

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

180

CLAUDIUS

It shall be so.

Madness in great ones must not unwatched go.

*Exeunt*3.2 *Enter HAMLET and two or three of the PLAYERS*

HAMLET Speak the speech I pray you as I pronounced it to you,
 trippingly on the tongue; but if you mouth it as many of our players
 do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the
 air too much with your hand thus, but use all gently; for in the
 very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, whirlwind of your passion,
 you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it
 smoothness. Oh, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious
 periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to totters, to very rags, to split
 the ears of the groundlings, who for the most part are capable of

5

177 grief] Q2; Greefes F 182 unwatched] F; vnmatch Q2 Act 3, Scene 2 3.2] Scene II *Capell* 0 SD *two or three*] F;
three Q2 1 pronounced] pronounc'd F; pronoun'd Q2 2 our] Q2; your F 3 lief] liue Q2, F 3 spoke] Q2; had spoke
 F 4 with] Q2; *not in* F 5 whirlwind] Q2; the Whirle-winde F 5 your passion] Q2; Passion F 7 hear] Q2; see
 F 8 periwig] Pery-wig F; perwig Q2 8 totters] Q2, Q1; tatters F 8 split] F; spliet Q2

177 **round** direct and outspoken.179 **find him not** fails to discover his secret.182 **Madness** ... Though Claudius has just doubted the sincerity of Hamlet's madness (158).**Act 3, Scene 2**

0 SD **two or three** So F. Q2 gives 'three'; for Shakespeare's MS to be so specific against an MS with theatre influence is remarkable, especially as there is no need for three players. Probably a compositor's omission.

1 The time is the evening of the same day. Hamlet now appears sane and utterly intent on the acting of his play.

3 **I had as lief** It would be as agreeable to me that.

4 **thus** Hamlet makes the exaggerated gestures he criticizes.

4-6 **in the very torrent ... acquire and beget a temperance** Hamlet describes an acting process by which the actors should obtain, even as they generate intense emotion, a balance and control that they should then convey in their performance.

7 **robustious** rough and rude.8 **periwig-pated** wearing a wig.8 **totters** So Q2 (and Q1); an alternative form of 'tatters', which F gives.9 **groundlings** Audience members who stood in the open yard of the amphitheatre, admission to which was the least expensive option.9 **are capable of** have a capacity for, can understand.

nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise. I would have such a fellow whipped for o'erdoing Termagant – it out-Herods Herod. Pray you avoid it. 10

I PLAYER I warrant your honour.

HAMLET Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor. Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature. For anything so o'erdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end both at the first and now, was and is, to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure. Now this overdone, or come tardy off, though it makes the unskilful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve, the censure of the which one must in your allowance o'erweigh a whole theatre of others. Oh, there be players that I have seen play, and heard others praise and that highly, not to speak it profanely, that neither having 25

10 would] Q2; could F 16 o'erstep] ore-steppe Q2; ore-stop F 17 o'erdone] ore-doone Q2; ouer-done F 19 own feature] F; feature Q2 21 makes] Q2; make F 22–3 the which] F; which Q2 25 praise] F; praysd Q2

10 **inexplicable dumb-shows** Shakespeare does not use 'inexplicable' elsewhere. The context of dumb-shows, by which Hamlet invokes old-fashioned spectacles, suggests 'meaningless'.

11 **Termagant** A deity supposed to be worshipped by Muslims, invoked to signify a user of excessive or senseless terms.

11 **Herod** Ruler of Judaea from 37 BCE to 4 BCE; familiar as a ranting tyrant in the medieval biblical cycles who ordered the slaughter of children in an attempt to kill Jesus Christ.

15 **Suit ... action** 'action' is used here in two different senses, both belonging to the theatre. First, it means acting – in its fullest sense of an actor's management of himself on the stage, and not just gesture (*OED* 6). In the second phrase, it means the action of the play. '[W]ord' also has two meanings; first, the language of the play, and, in the second phrase, the actor's speech. Hamlet instructs the Player to let his acting be governed by what he is given to speak, and to let his speech be

governed by what he is given to act.

16 **modesty** restraints, limitations, measure. Compare 2.2.400.

17 **from** away from.

18 **mirror** Reveals things not as they seem, but as they really are.

19 **scorn** i.e. that which is to be scorned.

20 **the very ... pressure** i.e. gives an impression of the shape of our times in the clearest detail. Many commentators think that 'very age' and 'body of the time' are separate and parallel phrases, but the run of the sentence clearly puts 'age and body' together.

21 **come tardy off** done inadequately or imperfectly.

21 **unskilful** ignorant and undiscerning.

22 **censure** judgement.

22–3 **of the which one** of one of whom.

23 **your allowance** i.e. what you will permit or sanction, hence 'your scale of values'.

th'accent of Christians, nor the gait of Christian, pagan, nor man,
have so strutted and bellowed that I have thought some of nature's
journeymen had made men, and not made them well, they imitated
humanity so abominably.

I PLAYER I hope we have reformed that indifferently with us, sir. 30

HAMLET Oh reform it altogether. And let those that play your clowns
speak no more than is set down for them, for there be of them that
will themselves laugh, to set on some quantity of barren spectators
to laugh too, though in the meantime some necessary question of
the play be then to be considered. That's villainous, and shows 35
a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it. Go make you ready.

Exeunt Players

Enter POLONIUS, ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN

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

POLONIUS And the queen too, and that presently.

HAMLET Bid the players make haste.

Exit Polonius

Will you two help to hasten them?

ROSENCRANTZ Ay my lord. 40

Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern

HAMLET What ho, Horatio!

Enter HORATIO

HORATIO Here sweet lord, at your service.

HAMLET Horatio, thou art e'en as just a man

As e'er my conversation coped withal. 45

HORATIO Oh my dear lord.

