the authority of this text to inject violence, often erotically charged, into this scene.

18 **glass** mirror

19 ***inmost** Q2's 'most' makes poor sense and metre and can be accounted for as a minim misreading.

22 **rat** Hibbard cites two relevant proverbs: 'The rat betrayed herself with her own noise' (Dent, R30.1) and 'I smell a rat' (Tilley, R31). 'Rat' could also be used as an insult, cf. Coriolanus' contemptuous 'Rome and her rats are at the point of battle' (*Cor* 1.1.161). It must literally have been the case that rats hid behind curtains and in the spaces between walls in Elizabethan houses.

Dead for a ducat 'I'll bet a ducat that he is (or will be) dead.' Jenkins, however, says, 'Not a bet that he *is* dead but the price for making him dead. Cf. for two pins' (Ard^2).

22 SD ***Later in all three texts the Queen gives the King an account of what happens here (4.1.7–12), though as she promises to conceal that Hamlet is only *mad in craft* (186) she may exaggerate his frenzy.

15 And] But *F* it] you *F* 19 inmost] *F*; most *Q2* 21 Help, ho!] (Helpe how.), *Q1*; Helpe, helpe, hoa. *F* SD] *Rowe* What ho! Help!] (What how helpe.); What hoa, helpe, helpe, helpe. *F* 22 SD] *F, after* slaine. *23; not in Q21*

QUEEN O me, what hast thou done?

HAMLET
Nay, I know not. Is it the King?

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

HAMLET
A bloody deed – almost as bad, good mother,
As kill a king and marry with his brother.

QUEEN
As kill a king?

HAMLET Ay, lady, it was my word.
[*Uncovers the body of Polonius.*]
– Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell:
I took thee for thy better. Take thy fortune;
Thou find'st to be too busy is some danger.
– Leave wringing of your hands. Peace, sit you down
And let me wring your heart. For so I shall
If it be made of penetrable stuff,
~~If damned custom have not brazed it so~~
~~That it be proof and bulwark against sense.~~

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

28 'It is extraordinary that neither of them takes up this all-important matter again' (Edwards). In all three texts the Queen seems shocked by the accusation; the Ghost has not specified complicity on her part in 1.5, and her relative calmness during *The Murder of Gonzago* has been taken as evidence that she is innocent of murder, which she specifically denies at this point in Q1: 'I sweare by heauen / I neuer knew of this most horride murder' (11.85–6).
As kill as to kill
30 **thy better** i.e. the King
Take thy fortune accept your fate
31 **busy** overactive, interfering; proverbial: 'To be too busy is dangerous' (Dent, B759.1)
34 'if it has still retained any sensitivity to emotion'
35 **damned custom** damnèd; accursed habit
brazed it covered it as with brass (or hardened like brass?)
36 **proof and bulwark** armoured and fortified (another example of hendiadys)
sense natural or proper feeling (i.e. guilt)
37 **wag thy tongue** i.e. scold

28 it was] 'twas *F* SD] *this edn* 30 better] Betters *F* 35 brazed] (brasd), *F*; brass'd *Globe* 36 be] is *F*

In noise so rude against me?

HAMLET Such an act
That blurs the grace and blush of modesty,
Calls virtue hypocrite, takes off the rose
From the fair forehead of an innocent love
And sets a blister there, makes marriage vows
As false as dicers' oaths ~~– O, such a deed –~~
~~As from the body of contraction plucks~~
~~The very soul, and sweet religion makes~~
~~A rhapsody of words. Heaven's face does glow~~
~~O'er this solidity and compound mass~~
~~With heated visage as against the doom, –~~

38 **Such an act** In his language from here to 99 the *act* Hamlet dwells on is the Queen's remarriage, not the murder.
39 **blurs** disfigures
grace . . . modesty innocent (blushing) grace of a modest woman (*grace and blush* is another example of hendiadys)
40 **Calls virtue hypocrite** i.e. makes any claim to virtue subject to accusations of hypocrisy
40–2 **takes . . . there** As at 3.3.7, the brows or forehead reveal the inner self; the *rose* represents idealized love, while the *blister* refers to the practice of branding prostitutes, which as Edwards points out did not literally happen in Elizabethan England, though it had been threatened by Henry VIII in 1531 (see also Henning, who notes that editors after Edwards continue to assert that it did happen). Laertes evokes the idea again at 4.5.117–20. This passage used to attract such fanciful explanations that Furness felt obliged to remark, 'It is only by keeping steadfastly in mind the many benefits which we have received at the hands of the early commentators that we can listen with any patience to their dispute about the meaning of this phrase' (see Var for examples).
40 **off** Q2's 'of' was a common spelling for *off*.
43 **dicers' oaths** the (rash) promises of gamblers
44 **body of contraction** substance of a (marriage) contract
45–6 **sweet . . . words** turns sweet religion into a mere confusion or frenzy of words. This is Shakespeare's only use of the word *rhapsody*, which carried a more negative meaning than it does today.
46–9 **Heaven's . . . act** In Q2's version, the *visage* of heaven (i.e. the sky) glows red-hot over the earth as if it were the Day of Judgement and is *thought-sick* at the Queen's behaviour.
47 **O'er** F's 'Yea' for *O'er* makes 'this solidity and compound mass' (i.e. the world) the subject of *Is thought-sick* rather than *Heaven's face* as in Q2.
48 **heated** F's 'tristfull' means sorrowful; despite his commitment to F as Shakespeare's revision of Q2, MacDonald comments: 'I cannot help thinking the Q[2] reading of this passage the more intelligible, as well as much the more powerful.' Edwards

40 off] *(of), F* 42 sets] makes *F* 46 rhapsody] *(rapsedy), F (rapsidie)* does] doth *F* 47 O'er] *(Ore), F;* Yea *F;* And *Cam*[1] 48 heated] tristfull *F* doom,] *F;* doome *Q2*

~~Is thought-sick at the act.~~

QUEEN Ay me, what act?

