[4.1] *Enter* KING *with* ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN.

KING

There's matter in these sighs, ~~these profound heaves.~~
~~You must translate;~~ 'tis fit we understand them.
Where is your son?

QUEEN

Bestow this place on us a little while.
[*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*]
Ah, mine own lord, what have I seen tonight! 5

KING

What, Gertrude? How does Hamlet?

QUEEN

Mad as the sea and wind when both contend

F's '*tugging*' is a misprint for 'lugging', the verb Hamlet uses at 210; *in* implies 'into' the inner stage or tiring-house, i.e. offstage.

4.1 Q2's SD (see t.n.) has been taken to justify a new scene (and indeed a new act), although there has been no exit for the Queen from 3.4. The only other textual excuse for this notoriously problematic division is the King's statement at 4.1.34–5 that 'Hamlet in madness hath Polonius slain / And from his mother's closet hath he dragged him', implying a change of location from the *closet* which was the location of 3.4. The corresponding SD in F is merely '*Enter King*', which may justify the continuation of that scene at least until the *Exeunt* of the King and Queen at 4.1.45: *TxC* assumes 'a deliberate change of staging'. See Appendix 4. The three texts: this scene runs to 22 lines in Q1 where it is a continuation of scene 11, and 45 lines in Q2; the equivalent material runs to 40 lines in F where it is a continuation of 3.4 in Ard Q1/F (see 41–4n and 3.4.215 SDn.). Location and timing: in all three texts this scene follows immediately on from 3.4.

0.1–2 Rosencrantz and Guildenstern do not enter until 32 in F. In Q2 they are apparently dismissed by the Queen at 4. They are not given an exit, though they re-enter at 32.

1 **matter** substance, meaning
heaves heavings of the breast, sobs

2 **translate** i.e. put the meaning into words

4 The Queen asks whoever has entered with the King (see 0.1–2n.) to leave, presumably wanting privacy for what she is about to reveal.

5 **mine own lord** F's 'my good Lord' seems less intimate.

6 **What, Gertrude?** perhaps a straight question ('What have you seen, Gertrude?'); perhaps an exclamation of concern ('My poor Gertrude!')

7 **Mad . . . sea** proverbial (Dent, S170).

4.1] *Q6* 0.1–2] *Cam[1] subst.; Eenter King, and Queene, with Rosencraus and Guyldensterne. Q2; Enter the King and Lordes. Q1; Enter King. F* 1–3] *F lines* sighes. / heaues / them. / 1 matter] matters *F* heaves.] *Rowe;* heaues, *Q2;* heaues *F* 4] *om. F* SD] *Q6 subst.* 5 mine own] my good *F* 7 sea] *Q1;* Seas *F*

Which is the mightier. In his lawless fit,
Behind the arras hearing something stir,
Whips out his rapier, cries 'A rat, a rat!'
And in this brainish apprehension kills
The unseen good old man.

KING O heavy deed!
It had been so with us had we been there.
His liberty is full of threats to all,
To you yourself, to us, to everyone.
Alas, how shall this bloody deed be answered?
It will be laid to us whose providence
Should have kept short, restrained and out of haunt
This mad young man. But so much was our love,
~~We would not understand what was most fit,~~
But like ~~the owner of a foul disease,~~
~~To keep it from divulging, let it feed~~

Q2's singular *sea* consorts better with *both* than F's 'Seas' and is supported by Q1's 'Alas my lord, as raging as the sea'. The Queen seems to be obeying Hamlet's request or command at 3.4.179–86. Sometimes in performance she shrinks from the King's touch, but she has to defend him from Laertes in 4.5 so it may be inconsistent for her to express a complete change of heart.

8 **lawless** ungovernable, out of control

9 **something** In Q2 and F the Queen is vague about the source of the noise, implying that Hamlet might have thought he was killing a literal rat; in Q1, despite her stronger commitment to support and protect her son, she says, 'Corambis called', perhaps implying more explicitly that Hamlet knew what he was doing.

10 **Whips . . . rapier** The Queen omits the subject (he = Hamlet); F improves the grammar at the expense of metre.

11 **brainish apprehension** deluded (mis-)understanding

12 **heavy** serious, grievous

13, 15, 17 **us** The King emphasizes the royal plural.

13 The King does not assume that Hamlet actually thought he was killing him, and the Queen does not enlighten him (but see 4.7.4–5).

16 **answered** responded to, or perhaps accounted for

17 **laid to us** blamed on us (me)
providence care, forethought

18 **kept short** i.e. controlled
out of haunt away from society, secluded

20 **would not** chose not to

22 **divulging** being made known (*OED*'s first use). The King's metaphor of a secret disease recalls Hamlet's words to the Queen at 3.4.145–7.
let Thus Q2, making *We* the subject of the verb; F's 'let's' makes *the owner* the subject.

10 Whips . . . rapier] whips me / Out his rapier, and *Q1*; He whips his Rapier out *F* 11 this] his *Q1F* 22 let] let's *F*

~~—Even on the pith of life!~~ Where is he gone?

QUEEN

To draw apart the body he hath killed,
O'er whom – his very madness like some ore
Among a mineral of metals base
Shows itself pure – 'a weeps for what is done.

KING

O Gertrude, come away.
The sun no sooner shall the mountains touch
But we will ship him hence, and this vile deed
We must with all our majesty and skill
Both countenance and excuse. Ho, Guildenstern!

Enter ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN.

Friends both, go join you with some further aid:
Hamlet in madness hath Polonius slain
And from his mother's closet hath he dragged him.
Go seek him out, speak fair and bring the body

23 **pith** essential substance
25–7 **O'er . . . pure** The gist seems to be that even in his madness Hamlet shows evidence of his pure strain of superiority.
25 **ore** deposit or vein of [precious] metal. 'Shakespeare seems to think *ore* to be *Or*, that is, gold. Base metals have *ore* [deposits or veins] no less than precious' (Johnson).
26 **a mineral** a mine or the contents of a mine
27 **'a . . . done** As at 9, the Queen is protecting Hamlet with this inaccurate version of his response.
29–30 **The . . . hence** 'we will make him take ship as soon as dawn breaks'. These words remind us that it is still night and the King's anticipation of the dawn recalls the endings of 1.1 and 1.5.
32 **countenance and excuse** face out and offer justification. '*Majesty* will *countenance* and *skill* will *excuse*' (Edwards).
32.1 See t.n. for placing; the King's *Ho, Guildenstern!* could be a summons if it is spoken before they appear, or a greeting if after.
33 **join . . . aid** get more men to help you (see 4.2.2.1 and n.)
35 **from . . . closet** This implication that the scene is *not* now set in the Queen's closet provides a shred of justification for the traditional scene-break (see headnote and Appendix 4).
36 **speak fair** address him courteously (i.e. placate him)

25–7 whom – . . . pure –] *Ard²*; whom, . . . pure, *Q2*; whom . . . pure. *F* 25 some] *F*; fine *Furness (Walker)* 27 'a] He *F* 32] *F lines* excuse. / *Guildenstern:* / 32.1] Rowe; *opp. 31 Q2; opp.* excuse *F* 35 mother's closet] Mother Clossets *F* dragged] *F*; dreg'd *Q2*

Into the chapel. I pray you haste in this.
[*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*]
Come, Gertrude, we'll call up our wisest friends
And let them know both what we mean to do
And what's untimely done. [ ]
~~Whose whisper o'er the world's diameter,~~
~~As level as the cannon to his blank,~~
~~Transports his poisoned shot, may miss our name~~
~~And hit the woundless air.~~ O come away,
My soul is full of discord and dismay. *Exeunt.*

[4.2] *Enter* HAMLET.

37 SD *Some equivalent of F's SD seems needed here.
38 **wisest friends** It is not clear who, apart from the dead Polonius, are the King's councillors, though some productions do supply silent courtiers for this purpose (see 4.3.0.1).
40 **what's untimely done** what action has been inopportunely or improperly committed (by Hamlet). It is generally assumed that the second half of this line is missing in Q2; see t.n. for editors' attempts to provide an explicit subject for *Whose whisper* (41). In F the King continues *O come away* as at 44, omitting the intervening lines.
41–4 **Whose . . . air** not in F; Edwards and Hibbard agree these lines must have been marked for deletion; Edwards describes them as 'sententious' and relates the 'cut' to others in 1.1 and 1.4. MacDonald, however, defends the lines despite their obscurity, which he says results from 'over-condensation with its tendency to seeming confusion – the only fault I know in the Poet . . . It is much as if, able to think two thoughts at once, he would compel his phrase to utter them at once'.
41 **Whose whisper** Without emendation this must mean 'the rumour of which deed' (i.e. the killing of Polonius).
o'er . . . diameter throughout the world
42 as straight as the cannon to its target
43 **miss our name** avoid hurting our (my) reputation
44 **woundless** invulnerable (*OED*'s first use in this sense, though the word occurs earlier meaning 'unwounded')
4.2 The three texts: this scene runs to 28 lines in Q2 and 32 in F (3.5 in Ard Q1/F) with no major omissions or additions. In Q1 the action is continuous from the closet scene (11) to the appearance of Fortenbrasse (*sic*); Hamlet's encounter with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern at this point is omitted, though the dialogue about the *apple* (or *ape*) and the *sponge* (10–19) has appeared earlier, near the end of scene 9 (3.2). Location and timing: this scene follows immediately after 4.1 and takes place in an adjacent part of the palace.
0.1 F delays the entry of the others (specified as '*Ros. and Guildensterne*') until

37 SD] *Q1 (Exeunt Lordes), F (Exit Gent.), Rowe (Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern)* 39 And] To *F* 40 done. [ ]] *this edn; Q2 lines* doone, /; done. For, haply, Slander *Theobald;* done: so, haply, slander *Capell;* done: so viperous slander *Malone;* done. So envious slander *Ard*^{2} 41–4 Whose . . . air.] *om. F* 4.2] *Pope* 0.1] *F; Enter Hamlet, Rosencraus, and others. Q2*

HAMLET Safely stowed! But soft, what noise? Who calls on Hamlet? O, here they come!

[*Enter* ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN *and others.*]

ROSENCRANTZ What have you done, my lord, with the dead body?

HAMLET Compound it with dust, whereto 'tis kin.

ROSENCRANTZ Tell us where 'tis, that we may take it thence and bear it to the chapel.

HAMLET Do not believe it.

ROSENCRANTZ Believe what?

HAMLET That I can keep your council and not mine own. ~~Besides, to be demanded of a sponge! What replication should be made by the son of a king?~~

~~ROSENCRANTZ Take you me for a sponge, my lord?~~

after *here they come* at 2. It does seem from the first two lines that Hamlet enters alone.

1 **stowed** put away (hidden). Hamlet's action in hiding the body is perhaps intended to make the murder seem like the act of a madman. Actors often behave wildly in this scene and the next (see Hapgood).

1–2 **Who . . . Hamlet** F has '*Gentlemen within. Hamlet,* Lord *Hamlet*' after 'Safely stowed', described by Jenkins as 'evidently a playhouse addition'. Hibbard thinks it is 'deliberately added to bring out the farcical element'.

2.1 ***and others*** specified in Q2's opening direction and implied by the King's 'join you with some further aid' at 4.1.33; some additional personnel are also required by Q2's directions at 4.3.11 and 15.

5 **Compound . . . dust** Combined, mixed it, with dust. Hamlet gives the impression here that he has buried the body rather than just moved it. Q2's 'Compound' and F's 'Compounded' were both acceptable as past forms of the verb *c.* 1600, according to *OED.* Jennens, however, suggests that *Compound* must be an imperative 'if Shakespeare did not design Hamlet to tell an untruth here . . . he . . . bids them compound it with dust.'

whereto 'tis kin 'Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return' (Genesis, 3.19).

10 **That . . . own** 'That I can keep your secret (namely that you are agents for the King) and not my own.' This passage in which he specifically refuses to answer their questions recalls the dialogue about the recorders at 3.2.342–63 (with which it is combined in Q1).

11 **demanded of** interrogated by

replication reply; *OED* 2c cites a 1586 usage in a legal sense of an answer to a charge.

1 stowed!] stowed. / *Gentlemen within. Hamlet,* Lord *Hamlet. / F* But soft,] *om. F* 2.1] *Ard*^{2}; *Enter Ros. and Guildensterne. F* 5 Compound] Compounded *F* 6–7] *Ard*^{1}; *Q2F line* thence, / Chappell. /

HAMLET Ay, sir, that soaks up the King's countenance, his rewards, his authorities. But such officers do the King best service in the end. He keeps them like an ape in the corner of his jaw, first mouthed to be last swallowed. When he needs what you have gleaned, it is but squeezing you and, sponge, you shall be dry again!

ROSENCRANTZ I understand you not, my lord.

HAMLET I am glad of it. A knavish speech sleeps in a foolish ear.

ROSENCRANTZ My lord, you must tell us where the body is, and go with us to the King.

HAMLET The body is with the King, but the King is not with the body. The King is a thing.

14 **countenance** benevolent countenance, i.e. patronage

16 ***like an ape** as an ape does. Most editors (apart from Dover Wilson) regard Q2's 'like an apple' as a misreading; Elze comments that 'it may be surmised that [Q1: 'as an Ape doth nuttes'] exhibits the authentic words of the poet; at all events it presents an excellent and most noteworthy reading', and Jenkins remarks that the Q1 version 'shows how well the actors understood'. Singer, Staunton, Hudson and Rolfe actually adopt the Q1 reading; some editors (Oxf, Hibbard, Folg) adopt Farmer's conjecture 'like an ape an apple'.

18–19 **When . . . again** The implication is that the King will take back the benefits he has given at his convenience.

18 **gleaned** gathered, collected. This word literally refers to the practice of gathering ears of corn left after reaping as at 2.2.16; it is not normally used of the liquids implied by the *sponge* metaphor.

21 **knavish** wicked – either because Hamlet is insulting Rosencrantz or because he is telling a cynical truth about the King

sleeps i.e. is ineffective, does no harm

25–6 **The . . . body** 'This pretty piece of chiasmus [the wordplay of reversing the parallel terms *body* and *King*] sounds impressive but is singularly reluctant to yield up a sense that can be apprehended by an audience in a theatre. Intended as a riddle, it remains a riddle' (Hibbard). Jennens, however, explains, 'The body, being in the palace, might be said to be with the king; though the king, not being in the same room with the body, was not with the body.' Hamlet might also mean that the King is not with the body in the sense that he is not (yet) dead. Other editors suggest an allusion to the theory of the king's two bodies (natural and political), whereby Hamlet casts doubt on the legitimacy of this king, implying that his kingship does not reside in his physical body (see Jenkins, LN).

26–8 **The . . . nothing** The full stop after *thing* (26) in Q2 implies that Hamlet is insulting the King by calling him an object. F has a long dash after *thing* which makes Guildenstern's question an interruption (usually played as

16 like an ape] *F;* like an apple *Q2;* as an Ape doth nuttes *Q1 at 9.215–16;* like an ape an apple *Parrott-Craig (Farmer, see Steevens²)* 26 thing.] thing – *F*

GUILDENSTERN A thing, my lord?
HAMLET Of nothing. Bring me to him. *Exeunt.*

[4.3] *Enter* KING *and two or three.*

KING
I have sent to seek him and to find the body.
How dangerous is it that this man goes loose!
Yet must not we put the strong law on him:
He's loved of the distracted multitude,
Who like not in their judgement but their eyes,
And where 'tis so th'offender's scourge is weighed
But never the offence. To bear all smooth and even

shocked), or perhaps he expected some legal or philosophical definition of kingship which Hamlet deflates. 'A thing of nothing' recalls Psalm 144: 'Man is like a thing of nought.'

28 **Bring . . . him** F's additional line (see t.n.) is rejected by Jenkins as an actor's interpolation but defended by Hibbard as an authorial revision in the direction of the 'savage comic humour' characteristic of this scene and the next. He also suggests it is comparable to the mad Lear's abrupt exit on the line 'Come, an you get it, / You shall get it by running' (*KL* 4.6.198–9). In both Q2 and F, Hamlet seizes the initiative and avoids the indignity of a straightforward arrest (see his similar move at 4.3.51).

4.3 The three texts: this scene runs to 66 lines in Q2 and 64 lines in F (3.6 in Ard Q1/F). In Q1 the action is continuous but this section runs to 41 lines (11.126–66). Location and timing: this scene follows immediately after 4.2 and takes place in an adjacent part of the palace.

0.1 F's SD (see t.n.) turns the King's first speech into a soliloquy, a change deplored by Edwards and Klein but approved by Hibbard. Gurr and Ichikawa (145–6) suggest that 'a large body of support for the oppressed king ought to have been essential' here, but the numbers available may have been curtailed by the need for the appearance of Fortinbras's army in 4.4. It is not clear who Q2's '*two or three*' should be: presumably the *wisest friends* of 4.1.38 and people in whom the King feels he can confide his *desperate* plans for dealing with Hamlet. The King is notably less explicit in this speech than when he is definitely alone at the end of the scene.

3 **put . . . him** punish him to the full extent of the law

4–5 This is the first we have heard of Hamlet's popularity with the people – a factor he does not mention or exploit. The King returns to the theme at 4.7.19 when he explains to Laertes that he has not acted against Hamlet because of 'the great love the general gender bear him'.

4 **distracted multitude** confused or irrational populace

5 **like . . . eyes** approve not by judgement but by appearance

6 **scourge** punishment
weighed taken seriously

7 **bear . . . even** i.e. conduct everything so as to minimize suspicion

28 him.] him, hide Fox, and all after. *F* **4.3**] *Pope* 0.1] *Enter King. F* 7 never] neerer *F*

This sudden sending him away must seem
Deliberate pause; diseases desperate grown
By desperate appliance are relieved,
Or not at all.

Enter ROSENCRANTZ [*and* GUILDENSTERN] *and all the rest.*

How now, what hath befallen?

ROSENCRANTZ
Where the dead body is bestowed, my lord,
We cannot get from him.

KING But where is he?

ROSENCRANTZ
Without, my lord, guarded, to know your pleasure.

KING
Bring him before us.

ROSENCRANTZ Ho! Bring in the lord!

[*Enter* HAMLET *and Attendants.*]

KING Now, Hamlet, where's Polonius?

HAMLET At supper.

KING At supper! Where?

HAMLET Not where he eats but where 'a is eaten. A

9 **Deliberate pause** usually glossed 'i.e. the result of careful deliberation', but possibly 'a deliberate suspension of judgement'. It is now the King (and soon his ally Laertes) who must wait for the right moment to act.
9–10 **diseases . . . relieved** proverbial: 'A desperate disease must have a desperate cure' (Tilley, D357)
10 **appliance** application (of remedies)
11 SD *Q2 omits Guildenstern from this entry, but many editions and productions include him; F has the King summon him at 15, when he enters with Hamlet.
11 **befallen** happened; probably disyllabic, as Q2/F's spelling 'befalne' indicates
14 **Without** outside (the door)
guarded 'Henceforward he is guarded, or at least closely watched, according to the Folio – left much to himself according to the [Second] Quarto' (MacDonald).

11 SD *and* GUILDENSTERN] *Cam' subst. 'and . . . rest] om. F* befallen] *(*befalne*) F* 15 Ho!] *(*How*); Hoa, Guildensterne? F* the] my *F* 15.1] *this edn; They enter. Q2, opp. 15; Enter Hamlet and Guildensterne. F* 19 'a] he *Q1F*

certain convocation of politic worms are e'en at him. Your worm is your only emperor for diet. We fat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for maggots. Your fat king and your lean beggar is but variable service, two dishes but to one table. That's the end.

KING Alas, alas.

HAMLET A man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a king and eat of the fish that hath fed of that worm.

KING What dost thou mean by this?

HAMLET Nothing but to show you how a king may go a progress through the guts of a beggar.

KING Where is Polonius?

HAMLET In heaven. Send thither to see. If your messenger find him not there, seek him i'th' other place

20 **convocation . . . worms** generally taken to be a punning reference to the Diet or council of the German city of Worms made famous in 1521 when Martin Luther appeared to justify his Protestant views; see Greenblatt (*Purgatory*, 241), who argues that this passage parodies the debate about transubstantiation, i.e. the transformation of the body and blood of Jesus into the bread and wine of the Christian communion or mass.
politic shrewd, scheming (perhaps with a reference to Polonius' own nature)

21, 23 **Your . . . your** Used colloquially (see Blake, 3.3.4.5c or Hope 1.3.2b) in a general rather than a personal sense, as in *your philosophy* at 1.5.166 and *your water* at 5.1.161–2.

21 **emperor** Hamlet is playing on the (proverbial?) saying that even an emperor is food for worms.

21, 22 **fat** fatten

24 **variable service** various or interchangeable dishes or courses (of a meal); *OED* service *sb.* V 27b

25–7 **Alas . . . that worm** The fact that a version of these lines appears in Q1 causes Hibbard to assume that F's omission of them was an error rather than a deliberate cut.

25 **Alas, alas** In all three texts the King's pretence of concern for Hamlet's welfare (also at 39–40) is undermined by his expressed determination in soliloquy that he is sending him to his death (see 56–66).

27 **and eat** Q1's 'And a Beggar eate' seems necessary for Hamlet's follow-up at 29–30, though Jenkins dismisses it as 'an inferior reading through anticipating the point'.

28 **thou** Like the Queen in 3.4 (see 3.4.8–9n.), the King addresses Hamlet as *thou* while Hamlet responds using *you*.

30 **progress** the term used for official journeys by royalty

33 **i' th' other place** i.e. in hell. Hamlet's insulting joke recalls his concern for the King's ultimate destination at 3.3.73–95.

20 politic] *Q1; om. F* 22 ourselves] our selfe *F* 24 service, . . . table.] seruices, two dishes to one messe: *Q1;* seruice to dishes, but to one Table *F* 25–7] *om. F* 26–7] Looke you, a man may fish with that worme / That hath eaten of a King, / And a Beggar eate that fish, / Which that worme hath caught. *Q1* 28 SP] *F; King.King Q2*

yourself. But if indeed you find him not within this month you shall nose him as you go up the stairs into the lobby.

KING [*to some Attendants*] Go, seek him there!

HAMLET 'A will stay till you come. [*Exeunt Attendants.*]

KING

Hamlet, this deed for thine especial safety –
Which we do tender, as we dearly grieve
For that which thou hast done – must send thee hence.
Therefore prepare thyself:
The bark is ready and the wind at help,
Th'associates tend and everything is bent
For England.

HAMLET For England?

KING Ay, Hamlet.

HAMLET Good.

KING

So is it if thou knewst our purposes.

HAMLET

I see a cherub that sees them. But come, for England.

35 **shall nose** must smell
36 **lobby** corridor or ante-room
37 SD, 38 SD In Q2's version the '*two or three*' who entered at 0.1, '*the rest*' who entered at 11, and whoever entered with Hamlet at 15 are available to obey the King's command here.
38 In Q1 Hamlet spells out the joke more explicitly: 'do not make too much haste, / I'le warrant you hee'le stay till you come' (11.145–6).
40 **tender** care for
dearly intensely
42 F's phrase (see t.n.) at the beginning of this short line is an 'interpolation' for Jenkins, prompted by the phrase 'fiery expedition' in *R3* 4.3.54, but 'authorial revision' for Hibbard.
43 **bark** vessel
at help favourable
44 **tend** are waiting
bent directed, prepared
45 **For England?** Hamlet is presumably expressing sardonic knowingness rather than surprise (see 3.4.198 and n.).
47 **I . . . them** Cherubim were supposed to be watchful over human affairs; perhaps Hamlet is suggesting that the King cannot hide his purposes from God.

34 if indeed] indeed, if *F* within] *om. F* 37 SD] *Capell* 38 'A will] hee'le *Q1;* He will *F* you] *Q1*; ye *F* SD] *Capell* 39 deed] deed of thine, *F* 42 Therefore] With fierie Quicknesse. Therefore *F* 44 is] at *F* 47 them] him *F*

Farewell, dear mother.

KING Thy loving father, Hamlet.

HAMLET

My mother. Father and mother is man and wife.
Man and wife is one flesh. So – my mother. 50
Come, for England! *Exit.*

KING Follow him at foot.
Tempt him with speed aboard.
Delay it not – I'll have him hence tonight.
Away, for everything is sealed and done
That else leans on th'affair. Pray you make haste. 55
[*Exeunt all but the King.*]
And England, if my love thou hold'st at aught
As my great power thereof may give thee sense,
~~Since yet thy cicatrice looks raw and red~~
~~After the Danish sword, and thy free awe~~
~~Pays homage to us~~ thou mayst not coldly set 60

48 **Farewell, dear mother** Edwin Booth claimed to have been the first Hamlet to address these words directly to the King; the traditional method was apparently to address them offstage to the absent Queen (see Hapgood), though the King's reply makes more sense if they are addressed to him.

50 **Man . . . flesh** Hamlet alludes to biblical formulations: see Genesis, 2.24, Matthew, 19.5–6, Mark, 10.8.

51 **Come, for England** As at the end of 4.2, Hamlet seems to take the initiative, although he has in fact little choice.

at foot at his heels, i.e. closely

52 **Tempt** encourage

54–5 **everything . . . That else** everything . . . else that

55 **leans on** depends on, appertains to

55 SD *Q1's SD is clearly necessary, as the following lines would be surprisingly indiscreet as a public speech (see 0.1n. above).

56–66 Although *England* must mean 'the King of England', it is conceivable that the reiteration of *England* (56, 63) might encourage the actor to speak these lines as a direct address to an English audience.

56 **hold'st at aught** consider to be of any value

57 **thereof . . . sense** may give you an appreciation of the importance of valuing my love

58 **cicatrice** scar, wound. The assumption is that England has recently been 'wounded' by *the Danish sword* and is therefore more likely to carry out the King's command.

59 **free awe** voluntary obedience

60 **coldly set** set aside with indifference, i.e. ignore

49–51] *prose F* 50 So –] *this edn;* so *Q2;* And so *Q1F* 51–2 Follow . . . aboard.] *F; one line Rowe* 55 SD] *Q1 after equivalent of 51* England!

Our sovereign process, which imports at full
By letters congruing to that effect
The present death of Hamlet. Do it, England!
For like the hectic in my blood he rages
And thou must cure me. Till I know 'tis done,
Howe'er my haps my joys will ne'er begin. *Exit.*

[4.4] *Enter* ~~FORTINBRAS [*and*~~ *a* Captain] *with his army over the stage.*

~~FORTINBRAS~~
~~Go, Captain, from me greet the Danish King:~~

61 **sovereign process** royal command, order
imports at full bears as its full purport or message
62 **congruing** conforming, agreeing. F's 'coniuring' (= demanding) is preferred by some editors, perhaps because Hamlet refers to the King's *earnest conjuration* at 5.2.38, but, as Jenkins points out, that phrase may have prompted this one. *H5* has the unique but related form 'Congreeing' (1.2.182) in F, but the word appears in a slightly different context in its Q 1600 version as 'Congrueth'.
63 **present** immediate
64 **hectic** fever
66 **Howe'er my haps** however (good) my fortunes
will ne'er begin Jenkins, who adopts F's 'were ne're begun', comments, 'The rhyme seems to authenticate F's otherwise inferior reading.'
4.4 The three texts: this scene runs to 65 lines in Q2 and 8 lines in F (3.7 in Ard Q1/F), which ends it with the exit of Fortinbras, omitting Hamlet's conversation with the Captain and his last soliloquy and making this the most substantial single difference between Q2 and F. Q1 is similar to F here: scene 12 is only 5 lines long and the Captain does not speak; the effect in both F and Q1 is to maintain the focus on the Court. The whole scene was frequently omitted in performance from 1676 until the end of the nineteenth century (see Hapgood); more recent Hamlets have been reluctant to give up a soliloquy, but Mark Rylance made this sacrifice in the Folio-based production at the London Globe in 2000. Location and timing: in all three texts the location is out of doors, somewhere near enough to the royal palace for Fortinbras to send his Captain there; in Q2 it is also on the route Hamlet is taking to the coast to embark. In Q2 this scene must follow very shortly after 4.3: Hamlet is being hurried off to England. In Q1 and F, where Hamlet does not appear, the timing is more indeterminate. Some editors have argued that Act 4 should begin here (see Appendix 4).
0.2 *over the stage* i.e. marching across the stage (a frequent SD according to Dessen and Thomson: see under 'march'). Q1 introduces a '*Drumme*' (military drummer) here.

62 congruing] coniuring *F* 66 will ne'er begin] were ne're begun *F* 4.4] *Pope* 0.1–2] *Enter Fortenbrasse, Drumme and Souldiers. Q1; Enter Fortinbras with an Armie. F* *and a* Captain] *Globe subst.*

~~Tell him that by his licence Fortinbras~~
~~Craves the conveyance of a promised march~~
~~Over his kingdom. You know the rendezvous.~~
~~If that his majesty would aught with us~~
~~We shall express our duty in his eye,~~
~~And let him know so.~~
~~CAPTAIN~~ ~~I will do't, my lord.~~
~~FORTINBRAS~~
~~Go softly on.~~ ~~[Exeunt all but Captain.]~~

Enter HAMLET, ROSENCRANTZ, [GUILDENSTERN] *and others.*

HAMLET Good sir, whose powers are these?
CAPTAIN
They are of Norway, sir.
HAMLET
How purposed, sir, I pray you?
CAPTAIN
Against some part of Poland.

2–4 **Tell . . . kingdom** Fortinbras is claiming the permission requested and presumably granted at 2.2.76–82 to march his army through Denmark on their (circuitous) route to Poland. Emrys Jones (*Scenic*, 80) compares his brief entry in this scene with the 'quietly emphatic' first appearance of Octavius Caesar in 4.1 of *JC*.

3 **Craves** F's 'Claimes' is defended by Hibbard as more appropriate to the character of Fortinbras and his use of legalistic language here, and this reading is chosen by productions which present a strong, macho Fortinbras. Certainly it is a little strange that he should 'crave' something he has already been promised, but, as a 'chillingly calm' Fortinbras in Branagh's 1996 film, Rufus Sewell spoke the line menacingly, as if 'craves' were merely a diplomatic euphemism (Branagh, 120). **conveyance** granting or fulfilment (of a promise). Some editors, influenced by Q1's 'Craues a free passe and conduct', argue that it means 'escort'.

4 **You . . . rendezvous** 'You know where we have arranged to meet' (perhaps with other forces).

5 **would . . . us** i.e. wants any conference with us (Fortinbras uses the royal plural)

6 **express . . . eye** 'pay our respects in his presence'

7 **let . . . so** let him know this (*let* is a command to the Captain, parallel with *Tell* at 2).

8 **softly** quietly, carefully. The word seems to imply a respectful attitude towards Denmark, whereas F's 'safely' implies that the army's march will not be challenged.
powers armed forces

3 Craves] *Q1;* Claimes *F* 8 softly] safely *F* SD] *Kittredge*; *Exit. F*; *exeunt all. Q1* 8.1 GUILDENSTERN *and others*] *Theobald subst.*; *&c. Q2; not in Q1F* 8–65 Good . . . worth.] *not in Q1F*

HAMLET
Who commands them, sir?
CAPTAIN
The nephew to old Norway, Fortinbras.
HAMLET
Goes it against the main of Poland, sir,
Or for some frontier?
CAPTAIN
Truly to speak, and with no addition,
We go to gain a little patch of ground
That hath in it no profit but the name.
To pay five ducats – five – I would not farm it,
~~Nor will it yield to Norway or the Pole~~
~~A ranker rate should it be sold in fee.~~
HAMLET
Why then the Polack never will defend it.
CAPTAIN
Yes, it is already garrisoned.
HAMLET
Two thousand souls and twenty thousand ducats

14 **it** i.e. the army
main mainland, major part of the country
15 **for** towards
frontier *OED* cites this as the earliest use of *frontier* meaning 'fortress on the frontier' (*sb.* 5), but the contrast with *main* implies it also carries the sense of 'border or extremity' (*sb.* 4).
16 **addition** four syllables: add-it-i-on. Usually glossed 'exaggeration': the Captain seems to mean that he is speaking bluntly, not augmenting his language to make the situation seem other than absurd.
18 **name** 'fame (of conquering it)' (Hibbard)
19 'The line places the speaker: he is a tenant farmer in civilian life' (Mahood, *Bit Parts*, 40).
ducats See 2.2.302–3n. (Theobald and others emend to 'five ducats' fine', i.e. rent of five ducats.)
farm i.e. rent it as a farm
20, 22 **the Pole . . . the Polack** the King of Poland (see 1.1.62n.)
21 **ranker** higher, more abundant; see other uses of *rank* and *ranker* at 1.2.136, 2.1.20, 3.2.250, 3.3.36, 3.4.90, 146 and 150.
in fee outright, as a freehold
23 **garrisoned** occupied by a defending army
24–5 In giving these lines to the Captain, Hibbard (Appendix A) follows a contribution signed 'As You Like It' in the

19 ducats – five –] *Jennens;* duckets, fiue *Q2;* ducats fine *Theobald* 23 Yes, it is] Nay 'tis *Q5;* Yes, 'tis *Pope;* O, yes, it is *Capell*

Will not debate the question of this straw.
This is th'impostume of much wealth and peace
That inward breaks and shows no cause without
Why the man dies. I humbly thank you, sir.

CAPTAIN
God buy you, sir. [*Exit.*]

ROSENCRANTZ Will't please you go, my lord?

HAMLET
I'll be with you straight. Go a little before.
[*Rosencrantz, Guildenstern and the others move away.*]
How all occasions do inform against me

Gentleman's Magazine, 60, 403, dated May 1790.

24 **Two thousand . . . twenty thousand** If Hamlet speaks these lines he must be plucking the figures out of the air; if the Captain does he may be speaking from knowledge. See also 59n.

25 **Will not debate** are not enough to contest; editors strain to make *debate* mean 'decide'. Hibbard (Appendix A) and Oxf (Additional Passages) emend *not* to 'now', which gives an easier meaning. **straw** proverbial in this sense (Tilley, S918). See also 54.

26–8 **This . . . dies** Hamlet expresses the commonplace that too much wealth and peace lead to war; see Tilley, P139. The metaphor of a secret disease recalls Hamlet's words to the Queen at 3.4.145–7 and the King's words about Hamlet at 4.1.21–3.

26 **impostume** abscess

29 **God buy you** See 2.1.66n.

29–30 **Will't . . . before** See 30 SDn.

