

behind some bush we may come upon the lady Dulcinea, as disenchanted as you could wish. If it is because of worry over your defeat that you are dying, put the blame on me by saying that the reason for your being overthrown was that I had not properly fastened Rocinante's girth. For the matter of that, your Grace knows from reading your books of chivalry that it is a common thing for certain knights to overthrow others, and he who is vanquished today will be the victor tomorrow."

"That is right," said Sansón, "the worthy Sancho speaks the truth."

"Not so fast, gentlemen," said Don Quixote. "In last year's nests there are no birds this year. I was mad and now I am sane; I was Don Quixote de la Mancha, and now I am, as I have said, Alonso Quijano the Good. May my repentance and the truth I now speak restore to me the place I once held in your esteem. And now, let the notary proceed:

"ITEM. I bequeath my entire estate, without reservation, to my niece Antonia Quijana, here present, after the necessary deductions shall have been made from the most available portion of it to satisfy the bequests that I have stipulated. The first payment shall be to my housekeeper for the wages due her, with twenty ducats over to buy her a dress. And I hereby appoint the Señor Curate and the Señor Bachelor Sansón Carrasco to be my executors.

"ITEM. It is my will that if my niece Antonia Quijana should see fit to marry, it shall be to a man who does not know what books of chivalry are; and if it shall be established that he is acquainted with such books and my niece still insists on marrying him, then she shall lose all that I have bequeathed her and my executors shall apply her portion to works of charity as they may see fit.

"ITEM. I entreat the aforementioned gentlemen, my executors, if by good fortune they should come to know the author who is said to have composed a history now going the rounds under the title of *Second Part of the Exploits of Don Quixote de la Mancha*, to beg his forgiveness in my behalf, as earnestly as they can, since it was I who unthinkingly led him to set down so many and such great absurdities as are to be found in it; for I leave this life with a feeling of remorse at having provided him with the occasion for putting them into writing."

The will ended here, and Don Quixote, stretching himself at length in the bed, fainted away. They all were alarmed at this and hastened to aid him. The same thing happened very frequently in the course of the three days of life that remained to him after he had made his will. The household was in a state of excitement, but with it all the niece continued to eat her meals, the housekeeper had her drink, and Sancho Panza was in good spirits; for this business of inheriting property effaces or mitigates the sorrow which the heir ought to feel and causes him to forget.

Death came at last for Don Quixote, after he had received all the sacraments and once more, with many forceful arguments, had expressed his abomination of books of chivalry. The notary who was present remarked that in none of those books had he read of any knight-errant dying in his own bed so peacefully and in so Christian a manner. And thus, amid the tears and lamentations of those present, he gave up the ghost; that is to say, he died. Perceiving that their friend was no more, the curate asked

the notary to be a witness to the fact that Alonso Quijano the Good, commonly known as Don Quixote, was truly dead, this being necessary in order that some author other than Cid Hamete Benengeli might not have the opportunity of falsely resurrecting him and writing endless histories of his exploits.

Such was the end of the Ingenious Gentleman of La Mancha, whose birthplace Cid Hamete was unwilling to designate exactly in order that all the towns and villages of La Mancha might contend among themselves for the right to adopt him and claim him as their own, just as the seven cities of Greece did in the case of Homer. The lamentations of Sancho and those of Don Quixote's niece and his housekeeper, as well as the original epitaphs that were composed for his tomb, will not be recorded here, but mention may be made of the verses by Sansón Carrasco:

Here lies a gentleman bold
Who was so very brave
He went to lengths untold,
And on the brink of the grave
Death had on him no hold.
By the world he set small store—
He frightened it to the core—
Yet somehow, by Fate's plan,
Though he'd lived a crazy man,
When he died he was sane once more.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

1564–1616

When William Shakespeare was born in April 1564 at Stratford-on-Avon in Warwickshire, Stratford was a rural community with a population of less than two thousand—of which his father, John Shakespeare, was a prominent and prosperous member. Little is known of Shakespeare's early life beyond conjecture or legend; he probably received the education offered by the good local grammar school, with emphasis on Latin; at eighteen he married a farmer's daughter, Anne Hathaway, seven or eight years his senior; there are baptismal records of their children, Susanna (1583) and the twins Hamnet and Judith (1585). After a gap of seven years, records show Shakespeare in 1592 already a successful and many-talented playwright in London; in 1594 he was a shareholder in a prominent players' company of which the Lord Chamberlain was patron and the famous actors Burbage and Kempe were members, while literary distinction of a type that was then more highly respected came from successful poems (*Venus and Adonis*, 1593; *The Rape of Lucrece*, 1594). By 1596, of his now best-known plays he had written *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Richard III*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *The Merchant of Venice*; in 1597–1598, with the two parts of *Henry IV* he added Falstaff to his growing list of famous characters.

The Chamberlain's Company had been playing at the Theatre, north of the city of London, and later at the Curtain; in 1598 the Theatre was demolished, and the Globe, a large playhouse south of the Thames, was built; Shakespeare shared in

the expenses. Increased prosperity had brought social advancement: in 1596 the College of Heralds had sanctioned Shakespeare's claim to a gentleman's station by recognizing the family's coat of arms; in the same period he had bought New Place, a large house in his hometown. In 1599, *Henry V*, the last of the plays centering on the Lancastrian kings, was followed by the first of the great Roman tragedies, *Julius Caesar*. The Globe period saw most of Shakespeare's mature work; this is a usual dating of the most famous plays: *Hamlet*, 1601; *Othello*, 1603–1604; *King Lear*, 1605; *Macbeth*, 1606; *Antony and Cleopatra*, 1607; and *The Tempest*, 1611. Queen Elizabeth had favored the players, and her successor, James I, directly patronized them; the Lord Chamberlain's company thus became the King's Men. In 1608, besides the Globe, they acquired an enclosed playhouse in Blackfriars, in the city of London, for winter entertainment. At about that time Shakespeare seems to have retired from the stage, and certainly from then on he wrote fewer plays. He lived most of the time at Stratford until his death there on April 23, 1616.

Shakespeare's plays constitute the most important body of dramatic work in the history of literature, and no character in literature is more familiar to world audiences than Hamlet. He belongs to the world also in the sense that some of the influential interpretations of his character have been developed outside the country and language of his origin, the most famous being the one offered by Goethe in *Wilhelm Meister*. The unparalleled reputation of the work may also have certain nonliterary causes. For instance, it is a play whose central role is singularly cherished by actors in all languages as the test of their skill, and conversely, audiences sometimes content themselves with a rather vague notion of the work as a whole and concentrate on the attractively problematical and eloquent hero and on the actor impersonating him, waiting for his famous soliloquies as a certain type of operagoer waits for the next aria of a favorite singer. But along with the impact of the protagonist, there are other and deeper reasons why the world should naturally have given *Hamlet* its leading place in our literary heritage. Though it is a drama that concerns personages of superior station and the conflicts and problems associated with men and women of high degree, it reveals these problems in terms of a particular family, presenting an individual and domestic dimension along with a public one—the pattern of family conflict within the larger pattern of the *polis*—like the plays of antiquity that deal with the Theban myth, such as *Oedipus* and *Antigone*.

This public dimension of *Hamlet* helps us see it, for our present purposes, in relation to the literature of the Renaissance—for the framework within which the characters are presented and come into conflict is a court. In spite of the Danish locale and the relatively remote period of the action, it is plainly a Renaissance court exhibiting the structure of interests to which Machiavelli's *Prince* has potently drawn our attention. There is a ruler holding power, and much of the action is related to questions concerning the nature of that power—the way in which he had acquired it and the ways in which it can be preserved. Moreover, there is a courtly structure: the king has several courtiers around him, among whom Hamlet, the heir apparent, is only the most prominent.

We have seen some of the forms of the Renaissance court pattern earlier in Machiavelli. The court, the ruling nucleus of the community, was also an arena for conflicts of interest and of wit, a setting for the cultivation and codification of aristocratic virtues (valor, physical and intellectual brilliance, "courtesy"). The positive view of human achievement on earth, so prominent in the Renaissance, was given in courtly life its characteristic setting and testing ground. And as we have observed, the negative view (melancholy, sense of void and purposelessness) also emerged there.

Examining *Hamlet*, we soon realize that its temper belongs more to the negative than to the positive Renaissance outlook. Certain outstanding forms of human endeavor (the establishment of earthly power, the display of gallantry, the confident attempt of the mind to acquire knowledge and to inspire purposeful action), which elsewhere are presented as highly worthwhile, or are at least soberly discussed in terms of their value and limits, seem to be caught here in a condition of disorder and imbued with a sense of vanity and emptiness.

The way in which the state and the court of Denmark are presented in *Hamlet* is significant: they are shown in images of disease and rotteness. And here again, excessive stress on the protagonist himself must be avoided. His position as denouncer of the prevailing decadence, and the major basis for his denunciation—the murder of his father, which leads to his desire to obtain revenge and purify the court by destroying the present king—are central elements in the play, but they are not the *whole* play. The public situation is indicated, and Marcellus has pronounced his famous "Something is rotten" before Hamlet has talked to the Ghost and learned the Ghost's version of events. Moreover, the sense of outside dangers and internal disruption everywhere transcends the personal story of Hamlet, of his revenge, of Claudius's crime; these are rather the signs of the breakdown, portents of a general situation. In this sense, we may tentatively say that the general theme of the play has to do with a kingdom, a society, a *polis*, going to pieces—or even more, with its realization that it has already gone to pieces. Concomitant with this is a sense of the vanity of those forms of human endeavor and power of which the kingdom and the court are symbols.

The tone Shakespeare wants to establish is evident from the opening scenes: the night air is full of dread premonitions; sentinels turn their eyes toward the threatening outside world; meanwhile, the Ghost has already made his appearance, a sinister omen. The kingdom, as we proceed, is presented in terms that are an almost point by point reversal of the ideal. Claudius, the *pater patriae* and *pater familias*, whether we believe the Ghost's indictment or not (Hamlet does not necessarily, and some of his famous indecision has been attributed to his seeking evidence of the Ghost's truthfulness before acting), has by marrying the queen committed an act that by Elizabethan standards is incestuous. There is an overwhelming sense of disintegration in the body of the state, evident in the first court assembly and in all subsequent ones. In their various ways the two courtiers, Hamlet and Laertes, are strangers, contemplating departure; they offer, around their king, a picture quite unlike that of the conventional paladins, supports of the throne, in a well-mannered and well-mannered court.

On the other hand, as in all late and decadent phases of a social or artistic structure (the court in a sense is both), we have semblance instead of substance, ornate and empty facades, of which the more enlightened members of the group are mockingly aware. Thus Polonius, who after Hamlet is the major figure in the king's retinue, is presented satirically in his empty formalities of speech and conventional patterns of behavior. And there are numerous instances (e.g., Osric) of manners being replaced by mannerisms. Hence the way courtly life is depicted in the play suggests always the hollow, the fractured, and the crooked. The traditional forms and institutions of gentle living and all the pomp and solemnity are marred by corruption and distortion. Courtship and love are reduced to Hamlet's mockery of a "civil conversation" in the play scene, his phrases presenting not the Platonic loftiness and the repartee of "gentilesse" of Baldesar Castiglione, but punning undercurrents of bawdiness. The theater, a traditional institution of court life, is "politically" used by the hero as a device to expose the king's crime. There are elements of macabre caricature in Shakespeare's treatment of the solemn theme of death (see, for instance, the manner of Polonius's death, which is a

sort of sarcastic version of a cloak-and-dagger scene, or the effect of the clownish gravediggers' talk). Finally, the arms tournament, the typical occasion for the display of courtiers' gallantry in front of their king, is here turned by the scheming of the king himself into the play's conclusive scene of carnage. And the person who, on the king's behalf, invites Hamlet to that feast is Osric, the "waterfly," the caricature of the hollow courtier.