~~That roars so loud and thunders in the index?~~

HAMLET

Look here upon this picture, and on this,
The counterfeit presentment of two brothers:
See what a grace was seated on this brow,

assumes the Q2 compositor could not read or understand 'tristfull' and supplied *heated* from *glow*. Hibbard assumes that the F reading is an authorial revision; Jenkins retains *O'er* but prints 'tristful' on the grounds that 'so rare and eloquent a word seems beyond an improver' (LN). Against this, Shakespeare had used the word in Falstaff's comically inflated command when he is playing the king in *1H4*: 'convey my tristful Queen' (2.4.389) – if Dering's emendation of 'trustfull' to 'tristful' is correct. See the oddly similar textual difference at 2.2.489, where Q2 has 'visage wand' and F has 'visage warm'd'.

as . . . doom as if it were doomsday

49 **thought-sick** sick at the thought (or perhaps 'sick in thought')

50 Q2 gives this line to Hamlet as the first line of his speech, as if he is continuing from *the act* in 49, with the Queen's question as an interruption; most editors follow F and make it part of her question: *index* certainly seems to make more sense from her than from him.

index i.e. prologue. In Elizabethan parlance the *index* was the table of contents placed at the front of a book.

51 **this . . . this** It is clear from 52 that Hamlet is comparing a picture of his father with one of the present King; onstage, the pictures can be large formal portraits, miniatures, coins or even photographs, depending on the overall concept of the production. Some commentators have argued that the audience needs to see the pictures to judge for themselves, but this may not be necessary, given that they have seen both the Ghost and the King in person. In *Fratricide Punished* Hamlet says, 'But look, there in that gallery hangs the counterfeit resemblance of your first husband, and there hangs the counterfeit of your present one' (3.5; Bullough, 7.145), perhaps implying that he gestures towards unseen pictures offstage. Jenkins (LN) argues plausibly with reference to the occurrence of portraits in other plays (e.g. *TNK* 4.2) that relatively small portable versions would have been used at the Globe, though the illustration in Rowe's 1709 edition showing large pictures may reflect later stage practice (and see 56n.). John Philip Kemble is credited with (re)introducing miniatures to the London stage in 1783, though his grandfather John Ward seems to have used them in the provinces (see Thompson, 'Ward'). James Henry Hackett describes a striking effect in a production in 1840 in which the Ghost seemed to step out of a full-size portrait on to the stage (Hackett, 79–80).

52 **counterfeit presentment** artificial representation; *counterfeit* did not necessarily carry a negative connotation.

49 Is] *F;* 'Tis *Pope* 49–50 Ay . . . index?] *prose F* 49 Ay] *F;* Ah *Malone* act] *F* (act,); act? *Q2* 50 That] *F* (that); *Ham.* That *Q2* loud] *F* (lowd); low'd *Q2* 51 SP] *F; not in Q2* 53 this] his *Q3, F*

Hyperion's curls, the front of Jove himself,
An eye like Mars to threaten and command,
~~A station like the herald Mercury~~
~~New-lighted on a heaven-kissing hill;~~
A combination and a form indeed
Where every god did seem to set his seal
To give the world assurance of a man;
This was your husband. Look you now what follows:
Here is your husband like a mildewed ear
Blasting his wholesome brother. Have you eyes?
Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed

54 **Hyperion's curls** Presumably the sun-god would have golden tresses. For a preview of this idealized portrait, see 1.2.140, where Hamlet saw his father in relation to the present King as 'Hyperion to a satyr'. He now elaborates by attributing to his father all the best features and qualities of the classical gods. The list of attributes recalls Ophelia's enumeration of Hamlet's own 'eye, tongue, sword' at 3.1.150.
front of Jove forehead of Jove, the king of the gods

55 **eye like Mars** The war-god would have a dominating glare.

56 **station . . . Mercury** The messenger-god would have an athletic, upright *station* or stance. This reference may indicate that Hamlet is describing (or imagining) a full-length portrait, not a head or bust as would have been more usual for a miniature. Given his use of Marlowe and Nashe's *Dido* elsewhere in *Hamlet*, Shakespeare may be recalling the appearance of 'Jove's winged messenger' to Aeneas at 5.1.25: like the Ghost later in 3.4, the purpose of the visitation is to remind the hero of his mission (and Hermes/Mercury arrives accompanied by Aeneas' son Ascanius).

57 **New-lighted** newly alighted or landed; Mercury was regularly depicted with wings.
***heaven-kissing** high; Q2's reading seems erroneous.

58–60 See Antony's praise of the dead Brutus: 'the elements / So mix'd in him that Nature might stand up / And say to all the world, "This was a man!"' (*JC* 5.5.73–5).

58 **combination** i.e. of physical features

59 **set his seal** place his mark of approval or ownership (see also 3.2.61n. and 3.2.389n.)

63 **like . . . Blasting** blighting his ear as if with mildew. The notion of an *ear* being attacked by blight also of course recalls the literal manner of the murder, though in this case the reference is presumably to an ear of corn, as in the biblical account of Pharaoh's dream (Genesis, 41.5–7), a story Shakespeare also refers to at *1H4* 2.4.467, *KL* 5.3.24 and *Cor* 2.1.113–14 (see Shaheen).

63, 65 **Have you eyes?** In Q1, Hamlet follows this with the more explicit charge 'and can you look on him / That slew my father' (11.40–1).

64–5 **mountain . . . moor** The intended contrast must be between 'high' and 'low', since there would not be much difference in terms of quality of pasture.