HAMLET Nay, do not think I flatter,
For what advancement may I hope from thee,
That no revenue hast but thy good spirits

26 th'accent] Q2; the accent F 26 nor man] Q2; or Norman F 30 sir] F; not in Q2 36 SD *Exeunt Players*] F2; *Exit Players* F; not in Q2 36.I SD] F; after 37 in Q2 39 SD] F; not in Q2 41 ROSENCRANTZ Ay] Ros. I Q2; Both. We will F 41 SD] *Exeunt they two* Q2; *Exeunt* F 42 ho] hoa F; howe Q2 44 SH HAMLET] *Ham.* F; not in Q2

27–8 nature's journeymen These bad actors must have been made not by God (hence Hamlet's 'not to speak it profanely'), but by some of Nature's hired men, little better than apprentices.

29 abominably Spelt in Q2 and F 'abominably', indicating what, from a false etymology, they thought the word meant: 'away from the nature of man'.

30 indifferently reasonably well.

34 necessary question i.e. essential part of the plot.

38 presently immediately.

44 e'en Emphatic, like modern 'absolutely'.

44 just Not 'judicious' but 'honourable', 'upright'.

45 my conversation coped withal my encounters with people have brought me in touch with.

48 Scan 'That nó révénue hást but thý good spirits'.

48 spirits inner qualities.

To feed and clothe thee? Why should the poor be flattered?
 No, let the candied tongue lick absurd pomp 50
 And crook the pregnant hinges of the knee
 Where thrift may follow fawning. Dost thou hear?
 Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice,
 And could of men distinguish her election,
 Sh'ath sealed thee for herself, for thou hast been 55
 As one in suffering all that suffers nothing,
 A man that Fortune's buffets and rewards
 Hast tane with equal thanks. And blest are those
 Whose blood and judgement are so well commeddled
 That they are not a pipe for Fortune's finger 60
 To sound what stop she please. Give me that man
 That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him
 In my heart's core, ay in my heart of heart,
 As I do thee. Something too much of this.
 There is a play tonight before the king: 65
 One scene of it comes near the circumstance
 Which I have told thee of my father's death.
 I prithee when thou seest that act afoot,
 Even with the very comment of thy soul
 Observe my uncle. If his occulted guilt 70
 Do not itself unkennel in one speech,

50 lick] Q2; like F 52 fawning] fauning Q2; faining F 53 her] Q2; my F 54 distinguish her election,] Q2; distinguish, her election F 55 Sh'ath] S'hath Q2; Hath F 58 Hast] Q2; Hath F 59 comedded] comedled Q2; co-mingled F 69 thy] Q2; my F 70 my] Q2; mine F

50–1 The courtier kissing his patron's hands and bowing is pictured, in beast-fable fashion, as a fawning dog licking and crouching – though the dog is nowhere specifically mentioned.

50 **candied** sugared.

50 **absurd** ridiculous in its vanity and self-love. Accent on first syllable.

51 **pregnant** 'quick, ready, prompt' (Johnson).

52 **thrift** ('thriving') profit, prosperity.

54–5 **And could ... herself** From the time Hamlet's soul could be discriminating in her choice amongst men, she has marked you out. So Q2. F's meaning is different: 'and could discriminate amongst men, her choice hath marked you out'.

55 **sealed ... herself** In the legal sense, put a lawful seal on you as her property; hence, 'solemnly attested that you are hers'. There are biblical resonances as well with Ephesians 4.30, 2 Cor. 1.22, and Rom 11.5, 28 (see Naseeb Shaheen, *Biblical References in Shakespeare's Plays* (Newark:

University of Delaware Press, 1999), 549).

59 **blood and judgement** passion and reason.

59 **comedded** mixed together; 'meddle' is common, but 'comeddle' is rare, and F gives 'commingled'.

61 **stop** Note produced by closing a finger-hole in a wind instrument (*Shakespeare's Words*).

66 **circumstance** circumstances, details.

69–70 **Even with ... uncle** i.e. use your most intense powers of observation in watching my uncle; 'comment' stands for the power to comment.

70 **occulted** hidden.

71 **unkennel** come into the open. The word was used of dislodging or driving a fox from his hole or lair.

71 **in one speech** Thompson and Taylor point out that this could refer either to Hamlet's inserted lines (2.2.493–4) or to the anticipated admission of guilt by Claudius (2.2.542–5).

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

75

HORATIO

Well my lord.

If a steal aught the whilst this play is playing
 And scape detecting, I will pay the theft.

Sound a flourish

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

80

Danish march (trumpets and kettle-drums). Enter KING, QUEEN, POLONIUS, OPHELIA, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN and Other LORDS attendant, with his GUARD carrying torches

CLAUDIUS How fares our cousin Hamlet?

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

74 stithy] Q2; Stythe F 74 heedful] Q2; needfull F 77 In] Q2; To F 78 a] Q2; he F 79 detecting] F; detected Q2 79 SD *Sound a flourish*] F (concludes SD which follows); not in Q2 81 SD] This edn; Enter Trumpets and Kettle Drummes, King, Queene, Polonius, Ophelia. Q2; Enter King, Queene, Polonius, Ophelia, Rosincrance, Guildensterne, and other Lords attendant, with his Guard carrying Torches. Danish March. Sound a Flourish. F

72 a damnèd ghost ... seen the ghost which we have seen came from hell (and was an impostor and a liar).

73 my imaginations what Hamlet's mind has suggested to him in the wake of the conversation with the Ghost. To have given credence to the Ghost, and built on its tale, shows a disease of his mind.

74 Vulcan's stithy In classical mythology, Vulcan is the god of fire, and thus his stithy (= forge) was regarded as hellish.