30 SD *There is no SD in Q2, but most editors since Rowe take everyone except Hamlet offstage here. It is perhaps surprising that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are prepared to leave Hamlet alone, after the King's instructions to 'Follow him at foot' (4.3.51); it seems likely that they retire but observe from a distance. RP notes a similarity with *WT* 4.4.832–3 when Autolycus soliloquizes before following the others offstage.

30 **straight** immediately

31–65 MacDonald approves F's omission of this speech on the grounds that 'the author exposes his hero to a more depreciatory judgment than any from which I would justify him, and a conception of his character entirely inconsistent with the rest of the play.' Edwards (16–19) and Hibbard (362) also argue that its omission (and that of the preceding dialogue with the Captain) in Q1 and F is an authorial 'cut' that improves the play. Spencer sees it as important structurally, enabling Hamlet to make a strong impression before his absence in 4.5 to 4.7 and to reveal an increasing maturity. Pennington (112) finds it 'amazing' that 'perhaps the best of Hamlet's monologues' should be cut. Kenneth Branagh turns it into a melodramatic climax in his 1996 film (see 64–5n.), while Peter Brook's adaptation in 2000 replaced it with 'To be or not to be', indicating that this is 'Hamlet's nadir' (Lavender, 233). (See pp. 18–20.)

31–2 As at the end of 2.2, Hamlet uses his experience to comment on the larger issues he faces.

31 **occasions** occurrences, circumstances

29 SD] *Capell* 30 SD] *this edn; Exe. / Manet* Hamlet *Rowe*

And spur my dull revenge. What is a man
If his chief good and market of his time
Be but to sleep and feed? A beast – no more.
Sure he that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and godlike reason
To fust in us unused. Now whether it be
Bestial oblivion or some craven scruple
Of thinking too precisely on th'event
(A thought which quartered hath but one part
wisdom
And ever three parts coward) I do not know
Why yet I live to say this thing's to do,
Sith I have cause and will and strength and means
To do't. Examples gross as earth exhort me –
Witness this army of such mass and charge,
Led by a delicate and tender prince

inform against accuse, bring charges against
33 **market** advantage, profit (Johnson glosses *market of his time* 'that for which he sells his time')
35 **large discourse** extensive powers of thought or reasoning
36 **Looking . . . after** As he elaborates in 38–43, Hamlet distinguishes human beings from animals because they are capable of remembering the past and thinking about the future.
38 **fust** grow musty, decay
39 **Bestial oblivion** the forgetfulness or heedlessness characteristic of animals rather than people
craven cowardly
40 **Of** caused by
precisely rigorously, with attention to minute detail
event outcome (as at 49)
42–5 **I do . . . do't** Sam West, who played Hamlet in the 2001–2 RSC production directed by Steven Pimlott, remarked (in a talk given at King's College London on 11 March 2002) on the power of these 26 monosyllables (three of which are *do*).
43 **to do** i.e. still to be done
44 **Sith** since
strength and means It is not clear why Hamlet, as he is being escorted out of the country, claims he has ample *strength and means* for his revenge.
45 **gross** palpable, obvious
46 **mass and charge** size and expense
47 **delicate and tender** These seem inappropriate adjectives to apply to Fortinbras, who is described by Horatio as being 'Of unimproved mettle, hot and full,' at 1.1.95 and whose actions in Act 5 reveal him to be politically astute; perhaps, however, the implication is that he is highly sensitive to questions of honour. Polonius has punned on *tender* at 1.3.102–8 and Shakespeare plays on 'tender heir' and 'tender chorl' in *Son* 1.

Whose spirit with divine ambition puffed
Makes mouths at the invisible event
Exposing what is mortal and unsure
To all that fortune, death and danger dare
Even for an eggshell. Rightly to be great
Is not to stir without great argument
But greatly to find quarrel in a straw
When honour's at the stake. How stand I then
That have a father killed, a mother stained,
Excitements of my reason and my blood,
And let all sleep; while to my shame I see
The imminent death of twenty thousand men
That for a fantasy and trick of fame
Go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot
Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,

48 **puffed** inflated, inspired
49 **Makes mouths** at makes faces at, laughs at (as at 2.2.301)
invisible unforeseeable
51 **dare** i.e. can threaten
52 **eggshell** proverbially worthless (Tilley, E95), like the *straw* of 25 and 54
52–5 **Rightly . . . stake** On the face of it, Hamlet seems to be saying that the truly great man will not *stir* (take up arms) without an important motive, but he will if his honour is being challenged. Many editors are unhappy with this meaning and insist that *not* should be read as a double negative: 'true greatness does not consist in refraining from action when there is no compelling cause to act, but in finding a compelling cause in the merest trifle when one's honour is in question' (Hibbard). Perhaps the underlying problem is that Hamlet insists on admiring Fortinbras while at the same time acknowledging the absurdity of his actions.
53 **not to stir** Hamlet echoes the Ghost's expression 'Wouldst thou not stir' (1.5.34).
55 **honour's . . . stake** Edwards says the metaphor is from gambling – honour is at risk – but Hibbard notes that Shakespeare uses this expression in three other plays (*TN* 3.1.119, *TC* 3.3.226 and *AW* 2.3.150) and that in *TN* and *TC* it is clear that the metaphor is from bear-baiting. It became proverbial (Dent, S813.2).
56 **stained** dishonoured
57 **Excitements** motives to incite
59 **twenty thousand** 'Contrast [24]. I fear we must ascribe the confusion to Shakespeare, often lax with numbers, rather than . . . to Hamlet' (Jenkins); see, for example, *H5* 1.2.57, where he copies a fairly obvious error from Holinshed. Or perhaps Hamlet is exaggerating again, as in his claims that his father has been dead for only *A little month* (1.2.147) or *two hours* (3.2.120).
60 **fantasy . . . fame** illusion and imposture regarding reputation (or honour: see 52–5)
61 **Go . . . beds** As in 'To be or not to be', Hamlet employs the proverbial association of sleep with death (see Dent, B192.1).
plot piece of ground
62 which is not big enough for so many men to fight on it to decide the issue

Which is not tomb enough and continent
To hide the slain? O, from this time forth
My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth. *Exeunt.*

[4.5] *Enter* HORATIO, QUEEN *and a* Gentleman.

QUEEN
I will not speak with her.
GENTLEMAN
She is importunate – indeed, distract.

63 **continent** container
64 **hide** i.e. provide burial space for
64–5 **O . . . worth** In Branagh's film these words become a 'huge scream of resolution' as the camera draws back from the speaker revealing more and more members of the enormous army marching across the screen behind him (Branagh, 122). Garrick, in his 1772 acting version, perhaps recognizing the logical difficulties of a resolute Hamlet at this point (see 29–30, 30 SDn. and 44n.), rewrites the last line and adds another: 'My thoughts be bloody all! The hour is come – / I'll fly my keepers – sweep to my revenge.' In this drastically abbreviated version of the play's ending, Hamlet avoids his voyage altogether.
4.5 The texts: this scene runs to 211 lines in Q2, 214 in F (4.1 in Ard Q1/F) and 129 lines in Q1 (scene 13), which omits both the Gentleman and Horatio in the opening dialogue and abbreviates the King's reflections at 77–96 and his dialogue with Laertes. Q1 also changes the sequence of Ophelia's songs. Location and timing: the scene takes place in the royal palace, in the King's apartments from his assumption at 97 that his *Switzers* should be guarding the doors. Some time must have passed since the previous scene, as both Ophelia and Laertes have heard of the death of their father and Laertes has returned from France. (This lapse of time is one justification for beginning Act 4 here: see Appendix 4.) Often there is a general costume change: the Court has gone into mourning for the death of Polonius.
0.1 See t.n. for Q1/F variants. This scene can be played as an intimate domestic one, with only the named characters present, but many productions include more courtiers to react to Ophelia's distress and Laertes' forced entry, and to receive Ophelia's flowers at 169–78. The King's command *Attend!* at 96 (only in Q2) may imply that these courtiers, if present at all, are not onstage before that point.
1 **her** Ophelia is not named before her appearance in Q2 or F, though she is in Q1, where the Queen explicitly attributes her madness to her father's death.
2, 4 SP This courtier is sometimes a woman in modern performances. F gives the Gentleman's speeches to Horatio and his reply (14–16) to the Queen. Edwards, who follows Q2's attributions, remarks that F 'greatly coarsens the way Ophelia's madness is introduced'; Hibbard, who follows F, claims that it 'cuts out an unnecessary part' (as at 4.1.0 and 4.3.0). Horatio does not speak again in this scene after 16 in Q2 (13 in F); many editors and directors take him off at 74. He is not present at all in Q1's version of this

65 SD] *this edn; Exit. Q2* 4.5] *Pope* 0.1] *enter King and Queene. Q1; Enter Queene and Horatio. F* QUEEN] *(Gertrard)* 1–16] *not in Q1* 2, 4 SP] *Hor. F* 2–3] *Capell; Q2 lines* importunat, / pittied. / haue? */; prose F*

Her mood will needs be pitied.

QUEEN What would she have?

GENTLEMAN

She speaks much of her father, says she hears
There's tricks i'th' world, and hems and beats her heart,
Spurns enviously at straws, speaks things in doubt
That carry but half sense. ~~Her speech is nothing,~~
~~Yet the unshaped use of it doth move~~
~~The hearers to collection. They yawn at it~~
~~And botch the words up fit to their own thoughts~~
Yet ~~Which~~, as her winks and nods and gestures yield them,
Indeed would make one think there might be thought,
Though nothing sure, yet much unhappily.

scene (13), which avoids the problem of why he has apparently not mentioned Ophelia's madness to Hamlet when they encounter her funeral in 5.1 (see 5.1.213n.); instead, he has his own unique scene with the Queen (14) immediately after this (see headnote to 4.6).

2 **importunate** persistent in her demands
distract mad; see 16.1n.
3 **mood** state of mind
will needs be must necessarily be
What . . . have i.e. what does she want
5 **tricks** deceptions, plots
hems says 'hem'. Perhaps the Gentleman implies that she makes inarticulate noises.
6 **Spurns . . . straws** i.e. reacts suspiciously to trivial things
in doubt of doubtful or uncertain meaning
7 **nothing** i.e. nonsense
8–9 **Yet . . . collection** yet the incoherent fragments cause those who listen to find coherence in them
8 **unshaped** unshapèd
9 **yawn** gape with surprise; see Coriolanus' account of his mother's view of the common people as 'things created . . . to yawn, be still, and wonder' (*Cor* 3.2.9–11). F's 'ayme' (= aim, guess, conjecture) is adopted by Jenkins, but Jennens and Edwards follow Q2.
10 **botch . . . thoughts** patch the words together clumsily to match their own guesses. Blake (4.2.10) classifies *botch up* as a phrasal verb and compares *TN* 4.1.55–6, 'how many fruitless pranks / This ruffian hath botch'd up.'
11 **Which** i.e. her words
yield render, deliver (i.e. her gestures add meaning to her words)
12 **thought** Editors insist that this is a participle (= intended or supposed), though it can also be read and spoken as a noun (= thoughtful or coherent content). If the former, it is Ophelia's observers who are doing the thinking; if the latter, Ophelia herself.
13 **unhappily** perhaps just 'awkwardly', or, judging by Horatio's response, 'maliciously'. The implication seems to be that Ophelia's words may cause people with *ill-breeding minds* to question the circumstances of Polonius' death and thereby cause trouble for the King and Queen.

9 yawn] ayme *F* 12 might] would *F*

HORATIO

'Twere good she were spoken with, for she may strew
Dangerous conjectures in ill-breeding minds.
Let her come in. [*Exit Gentleman.*]

Enter OPHELIA.

QUEEN [*aside*]

To my sick soul, as sin's true nature is,
Each toy seems prologue to some great amiss,

14 SP F gives this speech to the Queen. Jenkins gives 14–15 to Horatio but 16 to the Queen on the grounds that 'Only the Queen can give this order'. If Horatio retains 16 it is presumably spoken as a request to which the Queen must give some sign of assent. The role of Horatio continues to be puzzling (see List of Roles, 10n.): the fact that he is Hamlet's close friend and confidant does not seem to make the King suspicious of him.
14 **strew** distribute, i.e. incite
15 **ill-breeding** fomenting evil
16 SD *Let her come in* implies that someone leaves the stage in order to admit Ophelia; this would seem to be the intended function of Q2's Gentleman.
16.1 See t.n. for Q1 and F variants. The hair being down (as in Q1) was a conventional indication of madness or extreme distress (see Constance's insistence on wearing her hair loose in *KJ* 3.4). Ophelia's dishevelled appearance recalls her description of Hamlet at 2.1.74–81. Editors disagree about Q1's lute: Jenkins dismisses it as 'an actors' embellishment' while Hibbard and Oxf find it appropriate. Given that Q1's SD has been widely quoted and discussed even by editors who do not adopt it, it is not surprising that it has often influenced theatrical tradition; some productions even introduce the lute earlier: see 1.3.0.1n. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Ophelia usually wore white in this scene, perhaps emphasizing a view of her as a forsaken would-be bride; modern Ophelias often enter with their clothes in disarray and sometimes wear a coat or hat previously worn by Polonius, putting the stress on her as a bereaved daughter (see Hapgood). (See pp. 26–9 for further discussion of the representation of Ophelia's madness and its subsequent influence.)
17–20 Q2 prefaces each of these lines with a quotation mark, indicating that they are maxims or quotable commonplaces; the rhymes also underscore this effect. The Queen's aside indicates a new awareness of guilt following on from 3.4.
17 **as . . . is** in accordance with the reality of the state of sinfulness
18 **toy** trivial thing. The word may indicate that the Queen does not yet take Ophelia's madness seriously, or that she sees it as merely a private matter, insignificant in a political context.
amiss disaster

14 SP] *Qu. F* 14–16] *F lines* with, / coniectures / come in. / 16 SD] *Hanmer; Exit Hor. / Johnson* 16.1] *Enter Ofelia playing on a Lute, and her haire downe singing. Q1; Enter Ophelia distracted. after 20 F; Enter* Horatio, *with* Ophelia, *distracted. / Johnson* 17 SD] *Capell* To] *F;* 'To *Q2* 18 Each] *F;* 'Each *Q2*

So full of artless jealousy is guilt
It spills itself in fearing to be spilt.

OPHELIA
Where is the beauteous majesty of Denmark?

QUEEN
How now, Ophelia?

OPHELIA (*Sings.*)
How should I your true love know
From another one?
By his cockle hat and staff
And his sandal shoon.

QUEEN
Alas, sweet lady, what imports this song?

OPHELIA Say you? Nay, pray you, mark.

19 **artless jealousy** unskilled (i.e. self-incriminating) apprehension
20 i.e. Guilt produces such paranoia that it betrays itself by its very own fear of betrayal.
21 **beauteous majesty** These words most obviously relate to the Queen, but, since Ophelia has just been admitted to her presence, she may be asking for the King, anticipating the gender confusion of *Sweet ladies* at 72. It is not clear how far she recognizes (or half-recognizes) the other characters throughout her two appearances in this scene; performers have explored a range of options (see Rosenberg; Hapgood).
23–40 This song is a version of a popular ballad much quoted elsewhere (see Jenkins, LN). Its theme of the woman bereft of her lover seems to indicate that her father's death is not the only cause of Ophelia's distress; in fact she alternates between lover and father. Jenkins argues that Q1's lute would be incongruous as an accompaniment to this and Ophelia's other songs but Hibbard claims that this is an argument for her using it, since 'only a mad woman would think of doing so'. The incongruity is probably lost on modern audiences precisely because of their familiarity with the lute's appearance in this scene. (See Appendix 6 for a discussion of the music traditionally used.)
25–6 **cockle . . . shoon** The hat decorated with a cockle-shell (the sign of St James of Compostella), the staff and the sandals were all signs of the pilgrim, and the pilgrim was often seen as a figure or metaphor for the lover.
26 **shoon** shoes (archaic plural: see Hope, 1.3.1)
27 **what . . . song** what does this song signify
28 **Say** you what did you say. Ophelia perhaps expresses irritation at being interrupted, though her madness is otherwise signalled by her lack of response to those around her. On the other hand, she may be asking the Queen to join in the song, as she does later.
mark pay attention (also at 35)

19 So] *F*; 'So *Q2* 20 It] *F*; 'It *Q2* 23 SD] *(shee sings.); singing Q1, at 16.1; om., with song in italics, F* 23–6] *Q1 subst., Capell; Q2F line* one, / shoone. / 26 sandal] *(*Sendall*), Q1F* 28, 38, 47, 160, 182 *SD*] *Song. opp. lines; not in Q1; songs in italics F*

Sings.

He is dead and gone, lady,
He is dead and gone.
At his head a grass-green turf,
At his heels a stone.

O ho!

QUEEN

Nay, but Ophelia –

OPHELIA Pray you mark.

[*Sings.*]

White his shroud as the mountain snow –

Enter KING.

QUEEN

Alas, look here, my lord.

OPHELIA (*Sings.*)

Larded all with sweet flowers
Which bewept to the ground did not go
With true-love showers.

KING

How do you, pretty lady?

33 **O ho** a conventional representation of a sigh or groan

36.1 The King enters after 32 in F and is present from the beginning of the scene in Q1. The awkwardness of his entry, the differences of personnel between Q2 and F, the different structure of the scene in Q1 and its extra scene between Horatio and the Queen suggest rewriting here.

38 **Larded** i.e. decorated (a culinary term, from the practice of inserting strips of fat or lard into meat to baste it). MacDonald comments with Victorian disapproval: 'This expression is, as Dr. Johnson says, taken from cookery; but it is so used elsewhere by Shakspere [*sic*] that we cannot regard it here as a scintillation of Ophelia's insanity.'

39 **ground** Q1 and F have 'graue', adopted by Jenkins. Ophelia uses *ground* again at 70.

not This unexpected and extrametrical negative occurs in all three texts and is usually explained as Ophelia's deliberate alteration of the song to suit her own experience.

41 **pretty lady** See *Pretty Ophelia* at 56; in Q1 the King calls Ofelia 'A pretty

29–32] *Q1 subst., Capell; Q2F line* ²gone, / stone. 33] *not in Q1F* 35–6] *F; one line Q2* 35] *F; not in Q1* SD] *om., with 36 in italics, F* 36.1] *after 32 F; at 0.1 Q1* 38 all] *not in Q1F* 39 ground] graue *Q1F* did not] *Q1F;* did *Pope* 41 do you] i'st with you *Q1;* do ye *F*

OPHELIA Well, good dild you. They say the owl was a baker's daughter. Lord, we know what we are but know not what we may be. God be at your table.

KING
Conceit upon her father –

OPHELIA Pray, let's have no words of this, but when they ask you what it means, say you this:

Sings.

Tomorrow is Saint Valentine's Day
All in the morning betime,
And I a maid at your window
To be your valentine.
Then up he rose and donned his clothes
And dupped the chamber door –

wretch'. Presumably he means to express sympathy, though his tone seems deprecating. The Nurse in *RJ* refers to Juliet as a 'pretty wretch' and a 'pretty fool' when describing her childhood fall (1.3.44, 31, 48). See also 181 and n.

42 **good dild you** i.e. thank you; a corruption of 'God yield [i.e. requite] you'

42–3 **owl . . . daughter** apparently a reference to a folk-tale in which a baker's daughter refused bread to the begging Jesus, who turned her into an owl. It is not clear why Ophelia should allude to this, though Edwards points out that it is a story of transformation; Jenkins (LN) suggests an allusion to the loss of virginity, and Hibbard cites Dent, who provides a 1555 reference to 'bakers daughters and such other poore whores' (B54.1). Mary Cowden Clarke helpfully has Ophelia's friend Jutha tell her a relevant story in 'Ophelia: the Rose of Elsinore'.

43–4 **Lord . . . may be** either a general maxim or a comment on the baker's daughter

44 **God . . . table** In the parodic version of Ophelia's song in *Eastward Ho* (1605), 3.2.85–90, Gertrude sings, 'God be at your labour' (see p. 57).

45 **Conceit . . . father** – fantasies about her father (i.e. her father's death); the King has entered in time to pick up the references to death in Ophelia's song and perhaps the word *daughter* in 43. Q2 and F (and most edited texts) have a full stop after *father* but it could be spoken as a question, or Ophelia may interrupt the King (as she interrupts the Queen at 35).

46 **Pray . . . this** Ophelia perhaps chides the King for interrupting her.

48–66 This song has not been found elsewhere; it depends on the belief that the first person one sees on St Valentine's day (14 February) will become one's lover. (See Appendix 6 for a discussion of the music traditionally used.)

49 **betime** early

52 **donned** put on (did on)

53 **dupped** opened (did up)

42 good dild] God yeeld *Q1*; God dil'd *F* 45 father –] *(father.) F* 46 Pray, let's have] Nay Loue, I pray you make *after* be. *44 Q1*; Pray you let's haue *F* 48–51] *Q1*; *F lines betime, / Valentine. /* 52–5] *Q1*; *Q2F line* doore, / more. / 52 clothes] *Q1F*; close *Q2*

Let in the maid that out a maid
Never departed more.

KING
Pretty Ophelia –

OPHELIA Indeed, without an oath I'll make an end on't.
[*Sings.*]
By Gis and by Saint Charity,
Alack and fie for shame,
Young men will do't if they come to't:
By Cock they are to blame.

Quoth she, 'Before you tumbled me
You promised me to wed.'
He answers:
'So would I ha' done by yonder sun
An thou hadst not come to my bed.'

KING
How long hath she been thus?

OPHELIA I hope all will be well. We must be patient. But I cannot choose but weep to think they would lay him i'th' cold ground. My brother shall know of it. And so I thank you for your good counsel. Come, my coach!

57 **without an oath** Ophelia may be conscious of avoiding saying 'Jesus' in 58 and 'God' in 61.
58 **Gis** Jesus
Saint Charity The capital 'S' in Q2 and F (but not in Q1) implies that *Charity* is the name of a saint, but there was no such person and the expression could just mean 'holy charity', as in Chaucer's 'Knight's Tale', 1721: 'But sle me first, for seinte charitee'.
60 **do't . . . to't** i.e. have sex when opportunity offers
61 **Cock** a corruption of 'God'. Editors regularly claim an obscene double meaning here, and one might compare related expressions where *cock* means 'penis', such as 'Pistol's cock is up' (*H5* 2.1.52) and 'Pillicock sat on Pillicock hill' (*KL* 3.4.75).
62 **tumbled** had sex with (see *AC* 1.4.17: 'to tumble on the bed of Ptolemy')
66 **An** if
71 **my coach** Editors cite Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, part 1 (*c.* 1587), 5.1.315, where the mad Zabina calls for her coach just before killing herself, but Ophelia's use of the phrase here is not necessarily inappropriate if she is intending to go out (see also 166n.).

57 Indeed,] Indeed la? *F* SD] *not in Q1; om., with 58–63, 65–6 in italics, F* 58 Saint Charity] *(*Saint Charitie*), Q1 (*saint Charitie*), F (S. Charity)* 62–3] *Q1F; one line Q2* 64 He answers:] *(*(He answers.)*); not in Q1F* 65 ha'] *(a) Q1, ha F* 67 thus] this *F* 69 would] should *F*

Goodnight, ladies, goodnight. Sweet ladies, goodnight, goodnight. [*Exit.*]

KING

Follow her close. Give her good watch, I pray you.
[*Exit Horatio.*]

O, this is the poison of deep grief. It springs
All from her father's death, ~~and now behold =~~
O Gertrude, Gertrude,
When sorrows come they come not single spies
But in battalions: first, her father slain;
Next, your son gone, ~~and he most violent author~~
~~Of his own just remove~~, the people muddied,

The moment is parodied in *Eastward Ho*, 3.2.30–35, when Gertrude longs for her coach (see p. 57).

72 **Goodnight, ladies** Unless there are more courtiers present (see 0.1), the Queen is the only other *lady* onstage; if Ophelia addresses the King and/or other male courtiers here, her confusion or conflation of genders echoes that of Hamlet at 4.3.48–50. Her ominous repetition of *goodnight* also echoes Hamlet's exit at the end of 3.4 – and is itself echoed at the end of section 2 of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922), though he does not record the parallel in his notes.

74 The King's command echoes his words on Hamlet's exit at 4.3.51: 'Follow him at foot.' It becomes apparent, of course, that whoever follows Ophelia does not in fact 'Give her good watch'; Branagh provides an explanation of how she gets away in his 1996 film (133).

74 SD *Presumably someone obeys the King, and Horatio might well leave at this point; Jenkins and Hibbard stress that the King and Queen must be alone onstage for the King's next speech. This intimate moment of shared apprehension comes at the beginning of the scene in Q1, before Ofelia's entry.

75 **poison . . . grief** In this formulation, Ophelia dies metaphorically by poison, as old Hamlet, the Queen, the King, Laertes and Hamlet die literally by it.

75–6 **It . . . death** The King does not acknowledge Hamlet's possible role in causing Ophelia's condition (see 23–40n.).

76 **and now behold** Jenkins points out that F's omission of these words regularizes the metre and Edwards sees them as a 'false start' probably marked for omission.

78–9 **When . . . battalions** Dent cites 'Misfortune (evil) never (seldom) comes alone' as proverbial (M1012).

78 **spies** i.e. lone soldiers sent out in advance of the main force

79 **battalions** large armies

80 **author** instigator

81 **just remove** deserved removal

81–2 **muddied, / Thick** stirred up, confused; see Katherina's speech at the end of *TS*: 'A woman mov'd is like a fountain troubled, / Muddy, ill-seeming, thick, bereft of beauty' (5.2.143–4).

72–3] *F; Q2 lines* ²night. / ⁴night. / 73 SD] *Q1 (exit Ofelia.), F* 74] *F lines* close, / you: / SD] *Theobald* 75–7] *Steevens³; prose Q2; F lines* springs / ²*Gertrude*, / 76 and now behold –] *om. F* 78 come] comes *F* 79 battalions] Battaliaes *F*

Thick and unwholesome in thoughts and whispers
For good Polonius' death, and ~~we have done but greenly~~
~~In hugger-mugger to inter him;~~ poor Ophelia
Divided from herself ~~and her fair judgement,~~
~~Without the which we are pictures or mere beasts;~~
Last, and as much containing as all these,
Her brother is in secret come from France,
~~Feeds on this wonder, keeps himself in clouds~~
And wants not buzzers to infect his ear
With pestilent speeches of his father's death –
~~Wherein necessity, of matter beggared,~~
Who ~~Will~~ nothing stick our person to arraign

82–4 These lines are metrically awkward: we have left 83 as an alexandrine, but *For good* might be added to 82.
82 **in** Jenkins prefers F's 'in their', presumably on metrical grounds.
83 **For** because of
greenly foolishly, showing lack of experience; see 'like a green girl' at 1.3.100.
84 **In hugger-mugger** secretly and hastily. Shakespeare's only use of this phrase which, as Steevens points out, he may have remembered from the account of the funeral of Julius Caesar in North's Plutarch: 'Antonius thinking good his testament should be red openly, and also that his body should be honorably buried and not in hugger mugger' ('Life of Brutus', Bullough, 5.104).
86 **pictures . . . beasts** The surprising analogy between *pictures* and *beasts* depends on the fact that both lack *god-like reason* (4.4.37), which is seen as the defining characteristic of human beings; see the King's use of the picture metaphor again at 4.7.105–7.
87 **containing** comprising, importing
88 **in secret** The suggestion (absent from Q1) is that the King's spies have discovered this, though they have presumably not anticipated Laertes' next actions, as described at 99–108.
89 **Feeds . . . wonder** Q2's reading must mean something like 'finds food (for revenge) in these amazing events'. F's 'Keepes on his wonder' seems to mean 'sustains his amazement'. Jenkins and Hibbard follow Q2 (though Jenkins suggests 'his' might be right); Spencer and Edwards (following Johnson) print 'Feeds on his wonder'; 'Keeps' is generally rejected, presumably as an anticipation of the word later in the line.
clouds i.e. of suspicion or uncertainty
90 **wants not buzzers** has no shortage of people stirring up trouble or spreading rumours
90–1 **infect . . . speeches** This can hardly be a conscious allusion to the King's murder of Hamlet's father, though it might suggest, for an audience or reader, a parallel with the infection of Hamlet's ear by the words of the Ghost.
92 **necessity . . . beggared** i.e. driven by necessity because of a lack of substantial evidence
93 **Will nothing stick** will in no way refuse, refrain

82 in] in their *F* 84 hugger-mugger] (hugger mugger) *F* 89 Feeds] Keepes *F* this] his *F* 92 Wherein] Where in *F* 93 person] persons *F*

In ear and ear. O my dear Gertrude, this,
Like to a murdering-piece in many places
Gives me superfluous death. *A noise within*

Enter a Messenger.

Attend!
~~Where is my Switzers? Let them guard the door.~~
What is the matter?
MESSENGER ~~Save yourself, my lord.~~
~~The ocean overpeering of his list~~
~~Eats not the flats with more impiteous haste~~
The ~~Than~~ young Laertes in a riotous head

person F's plural implicitly includes the Queen in the arraignment.
arraign put on trial, accuse

94 **ear and ear** one ear after another (see 90–1n.)
this i.e. all of these things

95 **murdering-piece** a small cannon capable of delivering several shots at once. Jenkins cites Fletcher and Massinger's *Double Marriage* (1620): 'like a murdering-piece, aims not at one, / But all that stand within the dangerous level' (4.2.6).

96 **Gives . . . death** i.e. kills me many times over

96 SD1 This is the first of a series of offstage noises of alarm or distress preceding an entry: see Ophelia's entry at 151 and the Queen's at 4.7.160. *Within* is a common stage direction (Dessen & Thomson find 800 examples) indicating the location of a sound or figure *within* the tiring-house and therefore offstage for the audience. Our practice is to retain *within* where it occurs in the early texts but to use *offstage* when we are adding a modern SD.
SD2 **Messenger** In eighteenth- and nineteenth-century theatrical tradition, this *Messenger* was Marcellus.

96 **Attend!** not in F, which gives the Queen a line here (see t.n.): 'most modern editors illogically include both' (Jenkins). More courtiers may enter in response to the King's command (see 0.1n.).

97 **Switzers** Swiss guards, often used as mercenary soldiers by European royalty, a custom which survives today in ceremonial form at the Vatican State in Rome. Malone quotes Nashe, *Christ's Tears over Jerusalem*, 'Law, Logicke, and the *Swizers* may be hir'd to fight for any body' (2.99).

99 **overpeering . . . list** looking over (i.e. rising above) its shore or boundary. See *R2* 3.2.106–11 for a comparable use of flooding as a metaphor for rebellion.

100 **Eats . . . flats** does not consume or overrun the flat or low-lying land
impiteous often emended to 'impetuous' (from Q3), but Edwards retains it as a Shakespearean coinage meaning 'pitiless'. Tronch-Pérez notes that 'piteous' is spelt 'pittious' in both Q2 and F texts at 2.1.91.

101 **in . . . head** in a rebellious insurrection

95 murdering-piece] *(*murdring peece*), F (*murdering Peece*)* 96–8] *Ard²; Q2 lines* death. / doore, / matter? / Lord. */; F lines* death. / this? / *Switzers*? / matter? / Lord. / 96 Attend!] *Qu.* Alacke, what noyse is this? *F* 97 is] are *F* Switzers] *(*Swissers*), F* 100 impiteous] *(*impitious*), F (*impittious*); *impetuous *Q3, F2*

O'erbears your officers. The rabble call him lord
~~And, as the world were now but to begin,~~
~~Antiquity forgot, custom not known,~~
~~The ratifiers and props of every word,~~
They cry, 'Choose we: Laertes shall be king!' –
~~Caps, hands and tongue, applaud it to the clouds~~
'Laertes shall be king! ~~Laertes king!~~'

~~QUEEN~~
~~How cheerfully on the false trail they cry.~~ *A noise within*
~~O, this is counter, you false Danish dogs!~~

KING
The doors are broke.

Enter LAERTES *with* Followers.

LAERTES
Where is this king? Sirs, stand you all without.

103–5 There is something incongruous about the Messenger's rather grandiose invocation of *Antiquity* and *custom* on the side of this particular king, but it is not unlike the flattery voiced by Guildenstern and Rosencrantz at 3.3.7–23.

103 **as . . . begin** i.e. as if social institutions and civil government were now being invented for the first time

105 i.e. *Antiquity* and *custom* guarantee and support every *word* (*OED*'s first use of *ratifier*).

106 ***They cry** Q2's 'The cry' could mean 'the cry is', but Jenkins prefers F, and the scribe or compositor might have been misled by 105, which begins with *The*.
Choose we 'The *distracted multitude* who were supposed to *love* Hamlet (4.3.4) have given their allegiance to Laertes, and are demanding to take over the prerogative of the electoral body which made Claudius king' (Edwards).
shall Compare *Cor* 3.1.89–90: 'Hear you this Triton of the minnows? Mark you / His absolute "shall"?'

107 **Caps** thrown into the air in salutation/celebration

109–10 The Queen's metaphor is from hunting dogs following a false or contrary (*counter*) scent. Michael Redgrave, having suggested Wanda Rotha to play the Queen in Hugh Hunt's 1950 production at the London Old Vic, in which he played Hamlet, noted that her 'trace of a German accent' made the expression *false Danish dogs* imply that she is a foreign consort – common enough in European monarchies in Shakespeare's time (Redgrave, 230).

111 **broke** broken or burst open

111.1 It is clear from 112–15 that if the *Followers* do enter they leave again very soon; many productions represent them by shouts offstage. Laertes often

106 They] *F*; The *Q2* 109 SD] *Q2c (A noise within.), Q2u ((A noise within.); Noise within. F, after 110* 111.1] *Spencer subst.; Enter Laertes with others. Q2, after 110; Enter Laertes. F, after 110, Q1 subst.*
112 this] the *F* king? Sirs,] King, sirs? *F*

~~FOLLOWERS~~
~~No, let's come in.~~
~~LAERTES~~ ~~I pray you give me leave.~~
~~FOLLOWERS~~ ~~We will, we will.~~
~~LAERTES~~
~~I thank you, keep the door.~~

[*Exeunt Followers and Messenger.*]

O thou vile King,
Give me my father.
QUEEN Calmly, good Laertes.
LAERTES
That drop of blood that's calm proclaims me bastard,
Cries 'Cuckold!' to my father, brands the harlot
Even here between the chaste unsmirched brow
Of my true mother.
KING What is the cause, Laertes,
~~That thy rebellion looks so giant-like?~~
Let him go, Gertrude, do not fear our person.
~~There's such divinity doth hedge a king~~

appears in mourning, like the Danish Court (see headnote).