55 and] or *F* 57 heaven-kissing] *F, Q5;* heaue, a kissing *Q2* 58 and a] and *Q4* 62 ear] *F;* deare *F2;* Deer *F3* 63 brother] breath *F*

And batten on this moor? Ha, have you eyes?
You cannot call it love, for at your age
The heyday in the blood is tame, it's humble
And waits upon the judgement, and what judgement
Would step from this to this? ~~Sense, sure, you have –~~
~~Else could you not have motion. But sure, that sense~~
~~Is apoplexed, for madness would not err~~
~~Nor sense to ecstasy was ne'er so thralled~~
~~But it reserved some quantity of choice~~
~~To serve in such a difference. What devil was't~~
~~That thus hath cozened you at hoodman-blind?~~

65 **batten** on feed on. Hibbard argues that the *moor* provides 'an abundance of rank grass', making it preferable to the *fair mountain*, but surely Hamlet's point is that his mother's choice is an irrational one.
moor The suggestion of a pun on 'blackamoor' is supported by Hamlet's claim that the present King has 'a face like Vulcan' in Q1 at this point (11.34), Vulcan being the blacksmith of the gods whose face was darkened by the smoke of his occupation.
66 **at your age** Hamlet's assumption, in all three texts, that his mother is too old to experience sexual desire has been regularly endorsed by (male) editors, who also feel that she must be too old to excite it. Within the play, she is the same age as 'Gonzago's wife', whose remarriage is viewed with equanimity by her failing husband at 3.2.167–71.
67 **heyday . . . blood** sexual excitement. The origin of the word *heyday* is obscure: *OED* says 'the second element does not seem to have been the word *day*', though 'high-day' (= noon) is how it is often understood.
68 **waits upon** is subservient to
69–74 **Sense . . . difference** This passage and that at 76–9 are not in F; Edwards argues that Shakespeare was dissatisfied with them and intended to delete them; Hibbard goes further and claims, 'They smack of self-indulgence on the part of the hero and, possibly, of the author.' Earlier editors and commentators, such as Theobald, were more open-minded; he conjectures of the first passage, 'Perhaps it was not written when he first finish'd the Play; or it was left out in the shortning the Play for the Representation' (*Restored*, 103).
69–70 **Sense . . . motion** i.e. you must have some basic *sense* or apprehension or you would not be living and moving.
71 **apoplexed** struck with apoplexy, paralysed
for . . . err i.e. even a mad person would not make this mistake
72 **Nor . . . thralled** nor was sensibility ever so enslaved to transcendent fantasy
73 'without holding back some limited amount of the power to choose'
74 **To . . . difference** to enable it to differentiate (in such a case)
75 **cozened** deceived
at hoodman-blind in a game of blind man's buff (so called because one of the players was blindfolded by wearing a hood over the head); Hamlet implies that his mother must have been blindfolded when she chose her second husband.

65 moor] *(*Moore*)* *F* 69 step] *F;* stoop *Collier*^{2} 69–74 Sense . . . difference] *om. F* 75 hoodman-blind] *(*hodman blind*), F*

~~Eyes without feeling, feeling without sight,~~
~~Ears without hands or eyes, smelling sans all,~~
~~Or but a sickly part of one true sense~~
~~Could not so mope:~~ O shame, where is thy blush?
~~Rebellious hell,~~
~~If thou canst mutine in a matron's bones,~~
~~To flaming youth let virtue be as wax~~
~~And melt in her own fire, proclaim no shame~~
~~When the compulsive ardour gives the charge,~~
~~Since frost itself as actively doth burn~~
~~And reason pardons will.~~

QUEEN O Hamlet, speak no more.
Thou turn'st my very eyes into my soul
And there I see such black and grieved spots
As will leave there their tinct.

76–9 **Eyes . . . mope** Hamlet's catalogue of the senses echoes his earlier catalogue of his father's attributes (53–61). See 69–74n.
77 **sans** without
79 **so mope** behave in such an aimless way
80 **Rebellious hell** Hamlet sees sensuality as a kind of rebellion (as Laertes did at 1.3.43) and as a *hell* (as in *Son* 129).
81 **canst mutine** can mutiny, rebel
matron's bones As at 66–8, Hamlet stresses the Queen's maturity.
82–3 **To . . . fire** i.e. chastity (*virtue*) will be like wax for young people (who are naturally more sensual) and will melt in its own heat. Hamlet's language and tone here again recall the advice of Laertes and Polonius to Ophelia in 1.3.
83 **proclaim no shame** *Proclaim* and 'proclamation' regularly refer to quasi-formal public announcements in Shakespeare, as when Cinna in *JC* urges the other conspirators to 'Run hence, proclaim, cry it [the death of Caesar] about the streets' (3.1.79), or when Isabella threatens, 'I will proclaim thee, Angelo' (*MM* 2.4.150).
84 **compulsive . . . charge** 'compelling lust gives the signal for attack'
85 **frost** i.e. age. Dent cites 'To find fire in frost' as proverbial (F283.1).
actively vigorously
86 **And . . . will** and reason forgives (or makes excuses for) passion. F's 'As Reason panders Will' makes the construction a comparative one. 'Panders' is a stronger word meaning 'prostitutes' or 'serves the gratification of'; Jenkins, Edwards and Hibbard all conflate Q2's *And* with F's 'panders'.
87 **my . . . soul** F's reading is adopted by Jenkins, perhaps because *my very eyes* (= my own eyes) seems tautologous.
88 **grieved** grievèd; grievous. F's 'grained' (ingrained) is adopted by Jenkins, even though it repeats the idea that the stain is indelible. *TxC* specifically rejects *grieved* as a minim misreading of 'greined'.
89 **As . . . tinct** as will leave their stain there. F's reading (see t.n.) repeats the

76–9 Eyes . . . mope] *om. F* 79–80 O . . . hell] *one line F* 81 mutine] mutiny *Rowe* 86 And] As *F* pardons] panders *F* 87 my very] mine *F* soul] very soule *F* 88 grieved] grained *F* 89 leave there] not leaue *F*

HAMLET Nay, but to live
In the rank sweat of an enseamed bed
Stewed in corruption, honeying and making love
Over the nasty sty –
QUEEN O speak to me no more!
These words like daggers enter in my ears.
No more, sweet Hamlet.
HAMLET A murderer and a villain,
A slave that is not twentieth part the kith
Of your precedent lord, a vice of kings,
A cutpurse of the empire and the rule,
That from a shelf the precious diadem stole
And put it in his pocket, –
QUEEN No more!
HAMLET – a king of shreds and patches –

notion in 'grained' that the stain is indelible. Jenkins points out, 'The meaning is basically the same, owing to the ambiguity of *leave*, which means either cease, give up (F) or cause to remain behind (Q2)'.