This sense of corruption and decadence dominates the temper of the play and obviously qualifies the character of Hamlet, his indecision, and his sense of vanity and disenchantment with the world in which he lives. In Hamlet the relation between thought and deed, intent and realization, is confused in the same way the norms and institutions that would regulate the life of a well-ordered court have been deprived of their original purpose and beauty. He and the king are "mighty opposites," and it can be argued that against Hamlet's indecision and negativism the king presents a more positive scheme of action, at least in the purely Machiavellian sense, at the level of practical power politics. But even this conclusion will prove only partly true. There are indeed moments in which all that the king seems to wish for himself is to forget the past and rule honorably. He advises Hamlet not to mourn his father excessively, for melancholy is not in accord with "nature." On various occasions the king shows a high and competent conception of his office: a culminating instance is the courageous and cunning way in which he confronts and handles Laertes's wrath. The point can be made that since his life is obviously threatened by Hamlet (who was seeking to kill him when by mistake he killed Polonius instead), the king acts within a legitimate pattern of politics in wanting to have Hamlet liquidated. But this argument cannot be carried so far as to demonstrate that he represents a fully positive attitude toward life and the world, even in the strictly amoral terms of political technique. For in fact his action is corroded by an element alien to that technique—the vexations of his own conscience. In spite of his energy and his extrovert qualities he too becomes part of the negative picture of disruption and lacks concentration of purpose. The images of decay and putrescence that characterize his court extend to his own speech: his "offense," in his own words, "smells to heaven."

To conclude, *Hamlet* as a Renaissance tragedy presents a world particularly "out of joint," a world that, having long ago lost the sense of a grand extratemporal design that was so important in medieval times (to Hamlet the thought of the afterlife is even more puzzling and dark than that of this life), looks with an even greater sense of disenchantment at the circle of temporal action symbolized by the kingdom and the court. These structures could have offered certain codes of conduct and objects of allegiance that would have given individual action a purposeful meaning. But now their order has been destroyed. Ideals that once had power and freshness have lost their vigor under the impact of satiety, doubt, and melancholy. Because communal values are so degraded, it is natural to ask in the end whether some alternative attempt at a settlement could be imagined, with Hamlet—like other Renaissance heroes—adopting an individual code of conduct, however extravagant. On the whole, Hamlet seems too steeped in his own hopelessness and in the courtly mechanism to which he inevitably belongs to be able to find personal intellectual and moral compromise or his own version of total escape or total dream; for his "antic disposition" is a strategy, his "folly" is politically motivated. Still, the tone of his brooding and often moralizing speech, his melancholy and dissatisfaction, his very desire for revenge do seem to imply an aspiration toward some form of moral beauty, a nostalgia for a world—as his father's must have been—of clean allegiances and respected codes of honor. One thing worth examining in this connection is Hamlet's attitude toward Fortinbras. Fortinbras is a marginal character, but our attention is emphatically drawn to him both at the

very opening and at the very close of the play. There is no doubt that while in the play certain positive virtues—such as friendship, loyalty, and truthfulness—are represented by the very prominent Horatio, who will live on to give a true report of Hamlet, in Fortinbras the ideals of gallant knighthood, which in the present court have been so corrupted and lost, seem to be presented at their purest. And he has, of course, Hamlet's "dying voice." In act 4, scene 4, Hamlet saw Fortinbras move with his army toward an enterprise characterized by the flimsiness of its material rewards. In a world where all matter seems corrupt, Hamlet's qualified sympathy for that gratuitous display of honor for honor's sake, of valor "even for an eggshell," of death braved "for a fantasy," calls to mind some of the serious aspects of the Quixotic code.

William Shakespeare's "Hamlet" (1986), edited by Harold Bloom, contains some unconventional critical approaches. A biography placing Shakespeare in his social context is M. C. Bradbrook, *Shakespeare the Poet in His World* (1978), while E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare, A Study of Facts and Problems*, 2 vols. (1930), is considered the most fully documented biography. Paul Arthur Cantor, *Shakespeare, "Hamlet"* (1989), is an in-depth study of the tragedy. The student will find several views in *Shakespeare: Modern Essays in Criticism* (1957), edited by Leonard F. Dean. More advanced interpretations and critical methods are presented in Paul Gottschalk, *The Meanings of "Hamlet." Modes of Literary Interpretation Since Bradley* (1972). Another valuable work is Harry Levin, *The Question of "Hamlet"* (1959). Cedric Watts, *Hamlet* (1988), besides critical interpretation, offers stage history, critical history, and a selected bibliography. Bert O. States, *"Hamlet" and the Concept of Character* (1992), focuses on characters and characteristics in the play.

Hamlet, Prince of Denmark

CHARACTERS

| | | |
|--|--|--------------------|
| CLAUDIUS, <i>king of Denmark</i> | VOLTIMAND, | } <i>courtiers</i> |
| HAMLET, <i>son to the late, and nephew to the present king</i> | CORNELIUS, | |
| POLONIUS, <i>lord chamberlain</i> | ROSENCRANTZ, | |
| HORATIO, <i>friend to Hamlet</i> | GULDENSTERN, | |
| LAERTES, <i>son of Polonius</i> | OSRIC, | |
| PRIEST | GENTLEMAN, | |
| MARCELLUS, } <i>officers</i> | ENGLISH AMBASSADORS | |
| BERNARDO, } | GERTRUDE, <i>queen of Denmark, and mother to Hamlet</i> | |
| FRANCISCO, <i>a soldier</i> | OPHELIA, <i>daughter of Polonius</i> | |
| REYNALDO, <i>servant to Polonius</i> | LORDS, LADIES, OFFICERS, SOLDIERS, SAILORS, MESSENGERS, and OTHER ATTENDANTS | |
| PLAYERS | GHOST OF HAMLET'S FATHER | |
| TWO CLOWNS, <i>grave-diggers</i> | | |
| FORTINBRAS, <i>prince of Norway</i> | | |
| CAPTAIN | | |

SCENE — *Denmark.*

Act I

SCENE 1

Elsinore. A platform before the castle.

[FRANCISCO at his post. Enter to him BERNARDO.]

BERNARDO: Who's there?

FRANCISCO: Nay, answer me: stand, and unfold yourself.

BERNARDO: Long live the king!

FRANCISCO: Bernardo?

BERNARDO: He.

FRANCISCO: You come most carefully upon your hour.

BERNARDO: 'Tis now struck twelve; get thee to bed, Francisco.

FRANCISCO: For this relief much thanks: 'tis bitter cold,

And I am sick at heart.

BERNARDO: Have you had quiet guard?

FRANCISCO: Not a mouse stirring.

BERNARDO: Well, good night.

If you do meet Horatio and Marcellus,

The rivals¹ of my watch, bid them make haste.

FRANCISCO: I think I hear them. Stand, ho! Who is there?

[Enter HORATIO and MARCELLUS.]

HORATIO: Friends to this ground.

MARCELLUS: And liegemen to the Dane.²

FRANCISCO: Give you good night.

MARCELLUS: O, farewell, honest soldier:

Who hath relieved you?

FRANCISCO: Bernardo hath my place.

Give you good night.

[Exit.]

MARCELLUS: Holla! Bernardo!

BERNARDO: Say,

What, is Horatio there?

HORATIO: A piece of him.

BERNARDO: Welcome, Horatio; welcome, good Marcellus.

MARCELLUS: What, has this thing appeared again to-night?

BERNARDO: I have seen nothing.

MARCELLUS: Horatio says 'tis but our fantasy,

And will not let belief take hold of him

Touching this dreaded sight, twice seen of us:

Therefore I have entreated him along

With us to watch the minutes of this night,

That if again this apparition come,

He may approve our eyes³ and speak to it.

HORATIO: Tush, tush, 'twill not appear.

BERNARDO: Sit down a while;

And let us once again assail your ears,

That are so fortified against our story,
What we have two nights seen.

HORATIO: Well, sit we down,
And let us hear Bernardo speak of this.

BERNARDO: Last night of all,
When yond same star that's westward from the pole
Had made his course to illumine that part of heaven
Where now it burns, Marcellus and myself,
The bell then beating one, —

[Enter GHOST.]

MARCELLUS: Peace, break thee off; look, where it comes again!

BERNARDO: In the same figure, like the king that's dead.

MARCELLUS: Thou art a scholar; speak to it, Horatio.

BERNARDO: Looks it not like the king? mark it, Horatio.

HORATIO: Most like it: it harrows me with fear and wonder.

BERNARDO: It would be spoke to.

MARCELLUS: Question it, Horatio.

HORATIO: What art thou, that usurp'st this time of night,

Together with that fair and warlike form

In which the majesty of buried Denmark

Did sometimes⁴ march? by heaven I charge thee, speak!

MARCELLUS: It is offended.

BERNARDO: See, it stalks away!

HORATIO: Stay! speak, speak! I charge thee, speak!

[Exit GHOST.]

MARCELLUS: 'Tis gone, and will not answer.

BERNARDO: How now, Horatio! you tremble and look pale:

Is not this something more than fantasy?

What think you on't?

HORATIO: Before my God, I might not this believe

Without the sensible and true avouch

Of mine own eyes.

MARCELLUS: Is it not like the king?

HORATIO: As thou art to thyself:

Such was the very armor he had on

When he the ambitious Norway⁵ combated;

So frown'd he once, when, in an angry parle,

He smote the sledged⁶ Polacks on the ice.

'Tis strange.

MARCELLUS: Thus twice before, and jump⁷ at this dead hour,

With martial stalk hath he gone by our watch.

HORATIO: In what particular thought to work I know not;

But, in the gross and scope of my opinion,⁸

This bodes some strange eruption to our state.

MARCELLUS: Good now, sit down, and tell me, he that knows,

Why this same strict and most observant watch

1. Partners. 2. The king of Denmark. 3. Confirm what we saw.

4. Formerly. *Denmark*: the king of Denmark. 5. The king of Norway (the elder Fortinbras).
6. They travel in sledges. *Parle*: parley. 7. Just. 8. Taking a general view.

So nightly toils the subject⁹ of the land,
 And why such daily cast of brazen cannon,
 And foreign mart for implements of war;
 Why such impress of shipwrights,¹ whose sore task
 Does not divide the Sunday from the week;
 What might be toward,² that this sweaty haste
 Doth make the night joint-laborer with the day:
 Who is't that can inform me?

HORATIO: That can I;
 At least the whisper goes so. Our last king,
 Whose image even but now appear'd to us,
 Was, as you know, by Fortinbras of Norway,
 Thereto pricked on by a most emulate pride,
 Dared to the combat; in which our valiant Hamlet—
 For so this side of our known world esteem'd him—
 Did slay this Fortinbras; who by a seal'd compact
 Well ratified by law and heraldry,³
 Did forfeit, with his life, all those his lands
 Which he stood seized of, to the conqueror:
 Against the which, a moiety competent
 Was gagèd⁴ by our king; which had returned
 To the inheritance of Fortinbras,
 Had he been vanquisher; as, by the same covenant
 And carriage⁵ of the article design'd,
 His fell to Hamlet. Now, sir, young Fortinbras,
 Of unimprovèd metal hot and full,
 Hath in the skirts⁶ of Norway here and there
 Shark'd up a list of lawless resolute,
 For food and diet, to some enterprise
 That hath a stomach in't:⁷ which is no other—
 As it doth well appear unto our state—
 But to recover of us, by strong hand
 And terms compulsory, those foresaid lands
 So by his father lost: and this, I take it,
 Is the main motive of our preparations,
 The source of this our watch and the chief head
 Of this post-haste and romage⁸ in the land.

BERNARDO: I think it be no other but e'en so:
 Well may it sort,⁹ that this portentous figure
 Comes armèd through our watch, so like the king
 That was and is the question of these wars.

HORATIO: A mote it is to trouble the mind's eye.
 In the most high and palmy state of Rome,
 A little ere the mightiest Julius fell,
 The graves stood tenantless, and the sheeted dead

9. The people. 1. Ship carpenters. *Mart*: trading. *Impress*: pressing into service. 2. Impending.
 3. Duly ratified and proclaimed through heralds. 4. Pledged. *Seized*: possessed. *Moiety competent*:
 equal share. 5. Purport. 6. Outskirts, border regions. *Unimprovèd*: untested. 7. Calls for cour-
 age. 8. Bustle. *Head*: origin, cause. 9. Fit with the other signs of war.

Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets:
 As stars with trains of fire and dews of blood,
 Disasters in the sun; and the moist star,
 Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands,¹
 Was sick almost to doomsday with eclipse:
 And even the like precurse² of fierce events,
 As harbingers preceding still the fates
 And prologue to the omen coming on,
 Have heaven and earth together demonstrated
 Unto our climatures³ and countrymen.

[*Re-enter GHOST.*]

But soft, behold! lo, where it comes again!
 I'll cross it, though it blast me. Stay, illusion!
 If thou hast any sound, or use of voice,
 Speak to me:
 If there be any good thing to be done,
 That may to thee do ease and grace to me,
 Speak to me:
 If thou art privy to thy country's fate,
 Which, happily, foreknowing may avoid,
 O, speak!
 Or if thou hast uphoarded in thy life
 Extorted treasure in the womb of earth,
 For which, they say, you spirits oft walk in death,
 Speak of it: stay, and speak! [*The cock crows.*] Stop it, Marcellus.