77 In censure of his seeming in weighing up his appearance. They will have to infer from his outward expression what he is actually feeling.

77 Well my lord Expresses Horatio's concurrence and approval.

78 If a steal aught i.e. if he conceals anything.

80 idle Not 'unoccupied', but 'idle-headed' = crazy.

81 SD F's rich version of this grand entry shows

how the theatre worked on the bare essentials given by Shakespeare (as recorded in Q2). The two versions have been conflated by suggesting that F's 'Danish March' was, in fact, played by Q2's 'Trumpets and Kettle Drummes'. F's 'Sound a flourish' has also been separated from the main body of the SD, since it is the warning flourish that alerts Hamlet to the entry.

82 fares Hamlet chooses to understand this in its alternative sense of being fed.

82 cousin Any close relation. *OED* notes that the term was often used by a sovereign to another sovereign, or to one of his nobles. Compare 1.2.117, 'our cousin and our son'. Hamlet and Claudius now come together for the first time since the second scene of the play.

83 the chameleon's dish The chameleon was supposed to live on air.

84 capons castrated cocks, fattened for the table.

CLAUDIUS I have nothing with this answer Hamlet, these words are not mine. 85

HAMLET No, nor mine now. – My lord, you played once i'th' university, you say.

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

HAMLET And what did you enact? 90

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

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

ROSENCRANTZ Ay my lord, they stay upon your patience. 95

GERTRUDE Come hither my dear Hamlet, sit by me.

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

POLONIUS Oh ho, do you mark that?

HAMLET Lady, shall I lie in your lap?

OPHELIA No my lord. 100

HAMLET I mean, my head upon your lap?

OPHELIA Ay my lord.

HAMLET Do you think I meant country matters?

OPHELIA I think nothing my lord.

HAMLET That's a fair thought to lie between maids' legs. 105

OPHELIA What is, my lord?

HAMLET Nothing.

OPHELIA You are merry my lord.

HAMLET Who, I?

OPHELIA Ay my lord. 110

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

87 mine now. – My lord.] *Johnson (substantially)*; mine now my Lord. Q2; mine. Now my Lord, F 89 did I] Q2; I did F 90 And what] F; What Q2 96 dear] Q2; good F 101–2 HAMLET I mean . . . lord] F; not in Q2

85 have nothing with gain nothing from.

85–6 are not mine do not belong to my question.

91–2 I did enact . . . killed me For this as an allusion to Shakespeare's own *Julius Caesar*, see Introduction, 7–8.

93 part action (compare 2 *Henry IV* 4.5.63) – but also, continuing the theatre-language, 'part to play', role.

93 calf Commonly used for a dolt or stupid person.

97 metal more attractive literally, a substance more magnetic; figuratively, a person more

appealing. But 'mettle' (the spelling in both Q2 and F) means also 'disposition', 'spirit'.

103 country matters the sort of thing that goes on among rustics in the country; coarse or indecent things; sex (with a pun on the first syllable of country).

107 Nothing 'Thing' was commonly used to refer to the sexual organ of either men or women; 'nothing' was also used to refer to the female genitals.

111 your only jig-maker i.e. 'there's no one like me for providing farcical entertainments'.

OPHELIA Nay, 'tis twice two months my lord.

HAMLET So long? Nay then let the devil wear black, for I'll have a suit
of sables. O heavens! die two months ago, and not forgotten yet?
Then there's hope a great man's memory may outlive his life half
a year, but byrlady a must build churches then, or else shall a suffer
not thinking on, with the hobby-horse, whose epitaph is, 'For O,
for O, the hobby-horse is forgot.'

Hoboy's play. The dumb-show enters

Enter a KING and a QUEEN, very lovingly, the Queen embracing him. She kneels and makes show of protestation unto him. He takes her up, and declines

115 devil] Diuel F; deule Q2 118 byrlady] F; ber lady Q2 118 a must] Q2; he must F 118 shall a] Q2; shall he F 120.1 SD *Hoboy's ... enters*] F; *The Trumpets sounds. Dumb show follows* Q2 120.2 SD a QUEEN] Q2; *Queene* F 120.2 SD *very lovingly*] F; *not in* Q2 120.2 *embracing him.*] F; *embracing him, and he her,* Q2 120.2-3 SD *She ... him*] F; *not in* Q2

114 **twice two months** Compare 1.2.138 – it was then less than two months since the former king's death: a further indication of the gap in time between Acts 1 and 2.

115–16 **let the devil ... sables** 'sables' means the fur of a northern animal, the sable, which is brown. But 'sable' is also the heraldic word for 'black'. So this is a typical riddling remark of Hamlet's. Since his father has been dead so long, the devil can have his mourning garments and he will start wearing rich furs – but, by the pun, he will actually continue mourning.

118 **byrlady** Compare 2.2.388. This is F's spelling. Q2's 'ber lady' may represent Shakespeare's spelling and pronunciation.

119 **not thinking on** being forgotten.

119–20 **hobby-horse ... forgot** The hobby-horse was one of the additional characters in the Morris dance in the traditional English summer festivities. A man wore a huge hooped skirt in the likeness of a horse. The phrase 'the hobby horse is forgot' is very common (see *OED*) and nearly always had a sexual connotation (see *Othello* 4.1.154; *Winter's Tale* 1.2.276). A. Brissenden (*RES* xxx (1979), 1–11) describes how the horse used to sink to the ground as though dead, then come to energetic life again. So the hobby-horse does not die to be forgotten, but comes back with a vengeance, like Hamlet's father.