90 **rank** offensive, excessive; see 146, 150 and other uses of *rank* and *ranker* at 1.2.136, 2.1.20, 3.2.250, 3.3.36, 4.4.21.
enseamed enseamèd. Editors gloss 'saturated with grease or animal fat' (Dover Wilson suggests that Shakespeare drew unwittingly on early memories of hog's lard used in his father's wool-dyeing trade); 'stained with semen' seems another possibility (see Rubinstein, Supplement, 345). (Olivier's Hamlet in the 1948 film replaced *enseamed* with 'lascivious'.)

91 **Stewed** smothered, steeped; brothels were referred to as 'the stews'.
honeying using love-talk, calling each other *honey*

92 **sty** pigsty. In this part of the story in Saxo Grammaticus, Amleth chops up the body of the eavesdropper and feeds it to the pigs (Bullough, 7.65).

93 Hamlet has succeeded in his intention to *speak daggers* (3.2.386).

95 **not . . . kith** If *kith* is taken as a synonym of 'kin', this must mean something like 'not a twentieth part kin to him', i.e. completely unlike him. Most editors adopt F's 'tythe' for *kith*, which yields the meaning 'not a twentieth part of a tenth part', and is supported by the extreme ease of *k/t* confusion in secretary hand.

96 **vice of kings** supreme example of a vicious king. There may also be a reference to the traditional character of the Vice in the morality plays.

97 **the rule** the kingdom

98 **diadem** crown

99 **And . . . patches** Hamlet apparently continues his line, ignoring or speaking over the Queen's extra-metrical interruption.
shreds and patches i.e. ragged patchwork (as contrasted with the paragon of *your precedent lord*). Stallybrass ('Clothes', 315) points out that this line

90 enseamed] (inseemed), *F*; incestuous *Q3* 93 my] mine *F* 95 kith] tythe *F* 99] *this edn (RP)*; *Q2F line* pocket. / more. / patches. /

Enter GHOST.

Save me and hover o'er me with your wings, 100
You heavenly guards! What would your gracious
figure?

QUEEN

Alas, he's mad!

HAMLET

Do you not come your tardy son to chide

appears in Q2 and F *after* the entry SD for the Ghost and might apply to his apparently diminished status (see next note) as well as to his brother, though this hardly fits Hamlet's *gracious figure* (101).

99.1 Q1's SD is often quoted and sometimes adopted by editors of Q2/F reasoning that it indicates what originally happened onstage. Nightgowns are frequently specified in plays of the period; Dessen and Thomson note 40 examples under 'nightgown'. Perhaps the appearance of Caesar in his nightgown, accompanied by 'Thunder & Lightning' (*JC* 2.2), and later as a ghost in a night-time scene in Brutus' tent when Brutus has called for his 'gown' (4.3), is a relevant parallel, even an influence on Q1. If we assume Q1 is correct, the contrast here with the fully armed Ghost of Act 1 is striking: Hibbard claims it 'modifies our previous impression of him greatly by bringing out his humanity'. Greenblatt suggests that the change 'would lightly echo those multiple hauntings in which spirits from Purgatory displayed their progressive purification by a gradual whitening of their robes' (*Purgatory*, 223). A more prosaic reason might be that, if the actor playing the King was doubling the Ghost, a nightgown could be put on quickly over his previous costume and taken off again for his next entry (in Q1 there are 21 lines between the Ghost's exit and the King's entry at the equivalent of the beginning of 4.1 (see Q1 11.82–103 and Appendix 5 on doubling). Phelps (147) claims that Irving in 1874 was the first to stage the Ghost dressed in this way, though this was more than 50 years after the rediscovery of Q1. Some productions precede the Ghost's entry with a clock striking, as in 1.1 and sometimes in 1.4; see also 3.2.378n. and Fig. 7).

100–1 **Save . . . guards** Hamlet appeals to angels for protection.

101–5 **your . . . your . . . your** Hamlet's pronouns (unlike *thee/thou* at 1.4.40–52) may explicitly acknowledge the Ghost as his father (see 8–9n.).

101 **your gracious figure** F's reading seems equally acceptable, and 'you'/'yor' with final superscripts would be easy to confuse in manuscript.

102 This response makes it clear that, unlike Horatio, Marcellus and Barnardo in Act 1, the Queen does not see the Ghost. A comparable scene is *Mac* 3.4, where Macbeth alone sees the Ghost of Banquo, who, however, does not speak. Occasionally in productions it is indicated that the Queen does see the Ghost but still denies his existence (see Dawson, 156). Dessen (*Elizabethan*, 153) argues that the Queen's blindness 'is designed primarily to *italicize* the larger issue of *not*-seeing in this scene and in the tragedy as a whole'.

103–5 'What can this question, asked by

99.1 *Singer; Enter the ghost in his night gowne. Q1; after* more *99 Q2F* 101 your] you *F*

That, lapsed in time and passion, lets go by
Th'important acting of your dread command?
O say!

GHOST Do not forget! This visitation
Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose.
But look, amazement on thy mother sits!
O step between her and her fighting soul.
~~Conceit in weakest bodies strongest works.~~
Speak to her, Hamlet.

HAMLET
How is it with you, lady?

QUEEN Alas, how is't with you,

one who has only a moment before killed the man he thought was his uncle, possibly mean?' (Greenblatt, *Purgatory*, 223). Hamlet's treatment of the two murdered fathers present onstage in this scene could hardly be more different.

103 **tardy** late, i.e. procrastinating

104 **That . . . passion** Commentators agree that Hamlet is accusing himself of having wasted time, but they disagree on whether he is also saying he has allowed his original passion (for revenge) to cool. MacDonald offers six different meanings for this phrase: '1. Who, *lapsed* (fallen, guilty), lets action slip in delay and suffering; 2. Who, *lapsed* in (fallen in, overwhelmed by) delay and suffering, omits etc.; 3. *lapsed* in respect of *time*, and because of *passion* – the meaning of the preposition *in*, common to both, reacted upon by the word it governs; 4. faulty both in delaying, and in yielding to suffering, when action is required; 5. *lapsed* through having too much *time* and great suffering; 6. allowing himself to be swept along by *time* and grief.' In the immediate context it seems equally likely that he is acknowledging that he is indulging in the wrong kind of passion – directed against his mother.