MARCELLUS: Shall I strike at it with my partisan?

HORATIO: Do, if it will not stand.

BERNARDO: 'Tis here!

HORATIO: 'Tis here!

[*Exit GHOST.*]

MARCELLUS: 'Tis gone!

We do it wrong, being so majestic,
 To offer it the show of violence;
 For it is, as the air, invulnerable,
 And our vain blows malicious mockery.

BERNARDO: It was about to speak, when the cock crew.

HORATIO: And then it started like a guilty thing
 Upon a fearful summons. I have heard
 The cock, that is the trumpet to the morn,
 Doth with his lofty and shrill-sounding throat
 Awake the god of day, and at his warning,
 Whether in sea or fire, in earth or air,
 The extravagant⁴ and erring spirit hies
 To his confine: and of the truth herein
 This present object made probation.⁵

MARCELLUS: It faded on the crowing of the cock.

1. The moon (*moist star*) regulates the sea's tides. *Disasters*: Ill omens. 2. Foreboding.
 3. Regions. 4. Wandering out of its confines. 5. Gave proof.

Some say that ever 'gainst⁶ that season comes
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
The bird of dawning singeth all night long: 160
And then, they say, no spirit dare stir abroad,
The nights are wholesome, then no planets strike,
No fairy takes nor witch hath power to charm,
So hallowed and so gracious⁷ is the time.

HORATIO: So have I heard and do in part believe it. 165
But look, the morn, in russet mantle clad,
Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastward hill:
Break we our watch up; and by my advice,
Let us impart what we have seen to-night
Unto young Hamlet; for, upon my life, 170
This spirit, dumb to us, will speak to him:
Do you consent we shall acquaint him with it,
As needful in our loves, fitting our duty?

MARCELLUS: Let's do't, I pray; and I this morning know 175
Where we shall find him most conveniently.
[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE 2

A room of state in the castle.

[*Flourish. Enter the KING, QUEEN, HAMLET, POLONIUS, LAERTES, VOLTIMAND, CORNELIUS, LORDS, and ATTENDANTS.*]

KING: Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death
The memory be green, and that it us befitted
To bear our hearts in grief and our whole kingdom
To be contracted in one brow of woe,
Yet so far hath discretion⁸ fought with nature 5
That we with wisest sorrow think on him,
Together with remembrance of ourselves.
Therefore our sometime sister, now our queen,
The imperial jointress to this warlike state,
Have we, as 'twere with a defeated joy,— 10
With an auspicious and a dropping eye,
With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,
In equal scale weighing delight and dole,—
Taken to wife: nor have we herein barr'd⁹
Your better wisdoms, which have freely gone 15
With this affair along. For all, our thanks.
Now follows, that¹ you know, young Fortinbras,
Holding a weak supposal of our worth,
Or thinking by our late dear brother's death
Our state to be disjoint and out of frame, 20
Colleaguèd with this dream² of his advantage,

6. Just before. 7. Full of blessing. *Strike*: exercise evil influence (compare "moonstruck"). *Fairy takes*: bewitches. 8. Restraint (on grief). 9. Ignored. *Dole*: grief. 1. What. 2. Combined with this fantastic notion.

He hath not failed to pester us with message,
Importing the surrender of those lands
Lost by his father, with all bonds of law,
To our most valiant brother. So much for him. 25
Now for ourself, and for this time of meeting:
Thus much the business is: we have here writ
To Norway, uncle of young Fortinbras,—
Who, impotent and bed-rid, scarcely hears
Of this his nephew's purpose,—to suppress 30
His further gait herein; in that the levies,
The lists and full proportions,³ are all made
Out of his subject: and we here dispatch
You, good Cornelius, and you, Voltimand,
For bearers of this greeting to old Norway, 35
Giving to you no further personal power
To business with the king more than the scope
Of these delated⁴ articles allow.
Farewell, and let your haste commend your duty.

CORNELIUS: } In that and all things will we show our duty. 40
VOLTIMAND: }

KING: We doubt it nothing: heartily farewell.

[*Exeunt VOLTIMAND and CORNELIUS.*]

And now, Laertes, what's the news with you?
You told us of some suit; what is't, Laertes?
You cannot speak of reason to the Dane,
And lose your voice: what wouldst thou beg, Laertes, 45
That shall not be my offer, not thy asking?
The head is not more native to⁵ the heart,
The hand more instrumental to the mouth,
Than is the throne of Denmark to thy father.
What wouldst thou have, Laertes?

LAERTES: My dread lord, 50
Your leave and favor to return to France,
From whence though willingly I came to Denmark,
To show my duty in your coronation,
Yet now, I must confess, that duty done,
My thoughts and wishes bend again toward France 55
And bow them to your gracious leave and pardon.

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

POLONIUS: He hath, my lord, wrung from me my slow leave
By laborsome petition, and at last
Upon his will I sealed my hard consent: 60
I do beseech you, give him leave to go.

KING: Take thy fair hour, Laertes; time be thine,
And thy best graces spend it at thy will!

But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son,—
HAMLET: [*Aside.*] A little more than kin, and less than kind. 65

3. Amounts of forces and supplies. *Gait*: proceeding. 4. Detailed. 5. Naturally bound to.

KING: How is it that the clouds still hang on you?

HAMLET: Not so, my lord; I am too much i' the sun.⁶

QUEEN: Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted color off,

And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.

Do not for ever with thy vailèd⁷ lids

Seek for thy noble father in the dust:

Thou know'st 'tis common; all that lives must die,

Passing through nature to eternity.

HAMLET: Aye, madam, it is common.

QUEEN: If it be,

Why seems it so particular with thee?

HAMLET: Seems, madam! nay, it is; I know not 'seems.'

'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,

Nor customary suits of solemn black,

Nor windy suspiration of forced breath,

No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,

Nor the dejected havior of the visage,

Together with all forms, moods, shapes of grief,

That can denote me truly: these indeed seem,

For they are actions that a man might play:

But I have that within which passeth show;

These but the trappings and the suits of woe.

KING: 'Tis sweet and commèdable in your nature, Hamlet,

To give these mourning duties to your father:

But, you must know, your father lost a father,

That father lost, lost his, and the survivor bound

In filial obligation for some term

To do obsequious⁸ sorrow: but to persevere

In obstinate condolèment is a course

Of impious stubbornness; 'tis unmanly grief:

It shows a will most incorrect⁹ to heaven,

A heart unfortified, a mind impatient,

An understanding simple and unschool'd:

For what we know must be and is as common

As any the most vulgar thing to sense,

Why should we in our peevisch opposition

Take it to heart? Fie! 'tis a fault to heaven,

A fault against the dead, a fault to nature,

To reason most absurd, whose common theme

Is death of fathers, and who still hath cried,

From the first corse till he that died to-day,

'This must be so.' We pray you, throw to earth

This unprevailing¹ woe, and think of us

As of a father: for let the world take note,

You are the most immediate to our throne,

And with no less nobility of love

6. The cue to Hamlet's irony is given by the King's "my cousin . . . my son" (line 64). Hamlet is punning on *son*. 7. Downcast. 8. Dutiful, especially concerning funeral rites (obsequies). 9. Not subdued. 1. Useless.

Than that which dearest father bears his son

Do I impart toward you. For your intent

In going back to school in Wittenberg,

It is most retrograde² to our desire:

And we beseech you, bend you to remain

Here in the cheer and comfort of our eye,

Our chiefest courtier, cousin and our son.

QUEEN: Let not thy mother lose her prayers, Hamlet:

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

HAMLET: I shall in all my best obey you, madam.

KING: Why, 'tis a loving and a fair reply:

Be as ourself in Denmark. Madam, come;

This gentle and unforced accord of Hamlet

Sits smiling to my heart: in grace whereof,

No jocund health that Denmark drinks to-day,

But the great cannon to the clouds shall tell,

And the king's rouse the heaven shall bruit³ again,

Re-speaking earthly thunder. Come away.

[*Flourish. Exeunt all but HAMLET.*]

HAMLET: O, that this too too sullied flesh would melt,

Thaw and resolve itself into a dew!

Or that the Everlasting had not fixed

His canon⁴ 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! God!

How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable

Seem to me all the uses of this world!

Fie on't! ah fie! 'tis an unweeded garden,

That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature

Possess it merely. That it should come to this!

But two months dead! nay, not so much, not two:

So excellent a king; that was, to this,

Hyperion to a satyr: so loving to my mother,

That he might not betèem⁵ the winds of heaven

Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth!

Must I remember? why, she would hang on him,

As if increase of appetite had grown

By what it fed on: and yet, within a month—

Let me not think on't—Frailty, thy name is woman!—

A little month, or ere those shoes were old

With which she followed my poor father's body,

Like Niobe,⁶ all tears:—why she, even she,—

O God! a beast that wants discourse⁷ of reason

Would have mourned longer,—married with my uncle,

My father's brother, but no more like my father

Than I to Hercules: within a month;

2. Opposed. *Wittenberg*: the seat of a university; at the peak of fame in Shakespeare's time because of its connection with Martin Luther. 3. Proclaim, echo. *Rouse*: carousal, revel. 4. Law. 5. Allow. Hyperion is the sun god. 6. A proud mother who boasted of having more children than Leto; her seven sons and seven daughters were slain by Apollo and Artemis, children of Leto. The grieving Niobe was changed by Zeus into a continually weeping stone. 7. Lacks the faculty.

Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears
 Had left the flushing in her gallèd⁸ eyes, 155
 She married. O, most wicked speed, to post
 With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!⁹
 It is not, nor it cannot come to good:
 But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue!
 [*Enter HORATIO, MARCELLUS, and BERNARDO.*]
 HORATIO: Hail to your lordship!
 HAMLET: I am glad to see you well: 160
 Horatio, — or I do forget myself.
 HORATIO: The same, my lord, and your poor servant ever.
 HAMLET: Sir, my good friend; I'll change¹ that name with you:
 And what make you from Wittenberg, Horatio?
 Marcellus? 165
 MARCELLUS: My good lord?
 HAMLET: I am very glad to see you. [*To BERNARDO.*] Good even, sir.
 But what, in faith, make you from Wittenberg?
 HORATIO: A truant disposition, good my lord.
 HAMLET: I would not hear your enemy say so, 170
 Nor shall you do my ear that violence,
 To make it truster of your own report
 Against yourself: I know you are no truant.
 But what is your affair in Elsinore?
 We'll teach you to drink deep ere you depart. 175
 HORATIO: My lord, I came to see your father's funeral.
 HAMLET: I pray thee, do not mock me, fellow-student;
 I think it was to see my mother's wedding.
 HORATIO: Indeed, my lord, it followed hard upon.
 HAMLET: Thrift, thrift, Horatio! the funeral baked-meats 180
 Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.
 Would I had met my dearest² foe in heaven
 Or ever I had seen that day, Horatio!
 My father! — methinks I see my father.
 HORATIO: O where, my lord?
 HAMLET: In my mind's eye, Horatio. 185
 HORATIO: I saw him once; he was a goodly king.
 HAMLET: He was a man, take him for all in all,
 I shall not look upon his like again.
 HORATIO: My lord, I think I saw him yesternight.
 HAMLET: Saw? who? 190
 HORATIO: My lord, the king your father.
 HAMLET: The king my father!
 HORATIO: Season your admiration³ for a while
 With an attent ear, till I may deliver,
 Upon the witness of these gentlemen,
 This marvel to you.

8. Inflamed. 9. According to principles that Hamlet accepts, marrying one's brother's widow is incest. 1. Exchange. 2. Bitterest. 3. Restrain your astonishment.