113 **give me leave** i.e. leave me alone with the King

115 **keep** guard

118–19 **brands . . . brow** Laertes alludes to the threat to brand prostitutes (see 3.4.40–2n.).

119 **between** in the middle of
unsmirched unsmirchèd; unstained (*OED*'s first use: see also *besmirch* at 1.3.15)

120 **my true mother** This is the play's only reference to the mother of Laertes and Ophelia; like Miranda's mother at *Tem* 1.2.56–7, she is evoked only in order to confirm her child's legitimacy.

121 **giant-like** perhaps just 'large', but perhaps an allusion to the war of the Titans which comes up again in the references to Pelion and Ossa at 5.1.242–3 and 272.

122, 126 **Let . . . Gertrude** The Queen defends the King both verbally and physically (by holding on to Laertes) in all three texts. As is emphasized by her words at 128, she has reason to be confident that he is not in fact guilty of Polonius' death.

122 **fear** be afraid for

123 **divinity . . . king** The King (outrageously) refers to the divine right which was seen as protecting monarchs; see 3.3.7–23.
hedge surround, defend

113, 114 SP FOLLOWERS] *Spencer subst.; All. Q2F* 115–16] *F lines* doore. / Father. / *Laertes.* / 115 SD *Exeunt Followers*] *Kittredge and Messenger*] *this edn* 117] *F lines* calmes / Bastard: / that's calm] that calmes *F* 119 brow] *F;* Brows *Q6* 121 giant-like] (gyant like), *F*

~~That treason can but peep to what it would,~~
~~Acts little of his will~~. Tell me, Laertes,
Why thou art thus incensed. Let him go, Gertrude.
Speak, man.

LAERTES Where is my father?

KING Dead.

QUEEN
But not by him.

KING Let him demand his fill.

LAERTES
How came he dead? I'll not be juggled with.
To hell allegiance, vows to the blackest devil,
Conscience and grace to the profoundest pit.
I dare damnation. ~~To this point I stand.~~
~~That both the worlds I give to negligence.~~
Let come what comes, only I'll be revenged
Most throughly for my father.

KING Who shall stay you?

LAERTES
My will, not all the world's.
And for my means I'll husband them so well
They shall go far with little.

124 **can . . . would** can only glimpse or glance at its objectives
125 **Acts . . . will** is able to perform little of its desires
129 **juggled with** manipulated, cheated
130–1 Laertes rhetorically consigns both his *allegiance* to the King and his *grace* of his standing with God to hell (see Polonius' conventional association of duty to God and duty to the King at 2.2.44–5).
131 **pit** i.e. of hell
132 **To . . . stand** I am firm in this resolve
133 **both . . . negligence** i.e. I disregard the consequences both in this world and in the next.
135 **throughly** thoroughly
stay prevent
136 **My . . . world's** Q2's reading must mean something like 'I'll have my will despite the world's will'; F's 'world' produces the meaning 'By my will, the world will not' (prevent me). Hibbard assumes Q2's 'worlds' was suggested by the same word in 133.
137–8 **And . . . little** perhaps a surprising comment on the resources Laertes might need to prosecute a revenge action against the King

127 Where is] where's *Q1F* 136 world's] (worlds), *Pope*; world *F*

KING Good Laertes,
If you desire to know the certainty
Of your dear father, is't writ in your revenge
That swoopstake you will draw both friend and foe,
Winner and loser?

LAERTES
None but his enemies.

~~KING Will you know them, then?~~

~~LAERTES~~
~~To his good friends thus wide I'll ope my arms~~
~~And like the kind life-rendering pelican~~
~~Repast them with my blood.~~

KING Why, now you speak
Like a good child and a true gentleman.
That I am guiltless of your father's death
And am most sensibly in grief for it
It shall as level to your judgement 'pear
As day does to your eye. *A noise within*

140 **father, is't** Many editors conflate Q2 with F (see t.n.) by printing 'father's death, is't', but Jenkins points out that this extrametrical addition could be an anticipation of 148. Tronch-Pérez adds that the Q2 King may be more tactful.
writ in required by; see 'writ down in our duty' at 1.2.221.
141 **swoopstake . . . foe** you, as in a sweep-stake, draw in friend and enemy alike. The point is that the gambler 'swoops' upon or 'sweeps' up all the stakes on the table indiscriminately. Q1 has 'draw at' = draw your sword on.
144 **ope** open
145–6 **kind . . . blood** The pelican was supposed to pierce its own breast with its bill and feed its young on its own blood.
146 **Repast** feed
149 **sensibly** feelingly
150 **level** straightforwardly
'pear appear (F's 'pierce' seems to Edwards a 'more Shakespearean word')
151 SD1 The *noise* is presumably of a woman or women crying out *within*, i.e. offstage. Ophelia usually enters carrying the flowers she distributes at 173–8, though some productions (and commentators) assume that the flowers exist only in her imagination. Q1's line 'I a bin gathering of floures' (13.75–6) and the entry SD in *Fratricide Punished*, 'Ophelia, with flowers' (4.7; Bullough, 7.153), may testify to early stage practice, and this would be supported by the

138–9 Good . . . certainty] *F; one line Q2* 140 father] Fathers death *F* is't] if *F* 141 swoopstake] *Dyce;* soopstake *Q2F;* Swoop-stake-like *Q1;* sweep-stake *Pope* 141 both] *F;* at *Q1* 145 pelican] Politician *F* 149 sensibly] sensible *F* 150 'pear] *Johnson;* peare *Q2;* pierce *F* 151 SD1] *A noise within. Let her come in. F; A noise within.* [*Ophelia is heard singing.*] *Ard*[2]

Enter OPHELIA.

~~LAERTES~~ ~~Let her come in.~~

How now, what noise is that?
O heat, dry up my brains, tears seven times salt
Burn out the sense and virtue of mine eye.
By heaven, thy madness shall be paid with weight
Till our scale turn the beam. O rose of May,
Dear maid, kind sister, sweet Ophelia,
O heavens, is't possible a young maid's wits
Should be as mortal as a poor man's life?

OPHELIA (*Sings.*)

They bore him bare-faced on the bier

comparable scene where Perdita distributes flowers in *WT* (4.4.73–134).

151 **Let . . . in** These words are repeated from 16. As the text of Q2 stands, we must assume that Laertes sees someone struggling to prevent Ophelia from entering (see t.n. for F's variant). Jenkins adds the command or request to the end of the King's speech, while Oxf follows Spencer in attributing it to '*Voices* (*within*)'.

152 **How . . . that** In Q1, Leartes' first line is 'Who's this, *Ofelia*?', perhaps implying that she is so changed he can scarcely recognize her.

154 **virtue** efficacy, function

155–6 **thy . . . beam** 'your madness will be revenged (by putting more weight into our side of the scale until it overbalances the other)'. Laertes asserts the Senecan view that revenge has to outdo the original crime.

156 ***Till** Q2's 'Tell' seems erroneous (as at 2.2.482).

turn the beam tilt the bar joining the two scales

159 **a poor man's life** Jenkins prefers F's 'an old mans life', which is perhaps more appropriate as an allusion to Polonius and is supported by Q1's 'an olde mans sawe' (= saying). It is possible, however, that *poor* expresses Laertes' affection or pity for his father. He has three more lines in F at this point (see Appendix 1); Edwards asks, 'Is it possible that for once the Q2 compositor noted a deletion mark overlooked by the playhouse scribe?'

160–1 apparently the first two lines of a lament, now lost (see Jenkins's extensive LNs on songs)

160 **bare-faced** The assumption is either that there is no coffin or that the coffin is open.

bier stretcher or litter on which a corpse is carried; F has an additional line (see t.n.) after *bier*, assumed to be a 'stage-addition' by Jenkins, but part of the deliberate incongruity for Edwards and Hibbard. 'Nonny, nonny' is used to signify a happy tone in the song 'Sigh no more, ladies' in *MA*: 'Converting all your sounds of woe / Into Hey nonny, nonny' (2.3.67–8).

151 SD2] *Enter Ofelia as before. Q1; after 151 F; Enter* Ophelia, *fantastically drest with Straws and Flowers. Rowe; after 152 Ard²* SP] *F; King. Ard²* Let . . . in.] *part of* 151 *SD1 F; Dan.* [*within.*] Let her come in. *Capell* 152 How] *Laer.* How *F* 155 with] by *F* 156 Till] *F;* Tell *Q2* turn] turnes *F* 159 a poor] an old *F* life?] *followed by three additional lines F (159–61)* 160 SD] (*Song., opp. 160)* bier] *Beer, / Hey non nony, nony, hey nony: F*

And in his grave rained many a tear.
Fare you well, my dove.

LAERTES
Hadst thou thy wits and didst persuade revenge
It could not move thus.

OPHELIA You must sing 'a-down a-down', an you call him 165
'a-down-a'. ~~O how the wheel becomes it. It is the false steward that stole his master's daughter.~~

~~LAERTES~~
~~This nothing's more than matter.~~

OPHELIA There's rosemary: that's for remembrance.

162 **Fare . . . dove** If this is Ophelia's own addition to the song (see t.n.), *my dove* seems more appropriate to a lost love than to a dead father; again she is alternating between the two (and possibly mistaking Laertes for Hamlet here).

165–6 **You . . . 'a-down-a'** Ophelia instructs her listeners to sing the refrain *a-down*, etc.

165 **an** if

166 **wheel** Usually interpreted as meaning 'refrain', but Ophelia may be referring to the wheel of Fortune. Mowat and Werstine suggest a spinning wheel, 'to which motion ballads were sung' (Folg²). Farley-Hills ('Crux') points out that F2 has 'How the wheeles become it' and argues that Ophelia is still thinking about a *coach* (as at 71) and that this is how the authors of *Eastward Ho* understood (and parodied) the scene (see p. 57).

166–7 **It . . . daughter** Edwards comments, 'In view of Laertes' next remark, indicating that Ophelia's disconnected remarks have a special significance, it is embarrassing that no-one has been able to throw light on the false steward', but Burnett has argued for the 'multiple contexts' of the remark in scriptural parallels and in the romance tradition, where servants steal their masters' daughters. Perhaps, however, this is just Ophelia's confusion for the steward's daughter (herself) and the false king or prince (Hamlet).

168 i.e. This seeming nonsense is more eloquent than sensible speech. See Polonius' earlier comment on Hamlet, at 2.2.202–3 and n. In this instance, Laertes has heard only two brief speeches from Ophelia and it is not clear what sense he detects behind them, so his comment may be a choric one.

169–78 Apart from Laertes, the particular recipients of the flowers are not specified in any of the three texts, but some assumptions have been made based on traditional flower symbolism: rue or herb of grace signifies repentance and may therefore be appropriate to the Queen or to the King (though not so obviously to Ophelia); daisies signify (unrequited) love and are appropriate to Ophelia herself; rosemary for

161 in] *on F* rained] *raines F* 162] *not as song Capell; as song F* 163–4] *prose F* 165–7] *F; Q2 lines* downe a downe, / becomes it, / daughter. / 165–6 You . . . 'a-down-a'] *this edn; no inverted commas Q21F; all as quotation Johnson; as quotation after* sing *Steevens²; only* 'Adown adown' *as quotation Cam²;* You . . . *A-down a-down*, and you *Call him a-down-a Ard²* 165 an] (And) *Q1F* 166 wheel becomes it] *F;* wheeles become it *F2;* wheels become *F3*

Pray you, love, remember. And there is pansies: that's for thoughts.

LAERTES

A document in madness – thoughts and remembrance fitted!

OPHELIA There's fennel for you, and columbines. There's rue for you, and here's some for me. We may call it herb of grace o'Sundays. You may wear your rue with a difference. There's a daisy. I would give you some violets, but they withered all when my father died. They say 'a made a good end.

~~*Sings.*~~

~~For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy.~~

LAERTES

Thought and afflictions, passion, hell itself
She turns to favour and to prettiness.

remembrance and pansies for thought are offered to Laertes (see 169–71); fennel was associated with flattery and may be given to any courtier (or to the King); either violets signifying fidelity or columbines signifying infidelity may be offered to the Queen (see John Gerard, *The Herbal* (1597); William Langham, *The Garden of Health* (1579); and Jenkins, LN).

172 **document** object lesson

173 **fitted** put together appropriately

175 **o'Sundays** on Sundays
You may Jenkins prefers F's 'you must', which is supported by Q1. *May* could be an erroneous repetition from 174.

176 **difference** a term from heraldry, meaning a variation in a coat of arms to distinguish one branch of a family from another

178 **They . . . end** Sadly untrue, if we equate the notion of *a good end* with the opportunity for repentance and forgiveness, as is emphasized in 1.5 and 3.3.
'a he

179 **For . . . joy** A line from a popular song which does not survive, though it is much alluded to elsewhere, including in *TNK* 4.1.107–8, where the Jailer's Daughter, whose madness is clearly influenced by Ophelia's, says, 'I can sing "The Broom" / And "Bonny Robin"'.

180 **Thought** i.e. sad thoughts, melancholy
afflictions F's 'Affliction' is usually adopted by editors, presumably because the other terms are singular.
passion suffering

181 **favour . . . prettiness** i.e. something charming and attractive (see the King's *pretty* at 41 and 56). Laertes' comment was perhaps taken too literally in some nineteenth-century productions which presented Ophelia's madness as picturesque (see Showalter); modern Ophelias are more likely to be painful and distressing, which can equally make nonsense of this line.

170 Pray you] I pray *Q1;* Pray *F* pansies] pansey *Q1;* Paconcies *F* 175 herb of grace] hearb a grace *Q1;* Herbe-Grace *F* You] *Q1;* Oh you *F* may] must *Q1F* 178 'a] he *F* 180 Thought and afflictions] Thoughts & afflictions *Q1, Q5;* Thought, and Affliction *F*

OPHELIA (*Sings.*)

And will 'a not come again?
And will 'a not come again?
No, no, he is dead,
Go to thy deathbed.
He never will come again.

His beard was as white as snow,
Flaxen was his poll.
He is gone, he is gone,
And we cast away moan.
God a' mercy on his soul.

And of all Christians' souls. God buy you. [*Exit.*]

LAERTES

Do you see this, O God?

KING

Laertes, I must commune with your grief

182–91 a lament, like the fragment at 160–1, not otherwise recorded. The song is parodied in *Eastward Ho*, 3.2.85–90 (see p. 57).

188 **Flaxen . . . poll** i.e. his hair was as white as flax. Jenkins and others prefer F's 'All flaxen', which is preferable metrically and is supported by Q1, where Ofelia sings the song on her first appearance in this scene.
poll head

190 **we . . . moan** (1) we waste or throw away our mourning; (2) we who are abandoned mourn (?)

191 **God a' mercy** God have mercy

191–2 **on . . . of** These words seem interchangeable here, perhaps because both were often abbreviated to *o'* (see Blake, 5.4.2, *Of*).

192 **God buy you** See 2.1.66n.

192 SD *Perhaps taking their cue from F's '*Exeunt*', many productions have the Queen follow her, partly out of concern for Ophelia, but also so that she does not hear about the King's conspiracy with Laertes (which is more explicit at this point in Q1). But the plural might equally indicate that she is followed by an attendant (if more courtiers are present: see 0.1n.).

193 *see Q2's 'Doe you this' could mean something like 'are you responsible for this?' (F's implicitly pagan plural 'gods' seems surprising in the context.)

194–5 **I . . . right** 'I have an undeniable right to talk to you in your grief'

194 **commune with** often glossed 'participate in', though Edwards suggests

182 SD] (*Song., opp. 182*) 182, 183 'a] he *Q1F* 184–5] *Johnson; one line Q2F* 187 was] *not in Q1F* 188 Flaxen] All flaxen *Q1F* 189–90] *Q1 subst., Johnson; one line Q2F* 189 'gone] *F;* dead *Q1* 191 God a' mercy] *Q1; Gramercy F* 192 Christians'] christen *Q1;* Christian *F* souls] soules I pray God *Q1F* buy you] be with you *Q1;* buy ye *F* SD] *Q1 (exit Ofelia.), F (Exeunt Ophelia)* 193 see] *F; not in Q21* O God] you Gods *F* 194 commune] *Q2, F2;* common *F*

Or you deny me right. Go but apart,
Make choice of whom your wisest friends you will,
And they shall hear and judge 'twixt you and me.
If by direct or by collateral hand
They find us touched, we will our kingdom give –
Our crown, our life, and all that we call ours –
To you in satisfaction. But, if not,
Be you content to lend your patience to us
And we shall jointly labour with your soul
To give it due content.

LAERTES Let this be so.
His means of death, his obscure funeral –
~~No trophy, sword nor hatchment o'er his bones,~~
No noble rite, nor formal ostentation –
Cry to be heard as 'twere from heaven to earth
That I must call't in question.

KING So you shall,
And where th'offence is let the great axe fall.
I pray you go with me. *Exeunt.*

'converse with'. F's 'common' is a variant of the same word.

195 **Go but apart** i.e. let's discuss this privately somewhere else (a standard exit line)

196 **whom your** which of your
wisest friends When the King and Laertes resume this conversation in 4.7, Laertes is still unaccompanied (see also the King's use of the same formulaic expression at 4.1.38).

198 **collateral** indirect

199 **touched** i.e. with guilt, implicated (see Hamlet's use of the word at 3.2.235)

205 **funeral** F has 'buriall', seen as an authorial substitution by Hibbard on the grounds that a *funeral* as a public event cannot be *obscure*. Laertes might, however, mean that Polonius' funeral was relatively *obscure* for such a prominent courtier.

206 **trophy** memorial
hatchment memorial tablet displaying the coat of arms of the dead person

207 **ostentation** ceremony

209 **That . . . question** so that I must demand an explanation

210 **the great axe** The axe was the traditional implement of execution; Shakespeare frequently refers to 'the hangman's axe' (see especially *MM* 4.3.26–37, where Abhorson, the 'hangman', asks Pompey if the axe is ready) or more generally to 'the axe of death' (e.g. *2H6* 2.4.49).

198 collateral] *(colaturall), F* 205 funeral] buriall *F* 206 trophy, sword] *F;* trophe sword *Q2;* trophy sword *Pope* 207 rite] *(right), F* 209 call't] call *F*

[4.6] *Enter* HORATIO ~~*and* [*a* Gentleman].~~

~~HORATIO What are they that would speak with me?~~
~~GENTLEMAN Sea-faring men, sir. They say they have letters for you.~~
~~HORATIO Let them come in.~~ [*Exit Gentleman.*]
~~I do not know from what part of the world I should be greeted if not from Lord Hamlet.~~

Enter Sailors.

SAILOR God bless you, sir.
HORATIO Let Him bless thee too.
SAILOR 'A shall, sir, an please Him. There's a letter for you, sir – it came from th'ambassador that was bound

4.6 The three texts: this scene runs to 31 lines in Q2 and F (4.2 in Ard Q1/F) with no major variants. Q1 has a different scene of about the same length between Horatio and the Queen (scene 14) in which he gives her some of the information contained in 4.6, 4.7 and the beginning of 5.2, she repeats her expressions of support for Hamlet and she makes it explicit that she will deliberately deceive the King. Location and timing: it may seem from 'Let them come in' at 4 that this scene is set indoors, somewhere in the royal palace or perhaps in Horatio's own lodgings, though *come in* could also mean 'come onstage'. Time has obviously passed since Hamlet left for England at the end of 4.4 (see headnote to 4.5), but this scene could follow quickly after the previous one.

0.1 There is no need for more than one attendant here, but Hapgood cites Granville-Barker's speculation that Q2's '*others*' may be the King's agents keeping watch on Horatio. In eighteenth- and nineteenth-century theatrical tradition, Horatio's companion at this point was Francisco.

1 **What are they** what sort of men are they (pronominal use of *what*: see Blake, 3.2.2.4)

4 SD *Someone presumably leaves to admit the sailor(s). If more than one attendant has entered at the beginning of the scene, it seems likely that they all leave at this point, since it would be odd for Horatio to read Hamlet's letter aloud in the presence of anyone who, presumably unlike the sailor(s), would understand its significance.

5 **what . . . world** i.e. what distant part (picking up on *Sea-faring men*)

6.1 There is no need for more than one sailor, though Horatio's and the Gentleman's use of *they* and *them* does indicate that the plural is correct.

an if it

10 **th'ambassador** Editors regularly say that Hamlet has concealed his identity from the sailors, but he must have convinced them of his importance to have

4.6] *Capell* 0.1 *and a* Gentleman.] *Spencer; and others. Q2; with an Attendant. F* 2 SP] *Ser. F* Sea-faring men] Saylors *F* 4 SD] *Hanmer subst.* 5–6] *this edn; Q2F line* world / *Hamlet. /* 6.1 Sailors] *Saylor F* 9 'A] Hee *F* an] *(and); and't F* 10 came] comes *F* th'ambassador] th'Ambassadours *F*

for England – if your name be Horatio, as I am let to know it is.

HORATIO [*Reads.*] *Horatio, when thou shalt have overlooked this, give these fellows some means to the King: they have letters for him. Ere we were two days old at sea, a pirate of very warlike appointment gave us chase. Finding ourselves too slow of sail, we put on a compelled valour and in the grapple I boarded them. On the instant they got clear of our ship, so I alone became their prisoner. They have dealt with me like thieves of mercy, but they knew what they did: I am to do a turn for them. Let the King have the letters I have sent, and repair thou to me with as much speed as thou wouldest fly death. I have words to speak in thine ear will make thee dumb. ~~Yet are they much too light for the bore~~*

negotiated for his freedom. If a sailor is listening, he will in any case hear Hamlet's name at the end of the letter. Perhaps Hamlet has warned them to be cautious until they are quite sure they are speaking to Horatio. F's plural 'Ambassadours' could include Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

11–12 **let to know** informed

13 ***overlooked*** i.e. read

14 ***means*** help in approaching

15 ***were . . . old*** had spent two days

pirate pirate ship, i.e. one engaged in robbery and violence

16 ***appointment*** equipment (especially of a military nature)

17 ***a compelled valour*** i.e. a valour compelled by necessity

17–18 ***the grapple*** the action of grappling, whereby two ships in close combat lay hold of each other (see the metaphorical use at 1.3.62)

20 ***thieves of mercy*** thieves who were nevertheless merciful

21 ***a turn*** Jenkins argues that F's '*good turne*' is 'not merely superfluous but enfeebling', but Dent cites 'One good turn asks (requires, deserves) another' as proverbial (T616). It is not clear quite what Hamlet has agreed to do for the pirates in return for his freedom. Perhaps he is supposed to be negotiating a ransom or an amnesty of some kind for them. Shakespeare may be remembering the similar incident in the life of Julius Caesar: Caesar was well treated by the pirates and paid his ransom, but he subsequently pursued and executed them. (On a literal interpretation, Hamlet may also renege on his side of the bargain, since he does not mention the sailors in his letter to the King in 4.7 or in his discussion of the episode with Horatio in 5.2, but this is not something an audience or reader has time to worry about.)

22 ***repair*** come

22–3 ***with . . . death*** In Q1 Hamlet's message seems less urgent, asking Horatio to meet him '*To morrow morning*' (14.17).

24 ***they*** i.e. my words

24–5 ***too . . . matter*** too trivial for the importance of the subject. The metaphor is from the *bore* or calibre of a gun: Hamlet's words are seen as

13 SP] *om. F* SD] *F subst. (Reads the Letter.)* 17 *valour and*] *Valour. F* 21 *turn*] *good turne F* 22 *speed*] *hast F* 23 *thine*] *your F* 24 *bore*] *F;* bord *Q2*

~~*of the matter.*~~ *These good fellows will bring thee where I am. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern hold their course for England. Of them I have much to tell thee. Farewell. He that thou knowest thine. Hamlet.*

Come. I will give you way for these your letters.
And do't the speedier that you may direct me
To him from whom you brought them. *Exeunt.*

[4.7] *Enter* KING *and* LAERTES.

KING

Now must your conscience my acquittance seal
And you must put me in your heart for friend

small bullets in a large cannon. (*OED* cites this passage under 'bore', *sb.* 2b.)

24 ***bore*** Q2's 'bord' was perhaps influenced by *boarded* ('boorded') at 18.

25–6 ***These . . . am*** The assumption may be that Hamlet is in hiding, but we hear no more of this on his reappearance in 5.1. The idea comes up in a different way in Q1, where the Queen asks Horatio if he knows where Hamlet is (14.14).

27 ***He*** Q2's '*So*' seems erroneous.

28–9 ***will . . . way** give you the means of access (as requested in 14); Q2's 'will you way' seems defective; some editors, e.g. Jennens, follow Q3 (see t.n.).

4.7 The three texts: this scene runs to 192 lines in Q2 and 166 lines in F (4.3 in Ard Q1/F), which lacks three passages: see notes on 66–80, 98–100 and 112–21. It runs to 54 lines in Q1 (scene 15), which simplifies the plot against Hamlet, leaving out the *sword unbated* (136); the Queen's report of Ofelia's death and Leartes' response are also abbreviated in Q1. Location and timing: the scene takes place in the royal palace; it must follow quickly on from 4.5: at the end of that scene the King persuaded Laertes to discuss his griefs privately and they are now doing this. There is, however, no mention of the *wisest friends* Laertes was invited to consult at 4.5.196. Occasionally on the stage (e.g. in Tyrone Guthrie's 1963 production and in Peter Brook's 2000 adaptation), and in the film versions by Kozintsev and Zeffirelli, a large part of this scene (1–160) is moved to follow Ophelia's funeral in 5.1, presumably to provide even more motivation for Laertes' hostility to Hamlet.

1–5 **Now . . . life** As often in plays of this period, the opening speech establishes that the characters enter in the midst of conversation. We assume here that they are drawing towards the end of a long discussion.

1 **conscience** The King echoes the word used by Laertes at 4.5.131 and which resonates through the play: see 2.2.540; 3.1.49 and 82; 5.2.57, 66 and 279.

my acquittance seal confirm my release or discharge (i.e. accept my innocence)

27 *He*] *F; So Q2* 28 *thine. Hamlet*] *F; thine Hamlet Q2* 29 Come] *F; Hor.* Come *Q2* give] *F; not in Q2;* make *Q3* 4.7] *Capell*

Sith you have heard and with a knowing ear
That he which hath your noble father slain
Pursued my life.

LAERTES It well appears. But tell me
Why you proceed not against these feats
So criminal and so capital in nature
As by your safety, greatness, wisdom, all things else,
You mainly were stirred up.

KING
O, for two special reasons
Which may to you perhaps seem much unsinewed
But yet to me they're strong. The Queen his mother
Lives almost by his looks and for myself,
My virtue or my plague, be it either which,
She is so conjunct to my life and soul
That as the star moves not but in his sphere

3 **Sith** since
knowing i.e. understanding or receptive
5 **Pursued my life** tried to kill me; see 4.1.13 and n.
6 **proceed not** do not take on legal proceedings. Jenkins adopts F's 'proceeded', presumably either on metrical grounds or because of the past tense of *were stirred up* in 9.
feats deeds, actions
7 **criminal** Jenkins adopts F's 'crimefull', though he quotes *Cor* 3.3.82: 'So criminal and in such capital kind'.
capital punishable by death
8 **greatness** This extrametrical word is generally assumed to be 'a rejected first thought' (Jenkins).
9 **mainly . . . up** were greatly incited (to take action)
10–25 The King tells Laertes why he has *not* acted against Hamlet but conceals from him that he has, as he thinks, sent his stepson to his death. It is perhaps surprising that he does not mention Hamlet's supposed madness as a factor.
11 **unsinewed** lacking sinews, i.e. weak
13–17 **for . . . her** The King's profession of his dependence on the Queen has been taken by some to motivate his murder of Hamlet's father, but he is hardly being honest in this speech.
14 **be . . . which** whichever of the two it may be
15 ***conjunct** intimately associated or coupled, as in *KL* 5.1.12–13: 'I am doubtful that you have been conjunct / And bosomed with her.' We adopt Oxf's speculation (*TxC*) that this might be behind the word printed as 'concliue' in Q2; like F's 'coniunctiue' (which requires the elision of *she is*), it carries a sense of astrological influence that is picked up in the next line.
16 **star . . . sphere** The King refers to the conventional (Ptolemaic) belief that

6 proceed] proceeded *F* 7 criminal] crimefull *F* 8 greatness] *om. F* 11 unsinewed] *(*vnsinnow'd*), F(*vnsinnowed*)* 12 But] And *F* they're] *(*tha'r*); they are F* 15 She is] She's *F* conjunct] *Oxf; concliue Q2; coniunctiue F*

I could not but by her. The other motive
Why to a public count I might not go
Is the great love the general gender bear him,
~~Who, dipping all his faults in their affection,~~
~~Work like the spring that turneth wood to stone,~~
~~Convert his gyves to graces, so that my arrows,~~
~~Too slightly timbered for so loud a wind,~~
~~Would have reverted to my bow again~~
~~But not where I have aimed them.~~

LAERTES

And so have I a noble father lost,
A sister driven into desperate terms
~~Whose worth, if praises may go back again,~~

the stars (planets) revolved around the earth in their spheres – a concentric set of transparent globes.

17 **I . . . her** 'I could not live without her'

18 **count** account, indictment

19 **general gender** common sort (of people)

21 **Work** operate. Q2's version requires us to read *Work* as a main verb in parallel with *Convert* (22).
spring . . . stone This sounds like a mythical spring, but various British examples have been identified; Shakespeare is referring to the way that water in limestone areas can deposit a layer of lime on objects placed in it. Johnson finds the comparison surprising – 'If the *Spring* had changed base metals to gold, the thought had been more proper' – but in this context the point may be that stone is less vulnerable to arrows than wood.

22 **gyves** fetters. The King presumably uses the word to mean 'faults' or 'crimes'.

23 **slightly timbered** having too light a shaft
***so loud a wind** i.e. such a fierce opposition; Shakespeare refers to the wind being 'loud' in *Per* (3.1.48) and *Tem* (3.3.63). Malone calls Q2's 'so loued Arm'd' 'as extraordinary a corruption as any that is found in [Shakespeare's] plays', but Jennens retains it and glosses '*Too slightly timbered for* one *so loved*, and *armed* with the affections and venerations of the people'.

24 **reverted** returned

25 **aimed** MacDonald defends F's 'arm'd', but the Q2 reading is generally adopted. It seems curious that the word 'arm'd' thus disappears from this passage although it occurs independently in both texts.

26–7 Laertes' summary of his position recalls Hamlet's at 4.4.55–6.

27 **terms** circumstances

28 **Whose worth** F's 'Who was' is retained by Hibbard without comment.
go back again i.e. recall what she was before

21 Work] Would *F* 22 gyves] (Giues), *F* (Gyues); crimes *Elze*; guilts *Oxf* 23 loud a wind] *F*; loued Arm'd *Q2* 25 But] And *F* have] had *F* aimed] arm'd *F* 28 Whose worth] Who was *F*; Who has *Johnson*

~~Stood challenger on mount of all the age~~
~~For her perfections.~~ But my revenge will come.

KING

~~Break not your sleeps for that; you must not think~~
~~That we are made of stuff so flat and dull~~
~~That we can let our beard be shook with danger~~
~~And think it pastime. You shortly shall hear more.~~
~~I loved your father and we love ourself,~~
~~And that, I hope, will teach you to imagine~~

Enter a Messenger *with letters.*

MESSENGER

These to your majesty, this to the Queen.

KING

From Hamlet! Who brought them?

29 i.e. constituted a superlative challenge to the entire age. Laertes idealizes his *desperate* sister rather as Hamlet idealizes his dead father.
on mount set up on high
31 **Break . . . sleeps** We would say 'don't lose any sleep', i.e. don't worry.
32 **flat and dull** inert, slow to take offence
33 **That . . . shook** To shake or pluck a man by the beard was (metaphorically) to insult him: see 2.2.508.
with by
34 **pastime** harmless sport
You . . . more Does the audience take this as a hint that the King is about to tell Laertes about Hamlet's journey to England and its intended consequences when he is interrupted by *more* than he expected?
35 **we love ourself** The King presumably means that his own reputation and safety are involved.
36.1 In eighteenth- and nineteenth-century theatrical tradition, this Messenger was Barnardo.
37 **These** 'Letters' could be used in the plural of just one letter, as at 4.6.3, but F's repetition of 'This' seems more consistent. Jenkins regards F's additional phrases (see t.n.) as unnecessary 'theatrical elaboration'.
this . . . Queen This letter was not specifically mentioned in 4.6 (the apparent plural '*letters*' at 4.6.21 being ambiguous), nor do we hear any more of it. If we are to assume that Hamlet reveals the full extent of the King's treachery in it, it is surprising that he does not intercept it. In Q1, Horatio reports directly to the Queen in a unique scene (14), at which point there is no doubt that she is informed of her husband's plot. In Olivier's 1948 film the letters are delivered between Ophelia's two mad appearances (as in 4.5) and we see the King and Queen exiting separately reading them, which may encourage us to speculate on the contents of her letter.
38 **From Hamlet** In Q2 the King presumably deduces this from the inscription. (On whether the bearer knows Hamlet's identity, see 4.6.10n.)