105 **important** urgent, importunate (*OED a.* 3); as at *MA* 2.1.64–5: 'If the Prince be too important, tell him there is measure in everything.'
your dread command Q1's Hamlet is unique in using the word *revenge* at this point.

107 Perhaps the metaphor of sharpening a blunted sword implies that Hamlet has used his weapon inappropriately (by killing Polonius) and thus jeopardized his mission (see *Son* 95, 14: 'The hardest knife ill used doth lose his edge').

109 i.e. intervene in her mental or spiritual crisis

110 **Conceit** imagination. The Ghost seems to assume that the Queen is particularly vulnerable to the *amazement* (108) caused either by Hamlet's previous behaviour or by his present reaction which is incomprehensible to her.

111–12 three short lines in Q2/F: in this case the combination of the second and third into a single line seems to us better than the combination of the first and second.

105–6] *Theobald; Q2F line* say. / visitation /

That you do bend your eye on vacancy
And with th'incorporal air do hold discourse?
~~Forth at your eyes your spirits wildly peep,~~
~~And as the sleeping soldiers in th'alarm~~
~~Your bedded hair like life in excrements~~
~~Start up and stand on end. O gentle son,~~
~~Upon the heat and flame of thy distemper~~
~~Sprinkle cool patience. Whereon do you look?~~

HAMLET

~~On him, on him! Look you how pale he glares,~~
~~His form and cause conjoined preaching to stones~~
~~Would make them capable. [*to Ghost*] Do not look~~
~~upon me~~
~~Lest with this piteous action you convert~~
~~My stern effects. Then what I have to do~~
~~Will want true colour, tears perchance for blood.~~

113 **bend** focus, direct
vacancy empty space
114 **th'incorporal** the immaterial or insubstantial
hold discourse converse
115 a vivid metaphor based on the theory that extreme stress or excitement could cause the *spirits* to come to the surface of the body and become visible
116 **in th'alarm** i.e. when the alert to arm sounds
117 **bedded hair** rooted hairs (regarded as plural). Hibbard glosses *bedded* as 'lying flat'.
like . . . excrements as if an *excrement* or outgrowth of the body like hair could have a life of its own. This phrase was marked for cutting in the quartos from 1676; Theobald noted that Hughes omitted it in his 1723 text 'either because he could make Nothing of it, or thought it alluded to an Image too nauseous', indicating that *excrement* had taken on a narrower meaning by then. Of Shakespeare's six uses of the word, four are in relation to hair (see *CE* 2.2.77, *LLL* 5.1.96, *WT* 4.4.716).
121 **how . . . glares** See 1.2.231–2. Macbeth uses 'glare' to describe the eyes of Banquo's Ghost (*Mac* 3.4.95).
123 **capable** i.e. of some form of response – the following lines imply one of sympathy or pity rather than fear or horror as in Act 1.
123–5 **Do . . . effects** It is not clear why the *piteous* looks of the Ghost should *convert* Hamlet's *effects* (intentions) from being *stern* to something else: Q1 spells out in more detail the idea that pity would interfere with his revenge.
126 **want true colour** The usual gloss is 'lack its proper quality or character', but *colour* might also mean 'justifica-

113 you do] thus you *Q1, F2;* you *F* 114 th'incorporal] their corporall *F;* the corporall *F2;* th'incorporeal *Q6* 117 bedded] *F;* beaded *Q4* hair] *F;* hairs *Rowe* 118 Start . . . stand] *F;* Starts . . . stands *Q3* on] *(an) F, Q6* 123 SD] *Oxf*

QUEEN
To whom do you speak this?
HAMLET
Do you see nothing there?
QUEEN
Nothing at all, yet all that is I see.
HAMLET
Nor did you nothing hear?
QUEEN
No, nothing but ourselves.
HAMLET
Why, look you there! Look how it steals away –
My father in his habit as he lived.
Look where he goes even now out at the portal! *Exit Ghost.*
QUEEN
This is the very coinage of your brain.
This bodiless creation ecstasy

tion' as at *JC* 2.1.28–9: 'since the quarrel / Will bear no colour for the thing he is'. There is also the literal contrast of the colour of tears and blood here.

129 **Nothing** In *Fratricide Punished* Hamlet responds 'Indeed I believe you see nothing, for you are no longer worthy to look upon his form' (3.6; Bullough, 7.145).

132 **it** See 1.1.20 and n.
steals unnecessarily emended to 'stalks' by some nineteenth-century editors (see Var), but the Ghost's departure from this scene (and from the play) is surprisingly informal

133 **in . . . lived** either (1) in the clothes he wore when he was alive or (2) dressed as if he were alive. As with the armour in Act 1, it seems important that the actual clothing is recognizable. Some commentators find this phrase incompatible with Q1's '*night gowne*' (see 99.1n.) but presumably such a garb would have been familiar to members of the family. Jonson has a SD in his masque *The Fortunate Isles, and Their Union* (1626), 'Enter Scogan and Skelton, in like habits as they lived' (Jonson, *Masques*, l.193).

134 **portal** doorway. This explicit reference, found in all three texts, makes it clear that in the original staging the Ghost did not use a trapdoor at this point but left by one of the usual stage doors: see Gurr, who argues that he enters and leaves via the central space, stepping over the body of Polonius ('Globe', 162). This was how the exit was staged at the reconstructed London Globe in 2000, though Hamlet had dragged the body forward out of the way of the Ghost.

135 **very** mere
coinage invention (but here with a sense of 'forgery')

136 **bodiless creation** manufacture of fantasies or hallucinations
ecstasy madness

127 whom] who *F* 134 SD] *Exit. F* 136–7] *Pope; one line Q2F*

Is very cunning in.

HAMLET

My pulse as yours doth temperately keep time
And makes as healthful music. It is not madness
That I have uttered. ~~Bring me to the test~~
~~And I the matter will reword, which madness~~
~~Would gambol from.~~ Mother, for love of grace
Lay not that flattering unction to your soul
That not your trespass but my madness speaks.
It will but skin and film the ulcerous place
Whiles rank corruption mining all within
Infects unseen. Confess yourself to heaven,
Repent what's past, avoid what is to come,
And do not spread the compost on the weeds
To make them ranker. ~~Forgive me this my virtue,~~

137 **cunning** clever, skilful

138 i.e. my pulse keeps as moderate a rate as yours. In F, Hamlet begins his next speech by repeating 'Extasie?', printed as a separate line by Hibbard. Jenkins omits it; Edwards prints it as if Hamlet is completing the Queen's line.