120 SD The versions of the dumb-show in Q2 and F differ in three ways: (1) Q2 accidentally omits what is almost certainly part of the original SD (chiefly 'She kneels...unto him', 2–3); (2) F firms up for stage presentation, altering the music, identifying characters ('Fellow', 'King', 'Mutes'), and inserting exits; (3) F substitutes more familiar and descriptive words like 'loath and unwilling' for 'harsh'. What is printed here is an eclectic version, accepting some changes from F, but preserving Q2's language. There are three problems about the dumb-show. (1) It is most unusual for a dumb-show to mime the action of the entire play to follow; (2) Did Hamlet know the dumb-show was going to be presented? (3) Why does Claudius not react? As regards (1), the show clearly puzzles Ophelia, and is therefore probably meant to seem rather peculiar. As regards (2), although Hamlet's ensuing remarks *can* be interpreted as showing anger towards the players, they do not in the least demand that interpretation, and it is safer to assume that the sponsor of the play knew what was going to take place. (3) There are many ways of explaining Claudius's silence, but an impassive, or nearly impassive, Claudius is theatrically very effective, providing an enigma for Hamlet and Horatio, as well as the audience.

120.1 *Hoboy's* Oboes.

120.3 *protestation* solemn vow.

his head upon her neck. He lies him down upon a bank of flowers. She, seeing him asleep, leaves him. Anon comes in another man, takes off his crown, kisses it, pours poison in the sleeper's ears, and leaves him. The Queen returns, finds the King dead, and makes passionate action. The poisoner, with some two or three mutes, comes in again, seeming to condole with her. The dead body is carried away. The poisoner woos the Queen with gifts. She seems harsh awhile, but in the end accepts his love. Exeunt

OPHELIA What means this my lord?

HAMLET Marry this is miching mallecho, it means mischief.

OPHELIA Belike this show imports the argument of the play?

Enter PROLOGUE

HAMLET We shall know by this fellow; the players cannot keep counsel, they'll tell all. 125

OPHELIA Will a tell us what this show meant?

HAMLET Ay, or any show that you'll show him. Be not you ashamed to show, he'll not shame to tell you what it means.

OPHELIA You are naught, you are naught. I'll mark the play.

PROLOGUE For us and for our tragedy, 130
Here stooping to your clemency,
We beg your hearing patiently.

HAMLET Is this a prologue, or the posy of a ring?

OPHELIA 'Tis brief my lord.

HAMLET As woman's love. 135

Enter the PLAYER KING *and* QUEEN

120.4 SD *He lies*] Q2; *Layes* F 120.5 SD *comes*] F; *come* Q2 120.5 SD *another man*] Q2; a *Fellow* F 120.6 SD *pours*] Q2; and *powres* F 120.6 SD *the sleeper's*] Q2; the *Kings* F 120.6 SD *leaves him*] Q2; *Exits* F 120.7 SD and *makes*] F; *makes* Q2 120.8 SD *two or three mutes*] F; *three or foure* Q2 120.8 SD *comes*] F; *come* Q2 120.8 SD *seeming*] F; *seeme* Q2 120.8 SD *condole*] Q2; *lament* F 120.10 SD *harsh*] Q2; *loath and unwilling* F 120.10 SD *his love*] F; *loue* Q2 120.10 SD *Exeunt*] F; *not in* Q2 122 *is*] F; *not in* Q2 122 *miching*] *Miching* F; *munching* Q2; *myching* Q1 122 *mallecho*] *Malone*; *Mallico* Q2; *Malicho* F; *Mallico* Q1 122 *it*] Q2; that F 123 *play?*] F; *play*. Q2 123 SD] Q2; *after 129 in F* 124 *this fellow*] Q2; these *Fellowes* F 124 *counsel*] F; *not in* Q2 126 a] Q2; they F 127 *you'll*] F; *you will* Q2 133 *posy*] *posic* Q2; *Poesie* F 135 SD] *P. Alexander*; *Enter King and Queene* Q2; *Enter King and his Queene* F

120.10 *harsh* i.e. she is disdainful, cross.

122 *miching mallecho* Another insoluble problem. '[M]iching' is F's word; Q2 has 'munching'. '[M]iching' is a good English word meaning 'skulking'; 'mallecho' (Q2, *Mallico*; F, *Malicho*) may be for Spanish *malhecho*, a misdeed.

123 *Belike ... play?* 'Perhaps this dumb-show explains what the play is about?'

125 *they'll tell all* It would seem unnecessary to point out that this is a joke, but some have taken it as a sign of Hamlet's anxiety lest his scheme should

be sabotaged.

127 *any show ...* Hamlet continues his bawdy innuendos.

129 *naught wicked*.

133 *posy* inscribed motto or rhyme; a shortened version of 'poesie', which is how the word is spelt in F and Q1.

135 SD KING ... QUEEN According to Hamlet in 216–18, it is a Duke called Gonzago and his wife Baptista. F makes an effort to call the Queen-Duchess '*Bap.*' or '*Bapt*' in speech headings – no doubt to distinguish her from Gertrude – but does

PLAYER KING Full thirty times hath Phoebus' cart gone round
 Neptune's salt wash and Tellus' orbèd ground,
 And thirty dozen moons with borrowed sheen
 About the world have times twelve thirties been,
 Since love our hearts, and Hymen did our hands, 140
 Unite commutual in most sacred bands.

PLAYER QUEEN So many journeys may the sun and moon
 Make us again count o'er ere love be done.
 But woe is me, you are so sick of late,
 So far from cheer and from your former state, 145
 That I distrust you. Yet though I distrust,
 Discomfort you my lord it nothing must.
 For women's fear and love hold quantity,
 In neither aught, or in extremity.
 Now what my love is, proof hath made you know; 150
 And as my love is sized, my fear is so.
 [Where love is great, the littlest doubts are fear;
 Where little fears grow great, great love grows there.]