36.1 *with letters*] *om. F* 37 MESSENGER These] How now? What Newes? / *Mes.* Letters my Lord from *Hamlet*. This *F*

MESSENGER
Sailors, my lord, they say. I saw them not.
~~They were given me by Claudio. He received them~~
~~Of him that brought them.~~
KING Laertes, you shall hear them.
Leave us. [*Exit Messenger.*]
[*Reads.*] *High and mighty. You shall know I am set naked* down
on your kingdom. Tomorrow shall I beg leave to see your
kingly eyes. When I shall (first asking you pardon)
thereunto recount the occasion of my sudden return.
What should this mean? Are all the rest come back,
Or is it some abuse, and no such thing?
LAERTES
Know you the hand?
KING 'Tis Hamlet's character. 'Naked',
And in a postscript here he says 'alone'.
Can you ~~devise~~ me? advise

39–41 **Sailors . . . them** F omits what does seem an over-elaboration in Q2. Hibbard, however, while following F, comments: 'The roundabout route by which the letters reach the King testifies to Horatio's care in ensuring that Claudius knows no more than Hamlet wishes him to.'
40 **Claudio** Shakespeare's use of this name may indicate that he did not actively think of the King as 'Claudius' (see List of Roles, 3n.). Some productions substitute 'Horatio', which simplifies the matter, but Goldberg insists on the aptness of what he calls 'a circuit from Claudio to Claudius where all characters are lost in the letter' (313).
43 ***naked*** Hamlet means 'without any possessions', or possibly 'unarmed'.
45–6 ***eyes . . . recount*** Speaking to eyes might sound illogical, but *eyes* was a conventional metonymy for the royal presence; see 1.2.116 and Fortinbras's 'We shall express our duty in his eye' (4.4.6).
45 ***you pardon*** Jenkins prefers F's '*your Pardon*'; *y*^{u}/*y* is an easy error.
46 ***occasion*** circumstances
sudden return Jenkins adopts both F's additions (see t.n.) but suggests the latter is 'a players' addition'.
48 **abuse** trick, deception
and . . . thing? i.e. is the whole thing a trick? Preferred by Hibbard to F's 'Or no such thing?'
49 **character** handwriting
51 **devise** explain, resolve (*OED v.* 13); F's 'aduise' provides an easier meaning. (The same spelling occurs in Q2 for 'deuise' at 62.)

41 Of . . . brought them] *om. F* 41–2 Laertes . . . us.] *F; one line Q2* 42 SD] *F; not in Q2* 43 SD] *Capell* 45 *you*] *your F* 46 *the occasion*] *th'Occasions F* *sudden*] *sodaine, and more strange F* *return.*] *returne. / Hamlet. F* 48 abuse, and] abuse? Or *F* 49–51 'Tis . . . me?] *prose F* 51 devise] aduise *F*

LAERTES
I am lost in it, my lord, but let him come.
It warms the very sickness in my heart
That I live and tell him to his teeth
'Thus didst thou.'
KING If it be so, Laertes –
~~As how should it be so, how otherwise?~~
Will you be ruled by me?
LAERTES Ay, my lord,
So you will not o'errule me to a peace.
KING
To thine own peace. If he be now returned
As checking at his voyage, and that he means
No more to undertake it, I will work him
To an exploit, now ripe in my device,
Under the which he shall not choose but fall.
And for his death no wind of blame shall breathe
But even his mother shall uncharge the practice
And call it accident.

52 **lost in** baffled by
53 **warms** i.e. does good to
54 **I live** Jenkins prefers F's 'I shall live', perhaps on metrical grounds; RP suggests the F reading might be an error for 'I live and shall tell'.
55 **didst** Jenkins follows Dover Wilson in emending to 'diest', which is attractive (and supported by Q1's 'thus he dies', 15.5) but not strictly necessary.
55–6 **If . . . otherwise** Presumably the King is talking about Hamlet's return and wondering whether to believe the letter or to see it as a trick. He is deciding not to grant the interview on Hamlet's terms but to exploit the situation to entrap him.
58 **So** so long as
60 ***As . . . voyage** as a result of deviating from or giving up his voyage. *Check* is a term used of hawks being diverted from their prey; Dowden cites *TN* 3.1.64, 'check at every feather'. Q2's 'the King' seems an easy misreading of F's 'checking'; some editors, e.g. Jennens, adopt the Q6 reading (see t.n.).
that i.e. if it is the case that
62 **ripe . . . device** i.e. which I have fully developed as a scheme (ready to be put into effect)
65 **uncharge the practice** find the plot blameless (because undetected). *Practice* often has negative connotations: see 136 and 5.2.302.

52 I am] I'm *F* 54 I] I shall *F* 55 didst thou] he dies *Q1;* diddest thou *F;* diest thou *Cam¹ (1964) (Marshall)* 55–7 If . . . me?] *F lines* ²so: / me? / 57–8 Ay . . . peace.] *Steevens; one line Q2* Ay . . . will] If so you'l *F* 60 checking] *F;* the King *Q2;* liking not *Q6*

LAERTES My lord, I will be ruled
The rather if you could devise it so
That I might be the organ.
KING It falls right.
You have been talked of since your travel much,
And that in Hamlet's hearing, for a quality
Wherein they say you shine. ~~Your sum of parts~~
~~Did not together pluck such envy from him~~
~~As did that one, and that in my regard~~
~~Of the unworthiest siege.~~
~~LAERTES~~
~~What part is that, my lord?~~
~~KING~~
~~A very ribbon in the cap of youth:~~
~~Yet needful too, for youth no less becomes~~
~~The light and careless livery that it wears~~
~~Than settled age his sables and his weeds~~

66–80 **My . . . graveness** These lines are not in F: 'the cut is sensitive and proper' (Edwards); 'evidently a deliberate cut, designed to speed up the action by removing some of the *indirections* Claudius has recourse to in his approach to Laertes' (Hibbard). Pennington, however, describes this as 'one of Shakespeare's great temptation scenes' (123) and clearly relished every moment of it when he played the King. The discussion of Laertes' *parts* (71) or attributes is to some extent repeated at 5.2.91–105, when Osric conveys the King's praise of him to Hamlet, who responds by parodying the style of the message; this later passage is also omitted from F.

68 **organ** instrument
It falls right that will fit excellently

71 **sum of parts** entire list of attributes; one can still speak of 'a man of parts' to mean a man with numerous good qualities.

74 **siege** rank, importance

76 **very ribbon** usually glossed 'mere decoration', but the King is not dispraising the attribute: he seems rather to mean 'the absolute pinnacle of accomplishment' or 'the finishing touch' (comparable to 'On Fortune's cap we are not the very button', 2.2.224). Q2/F's 'ribaud' is assumed to be a turned letter error for 'riband', but it might also suggest a link with the puzzling 'ribaudred hag of Egypt' (*AC* 3.10.10).

77 **becomes** suits (or is suited by)

78 **livery** literally 'uniform': the King likens the fashionable art of fencing to a garment appropriate to *light and careless* young men.

79 **sables** furs, or robes trimmed with fur (see 1.2.240, 3.2.123 and nn.)
weeds clothes

66–80 My . . . graveness.] *om. F* 76 ribbon] *(*ribaud*)*

~~Importing health and graveness.~~ Two months since
Here was a gentleman of Normandy –
~~I have seen myself, and served against, the French~~
~~And they can well on horseback, but this gallant~~
~~Had witchcraft in't, he grew unto his seat~~
~~And to such wondrous doing brought his horse~~
~~As had he been incorpsed and demi-natured~~
~~With the brave beast. So far he topped my thought~~
~~That I in forgery of shapes and tricks~~
~~Come short of what he did.~~
~~LAERTES~~ ~~A Norman was't?~~
~~KING~~
~~A Norman.~~
~~LAERTES~~ ~~Upon my life, Lamord!~~
~~KING~~ ~~The very same.~~

80 **Importing . . . graveness** indicating a care for health and dignity. Editors have found the association of *health* (rather than 'wealth') with *age* incongruous, though one might understand *health* as 'care for one's health'; Jenkins glosses 'orderly well-being, stability'.
80 Having omitted 66–80, F begins again with 'Some two months hence', which completes the line beginning 'And call it accident' (66).
82 **I have** F's elision improves the metre.
served taken part in military action
83 **can . . . horseback** know how to ride well; for this use of *can*, Hope (2.1.2a) compares *PT* 13–14, 'Let the priest in surplice white, / That defunctive music can'. *Can* is explicitly preferred to F's 'ran' by MacDonald and adopted by Hibbard and Oxf without comment.
gallant stressed on first syllable; daring or spirited man
85 **doing** behaviour, performance
86 **As** as if
incorpsed made into one body (*OED*'s first use)
86–7 **demi-natured . . . beast** sharing, participating in the nature of the noble or fearless animal. (The King is imagining the Norman and his horse as being like the mythical Centaur, half man and half horse.)
87 ***topped my thought** exceeded my expectation; Q2's 'topt me thought' could mean something like 'excelled, as I thought', but *me/my* is a common error. Jenkins and Edwards conflate to read 'topped my thought' (as does Jennens).
88 **forgery . . . tricks** imagination of feats (of horsemanship)
89 **Come . . . did** cannot compete with what he actually performed
90 **Lamord** Editors have suggested topical references – understandably perhaps, because the matter of the Norman and his horsemanship seems

80 Two] Some two *F* since] hence *F* 82 I have] I'ue *F* 83 can] ran *F* 84 unto] into *F* 86 had he] *F;* he had *Q5* demi-natured] (demy natur'd), *F* 87 topped] past *F* my] *F;* me *Q2* 90 Lamord] *Lamound F*

~~LAERTES~~
~~I know him well. He is the brooch, indeed,~~
~~And gem of all the nation.~~
~~KING~~
Who ~~He~~ made confession of you
And gave you such a masterly report
For art and exercise in your defence,
And for your rapier most especial,
That he cried out 'twould be a sight indeed
If one could match you. ~~Th'escrimers of their nation~~
~~He swore had neither motion, guard nor eye~~
~~If you opposed them.~~ Sir, this report of his
Did Hamlet so envenom with his envy
That he could nothing do but wish and beg
Your sudden coming o'er to play with you.
Now out of this –
LAERTES What out of this, my lord?

rather tangential to the real skill in question, that of fencing. They have also noted the closeness of the name to *la mort* (death).

91 **brooch** ornament, 'star'

93 **made . . . you** testified to your ability; perhaps *confession* implies that the Norman was reluctant to praise the Dane.

95 **art . . . defence** skilful practice of the art of self-defence. Wright, 192, argues that *art and exercise* is another hendiadys.

96 **rapier** a fashionable weapon for duelling around 1600: see 5.2.128n.
especial four syllables; either this form or F's 'especially' could be used adverbially.

98 **If . . . you** if anyone could be found to compete with you

98–100 **Th'escrimers . . . them** Again Edwards and Hibbard argue that the F 'cut' is beneficial.

98 ***Th'escrimers** skilled fencers (French *escrimeurs*).

99 **had** would have
motion (correct or practised) movement
eye faculty of visual perception

101 **envenom** embitter (literally, poison – a characteristically Shakespearean anticipation of the literal suggestion which soon follows)

103 **coming o'er** i.e. return from France
with you F's 'with him' is more grammatical, but either makes sense.

104 **What . . . this** Laertes' interruption may imply his impatience, or perhaps that the King has paused for thought.

92 the] our *F* 96 especial] especially[c] *F* 98 you.] *(*you;*); you F* 98–100 Th'escrimers . . . them.] *om. F* 98 Th'escrimers] *Oxf (White); the* Scrimures *Q2* 100 Sir, this] Sir. This *F* 103 you] him *F* 104 What] Why *F*

KING

Laertes, was your father dear to you?
Or are you like the painting of a sorrow,
A face without a heart?

LAERTES Why ask you this?

~~KING~~

~~Not that I think you did not love your father~~
~~But that I know love is begun by time~~
~~And that I see in passages of proof~~
~~Time qualifies the spark and fire of it.~~
~~There lives within the very flame of love~~
~~A kind of wick or snuff that will abate it,~~
~~And nothing is at a like goodness still,~~
~~For goodness growing to a pleurisy~~
~~Dies in his own too much. That we would do~~
~~We should do when we would, for this 'would'~~
~~changes~~
~~And hath abatements and delays as many~~

105–24 The King insists (even in the abbreviated F version – see 112–21n.) that revenge is a natural concomitant of love.

106 **painting . . . sorrow** The King's metaphor recalls his description of Ophelia as being like a *picture* in her madness (4.5.86) and the First Player's reference to Pyrrhus as a '*painted tyrant*' (2.2.418).

110 **passages of proof** experiences which put this to the test

111 **qualifies** modifies, i.e. reduces

112–21 Edwards regrets what he sees as a deliberate cut in F 'since the passage is of such great interest thematically, and so illuminating of Claudius' theory of life', but Hibbard thinks an audience may become 'impatient at Claudius' elaborate moralizing'.

113 **wick or snuff** The *wick* is the fibre in a lamp or candle which is ignited to provide light; the *snuff* is the part of the wick which is slowly consumed and needs to be trimmed occasionally. The King seems to be saying that love is lessened by the very thing that feeds it (in contrast to Hamlet's observation of his mother: 'As if increase of appetite had grown / By what it fed on', 1.2.144–5).

114 **at . . . goodness** at the same level of goodness

115 **pleurisy** excess; literally an inflammation of the chest, sometimes spelt 'plurisy' and mistakenly derived from Latin *plus*, *pluris* (more) – hence seen as a result of an excess of humours

116–19 **That . . . accidents** Dent cites 'He that will not when he may, when he would he shall have nay' as proverbial (N54).

118 **abatements** reductions

112–21] *om. F* 113 wick] *(weeke)* 115 pleurisy] *(plurisie)*

~~As there are tongues, are hands, are accidents,~~
~~And then this 'should' is like a spendthrift's sigh~~ 120
~~That hurts by easing. But to the quick of th' ulcer~~
Hamlet comes back. What would you undertake
To show yourself in deed your father's son
More than in words?

LAERTES To cut his throat i'th' church.

KING

No place indeed should murder sanctuarize. 125
Revenge should have no bounds. But, good Laertes,
Will you do this? Keep close within your chamber;
Hamlet returned shall know you are come home;
We'll put on those shall praise your excellence
And set a double varnish on the fame 130
The Frenchman gave you, bring you in fine together
And wager on your heads. He being remiss,

119 **tongues . . . hands** i.e. other people's words and actions
120 **spendthrift's sigh** i.e. the vain regret of a man who has spent his money. Q5's 'spend-thrift sigh' is adopted by Dowden, Spencer, Jenkins, Edwards and Hibbard: in this reading the sigh itself is the *spendthrift*. *Pleurisy* (115) is characterized by difficult and painful breathing.
121 **hurts by easing** i.e. gives pain at the same time as it relieves it
quick heart, most sensitive part (see Hamlet's *ulcer* metaphor at 3.4.145–7)
123 ***in . . . son** Malone's emendation seems justified by the contrast with *in words* in 124.
125 **should murder sanctuarize** '[The King's] remark runs in two directions at once. (1) No church should offer sanctuary and protection to a man who like Hamlet has committed murder; (2) no church should be regarded as a sanctuary where the throat-cutting you mention cannot be carried out' (Edwards). We may recall Hamlet's refusal to kill the King at prayer in 3.3.
127 **Will . . . this** Despite the question marks in Q5 and F2 (see t.n.), Jenkins argues that this is not a question but a condition – i.e. *if* you do this, you will 'Requite him for your father' (137).
Keep close stay concealed. The King may not want to risk a chance encounter between Laertes and Hamlet (such as occurs in 5.1).
129 **put . . . shall** organize some people who will
130 **fame** reputation
131 **in fine** in conclusion, finally
132 ***wager on** F's reading is the more idiomatic expression (see 5.2.88), and 'on' could easily be misread as 'o'r'.
132 **remiss** careless, negligent

120 spendthrift's] *Pope* (spend-thrift's); spend thirfts *Q2;* spend-thrifts *Q3;* spend-thrift *Q5, Ard*^{2}
123 in . . . son] *Malone;* indeede your fathers sonne *Q2;* your Fathers sonne indeed *F;* your Father's Son in deed *F4* 127 this? . . . chamber;] *Q5* (this? . . . chamber,); this, . . . chamber, *Q2F;* this, . . . Chamber? *F2* 132 on] *F;* ore *Q2*

~~Most generous and free from all contriving,~~
Will not peruse the foils, so that with ease,
Or with a little shuffling, you may choose
A sword unbated and in a pass of practice
Requite him for your father.
LAERTES I will do't.
And for that purpose I'll anoint my sword.
I bought an unction of a mountebank
So mortal that, but dip a knife in it,
Where it draws blood no cataplasm so rare,
Collected from all simples that have virtue

133–4 **Most . . . foils** See Edmund's reflections on Edgar: 'a brother noble, / Whose nature is so far from doing harms / That he suspects none' (*KL* 1.2.177–9). Perhaps the King overlooks the evident 'contrivance' of *The Murder of Gonzago* in order to make Laertes' role in the plot seem easier.

133 **generous** noble, free from meanness (or suspicion)
contriving scheming, deception

134 **peruse** scrutinize
foils light swords used for fencing, rendered comparatively harmless by the placing of buttons on their points

135 **shuffling** sleight of hand (mixing up of the foils). Some editors suggest that *shuffling* means 'evasive dealing' here as it does at 3.3.61, but *OED* gives this example under the literal sense (*vbl. sb.* 3).

136 **unbated** not blunted, i.e. not protected by a button. Jenkins stresses *sword* (as opposed to *foil*) in this line, but Shakespeare seems to use 'rapier', 'foil' and 'sword' as synonyms in this scene and in 5.2.
pass of practice either (1) a thrust intended as mere exercise (i.e. not a serious fight) or (2) a thrust characterized by treachery (see *practice* at 65 and at 5.2.302).

138 ***for that purpose** F's reading (adopted by Jenkins) seems preferable metrically to Q2's 'for purpose'.

139–44 **an unction . . . withal** Such a poison seems to belong to the world of legend rather than reality, like the drugs that cause Juliet in *RJ* and Imogen in *Cym* to appear to be dead for a while. In Q1 it is the King who suggests anointing the sword with poison.

139 **unction** ointment; often but not exclusively used in religious contexts, as in 'extreme unction', the final rite of the Christian church. This and 3.4.143 are Shakespeare's only uses of the word.
mountebank travelling salesman offering dubious cures and potions; as the name implies, he got up on a bench to cry his wares – as the principal character does in 2.1 of Ben Jonson's *Volpone* (1606) in order to see Celia.

140 **mortal** deadly, fatal
that, but dip F's 'I but dipt' may suggest that Laertes has previously tested the poison. In both readings the syntax changes, leaving this part of the sentence incomplete.

141 **cataplasm** medicinal poultice or plaster

142 **Collected from** composed of
simples . . . virtue herbs with healing properties

136 pass] (pace), *F* 138 that] *F; not in Q2;* the *Q3* 140 that] I *F* dip] dipt *F*

Under the moon, can save the thing from death
That is but scratched withal. I'll touch my point
With this contagion, that if I gall him slightly
It may be death.

KING Let's further think of this,
Weigh what convenience both of time and means
May fit us to our shape. If this should fail —
~~And that our drift look through our bad performance~~
~~'Twere better not essayed. Therefore this project~~
~~Should have a back or second that might hold~~
~~If this did blast in proof~~ Soft, let me see:
~~We'll make a solemn wager on your cunnings~~ —
I ha't!
When in your motion you are hot and dry
(As make your bouts more violent to that end)
And that he calls for drink, I'll have preferred him
A chalice for the nonce, whereon but sipping,

143 **Under the moon** perhaps just 'anywhere on earth', but see 3.2.250 for Lucianus' '*mixture rank, of midnight weeds collected*'.
144 **touch my point** anoint or smear the (*unbated*) point of my sword
145 **contagion** poisonous compound
gall graze, scratch
148 **May . . . shape** may suit us for the role we are to play
149 **drift look** intention be visible
bad performance failed attempt
150 **essayed** put to the test, attempted
151 **back or second** back-up or second string
hold prove effective
152 **blast in proof** go wrong (blow up) in practice
153 **your cunnings** your respective degrees of skill. F's 'commings' may be a version of the technical fencing term *venies* (from French *venir*, to come) used in Q1 at this point (15.18).
154 **I ha't** I have it (i.e. I've thought of the solution)
156 **As** i.e. and you should
157 **preferred** offered; F's 'prepar'd', though rejected by Hibbard, is adopted by Jenkins on the grounds that Q2's 'prefard' is a misprint since the spelling is unique in Shakespeare and the F reading is supported by Q1's 'a potion that shall ready stand'.
158 **chalice** drinking cup or goblet; like *unction* (139), the word occurs often, though not exclusively, in religious contexts.
for the nonce especially for the occasion

145–6 With . . . death.] *F; one line Q2* 148 shape. If . . . fail] *Rowe;* shape if . . . fayle, *Q2;* shape, if . . . faile; *F* 150 essayed] *(*assayd*), F (*assaid*)* 152 did] should *F* 153 cunnings] commings *F* 154–5] *Johnson; one line Q2F* 154 ha't] *(*hate*), F* 156 that] the *F* 157 preferred] *(*prefard*), Q3 (*preferd*); prepar'd F*

If he by chance escape your venomed stuck,
Our purpose may hold there. But stay, what noise?

Enter QUEEN.

QUEEN
One woe doth tread upon another's heel,
So fast they follow. Your sister's drowned, Laertes.

LAERTES
Drowned! O, where?

QUEEN
There is a willow grows askant the brook
That shows his hoary leaves in the glassy stream.

159 **stuck** thrust (with a sword). Q6's reading 'tuck', meaning a kind of sword or rapier (as at *TN* 3.4.223), was adopted by some eighteenth-century editors, e.g. Jennens.

160 **noise** Presumably sounds of lamentation made by the Queen and/or others. Hibbard has a SD '*Enter Gertrude* [*in tears*]'.

161–2 **One . . . follow** The Queen expresses the same sentiment as her husband at 4.5.78–9: 'When sorrows come they come not single spies / But in battalions.'

163 **Drowned!** Some productions and editions make this a question.
O, where? Laertes may seem impatient to rush off to find her.

164–81 **There . . . death** The Queen's description of Ophelia's death provides the material for what became one of the most frequently illustrated moments in the play even before the famous 1851 painting by John Everett Millais (now in Tate Britain, London, it provides one of the gallery's best-selling posters). A similar incident is recounted in *TNK* 4.1, but in that case the Jailer's Daughter is in fact saved from drowning by the witness, her Wooer. Some late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century productions ended this scene with a kind of tableau in which Ophelia's dripping body was carried onstage on a litter (see Hapgood). The film versions by Eleuterio Rodolfi (1917) and Laurence Olivier (1948) show the direct influence of Millais in depicting the moment; Branagh broke with cinematic tradition (and his own liking for flashbacks and other illustrations of narrated material) by *not* filming it (Jenkins, LN; see pp. 26–9; Peterson; and Figs 5 and 6).

164 **willow** The willow was traditionally associated with unrequited love; see Desdemona's 'song of willow' in *Oth* 4.3.
askant obliquely, i.e. across. This seems to be a variant of 'askance', though *OED*'s other examples date from 1633 and 1695. F's 'aslant' is a different word with a similar meaning.

165 **shows** i.e. reflects
hoary grey or white (usually associated with age or with cold as in 'hoar-frost'). F's 'hore' regularizes the metre but loses the internal rhyme.

159 stuck] tuck *Q6* 160 But . . . noise?] How now Gertred *Q1*; how sweet Queene *F*; how now sweet Queene *F2* 162 they] they'l *F* 164 askant the] aslant a *F* 165 hoary] (horry); hore *F*

Therewith fantastic garlands did she make
Of crowflowers, nettles, daisies and long purples,
~~That liberal shepherds give a grosser name~~
~~But our cold maids do dead men's fingers call them.~~
There on the pendent boughs her crownet weeds 170
Clambering to hang, an envious sliver broke,
When down her weedy trophies and herself
Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide
And mermaid-like awhile they bore her up,

166 Capell defends Q2 as implying that Ophelia's decision to decorate the tree was a spontaneous one and Dover Wilson adds the point that garlands made *with* willow signify 'disconsolate love'; by contrast the F reading (see t.n.) implies she 'came' *to* the tree with ready-made garlands. This could have a bearing on whether her death is accidental or premeditated. Edwards follows Q2 on the assumption that F's scribe misunderstood the line.
fantastic elaborate

167 **crowflowers** a common name for two different kinds of wild flowers, buttercups and ragged robins
long purples usually identified as a kind of wild orchid

168 **liberal** free-speaking
grosser name It is generally assumed that the *grosser name* relates to the testicle-shaped tubers of these plants; Jenkins suggests 'dogstones' and 'fool's ballocks'. (The Greek 'orchis' also means 'testicle'.) Wentersdorf, however, argues that the *long purple* is wild arum or cuckoo-pint which has a 'phallic' spadix and has also attracted *gross* names.

169 ***cold** i.e. chaste, the opposite of *liberal*. Q2's hypermetrical 'cull-cold' persists uncorrected in the seventeenth-century quartos and is retained by Riv (which glosses 'chaste'), but it is not listed in *OED* and Jenkins sees it as a false start in the manuscript.

170 **pendent** overhanging
crownet weeds coronet of wild flowers

171 **Clambering** probably disyllabic, as Q2/F's 'Clambring' indicates. Before Millais, most illustrations of this scene showed Ophelia in an upright posture, often perilously poised above the water; after 1851 she was usually depicted lying down (see Figs 5 and 6).
envious malicious
sliver twig or splinter; like Q1's 'sprig', the word was normally used of a part of a tree or bush much smaller than that implied here.

172 **trophies** i.e. garlands

173 **Fell** In the Queen's account, Ophelia's entry into the water seems like an accident, but in 5.1 suicide is suggested.

173–4 **Her . . . up** This passage is parodied in *Eastward Ho*, 4.1.66–75, when Slitgut observes Security's wife, who eventually comes safe ashore after a shipwreck in the Thames (see p. 57).

174 **mermaid-like** Mermaids are mythical creatures, half women and half fish.

166 Therewith] There with *F* make] come *F* 169 cold] *F;* cull-cold *Q2;* culcold *Q4* 170 crownet] *Cam*^{1}*;* cronet *Q2;* Coronet *Q3, F* 171 Clambering] *(*Clambring*) F* sliver] *F;* sprig *Q1* 172 her] the *F* 174 mermaid-like] *(*Marmaide like*), Q1F*

Which time she chanted snatches of old lauds
As one incapable of her own distress,
Or like a creature native and endued
Unto that element. But long it could not be
Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,
Pulled the poor wretch from her melodious lay
To muddy death.

LAERTES Alas, then she is drowned.

QUEEN
Drowned, drowned.

LAERTES
Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia,
And therefore I forbid my tears. But yet
It is our trick – nature her custom holds
Let shame say what it will. [*Weeps.*] When these are gone
The woman will be out. Adieu, my lord,

175 **Which time** during which time
lauds hymns. Some commentators have objected to *lauds* as unlikely given (1) the songs Ophelia sings in 4.5 and (2) the suggestion of suicide. Jennens prints *lauds* as 'the kind of music she entertained herself with just before she died', and Dover Wilson asserts that 'Ophelia dies crowned with flowers and singing hymns of praise to God'. Elze prints *lauds* but prefers Q1/F's 'tunes': 'Ophelia does not sing *lauds*, which are entirely foreign to her form of mental disease, but love ditties and songs of mourning.' Edwards dismisses 'tunes' as 'an intentional simplification by the playhouse scribe' and suggests Gertrude may be 'covering up'; he adds: 'But crazy hymn-singing might well have marked Ophelia's death.'

176 **incapable** uncomprehending
177 **endued** habituated, i.e. as if native
180 **wretch** often used to indicate a mixture of pity and affection, as the Queen uses it of Hamlet at 2.2.165 above, and in the Nurse's reference to the young Juliet as a 'pretty wretch' (*RJ* 1.3.44)
melodious lay sweet-sounding song
181 **she is drowned** Some performers take a cue from Q3/F (see t.n.) to represent Laertes as too stunned to take in the main point of the Queen's speech.
185 **our trick** the normal reflex or impulse of human beings
186 **these** these tears
187 **The . . . out** i.e. this feminine weakness will be finished with. Tears were often associated with women; see Lear's 'let not women's weapons, water-drops, / Stain my man's cheeks' (*KL* 2.2.469–70).

175 lauds] tunes *Q1F* 177 endued] *(*indewed*), F (*indued*)* 179 their] *Q1*; her *F* 180 lay] buy *F* 181 she is] *Q1*; is she *Q3, F* drowned.] *(*drownd.*), Q1 (*drownde:*)*; drown'd? *F, Q5*; drown'd! *Pope* 186 SD] *Ard*^{2}

I have a speech o'fire that fain would blaze
But that this folly drowns it. *Exit.*

KING Let's follow, Gertrude.
How much I had to do to calm his rage!
Now fear I this will give it start again.
Therefore let's follow. *Exeunt.*

[5.1] *Enter two Clowns* [*a* Gravedigger *and a* Second Man].

GRAVEDIGGER Is she to be buried in Christian burial,

188 ***o'fire** of fire, fiery; RP suggests Q2's 'a fire' might work as 'afire' implying inverted word order ('that fain would blaze into fire').
fain would is very eager to

189 **this folly** this foolish impulse (of weeping)
drowns F's 'doubts', usually read as 'douts' meaning 'does out, puts out, extinguishes', is adopted by Dowden, Jenkins, Edwards and Hibbard.

189–92 **Let's . . . follow** In some productions the Queen seems reluctant to *follow*, repelled by the King's brisk (and selfish) focus on Laertes rather than on the tragic event she has just described. In Branagh's 1996 film this was the turning point for Julie Christie's Gertrude: 'She will not follow. Never again.' (141).

5.1 The three texts: this scene runs to 288 lines in Q2, 295 lines in F (see 33n. and 100n.), and 177 lines in Q1 (scene 16). Q1 has a shorter version of the opening conversation between the '*two Clowns*' and Hamlet's conversation with the Gravedigger. Q1 also omits the insistence on Hamlet's age at 135–53 and 163–4, and its SDs at the equivalent of 70 and 247 have proved controversial. Location and timing: this scene, a favourite with illustrators, takes place in a churchyard. There must be a small gap in time since Ophelia's death was announced at the end of 4.7, but apparently not long enough for Hamlet to have kept his engagement to meet the King '*Tomorrow*' (4.7.44). The King's reference to 'our last night's speech' in his words to Laertes at 283 may imply that this is the next day.

0.1 In all three texts the primary meaning of *clown* is 'rustic' rather than 'comedian', but here as elsewhere in Shakespeare rustic characters are used to provide comic relief (see List of Roles, 20n.). It is clear from the dialogue that the first speaker is a gravedigger (he refers to himself as a *sexton* at 153); the other is often played as a less experienced assistant, but he may be simply a passing acquaintance. His role in any case is to play the straight man or 'stooge' to allow the gravedigger to display his wit. Q6 adds '*with spades and mattocks*' to this SD: at least one such implement is needed at 29 and later, and at least two skulls must be produced from the *grave* (see 3–4 n., 70 SD and 92 SD).

1 **she** It is obvious to audience and readers (though not to Hamlet and Horatio later on) that this is Ophelia. In Saxo Grammaticus and François de Belleforest, the hero returns to find his

188 o'fire] *Cam²*; a fire *Q2*; of fire *F*; afire *Q5* 189 drowns] *Q2, F2*; doubts *F*; douts *Ard²* 5.1] *Q6* 0.1 *Enter two Clowns*] *F*; *enter Clowne and an other Q1* *a* Gravedigger *and*] *Ard² subst.* *a* Second Man] *this edn*; Another *Ard²* 1+ SP] *Ard²*; *Clowne. Q2 1F*

when she wilfully seeks her own salvation?

2 MAN I tell thee she is. Therefore make her grave straight. The ~~crowner~~ hath sat on her and finds it Christian burial. coroner

GRAVEDIGGER How can that be unless she drowned herself in her own defence?

~~2 MAN Why, 'tis found so.~~

~~GRAVEDIGGER It must be *se offendendo*. It cannot be else. For here lies the point: if I drown myself wittingly, it argues an act, and an act hath three branches — it is to act, to do, to perform. Argal, she drowned herself wittingly.~~

own obsequies being performed, Feng/Fengon having assumed he has been killed in England (see Bullough, 7.69 and 108, and pp. 66–9).
Christian burial i.e. burial in consecrated ground accompanied by Christian ritual, traditionally denied to suicides. From the Queen's account of the death of Ophelia in all three texts one might deduce it was accidental as much as wilful, but this discussion (which parodies legal arguments) relates to the play's wider interest in issues of salvation and damnation.

2 **wilfully . . . salvation** Either the Gravedigger implies that Ophelia is seeking heaven prematurely, or he is confusing *salvation* for 'damnation', as Dogberry does at *MA* 3.3.3.

3–4 **Therefore . . . straight** The Second Man seems to speak with some degree of professional authority here (see also 14n. and 29n.). The *grave* was (and is) usually represented by an open trapdoor leading to the space under the stage.

4 **straight** immediately
crowner colloquial version of 'coroner', an official whose job is to conduct inquests in cases of accidental or violent death
sat on her sat in judgement on her case

4–5 **finds . . . burial** i.e. adjudicates her worthy of burial in consecrated ground

6–7 **drowned . . . defence** Self-defence could (and can) excuse murder, but is comically inappropriate in most cases of suicide.

9 ***se offendendo*** Q2's 'so offended' could mean 'It must indeed be that kind of offence' (with the Gravedigger picking up *so* from the Second Man's previous line). Most editors prefer F's reading, taking it as the Gravedigger's error for '*se defendendo*', Latin for 'in self-defence'. The Q2 compositor might have had difficulty with the Latin here, as at 12.

10 **wittingly** knowingly

11–12 **three . . . perform** It is generally agreed that Shakespeare is alluding to the famous suicide (by drowning) of Sir James Hales in 1554: the subsequent legal arguments over his property involved a claim that 'the act of self-destruction' was divided into three parts, the imagination, the resolution and the perfection (see Jenkins, LN).

12 ***Argal** therefore (a corruption of *ergo*, the Latin form which is found in Q1). Q2 reads 'or all', but F has 'argall' here and both texts have 'argall' at 19 and 44.

2 when she] that *F* 3+ SP] *this edn; Other. Q2F; 2. Q1* Therefore] and therefore *F* 9 *se offendendo*] *F;* so offended *Q2* 11–12 to act] an Act *F* 12 do] doe and *F* Argal] *F;* or all *Q2*

~~2 MAN Nay, but hear you, goodman delver.~~
~~GRAVEDIGGER Give me leave. Here lies the water – good. Here stands the man – good. If the man go to this water and drown himself, it is, willy-nilly, he goes. Mark you that. But if the water come to him and drown him, he drowns not himself. Argal, he that is not guilty of his own death shortens not his own life.~~
~~2 MAN But is this law?~~
~~GRAVEDIGGER Ay, marry is't, Crowner's 'quest law.~~
2 MAN Will you ha' the truth on't? If this had not been a gentlewoman she should have been buried out o'Christian burial.
GRAVEDIGGER Why, there thou sayst, and the more pity that great folk should have countenance in this world to drown or hang themselves more than their ~~even~~ fellow Christen. Come, my spade. There is no ancient

14 **goodman delver** 'neighbour digger'. The Second Man addresses the Gravedigger by his occupation, though some have taken 'Delver' to be the man's actual (appropriate) name. In addition to being used when addressing someone by their occupation, *goodman* could be used when condescending to someone of lower social status, as when Holofernes addresses 'goodman Dull' at *LLL* 4.2.36 and 5.1.143.