HAMLET: For God's love, let me hear. 195
 HORATIO: Two nights together had these gentlemen,
 Marcellus and Bernardo, on their watch,
 In the dead vast and middle of the night,
 Been thus encountered. A figure like your father,
 Armed at point exactly, cap-a-pe,⁴ 200
 Appears before them, and with solemn march
 Goes slow and stately by them: thrice he walked
 By their oppressed and fear-surprised eyes,
 Within his truncheon's length; whilst they, distilled
 Almost to jelly with the act of fear, 205
 Stand dumb, and speak not to him. This to me
 In dreadful secrecy impart they did;
 And I with them the third night kept the watch:
 Where, as they had delivered, both in time,
 Form of the thing, each word made true and good, 210
 The apparition comes: I knew your father;
 These hands were not more like.
 HAMLET: But where was this?
 MARCELLUS: My lord, upon the platform where we watched.
 HAMLET: Did you not speak to it?
 HORATIO: My lord, I did. 215
 But answer made it none: yet once methought
 It lifted up its head and did address
 Itself to motion, like as it would speak:
 But even then the morning cock crew loud,
 And at the sound it shrunk in haste away
 And vanished from our sight.
 HAMLET: 'Tis very strange. 220
 HORATIO: As I do live, my honored lord, 'tis true,
 And we did think it writ down in our duty
 To let you know of it.
 HAMLET: Indeed, indeed, sirs, but this troubles me.
 Hold you the watch to-night?
 MARCELLUS: } We do, my lord. 225
 BERNARDO: }
 HAMLET: Armed, say you?
 MARCELLUS: } Armed, my lord.
 BERNARDO: }
 HAMLET: From top to toe?
 MARCELLUS: } My lord, from head to foot.
 BERNARDO: }
 HAMLET: Then saw you not his face?
 HORATIO: O, yes, my lord; he wore his beaver⁵ up.
 HAMLET: What, looked he frowningly? 230
 HORATIO: A countenance more in sorrow than in anger.
 HAMLET: Pale, or red?

4. From head to foot. *At point*: completely. 5. Visor.

HORATIO: Nay, very pale.

HAMLET: And fixed his eyes upon you?

HORATIO: Most constantly.

HAMLET: I would I had been there.

HORATIO: It would have much amazed you.

HAMLET: Very like, very like. Stayed it long?

HORATIO: While one with moderate haste might tell⁶ a hundred.

MARCELLUS: } Longer, longer.
BERNARDO: }

HORATIO: Not when I saw't.

HAMLET: His beard was grizzled?⁷ no?

HORATIO: It was, as I have seen it in his life,

A sable silvered.⁸

HAMLET: I will watch to-night;
Perchance 'twill walk again.

HORATIO: I warrant it will.

HAMLET: If it assume my noble father's person,
I'll speak to it, though hell itself should gape

And bid me hold my peace. I pray you all,

If you have hitherto concealed this sight,

Let it be tenable in your silence still,⁹

And whatsoever else shall hap to-night,

Give it an understanding, but no tongue:

I will requite your loves. So fare you well:

Upon the platform, 'twixt eleven and twelve,

I'll visit you.

ALL: Our duty to your honor.

HAMLET: Your loves, as mine to you: farewell.

[*Exeunt all but HAMLET.*]

My father's spirit in arms! all is not well;

I doubt¹ some foul play: would the night were come!

Till then sit still, my soul: foul deeds will rise,

Though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE 3

A room in Polonius's house.

[*Enter LAERTES and OPHELIA.*]

LAERTES: My necessities are embarked: farewell:

And, sister, as the winds give benefit

And convoy² is assistant, do not sleep,

But let me hear from you.

OPHELIA: Do you doubt that?

LAERTES: For Hamlet, and the trifling of his favor,

Hold it a fashion, and a toy in blood,

A violet in the youth of primy nature,
Forward,³ not permanent, sweet, not lasting,
The perfume and suppliance of a minute;
No more.

OPHELIA: No more but so?

LAERTES: Think it no more:

For nature crescent does not grow alone
In thews and bulk; but, as this temple⁴ waxes,

The inward service of the mind and soul

Grows wide withal. Perhaps he loves you now;

And now no soil nor cautel⁵ doth besmirch

The virtue of his will: but you must fear,

His greatness weighed,⁶ his will is not his own;

For he himself is subject to his birth:

He may not, as unvalued persons do,

Carve for himself, for on his choice depends

The safety and health of this whole state,

And therefore must his choice be circumscribed

Unto the voice and yielding⁷ of that body

Whereof he is the head. Then if he says he loves you,

It fits your wisdom so far to believe it

As he in his particular act and place

May give his saying deed; which is no further

Than the main voice of Denmark goes withal.⁸

Then weigh what loss your honor may sustain,

If with too credent ear you list his songs,

Or lose your heart, or your chaste treasure open

To his unmastered importunity.

Fear it, Ophelia, fear it, my dear sister,

And keep you in the rear of your affection,

Out of the shot and danger of desire.

The chariest maid is prodigal enough

If she unmask her beauty to the moon:

Virtue itself 'scapes not calumnious strokes:

The canker galls the infants of the spring

Too oft before their buttons be disclosed,

And in the morn and liquid dew of youth

Contagious blastments⁹ are most imminent.

Be wary then; best safety lies in fear:

Youth to itself¹ rebels, though none else near.

OPHELIA: I shall the effect of this good lesson keep,

As watchman to my heart. But, good my brother,

Do not, as some ungracious pastors do,

Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven,

Whilst, like a puffed and reckless libertine,

6. Count. 7. Gray. 8. Black and white. 9. Consider it still a secret. 1. Suspect. 2. Conveyance, means of transport.

3. Early. *Fashion*: passing mood. *Primy*: early, young. 4. The body. *Crescent*: growing. 5. No foul or deceitful thoughts. 6. When you consider his rank. *Will*: desire. 7. Assent. 8. Goes along with, agrees. *Main*: powerful. 9. Blights. 1. Against its better self.

Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads
And recks not his own rede.²

LAERTES: O, fear me not.

I stay too long; but here my father comes.

[Enter POLONIUS.]

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

POLONIUS: Yet here, Laertes! Aboard, aboard, for shame!

The wind sits in the shoulder of your sail,
And you are stayed for. There; my blessing with thee!

And these few precepts in thy memory

See thou charáctér.³ Give thy thoughts no tongue,

Nor any unproportioned⁴ thought his act.

Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar.

Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel,

But do not dull thy palm⁵ with entertainment

Of each new-hatched unfledged comrade. Beware

Of entrance to a quarrel; but being in,

Bear't, that the opposèd may beware of thee.

Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice:

Take each man's censure,⁶ but reserve thy judgment.

Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,

But not expressed in fancy; rich, not gaudy:

For the apparel oft proclaims the man;

And they in France of the best rank and station

Are of a most select and generous chief⁷ in that.

Neither a borrower nor a lender be:

For loan oft loses both itself and friend,

And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.⁸

This above all: to thine own self be true,

And it must follow, as the night the day,

Thou canst not then be false to any man.

Farewell: my blessing season⁹ this in thee!

LAERTES: Most humbly do I take my leave, my lord.

POLONIUS: The time invites you; go, your servants tend.¹

LAERTES: Farewell, Ophelia, and remember well

What I have said to you.

OPHELIA: 'Tis in my memory locked,

And you yourself shall keep the key of it.

LAERTES: Farewell.

[Exit.]

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

OPHELIA: So please you, something touching the Lord Hamlet.

POLONIUS: Marry, well bethought:

'Tis told me, he hath very oft of late

2. Does not follow his own advice. 3. Engrave in your memory. 4. Unsuitable. 5. Make the palm of your hand callous (by indiscriminate handshaking). 6. Opinion. 7. Preeminence. 8. Thriftiness. 9. Ripen. 1. Wait.

Given private time to you, and you yourself
Have of your audience been most free and bounteous:

If it be so—as so 'tis put on me,

And that in way of caution—I must tell you,

You do not understand yourself so clearly

As it behoves my daughter and your honor.

What is between you? give me up the truth.

OPHELIA: He hath, my lord, of late made many tenders

Of his affection to me.

POLONIUS: Affection! pooh! you speak like a green girl,

Unsifted² in such perilous circumstance.

Do you believe his tenders, as you call them?

OPHELIA: I do not know, my lord, what I should think.

POLONIUS: Marry, I'll teach you: think yourself a baby,

That you have ta'en these tenders for true pay,

Which are not sterling. Tender³ yourself more dearly;

Or—not to crack the wind of the poor phrase,

Running it thus—you'll tender me a fool.⁴

OPHELIA: My lord, he hath importuned me with love

In honorable fashion.

POLONIUS: Aye, fashion you may call it; go to, go to.

OPHELIA: And hath given countenance⁵ to his speech, my lord,

With almost all the holy vows of heaven.

POLONIUS: Aye, springs to catch woodcocks. I do know,

When the blood burns, how prodigal the soul

Lends the tongue vows: these blazes, daughter,

Giving more light than heat, extinct in both,

Even in their promise, as it is a-making,

You must not take for fire. From this time

Be something scanter of your maiden presence;

Set your entreatments⁶ at a higher rate

Than a command to parley. For Lord Hamlet,

Believe so much in him, that he is young,

And with a larger tether may he walk

Than may be given you: in few, Ophelia,

Do not believe his vows; for they are brokers,

Not of that dye which their investments⁷ show,

But mere implorators of unholy suits,

Breathing like sanctified and pious bawds,

The better to beguile. This is for all:

I would not, in plain terms, from this time forth,

Have you so slander any moment⁸ leisure,

As to give words or talk with the Lord Hamlet.

Look to't, I charge you: come your ways.

OPHELIA: I shall obey, my lord.

[Exeunt.]

2. Untested. 3. Regard. 4. You'll furnish me with a fool (a foolish daughter). 5. Authority. 6. Conversation, company. 7. Clothes. Brokers: procurers, panders. 8. Use badly any momentary.

SCENE 4

The platform.

[Enter HAMLET, HORATIO, and MARCELLUS.]

HAMLET: The air bites shrewdly; it is very cold.

HORATIO: It is a nipping and an eager⁹ air.

HAMLET: What hour now?

HORATIO: I think it lacks of twelve.

MARCELLUS: No, it is struck.

HORATIO: Indeed? I heard it not: it then draws near the season

Wherein the spirit held his wont to walk.

[A flourish of trumpets, and ordnance shot off within.]

What doth this mean, my lord?

HAMLET: The king doth wake to-night, and takes his rouse,

Keeps wassail, and the swaggering up-spring reels;

And as he drains his draughts of Rhenish¹ down,

The kettle-drum and trumpet thus bray out

The triumph of his pledge.²

HORATIO: Is it a custom?

HAMLET: Aye, marry, is't:

But to my mind, though I am native here

And to the manner born, it is a custom

More honored³ in the breach than the observance.

This heavy-headed revel east and west

Makes us traduced and taxed of other nations:

They clepe us drunkards, and with swinish phrase

Soil our addition;⁴ and indeed it takes

From our achievements, though performed at height,⁵

The pith and marrow of our attribute.⁶

So, oft it chanceth in particular men,

That for some vicious mole of nature in them,

As, in their birth,—wherein they are not guilty,

Since nature cannot choose his origin,—

By the o'ergrowth of some complexion,⁷

Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason,

Or by some habit that too much o'er-leavens⁸

The form of plausive⁹ manners, that these men,—

Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect,

Being nature's livery, or fortune's star,—

Their virtues else¹—be they as pure as grace,

As infinite as man may undergo—

Shall in the general censure take corruption

From that particular fault: the dram of evil

Doth all the noble substance often dout

To his own scandal.²

9. Sharp. 1. Rhine wine. *Up-spring reels*: wild dances. 2. In downing the cup in one draught.
3. Honorable. 4. Reputation. *Taxed*: blamed. *Clepe*: call. 5. Done in the best possible manner.
6. Reputation. 7. Excess in one side of their temperament. 8. Modifies, as yeast changes dough.
9. Agreeable. 1. The rest of their qualities. 2. To its own harm. *Dout*: extinguish, nullify.

[Enter GHOST.]

HORATIO: Look, my lord it comes!

HAMLET: Angels and ministers of grace defend us!

Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damned,

Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell,

Be thy intents wicked or charitable,

Thou comest in such a questionable shape

That I will speak to thee: I'll call thee Hamlet,

King, father, royal Dane: O, answer me!

Let me not burst in ignorance; but tell

Why thy canonized bones, hearsèd in death,

Have burst their cerements; why the sepulchre,

Wherein we saw thee quietly inurned,

Hath oped his ponderous and marble jaws,

To cast thee up again. What may this mean,

That thou, dead corse, again, in complete steel,

Revisit'st thus the glimpses of the moon,

Making night hideous; and we fools of nature

So horridly to shake our disposition

With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls?

Say, why is this? Wherefore? what should we do?

[GHOST beckons HAMLET.]

HORATIO: It beckons you to go away with it,

As if it some impartment did desire

To you alone.

MARCELLUS: Look, with what courteous action

It waves you to a more removèd ground:

But do not go with it.

HORATIO: No, by no means.

HAMLET: It will not speak; then I will follow it.