PLAYER KING Faith, I must leave thee love, and shortly too:
 My operant powers their functions leave to do; 155
 And thou shalt live in this fair world behind,
 Honoured, beloved; and haply one as kind
 For husband shalt thou –

PLAYER QUEEN Oh confound the rest!
 Such love must needs be treason in my breast.
 In second husband let me be accurst: 160
 None wed the second but who killed the first.

137 orbèd ground] F; orb'd the ground Q2 142, 158, 197 SH *PLAYER QUEEN*] *Stevens*²; *Quee*. Q2; *Bap*. F 145 your] F; our Q2 145 former] Q2; forme F 147 *Following this line Q2 inserts* For women feare too much, euen as they loue, 148 For] F; And Q2 148 hold] Q2; holds F 149 In] F; Eyther none, in Q2 150 love] F; Lord Q2 152–3] Q2; not in F 155 their] Q2; my F

nothing to alter 'King'. Interestingly, Q1 calls them Duke and Duchess throughout.

136 *Phoebus' cart* The chariot of the classical god of the sun, i.e. the sun.

136–9 The emphasis on thirty years of marriage has been compared with the emphasis on Hamlet's age as 30 at 5.1.122–38.

137 *Neptune's ... Tellus' orbèd ground* The ocean and the sphere of the earth, the globe.

138 *borrowed sheen* reflected light.

140 *Hymen* God of marriage.

146 *distrust you* worry about your health.

148 Fear and love go together in a woman. Either they are both non-existent, or they are both present in full. For Shakespeare's hesitations here, see *Textual Analysis*, 255–6.

150 *proof* experience, trial.

151 *sized* in size.

152–3 These two lines are omitted in F. See *Textual Analysis*, 255–6.

155 *leave to do* cease to perform.

161 *None wed ... first* No explicit accusation or

HAMLET That's wormwood, wormwood.

PLAYER QUEEN The instances that second marriage move
Are base respects of thrift, but none of love.
A second time I kill my husband dead 165
When second husband kisses me in bed.

PLAYER KING I do believe you think what now you speak,
But what we do determine oft we break.
Purpose is but the slave to memory,
Of violent birth but poor validity, 170
Which now like fruit unripe sticks on the tree,
But fall unshaken when they mellow be.
Most necessary 'tis that we forget
To pay ourselves what to ourselves is debt.
What to ourselves in passion we propose, 175
The passion ending, doth the purpose lose.
The violence of either grief or joy
Their own enactures with themselves destroy.
Where joy most revels, grief doth most lament;
Grief joys, joy grieves, on slender accident. 180
This world is not for aye, nor 'tis not strange
That even our loves should with our fortunes change,
For 'tis a question left us yet to prove,
Whether love lead fortune, or else fortune love.
The great man down, you mark his favourite flies; 185
The poor advanced makes friends of enemies,

162 That's wormwood, wormwood] *Wilson*; That's wormwood Q2 (*margin*); Wormwood, Wormwood F 163 SH
PLAYER QUEEN] *Steevens*²; *not in* Q2; *Bapt.* F 167 you think] Q2; you. Think F 171 like] F; the Q2 177 either]
Q2; other F 180 joys] F; ioy Q2 180 grieves] F; griefes Q2 185 favourite] Q2; faourites F

indictment of Gertrude for the murder of Hamlet
Sr has been made so far in the play. (Hamlet accuses
her at 3.4.30.)

162 wormwood *Artemisia absinthium*, a bitter
herb.

163 instances motives.

164 thrift profit, advancement.

167–78 The whole of this speech makes gnomic
comments on Hamlet's own predicament.

169 Purpose is ... memory The fulfilment of
plans depends on memory.

170 Of violent birth Very strong at the
beginning.

170 validity health and strength.

175–6 in passion ... purpose lose Extends
the sentiment of 169, only now the fulfilment of
a plan depends upon the maintenance of emotional
fervour.

177–8 The violence ... destroy Repeats the
preceding couplet. Violent grief and joy, when
they cease, destroy the 'enactures' or actions
which are associated with them.

179–80 Where joy ... accident Those who
have most capacity for joy have most capacity for
grief, and the one changes into the other on the
slightest occasion.

181 for aye for ever.

And hitherto doth love on fortune tend;
 For who not needs shall never lack a friend,
 And who in want a hollow friend doth try
 Directly seasons him his enemy. 190
 But orderly to end where I begun,
 Our wills and fates do so contrary run
 That our devices still are overthrown;
 Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own.
 So think thou wilt no second husband wed, 195
 But die thy thoughts when thy first lord is dead.

PLAYER QUEEN Nor earth to me give food, nor heaven light,
 Sport and repose lock from me day and night,
 [To desperation turn my trust and hope,
 An anchor's cheer in prison be my scope,] 200
 Each opposite that blanks the face of joy
 Meet what I would have well, and it destroy;
 Both here and hence pursue me lasting strife,
 If once a widow, ever I be wife.

HAMLET If she should break it now! 205

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

Sleeps

PLAYER QUEEN Sleep rock thy brain,
 And never come mischance between us twain. *Exit*

HAMLET Madam, how like you this play? 210

GERTRUDE The lady doth protest too much methinks.

HAMLET Oh but she'll keep her word.

197 to me give] Q2; to giue me F 199–200] Q2; not in F 200 An] *Theobald*; And Q2 204 once a] F; once I be a Q2 204 wife] F; a wife Q2 208 SD] F(*after brain*); not in Q2 209 SD] F; *Exeunt* Q2 211 doth protest] Q2; protests F

187 *hitherto* to this extent.

187 *tend* attend, wait.

189 *try* make trial of.

190 *seasons* As in 1.3.81, 'to season' means 'to cause change by the passage of time', usually 'to ripen', but here simply 'changes (him into)'.

193 *devices* schemes, plans.

200 *anchor's cheer* the fare of an anchorite or

religious hermit.