141 ***And . . . matter** F's 'I' seems necessary for both sense and metre.
reword repeat (as opposed to 'put into different words'): Hamlet offers to prove his sanity by being able to repeat something accurately.

142 **gambol from** shy away from, i.e. be incapable of performing. See Falstaff's slander on Poins: 'such other gambol faculties 'a has that show a weak mind' (*2H4* 2.4.250–1).

143 **unction** soothing or healing ointment. This and Laertes' reference to the poisonous *unction* he bought *of a mountebank* at 4.7.139, are Shakespeare's only uses of this word whose primary meanings, according to *OED*, relate to oil used for anointing in religious rituals, especially 'extreme unction', the Christian sacrament for the dying.

145 **skin and film** i.e. cover thinly like a skin or film

146 **mining** burrowing, undermining. This idea of an infection working beneath the skin comes up again in the King's description of the hidden danger represented by Hamlet at 4.1.19–23. (For a fuller discussion of this and other similar metaphors in *Hamlet*, see Thompson & Thompson, 104–9.)

148 **what . . . come** i.e. future sin or opportunities for sin (Hamlet elaborates on this at 157–68)

150 **ranker** more luxuriant or vigorous (here, offensively so); see 90 and 146, and other uses of *rank* at 1.2.136, 2.1.20, 3.2.250, 3.3.36 and 4.4.21.
Forgive . . . virtue 'It is perhaps a little disgusting that in the nearest thing to an apology to Gertrude for his abusive behaviour which Hamlet achieves, he stresses even further his self-righteousness' (Edwards). Staunton,

138 My] Extasie? / My *F* 141 I] *F; not in Q21* 143 that] a *F* 146 Whiles] Whil'st *F* mining] *F;* running *F3* 149 on] or *F;* o'er *Caldecott* 150 ranker] ranke *F*

~~For in the fatness of these pursy times~~
~~Virtue itself of Vice must pardon beg~~
~~Yea, curb and woo for leave to do him good~~

QUEEN

O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain.

HAMLET

O throw away the worser part of it
And live the purer with the other half.
Goodnight, but go not to my uncle's bed;
Assume a virtue if you have it not.
~~That monster Custom, who all sense doth eat~~

however, argues that the line is 'an imploration to his own virtue' and is not addressed to the Queen.

151 **pursy** fat, like a swollen purse

153 **curb** bow

154 Belleforest gives the Queen's repentant thoughts at some length at this point (Bullough, 7.94–5). Many performers of the Queen are weeping by now, either from remorse or from distress at Hamlet's behaviour. Dent cites 'To cleave a heart in twain' as proverbial (H329.1).

156 ***live** This makes better sense than Q2's 'leaue', which could be repeated from 153 (though Andrews retains, glossing 'depart'); see *AC* 5.1.59 for a similar traditional emendation: 'Caesar cannot leave/live to be ungentle' (actually emended to 'lean' in Ard^3).

158 Jenkins says *assume* means 'put on the garb of, adopt' and not 'simulate'; even so the Queen may find it rather surprising advice coming from the man who had earlier told her 'I know not "seems"' (1.2.76). His choice of a clothing metaphor also seems to reverse his earlier rejection of 'the trappings and the suits of woe' (1.2.86).

159–63 **That . . . on** This passage and the one at 165–8 are not in F. Again Edwards argues that Shakespeare marked them for deletion (see 69–74n.), and Hibbard comments dismissively on 159–63: 'The general sense of this passage is conveniently summed up in two commonplace phrases: "Custom makes sin no sin" (Tilley, C934) and "Custom is overcome with custom" (Dent, C932.1). But it becomes contorted through Shakespeare's inability to resist the temptation to quibble held out by the word *habit*.' Earlier editors agree: Caldecott remarks, 'Though this passage is much in our author's manner, the folios do not seem to have omitted any thing that could better have been spared', and MacDonald says, 'This omitted passage is obscure with the special Shakespearean obscurity that comes of over-condensation. He omitted it, I think, because of its obscurity'.

159 **monster Custom** i.e. Custom who is a monster

159–60 **who . . . devil** who destroys all sensitivity to wicked or devilish practices. Theobald and many editors emend *devil* to 'evil'; Johnson and others defend *devil* because of the antithesis with *angel*. Hibbard (who prints these lines in an appendix) emends it to 'vile' on the assumption that the

151 these] this *F* 153 woo] woe *F* him] *F*; it *Pope* 154] *F lines Hamlet*, / twaine. / 156 live] *F*; leaue *Q2* 157 my] mine *F* 158 Assume] (Assune), *F* 159–63 That . . . on] *om. F*

~~Of habits devil, is angel yet in this,~~
~~That to the use of actions fair and good~~
~~He likewise gives a frock or livery~~
~~That aptly is put on~~. Refrain tonight
And that shall lend a kind of easiness
To the next abstinence, the next more easy.
~~For use almost can change the stamp of nature,~~
~~And either shame the devil or throw him out~~
~~With wondrous potency~~. Once more goodnight,
And when you are desirous to be blessed
I'll blessing beg of you. For this same lord
I do repent, but heaven hath pleased it so

word in the manuscript. was 'vilde'; Oxf emends to 'devilish'. (See Jenkins, LN.)

161 **use** custom, habit

162 **likewise** The assumption seems to be that, if the Queen *put[s] on* the clothing or appearance of virtue, custom will make it habitual (i.e. real), just as custom has made her insensitive to sin. Hamlet also makes the link between *habit* and *livery* in his *vicious mole* speech about Danish drunkenness (1.4.23–38).
frock or livery coat or uniform

163 **aptly** readily

165–8 **²the next . . . potency** See 159–63n.

166 **use . . . nature** 'Use [habit or custom] is another nature' was proverbial (Dent C932). Again the language recalls the *vicious mole* passage where Hamlet refers to 'the stamp of one defect / (Being Nature's livery . . .)' (1.4.31–2).