HORATIO: Do not, my lord.

HAMLET: Why, what should be the fear?

I do not set my life at a pin's fee;

And for my soul, what can it do to that,

Being a thing immortal as itself?

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

HORATIO: What if it tempt you toward the flood, my lord,

Or to the dreadful summit of the cliff

That beetles o'er³ his base into the sea,

And there assume some other horrible form,

Which might deprive your sovereignty of reason

And draw you into madness? think of it:

The very place puts toys⁴ of desperation,

Without more motive, into every brain

That looks so many fathoms to the sea

And hears it roar beneath.

HAMLET: It waves me still.

3. Juts over. 4. Fancies.

Go on; I'll follow thee. 80
 MARCELLUS: You shall not go, my lord.
 HAMLET: Hold off your hands.
 HORATIO: Be ruled; you shall not go.
 HAMLET: My fate cries out,
 And makes each petty artery in this body
 As hardy as the Nemean lion's nerve.⁵
 Still am I called, unhand me, gentlemen; 85
 By heaven, I'll make a ghost of him that lets⁶ me:
 I say, away! Go on; I'll follow thee.
 [Exeunt GHOST and HAMLET.]
 HORATIO: He waxes desperate with imagination.
 MARCELLUS: Let's follow; 'tis not fit thus to obey him.
 HORATIO: Have after. To what issue will this come? 90
 MARCELLUS: Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.
 HORATIO: Heaven will direct it.
 MARCELLUS: Nay, let's follow him.
 [Exeunt.]

SCENE 5

Another part of the platform.

[Enter GHOST and HAMLET.]
 HAMLET: Whither wilt thou lead me? speak; I'll go no further.
 GHOST: Mark me.
 HAMLET: I will.
 GHOST: My hour is almost come,
 When I to sulphurous and tormenting flames⁷
 Must render up myself.
 HAMLET: Alas, poor ghost!
 GHOST: Pity me not, but lend thy serious hearing 5
 To what I shall unfold.
 HAMLET: Speak; I am bound to hear.
 GHOST: So art thou to revenge, when thou shalt hear.
 HAMLET: What?
 GHOST: I am thy father's spirit;
 Doomed for a certain term to walk the night, 10
 And for the day confined to fast in fires,
 Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
 Are burnt and purged away. But that I am forbid
 To tell the secrets of my prison-house,
 I could a tale unfold whose lightest word 15
 Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,
 Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres,⁸
 Thy knotted and combinèd locks to part
 And each particular hair to stand on end,

5. Sinew, muscle. The Nemean lion was slain by Hercules as one of his twelve labors. 6. Hinders.
 7. Of purgatory. 8. Transparent revolving shells in each of which, according to Ptolemaic astronomy,
 a planet or other heavenly body was placed.

Like quills upon the fretful porpentine: 20
 But this eternal blazon⁹ must not be
 To ears of flesh and blood. List, list, O, list!
 If thou didst ever thy dear father love—
 HAMLET: O God!
 GHOST: Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder. 25
 HAMLET: Murder!
 GHOST: Murder most foul, as in the best it is,
 But this most foul, strange, and unnatural.
 HAMLET: Haste me to know't, that I, with wings as swift
 As meditation or the thoughts of love, 30
 May sweep to my revenge.
 GHOST: I find thee apt;
 And duller shouldst thou be than the fat weed
 That roots itself in ease on Lethe¹ wharf,
 Wouldst thou not stir in this. Now, Hamlet, hear:
 'Tis given out that, sleeping in my orchard, 35
 A serpent stung me; so the whole ear of Denmark
 Is by a forgèd process of my death
 Rankly abused: but know, thou noble youth,
 The serpent that did sting thy father's life
 Now wears his crown.
 HAMLET: O my prophetic soul! 40
 My uncle!
 GHOST: Aye, that incestuous, that adulterate beast,
 With witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts,—
 O wicked wit and gifts, that have the power
 So to seduce!—won to his shameful lust 45
 The will of my most seeming-virtuous queen:
 O Hamlet, what a falling-off was there!
 From me, whose love was of that dignity
 That it went hand in hand even with the vow
 I made to her in marriage; and to decline 50
 Upon a wretch, whose natural gifts were poor
 To those of mine!
 But virtue, as it never will be moved,
 Though lewdness court it in a shape of heaven,²
 So lust, though to a radiant angel linked, 55
 Will sate itself in a celestial bed
 And prey on garbage.
 But, soft! methinks I scent the morning air;
 Brief let me be. Sleeping within my orchard,
 My custom always of the afternoon, 60
 Upon my secure hour thy uncle stole,
 With juice of cursed hebenon³ in a vial,
 And in the porches of my ears did pour

9. Publication of the secrets of the other world (of eternity). *Porpentine*: porcupine. 1. The river of forgetfulness in Hades. 2. A heavenly, angelic form. 3. Henbane, a very poisonous herb.

The leperous distilment; whose effect
 Holds such an enmity with blood of man
 That swift as quicksilver it courses through
 The natural gates and alleys of the body;
 And with a sudden vigor it doth posset
 And curd, like eager⁴ droppings into milk,
 The thin and wholesome blood: so did it mine;
 And a most instant tetter barked about,⁵
 Most lazar-like,⁶ with vile and loathsome crust,
 All my smooth body.

Thus was I, sleeping, by a brother's hand
 Of life, of crown, of queen, at once dispatched:
 Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin,
 Unhouseled, disappointed, unaneled;⁷
 No reckoning made, but sent to my account
 With all my imperfections on my head:
 O, horrible! O, horrible! most horrible!
 If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not;
 Let not the royal bed of Denmark be
 A couch for luxury and damned incest.
 But, howsoever thou pursuest this act,
 Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive
 Against thy mother aught: leave her to heaven,
 And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge,
 To prick and sting her. Fare thee well at once!
 The glow-worm shows the matin to be near,
 And 'gins to pale his uneffectual fire:
 Adieu, adieu! remember me.

[Exit.]

HAMLET: O all you host of heaven! O earth! what else?
 And shall I couple hell? O, fie! Hold, hold, my heart;
 And you, my sinews, grow not instant old,
 But bear me stiffly up. Remember thee!
 Aye, thou poor ghost, while memory holds a seat
 In this distracted globe. Remember thee!
 Yea, from the table⁸ of my memory
 I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
 All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past,
 That youth and observation copied there:
 And thy commandment all alone shall live
 Within the book and volume of my brain,
 Unmixed with baser matter: yes, by heaven!
 O most pernicious woman!
 O villain, villain, smiling, damnèd villain!
 My tables,—meet it is I set it down,
 That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain;

4. Posset: coagulate. Sour. 5. The skin immediately became thick like the bark of a tree.
 6. Leper-like (from the beggar Lazarus, "full of sores," in Luke 16:20). 7. Without sacrament, unprepared, without extreme unction. 8. Writing tablet; used in the same sense in line 107. *Globe*: head.

At least I'm sure it may be so in Denmark.

[Writing.]

So, uncle, there you are. Now to my word;
 It is 'Adieu, adieu! remember me.'

I have sworn't.

HORATIO: } [Within.] My lord, my lord!

MARCELLUS: } [Enter HORATIO and MARCELLUS.]

MARCELLUS: Lord Hamlet!

HORATIO: Heaven secure him!

HAMLET: So be it!

MARCELLUS: Illo,⁹ ho, ho, my lord! 115

HAMLET: Hillo, ho, ho, boy! come, bird, come.

MARCELLUS: How is't, my noble lord?

HORATIO: What news, my lord?

HAMLET: O, wonderful!

HORATIO: Good my lord, tell it.

HAMLET: No; you will reveal it.

HORATIO: Not I, my lord, by heaven.

MARCELLUS: Nor I, my lord. 120

HAMLET: How say you, then; would heart of man once think it?

But you'll be secret?

HORATIO: } Aye, by heaven, my lord.

MARCELLUS: }
 HAMLET: There's ne'er a villain dwelling in all Denmark
 But he's an arrant knave.

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

HAMLET: Why, right; you are i' the right;
 And so, without more circumstance¹ at all,
 I hold it fit that we shake hands and part:
 You, as your business and desire shall point you;
 For every man hath business and desire, 130
 Such as it is; and for my own poor part,
 Look you, I'll go pray.

HORATIO: These are but wild and whirling words, my lord.

HAMLET: I'm sorry they offend you, heartily;

Yes, faith, heartily.

HORATIO: There's no offense, my lord. 135

HAMLET: Yes, by Saint Patrick, but there is, Horatio,
 And much offense too. Touching this vision here,
 It is an honest² ghost, that let me tell you:

For your desire to know what is between us,
 O'ermaster't as you may. And now, good friends, 140
 As you are friends, scholars and soldiers,
 Give me one poor request.

HORATIO: What is't, my lord? we will.

9. A falconer's call. 1. Ceremony. 2. Genuine.

HAMLET: Never make known what you have seen tonight.

MARCELLUS: } My lord, we will not.

HORATIO: }

HAMLET: Nay, but swear't.

HORATIO: In faith,

My lord, not I.

MARCELLUS: Nor I, my lord, in faith. 145

HAMLET: Upon my sword.

MARCELLUS: We have sworn, my lord, already.

HAMLET: Indeed, upon my sword, indeed.

GHOST: [*Beneath.*] Swear.

HAMLET: Ah, ha, boy! say'st thou so? art thou there, true-penny?³

Come on: you hear this fellow in the cellarage:

Consent to swear.

HORATIO: Propose the oath, my lord. 150

HAMLET: Never to speak of this that you have seen,

Swear by my sword.

GHOST: [*Beneath.*] Swear.

HAMLET: Hic et ubique?⁴ then we'll shift our ground. 155

Come hither, gentlemen,

And lay your hands again upon my sword:

Never to speak of this that you have heard,

Swear by my sword.

GHOST: [*Beneath.*] Swear.

HAMLET: Well said, old mole! canst work i' the earth so fast? 160

A worthy pioner!⁵ Once more remove, good friends.

HORATIO: O day and night, but this is wondrous strange!

HAMLET: And therefore as a stranger give it welcome.

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy. 165

But come;

Here, as before, never, so help you mercy,

How strange or odd soe'er I bear myself,

As I perchance hereafter shall think meet

To put an antic⁶ disposition on,

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

With arms encumbered⁷ thus, or this head-shake,

Or by pronouncing of some doubtful phrase,

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

Or 'If we list to speak,' or 'There be, an if they might,' 175

Or such ambiguous giving out, to note

That you know aught of me: this not to do,

So grace and mercy at your most need help you,

Swear.

GHOST: [*Beneath.*] Swear. 180

HAMLET: Rest, rest, perturbèd spirit!

[*They swear.*]

3. Honest fellow. 4. Here and everywhere (Latin). 5. Miner. 6. Odd, fantastic. 7. Folded.

So, gentlemen,

With all my love I do commend⁸ me to you:

And what so poor a man as Hamlet is

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

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

And still your fingers on your lips, I pray.

The time is out of joint: O cursèd spite,

That ever I was born to set it right!

Nay, come, let's go together. 190

[*Exeunt.*]

Act II

SCENE I

A room in Polonius's house.

[*Enter POLONIUS and REYNALDO.*]

POLONIUS: Give him this money and these notes, Reynaldo.

REYNALDO: I will, my lord.

POLONIUS: You shall do marvelous wisely, good Reynaldo,

Before you visit him, to make inquire

Of his behavior.

REYNALDO: My lord, I did intend it. 5

POLONIUS: Marry, well said, very well said. Look you, sir,

Inquire me first what Danskers are in Paris,

And how, and who, what means, and where they keep,⁹

What company, at what expense, and finding

By this encompassment¹ and drift of question 10

That they do know my son, come you more nearer

Than your particular demands will touch it:

Take you, as 'twere, some distant knowledge of him,

As thus, 'I know his father and his friends,

And in part him': do you mark this, Reynaldo? 15

REYNALDO: Aye, very well, my lord.

POLONIUS: 'And in part him; but,' you may say, 'not well:

But if 't be he I mean, he's very wild,

Addicted so and so'; and there put on him

What forgeries you please; marry, none so rank 20

As may dishonor him; take heed of that;

But, sir, such wanton, wild and usual slips

As are companions noted and most known

To youth and liberty.

REYNALDO: As gaming, my lord.

POLONIUS: Aye, or drinking, fencing, swearing, quarreling, 25

Drabbing;² you may go so far.

REYNALDO: My lord, that would dishonor him.