200 *scope* limit.

201 *opposite* opposing force.

201 *blanks* blanches, makes pale. Not used elsewhere by Shakespeare.

207 *spirits* vital spirits.

211 *doth protest* makes protestation or promises.

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

HAMLET No, no, they do but jest, poison in jest, no offence i'th'world.

CLAUDIUS What do you call the play? 215

HAMLET The Mousetrap. Marry how? Tropically. This play is the image of a murder done in Vienna. Gonzago is the duke's name, his wife Baptista. You shall see anon. 'Tis a knavish piece of work, but what o' that? Your majesty, and we that have free souls, it touches us not. Let the galled jade winch, our withers are unwrung. 220

Enter LUCIANUS

This is one Lucianus, nephew to the king.

OPHELIA You are as good as a chorus my lord.

HAMLET I could interpret between you and your love if I could see the puppets dallying.

OPHELIA You are keen my lord, you are keen. 225

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

OPHELIA Still better and worse.

HAMLET So you mistake your husbands. Begin, murderer. Pox, leave thy damnable faces and begin. Come, the croaking raven doth bellow for revenge. 230

219 o' that] F; of that Q2 220 SD] F; after 221 in Q2 222 as good as a] Q2, Q1; a good F 226 mine] Q2; my F 228 your] Q2; not in F 228 Pox] F; not in Q2

213–14 **Is there ... no offence i'th'world** Claudius is probably asking whether there is anything censorable in the play, but Hamlet chooses to interpret it as a question about whether there is something criminal in it. Hamlet's assurance that it is only a mock-crime includes the first verbal mention of poison in the inset play.

216 **Tropically** As a trope, a figure of speech.

219 **free innocent.** See 2.2.516.

220 **Let ... winch** 'galled jade' is a poor horse with saddle-sores, 'winch' = 'wince'. It was a common saying that it was the galled horse that would soonest wince (Tilley H700).

220 **withers** The high part of a horse's back, between the shoulder-blades.

220 **unwring** not pressed tight, pinched or chafed. See *OED* wring v 4.

221 **nephew to the king** In identifying Lucianus thus, Hamlet brings together past and future: Claudius's killing of his brother, and his own projected killing of his uncle.

223–4 **I could ... dallying** I could act as a chorus in explaining what goes on between you and your lover if I could see the dalliance or flirting in the form of a puppet show. Many commentators suspect some indecent secondary meaning in 'puppets', which is fully in keeping with Hamlet's

treatment of Ophelia. The explanation may well lie in Q1's 'pooopies'. It has been shown by H. Hulme that 'poop' meant the female genitals (Hilda M. Hulme, *Explorations in Shakespeare's Language: Some Problems of Lexical Meaning in the Dramatic Text* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1963), 114). That the word could mean 'rump' is clear from *OED*, and the obscene use is probably only an extension of that meaning, probably to the genital organs of either sex.

225 **keen** sharp and bitter.

226 **groaning** of childbirth or loss of maiden-head. '[E]dge' = sexual appetite.

227 **Still better and worse** Ophelia refers to Hamlet's continual 'bettering' of her meaning, i.e. 'Always a "better" meaning with a more offensive slant'.

228 **mistake** i.e. mis-take, trick: 'with such vows (for better or for worse) you falsely take your husbands'.

229–30 **the croaking ... revenge** Simpson noted (NV) in 1874 that this was a 'satirical condensation' of two lines from *The True Tragedy of Richard III* (printed 1594): 'The screeking raven sits croaking for revenge, / Whole herds of beasts come bellowing for revenge' (Malone Society Reprint, 1892–3).

LUCIANUS Thoughts black, hands apt, drugs fit, and time agreeing,
 Confederate season, else no creature seeing.
 Thou mixture rank, of midnight weeds collected,
 With Hecat's ban thrice blasted, thrice infected,
 Thy natural magic and dire property
 On wholesome life usurp immediately. 235

Pours the poison in his ears

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

OPHELIA The king rises. 240

HAMLET What, frightened with false fire?

GERTRUDE How fares my lord?

POLONIUS Give o'er the play.

CLAUDIUS Give me some light. Away!

LORDS Lights, lights, lights! 245

Exeunt all but Hamlet and Horatio

HAMLET Why, let the stricken deer go weep,
 The hart ungalled play,
 For some must watch while some must sleep,
 Thus runs the world away.

232 Confederate] F; Considerat Q2 234 infected] F; inuected Q2 236 usurp] F; vsurps Q2 236 SD] F; not in Q2 237 A] Q2; He F 237 for's] F; for his Q2 238 written] Q2; writ F 238 very choice] Q2; choyce F 241 HAMLET . . . fire] F; not in Q2 245 SH LORDS] *This edn; Pol. Q2; All F 245 SD] Q2; Exeunt / Manet Hamlet & Horatio F 249 Thus] Q2, Q1; So F*

231 apt ready.

232 Confederate season i.e. this moment of time is his ally, and his only witness.

233 of midnight weeds collected put together from weeds gathered at midnight; [C]ollected' refers to the mixing of the weeds, the concoction, and not the picking. Compare 4.7.143.

234 Hecat Hecate, goddess of witchcraft.

234 ban curse.

235 dire property baleful quality.

236 usurp So F. Q2 reads 'usurps', but it is quite clear from the syntax that Lucianus is invoking the

poison to work.

237 estate position (as king). Compare 3.3.5.

241 false fire gunfire with blank charge.

245 LORDS Q2 gives this to Polonius; F to 'All.' The royal guard came in bearing torches (81 SD above); Claudius orders these torchbearers to light him to his own quarters.

246–9 Why, let . . . world away This song or ballad has not been identified.

247 ungalled uninjured.

248 watch keep awake.