15–16 **Here . . . good** In performance the Gravedigger can use tools and bones as props to act this out, rather as Launce acts out his farewell to his family in *TGV* 2.3 ('This shoe is my father', etc.). In Yukio Ninagawa's production at London's Barbican Centre in 1998 the Gravedigger used a bottle of mineral water at this moment.

17 **willy-nilly** whether he is willing or not (will he? nil he?)
Mark take note, remember

20 **death shortens** It is conceivable that the comma between these two words, in both Q2 and F, indicates the Gravedigger's comic timing.

22 **'quest** inquest

23 **on't** of it

24–5 **out o'** out of, outside

26 **there thou sayst** i.e. you've made a good point. The priest's reference to *great command* at 217 seems to confirm the Gravedigger's cynicism.

27 **countenance** permission, authority (i.e. they get away with it – at least as far as getting Christian burial)

28–9 **even-Christen** fellow Christians (a collective form)

29 **Come, my spade** If this is a command to the Second Man to pick up and pass the tool, the Gravedigger is now the one speaking with authority (see 3–4n. and 14n.). But he could be addressing the tool as he picks it up.
ancient venerable, well-established

14 goodman delver] *(good man deluer), F (Goodman Deluer)* 17 willy-nilly] *(will he, nill he) F* 18 that.] *(that,) that? F* 20 death shortens] *(death, shortens) F* 23 on't] *(an't), F* 25 o'] *Jennens; a Q2; of F* 28–9 their even-Christen] *F; other people Q1*

gentlemen but gardeners, ditchers and grave-makers. They hold up Adam's profession.

2 MAN Was he a gentleman?

GRAVEDIGGER 'A was the first that ever bore arms. I'll put another question to thee. If thou answerest me not to the purpose, confess thy self.

2 MAN Go to.

GRAVEDIGGER What is he that builds stronger than either the mason, the shipwright or the carpenter?

2 MAN The gallows-maker, for that outlives a thousand tenants.

GRAVEDIGGER I like thy wit well, in good faith. The gallows does well. But how does it well? It does well to those that do ill. Now, thou dost ill to say the gallows is built stronger than the church. Argal, the gallows may

30 **ditchers** men who make and repair ditches

31 **hold up** keep up (the noble reputation of)

32 **gentleman** a reference to the proverbial rhyme, 'When Adam delved and Eve span, / Who was then the gentleman?' (Tilley, A30); the rhyme implies that there were no 'gentlemen' or distinctions between people of different social classes in Eden.

33 **bore arms** had a coat of arms, the mark of a gentleman. Jenkins attributes Q2's omission of an additional passage in F (see t.n.) to a compositor's error, an eyeskip from one *arms* to another. Shakespeare apparently assisted his father in his successful attempt to obtain a coat of arms from the Heralds' College in 1596; see Honan, 228–9. Duncan-Jones (84–91) points out that his first negotiations with the Heralds took place in the mid-1590s, when his son Hamnet or Hamlet was still alive.

35 **to the purpose** i.e. correctly
confess thyself i.e. prepare for death. Q2 has a full stop after 'thy selfe', while F has a long dash; editors tend to adopt the latter and to quote the proverb 'Confess thyself and be hanged' (Tilley, C587).

36 **Go to** shut up (a common expression indicating objection or impatience). In F, the long dash after *confess thyself* in 35 may suggest that *Go to* is an interruption.

38 **mason** i.e. stonemason

39 **gallows-maker** one who makes the frames or gallows (consisting of one or two upright posts and a crossbeam) used for hanging criminals
that i.e. the gallows. References to 'a gallows' in the singular are common.

42 **does well** (1) makes a good answer; (2) provides a good service

44–5 **may . . . thee** i.e. may serve its purpose by punishing you

33 'A] He *F* arms.] Armes. / *Other.* Why he had none. / *Clo.* What, ar't a Heathen? how dost thou vnderstand the Scripture? the Scripture sayes *Adam* dig'd; could hee digge without Armes? *F* 35 thy self] (thy selfe.), *F* (thy selfe –) 39 that] that Frame *F*

do well to thee. To't again, come.

2 MAN Who builds stronger than a mason, a shipwright or a carpenter?

GRAVEDIGGER Ay, tell me that and unyoke.

2 MAN Marry, now I can tell.

GRAVEDIGGER To't!

2 MAN Mass, I cannot tell.

GRAVEDIGGER Cudgel thy brains no more about it, for your dull ass will not mend his pace with beating. And when you are asked this question next, say a grave-maker. The houses he makes lasts till doomsday. Go get thee in and fetch me a stoup of liquor.

[*Exit Second Man.*]

Sings.

In youth when I did love, did love,

45 **To't again** have another try
48 **unyoke** unyoke the oxen (from the plough), i.e. put an end to your labour
49 **Marry** by (the Virgin) Mary
50 **To't** get on with it
51 **Mass** by the mass
52 **Cudgel thy brains** proverbial (Tilley, B602)
53 **your . . . beating** a variant of the proverb 'A dull ass must have a sharp spur' (Dent, A348.1)
55 **doomsday** See 1.1.119, 2.2.234 and nn.
56 **in and** F's '*Yaughan*' is generally taken to be an unusual spelling of 'Johan' or possibly 'Joan', presumably the owner of the alehouse.
stoup pitcher or jug, as at 5.2.244; it is difficult to find a relevant meaning for Q2's 'soope' (which is an easy misreading), though Jennens defends it as 'the clownish pronunciation of 'sup', which Riv retains.
56 SD *There is no SD in Q2, F or Q1, but the command (somewhat more peremptory in Q1: 'Fetch me a stope of beere, goe') is presumably obeyed. Mahood (*Bit Parts*, 16) notes that the liquor never arrives and compares this rather casual handling of a subsidiary role with the moment in *MA* 2.3 when Benedick's page never returns with the book he has been sent to fetch.
57–60 a version of a popular song, 'The Aged Lover Renounceth Love', written by Thomas Lord Vaux. His first stanza reads: 'I loathe that I did love, / In youth that I thought sweet: / As time requires for my behove / Methinks they are not meet.' The Gravedigger's version seems to turn this stanza into a more straightforward celebration of careless youth (see Jenkins, LN, and see Appendix 6 for a discussion of the music traditionally used). While Hamlet finds the Gravedigger's singing inappropriate, it quickly becomes clear that the theme of his song is mortality. See also 67–70, 89–92.

55 houses] *Q1;* Houses that *F* lasts] *F;* Last *Q1, Q3, F4* 56 in and] to *Yaughan F* stoup] *Q1* (stope), *F* (stoupe); soope *Q2;* sup *Riv (Kermode)* SD] *this edn* 57, 67, 89 SD] *F; Song. opp. line Q2; not in Q1*

Methought it was very sweet
To contract-a the time for-a my behove,
O, methought there-a was nothing-a meet! 60

Enter HAMLET *and* HORATIO.

HAMLET Has this fellow no feeling of his business? 'A sings in grave-making.

HORATIO Custom hath made it in him a property of easiness.

HAMLET 'Tis e'en so. ~~The hand of little employment hath the daintier sense.~~ 65

GRAVEDIGGER (*Sings.*)

But age with his stealing steps
Hath clawed me in his clutch
And hath shipped me into the land

59–60 **-a . . . -a** These extrametrical syllables are either the Gravedigger's decorations of his lyric or his grunts as he works.

59 **To . . . behove** to pass the time for my own pleasure

60 **meet** appropriate

60.1 See t.n. for variant placings; Hamlet and Horatio must enter in time to hear the Gravedigger singing. In most productions he is not aware of their presence until Hamlet addresses him at 110–11.

61 **'A** he (also at 80, 142, 143, 155, 157, 161, 169 and 194)

63–4 **a . . . easiness** a matter of indifference (*it* being the *business* of *grave-making*)

66 **hath . . . sense** is more sensitive (proverbial?)

***daintier** Q2's 'dintier' has no relevant meaning; *TxC* suggests it may represent an acceptable spelling of the alternative 'ei-' pronunciation.

67–70 The Gravedigger combines two stanzas in Vaux's song (see 57–60n.), the relevant lines being 'For age with stealing steps, / Hath clawed me with his crutch; / And lusty life away she leaps, / As there had been none such', and 'For beauty with her band / These crooked cares hath wrought, / And shipped me into the land, / From whence I first was brought.'

68 **clawed** The word is in Vaux and provides stronger alliteration with *clutch* than F's 'caught'.

69 **shipped . . . land** transported me to the land (of death): *age* in the Gravedigger's version and 'beauty' in Vaux's have the same effect. (F's 'intill' is an archaic and originally northern form of *into* according to Blake, 5.4.2, who notes that it is unclear whether, since the word occurs in a song, it is meant to indicate the character's social or geographical background.)

59–60] *this edn;* To contract ô the time for a my behoue, / O me thought there a was nothing a meet *Q2; To contract O the time for a my behoue, / O me thought there was nothing meete F* 60.1] *after 56 Q1 subst.; after 51 F subst. (Enter Hamlet and Horatio a farre off.)* 61 'A] that he *F* 62 in] at *F* 66 daintier] *F;* dintier *Q2* 68 clawed] *caught F* 69 into] *intill F*

As if I had never been such. 70

[*Throws up a skull.*]

HAMLET That skull had a tongue in it and could sing once. How the knave jowls it to the ground, as if 'twere Cain's jawbone, that did the first murder. ~~This~~ might be the pate of a politician ~~which this ass now o'erreaches, one that would circumvent God, might it not?~~ 75

~~HORATIO It might, my lord.~~

~~HAMLET Or of a courtier which could say, 'Good morrow, sweet lord, how dost thou, sweet lord?'~~ This might be my Lord Such-a-One, that praised my Lord

70 SD *Q1's 'he throwes up a shovel' is adopted by Capell and defended by Holderness and Loughrey, but it is not clear what 'throwing up' a shovel might mean (unless we assume, with Riv, that 'shovel' means 'shovelful of earth'); *skull* is supported by Hamlet's immediate response and by his *There's another* at 93.

71–205 **That . . . flaw** Holleran points out that Hamlet's reflections on death and mortality here in effect supply the funeral sermon that is missing from Ophelia's *maimed rites* (208). This moment in *Hamlet* is clearly recalled in Charlemont's meditations in the churchyard in 4.3 of Cyril Tourneur's *The Atheist's Tragedy* (1611). It may seem surprising that Hamlet postpones his sensational revelations ('*words to speak in thine ear* [which] *will make thee dumb*', 4.6.23–4) until the following scene.

72 **jowls** hurls (with a pun on *jowl* meaning 'jaw')

73 **Cain's . . . murder** This is the play's third reference to the primal fratricide: see 1.2.105n. and 3.3.37n. Traditionally (though not biblically) Cain was thought to have killed Abel with the *jawbone* of an *ass* (an event dramatized in the medieval cycle plays, e.g. 'The Killing of Abel' in the Wakefield cycle), which is relevant to Hamlet's train of thought here. Shaheen points out that the idea may have come from the story of Samson killing a thousand Philistines with an ass's jawbone in Judges, 15.15–16.

74 **pate** head

politician one who practises 'policy' in the sense of scheming or manipulation

o'erreaches outwits, triumphs over. F's 'o're Offices' is adopted by Jenkins, who glosses it 'lords it over (by virtue of his office)' and comments, 'The preference of editors and bibliographers for Q2's "ore-reaches", an obvious substitution, is astonishing.' Jennens, however, defends *o'erreaches*, which 'seems preferable, when applied to a politician, not as an *insolent officer*, but as a *circumventing*, scheming man'; Caldecott quotes Johnson's opinion that both readings are authorial.

79–80 **that . . . beg it** See *Tim* 1.2.213–15: 'And now I remember, my lord, you gave good words the other day of a bay courser I rode on. "'Tis yours, because you lik'd it.'

70 SD] *Capell; he throwes vp a shouel. Q1, after equivalent of 69* 72 [2]the] th' *F* 'twere] it were *F* 73 This] It *F* 74 now] *om. F* o'erreaches] o're Offices *F* 75 would] could *F* 78 [2]sweet] good *F*

Such-a-One's horse when 'a went to beg it, might it not?

HORATIO Ay, my lord.

HAMLET Why, e'en so. And now my Lady Worm's – chapless and knocked about the mazard with a sexton's spade. ~~Here's fine revolution an we had the trick to see't. Did these bones cost no more the breeding but to play at loggets with them? Mine ache to think on't.~~

GRAVEDIGGER (*Sings.*)

A pickaxe and a spade, a spade,
~~For and a shrouding sheet,~~
~~O, a pit of clay for to be made~~
~~For such a guest is meet.~~

[*Throws up another skull.*]

~~HAMLET There's another! Why, may not that be the skull of a lawyer? Where be his quiddities now, his quillets,~~

80 'a . . . it he went to him to beg to be given it; Jenkins prefers F's 'meant' over *went*, perhaps because it is supported by Q1.

83 **my Lady Worm's** ambiguous: perhaps '[the skull of] my lady who is now food for worms' or perhaps 'my Lady Worm's [skull]', where 'Lady Worm' is an ironic title. Benedick refers to a man's conscience as 'Don Worm' in *MA* 5.2.79 (see 3.2.126n. on this parallel to Hamlet's earlier musings).

84 **chapless** Chaps or chops are the jaws or cheeks, the latter being relevant here. The term still survives in a culinary context: 'Bath chap' is a dish made from a pig's head and associated with the town of Bath (see Grigson, 245–6).
***mazard** i.e. head (literally, a *mazard* or mazer is a drinking bowl, which the skull is seen to resemble); Q2's 'massene' is not recorded by *OED*.

85 **revolution** alteration or reversal (of social hierarchy)

86 **trick** skill, knack

86–7 **Did . . . them?** i.e. was the value of bringing up these people so negligible that one can play games with their bones?

87 **loggets** a game rather like skittles or alley-bowls in which pieces of wood (loggets) were thrown at a post or tree

89–92 The equivalent stanza in Vaux (see 57–60n.) reads 'A pickaxe and a spade, / And eke a winding sheet, / A house of clay for to be made, / For such a guest most meet.'

90 **For and** 'and moreover. Not the gravedigger's vulgarism, but a regular ballad idiom (*OED* for *conj.* 5)' (Jenkins).

94 **quiddities** excessively subtle scholastic arguments concerning the *quidditas*

80 'a] he *Q1F* went] meant *Q1*, *Q3*, *F* 83 Worm's] (wormes), *F* (Wormes) 84 chapless] (Choples), *F* mazard] *F*; massene *Q2*; mazer *Q3* 85 an] (and); if *F* 87 them] 'em *F* 92 SD] *Capell* 93 Why,] *Ard*^{2}; why *Q2F* may] mai't *Q1*; might *F* 94 quiddities] Quiddits *F* 94 quillets] *F*; quillites *Q2*; Quirkes and quillets *Q1*; quillities *Q3*

his cases, his tenures and his tricks? Why does he suffer this mad knave now to knock him about the sconce with a dirty shovel and will not tell him of his action of battery? Humh! This fellow might be in's time a great buyer of land, with his statutes, his recognizances, his fines, his double vouchers, his recoveries. To have his fine pate full of fine dirt! Will vouchers vouch him no more of his purchases and doubles than the length and breadth of a pair of indentures? The very conveyances of his lands will scarcely lie in this box, and must

or essence of a thing
quillets (1) small pieces of land; (2) verbal quibbles (see entry for 'quillets' in Sokol & Sokol).

95 **tenures** property titles
tricks The phrase 'law-tricks' was current; John Day's play *Law Tricks* was performed in 1604.

96 **mad** wild, i.e. irreverent. Jenkins comments, 'It is odd that editorial tradition has preferred F's inferior *rude*.' The Q2 reading perhaps expresses Hamlet's appreciation of the Gravedigger's eccentricity, while the F reading deplores his irreverence.
sconce head

97–8 **action of battery** lawsuit charging physical assault

99–100 **his statutes . . . recoveries** Hamlet uses legal terminology relating to transactions in land: *statutes* were securities for debts or mortgages, *recognizances* were bonds relating to debts, *fines* and *recoveries* were legal fictions used in the *conveyancing* (the legal transfer of ownership) of land, *vouchers* and *double vouchers* were ways of securing third parties as guarantors, and *recoveries* were suits for obtaining possession (see entries for 'fine and recovery' and 'conveyance' in Sokol & Sokol). Hamlet's interest in property and inheritance in this context seems to relate to his own position as in effect a disinherited son (see 1.1.88n.).

100 **fines** The word, with its appropriate connotation of finality, leads Hamlet on to the puns *fine pate* (handsome head) and *fine dirt* (powdered earth) at 101.
recoveries Jenkins includes F's additional line (see t.n.), presumably on the grounds that the omission was an accidental result of eyeskip in Q2.

101 **vouchers** Jenkins prefers F's 'his Vouchers'.

102 **doubles** Jenkins again prefers F's 'double ones too'.

103 **a pair of indentures** Two copies of a legal agreement would be made on a single sheet of paper that would then be cut on a jagged line so that each party had a copy and the exact fit would prove authenticity. Spencer whimsically suggests that Hamlet may be punning with reference to the two tooth-bearing jaws of the skull.

103–4 **conveyances . . . lands** deeds relating to purchase of his own lands

104 **this box** presumably 'this coffin', with an allusion to a deed-box for containing legal documents (but Dover Wilson says the *box* is the skull, perhaps prompted by *memento mori* images of skulls with rolled documents in their eye-sockets as at *MV* 2.7.63–4)

96 mad] rude *F* 100 recoveries. To] (recoueries, to); Recoueries: Is this the fine of his Fines, and the recouery of his Recoueries, to *F* 101 vouchers] his Vouchers *F* 102 doubles] double ones too *F* 104 scarcely] hardly *F*

~~th'inheritor himself have no more, ha?~~
~~HORATIO Not a jot more, my lord.~~
~~HAMLET Is not parchment made of sheepskins?~~
~~HORATIO Ay, my lord, and of calves' skins too.~~
~~HAMLET They are sheep and calves which seek out assurance in that.~~ I will speak to this fellow. Whose grave's this, sirrah?
GRAVEDIGGER Mine, sir,
[*Sings.*]
O, a pit of clay for to be made –
HAMLET I think it be thine, indeed, for thou liest in't.
GRAVEDIGGER You lie out on't, sir, and therefore 'tis not yours. For my part I do not lie in't, yet it is mine.
HAMLET Thou dost lie in't, to be in't and say it is thine. 'Tis for the dead, not for the quick. Therefore thou liest.
GRAVEDIGGER 'Tis a quick lie, sir, 'twill away again from me to you.
HAMLET What man dost thou dig it for?
GRAVEDIGGER For no man, sir.

105 **inheritor** possessor, i.e. the lawyer himself (who has not inherited his lands but bought them); see *Tem* 4.1.154: 'all which it inherit'.
107 **parchment** i.e. as used for legal documents
109–10 **They . . . that** 'people who trust such documents are fools'. Dent cites 'As simple as a sheep' (S295.1) and 'As wise as a calf' (C16.1) as relevant proverbs.
110 **assurance** legal evidence of title or ownership
111 **sirrah** a variant of 'sir' which expresses an assumption of superiority on the part of the speaker. Hamlet continues to maintain social distance by his use of *thou* to the Gravedigger's more respectful *you* at 115. The pronouns are the same in Q1 but there Hamlet's 'my friend' suggests a different tone, possibly reflecting a more genial attitude in performance.
113 ***O** Q2 has 'or' and prints this line as regular dialogue. F has '*O*' and prints this and the next line of the song (as at 92) indented and in italics; Jenkins calls this 'evidently an actor's addition'.
118 **quick** living
120 **quick** fast-moving, i.e. I can quickly put it back on to you

105 th'inheritor] the Inheritor *F* 108 calves' skins] *(*Calues-skinnes*) Q1;* Calue-skinnes *F* 109 which] that *F* 111 sirrah] Sir *F* 112–13] *F; one line Q2* 112 SD] *Capell; italics as song F* 113 O] *F;* or *Q2* made –] *(*made.*); made, / for such a Guest is meete. F* 115 'tis] it is *F* 116 yet] and yet *F* 117 it is] 'tis *F*

HAMLET What woman, then?
GRAVEDIGGER For none, neither.
HAMLET Who is to be buried in't?
GRAVEDIGGER One that was a woman, sir, but rest her soul she's dead.
HAMLET [*to Horatio*] How absolute the knave is! ~~We must speak by the card or equivocation will undo us. By the Lord, Horatio, this three years I have took note of it, the age is grown so picked that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier he galls his kibe.~~ – How long hast thou been grave-maker?
GRAVEDIGGER Of the days i'th' year I came to't that day that our last King Hamlet overcame Fortinbras.
HAMLET How long is that since?
GRAVEDIGGER Cannot you tell that? Every fool can tell

129 **absolute** precise, strict
130 **by the card** We might say 'by the book': a *card* was a sailor's chart or compass; at 5.2.95 Osric refers to Laertes as 'the card or calendar of gentry', where *card* seems to mean 'model'.
equivocation quibbling – an element common to both legal arguments and comic dialogue (the latter exemplified by the puns on *lie* at 114–21)
131 **this three years** Q1's 'This seauen yeares' is surprising, given its assumption of a younger Hamlet, but 'seven years' occurs in folk-tales and in the Bible as a general term for a long time.
132 **picked** usually glossed as 'refined' or 'fastidious'. Hamlet seems to be commenting on social difference and implying that it is inappropriate for a lower-class person (*the peasant*, the Gravedigger) to equivocate with a higher-class person (*the courtier*, Hamlet himself); see *MA* 3.4.62–3, where Beatrice exclaims to Margaret, Hero's waiting woman, 'God help me, how long have you professed apprehension [i.e. made wit your profession]?', and similar comments by Lorenzo at *MV* 3.5.42–9.
133 **galls his kibe** rubs against the sore on his heel, i.e. follows him so closely that there is little distinction between them
135 **Of the days** F's 'Of all the dayes' echoes a phrase Shakespeare had used at *RJ* 1.3.25.
135–6 **that day . . . Fortinbras** The Gravedigger alludes to the events described at 1.1.79–94; we now learn how long ago they occurred, and that they coincided with Hamlet's birth. The implication that Hamlet's own grave has been waiting for him since the day he was born has been staged overtly, e.g. by Yuri Lyubimov, who in 1971 introduced the Gravedigger as a kind of prologue at the very beginning of the play and kept the grave onstage throughout (see Stříbrný, 119–20).

129 SD] *this edn* 131 this three] This seauen *Q1*; these three *F* took] taken *F* 133 heel] *Q1, F2*; heeles *F* [1]the] *Q1*; our *F* 134 been] been a *F* 135 Of] Of all *F* 136 overcame] o'recame *F*

that! It was that very day that young Hamlet was born – he that is mad and sent into England.

HAMLET Ay, marry. Why was he sent into England?

GRAVEDIGGER Why, because 'a was mad. 'A shall recover his wits there. Or if 'a do not, 'tis no great matter there.

HAMLET Why?

GRAVEDIGGER 'Twill not be seen in him there. There the men are as mad as he.

~~HAMLET How came he mad?~~

~~GRAVEDIGGER Very strangely, they say.~~

~~HAMLET How, strangely?~~

~~GRAVEDIGGER Faith, e'en with losing his wits.~~

~~HAMLET Upon what ground?~~

~~GRAVEDIGGER Why, here in Denmark. I have been sexton here, man and boy, thirty years.~~

HAMLET How long will a man lie i'th' earth ere he rot?

GRAVEDIGGER Faith, if 'a be not rotten before 'a die (as

139 **young Hamlet** As at 1.1.169, the adjective distinguishes Hamlet from his father. It is perhaps more surprising here, where the Gravedigger is about to tell us that Hamlet is in fact 30.

145 **seen** noticed

145–6 **There . . . he** The joke depends on reminding the English audience of the play's foreign setting, as when Portia in *MV* ridicules her English suitor and claims not to understand him because 'I have a poor pennyworth in the English' (1.2.69–70), or when characters such as Iago (*Oth* 2.3.71) or Trinculo (*Tem* 2.2.27–8) refer to visits to England.

148 **Very strangely** The Gravedigger implies 'in an unusual way', but *strangely* could also mean 'in a foreign or outlandish manner' and may lead on to the notion of *ground* in 151.

151 **Upon what ground** Hamlet implies 'For what reason?' but the Gravedigger equivocates by taking him literally.

153 **sexton** a secular church official whose duties included ringing bells and digging graves

thirty years In Q2 and F Hamlet's age is given clearly, by this and by the Gravedigger's insistence at 163–71 that Yorick (whom Hamlet remembers) has been dead for 23 years. The Gravedigger in Q1 omits the first statement altogether and says Yorick's skull has lain in the earth 'this dozen yeare', perhaps indicating that Hamlet is 18 rather than 30, an age which would seem more appropriate to his status as a student (see Jenkins, LN; see also List of Roles, 1n.). The precision in Q2/F is comparable to that in *Oth*, where Iago declares, 'I have looked upon the world for four times seven years' (1.3.313–14).

139 ²that] the *F* 140 is] was *F* 142–3 'a . . . 'A . . . 'a] he . . . hee . . . he *F* 143 'tis] *Q1* (t'is); it's *F* 145 him there. There] him, there *F* 153 sexton] sixeteene *F* 155 Faith] Ifaith *Q1F* 'a . . . 'a] hee . . . He *Q1F*

we have many pocky corpses that will scarce hold the laying in) 'a will last you some eight year – or nine year – a tanner will last you nine year.

HAMLET Why he more than another?

GRAVEDIGGER Why, sir, his hide is so tanned with his trade that 'a will keep out water a great while. And your water is a sore decayer of your whoreson dead body. Here's a skull now hath lien you i'th' earth three and twenty years.

HAMLET Whose was it?

GRAVEDIGGER A whoreson mad fellow's it was. Whose do you think it was?

HAMLET Nay, I know not.

GRAVEDIGGER A pestilence on him for a mad rogue. 'A poured a flagon of Rhenish on my head once! This

156 **pocky** pox-ridden, diseased. F's 'now adaies' after *corpses* is adopted by Jenkins without comment.

156–7 **hold . . . in** remain unrotten during the last rites and burial

158 **tanner** one who converts animal hides into leather by a process of 'tanning' i.e. steeping them in astringent solutions. It may be relevant that Shakespeare's father was a 'whittawer', a specialist in the preparation of soft, white leather, who regularly drew a pair of glover's compasses or a glover's stitching clamp when he made his mark on documents (see pp. 36–8 and Honan, 8).

162 **whoreson** literally 'son of a whore or prostitute'; used generally as an adjective of familiarity or contempt

163–4 **Here's . . . years** The Gravedigger is presumably guessing from where he found the skull: he cannot possibly 'recognize' it as Yorick's. (Branagh, however, in his 1996 film, made such recognition possible by casting as Yorick the comedian Ken Dodd, known for his pronounced buck teeth; see 174–84n.)

163 **lien** Q2's spelling 'lyen' may suggest an echo of the punning on *lie* at 114–21.

you ethical dative: 'for you'

163–4 **three and twenty years** F's version recommends adoption of this style of expansion of Q2's '23'. Mullaney points out the parallel with Leontes in *WT* who says that when he looked at his son 'methoughts I did recoil / Twenty-three years, and saw myself unbreech'd' (1.2.154–5). The 'breeching' of boys – dressing them in breeches or trousers – at the age of seven marked their transition from childhood into masculinity.

169–70 **'A poured . . . once** This may seem an odd thing for the King's jester to do to a gravedigger, although the latter is now presumably employed at the Court chapel.

170 **Rhenish** wine from the Rhine region in Germany

156 corpses] *(*corses*) Q1;* Coarses now adaies *F* 157 'a] He *Q1F* 161 'a] he *F;* it *Q1* 163 now] now: this Scul *F* hath lien you] *(*hath lyen you*);* has laine *F* i'th'] in the *F* 163–4 three and twenty] *F;* 23. *Q2;* this dozen *Q1* 166–7] *F lines* was; / was? / 169–70 'A poured] *(*a poured*), Q1 (*He powred*), F (*a pou'rd*)*

same skull, sir, was, sir, Yorick's skull, the King's jester.

HAMLET This?

GRAVEDIGGER E'en that.

HAMLET Alas, poor Yorick. I knew him, Horatio. A fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy. He hath bore me on his back a thousand times, and now how abhorred in my imagination it is. My gorge rises at it. Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft. Where be your jibes now – your gambols, your songs, your flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roar? Not one now to mock your own

171 **sir . . . sir** The additional *sir* in Q2 makes the Gravedigger's style of speech similar to Pompey's in *MM* 2.1.210–31.

Yorick's This is the first occurrence of the name (perhaps a version of Jorg or Jurek) of one of the most famous characters not to appear in a play (but see 174–84n.).

the King's jester As Elam points out (*TN* 2.4.11n.), 'A dead man's delight in his jester is something of a Shakespearean topos', noting that Feste is described as 'a fool that the Lady Olivia's father [formerly] took much delight in' and comparing the Countess's reference to the clown at *AW* 4.5.63–4: 'My lord that's gone made himself much sport out of him'. As in 3.2 (see 36–7n., 118n. and 266n.), the absence of the clown is noted, but if there is a topical reference here Duncan-Jones (35) argues that it may be to Richard Tarlton, the celebrated clown of the Queen's Men; he died in 1588, a date that would fit better with Q1's 'this dozen yeare' as compared with Q2/F's *three and twenty years* at 163–4.

172 **This?** Hamlet's words in Q1 at this point 'I prethee let me see it', imply that the Gravedigger hands the skull to him; it seems likely that he is holding it during his speech at 174–84. F also clarifies this by adding 'Let me see' at the beginning of 174.

174–84 Hibbard describes this as 'a superb flashback to Hamlet's boyhood'; Kenneth Branagh's 1996 film presented it literally as such.

175 **fancy** invention

176–7 **bore . . . abhorred** Q2's *bore* allows a pun on *bore/abhor*; in both Q2 and F Hamlet is revolted by the idea of his former physical contact with one who is now represented by a skull.

177 **abhorred** filled with horror (a unique usage, according to *OED*)

gorge literally 'throat' or 'stomach' but also 'contents of the stomach'

179 **jibes** taunts or scoffs

gambols playful tricks

181–2 **mock . . . grinning** In the Q2 reading, where *jibes* etc. are the subject, Hamlet seems to envisage Yorick's own jokes mocking his present condition. In F he is saying 'Is there no one now to mock your jeering?' F's 'Ieering' (jeering) is rejected by Edwards and Hibbard without comment, perhaps because Shakespeare associates death with *grinning* elsewhere, as when

171 [sir] Sir, this same Scull sir *F* was, sir] was one *Q1*; was *F* 174 Alas] prethee let me see it, alas *Q1*; Let me see. Alas *F* 176 bore] borne *F*; caried *Q1* now] *Q1*; *om. F* 177 in] *om. F* it is] is *F* 181 Not] No *F*

grinning, quite chapfallen. Now get you to my lady's table and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come. Make her laugh at that. Prithee, Horatio, tell me one thing.

HORATIO What's that, my lord?

HAMLET Dost thou think Alexander looked o'this fashion i'th' earth?

HORATIO E'en so.

HAMLET And smelt so? Pah!

HORATIO E'en so, my lord.

HAMLET To what base uses we may return, Horatio! Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander till 'a find it stopping a bung-hole?

HORATIO 'Twere to consider too curiously to consider so.

HAMLET No, faith, not a jot. But to follow him thither

Falstaff, contemplating the corpse of Sir Walter Blunt, comments, 'I like not such grinning honour as Sir Walter hath' (*1H4* 5.3.59–60).

182 **chapfallen** (1) lacking the cheeks or jaw (see 84n.); (2) crestfallen, dejected

182–4 **Now . . . come** Just before the entry of Ophelia's corpse, Hamlet repeats the traditional misogynistic attack on cosmetics that he voiced to her at 3.1.141–3 (see Jenkins, LN).

183 **table** presumably 'dressing-table'. Spencer refers to 'engravings of Death (represented by a skeleton) coming into a young lady's bedchamber while she sits at her toilet-table'. F's 'chamber' is adopted by Jenkins without comment, perhaps on the assumption that *table* is mistakenly repeated from 181.

184 **favour** facial appearance

187 **Alexander** Alexander the Great: a figure very much in Shakespeare's mind around 1599–1600; his 'Life' parallels that of Julius Caesar in Plutarch and through Fluellen Shakespeare sets up Henry V as an English equivalent (*H5* 4.7.11–53). The meditation here is echoed in Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling* (1622), when Diaphanta remarks, 'Earth-conquering Alexander, that thought the world / Too narrow for him, in the end had but his pit-hole' (4.1.60–1).

190 **smelt so** Dowden and Jenkins note that, according to Plutarch, Alexander's body in his lifetime was unusually sweet-smelling, though here the reference is to his corpse.

193–205 **Why . . . flaw** This speculation is very like Hamlet's earlier one about the worms eating Polonius (4.3.17–30); he seems fascinated by the literal as well as the spiritual 'afterlife'.

194 **bung-hole** A *bung* is the stopper for a cask or barrel; a *bung-hole* the outlet or 'mouth' it stops.

195 **too curiously** with excessive or inappropriate ingenuity

182 grinning] Ieering *F* chapfallen] *(*chopfalne*)* *F* 183 table] chamber *Q1F* 187 o'] *(a)*. *F* 190 so? Pah] *Q5;* so pah *Q2;* so: pah *Q3;* so? Puh *F* 193 Why] Why, *Ard*^{2} 194 'a] he *F* 195 consider too] consider: to *F*

with modesty enough and likelihood to lead it:
Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander
returneth to dust, the dust is earth, of earth we make
loam, and why of that loam whereto he was converted
might they not stop a beer-barrel?
Imperious Caesar, dead and turned to clay,
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away.
O, that that earth which kept the world in awe
Should patch a wall t'expel the water's flaw.