8. Entrust. 9. Dwell. *Danskers*: Danes. 1. Roundabout way. 2. Whoring.

POLONIUS: Faith, no; as you may season it in the charge.³
 You must not put another scandal on him,
 That he is open to incontinency;
 That's not my meaning: but breathe his faults so quaintly⁴
 That they may seem the taints of liberty,
 The flash and outbreak of a fiery mind,
 A savageness in unreclaimèd blood,
 Of general assault.⁵ 30

REYNALDO: But, my good lord,— 35
 POLONIUS: Wherefore should you do this?
 REYNALDO: Aye, my lord,
 I would know that.
 POLONIUS: Marry, sir, here's my drift,
 And I believe it is a fetch of warrant:⁶
 You laying these slight sullies on my son,
 As 'twere a thing a little soiled i' the working,
 Mark you,
 Your party in converse, him you would sound,
 Having ever seen in the prenominate⁷ crimes
 The youth you breathe of guilty, be assured
 He closes with you in this consequence;⁸
 'Good sir,' or so, or 'friend,' or 'gentleman,'
 According to the phrase or the addition⁹
 Of man and country. 40

REYNALDO: Very good, my lord.
 POLONIUS: And then, sir, does he this—he does—what was I about to
 say? By the mass, I was about to say something: where did I leave? 50
 REYNALDO: At 'closes in the consequence,' at 'friend or so,' and 'gen-
 tleman.'
 POLONIUS: At 'closes in the consequence,' aye, marry;
 He closes with you thus: 'I know the gentleman;
 I saw him yesterday, or t' other day,
 Or then, or then, with such, or such, and, as you say,
 There was a' gaming, there o'ertook in 's rouse,¹
 There falling out at tennis': or perchance,
 'I saw him enter such a house of sale,'
 Videlicet,² a brothel, or so forth. 60
 See you now;
 Your bait of falsehood takes this carp of truth:
 And thus do we of wisdom and of reach,³
 With windlasses and with assays of bias,⁴
 By indirections find directions out: 65
 So, by my former lecture and advice,
 Shall you my son. You have me, have you not?

3. Qualify it in making the accusation. 4. Delicately, skillfully. *Incontinency*: extreme sensuality.
 5. Assailing all. *Unreclaimèd*: untamed. 6. Allowable stratagem. 7. Aforementioned. *Having ever*:
 if he has ever. 8. You may be sure he will agree in this conclusion. 9. Title. 1. Intoxicated in
 his reveling. 2. Namely. 3. Wise and farsighted. 4. Sending the ball indirectly (in bowling),
 devious attacks. *Windlasses*: winding ways, roundabout courses.

REYNALDO: My lord, I have.
 POLONIUS: God be wi' ye; fare ye well.
 REYNALDO: Good my lord!
 POLONIUS: Observe his inclination in yourself.⁵ 70
 REYNALDO: I shall, my lord.
 POLONIUS: And let him ply his music.
 REYNALDO: Well, my lord.
 POLONIUS: Farewell!
 [Exit REYNALDO. — Enter OPHELIA.]
 How now, Ophelia! what's the matter?
 OPHELIA: O, my lord, I have been so affrighted! 75
 POLONIUS: With what, i' the name of God?
 OPHELIA: My lord, as I was sewing in my closet,
 Lord Hamlet, with his doublet⁶ all unbraced,
 No hat upon his head, his stockings fouled,
 Ungartered and down-gyvèd⁷ to his ankle;
 Pale as his shirt, his knees knocking each other,
 And with a look so piteous in purport
 As if he had been loosèd out of hell
 To speak of horrors, he comes before me.
 POLONIUS: Mad for thy love?
 OPHELIA: My lord, I do not know, 85
 But truly I do fear it.
 POLONIUS: What said he?
 OPHELIA: He took me by the wrist and held me hard;
 Then goes he to the length of all his arm,
 And with his other hand thus o'er his brow,
 He falls to such perusal of my face 90
 As he would draw it. Long stayed he so;
 At last, a little shaking of mine arm,
 And thrice his head thus waving up and down,
 He raised a sigh so piteous and profound
 As it did seem to shatter all his bulk 95
 And end his being: that done, he lets me go:
 And with his head over his shoulder turned,
 He seemed to find his way without his eyes;
 For out o' doors he went without their help,
 And to the last bended their light on me. 100
 POLONIUS: Come, go with me: I will go seek the king.
 This is the very ecstasy of love;
 Whose violent property fordoes itself⁸
 And leads the will to desperate undertakings
 As oft as any passion under heaven 105
 That does afflict our natures. I am sorry.
 What, have you given him any hard words of late?
 OPHELIA: No, my good lord, but, as you did command,

5. Ways of procedure by yourself. 6. Jacket. *Closet*: private room. 7. Pulled down like fetters on
 a prisoner's leg. 8. Which, when violent, destroys itself. *Ecstasy*: madness.

I did repel his letters and denied
His access to me.

POLONIUS: That hath made him mad. 110
I am sorry that with better heed and judgment
I had not quoted him: I fear'd he did but trifle
And meant to wreck thee; but beshrew my jealousy!⁹
By heaven, it is as proper to our age
To cast beyond ourselves¹ in our opinions 115
As it is common for the younger sort
To lack discretion. Come, go we to the king:
This must be known; which, being kept close, might move
More grief to hide than hate to utter love.²
Come. 120
[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE 2

A room in the castle.

[*Flourish. Enter KING, QUEEN, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, and ATTENDANTS.*]

KING: Welcome, dear Rosencrantz and Guildenstern!
Moreover that we much did long to see you,
The need we have to use you did provoke
Our hasty sending. Something have you heard
Of Hamlet's transformation; so call it, 5
Sith³ nor the exterior nor the inward man
Resembles that it was. What it should be,
More than his father's death, that thus hath put him
So much from the understanding of himself,
I cannot dream of: I entreat you both, 10
That, being of so young days brought up with him
And sith so neighbored to his youth and behavior,
That you vouchsafe your rest⁴ here in our court
Some little time: so by your companies
To draw him on to pleasures, and to gather 15
So much as from occasion you may glean,
Whether aught to us unknown afflicts him thus,
That opened⁵ lies within our remedy.
QUEEN: Good gentlemen, he hath much talked of you,
And sure I am two men there are not living 20
To whom he more adheres.⁶ If it will please you
To show us so much gentry⁷ and good will
As to expend your time with us awhile
For the supply and profit of our hope,
Your visitation shall receive such thanks 25
As fits a king's remembrance.

9. Curse my suspicion. *Quoted:* noted. 1. Overshoot, go too far. 2. If Hamlet's love is revealed. To *hide:* if kept hidden. 3. Since. 4. Consent to stay. 5. Once revealed. 6. Is more attached. 7. Courtesy.

ROSENCRANTZ: Both your majesties
Might, by the sovereign power you have of us,
Put your dread pleasures more into⁸ command
Than to entreaty.
GUILDENSTERN: But we both obey,
And here give up ourselves, in the full bent⁹ 30
To lay our service freely at your feet,
To be commanded.
KING: Thanks, Rosencrantz and gentle Guildenstern.
QUEEN: Thanks, Guildenstern and gentle Rosencrantz:
And I beseech you instantly to visit 35
My too much changéd son. Go, some of you,
And bring these gentlemen where Hamlet is.
GUILDENSTERN: Heavens make our presence and our practices
Pleasant and helpful to him!
QUEEN: Aye, amen!
[*Exeunt ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, and some ATTENDANTS.—*
Enter POLONIUS.]
POLONIUS: The ambassadors from Norway, my good lord,
Are joyfully returned. 40
KING: Thou still¹ hast been the father of good news.
POLONIUS: Have I, my lord? I assure my good liege,
I hold my duty as I hold my soul,
Both to my God and to my gracious king: 45
And I do think, or else this brain of mine
Hunts not the trail of policy so sure
As it hath used to do, that I have found
The very cause of Hamlet's lunacy.
KING: O, speak of that; that do I long to hear. 50
POLONIUS: Give first admittance to the ambassadors;
My news shall be the fruit to that great feast.
KING: Thyself do grace² to them, and bring them in.
[*Exit POLONIUS.*]
He tells me, my dear Gertrude, he hath found
The head and source of all your son's distemper. 55
QUEEN: I doubt it is no other but the main;
His father's death and our o'erhasty marriage.
KING: Well, we shall sift him.
[*Re-enter POLONIUS, with VOLTIMAND and CORNELIUS.*]
Welcome, my good friends!
Say, Voltimand, what from our brother Norway?
VOLTIMAND: Most fair return of greetings and desires. 60
Upon our first,³ he sent out to suppress
His nephew's levies, which to him appeared
To be a preparation 'gainst the Polack,
But better looked into, he truly found

8. Give your sovereign wishes the form of. 9. Bent (as a bow) to the limit. 1. Always. 2. Honor. *Fruit:* dessert. 3. As soon as we made the request.

It was against your highness: whereat grieved, 65
 That so his sickness, age and impotence
 Was falsely borne in hand,⁴ sends out arrests
 On Fortinbras; which he, in brief, obeys,
 Receives rebuke from Norway, and in fine⁵
 Makes vow before his uncle never more 70
 To give the assay⁶ of arms against your majesty.
 Whereon old Norway, overcome with joy,
 Gives him three thousand crowns in annual fee
 And his commission to employ those soldiers,
 So levied as before, against the Polack: 75
 With an entreaty, herein further shown,
 [Giving a paper.]
 That it might please you to give quiet pass
 Through your dominions for this enterprise,
 On such regards of safety and allowance
 As therein are set down.

KING: It likes us well, 80
 And at our more considered time we'll read,
 Answer, and think upon this business.
 Meantime we thank you for your well-took labor:
 Go to your rest; at night we'll feast together:
 Most welcome home!

[*Exeunt* VOLTIMAND and CORNELIUS.]

POLONIUS: This business is well ended. 85
 My liege, and madam, to expostulate
 What majesty should be, what duty is,
 Why day is day, night night, and time is time,
 Were nothing but to waste night, day and time.
 Therefore, since brevity is the soul of wit 90
 And tediousness the limbs and outward flourishes,
 I will be brief. Your noble son is mad:
 Mad call I it; for, to define true madness,
 What is 't but to be nothing else but mad?
 But let that go.

QUEEN: More matter, with less art. 95

POLONIUS: Madam, I swear I use no art at all.
 That he is mad, 'tis true: 'tis true 'tis pity,
 And pity 'tis 'tis true: a foolish figure;⁷
 But farewell it, for I will use no art.
 Mad let us grant him then: and now remains 100
 That we find out the cause of this effect,
 Or rather say, the cause of this defect,
 For this effect defective comes by cause:
 Thus it remains and the remainder thus.
 Perpend.⁸ 105
 I have a daughter,—have while she is mine,—

4. Deceived, deluded. 5. Finally. 6. Test. 7. Of speech. 8. Consider.

Who in her duty and obedience, mark,
 Hath given me this: now gather and surmise.
 [Reads.] 'To the celestial, and my soul's idol, the most beautified
 Ophelia,'—That's an ill phrase, a vile phrase; 'beautified' is a vile 110
 phrase; but you shall hear. Thus:

[Reads.] 'In her excellent white bosom, these,' &c.

QUEEN: Came this from Hamlet to her?

POLONIUS: Good madam, stay awhile; I will be faithful.

[Reads.] 'Doubt thou the stars are fire; 115

Doubt that the sun doth move;

Doubt truth to be a liar;

But never doubt I love.

'O dear Ophelia, I am ill at these numbers;⁹ I have not art to reckon
 my groans: but that I love thee best, O most best, believe it. Adieu. 120

'Thine evermore, most dear lady, whilst this
 machine is to him,¹ HAMLET.'

This in obedience hath my daughter shown me;
 And more above,² hath his solicitings,
 As they fell out by time, by means and place, 125
 All given to mine ear.

KING: But how hath she

Received his love?

POLONIUS: What do you think of me?

KING: As of a man faithful and honorable.

POLONIUS: I would fain prove so. But what might you think,

When I had seen this hot love on the wing,— 130
 As I perceived it, I must tell you that,

Before my daughter told me,—what might you,
 Or my dear majesty your queen here, think,

If I had played the desk or table-book,³

Or given my heart a winking,⁴ mute and dumb, 135
 Or looked upon this love with idle sight;

What might you think? No, I went round⁵ to work,

And my young mistress thus I did bespeak:

'Lord Hamlet is a prince, out of thy star;⁶

This must not be:' and then I prescripts gave her, 140

That she should lock herself from his resort,

Admit no messengers, receive no tokens.