Would not this, sir, and a forest of feathers, if the rest of my fortunes
turn Turk with me, with two provincial roses on my razed shoes,
get me a fellowship in a cry of players, sir? 250

HORATIO Half a share.

HAMLET A whole one I.

For thou dost know, O Damon dear, 255
This realm dismantled was
Of Jove himself, and now reigns here
A very, very – pajock.

HORATIO You might have rhymed.

HAMLET O good Horatio, I'll take the ghost's word for a thousand 260
pound. Didst perceive?

HORATIO Very well my lord.

HAMLET Upon the talk of the poisoning?

HORATIO I did very well note him.

Enter ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN

HAMLET Ah ha! – Come, some music! Come, the recorders! 265
For if the king like not the comedy,

251 two] F; *not in Q2* 251 razed] raz'd Q2; rac'd F 252 sir] F; *not in Q2* 264 SD] F; *after 268 in Q2* 265 Ah ha!]
Ah ha, Q2; Oh, ha? F

250 **this** The success of the performance?

250 **forest of feathers** The plumes which were a derided feature of the gallant's outfit were a notable feature of theatre costume.

251 **turn Turk with me** To 'turn Turk' is to renounce one's religion, apostasize or become a renegade; 'with' has here the sense of 'against' (as we still use it in 'fight' or 'compete' *with* someone). So the phrase means 'renew on me', or 'renounce and desert me'.

251 **provincial roses** Roses originating either from Provins in northern France or from Provence. (Jenkins in a long note strongly defends the latter origin.) Hamlet is speaking of rosettes and not the real flowers.

251 **razed shoes** Shoes which were 'razed', 'rased' or 'raced' were ornamented by cuts or slits in the leather.

252 **fellowship** partnership; the technical term was a 'share'.

252 **cry pack** (of hounds).

255 **Damon** Known from classical literature as a paragon (with Pythias) of friendship.

256 **dismantled** stripped, divested; i.e. the

realm lost Jove himself (sovereign god of the Romans) as king.

258 **pajock** T. McGrath, in 1871 (cited in NV), cleverly suggested that 'pajock' is the 'patchock' used by Edmund Spenser in *A View of the Present State of Ireland* (ed. W. L. Renwick (London: Scholartis Press, 1934), 64) in a context suggesting a despicable person: 'as very patchocks as the wild Irish'. This is supported by *OED* sv Patchcock. In the following line, Horatio suggests that he expected Hamlet to finish with a rhyme, likely 'ass'.

263 **Upon the talk of the poisoning** May refer either to Lucianus's words (231–6) or to Hamlet's outburst (237–9).

264 SD So placed by F. Q2 places it later, after 268. F shows Hamlet pointedly ignoring Rosencrantz and Guildenstern by calling for music and singing a little song.

266–7 **if ... perdy** It has been suggested that this is an echo of the lines in *The Spanish Tragedy* (4.1.197–8), also referring to a revenger's playlet, 'And if the world like not this tragedy, / Hard is the hap of old Hieronimo'. ('Perdy' = by God.)

Why then – belike he likes it not, perdy.

Come, some music!

GUILDENSTERN Good my lord, vouchsafe me a word with you.

HAMLET Sir, a whole history.

270

GUILDENSTERN The king, sir –

HAMLET Ay sir, what of him?

GUILDENSTERN Is in his retirement marvellous distempered.

HAMLET With drink sir?

GUILDENSTERN No my lord, rather with choler.

275

HAMLET Your wisdom should show itself more richer to signify this to his doctor, for, for me to put him to his purgation would perhaps plunge him into far more choler.

GUILDENSTERN Good my lord, put your discourse into some frame, and start not so wildly from my affair.

280

HAMLET I am tame sir, pronounce.

GUILDENSTERN The queen your mother, in most great affliction of spirit, hath sent me to you.

HAMLET You are welcome.

GUILDENSTERN Nay good my lord, this courtesy is not of the right breed. If it shall please you to make me a wholesome answer, I will do your mother's commandment. If not, your pardon and my return shall be the end of my business.

285

HAMLET Sir, I cannot.

ROSENCRANTZ What, my lord?

290

HAMLET Make you a wholesome answer; my wit's diseased. But, sir, such answer as I can make, you shall command, or rather, as you say, my mother. Therefore no more, but to the matter. My mother, you say.

ROSENCRANTZ Then thus she says. Your behaviour hath struck her into amazement and admiration.

295

275 rather with] F; with Q2 277 his doctor] F; the Doctor Q2 278 far more] F; more Q2 280 start] F; stare Q2 288 my business] F; busines Q2 290 SH ROSENCRANTZ] *Ros. Q2; Guild, F* 291 answer] Q2; answers F 292–3 as you say] Q2; you say F

273 **distempered** out of humoral balance. But the word was also used as a euphemism for being drunk, as Hamlet's bland enquiry indicates.

275 **choler** anger.

277 **purgation** The practice, based on humoral theory, of getting rid of the excess yellow bile that has distempered Claudius. See 1.4.27.

277 **signify** announce.

277–8 **for me ... more choler** the way in which I would cure him of his distemper would make him much angrier.

279 **frame** ordered structure.

280 **start** make a sudden movement, like a startled horse.

281 **tame** subdued; i.e. a manageable horse that will not 'start'.

286 **wholesome** healthy, i.e. sane.

287 **pardon** permission (to leave).

292 **command** have at your service.

296 **amazement** See notes to 1.2.235, 2.2.517.

296 **admiration** wonder.

HAMLET O wonderful son that can so stonish a mother! But is there no sequel at the heels of this mother's admiration? Impart.

ROSENCRANTZ She desires to speak with you in her closet ere you go to bed.

300

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

ROSENCRANTZ My lord, you once did love me.

HAMLET And do still, by these pickers and stealers.