167 ***shame** It is usually assumed that there is a word missing in Q2 and that it should provide some alternative to *throw him out*. We adopt Hudson's emendation because the proverb 'tell truth and shame the devil' (Dent, T566) is used three times by Shakespeare in *1H4* (3.1.54, 55 and 58); see t.n. for other editorial emendations. Oxf emends to 'either in the devil', explaining that this means 'take in'.

168 **With wondrous potency** with remarkable (presumably because less expected) power

169–70 **And . . . you** See *KL* 5.3.10–11: 'When thou dost ask me blessing I'll kneel down / And ask of thee forgiveness.' In both instances Shakespeare draws on the assumption that it would be normal or proper for a child to kneel to ask blessing of a parent rather than vice versa. See also *Cor* 5.3.187, where the sight of Volumnia kneeling to her son is described as 'unnatural'.

171 **heaven . . . so** i.e. such is heaven's pleasure

160 Of habits devil] Of habit's Devil *Rowe;* Of habits evil *Theobald (Thirlby);* Oft habit's devil *Staunton;* Of habit's evil *White;* Of habits devilish *Oxf;* Of habits vile *Oxf¹ (Theobald)* 163 on.] *Q5 (on:);* on *Q2* Refrain tonight] *F;* to refraine night *Q2* 165–8 ²the . . . potency] *om. F* 167 either shame] *Hudson;* either *Q2;* Maister *Q3;* master ev'n *Pope;* either master *Jennens;* either curb *Malone;* entertain *Cam (Monro);* either house *Chambers² (Bailey);* either lodge *Ard² (Clarendon);* either . . . *Cam²;* either in *Oxf*

To punish me with this, and this with me,
That I must be their scourge and minister.
I will bestow him and will answer well
The death I gave him. So again goodnight.
I must be cruel only to be kind.
This bad begins and worse remains behind.
One word more, good lady!

QUEEN What shall I do?

HAMLET

Not this, by no means, that I bid you do –
Let the bloat King tempt you again to bed,

172 Hamlet presumably means that as he has punished Polonius (by killing him), so he will be punished for the killing (either by the King or by having the murder on his conscience).

173 **their . . . minister** Hamlet sees himself as the chastising agent of the gods (*their* refers back to *heaven* in 171); see Richmond's prayer, 'Make us Thy ministers of chastisement' (*R3* 5.3.114). *Scourge and minister* is another hendiadys (= scourging minister); this idea became important in a political sense in many productions of *Hamlet* in the former Soviet Union and eastern Europe, with Hamlet seen as the self-sacrificing hero who could cleanse the state of corruption and oppression (see Stříbrný, especially 115–16 on productions by Josef Svoboda before and after the 'Prague Spring' of 1968).

174 **bestow** remove, dispose of. In Q1 Hamlet says more specifically, 'Come sir, I'll provide for you a grave' (as the first half of a couplet completed with 213).

answer well make an appropriate response, i.e. explain the death or perhaps, as Jenkins suggests, atone for it. This promise is hardly fulfilled by Hamlet's behaviour in 4.2 and 4.3, or by his apology to Laertes in 5.2.

176–7 As Edwards notes, this is a reflective couplet, almost an aside, like his couplet at the end of Act 1 (1.5.186–7).

177 **This** 'the killing of Polonius, as at [172]. It is hard to see why most eds continue to prefer F's vague and feeble *Thus*' (Jenkins).

worse remains behind i.e. worse crimes or calamities will follow. Dent cites 'An ill (bad) beginning has an ill (bad) ending' as proverbial (B261).

178 **One . . . lady** This line is not in F and Jenkins suggests the omission may be deliberate as 'it seems intrusive after Hamlet's couplet'. The couplet certainly sounds like an exit-line, but Hamlet has previously said *good night* three times (157, 168, 175) and then returned to his theme, very much as he repeatedly returned to Ophelia after bidding her farewell in 3.1. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century stage tradition ended this scene at 177: see Hapgood and Appendix 4.

179 **Not . . . means** Hamlet's double negative emphasizes the irony or sarcasm of his advice. In performance it is possible to play this speech as 'mad': Hamlet reverts to his *antic disposition*, partly in order to test his mother's sincerity.

180 **bloat** bloated or fat

177 This] Thus *F* 178 One . . . lady!] *om. F* 180 bloat] *Warburton;* blowt *Q2*; blunt *F;* fond *Pope*

Pinch wanton on your cheek, call you his mouse
And let him for a pair of reechy kisses,
Or paddling in your neck with his damned fingers,
Make you to ravel all this matter out
That I essentially am not in madness
But mad in craft. ~~'Twere good you let him know,~~
~~For who that's but a queen, fair, sober, wise~~
~~Would from a paddock, from a bat, a gib,~~
~~Such dear concernings hide? Who would do so?~~
~~No, in despite of sense and secrecy~~
~~Unpeg the basket on the house's top,~~
~~Let the birds fly and like the famous ape~~
~~To try conclusions in the basket creep~~
~~And break your own neck down.~~

181 **Pinch wanton** give you sensual pinches or caresses (or pinch in a wanton way?)
call . . . mouse presumably an example of the *honeying* of 91; *mouse* occurs as an endearment in other texts of the period, usually between husband and wife, though Shakespeare's Rosaline uses it to address another woman, Katherine, at *LLL* 5.2.19. See also Lady Capulet's use of 'mouse-hunt' meaning 'woman-chaser' at *RJ* 4.4.11.
182 **reechy** filthy (literally 'reeky', foul-smelling)
184 **ravel . . . out** unravel, reveal
185–6 **That . . . craft** The same question arises in a very different context in *TN* when Feste asks Malvolio, 'But tell me true, are you not mad indeed? or do you but counterfeit?' (4.2.114–15).
185 that I am not really afflicted by madness
186 **in craft** by cunning or pretence
'Twere . . . know (sarcastic)
187–8 **For . . . Would** for would anyone who was just a fair, sober and wise queen
188 **paddock . . . bat . . . gib** 'The toad, bat and tom-cat, all regarded as unclean or venomous, were supposed to be the familiars of witches, and so privy to their secrets' (Hibbard).
gib pronounced with a hard 'g' as in 'give'
189 **Such dear concernings** matters of such crucial concern to it (him)
190–4 'Oddly enough, there is no record of this fable. It more or less explains itself, however. An ape takes a birdcage onto a roof; he opens the door and lets the birds fly out. In order to imitate them, he gets into the basket, jumps out and, instead of flying, falls to the ground. It does not seem a very appropriate way of telling the queen that she will get hurt if she releases news of Hamlet's sanity' (Edwards). Daniell cites this speech as an example of the language of *Hamlet* getting out of control when driven by passion, as compared with the more rational and orderly discourse of *JC* (Daniell, 40).
193 **try conclusions** experiment
194 **down** more likely an intensifier, 'utterly' (Edwards), than 'by falling' (Jenkins, Hibbard). MacDonald speculates, 'it could hardly have been written "neck-bone"'.