Enter KING, QUEEN, LAERTES *and* [*other Lords, with a* Priest *after*] *the corpse.*

But soft, but soft awhile, here comes the King,

197 **modesty** moderation
it Presumably the antecedent is *imagination* (193).
199 **returneth to dust** As at 1.2.71 and 4.2.5, there is an allusion to the Church of England burial service: 'Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust'; see also Genesis, 3.19: 'Thou art dust, and to dust shalt thou returne.'
200 **loam** clay moistened to make plaster
202 **Imperious** Malone cites F's 'Imperiall' as an example of its habit of substituting more familiar words. Shakespeare, however, seems to use both forms indifferently: 'imperious Agamemnon' (*TC* 4.5.171), 'imperial Caesar' (*Cym* 5.5.475), and the same variant between Q1 and F *Tit* occurs at 1.1.254.
204 **that earth** 'i.e. Caesar's body, which Antony calls "thou bleeding piece of earth" (*JC* 3.1.254)' (Hibbard).
205 **t'expel . . . flaw** 'to keep out the flow of water', with *flaw* as a nonce variant of 'flow' for the sake of the rhyme. F's 'winters flaw' is generally adopted (e.g. by Jenkins), with *flaw* glossed as 'squall' or 'shower of rain'.
205.1–2 It is odd that neither Q2 nor F includes the Priest in this SD: see 215 SPn. Gurr and Ichikawa (152) argue that Osric must be among the '*attendants*' or '*Lords*' here because he 'notes Hamlet's misleading claim to be king, a claim he makes much of in the next scene' (see also pp. 133–4). The dialogue in all three texts indicates that if there is a coffin it is an open one. Many productions have a bell tolling at this point (see 222–3 and n.).
205.2 *corpse* In most modern productions, the 'corpse' is the actor of Ophelia rather than a dummy; this becomes obvious if Laertes lifts the body out of the grave at 239. Judging by the SDs cited for *body* and *corpse* in Dessen and Thomson, actors were probably used in other Elizabethan and Jacobean productions too.
206 **soft** be silent

198 'Alexander] as thus of *Alexander, Alexander Q1;* as thus. *Alexander F* 199 to] into *F* 202 Imperious] *Q1;* Imperiall *F* 205 water's] winters *F* 205.1–2] *(Enter K. Q. / Laertes and / the corse.) opp. 206–8; Enter King and Queene, Leartes, and other lordes, / with a Priest after the coffin. Q1, after 203; Enter King, Queene, Laertes, and a Coffin, / with Lords attendant. F, after 206* 206 soft awhile] soft, aside *F*

-The Queen, the courtiers. Who is this they follow?
And with such maimed rites? This doth betoken
The corpse they follow did with desperate hand
Fordo it own life. ~~'Twas of some estate.~~
~~Couch we awhile and mark.~~
[*Hamlet and Horatio stand aside.*]

LAERTES
What ceremony else?

HAMLET [*aside to Horatio*]
That is Laertes – a very noble youth, mark.

LAERTES
What ceremony else?

208 **maimed rites** maimèd; reduced or truncated (literally, mutilated or injured) rituals. It is not clear how this would be immediately apparent to Hamlet; perhaps the procession is shockingly small for what seems to be the funeral of a person *of some estate* (210). In Q1 he seems to imply almost the opposite by asking 'What funerall's this that all the Court laments?' Lavish nineteenth-century stagings of the scene with processions of mourning virgins made nonsense of this issue.

208–10 **This . . . life** In Olivier's 1948 film Horatio spoke these words, replying to Hamlet and realizing in horror whose funeral it was.

210 **Fordo** destroy
it its (Hope, 1.3.2c; see 1.2.215n.)
some estate considerable class, social standing

211 **Couch . . . mark** 'Let us conceal ourselves for a while and observe what happens.' Q1 has the more common 'Stand by a while.' Presumably the Gravedigger also stands aside; some editions and productions have him exit here, but Bristol (363) argues that his choric function would be weakened by such an exit. More prosaically, he needs to stay onstage to continue with the burial at the end of the scene.

212 **else** further (in addition to what has been performed). Like Hamlet, Laertes seems shocked by the *maimed rites*, his response here (repeated at 214) echoing his complaint about the *obscure funeral* awarded to his father (4.5.205).

213 It is surprising that Hamlet needs to explain who Laertes is to Horatio, though it is true that they have not appeared onstage together (see List of Roles, 10n.). It is even more surprising that Horatio has apparently not told Hamlet about Ophelia's madness (which he witnessed in 4.5; however, see 4.5.2, 4 SPn. on the problematic nature of his presence in that scene); presumably he has not heard of her death since he supposedly left the Court to meet Hamlet at the end of 4.6. But an audience would not have time to worry about such things.

207 this] that *F* 208 rites] *Fc;* rights *Fu* 209 desperate] *(desprat), F (disperate)* 210 it] its *Q5;* it's *F3* of] *om. F* 211 SD] *Capell subst.* 213 SD] *Oxf*

PRIEST

Her obsequies have been as far enlarged
As we have warranty. Her death was doubtful;
And but that great command o'ersways the order
She should in ground unsanctified been lodged
Till the last trumpet: ~~for charitable prayers,~~
~~Flints and pebbles should be thrown on her.~~
Yet here she is allowed her virgin crants,
Her maiden strewments, and the bringing home
Of bell and burial.

LAERTES

Must there no more be done?

215 SP *Q2 has '*Doct.*', presumably short for '*Doctor*' (of Divinity), but '*Doctor*' might be misleading in a modern text, suggesting a medical practitioner; Laertes addresses him as *churlish priest* at 229.
215 **obsequies** funeral rites
enlarged extended, prolonged
216 **we** The priest presumably speaks on behalf of the church.
warranty authorization
Her . . . doubtful i.e. the manner of her death gave rise to the suspicion of suicide
217 **great command** the command of powerful people; the priest sometimes looks at the King as he says this.
o'ersways the order prevails over the normal proceeding (or possibly 'overrules the decision of the monastic order'?)
218 **should . . . been** F's reading (see t.n.) is 'a manifest attempt at "improvement"', according to Jenkins who argues that the Q2 version is idiomatic. Q1 is more explicit about *ground unsanctified*: 'She had beene buried in the open fieldes.'
219 **last trumpet** Shaheen points out that the Geneva Bible has *trumpet* in passages relating to the end of the world: 'At the last trumpet: for the trumpet shall blowe, and the dead shal bee raised up' (1 Corinthians, 15.52; see also 1 Thessalonians, 4.16); other translations have 'trump'.
for instead of
prayers The plural seems more appropriate (see t.n.) in the context (and is adopted by Hibbard).
220 F's 'Shardes' (pieces of broken pottery) before *Flints* does regularize the metre, though it seems unusual for a scribe or compositor to omit the first word in a line.
221 **virgin crants** garlands appropriate to a virgin; *crants* is from German *kranz* = crown, and is cognate with 'Rosencrantz' (see List of Roles, 11n.). F's 'Virgin Rites' is assumed by Edwards to be a substitution by the playhouse scribe who did not understand the rare *crants*; Hibbard, following Caldecott, sees the author revising by using a more familiar word here.
222 **strewments** strewings, i.e. flowers scattered on the coffin or grave (a Shakespearean coinage: see 1.2.93n.)
222–3 **the . . . burial** ceremony of bringing her to her last resting place with bell-ringing and burial rites

215, 224 SP PRIEST] *Q1F; Doct. Q2* 216 warranty] warrantis *F;* warrantise *Dyce* 218 been] haue *F* 219 prayers] praier *F* 220 Flints] Shardes, Flints *F* 221 crants] Rites *F*

PRIEST No more be done.
We should profane the service of the dead
To sing a requiem and such rest to her
As to peace-parted souls.
LAERTES Lay her i'th' earth,
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
May violets spring. I tell thee, churlish priest,
A ministering angel shall my sister be
When thou liest howling.
HAMLET [*aside to Horatio*] What, the fair Ophelia?
QUEEN
Sweets to the sweet. Farewell.
I hoped thou shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife:
I thought thy bride-bed to have decked, sweet maid,
And not have strewed thy grave.
LAERTES O, treble woe
Fall ten times double on that cursed head

226 **requiem** funeral song or chant; F's 'sage [solemn] Requiem' is adopted by Jenkins: 'Presumably the word defeated the Q2 compositor.'
227 **peace-parted souls** those who have departed in peace or died a natural death
229 **violets** previously associated with youthful love at 1.3.7 and with death or the loss of love at 4.5.177
231 **liest howling** i.e. in hell (or purgatory)
232 **Sweets . . . sweet** The Queen probably places or throws flowers on the corpse or coffin as she says this.
233–4 **I hoped . . . decked** The Queen again makes it clear that she had not shared the assumption of Polonius and Laertes that Ophelia would have been an inappropriate bride for Hamlet (see 3.1.37–41n.). The painful thought is like the more explicit transformation of wedding to funeral in *RJ*, where Capulet remarks, 'Our bridal flowers serve for a buried corpse' (4.5.89).
236 **double** F's 'trebble' is generally adopted without comment as a deliberate repetition of the word in 235 (where F, confusingly, has 'terrible'); line 236 is at the top of a new page in Q2 so the compositor was not influenced by having the previous line immediately in front of him.
236–8 **that . . . of** Laertes curses Hamlet, whose *wicked deed* (the murder of Polonius?) he blames for Ophelia's madness; Hamlet, who refuses to accept any blame at 278–9, never comments directly on her madness or on her *doubtful death* (see 5.2.204–21 and n.).
cursed cursèd

226 a] sage *F* 231 SD] *Folg*^{2} 232 Sweets . . . sweet. Farewell] *(*sweets . . . sweet, farewell*) Q1;* Sweets, . . . sweet farewell *F* 235 have] t'haue *F* treble woe] terrible woer *F* 236 double] trebble *F*

Whose wicked deed thy most ingenious sense
Deprived thee of. Hold off the earth awhile,
Till I have caught her once more in mine arms.
[*Leaps in the grave.*]
Now pile your dust upon the quick and dead
Till of this flat a mountain you have made
~~T'o'ertop old Pelion or the skyish head~~
~~Of blue Olympus.~~
HAMLET [*Comes forward.*] What is he whose grief
Bears such an emphasis, whose phrase of sorrow
Conjures the wandering stars and makes them stand
Like wonder-wounded hearers? This is I,
Hamlet the Dane.
LAERTES [*Leaps out and grapples with him.*]
The devil take thy soul!

237 **most ingenious sense** excellent intelligence or rationality
238 **Hold . . . awhile** hold off from filling the grave with earth for a while
239 **caught . . . arms** Many productions have Laertes lift the body out of the grave at this point.
240 **quick** living
241 **flat** level ground
242–3 **Pelion . . . Olympus** mountains in Greece; Olympus was supposed to be the home of the gods; the Titans tried to reach and conquer it by piling Pelion on top of the neighbouring peak Ossa (see 272, and Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, book 1). Golding's translation (1.171–8) implies that Ossa was piled on top of Pelion, and Dent lists 'To heap Ossa upon Pelion' as proverbial (O81).
242 **skyish** close to the sky – and therefore *blue* (243) (*OED*'s first usage)
243–5 **What . . . Conjures** In Q1 it is Leartes who says 'Whats he that conjures so?'
244 **Bears . . . emphasis** is expressed in such forceful language
245 **wandering stars** planets (both Q2 and F suggest elision with their spelling 'wandring'). Irving interpreted these words literally by staging this scene at night.
stand stand still
246 **wonder-wounded** struck with wonder
246–7 **This . . . Dane** In performance, Hamlet often throws off a cloak at this point, perhaps the *sea-gown* he refers to at 5.2.13. See the equally grim reclamation of identity towards the end of *KL*: 'My name is Edgar and thy father's son' (5.3.167). In calling himself *the Dane* Hamlet may be asserting his claim to the crown of Denmark; see 1.1.13, 1.2.44, 1.2.109 and 5.2.61.
247 SD *While F is like Q1 in having an SD instructing Laertes to leap into the grave, Q1 is alone in having a SD at

239 SD] *Q1 subst., F* 242 T'o'ertop] *(*To'retop*); to o're top Q1F* 243 SD] *Pope subst.* grief] griefes *F* 245 Conjures] Coniure *F* wandering] *(*wandring*) F* 247 SD] *this edn; Hamlet leapes / in after Leartes, Q1 opp. equivalent of 241–5; om. F*

HAMLET

Thou pray'st not well.

~~I prithee take thy fingers from my throat,~~

~~For, though I am not splenative rash,~~ 250

~~Yet have I in me something dangerous~~

~~Which let thy wisdom fear. Hold off thy hand.~~

KING

Pluck them asunder.

QUEEN Hamlet! Hamlet!

LORDS Gentlemen!

HORATIO

Good my lord, be quiet.

HAMLET

Why, I will fight with him upon this theme 255

Until my eyelids will no longer wag.

this point: '*Hamlet leapes in after Leartes*'. This piece of staging is supported by the anonymous *Elegy on Burbage* – 'Oft have I seen him leap into the grave' – and it could provide a striking visual parallel with the Ghost's behaviour in 1.1, 1.4 and 1.5 if the trap was indeed used then, but it has been much disputed by editors who argue that Hamlet cannot be the aggressor here; Laertes must come out of the grave to attack him. (See *AYL* 1.1.51–78 for a similar situation where editors insert SDs to make it clear that Oliver is the aggressor rather than Orlando.) Another consideration is visibility: at the Globe in 2000 Hamlet did leap into the 'grave' made by the trapdoor, and the subsequent fight was not easily visible from the yard. For a comparative study of this moment in all three texts, see Zitner.

249 **I prithee . . . throat** Hamlet's phrasing is forced and cold, under the circumstances.

250 **splenative rash** hot-tempered; the spleen was seen as the seat of various emotions ranging from anger and melancholy to mirth. (F's version is generally adopted.) *OED* lists both 'splenative' and 'splenitive' as obsolete; the modern word is 'splenetic'.

253 Presumably the attendants obey the King and intervene.

253 SP LORDS **Gentlemen!** This SP and exclamation are not in F (but are added by Oxf and Hibbard).

254 SP F gives these words to '*Gen*'[*tlemen*]; perhaps this is related to its omission of part of 253. It seems more appropriate for Hamlet's friend to speak them.

254 **be quiet** calm down. At this point Rowe and other editors (e.g. Edwards) insert a SD: '*The Attendants part them.*'

256 **wag** move. Hamlet means 'until I have no life left at all'.

248–9] *Q1F; one line with turnover Q2* 250 For] *Q1;* Sir *F* rash] and rash *F* 251 in me something] something in me *Q1F* 252 wisdom] *Q1;* wisenesse *F* Hold off] *Q1;* Away *F* 253 SP LORDS] *Oxf subst.; All. Q2* Gentlemen!] *not in Q1F* 254 SP] *Gen. F*

QUEEN

O my son, what theme?

HAMLET

I loved Ophelia – forty thousand brothers
Could not with all their quantity of love
Make up my sum. What wilt thou do for her?

KING

O, he is mad, Laertes.

QUEEN

For love of God, forbear him.

HAMLET

'Swounds, show me what thou'lt do.
Woul't weep, woul't fight, woul't fast, woul't tear thyself,
~~Woul't drink up eisel, eat a crocodile?~~

258–60 **I . . . sum** Edwards quotes MacDonald: 'Perhaps this is the speech in all the play of which it is most difficult to get into a sympathetic comprehension.'

258 **forty thousand brothers** Q1's 'twenty brothers' is approved by Poel as an actor's emendation to remove an unnecessary exaggeration, but *forty* could be used as a general round figure, as 'forty winters' in *Son* 2.1 and 'forty shillings' in *MW* 1.1.183 (see also *four hours together* at 2.2.157 and Elze, 'Four hours').

262 **forbear** bear with, tolerate

263 **'Swounds** by God's wounds (a powerful oath, censored in F)
***thou'lt** thou wouldst; F's 'thou'lt' (which appears in Q2 at 272) is defended by *TxC* as a colloquialism.

264 **Woul't** wouldst thou (colloquial)

265 **eisel** Jenkins (LN) champions Theobald in seeing Q2's 'Esill' ('Esile' in F) as a spelling of *eisel* meaning vinegar; Shakespeare refers to 'Potions of eisel' as bitter medicines in *Son* 111.10, and there may be a reference to the 'vinegar . . . mingled with gall' offered to Christ on the cross (Matthew, 27.48; 'aycel' in Wyclif's Bible). Dowden wonders whether 'eisel' might refer to a river, perhaps the Yssel, and Q1's 'vessels' may indicate an early misunderstanding.

265–6 This passage may be echoed in *Eastward Ho*, 4.2.349–51: 'Offer not to speak, crocodile . . . Thou hast learnt to whine at the play yonder'; see p. 57.

265 **eat a crocodile** Edwards suggests 'to increase the flow of hypocritical tears' (the meaning picked up in *Eastward Ho*), while Hibbard says the crocodile is included 'on account of the toughness of its skin'. Shakespeare refers to the former association at *2H6* 3.1.226 and at *Oth* 4.1.245.

263 'Swounds, show] Shew *Q1;* Come show *F* thou'lt] (th'owt) *F;* thou wilt *Q1* 264 Woul't weep] (Woo't weepe) *F* woul't fight] (woo't fight) *F;* Wilt fight *Q1* woul't fast] (woo't fast); wilt fast *Q1; om. F* woul't tear thyself] (woo't teare thy selfe) *F;* wilt pray *Q1* 265 Woul't] (Woo't) *F;* Wilt *Q1* eisel] *Theobald;* Esill *Q2;* vessels *Q1; Esile F*

I'll do't. Dost come here to whine,
To outface me with leaping in her grave?
Be buried quick with her, and so will I.
~~And if thou prate of mountains let them throw~~
~~Millions of acres on us till our ground,~~
~~Singeing his pate against the burning zone,~~
~~Make Ossa like a wart.~~ Nay, an thou'lt mouth,
I'll rant as well as thou.

QUEEN This is mere madness,
And thus awhile the fit will work on him.
~~Anon, as patient as the female dove~~
~~When that her golden couplets are disclosed,~~
~~His silence will sit drooping.~~

HAMLET Hear you, sir,

266 **Dost come** defended by Jenkins as idiomatic, compared with F's 'Dost thou come', though the latter may be preferable metrically
267 **outface** overcome, defeat ('stare out' or 'stare down' in modern idiom)
268 **quick** alive (as at 118 and 240)
269 **prate** boast
270 **acres** large quantities of land (an acre is 4,840 square yards or 4,046.86 square metres)
our ground the ground on top of us (or possibly 'Denmark')
271 **Singeing . . . zone** scorching its top by touching the sun's orbit
272 **Ossa** see 242–3n.
like a wart as small as a wart (on the skin)
thou'lt mouth if you want to shout
273 SP F gives this speech to the King, who uses a similar metaphor at 3.1.163–6; Q1 gives a shorter version of it to him, but also has the Queen apologize to Leartes ('Alas, it is his madnes makes him thus / And not his heart') after Hamlet's exit. MacDonald expresses uncertainty: 'It would be a fine specimen of the King's hypocrisy; and perhaps indeed its poetry, lovely in itself, but at such a time sentimental, is fitter for him than for the less guilty queen.' Edwards follows Q2 on the grounds that 'this was an error on the part of the playhouse scribe which was carried over into performance.' Some editors find the language 'motherly', and the content is consistent with the Queen's assertion of Hamlet's madness (see 4.1.7–8).
273 **mere** complete, unmitigated
274 ***thus** Q2's 'this' may be supported by 'What am I that thou shouldst contemn me this?' (*VA* 205), but 'this' may have been induced in that case by the need to rhyme with 'kiss' in *VA* 207, and *thus* is more idiomatic.
276 **golden couplets** the twin young of the dove, *golden* because covered with yellow down
disclosed hatched (see 3.1.165)
277 **His . . . drooping** i.e. he will be quiet and contemplative

266 Dost come] Com'st thou *Q1*; Dost thou come *F* 273 SP] *Kin. F; King. Q1* 274 thus] *F*; this *Q2* 276 couplets] (cuplets); Cuplet *F*

What is the reason that you use me thus?
I loved you ever – but it is no matter.
Let Hercules himself do what he may,
The cat will mew and dog will have his day. *Exit.*

KING

I pray thee, good Horatio, wait upon him. *Exit Horatio.*
[*aside to Laertes*] Strengthen your patience in our
last night's speech,
We'll put the matter to the present push.
~~– Good Gertrude, set some watch over your son.~~
This grave shall have a living monument.
An hour of quiet thereby shall we see;
Till then in patience our proceeding be. *Exeunt.*

GERTRUDE exits

278–9 These lines may indicate that (1) Hamlet has indeed been physically attacked by Laertes rather than vice versa (see 247 SD and n.); (2) at this stage he denies any responsibility for killing Polonius or for driving Ophelia to madness and death.

280 **Let . . . may** i.e. even Hercules (see 1.2.153n. and 1.4.83) couldn't stop me from doing what I intend to do (?). Perhaps Hamlet is deriding Laertes for ranting in 'Ercles' vein', as Bottom calls it (*MND* 1.2.37).

281 **The . . . day** 'Every dog has his day' was proverbial (Tilley, D464); Hamlet implies that, while the fight has been stopped for the moment, it isn't necessarily over.

282–3 **thee . . . your** The different pronouns for Horatio and Laertes in Q2 may express a different level of familiarity on the part of the King.

283 SD *The King must conceal his plan from the Queen and the others present. In Q1 Leartes responds, 'My lord, till then my soule will not bee quiet', suggesting a private exchange.

283–4 **Strengthen . . . We'll** 'if you draw renewed patience from remembering what we plotted last night, then we'll'

284 **present push** immediate trial

286 **living monument** enduring memorial. It is not clear what the King means by this. Does he imply that one who is *living* (i.e. Hamlet) will die to provide a *monument*? In this case, Laertes' revenge will compensate for the inadequate funerals of both his father and his sister (see 4.5.205n. and 5.1.208n. above).

287 **thereby** Jennens: '*Thereby* seems to refer to the living monument, i.e. Hamlet who is to be murdered.' It might refer rather to the period of grace allowed by the *watch* specified in 285. Jenkins prefers F's 'shortly'.

281 The . . . and . . . his] *F*; A . . . a . . . a *Q1* SD] *F*; *Exit Hamlet / and Horatio. Q2, opp. 281–2; Exit Hamlet and Horatio. Q1* 282 thee] you *F* SD] *om. F* 283 SD] *Rowe* your] you *F* 287 thereby] *Q2c, Jennens;* thirtie *Q2u;* shortly *F*

[5.2] *Enter* HAMLET *and* HORATIO.

HAMLET

So much for this, sir. Now shall you see the other:
You do remember all the circumstance?

HORATIO

Remember it, my lord?

HAMLET

Sir, in my heart there was a kind of fighting
That would not let me sleep. ~~Methought I lay~~
~~Worse than the mutines in the bilboes.~~ Rashly –

5.2 The three texts: this scene runs to 387 lines in Q2, 358 in F and 133 in Q1 (scene 17). F has a shorter version of Hamlet's conversation with Osric (see 92–120n.) and omits that with the Lord at 174.1–186; it has, however, an additional line after 56 and an additional passage after 66 (see Appendix 1). Q1 lacks most of the opening conversation with Horatio (though some of it is summarized in scene 14, Q1's unique scene between the Queen and Horatio); it also has a shorter version of the conversation with the '*Bragart Gentleman*', its equivalent of Osric, and most of the speeches are, as usual, shorter. Location and timing: this scene takes place in an indoor Court apartment large enough to accommodate the duel; it is referred to by Hamlet as *the hall* at 154, by the Gentleman as 'the outward pallace' in Q1. The scene presumably follows quickly on from the decision by the King and Laertes to put their plans *to the present push* at 5.1.284.

1 As in other scenes (e.g. 4.7), the characters enter in the midst of conversation. In this case Hamlet is fulfilling the promise of his letter ('*I have words to speak in thine ear will make thee dumb*', 4.6.23–4): *this* perhaps refers to what he has already told Horatio about his experiences, *the other* to what is to come; or *this* could be the official letter Hamlet was bearing from the King, *the other* the one he steals from his companions. Hamlet is carrying a paper – the *commission* he shows Horatio at 26. Film versions from Gade and Schall (1920) to Almereyda (2000; 116) have chosen to show the substitution of the papers but not the sea-fight, probably for financial reasons (but Russell Jackson informs us (privately) that Branagh originally intended to film the sea-fight).

1,4 **sir** Perhaps these usages denote a slight formality in Hamlet's tone (as of self-justification?). Or perhaps he is just urging Horatio to pay attention.

2 **circumstance** Shakespeare often uses this form where we use the plural.

3 **Remember . . . lord** i.e. how could I forget it?

5 ***Methought** it seemed to me. *OED* lists instances of Q2's 'my thought' as a variant in 1503 and 1621, but *methought* is the more usual 'modernization'. The difference would probably not be heard.

6 **mutines** mutineers
***bilboes** fetters; Shakespeare uses Q2's 'bilbo' (singular) twice in *MW* to mean a sword (1.1.149, 3.5.106). Both were named after Bilbao in Spain, whence various iron artefacts were imported.
Rashly – Having described his action

5.2] *Rowe* 1 shall you] let me *F* 5 Methought] *F*; my thought *Q2* 6 bilboes] *F*; bilbo *Q2*

And praised be rashness for it – let us know
Our indiscretion sometime serves us well
When our deep plots do fall – and that should learn us
There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will.

HORATIO That is most certain.

HAMLET

Up from my cabin,
My sea-gown scarfed about me, in the dark
Groped I to find out them, had my desire,
Fingered their packet, and in fine ~~withdrew~~ unsealed
~~To mine own room again, making so bold,~~
~~My fears forgetting manners, to unfold~~

as *rash* (hasty or impulsive), Hamlet breaks off to reflect on *rashness* before resuming his story again at 12.

7 **let us know** i.e. we should acknowledge

8 **indiscretion** Hamlet seems to mean an action committed without premeditation (rather than a careless one).
sometime Shakespeare uses this form and F's 'sometimes' indifferently.

9 **deep plots** It is only in Q2 (at 3.4.200–8) that Hamlet has given notice of premeditated action against Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.
fall fall down, prove inadequate. F/Q2u's 'paule' means falter or fail; Dowden compares Menas' reference to Pompey's 'palled fortunes' (*AC* 2.7.82).
learn 'F's substitution of *teach* suggests that *learn* in this sense, common in Shakespeare and still surviving in dialect, may already have been losing favour' (Jenkins).

10–11 **There's . . . will** Hamlet attributes a seemingly chance circumstance (his sleeplessness) to divine purpose, as he does later: 'There is special providence in the fall of a sparrow' (197–8).

10 **ends** (1) purposes; (2) destinations

11 **Rough-hew** fashion or shape crudely or carelessly (the metaphor is from cutting timber coarsely, without smoothing or finishing it)

13 **sea-gown** seaman's coat
scarfed wrapped like a scarf

14 **find out them** See the same transposition of the pronoun in *JC* 1.3.133–4: 'Cinna, where haste you so? / To find out you.' Perhaps 'find-out' is treated as a single word in both instances.
them i.e. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern

15 **Fingered their packet** pilfered their papers
in fine in conclusion

16 **room** cabin

16–18 **making . . . commission** Edgar in *KL* expresses a similar thought when opening the letters he has found on the body of Oswald, whom he has just killed: 'Leave, gentle wax; and manners blame us not. / To know our enemies' minds we rip their hearts, / Their papers is more lawful' (4.6.254–6).

17 **unfold** F's 'vnseale' is adopted by

7 praised] praise *F* 8 sometime] sometimes *F* 9 deep] deare *F* fall] *Q2c;* paule *Q2uF;* fail *Pope* learn] teach *F* 17 unfold] vnseale *F*

Their grand commission; where I found, Horatio,
A royal knavery, an exact command
~~(Larded with many several sorts of reasons~~
~~Importing Denmark's health, and England's too)~~
~~With, ha!, such bugs and goblins in my life,~~
That on the supervise, no leisure bated
– No, not to stay the grinding of the axe! –
My head should be struck off.

HORATIO Is't possible?

HAMLET
Here's the commission; read it at more leisure.
But wilt thou hear now how I did proceed?

HORATIO
I beseech you.

HAMLET
~~Being thus benetted round with villains,~~
~~Or I could make a prologue to my brains~~
~~They had begun the play.~~ I sat me down,
Devised a new commission, wrote it fair –

Jenkins without comment, perhaps because Shakespeare uses it elsewhere of letters, perhaps to avoid the rhyme with *bold* in 16. *Unfold* could conceivably be a misreading of MS 'vnseld'.

20 **Larded** decorated (see 4.5.38n.)
several separate, different

21 **Importing** signifying

22 **such bugs . . . life** my continued existence representing such (imaginary) bugs and monsters

23 **supervise** looking over, reading
no leisure bated i.e. with no time wasted

24 **stay** wait for
grinding sharpening

26 **Here's the commission** Hamlet presumably hands over the document.

29 **benetted round** surrounded as by a net. 'Netted' is the more common form: *OED* records this as the first use of 'benet'.
villains Editors since Capell have emended Q2/F's 'villaines' to 'villainies' as an improvement to both metre and sense.

30–1 **Or . . . play** Hamlet sees himself (his will?) as separate from his brain. This picks up the idea of *rashness* (6–7) and emphasizes again that his action was impulsive rather than premeditated.

30 **Or** an older form of 'ere' = before
make a prologue provide an outline of the forthcoming action (as, for example, the Prologue to *RJ* does)

32 **fair** in formal handwriting

19 A] Oh *F;* Ah, *Cam*[1], *Ard*[2] 20 reasons] reason *F* 22 ho!] (hoe), *F* (hoo,) 27 now] me *F* 29 villains] *F;* villainies *Capell, Ard*[2] 30 Or] Ere *F*

~~I once did hold it as our statists do~~
~~A baseness to write fair and laboured much~~
~~How to forget that learning, but, sir, now~~
~~It did me yeoman's service.~~ Wilt thou know
Th'effect of what I wrote?

HORATIO Ay, good my lord.

HAMLET

An earnest conjuration from the King,
As England was his faithful tributary,
~~As love between them like the palm might flourish,~~
~~As peace should still her wheaten garland wear~~
~~And stand a comma 'tween their amities,~~
~~And many such-like 'as', sir, of great charge,~~
That on the view and knowing of these contents,
~~Without debatement further more or less,~~
He should those bearers put to sudden death,
Not shriving time allowed.

~~HORATIO How was this sealed?~~

33 **statists** statesmen
34 **A baseness** something beneath me
36 **yeoman's service** the service of a faithful attendant
38–47 **An . . . allowed** As Hamlet describes his substituted commission, he parodies the affected language of diplomacy.
38 **conjuration** formal request
39 **tributary** a country paying tribute, usually as the result of having been defeated in some military action; Hamlet is supposed to be pursuing England's *neglected tribute* (see 3.1.168–9, 4.3.56–66).
41 **still** always (i.e. continue to – with implicit threat of war)
wheaten garland a traditional symbol of the prosperity fostered by peace
42 **stand . . . amities** This seems to mean 'stand like the shortest possible pause or impediment between their loves', a *comma* being the punctuation sign signifying the most minimal break. Theobald, following Warburton's suggestion, emended *comma* to 'commere' which he glossed as 'co-mother or guarantee', but this word does not occur in Shakespeare or in the *OED*.
43 **'as', sir** F's 'Assis' is usually printed 'as'es' or 'as-es'; both readings imply a list of clauses beginning with 'as' like those already given.
charge burden (allowing a pun on 'asses')
45 **debatement . . . less** further debate (Hamlet continues to parody 'official' language)
47 **shriving time** time for confession and absolution of their sins. Hamlet's father has complained that his sudden

37 Th'effect] The effects *F* 40 like] as *F* might] should *F* 43 'as', sir,] *(as sir); Assis F;* As's *Rowe, Ard*^{2} *('as'es)* 44 knowing] know *F* 46 those] the *F*

~~HAMLET~~

~~Why even in that was heaven ordinant.~~
~~I had my father's signet in my purse~~
~~Which was the model of that Danish seal~~ 50
~~Folded the writ up in the form of th'other,~~
~~Subscribed it, gave't th'impression, placed it safely,~~
~~The changeling never known.~~ Now the next day
Was our sea-fight, and what to this was sequent
Thou knowest already. 55

HORATIO

So Guildenstern and Rosencrantz go to't.

HAMLET

They are not near my conscience. Their defeat
Does by their own insinuation grow.

murder did not allow him time for confession (1.5.76–9), and Hamlet decided not to kill the King at 3.3.73–96 in case he was confessing his sins and therefore in a state of grace.

How . . . sealed The specificity of Horatio's question might raise the further issue of the availability of paper, pen, ink and sealing-wax.

48 **ordinant** controlling, ordaining events

49 **signet** small seal in the form of a signet-ring

50 **model** likeness, copy (not necessarily a smaller version, as is implied by modern usage)

that Danish seal presumably the royal seal on the original commission

51 **writ** written document

52 •**Subscribed** F's 'Subscrib'd' seems more appropriate than Q2's 'Subscribe', as *gave't* and *placed* are both past tense.

gave't th'impression i.e. sealed it

53 **changeling** substitution. The term was used for a child substituted by fairies for one they steal, like the changeling boy in *MND* 2.1.120.

54 **was sequent** followed

56 **go to't** i.e. go to their deaths. It is not easy to judge the tone of Horatio's comment in Q2; in F, Hamlet's reply begins with an additional line (see t.n. at 57) which may indicate that he receives it as a question or even a criticism. Edwards (14–19) argues that this was a crucial part of Shakespeare's revision; Jenkins includes it.

57 **defeat** destruction

58 **their own insinuation** their own act of winding their way in, ingratiating themselves. It is not clear whether Rosencrantz and Guildenstern know that they are supposed to be escorting Hamlet to his death; the King's instructions at 3.3.1–26 refer merely to the need to remove him from Denmark, and the fact that they continue their voyage after his capture by the pirates might imply that they think they are conveying other matters to the

48 ordinant] ordinate *F* 51 'the] *om. F* th'other] the other *F* 52 Subscribed] *F* (Subscrib'd); Subscribe *Q2* 54 sequent] sement *F* 55 knowest] know'st *F* 57 They] Why man, they did make loue to this imployment / They *F* defeat] debate *F* 58 Does] Doth *F*

'Tis dangerous when the baser nature comes
Between the pass and fell incensed points
Of mighty opposites.

HORATIO Why, what a king is this!