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

305

HAMLET Sir, I lack advancement.

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

310

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

Enter the PLAYERS with recorders

Oh, the recorders. Let me see one. To withdraw with you – Why do you go about to recover the wind of me, as if you would drive me into a toil?

315

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

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

297 stonish] Q2; astonish F 298 Impart] Q2; not in F 304 And] Q2; So I F 306 surely] Q2; freely F 306 upon] Q2; of F 311 sir] Q2; not in F 312 SD] Q2(after 310); Enter one with a Recorder F 313 recorders] Q2; Recorder F 313 Let me see one] Q2; Let me see F

301 were she ... mother In sane conversation, this would go with a *refusal* to obey.

304 pickers and stealers hands. From the Catechism in the Book of Common Prayer: 'To keep my hands from picking and stealing'.

306 bar ... liberty Rosencrantz means Hamlet would be more free in his mind, less burdened, if he would communicate his problems.

308 I lack advancement Hamlet brazenly offers the explanation which Rosencrantz and Guildenstern had previously suggested and which he had denied (2.2.241–4).

311 while the grass grows – While waiting for the grass to grow, the horse starves. As Hamlet

indicates, this is an old proverb (Tilley G423).

312 SD So Q2. F's modification of this direction and the subsequent dialogue cut down the number of characters necessary. See Textual Analysis, 266–8.

313 To withdraw with you Hamlet moves Rosencrantz and Guildenstern aside with him.

314 recover gain. The huntsman will try to move to the windward of his prey, and so get the animal, scenting him, to run away from him and towards the trap.

316–17 if my duty ... unmannerly 'If my respectful attention seems to you too bold, you accuse love of being ill-mannered'.

GUILDENSTERN My lord, I cannot.

HAMLET I pray you.

320

GUILDENSTERN Believe me I cannot.

HAMLET I do beseech you.

GUILDENSTERN I know no touch of it my lord.

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

325

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

HAMLET Why look you now how unworthy a thing you make of me.

You would play upon me, you would seem to know my stops, you
would pluck out the heart of my mystery, you would sound me from
my lowest note to the top of my compass – and there is much music,
excellent voice, in this little organ, yet cannot you make it speak.

330

'Sblood, do you think I am easier to be played on than a pipe? Call
me what instrument you will, though you can fret me, you cannot
play upon me.

335

Enter POLONIUS

God bless you sir.

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

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

POLONIUS By th'mass, and 'tis like a camel indeed.

340

HAMLET Methinks it is like a weasel.

324 'Tis] F; It is Q2 324 fingers] Q2; finger F 325 thumb] thumbe F; the vmbre Q2 326 eloquent] Q2; excellent
F 332 the top of] F; not in Q2 333 speak] Q2; not in F 334 'Sblood] Q2; Why F 334 think I] Q2, Q1; thinke, that
I F 335 can fret me] F; fret me not Q2 339 yonder] Q2, Q 1; that F 339 in shape of] Q2; in shape like F 340 mass]
masse Q2; Misse F 340 'tis] Q2; it's F

324 ventages vents, i.e. finger holes of the recorder.

331 mystery the skills of a particular craft. I.e. you would learn the innermost secret of my working, as a musician would learn the secret of playing the recorder.

333 this little organ the recorder.

335 fret 'frets' are the raised bars for fingering

on a lute, providing a pun with 'irritate'.

338 presently immediately.

339 see yonder cloud This scene is supposed to be taking place indoors at night. But Shakespeare has already puzzled the difference between inside and outside in scenes between Hamlet and Polonius (see 2.2.201).

POLONIUS It is backed like a weasel.

HAMLET Or like a whale?

POLONIUS Very like a whale.

HAMLET Then I will come to my mother by and by. – They fool me 345
to the top of my bent. – I will come by and by.

POLONIUS I will say so. *Exit*

HAMLET By and by is easily said. – Leave me, friends.

Exeunt all but Hamlet

'Tis now the very witching time of night,
When churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes out 350
Contagion to this world. Now could I drink hot blood,
And do such bitter business as the day
Would quake to look on. Soft, now to my mother.
O heart, lose not thy nature; let not ever
The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom. 355
Let me be cruel, not unnatural:
O will speak daggers to her but use none.
My tongue and soul in this be hypocrites,
How in my words somever she be shent,
To give them seals never my soul consent. *Exit* 360

343 whale?] F; Whale. Q2 345 SH HAMLET] F; as *catchword only in Q2* 345 I will] Q2; will I F 347–8 POLONIUS ... friends.] F; Leauc me friends. / I will, say so. By and by is easily said, Q2 350 breathes] breaths F; breakes Q2 352 bitter business as the day] F; busines as the bitter day Q2 357 daggers] F; dagger Q2 360 SD] Q2; *not in F*

345 *by and by* presently, quite soon.

345–6 *They fool me ... bent* They tax to the uttermost my capacity to play the madman.

349 *witching time* bewitching time, time of sorcery and enchantment. The reference is to the witches' sabbath, when their ceremonies conjured up the devil in physical form.

351 *Now could I drink hot blood* Witches were supposed to open the graves of newly buried children whom their charms had killed, boil the bodies, and drink the liquid. Drinking of blood was one of the most frequent charges against witches. See Reginald Scot, *Discovery of Witchcraft* (London, 1584), Et.

353 *Soft* That's enough! (see 3.1.88 note).

354 *nature* natural feelings (as regards his mother). Compare 1.5.81.

355 *Nero* Tyrannical Roman emperor who contrived the murder of his mother.

358 *My tongue ... hypocrites* Hamlet establishes the disjunction between what he will say and what he feels or wishes.

359 *shent* castigated, punished (by rebuke or reproach).

360 *give them seals* i.e. by deeds.