Which done, she took the fruits of my advice;

And he repulsed, a short tale to make,

Fell into a sadness, then into a fast,¹¹ 145

Thence to a watch, thence into a weakness,

Thence to a lightness,⁷ and by this declension

Into the madness wherein now he raves

And all we mourn for.

KING: Do you think this?

9. Verses. 1. Body is attached. 2. Moreover. 3. If I had acted as a desk or notebook (in keeping the matter secret). 4. Shut my heart's eye. 5. Straight. 6. Sphere. 7. Light-headedness. Watch: insomnia.

QUEEN: It may be, very like. 150
 POLONIUS: Hath there been such a time, I'd fain know that,
 That I have positively said 'tis so,
 When it proved otherwise?
 KING: Not that I know.
 POLONIUS: [*Pointing to his head and shoulder.*] Take this, from this,
 if this be otherwise: 155
 If circumstances lead me, I will find
 Where truth is hid, though it were hid indeed
 Within the center.⁸
 How may we try it further?
 KING: POLONIUS: You know, sometimes he walks for hours together
 Here in the lobby.
 QUEEN: So he does, indeed. 160
 POLONIUS: At such a time I'll loose my daughter to him:
 Be you and I behind an arras then;
 Mark the encounter: if he love her not,
 And be not from his reason fall'n thereon,⁹
 Let me be no assistant for a state, 165
 But keep a farm and carters.
 KING: We will try it.
 QUEEN: But look where sadly the poor wretch comes reading.
 POLONIUS: Away, I do beseech you, both away:
 I'll board him presently.¹
 [*Exeunt KING, QUEEN, and ATTENDANTS. — Enter HAMLET, reading.*]
 O, give me leave: how does my good Lord Hamlet? 170
 HAMLET: Well, God-a-mercy.
 POLONIUS: Do you know me, my lord?
 HAMLET: Excellent well; you are a fishmonger.²
 POLONIUS: Not I, my lord.
 HAMLET: Then I would you were so honest a man. 175
 POLONIUS: Honest, my lord!
 HAMLET: Aye, sir; to be honest, as this world goes, is to be one man
 picked out of ten thousand.
 POLONIUS: That's very true, my lord.
 HAMLET: For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, being a good 180
 kissing carrion³ — Have you a daughter?
 POLONIUS: I have, my lord.
 HAMLET: Let her not walk i' the sun: conception is a blessing; but as
 your daughter may conceive, — friend, look to 't.
 POLONIUS: [*Aside.*] How say you by that? Still harping on my daughter: 185
 yet he knew me not at first; he said I was a fishmonger: he is far
 gone: and truly in my youth I suffered much extremity for love;
 very near this. I'll speak to him again. — What do you read, my lord?
 HAMLET: Words, words, words.

8. Of the earth. 9. For that reason. 1. Approach him at once. 2. Fish seller but also slang for procurer. 3. Good bit of flesh for kissing.

POLONIUS: What is the matter,⁴ my lord? 190
 HAMLET: Between who?
 POLONIUS: I mean, the matter that you read, my lord.
 HAMLET: Slanders, sir: for the satirical rogue says here that old men
 have gray beards, that their faces are wrinkled, their eyes purging
 thick amber and plum-tree gum, and that they have a plentiful lack 195
 of wit, together with most weak hams: all which, sir, though I most
 powerfully and potently believe, yet I hold it not honesty to have it
 thus set down; for yourself, sir, shall grow old as I am, if like a crab
 you could go backward.
 POLONIUS: [*Aside.*] Though this be madness, yet there is method in 200
 't. — Will you walk out of the air, my lord?
 HAMLET: Into my grave.
 POLONIUS: Indeed, that's out of the air.
 [*Aside.*]
 How pregnant sometimes his replies are! a happiness⁵ that often
 madness hits on, which reason and sanity could not so prosperously 205
 be delivered of. I will leave him, and suddenly contrive the means
 of meeting between him and my daughter. — My honorable lord, I
 will most humbly take my leave of you.
 HAMLET: You cannot, sir, take from me any thing that I will more
 willingly part withal: except my life, except my life, except my life. 210
 POLONIUS: Fare you well, my lord.
 HAMLET: These tedious old fools.
 [*Re-enter ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.*]
 POLONIUS: You go to seek the Lord Hamlet; there he is.
 ROSENCRANTZ: [*To POLONIUS.*] God save you, sir!
 [*Exit POLONIUS.*]
 GUILDENSTERN: My honored lord! 215
 ROSENCRANTZ: My most dear lord!
 HAMLET: My excellent good friends! How dost thou, Guildenstern?
 Ah, Rosencrantz! Good lads, how do you both?
 ROSENCRANTZ: As the indifferent⁶ children of the earth.
 GUILDENSTERN: Happy, in that we are not over-happy; 220
 On Fortune's cap we are not the very button.⁷
 HAMLET: Nor the soles of her shoe?
 ROSENCRANTZ: Neither, my lord.
 HAMLET: Then you live about her waist, or in the middle of her favors?
 GUILDENSTERN: Faith, her privates⁸ we. 225
 HAMLET: In the secret parts of Fortune? O, most true; she is a strumpet.
 What's the news?
 ROSENCRANTZ: None, my lord, but that the world's grown honest.
 HAMLET: Then is doomsday near: but your news is not true. Let me
 question more in particular: what have you, my good friends, de- 230
 served at the hands of Fortune, that she sends you to prison hither?
 GUILDENSTERN: Prison, my lord!

4. The subject matter of the book. Hamlet responds as if he referred to the subject of a quarrel. 5. Aptness of expression. 6. Average. 7. Top. 8. Ordinary men (with obvious play on the sexual term *private parts*).

HAMLET: Denmark's a prison.

ROSENCRANTZ: Then is the world one.

HAMLET: A goodly one; in which there are many confines, wards⁹ and
dungeons, Denmark being one o' the worst. 235

ROSENCRANTZ: We think not so, my lord.

HAMLET: Why, then, 'tis none to you; for there is nothing either good
or bad, but thinking makes it so: to me it is a prison.

ROSENCRANTZ: Why, then your ambition makes it one; 'tis too narrow 240
for your mind.

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

GUILDENSTERN: Which dreams indeed are ambition; for the very sub-
stance of the ambitious is merely the shadow of a dream. 245

HAMLET: A dream itself is but a shadow.

ROSENCRANTZ: Truly, and I hold ambition of so airy and light a quality
that it is but a shadow's shadow.

HAMLET: Then are our beggars bodies, and our monarchs and out-
stretched heroes the beggars' shadows. Shall we to the court? for, 250
by my fay, I cannot reason.

ROSENCRANTZ: } We'll wait upon you.
GUILDENSTERN: }

HAMLET: No such matter: I will not sort you¹ with the rest of my
servants; for, to speak to you like an honest man, I am most dread-
fully attended. But, in the beaten way of friendship, what make you 255
at Elsinore?

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

HAMLET: Beggar that I am, I am even poor in thanks; but I thank you:
and sure, dear friends, my thanks are too dear a halfpenny.² Were
you not sent for? Is it your own inclining? Is it a free visitation? 260
Come, deal justly³ with me: come, come; nay, speak.

GUILDENSTERN: What should we say, my lord?

HAMLET: Why, any thing, but to the purpose. You were sent for; and
there is a kind of confession in your looks, which your modesties
have not craft enough to color: I know the good king and queen 265
have sent for you.

ROSENCRANTZ: To what end, my lord?

HAMLET: That you must teach me. But let me conjure you, by the
rights of our fellowship, by the consonancy of our youth, by the
obligation of our ever-preserved love, and by what more dear a bet- 270
ter proposer⁴ could charge you withal, be even and direct with me,
whether you were sent for, or no.

ROSENCRANTZ: [*Aside to GUILDENSTERN.*] What say you?

HAMLET: [*Aside.*] Nay then, I have an eye of⁵ you.—If you love me,
hold not off. 275

GUILDENSTERN: My lord, we were sent for.

HAMLET: I will tell you why; so shall my anticipation prevent your

9. Cells. *Confines*: places of confinement. 1. Put you together. 2. If priced at a halfpenny.
3. Honestly. 4. Speaker. 5. On.

discovery,⁶ and your secrecy to the king and queen moult no
feather. I have of late—but wherefore I know not—lost all my
mirth, forgone all custom of exercises; and indeed it goes so heav- 280
ily with my disposition that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to
me a sterile promontory; this most excellent canopy, the air, look
you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestic roof fretted⁷
with golden fire, why, it appears no other thing to me than a foul
and pestilent congregation of vapors. What a piece of work is a 285
man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and
moving how express⁸ and admirable! in action how like an angel!
in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the para-
gon of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust?
man delights not me; no, nor woman neither, though by your smil- 290
ing you seem to say so.

ROSENCRANTZ: My lord, there was no such stuff in my thoughts.

HAMLET: Why did you laugh then, when I said 'man delights not me'?

ROSENCRANTZ: To think, my lord, if you delight not in man, what
lenten entertainment the players shall receive from you: we coted⁹ 295
them on the way; and hither are they coming, to offer you service.

HAMLET: He that plays the king shall be welcome; his majesty shall
have tribute of me; the adventurous knight shall use his foil and
target; the lover shall not sigh gratis; the humorous¹ man shall end
his part in peace; the clown shall make those laugh whose lungs
are tickle o' the sere,² and the lady shall say her mind freely, or the
blank verse shall halt for 't. What players are they? 300

ROSENCRANTZ: Even those you were wont to take such delight in, the
tragedians of the city.

HAMLET: How chances it they travel? their residence, both in reputa- 305
tion and profit, was better both ways.

ROSENCRANTZ: I think their inhibition comes by means of the late
innovation.³

HAMLET: Do they hold the same estimation they did when I was in
the city? are they so followed? 310

ROSENCRANTZ: No, indeed, are they not.

HAMLET: How comes it? do they grow rusty?

ROSENCRANTZ: Nay, their endeavor keeps in the wonted pace: but
there is, sir, an eyrie of children, little eyases,⁴ that cry out on the
top of question⁵ and are most tyrannically clapped for 't: these are 315
now the fashion, and so berattle⁶ the common stages—so they call
them—that many wearing rapiers are afraid of goose-quills,⁷ and
dare scarce come thither.

HAMLET: What, are they children? who maintains 'em? how are they
escoted? Will they pursue the quality⁸ no longer than they can
sing? will they not say afterwards, if they should grow themselves to 320

6. Precede your disclosure. 7. Adorned. 8. Precise. 9. Overtook. 1. Eccentric, whimsical.
2. Ready to shoot off at a touch. 3. The introduction of the children (line 314), as Rosencrantz
explains in his subsequent replies to Hamlet. *Inhibition*: prohibition. 4. Nestling hawks. *Eyrie*: nest.
5. Above others on matter of dispute. 6. Berate. 7. Gentlemen are afraid of pens (that is, of poets
satirizing the "common stages"). 8. Profession of acting. *Escoted*: financially supported.

common players—as it is most like, if their means are no better,—
their writers do them wrong, to make them exclaim against their
own succession?⁹

ROSENCRANTZ: Faith, there has been much to-do on both sides, and
the nation holds it no sin to tarre¹ them to controversy: there was
for a while no money bid for argument unless the poet and the
player went to cuffs in the question.²

HAMLET: Is 't possible?

GUILDENSTERN: O, there has been much throwing about of brains.

HAMLET: Do the boys carry it away?³

ROSENCRANTZ: Aye, that they do, my lord; Hercules and his load too.⁴

HAMLET: It is not very strange; for my uncle is king of Denmark, and
those that would make mows⁵ at him while my father lived, give
twenty, forty, fifty, a hundred ducats a-piece, for his picture in lit-
tle. 'Sblood, there is something in this more than natural, if philoso-
phy could find it out.

[*Flourish of trumpets within.*]

GUILDENSTERN: There are the players.

HAMLET: Gentlemen, you are welcome to Elsinore. Your hands, come
then: the appurtenance of welcome is fashion and ceremony: let
me comply with you in this garb, lest my extent⁶ to the players,
which, I tell you, must show fairly outwards, should more appear
like entertainment⁷ than yours. You are welcome: but my uncle-
father and aunt-mother are deceived.

GUILDENSTERN: In what, my dear lord?

HAMLET: I am but mad north-north-west: when the wind is southerly
I know a hawk from a handsaw.⁸

[*Re-enter* POLONIUS.]

POLONIUS: Well be with you, gentlemen!