HAMLET

Does it not, think thee, stand me now upon?
He that hath killed my King and whored my mother,
Popped in between th'election and my hopes,
Thrown out his angle for my proper life
And with such cozenage. Is't not perfect conscience?

Enter [OSRIC,] *a courtier.*

OSRIC Your lordship is right welcome back to Denmark.

Insert (C) on 438A (next page)

(D)

King of England. Hamlet, however, sees them as the King's active accomplices here, as they clearly are in Saxo and Belleforest (Bullough, 7.67, 102).

60–1 **Between . . . opposites** Hamlet's metaphor anticipates the coming duel.

60 **pass** sword-thrust
fell incensed points incensèd; deadly and enraged weapons (it is of course those wielding the weapons who are *incensed*)

61 **opposites** opponents. Following on from his self-identification as *Hamlet the Dane* (5.1.246–7), Hamlet seems to see himself as the equal or rival of the King at this point.

62–6 **Does it . . . Is't** The change in sentence structure is particularly marked in Q2, where the sentence begun at 66 is left incomplete.

62 'Don't you think I am now under an obligation?' Q2 leaves the precise nature of this obligation undefined: see 66n. and Appendix 1.
think thee Hibbard notes a possible confusion between 'thinks it thee' (seems it to you) and 'thinkst thou' (what do you think).

63 **whored my mother** Hamlet now seems to see the Queen as a fellow victim of the King rather than as his dupe, as in 3.4.

64 **election** See 339 and 1.2.109 and n.

65 **angle** fishing hook and line
my proper life my own life

66 **cozenage** deception
Is't . . . conscience? Is it (my attitude or behaviour) not morally justifiable? In F Hamlet continues, 'To quit him with this arme', and there are a further 13 lines: see Appendix 1.

66.1 OSRIC Q2 has '*Enter a Courtier*' at this point, but he is named as 'young *Ostricke*' by the Lord at 176 and addressed by the King in the same way at 236 (see List of Roles, 18n.). He enters to announce the arrival of Fortinbras at 333.1 although he has not been given an exit after his previous line at 290. The treatment of the role is similar in F; he is simply '*a Bragart Gentleman*' in Q1 (17.4.1). Like the clowns in 5.1 he provides some comic relief, though Osric is merely the butt of Hamlet's mockery; he does not hold his own like the Gravedigger.

62 think] thinkst *F*; think'st *Dyce (Walker)* upon?] vpon *F* 66 conscience?] conscience, *F, followed by 14 additional lines of dialogue (68–81)* 66.1 OSRIC, *a courtier*] *a Bragart Gentleman Q1; young Ostricke F* 67+ SP] *F (Osr.); Cour. Q2; Gen[t]. Q1*

(4) F 5.2.68–5.2.81 (follows Q2 5.2.66)

HAMLET

. . . To quit him with this arm? And is't not to be
damned
To let this canker of our nature come
In further evil?

HORATIO

It must be shortly known to him from England
What is the issue of the business there.

HAMLET

It will be short. The interim's mine,
And a man's life's no more than to say one.
But I am very sorry, good Horatio,
That to Laertes I forgot myself,
For by the image of my cause I see

RETURN TO (D) on pg 438

(4) 'The absence of these lines from Q2 is difficult to explain except as an accidental omission' (Jenkins). Edwards and Hibbard both argue that they are part of an authorial revision.

1 **quit** requite, repay
damned condemned to hell. In the F reading, this picks up *perfect conscience* in Q2 5.2.66: Hamlet is arguing that it is morally justifiable to take revenge on the King and that it would be damnable to let him continue.

2 **canker** ulcer, sore (formerly the same as 'cancer')
of our nature i.e. of the human race

2–3 **come / In** enter into, commit

4–5 As at 5.2.56, Horatio's response can be performed (and read) as a relatively neutral comment, not the endorsement Hamlet seems to be seeking.

6 It presumably *The interim*, i.e. the time between the present moment and the enacting of Hamlet's revenge
interim's Thus F. Since Hanmer, many editors (including Jenkins and Hibbard) have emended to *interim is*, which regularizes the metre, but, as Edwards points out, there is no authority for this.

7 **a man's . . . one** a man's life is no longer than the time it takes to say *one*. Dent cites 'Man (Life) is but a figure of one' as proverbial (O50.1).

9 **I forgot myself** i.e. I behaved badly; as is clear from 12–13, Hamlet is regretting his words and actions at Ophelia's grave in 5.1.

10–11 **by . . . his** i.e. by thinking about my own obligation to revenge I recognize the same pattern in him. Despite this perception, Hamlet does not seem to see Laertes as a threat – a testimony to his nature as 'remiss / Most generous, and free from all contriving', as the King put it at 4.7.132–3. (See also Perdita at *WT* 4.4.384–5: 'By th' pattern of mine own thoughts I cut out / The purity of his.')

6–8] *Hanmer; F lines* short, / more / *Horatio*, /

HAMLET I humbly thank you, sir. [*aside to Horatio*] Dost know this water-fly?

HORATIO [*aside*] No, my good lord.

HAMLET [*aside*] Thy state is the more gracious, for 'tis a vice to know him. ~~He hath much land, and fertile. Let a beast be lord of beasts and his crib shall stand at the king's mess.~~ ~~'Tis a chough but, as I say, spacious in the possession of dirt.~~

OSRIC Sweet lord, if your lordship were at leisure I should impart a thing to you from his majesty.

HAMLET I will receive it, sir, with all diligence of spirit. Your bonnet to his right use: 'tis for the head.

OSRIC I thank your lordship, it is very hot.

68 ***humbly** Q2's 'humble' is recorded in an adverbial sense by *OED* in 1483, but does not occur elsewhere in Shakespeare. (If it is retained, Hamlet might mean 'I, who am humble'.)

69 **water-fly** i.e. superficial, trivial person. Thersites uses the same term to insult Patroclus: 'how the poor world is pestered with such water-flies!' (see *TC* 5.1.33–4). In Osric's case the word may also imply 'gaudy'.

71 **state** condition, circumstances
gracious free from sin, in a state of grace

72–4 **Let . . . mess** i.e. if a man is rich with large herds of animals (even though he is little better than an animal himself) he will be welcome at the King's table.

73 **crib** manger or trough for animals' food

74 **mess** meal-table. The term survives in military and naval contexts to denote a group of men of the same rank who eat together – and hence the place where they eat. In *LLL* 4.3.203 Shakespeare seems to refer to Inns of Court usage where a *mess* consisted of four men.
chough literally, crow or jackdaw, both birds which can be trained to talk – hence one who chatters or gossips (some editors also gloss 'chuff' = rustic, which does not seem very appropriate)

74–5 **spacious . . . dirt** possessing large tracts of land. Hamlet picks up one of the themes of his dialogue in 5.1 and derides Osric's lands by calling them mere *dirt*.

77 **a thing** something (as at *Oth* 3.3.305)

78 **sir** Hibbard includes this word, omitted in F.
diligence attentiveness

79 **Your . . . use** put your hat to its proper use. Osric has presumably taken off his hat as a gesture of respect.

80 Since Hamlet has acknowledged but rejected his gesture, and he is afraid to put his hat on again, Osric pretends he has taken it off because of the heat. Many productions make much of this comic business, which echoes Hamlet's deliberate misunderstanding of Polonius at 2.2.169–214 and 3.2.367–75.

68 humbly] *F;* humble *Q2* SD] *Capell* 70 SD] *Capell* 71 SD] *Capell* 74 chough] *(*chough*), F (*Chowgh*);* chuff *Ard*^{2} say] saw *F* 76 lordship] friendship *F* 78 sir] *om. F* 79 Your] put your *F* 80 it is] 'tis *F*

HAMLET No, believe me, 'tis very cold; the wind is northerly.
OSRIC It is indifferent cold, my lord, indeed.
HAMLET But yet methinks it is very sultry and hot, or my complexion –
OSRIC Exceedingly, my lord, it is very sultry, as 'twere – I cannot tell how. My lord, his majesty bade me signify to you that 'a has laid a great wager on your head. Sir, this is the matter –
HAMLET I beseech you remember.
OSRIC Nay, good my lord, for my ease, in good faith. Sir, here is newly come to court Laertes – believe me, an absolute gentleman, full of most excellent differences, of very soft society and great showing. Indeed, to speak sellingly of him, he is the card or calendar of gentry, for you shall find in him the continent of what part a gentleman would see.

83 **indifferent** somewhat
84 **But yet methinks** Q2's *But yet* increases the teasing component over F's 'Mee thinkes'.
***sultry** There is no relevant meaning in *OED* for Q2's 'sully' (which could easily be a misreading), and Q2 has 'soultery' at 86.
or If Q2 is right, Osric interrupts Hamlet in his eagerness to agree with him. F's 'for' is generally preferred.
85 **complexion** constitution
88 **'a** he
90 **I . . . remember** i.e. to put your hat on (as at *LLL* 5.1.90–2: 'I do beseech thee, remember thy courtesy: I beseech thee, apparel thy head'). Hamlet presumably points or gestures towards the hat.
92–120 **here . . . sir** Edwards and Hibbard commend F's omission of these lines, which they see as 'over-elaboration' and 'unnecessary to the plot'.
93 **absolute** complete, perfect
differences distinguishing qualities
94 **soft society** agreeable company
great showing impressive appearance
95 **sellingly** like a salesman. This reading of a unique word in the uncorrected state of Q2 is preferred by some editors, e.g. Steevens, Jennens and Dover Wilson. It might be supported by *TC* 4.1.76–9, where Diomed, speaking of Helen, tells Paris, 'We'll not commend, that not intend to sell.' Others prefer the corrected Q2's 'fellingly' = feelingly or forcefully. Confusion of *f* and long *s* is the obvious cause of the discrepancy.
card or calendar literally, map or directory, hence model or exemplar (see 5.1.130)
gentry gentility
96–7 **continent . . . see** container or possessor of whatever quality a gentleman

84 But yet] *om. F* sultry] *F (*soultry*); sully Q2* hot, or] hot for *F* 87 My] but my *F* 88 'a] he *F* 91 good my lord] in good faith *F* [2]my] mine *F* 91–120 Sir . . . sir?] *om. F* 95 sellingly] *Q2u;* fellingly *Q2c;* feelingly *Q3* 96 part] parts *Cam[1]*

HAMLET Sir, his definement suffers no perdition in you,
though I know to divide him inventorially would dazzle
th'arithmetic of memory, and yet but yaw neither, in
respect of his quick sail; but in the verity of extolment
I take him to be a soul of great article and his infusion
of such dearth and rareness as, to make true diction of
him, his semblable is his mirror, and who else would
trace him, his umbrage, nothing more.
OSRIC Your lordship speaks most infallibly of him.
HAMLET The concernancy, sir — why do we wrap the
gentleman in our more rawer breath?
OSRIC Sir?

might wish to see. *Continent* also carries on the geographical metaphor in *card*, so that *part* can also mean 'region'.

98–105 Hamlet's response parodies Osric's affected style of speech, full of empty and repetitive formulas; he seems to agree with Osric's inflation of Laertes' attributes but finally reduces him to his own shadow or mirror image. The parody includes the Shakespearean coinages *definement* (98) and *extolment* (101): see 1.2.93n.

98 **his . . . you** his definition or description suffers no loss by your words

99 **divide him inventorially** list all his qualities separately (as in an inventory or financial account)
***dazzle** Q2 reads 'dazzie' in the corrected state, 'dosie' in the uncorrected one; either way *th'arithmetic of memory* is seen as being overwhelmed or bewildered. (Jenkins and Edwards print 'dozy'; Hibbard, in an appendix, follows Q3's 'dizzie'.)

100 **th'arithmetic of memory** the ability of memory to calculate

100–1 **and . . . sail** and yet only manage a roundabout voyage in comparison to his rapid sailing

100 ***yaw** a nautical expression: a ship is said to *yaw* when it deviates from a straight course. (Q2c's 'raw' is difficult to justify; Jennens retains but does not gloss; Caldecott glosses as 'unready, untrained and awkward'.)

101 **verity of extolment** truth of eulogy (i.e. to praise him truthfully)

102 **great article** significant matter or importance (continuing the language of the inventory)
his infusion what is infused into him

103 **dearth** dearness (a synonym for *rareness*)
to . . . diction to speak truly

104 **his semblable . . . mirror** the only person like him is his mirror image

105 **trace** follow, i.e. rival
umbrage shadow

106 **infallibly** truthfully

107 **The concernancy** 'how is this relevant' or 'how does this concern us'. *Concernancy* is a unique usage according to *OED*.

107–8 **wrap . . . breath** i.e. clothe him in words which are too crude to do him justice

109 **Sir?** There is no question mark in Q2, but Osric is maybe puzzled by Hamlet's imitation of his own style.

99 dazzle] *(Wilson,* Manuscript*)*; dosie *Q2u, Ard²*; dazzie *Q2c*; dizzie *Q3* 100 yaw] *Q2u, Ard²*; raw *Q2c*

~~HORATIO Is't not possible to understand in another~~
~~tongue? You will do't, sir, really.~~
HAMLET What imports the nomination of this gentleman?
OSRIC Of Laertes.
HORATIO His purse is empty already – all's golden words are spent.
HAMLET Of him, sir.
~~OSRIC I know you are not ignorant~~
~~HAMLET I would you did, sir. Yet, in faith, if you did, it would not much approve me. Well, sir?~~
OSRIC You are not ignorant of what excellence Laertes is.
HAMLET I dare not confess that, lest I should compare with him in excellence. ~~But to know a man well were to know himself.~~
OSRIC I mean, sir, for his weapon. ~~But in the imputation~~

110–11 'Paradoxically, Horatio's interjection is more obscure than the ridiculous colloquy which he interrupts' (Edwards). Horatio may be asking Osric if he can't understand his own *tongue*, or he may be calling on both speakers to use simpler words. RP suggests: 'Couldn't you become comprehensible by talking in a foreign language?' (See Jenkins, LN.)

111 **You will do't** you will manage it (i.e. speak more plainly)
really Oxf (in an appendix) follows Theobald in emending to 'rarely' (= unusually well, splendidly), pointing out that *really* does not occur in Shakespeare apart from this usage and a rather different one at *TNK* 2.1.6–7, where the Jailer remarks, 'I would I were really that I am delivered to be.' The use of 'real' is almost as sparing, perhaps indicating that he charged the word with more significance than we do.

112 **What . . . nomination** what is the significance of naming (Hamlet continues to use a pretentious style)

114 **Of Laertes** Again there is no question mark in Q2, though many editors introduce one; Osric could be asking whom Hamlet means, or he could be confirming that Laertes is indeed the *gentleman* in question.

119 **I would you did** 'I wish this were truly your opinion (though you are unqualified to hold it)' (RP)

120 **approve** advantage, commend (i.e. it wouldn't do me any good?)

122–6 See t.n. and 92–120n.

122–4 Hamlet implies that to recognize Laertes' excellence one would need to match it, and that to know anyone else well one must first know oneself.

125 ***his weapon** Q2's 'this weapon' is an easy error. F perhaps clarifies by omitting 122–6 and adding 'at his weapon' to 121, so this reads 'you are

111 do't] *Q2c* (doo't); too't *Q2u*, *Ard*^{2} *(to't)* 121 You] Sir, you *F* is] is at his weapon *F* 122–6] *om. F* 125 his] *Q5*; this *Q2*

~~laid on him by them in his meed he's unfellowed.~~

HAMLET What's his weapon?

OSRIC Rapier and dagger.

HAMLET That's two of his weapons. But well.

OSRIC The King, sir, hath wagered with him ~~six Barbary~~ horses, against the which he has impawned, as I take it, ~~six French rapiers and poniards, with their assigns, as girdle, hanger and so. Three of the carriages, in faith, are very dear to fancy, very responsive to the hilts, most delicate carriages and of very liberal conceit.~~

~~HAMLET What call you the carriages?~~

~~HORATIO I knew you must be edified by the margin ere~~

not ignorant of what excellence Laertes is at his weapon'.

125–6 **in . . . meed** Osric seems to mean 'in the estimation of those who know his merit', though some editors take *in his meed* to mean 'in his pay', i.e. his retainers, or perhaps his fencing-masters.

127 **What's his weapon** Hamlet's question seems to belie the King's insistence on his *envy* of Laertes' skill with the rapier (4.7.71–4, 93–103). Or perhaps he is just impatient for Osric to come to the point.

128 **Rapier and dagger** These were fashionable weapons for duelling in England around 1600 (see *MM* 4.3.13–14: 'Master Starve-lackey the rapier and dagger man'); Shakespeare had previously specified the use of the *rapier* in several plays, including (anachronistically) *Tit* (2.1.54 and 4.2.87) and *R2* (4.1.40).

130 **Barbary** Arabian. The elided form 'Barbry' in Q2 at 142 may indicate a colloquial pronunciation.

131 **has impawned** has wagered. F's 'impon'd' is defended by Edwards as indicating Osric's pronunciation, and by Hibbard as an affected 'inkhorn' term. Osric's *as I take it* seems to imply some uncertainty about the word which Hamlet challenges in F (see 145 and t.n.).

132 **poniards** daggers
assigns accessories

133 **girdle, hanger** sword-belt and its straps
and so and so on, etcetera
carriages Hamlet queries this term in all three texts, presumably because it is inappropriate (see 140n.). Osric explains at 139 that he means the straps that carry the sword; possibly he is trying to avoid the sexual innuendo of *hangers*. A similar metaphor occurs in *TN* 3.4.222–3, when Sir Toby advises Cesario to 'Dismount thy tuck' (i.e. draw your sword).

134 **dear to fancy** endearing or pleasing to the fancy, i.e. fancifully designed or decorated
responsive to matching or in keeping with

135 **liberal conceit** ingenious or lavish design

137 **edified . . . margin** instructed by a marginal note. Horatio is saying that he knew Hamlet would need to ask for some explanation or annotation of Osric's vocabulary.

130 King, sir] sir King *F* hath wagered] hath layd a wager *Q1*; ha's wag'd *F* 131 has impawned] (has impaund); impon'd *F* 133 hanger] Hangers *F* and] or *F* 134 responsive] *Q2c F*; reponsiue *Q2u* 137–8] *om. F*

~~you had done.~~
~~OSRIC The carriages, sir, are the hangers.~~
~~HAMLET The phrase would be more germane to the~~ 140
~~matter if we could carry a cannon by our sides. I would~~
~~it might be 'hangers' till then. But on. Six Barbary~~
~~horses against six French swords, their assigns and~~
~~three liberal conceited carriages – that's the French bet~~
~~against the Danish. Why, is this all you call it?~~ 145
OSRIC ~~The King, sir, hath laid~~, sir, that in a dozen passes
between yourself and him he shall not exceed you three

139 ***carriages** F's plural seems to follow better than Q2's singular.

140 **germane** relevant. Hamlet is suggesting that *carriage* would be more appropriate to a larger weapon such as a *cannon* which would be transported on a gun-carriage; see *H5* 3 Prologue 26: 'Behold the ordnance on their carriages'.

142 ***might be** Q2c's 'be might' seems to result from erroneous correction which placed the missing *might* after *be* rather than before it.

But on i.e. do continue

144–5 **the French . . . Danish** We are reminded that Laertes has been living in France, whence he has apparently brought the items he is wagering.

145 **Why . . . it** 'If Q2 were our only text, its [reading] could be interpreted as it stands, with Hamlet ridiculing Osric's verbosity by affecting to be unable to repeat it: Why is this – all you said it was?' (Jenkins, who assumes an omission in Q2 and supplies F's 'why is this impon'd as you call it?') Oxf suggests Q2 should have read 'all what you call it', though 'all that you call it' would be an easier error, assuming compositorial omission of 'yt' (= that) as an anticipation of 'it' (see the 'it/that' variant at 148).

146–8 **The . . . nine** The King is clearly placing odds on Hamlet, but the precise terms of this wager are described by Jenkins (LN) as 'an insoluble problem' and a recent debate in the *Times Literary Supplement* (6 February 2004) failed to clarify the issue. Probably the King is betting that, in 12 bouts or *passes* (146), Laertes' total number of hits will not exceed Hamlet's total by 3. Q1 offers a simpler version: 'that yong Leartes in twelue venies / At Rapier and Dagger do not get three oddes of you' (17.27–9), which seems to mean that Laertes will not achieve three hits. Oxf emends *on* (F 'one') to 'ont' (= on it), arguing that the King is laying odds not 'on' but rather 'against' the terms stated (*TxC*). Perhaps the actual details are comparatively unimportant, since we know that the King and Laertes are not going to play by the rules anyway (and none of the players will be alive to collect the stakes).

146 **laid** wagered

passes brief periods of engagement or 'rounds' as they would be called in some sports; *pass* also occurs at 4.7.136. It is called a *bout* at 266 and 4.7.156 and an *exchange* at 246. Q1 uses the more technical 'venies' or venues (15.18 and 17.28), which may also be implied by F's 'comings'; see Ard Q1/F at 4.3.128

139 carriages] *F;* carriage *Q2* 141 a] *om. F;* the *Q1* 142 might be] *F;* be *Q2u;* be might *Q2c* on. Six] *(*on, six*);* on sixe *F* Barbary] *(*Barbry*), F* 144 bet] but *F* 145 all] impon'd as *F;* all 'impawned' as *Cam*[1] 146 ?sir] *om. F* 147 yourself] you *F*

hits. He hath laid on twelve for nine, and it would come to immediate trial if your lordship would vouchsafe the answer.

HAMLET How if I answer no?

OSRIC I mean, my lord, the opposition of your person in trial.

HAMLET Sir, I will walk here in the hall. If it please his majesty, it is the breathing time of day with me. Let the foils be brought, the gentleman willing and the King hold his purpose – I will win for him an I can; if not, I will gain nothing but my shame and the odd hits.

OSRIC Shall I deliver you so?

HAMLET To this effect, sir, after what flourish your nature will.

OSRIC I commend my duty to your lordship.

HAMLET Yours. ~~'A does well to commend it himself.~~

[*Exit Osric.*]

~~There are no tongues else for's turn.~~

~~HORATIO This lapwing runs away with the shell on his head.~~

148 **it** F's 'that' is preferred by Hibbard.

149 **immediate trial** The transformation of the scene from one of private conversation to a public trial of arms is like that in *AYL* 1.2: see Scolnicov, who notes the parallels between the plays in so far as Laertes, like Charles the wrestler, seems more likely to win, especially as we are aware of the collusion between him and the King, like that between Charles and Oliver.

149–50 **vouchsafe the answer** agree to accept the challenge (but Hamlet takes it to mean 'make a reply')

155 **breathing . . . me** my daily time for exercise

157 **an** if

158 **the odd hits** any hits I may make (despite losing the match)

159 **deliver you so** convey your response in this way. F's 'redeliuer' seems more characteristic of Osric.

160 **after what flourish** in whatever elaborate style

161 **will** wishes, intends

162 Osric's response is a standard parting formula.

164 **There . . . turn** i.e. no one else would serve his purpose (by doing it for him). Hibbard cites the proverb 'He must praise himself since no man else will' (Dent, P545.1).

165–6 proverbial (Tilley, L69), indicating Osric's youthful naïvety – and perhaps a final reference to his hat

148 laid on] one *F* nine] mine *F* it] that *F* 155 it is] 'tis *F* 157 an] *(and); if F* 157–8 I will] Ile *F* 159 deliver] redeliuer *F* so] ee'n so *F* 163 Yours.] *Riv (Parrott-Craig);* Yours *Q2;* Yours, yours; *F* 'A does] *Riv (Parrott-Craig);* doo's *Q2;* hee does *F* SD] *this edn; after* Yours. *Capell* 164 turn] tongue *F*

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

~~*Enter a* Lord.~~

~~LORD My lord, his majesty commended him to you by~~

167 **'A did so** i.e. he behaved in this way. This is not impossible, but Jenkins follows F, remarking, 'Q2, in trouble with several words in this passage, appears to have surrendered on this one.' The fact that *so* is added in the corrected version of this Q2 page may be evidence of the difficulty of the MS here. **his dug** his mother's (or his nurse's) nipple

168 **Thus . . . breed** Spencer, Jenkins, Edwards and Hibbard all take 'many' from Q2 and 'bevy' ('Beauvy') from F.

169 **the drossy age** the degenerate world we live in

169–70 **only . . . time** captured merely the fashionable style of the day

170 **out . . . encounter** from frequent social encounters. 'F *outward*, though much followed and superficially attractive in reinforcing *habit* (= dress) and providing a parallel metaphor for *tune*, would imply a contrast with some inner worth, which a *drossy age* must lack' (Jenkins).

171 •**yeasty** frothy, trivial; Q2's 'histy' is not otherwise recorded and *h/y* is an easy mistake in secretary hand. **collection** mixture, repertoire

171–2 **which . . . opinions** 'which allows them to bluff their way in all companies'

172 •**profane and winnowed** i.e. both vulgar and selective. Most editors prefer F's 'fond and winnowed', generally emended to 'fanned and winnowed', with 'fanned' understood as repeating the idea of 'sifted' already present in *winnowed*. There is no such word as Q2's 'trennowed', and *tr/w* is an easy misreading, but Jennens prints 'tres-renowned' meaning most renowned, following Q6's 'renowned'.

174.1–186 ***Enter* . . . me** 'Even Dover Wilson admits that the excision of these lines, which serve no useful purpose and require an extra speaking actor, is "a definite improvement"' (Hibbard). But, apart from giving notice of the approach of the royal party, they do contain the Queen's message to Hamlet (see 184–5n.). They were included in the Folio-based version at the Globe in 2000, though Hamlet's subsequent apology to Laertes was abbreviated.

175 **commended him** sent his commendations or greetings

167 'A . . . 'a] *(A . . . a);* He . . . hee *F* so, sir,] *Q2c;* sir *Q2u;* Complie *F* 168 has] had *F* many] mine *F* breed] Beauy *F* 170 out of an] outward *F* 171 yeasty] *F (yesty);* histy *Q2* 172 profane] fond *F;* fann'd *Hanmer, Warburton, Ard²;* profound *Tschischwitz (Bailey)* winnowed] *F;* trennowed *Q2;* trennowned *Q3;* renowned *Q6* 173 trial] tryalls *F* 174.1–186 *Enter* . . . me.] *om. F*

young Osric, who brings back to him that you attend him in the hall. He sends to know if your pleasure hold to play with Laertes, or that you will take longer time.
HAMLET I am constant to my purposes. They follow the King's pleasure. If his fitness speaks, mine is ready. Now or whensoever, provided I be so able as now.
LORD The King and Queen and all are coming down.
HAMLET In happy time. (OSRIC returns)
OSRIC LORD The Queen desires you to use some gentle entertainment to Laertes before you fall to play.
HAMLET She well instructs me. [*Exit Lord.*] OSRIC
HORATIO You will lose, my lord.
HAMLET I do not think so. Since he went into France I have been in continual practice. I shall win at the odds. Thou wouldst not think how ill all's here about my heart – but it is no matter.
HORATIO Nay, good my lord –
HAMLET It is but foolery, but it is such a kind of gaingiving as would perhaps trouble a woman.
HORATIO If your mind dislike anything, obey it. I will forestall their repair hither and say you are not fit.

178 **play** i.e. fence, duel (supposedly in sport)
that if
179 **follow** agree with, obey
180 **his fitness speaks** his convenience suits. Hamlet identifies the King as the key figure (and his true opponent).
183 **In happy time** i.e. this is an opportune moment
184–5 **use . . . entertainment** show some courtesy. Thus in Q2, though not in F, Hamlet's words at 204–21 seem prompted by the Queen.
188–9 **Since . . . practice** Hamlet here contradicts his earlier claim that he has 'forgone all custom of exercises' (2.2.262–3).
189 **at the odds** i.e. given that the odds [as specified at 146–50] are advantageous to me
194 ***gaingiving** misgiving; Q2's 'gamgiuing' is assumed to be a minim error for F's 'gain-giuing', seen as related to 'gainsay', though it is a rare word which elsewhere means 'giving in return'.
196 **repair** coming

186 SD] *Theobald* 187 lose] lose this wager *F* 190 Thou] but thou *F* ill] *om. F* all's] all *F* 194 gaingiving] *F (*gain-giuing*); *gamgiuing *Q2; *game-giuing *Q3* 195 it] *om. F*

HAMLET Not a whit. We defy augury. There is special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be, 'tis not to come. If it be not to come, it will be now. If it be not now, yet it will come. The readiness is all, since no man of aught he leaves knows what is't to leave betimes. Let be.

A table prepared. Trumpets, Drums and Officers with cushions, foils and daggers. [*Enter*] KING, QUEEN, LAERTES, [OSRIC] *and all the state.*

197 **Not a whit** not at all. A *whit* was a very small quantity; it occurred in negative expressions like this and 'never a whit'. **augury** literally, the practice of learning secrets or predicting the future from the flight of birds. Given that Hamlet goes on to talk about sparrows, he is perhaps using it in a more general sense of 'superstition'.

197–8 **special . . . sparrow** Hamlet alludes to the Christian (Calvinist) belief in God's direct intervention in worldly affairs (see Matthew, 10.29).

198 **If it be** *It* is Hamlet's moment of death, predetermined by God like 'the fall of a sparrow'. Jenkins prefers Q1/F's 'If it be now'. Hamlet's sentiments here echo those of Francis Feeble, the woman's tailor, facing possible death in battle at *2H4* 3.2.233–7: 'we owe God a death . . . and't be my destiny, so; and't be not, so . . . he that dies this year is quit for the next.'

200–1 **since . . . betimes** 'Since no one has any knowledge of the life he leaves behind him, what does it matter if one dies early [*betimes*]?' (Edwards). The F reading substitutes ownership for knowledge (see Jenkins, LN).

201–2 **Let be** leave it alone; say no more. These are the final (punning) words of Charlotte Jones's 2001 *Hamlet*-based play *Humble Boy*.

202.2 Q2's '*Cushions*' seems to indicate that the courtiers sit to watch; chairs or thrones may be brought on for the King and Queen, and a table for the *stoups of wine* at 244. F's substitution of '*Gauntlets*' for Q2's '*daggers*' may reflect a change in fashion; it would also facilitate the necessary exchange of weapons at 285; see Edelman, and Gurr and Ichikawa (155–9) for detailed discussions of ways of staging this fight. Both Q2 and F omit Osric from this entry but the King addresses him at 236 and he speaks at 243.

202.3 ***all the state*** the rest of the Court. In eighteenth- and nineteenth-century theatrical tradition, the '*state*' included Marcellus, Barnardo and Francisco, with Francisco playing the role of the King's cup-bearer later in the scene. This SD might also imply that a 'chair of state' or throne is brought on (see 'state' in Dessen & Thomson).

197 There is] theres a *Q1F* 198 be] be now *Q1F* 199 will] *F;* well *Q2* 201 of . . . knows] *(*of ought he leaues, knowes*)*, ha's ought of what he leaues *F;* owes aught of what he leaves *Hanmer;* knows aught of what he leaves, *Johnson;* of aught he leaves, knows aught *Ard²* 201–2 Let be.] *om. F* 202.1–3] *Q2 subst. (A table prepard, Trumpets, Drums and officers with Cushions, / King, Queene, and all the state, Foiles, daggers, / and Laertes.); Enter King, Queene, Leartes, Lordes. Q1; Enter King, Queene, Laertes and Lords, with other Atten- / dants with Foyles, and Gauntlets, a Table and / Flagons of Wine on it. F* 202.3 OSRIC] *Theobald subst.*

KING

Come, Hamlet, come and take this hand from me.
[*Puts Laertes' hand into Hamlet's.*]

HAMLET

Give me your pardon, sir. I have done you wrong,
But pardon't as you are a gentleman.
This presence knows, and you must needs have heard,
How I am punished with a sore distraction.
What I have done
That might your nature, honour and exception
Roughly awake, I here proclaim was madness.
Was't Hamlet wronged Laertes? Never Hamlet.
If Hamlet from himself be ta'en away
And when he's not himself does wrong Laertes,
Then Hamlet does it not; Hamlet denies it.
Who does it then? His madness. If't be so,
Hamlet is of the faction that is wronged –
His madness is poor Hamlet's enemy.
Let my disclaiming from a purposed evil

203 **this hand** The King takes Laertes' hand and places it in Hamlet's. Laertes and Hamlet shake hands, either here, or possibly not until 221 ('I am satisfied in nature'), but Laertes may let go of Hamlet's hand at 224 (*I stand aloof*).

204–21 This apology to Laertes, perhaps motivated in Q2 by the Queen's message at 184–5, has struck editors and commentators since at least Johnson in 1765 as disingenuous: Hamlet is clearly using his assumed or supposed madness as an excuse for his behaviour – and modern judicial practice still permits denial of responsibility on grounds of insanity. But the excuse is difficult to accept here, in relation to either the death of Polonius or the madness and death of Ophelia; the fact that Hamlet talks in generalities and does not spell out the crimes with which he is charged seems, to say the least, evasive.

206 **presence** audience, assembly of courtiers

207 **sore distraction** serious mental derangement

209 **exception** dissatisfaction (*OED* cites this passage as a rare example)

210 **awake** arouse

212 The mad Ophelia is described in a similar way as 'Divided from herself and her fair judgement' (4.5.85).

216 **faction** contending party

217 Jenkins includes F's additional short line.

218 **disclaiming from** denial of
purposed evil deliberate evil intention

203 SD] *Johnson subst., after Hanmer* 204 I have] I'ue *F* 205–8] *Rowe; Q2 lines* knowes, / punnisht / done /; *F lines* Gentleman. / knowes, / punisht / done / 207 a] *om. F* 217 enemy.] Enemy. / Sir, in this Audience, *F*

Free me so far in your most generous thoughts
That I have shot my arrow o'er the house
And hurt my brother.

LAERTES I am satisfied in nature,
Whose motive in this case should stir me most
To my revenge. But in my terms of honour
I stand aloof and will no reconcilement
Till by some elder masters of known honour
I have a voice and precedent of peace
To keep my name ungored. But all that time
I do receive your offered love like love
And will not wrong it.

HAMLET I embrace it freely
And will this brothers' wager frankly play.
Give us the foils.

LAERTES Come, one for me.