184 ravel] *F;* rouell *Q2* 186 mad] made *F*

QUEEN

Be thou assured, if words be made of breath
And breath of life, I have no life to breathe
What thou hast said to me.

~~HAMLET~~

~~I must to England – you know that.~~

~~QUEEN.~~

~~Alack, I had forgot; 'tis so concluded on.~~

~~HAMLET~~

~~There's letters sealed and my two schoolfellows –~~
~~Whom I will trust as I will adders fanged –~~
~~They bear the mandate, they must sweep my way~~
~~And marshal me to knavery. Let it work.~~

195–7 In Q1 Hamlet explicitly asks the Queen to 'assist me in revenge' at this point and she promises to do so: 'I will conceale, consent, and doe my best – / What stratagem soe're thou shalt deuise' (11.95, 99–100).

198 It is not clear how or when Hamlet (or indeed the Queen) learned about this plan first mentioned by the King to Polonius at 3.1.168–9 and announced to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern at 3.3.2–4, but Shakespeare often uses the convention whereby characters can be assumed to share information known to the audience. A somewhat over-literal Trevor Nunn production (London Old Vic 2004) had Hamlet discover the plan from a paper he found in Polonius' pocket.

200–8 **There's . . . meet** not in F. Edwards argues that this passage was cut by Shakespeare as part of a revision of the later part of the play; he claims that 'the determination to kill Rosencrantz and Guildenstern does not accord with 5.2.6–11' (where events are vaguely attributed to *a divinity*), but Hamlet seems to be resolving to outwit them here, not specifically to kill them. Edwards and Hibbard agree that the omission adds to the suspense in F. In the Kozintsev film, this part of the speech is moved to the later point where Hamlet's description of his outwitting of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern (5.2.1–53) is dramatized.

202 **bear the mandate** Hibbard assumes a breach of protocol: 'the orders for what the mission is to do should be in the hands of the most important member of it, Hamlet himself, not of two underlings', but the words might be interpreted more neutrally to mean simply that they have the King's orders to go.

sweep my way prepare the way for me

203 **marshal . . . knavery** conduct me towards some kind of trick or villainy (intended for me). The word *marshal* begins a train of military metaphors (*enginer . . . petard . . . mines*) as Hamlet sees his contest with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in terms of siege warfare.

Let it work i.e. let their plan unfold

199] *one line F; Q2 lines* forgot. / on. / 200–8] *om. F*

~~For 'tis the sport to have the enginer~~
~~Hoist with his own petard, and 't shall go hard~~ 205
~~But I will delve one yard below their mines~~
~~And blow them at the moon. O, 'tis most sweet~~
~~When in one line two crafts directly meet.~~
~~This man shall set me packing;~~
I'll lug the guts into the neighbour room. 210
Mother, goodnight ~~indeed.~~ This councillor
Is now most still, most secret and most grave,
Who was in life a most foolish prating knave.
Come, sir, to draw toward an end with you. 214
Goodnight, mother. *Exit* [*Hamlet tugging in Polonius*].

204 **enginer** maker of 'engines': bombs and other devices. We retain the Q2 spelling to draw attention to the fact that the meaning is slightly different from that of modern 'engineer' and the stress should be on the first syllable (like *pioner* at 1.5.162).

205 **Hoist . . . petard** blown up by his own bomb. Jenkins adopts 'petard' as 'the more regular spelling' than Q2's 'petar', though he notes that *OED* shows Drayton rhyming it with 'far'. He does not comment on the internal rhyme with *hard* created by 'petard'.

205–6 **and't . . . will** and it will be hard luck if I do not

206 **delve** dig. See 5.1.14, where the Gravedigger is addressed as *goodman delver*.
mines tunnels used in attacking a town (the word was later used for the explosives buried in such tunnels). Shakespeare had drawn on Holinshed's description of the use of mines at the siege of Harfleur in *H5* 3.2.55–65.

208 when two pieces of cunning collide with each other (as a countermine meets a mine)

209 **set me packing** oblige me to go at once; start me plotting

210 Richard of Gloucester has a similar line addressed to Henry VI, whom he has just killed: 'I'll throw thy body in another room' (*3H6* 5.6.92).
lug the guts This expression, together with 'draw toward an end' at 214 and F's SD at 215, implies that Hamlet drags Polonius offstage. The lines were traditionally cut as undignified in the context; Barrymore restored them in 1925 – surprisingly as his performance otherwise avoided the less attractive side of Hamlet (see Dawson, 75–6). It must always have been awkward for a lone actor to get a body off, but the unceremonious nature of the proceedings is highlighted here, as it is in Falstaff's removal of the body of Hotspur in *1H4* 5.4. Amleth's treatment of the body is worse in Saxo Grammaticus: see 92n. and pp. 68–9.

211, 215 **goodnight . . . Goodnight** See 178n.

213 **most** not in F, and perhaps mistakenly repeated from 212
prating chattering

214 **draw . . . you** (1) make an end of my business with you; (2) drag you towards your grave

215 SD ***Just** '*Exit*' in Q2, perhaps implying that the Queen remains onstage (see Appendix 4). Jenkins argues that

205 petard] *(petar)* 213 most] *om. F* 215 SD] *F; Exit. Q2; Exit Hamlet with the dead body. Q1*