HAMLET
I'll be your foil, Laertes. In mine ignorance
Your skill shall like a star i'th' darkest night

220 **That I have** as to imagine I have
221 **brother** F's 'Mother' is tentatively defended (though not printed) by Dowden. Given his failure to refer specifically to Ophelia in this scene, it seems unlikely that Hamlet means 'brother-in-law'.
221–9 Laertes' reply is at least as disingenuous as Hamlet's apology: Hamlet glosses over his past faults while Laertes dissimulates about his planned revenge.
221 **in nature** as far as my natural feelings are concerned. Like Hamlet, Laertes fails to name his father and sister as specific issues.
222 **Whose motive** the motivation or urging of which
223 **in . . . honour** as far as my sense of honour is concerned
224 **will** wish for, desire
225 **elder . . . honour** i.e. some experienced men who are knowledgeable about questions of honour
226 **voice . . . peace** opinion and previous example of (a similar) reconciliation
227 **To . . . ungored** to preserve my reputation from injury
•**keep** F's reading seems necessary for both sense and metre.
all F's 'till' is generally adopted, though *all* makes sense.
230 **frankly** freely, with no ill feeling
231 **Give . . . foils** F's 'Come on' after this perhaps anticipates Laertes' line.
232 **I'll . . . foil** Hamlet puns on *foil* meaning setting (as of a jewel), background or contrast.

220 my] mine *Q1F* 221 brother] *Q1;* Mother *F* 226 precedent] *(*president*) F* 227 keep] *F; not in Q2I* ungored] vngorg'd *F* all] till *F* 229–30 I . . . play] *F; prose Q2* 229 I] I do *F* 230 brothers'] *(*brothers*) F* 231 foils.] Foyles: Come on. *F*

Stick fiery off indeed.
LAERTES You mock me, sir.
HAMLET
No, by this hand.
KING
Give them the foils, young Osric. Cousin Hamlet,
You know the wager.
HAMLET Very well, my lord.
Your grace has laid the odds o'th' weaker side.
KING
I do not fear it. I have seen you both
But since he is better we have therefore odds.
LAERTES
This is too heavy, let me see another.
HAMLET
This likes me well. These foils have all a length?
OSRIC
Ay, my good lord.
KING
Set me the stoups of wine upon that table.

234 **Stick fiery off** burn brightly in contrast. See Lepidus on Antony: 'His faults, in him, seem as the spots of heaven, / More fiery by night's blackness' (*AC* 1.4.12–13), and see 2.1.33n.
238 **has . . . odds** Hamlet seems simply to mean 'backed' or 'bet on', but some commentators interpret this as a reference to the advantage given to Hamlet by the puzzling terms announced at 146–8.
o' on
239 **I . . . it** i.e. I am not afraid of that
240 **better** i.e. at this sport; F's 'better'd' is generally adopted and interpreted as meaning either that Laertes is 'pronounced to be better' (Jenkins) or that he has 'improved' (Edwards). Q2's reading is acceptable, though less courteous.
we . . . odds i.e. we have therefore arranged the terms in your favour
242 **likes** pleases
have . . . length are all of one (i.e. the same) length (see Hope, 1.1.2a); Osric's reply indicates that this is a question and it is one which may give the King and Laertes a moment of unease, given their confidence that Hamlet would 'not peruse the foils' (4.7.134).
244 **stoups** flagons, jars (as at 5.1.56)

234 off] *(of), F* 236–7] *F lines Osricke, / wager. /* 238 has] hath *F* 240 better] better'd *F* 242] *F lines* well, / length. / length?] length. *Prepare to play. F*

If Hamlet give the first or second hit
touch Or ~~quit~~ in answer of the third exchange
~~Let all the battlements their ordnance fire.~~
The King shall drink to Hamlet's better breath
And in the cup an union shall he throw
Richer than that which four successive kings
In Denmark's crown have worn. ~~Give me the cups,~~
~~And let the kettle to the trumpet speak,~~
~~The trumpet to the cannoneer without,~~
~~The cannons to the heavens, the heaven to earth~~.
Trumpets the while
Now the King drinks to Hamlet. Come, begin.
And you, the judges, bear a wary eye.

245–54 **If . . . earth** The King's description of how he will salute Hamlet's success recalls his acclamation of his stepson's 'gentle and unforced accord' at 1.2.121–8 and Hamlet's disapproval of the practice at 1.4.8–38.

246 **quit . . . exchange** acquit himself well by winning the third bout (?). The expression is obscure: does the King mean that he will celebrate Hamlet winning the third bout, even if he has lost the first and the second?

247 **battlements** i.e. the soldiers on the fortified crenellations of the castle
ordnance cannon

248 **better breath** i.e. improved performance

249 ***union** a kind of pearl (as clarified at 264), so called because of the unique nature of each example. This F reading allows Hamlet's grim pun at 310; Edwards points out that Q2's 'Onixe' could be a mistaken correction of 'Vnice', itself a misreading of MS 'Vnio' or 'Vnione'; Q1 has 'union' at the latter point but not at the former. Parrott and Craig note that Shakespeare 'may have been thinking of the tale of Cleopatra's throwing a pearl into a cup of wine. In *Soliman and Perseda* (ascribed to Thomas Kyd; 2 quartos were printed in 1599) this pearl is called "Cleopatra's union" [2.1.231].' Presumably the jewel either contains the poison or simply identifies Hamlet's cup (see 264n.).

252 **kettle . . . trumpet** Both terms could refer to the instrument and/or to the musician who played it; *cannoneer* in 253 might indicate that the reference is to the players.

253 **cannoneer without** man in charge of the cannons outside

255 **Now . . . Hamlet** Most editors put this in quotation marks, as what the King says he will do. They assume he doesn't drink until 265. It is, however, possible that he deliberately drinks from what will later be identified as *the poisoned cup* (275) before putting the pearl into it (see 264n.) or before the poison has time to dissolve.

256 **you, the judges** The only named character who takes on this role is Osric (see 262 and 284); presumably other courtiers arrange themselves as observers.

249 union] *F* (vnion); Vnice *Q2u*; Onixe *Q2c* 252 trumpet] Trumpets *F* 254 heaven] *F*; heavens *Q3* SD] *opp. 255–6; om. F*

HAMLET Come on, sir.
LAERTES Come, my lord. [*They play.*]
HAMLET One!
LAERTES No!
HAMLET Judgement?
OSRIC A hit, a very palpable hit. ~~*Drum,*~~ *trumpets and shot*
LAERTES Well, again.
KING
Stay, give me drink. Hamlet, this pearl is thine:
Here's to thy health. Give him the cup.
HAMLET
I'll play this bout first. Set it by awhile. [*They play.*]
Come, another hit! – What say you?
LAERTES I do confess't.
KING
Our son shall win.
QUEEN He's fat and scant of breath.
Here, Hamlet, take my napkin, rub thy brows –
The Queen carouses to thy fortune, Hamlet.
HAMLET Good madam.

258 **my lord** Q2's reading may be more deferential than F's 'sir'.
259 **One** Hamlet claims a hit (which Laertes denies).
261 **Judgment?** Hamlet appeals for adjudication, perhaps directly to Osric, who replies.
262 **palpable** tangible, i.e. definite
264 **this pearl** See 249n. If his words imply that he drinks from the cup before putting the pearl into it, the suggestion that the pearl contains the poison seems plausible. However it is handled, the audience must see and understand the poisoning of the cup in order to follow the subsequent death of the Queen.
269 **fat** This word has been much discussed by commentators who do not want it to mean 'overweight'. Jenkins (LN) argues that, in conjunction with *scant of breath*, it must mean something like 'out of condition'; Hibbard sees the line as 'maternal solicitude' which 'becomes all the more evident if Hamlet is neither fat nor scant of breath'.
270 **napkin** handkerchief
271 **carouses** drinks a toast
272 **Good madam** Hamlet acknowledges the Queen's gesture.

257 sir.] *F*; sir: *a hit Q1* 258 Come, my lord.] Come on sir. *F* SD] *F; not in Q2; opp. 260 Q1* 262 SD] *opp. 262; not in Q1F* 263 again.] *F*; again. *Florish, a peece goes off. Q2* 265 cup.] cup, / *Trumpets sound, and shot goes off. F* 266 it] *Q1; om. F* SD] *Q1 (They play againe.) after equivalent of* Come, *267* 268] I, I grant, a tuch, a tuch. *Q1;* A touch, a touch, I do confesse. *F* 270 Here . . . my] *Q1;* Heere's a *F*

KING Gertrude, do not drink.
QUEEN
I will, my lord. I pray you pardon me.
~~KING [*aside*]~~
~~It is the poisoned cup! It is too late.~~
HAMLET
I dare not drink yet, madam. By and by.
QUEEN
Come, let me wipe thy face.
LAERTES [*aside to King*]
My lord, I'll hit him now.
KING [*aside to Laertes*] I do not think't.
LAERTES [*aside*]
And yet it is almost against my conscience.
HAMLET
Come for the third, Laertes, you do but dally.
I pray you pass with your best violence.

274 **I . . . lord** During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Queen's line was often altered onstage to 'I have, my lord', presumably to make it apologetic rather than defiant (see O'Brien). In Q1, the SD '*Shee drinkes*' precedes the King's prohibition. Some performers make it clear that they are drinking the poison deliberately, as Eileen Herlie did in Olivier's 1948 film (see Dawson, 182) and Diana Wynyard did in the production Olivier directed at the London Old Vic in 1963 (see Trewin, 122).

275, 278, 279 SDs *Neither Q2 nor F designates these speeches as asides, but they do seem to be speeches not intended for all to hear. See also 279 and SDn.

275 The King will let the Queen die rather than risk exposure, despite his vaunted love for her (see 4.7.13–17 and n.).

276 Hamlet's line implies that the Queen offers him the cup after drinking from it herself.
By and by See 3.2.374n.

279 and SD In all three texts, Laertes has this moment of misgiving, perhaps redeeming himself a little in the minds of the audience/reader. It is possible that he speaks this line directly to the King rather than as an aside to the audience; Robert Holmes did so when playing an unusually sympathetic Laertes in the first modern-dress production of *Hamlet* staged by Barry Jackson and H.K. Ayliff at the Kingsway theatre in London in 1925 (see Dawson, 90).

280 **you . . . dally** you're only playing, i.e. you aren't competing in earnest

281 **pass** thrust, attack
your best violence your utmost strength

275 SD] *Rowe* 278 SD1] *Oxf* SD2] *Oxf* 279 SD] *Rowe* it is] it goes *Q1;* 'tis *F* against] *Q1;* 'gainst *F* 280] *F lines* third. / dally. / do but dally] dally *Q1;* but dally *F*

I am sure you make a wanton of me.
LAERTES Say you so? Come on. [*They play.*]
OSRIC Nothing neither way.
LAERTES Have at you now! [*In scuffling they change rapiers.*]
KING Part them – they are incensed.
HAMLET Nay, come again. [*Queen falls.*]
OSRIC Look to the Queen there, ho!
HORATIO
They bleed on both sides. How is it, my lord?
OSRIC How is't, Laertes?
LAERTES
Why, as a woodcock to mine own springe, Osric:
I am justly killed with mine own treachery.
HAMLET
How does the Queen?
KING She swoons to see them bleed.

282 **sure** F's 'affear'd' (afraid) is adopted by Jenkins, presumably on metrical grounds and as a stronger reading.
make . . . me play games with me, trifle with me. Elam points out the association of *dally*, *pass* and *wanton* in *TN* 3.1.14–43, where the reference to fencing is metaphorical but anticipates the actual duel in 3.4.
284 **Nothing neither way** no advantage on either side (either because there was no hit, or because two hits cancelled each other out)
285 **Have . . . now** Laertes presumably attacks and wounds Hamlet before the next bout should officially begin, though these words at least give him some warning.
285 SD *Sometimes onstage Hamlet realizes that he has been wounded with an *unbated* (302) sword and forces the exchange of weapons; or attendants may pick up the rapiers that have been dropped and return them to the 'wrong' duellists. However it is managed, Hamlet must get the *unbated* and poisoned rapier from Laertes and wound him with it.
288 **Look . . . ho** Osric calls for other courtiers to help the Queen, who has presumably collapsed (but Jenkins interprets *ho* as a call to stop the combat).
291 **woodcock . . . springe** The woodcock was generally thought to be a stupid bird because it was easy to catch; Laertes unwittingly, but perhaps touchingly, repeats his father's proverb (see 1.3.114 and n.), combining it with another one: 'The fowler is caught in his own net' (Tilley, F626).
springe trap
293 **swoons** collapses, faints. (The King tries desperately to retrieve the situation, as he does again at 308.)

282 sure] affear'd *F* 283 SD] *F (Play.); not in Q1* 285 SD] *F; They catch one anothers Rapiers, and both are wounded, Leartes falls downe, the Queene falles downe and dies. Q1* 287 SD] *Capell* 289 is it] is't *F* 291] *F lines* Woodcocke / *Osricke*, / own] *om. F* 293 swoons] (sounds) *F, Q5* (swounes)

QUEEN

No, no, the drink, the drink, O my dear Hamlet,
The drink, the drink – I am poisoned. [*Dies.*]

HAMLET

O villainy, ho! Let the ~~door~~ doors be locked.
Treachery! Seek it out. [*Exit Osric.*]

LAERTES

It is here, Hamlet, thou art slain.
No medicine in the world can do thee good:
In thee there is not half an hour's life;
The treacherous instrument is in thy hand
Unbated and envenomed. The foul practice
Hath turned itself on me. Lo, here I lie,
Never to rise again. Thy mother's poisoned –
I can no more – the King, the King's to blame.

HAMLET

The point envenomed too? Then venom to thy work!
[*Hurts the King.*]

~~LORDS Treason, treason!~~

294–5 In all three texts the Queen calls on Hamlet as she dies, warning him of the poisoned drink.
295 SD •During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Queen was often carried offstage to die (see O'Brien).
296 **Let . . . locked** Hamlet presumably intends to prevent any perpetrator of treason from escaping. Jenkins and Hibbard also take Osric off at this point (see 333.1 and n.).
298 **Hamlet** F's repetition regularizes the metre.
299 **medicine** i.e. antidote
301 •**thy hand** If Q2's 'my hand' is right, the duellists would have to switch twice to get the poisoned weapon back in Laertes' hand (or the actors could substitute *was* for *is* in this line).
302 **Unbated** i.e. with its point unprotected (as plotted at 4.7.136)
envenomed anointed with poison
practice stratagem, trick
303 **turned itself** rebounded
305 **can** can say, can do
to blame Q2/F's 'too blame' could mean 'excessively blameworthy' (see 3.1.45n.), but Q2's 'inuenom'd to' in the next line shows that the spellings were interchangeable. The metre here encourages 'to blame', i.e. 'at fault'.
307 **Treason** The lords may be responding directly to Hamlet's attack on the King, or perhaps to what Laertes has just said (see also 309 and n.).

294–5] *F lines* [2]drinke. / [4]drinke, / poyson'd./ 295 SD] *Rowe subst.* 296 ho!] *(*how*), Q1 (*ho*), Q3 (*hoe*), F (*How?*)* 297 SD] *Ard*[2] 298 *F lines Hamlet. /* slaine, / Hamlet,] *Hamlet. / Hamlet, F* 300 hour's] houre of *Q1F* 301 thy] *Q1F, Q5;* my *Q2* 306 SD] *F; not in Q2I* 307 SP] *Oxf subst.; All. Q2F*

KING
O, yet defend me, friends, I am but hurt.
HAMLET
Here, thou incestuous, damned Dane!
Drink of this potion. Is the union here?
Follow my mother. [*King dies.*]
LAERTES He is justly served.
It is a poison tempered by himself.
Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet,
Mine and my father's death come not upon thee,
Nor thine on me. [*Dies.*]
HAMLET
Heaven make thee free of it. I follow thee.
I am dead, Horatio. Wretched Queen, adieu.
You that look pale and tremble at this chance,

309 ***Here** F's reading is supported by the similar repetition in Q1: 'Come drinke, here lies thy union, here.' Q2's 'Heare' is not, however, impossible.
incestuous, damned damnèd; F's 'incestuous, murdrous / Damned' is preferred by Jenkins, perhaps because it regularizes the metre and is more emphatic. In Q2 and F this is the first time that the *incest* accusation has been made publicly (see 1.2.157n.). The courtiers would understand F's 'murdrous' as a reference to the King's actions against Hamlet and the Queen: not even at this point does Hamlet confront the King with the murder of his father.

310 **Drink . . . potion** Hamlet forces the King to drink from the cup (though some must be left for Horatio to try to drink at 326). F's 'Drinke off' is often preferred (and *of* / *off* could simply be a spelling variant), but *Drink of* (i.e. from) seems acceptable.

312 **tempered** prepared, concocted

314 **Mine** my death
come . . . thee i.e. may they not count (at the Last Judgement) as charges against you. Perhaps Laertes means that his own villainy equals and therefore excuses Hamlet's. He dies unaware of the full extent of his accomplice the King's guilt.

315 SD *Strictly speaking, Laertes should die after Hamlet, who was wounded first, but the reversal is obviously required for dramatic reasons. (If a literal explanation is needed, one might assume that Hamlet's wound was more superficial.)

316 **free** i.e. absolved of the guilt (unlike the King)

317 **I am dead** If Hamlet is already 'dead' when he kills the King, this may be Shakespeare's solution to the moral dilemma of the blood-guilt of the successful revenger.
Wretched unhappy

318 **this chance** what has happened here (*chance* in this sense is often negative = mischance)

309 Here] *F;* Heare *Q2* incestuous] incestuous, murdrous *F* 310 of] off *F* the] thy *Q1F* union] *Q1F;* Onixe *Q2* 311 SD] *Q1 subst., F* 311–12] *F; Q2 lines* mother. / himselfe, / 315 SD] *Q1 subst., F*

That are but mutes or audience to this act,
Had I but time (as this fell sergeant Death
Is strict in his arrest) – O, I could tell you –
But let it be. Horatio, I am dead.
Thou livest: report me and my cause aright
To the unsatisfied.
HORATIO Never believe it.
I am more an antique Roman than a Dane:
Here's yet some liquor left.
HAMLET As thou'rt a man
Give me the cup. Let go! By heaven I'll ha't!
O God, Horatio, what a wounded name,
Things standing thus unknown, shall I leave behind me!
If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart

319 **That . . . act** 'that are either mere *auditors* of this *catastrophe*, or at most only *mute performers* that fill the stage without any part in the action' (Johnson)
act action; performance
320 **as** because, whereas
fell sergeant cruel officer; Death is seen as arresting Hamlet ('Death is God's sergeant' was proverbial: Dent, D142.2), with the implication that he must appear in court, or perhaps that his destination is the *prison-house* of purgatory described by the Ghost (1.5.14).
321 **strict** precise, rigorous
323 **report . . . aright** i.e. give an accurate account of my experiences and the reasons for my actions. It is left to Horatio to explain the origins of the plot in the murder of old Hamlet.
324 **the unsatisfied** i.e. those who will demand an explanation
325 **antique Roman** Horatio claims to see suicide as heroic, like Shakespeare's Titinius and Brutus (*JC* 5.3.89 and 5.5.56–7) and like Cleopatra, who aspires to death 'after the high Roman fashion' (*AC* 4.15.91). This attitude is unlike that of the Christians in this play and others such as *KL* (4.6.33–4, 75–7) and *Cym* (3.4.75–7).
326–33 In performance, Hamlet may grapple with Horatio and spill the rest of the poison, or Horatio may assent more quietly to his request.
328 **God** F's 'good' may be a correction, not an expurgation, since Q2 reads 'god' (it normally capitalizes *God*); Honigmann (Ard^3 *Oth*), however, emends Q 1622 *Oth* 'O Good Iago' to 'O God Iago' (4.2.150) on the opposite assumption that the capital there (together with F's alternative 'Alas Iago') indicates expurgation.
wounded name damaged reputation
329 **shall I leave** F's 'shall liue' is metrically smoother. Hibbard emends to 'I leave', claiming that it 'has a greater urgency than either F or Q2' and that *leaue* is supported by Q1; see t.n.

323 livest] liu'st *F* cause aright] causes right *F* 325 antique] (anticke), *Q1F* (antike), *Q5* 326–7 As . . . ha't!] *F lines* Cup. / haue't. / 327 ha't] (hate); haue't *F* 328 God,] (god); fie *Q1*; good *F* 329 shall I leave] wouldst thou leaue *Q1*; shall liue *F* me!] (me?); me. *F*

Absent thee from felicity awhile
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain
To tell my story. *A march afar off* [*and a sound of shooting*]
What warlike noise is this?

Enter OSRIC.

OSRIC
Young Fortinbras with conquest come from Poland
~~To th'ambassadors of England~~ [gives
This warlike volley.

HAMLET O, I die, Horatio.
The potent poison quite o'ercrows my spirit,
I cannot live to hear the news from England,
But I do prophesy th'election lights
On Fortinbras: he has my dying voice.

331 i.e. postpone your journey from this earth to heaven. Hamlet does not seem troubled by the consequences of suicide for Horatio here.

333 SD *F's '*shout*' (see t.n.) is generally taken as an error for '*shot*': Hamlet's reference to a *warlike noise* and Osric's to a *warlike volley* (336) seem to require this, though the *drum* referred to by Horatio at 345 could also be construed as a *warlike noise*, since it accompanies the march of soldiers. In any case, the shooting represents Fortinbras's greeting to the English ambassadors (see 334–6 and *Oth* 2.1.56 and 94) and not (as sometimes in recent productions and films) the beginning of an offstage battle.

333.1 Both Q2 and F have Osric enter to announce the arrival of Fortinbras, though neither has given him an exit since he spoke at 290 and was addressed by Laertes at 291 (see 296n.). Riv leaves him onstage throughout and at this point inserts a SD, '*Osric goes to the door and returns*', to explain how he has acquired the news he conveys.

335 **th'ambassadors of England** Plural in both Q2 and F, and plural pronouns are used in 352–6 although only one of them speaks. Presumably they are coming to report the news about the deaths of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and we are to suppose that they have fallen in with Fortinbras on his return from Poland.

337 **o'ercrows** triumphs over (like a victorious cockerel: Jennens, who emends to 'o'ergrows', finds the metaphor 'a little too ludicrous, in this place')

339 **th'election** of a new king of Denmark (see 64 and 1.2.109n.)

340 **dying voice** Words spoken on a person's deathbed are often seen as particularly important, and an audience living under a hereditary monarchy would suppose that Hamlet, having been named as the King's heir, would have the right to nominate his own. Having

333 SD *A . . . off.*] *(opp 332–3); not in Q1; March afarre off, F and . . . shooting] Steevens subst.; not in Q21; and shout within. F* 333.1] *F; not in Q1*

So tell him ~~with th'occurrents more and less~~
~~Which have solicited.~~ – The rest is silence. [*Dies.*]

HORATIO

Now cracks a noble heart. Goodnight, sweet Prince,
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.
Why does the drum come hither? 345

Enter FORTINBRAS *with* [*his train and*] *the* Ambassadors.

FORTINBRAS

Where is this sight?

been born on the day that old Hamlet overcame old Fortinbras, young Hamlet makes restitution to young Fortinbras as he dies. (*Voice* is used here in the sense of 'vote', as in *Cor* 2.3.)

341 **th'occurrents . . . less** all the events, of major and minor importance

342 **solicited** incited (i.e. me to give him my support): the sentence is unfinished. **The rest is silence** *Rest* = residue, remainder, repose, but this might be heard as a pun, 'th'arrest': see *arrest* in 321. F's 'O, o, o, o' is a conventional indication of a dying groan or sigh, as at *KL* 5.3.308.

343–4 It is perhaps implied that these are the first two lines of what might have been a longer eulogy, had Horatio not been interrupted by the arrival of Fortinbras.

343 **Now . . . heart** It was supposed that the heart-strings cracked at the point of death; see *R3* 4.4.365, 'Harp on it [that string] still shall I, till heart-strings break.' Shakespeare develops the idea into a nautical metaphor at the death of King John: 'The tackle of my heart is crack'd and burn'd, / And all the shrouds wherewith my life should sail / Are turned to one thread, one little hair' (*KJ* 5.7.52–4).

344 **flights** flying companies
angels As Greenblatt points out (*Purgatory*, 51–4), angels frequently appear in depictions of purgatory, assisting in the deliverance of souls; indeed, their very presence signals that the place depicted is purgatory rather than hell.

345 **drum** Fortinbras's entry is heralded by the sound of a military drum. F's SD specifies that he enters with a drummer and a standard bearer, regular features of military entrances found in over 90 plays (Dessen & Thomson, 'drum').

345.1 Fortinbras is in armour or some kind of military uniform, perhaps deliberately recalling the martial appearance of the Ghost in Act 1. Q1 adds Voltemar (*sic*) to this entry, which may indicate that the actor who played Voltemand in 1.2 and 2.2 is now playing the English Ambassador (see Appendix 5). Q1's '*train*' of soldiers (or F's '*Attendants*') are necessary for the removal of the bodies (see 385 and n.). Sometimes, most spectacularly in Branagh's 1996 film, Fortinbras and his men arrive as a sinister, invading force.

346 **this sight** Fortinbras has apparently been warned (by Osric?) what to expect. Q1 is even more explicit (see t.n.).

341 th'occurrents] the occurrents *F* 342 silence.] silence. O, o, o, o. *F* SD] *Q1 subst., F* 343] *F lines* heart: / Prince / cracks] cracke *F* 345.1 *his train*] *Q1; Drumme, Colours, and Attendants. F and the Ambassadors*] *Voltemar and the Ambassadors from England. Q1; and English Ambassador F* 346 sight] *F;* bloudy sight *Q1* you] ye *F*

HORATIO What is it you would see?
If aught of woe or wonder, cease your search.
FORTINBRAS
This quarry cries on havoc. O proud Death,
What feast is toward in thine eternal cell
That thou so many princes at a shot
So bloodily hast struck?
~~AMBASSADOR~~ ~~The sight is dismal~~
~~And our affairs from England come too late.~~
~~The ears are senseless that should give us hearing~~
~~To tell him his commandment is fulfilled~~
~~That Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead.~~
~~Where should we have our thanks?~~
HORATIO ~~Not from his mouth,~~
~~Had it th'ability of life to thank~~ you;
~~He never gave commandment for their death.~~
~~But, since so jump upon this bloody question~~
~~You from the Polack wars and you from England~~
~~Are here arrived~~, give order that these bodies
High on a stage be placed to the view,

348 **This . . . havoc** This pile of bodies proclaims that there has been a massacre. *Quarry* is a term used for the slaughtered animals after a hunt, as at *Cor* 1.1.197. *Havoc* is a battle-cry inciting soldiers to slaughter and destruction, as at *JC* 3.1.273.
349 **feast** Death is also personified as one who feasts on his victims in *KJ* 2.2.352–5 and in *RJ* 5.3.45–8.
toward being prepared, going forward
eternal 'Shakespeare occasionally uses this word as if it meant "damnable" or "infernal"' (Edwards). See also 1.5.21 and n.
351 **dismal** dreadful, disastrous (a stronger meaning than the modern one)
352 **affairs** business
353 **The ears** i.e. those of the King; an appropriate way of saying that the King is dead, given the play's obsession with literal and metaphorical *ears* – see 1.1.30n.
356 **Where** i.e. from whom. The Ambassador is in effect enquiring who is now King of Denmark.
his i.e. the King's
359 **jump upon** immediately after
question quarrel, conflict
361 **give order** Fortinbras, with his conquering army (334), is in a position to do so.
362 **the stage** some kind of platform; Q1 has 'a scaffold'. Steevens quotes the end of Arthur Brooke's *Romeus and Juliet* (a major source for Shakespeare's *RJ*): 'The prince did straight ordaine, the corses that wer founde, / Should be set

348 This] His *F* 350 shot] shoote *F*

And let me speak to th' yet unknowing world
How these things came about. So shall you hear
Of carnal, bloody and unnatural acts,
Of accidental judgements, casual slaughters,
Of deaths put on by cunning, and for no cause,
And in this upshot purposes mistook
Fallen on th'inventors' heads. All this can I
Truly deliver.
FORTINBRAS Let us haste to hear it

forth vpon a stage hye raysed from the ground' (2817–18; Bullough, 1.358). **placed** placèd

363 **let me speak** We may imagine Horatio addressing the Danes and others, rather as Brutus and Antony address the Romans in *JC* 3.2.

364–9 **So . . . heads** Horatio's list covers, without necessarily itemizing, most of the play's crimes and deaths; some of them could be placed in more than one category. Several critics have found the vagueness and generality of this account unsatisfactory: Horatio fails to give the onstage audience any of the specific details (about the death of old Hamlet, or the King's plots against young Hamlet, for example) that are known to the theatre audience or reader. Perhaps a feeling that this speech is somewhat equivocal (is Horatio waiting to see how Fortinbras will react?) helped to inspire some of the play's sequels in which he turns out to be secretly in league with Norway (see pp. 131–2).

365 **carnal . . . acts** Horatio may agree with Hamlet in seeing the marriage of the King and Queen as incestuous, therefore *carnal* (sensual, motivated by lust); he may be thinking of the King's murder of his brother as *bloody and unnatural*.

366 **accidental judgements** judgements or punishments brought about by accident. The death of Polonius might be viewed in this light, as well as the deaths of the Queen and Laertes. **casual slaughters** killings brought about by chance

367 **put . . . cunning** instigated, set up by plot or strategy. This could cover the deaths of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern as well as that of Hamlet. **for no cause** This apparently repeats the idea of *casual slaughters*. F's 'forc'd cause' is generally preferred, meaning 'false or contrived cause' – a possible allusion to the King's attempt to have Hamlet executed in England.

368 **this upshot** this climax or conclusion. An *upshot* is literally the final shoot-off to decide the winner in an archery contest.

368–9 **purposes . . . heads** See Hamlet's view, 'For 'tis the sport to have the enginer / Hoist with his own petard' (3.4.204–5); his *defeat* (57) of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern could fall into this category, as could Laertes' death 'as a woodcock to mine own springe' (291), and ultimately the death of the King.

370 **deliver** report, narrate

370–1 **Let . . . audience** Fortinbras assumes that they will repair to some other more public location to hear Horatio's story – which gives the actors a reason to leave the stage.

363 th'yet] *F*; yet *Q2* 367 for no] forc'd *F* 369 th'inventors'] the Inuentors *F*

And call the noblest to the audience.
For me, with sorrow I embrace my fortune.
I have some rights of memory in this kingdom
Which now to claim my vantage doth invite me.

~~HORATIO~~

~~Of that I shall have also cause to speak~~
~~And from his mouth whose voice will draw no more.~~
~~But let this same be presently performed~~
~~Even while men's minds are wild, lest more mischance~~
~~On plots and errors happen.~~

FORTINBRAS ~~Let four captains~~
Bear Hamlet like a soldier to the stage,
For he was likely, had he been put on,

372–4 Fortinbras's careful balance of his *sorrow* against his eagerness to *embrace my fortune* recalls the King's similar balance between *wisest sorrow* and *remembrance of ourselves* in his opening speech at 1.2.6–7.
372 **fortune** good luck
373 **rights of memory** unforgotten or immemorial rights (?). Fortinbras is claiming (at least) the lands forfeited by his father to the elder Hamlet (see 1.1.79–94). Thanks to the actions of the King and Laertes, he is spared any obligation to revenge his father's death on the younger Hamlet.
374 **my vantage** my advantageous position
376 **whose . . . no more** Q2's reading must mean 'who has ceased to draw breath'. F's 'whose . . . on more' ('whose support will encourage further votes'; see 340 and n.) is generally accepted (e.g. by Jenkins), but it is arguable that Horatio is focused on his dead friend at this point, not on the likelihood of Fortinbras's election.
377 **this same** i.e. the public exhibition of the bodies and the permission to speak about what has happened that Horatio requested at 361–4.
presently immediately
378 **wild** disturbed, excited
379 **On** either 'on top of' or 'arising from'
four captains Four bearers was a standard requirement for a ceremonial exit or entrance with a body, as in '*They march out with the body of the King, lying on four men's shoulders with a dead march, drawing weapons on the ground*' (Marlowe, *The Massacre at Paris*, 1593; l.1623) or '*Enter funeral. Body borne by four Captains and Soldiers*' (Philip Massinger and Nathan Field, *The Fatal Dowry*, 1619, 2.1.47).
380–4 **Bear . . . him** In contrast to the *hugger mugger* or *obscure* burial of Polonius (4.5.84, 205) and the *maimed rites* of Ophelia (5.1.208), Hamlet is to be given a proper funeral ceremony, though it may be questionable whether a military one is appropriate.
380 **stage** See 362 and n.
381 **put on** given the opportunity (to rule as king)

373 rights] *Q1;* Rites *F* 374] *Q1 subst.; F lines* doth / me, / now] *Q1;* are *F* claim] *Q1;* claime, *F* vantage] *F;* leisure *Q1* 375 also] alwayes *F* 376] *F lines* mouth / more: / no] on *F* 378] *F lines* wilde, / mischance / while] whiles *F*

To have proved most royal. And for his passage
The soldiers' music and the rite of war
Speak loudly for him.
Take up the bodies. Such a sight as this
Becomes the field but here shows much amiss.
~~Go, bid the soldiers shoot.~~ *Exeunt.*

FINIS

382 **passage** passing (from life to death)
383 **soldiers' music** the drum that accompanies the captains marching off with the body; see Benedick's characterization of Claudio as a soldier in *MA*: 'I have known when there was no music with him but the drum and the fife' (2.3.13–14).
***rite of war** sound of gunshot (?). Edwards prefers Q2's 'right' to F 'rites' on the grounds that Shakespeare often uses *rite* in the singular.
384 **Speak** (imperative)
385 **bodies** See 387 SDn. Q1/F's 'bodie' presumably refers to Hamlet's body – 'the rest must lie and rot where they were' (Jennens). Hibbard follows Q2.
386 **Becomes the field** is appropriate to the battlefield
shows much amiss is most out of place
387 'The end is a half-line after a riming [*sic*] couplet – as if there were more to come – as there must be after every tragedy' (MacDonald).
387 SD All four bodies (those of Hamlet, the King, the Queen and Laertes) would presumably have been carried off at this point; a modern production can bring down a curtain or dim the stage lights.

382] *F lines* royally: / passage, / have] *F*; a *Q1* royal] *Q1*; royally *F* 383 rite] *Cam*^{1}, *Ard*^{2}; right *Q2*; rites *F* 385 bodies] bodie *Q1F* 387 SD] *not in Q1; Exeunt Marching: after the which, a Peale of / Ordenance are shot off. F*