HAMLET: Hark you, Guildenstern; and you too: at each ear a hearer:
that great baby you see there is not yet out of his swaddling clouts.⁹

ROSENCRANTZ: Happily he's the second time come to them; for they
say an old man is twice a child.

HAMLET: I will prophesy he comes to tell me of the players; mark it.
You say right, sir: o' Monday morning; 'twas so, indeed.¹

POLONIUS: My lord, I have news to tell you.

HAMLET: My lord, I have news to tell you. When Roscius² was an
actor in Rome,—

POLONIUS: The actors are come hither, my lord.

HAMLET: Buz, buz!³

POLONIUS: Upon my honor,—

HAMLET: Then came each actor on his ass,—

POLONIUS: The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy,

9. Recite satiric pieces against what they are themselves likely to become, common players. 1. Incite.
2. No offer to buy a plot for a play if it did not contain a quarrel between poet and player on that
subject. 3. Win out. 4. The sign in front of the Globe theater showed Hercules bearing the world
on his shoulders. 5. Faces, grimaces. 6. Welcoming behavior. *Carb*: style. 7. Welcome.
8. A hawk from a heron as well as a kind of ax from a handsaw. 9. Clothes. 1. Hamlet, for
Polonius's sake, pretends he is deep in talk with Rosencrantz. 2. A famous Roman comic actor
(126?–62? B.C.). 3. An expression used to stop the teller of a stale story.

history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-his-
torical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene indivisible, or
poem unlimited:⁴ Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light. 365
For the law of writ and the liberty,⁵ these are the only men.

HAMLET: O Jephthah,⁶ judge of Israel, what a treasure hadst thou!

POLONIUS: What a treasure had he, my lord?

HAMLET: Why,

'One fair daughter, and no more,
The which he lovèd passing well.'⁷ 370

POLONIUS: [*Aside.*] Still on my daughter.

HAMLET: Am I not i' the right, old Jephthah?

POLONIUS: If you call me Jephthah, my lord, I have a daughter that I
love passing well. 375

HAMLET: Nay, that follows not.

POLONIUS: What follows, then, my lord?

HAMLET: Why,

'As by lot, God wot.'

and then you know,

'It came to pass, as most like it was,'— 380

the first row of the pious chanson will show you more; for look,
where my abridgment⁸ comes.

[*Enter four or five* PLAYERS.]

You are welcome, masters; welcome, all. I am glad to see thee well.
Welcome, good friends. O, my old friend! Why thy face is valanced⁹
since I saw thee last; comest thou to beard me in Denmark? What, 385
my young lady and mistress! By'r lady, your ladyship is nearer to
heaven than when I saw you last, by the altitude of a chopine. Pray
God, your voice, like a piece of uncurrent gold, be not cracked
within the ring.¹ Masters, you are all welcome. We'll e'en to 't like
French falconers, fly at any thing we see: we'll have a speech straight: 390
come, give us a taste of your quality; come, a passionate speech.

FIRST PLAYER: What speech, my good lord?

HAMLET: I heard thee speak me a speech once, but it was never acted;
or, if it was, not above once; for the play, I remember, pleased not
the million; 'twas caviare to the general:² but it was—as I received 395
it, and others, whose judgments in such matters cried in the top of
mine³—an excellent play, well digested in the scenes, set down
with as much modesty as cunning. I remember, one said there were
no sallets in the lines to make the matter savory, nor no matter in
the phrase that might indict the author of affection;⁴ but called it 400
an honest method, as wholesome as sweet, and by very much more
handsome than fine.⁵ One speech in it I chiefly loved: 'twas *Æneas'*

4. For plays governed and those not governed by classical rules. 5. Possibly, for both written and
extemporized plays. Seneca (ca. 4 B.C.–A.D. 65) was a Roman who wrote tragedies. Plautus (ca. 254–184
B.C.) was a Roman who wrote comedies. 6. Who was compelled to sacrifice a dearly beloved daughter
(Judges 11). 7. From an old ballad about Jephthah. 8. That is, the players interrupting him.
Row: stanza. *Chanson*: song. 9. Draped (with a beard). 1. A pun on the *ring* of the voice and the
ring around the king's head on a coin. *Chopine*: a thick-soled shoe. *Uncurrent*: unfit for currency.
2. A delicacy wasted on the general public. 3. Were louder (more authoritative than) mine. 4. Affec-
tation. *Sallets*: salads (that is, relish, spicy passages). 5. More elegant than showy.

tale to Dido; and thereabout of it especially, where he speaks of Priam's slaughter:⁶ it live in your memory, begin at this line; let me see, let me see; 405
 "The rugged Pyrrhus, like th' Hyrcanian beast,"⁷—
 It is not so: it begins with 'Pyrrhus.'
 "The rugged Pyrrhus, he whose sable arms,
 Black as his purpose, did the night resemble
 When he lay couchèd in the ominous horse,"⁸ 410
 Hath now this dread and black complexion smeared
 With heraldry more dismal: head to foot
 Now is he total gules; horribly tricked⁹
 With the blood of fathers; mothers, daughters, sons,
 Baked and impasted with the parching streets, 415
 That lend a tyrannous¹ and a damnèd light
 To their lord's murder: roasted in wrath and fire,
 And thus o'er-sizèd² with coagulate gore,
 With eyes like carbuncles, the hellish Pyrrhus
 Old grandsire Priam seeks.' 420
 So, proceed you.

POLONIUS: 'Fore God, my lord, well spoken, with good accent and good discretion.

FIRST PLAYER: 'Anon he finds him
 Striking too short at Greeks; his antique sword, 425
 Rebellious to his arm, lies where it falls,
 Repugnant to command: unequal matched,
 Pyrrhus at Priam drives; in rage strikes wide;
 But with the whiff and wind of his fell sword
 The unnervèd father falls. Then senseless Ilium,³ 430
 Seeming to feel this blow, with flaming top
 Stoops to his base, and with a hideous crash
 Takes prisoner Pyrrhus' ear: for, lo! his sword,
 Which was declining on the milky⁴ head
 Of reverend Priam seemed i' the air to stick: 435
 So, as a painted tyrant, Pyrrhus stood,
 And like a neutral to his will and matter,
 Did nothing.
 But as we often see, against some storm,
 A silence in the heavens, the rack⁵ stand still, 440
 The bold winds speechless and the orb below
 As hush as death, anon the dreadful thunder
 Doth rend the region, so after Pyrrhus' pause
 Aroused vengeance sets him new a-work;
 And never did the Cyclops⁶ hammers fall 445
 On Mars's armor, forged for proof⁷ eterne,
 With less remorse than Pyrrhus' bleeding sword

6. The story of the fall of Troy, told by Aeneas to Queen Dido. Priam was the king of Troy. 7. Tiger. Pyrrhus was Achilles' son (also called Neoptolemus). 8. The wooden horse in which Greek warriors were smuggled into Troy. 9. Adorned. *Gules*: heraldic term for red. 1. Savage. 2. Glued over. 3. Troy's citadel. 4. White-haired. 5. Clouds. *Against*: just before. 6. The gigantic workmen of Hephaestus (Vulcan), god of blacksmiths and fire. 7. Protection.

Now falls on Priam.

Out, thou strumpet, Fortune! All you gods,
 In general synod take away her power, 450
 Break all the spokes and fellies from her wheel,
 And bowl the round nave⁸ down the hill of heaven
 As low as to the fiends!

POLONIUS: This is too long.

HAMLET: It shall to the barber's, with your beard. Prithee, say on: he's 455
 for a jig⁹ or a tale of bawdry, or he sleeps: say on: come to Hecuba.

FIRST PLAYER: 'But who, O, who had seen the mobled¹ queen—'

HAMLET: 'The mobled queen?'

POLONIUS: That's good; 'mobled queen' is good.

FIRST PLAYER: 'Run barefoot up and down, threatening the flames 460
 With bisson rheum; a clout² upon that head

Where late the diadem stood; and for a robe,

About her lank and all o'er-teemèd loins,³

A blanket, in the alarm of fear caught up:

Who this had seen, with tongue in venom steeped 465

'Gainst Fortune's state⁴ would treason have pronounced:

But if the gods themselves did see her then,

When she saw Pyrrhus make malicious sport

In mincing with his sword her husband's limbs,

The instant burst of clamor that she made, 470

Unless things mortal move them⁵ not at all,

Would have made milch the burning eyes of heaven⁶

And passion in the gods.'

POLONIUS: Look, whether he has not turned his color and has tears in 475
 's eyes. Prithee, no more.

HAMLET: 'Tis well; I'll have thee speak out the rest of this soon. Good 480
 my lord, will you see the players well bestowed?⁷ Do you hear, let
 them be well used, for they are the abstracts and brief chronicles of
 the time: after your death you were better have a bad epitaph than
 their ill report while you live.

POLONIUS: My lord, I will use them according to their desert.

HAMLET: God's bodykins,⁸ man, much better: use every man after his 485
 desert, and who shall 'scape whipping? Use them after your own
 honor and dignity: the less they deserve, the more merit is in your
 bounty. Take them in.

POLONIUS: Come, sirs.

HAMLET: Follow him, friends: we'll hear a play to-morrow. [*Exit*
 POLONIUS *with all the PLAYERS but the first.*] Dost thou hear me,
 old friend; can you play the Murder of Gonzago?

FIRST PLAYER: Aye, my lord. 490

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

8. Hub. *Fellies*: rims. 9. Ludicrous sung dialogue, short farce. 1. Muffled. 2. Cloth. *Bisson rheum*: blinding moisture, tears. 3. Worn out by childbearing. 4. Government. 5. The gods. 6. The stars. *Milch*: moist (milk-giving). 7. Taken care of, lodged. 8. By God's little body.

FIRST PLAYER: Aye, my lord.

HAMLET: Very well. Follow that lord; and look you mock him not. 495

[Exit FIRST PLAYER.] My good friends, I'll leave you till night: you are welcome to Elsinore.

ROSENCRANTZ: Good my lord!

HAMLET: Aye, so, God be wi' ye! [Exeunt ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.] Now I am alone. 500

O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!

Is it not monstrous that this player here,

But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,

Could force his soul so to his own conceit

That from her⁹ working all his visage wanned; 505

Tears in his eyes, distraction in 's aspect,

A broken voice, and his whole function¹ suiting

With forms to his conceit? and all for nothing!

For Hecuba!²

What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba, 510

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

Had he the motive and the cue for passion

That I have? He would drown the stage with tears

And cleave the general air with horrid speech, 515

Make mad the guilty and appal the free,

Confound the ignorant, and amaze indeed

The very faculties of eyes and ears.

Yet I,

A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak,³

Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause,⁴ 520

And can say nothing; no, not for a king,

Upon whose property and most dear life

A damn'd defeat was made. Am I a coward?

Who calls me villain? breaks my pate across?

Plucks off my beard, and blows it in my face? 525

Tweaks me by the nose? gives me the lie i' the throat,

As deep as to the lungs? who does me this?

Ha!

'Swounds, I should take it: for it cannot be

But I am pigeon-livered and lack gall 530

To make oppression bitter, or ere this

I should have fatted all the region kites⁵

With this slave's offal: bloody, bawdy villain!

Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless⁶ villain!

O, vengeance! 535

Why, what an ass am I! This is most brave,

That I, the son of a dear father murdered,

Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,

Must, like a whore, unpack my heart with words,

And fall a-cursing, like a very drab, 540

A scullion!

Fie upon 't! About,⁷ my brain! Hum, I have heard

That guilty creatures, sitting at a play,

Have by the very cunning of the scene

Been struck so to the soul that presently 545

They have proclaimed their malefactions;

For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak

With most miraculous organ. I'll have these players

Play something like the murder of my father

Before mine uncle: I'll observe his looks; 550

I'll tent him to the quick: if he but blench,⁸

I know my course. The spirit that I have seen

May be the devil; and the devil hath power

To assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps

Out of my weakness and my melancholy, 555

As he is very potent with such spirits,

Abuses me to damn me. I'll have grounds

More relative⁹ than this. The play's the thing

Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.

[Exit.]

Act III

SCENE I

A room in the castle.

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

KING: And can you, by no drift of circumstance,¹

Get from him why he puts on this confusion,

Grating so harshly all his days of quiet

With turbulent and dangerous lunacy?

ROSENCRANTZ: He does confess he feels himself distracted, 5

But from what cause he will by no means speak.

GUILDENSTERN: Nor do we find him forward to be sounded;

But, with a crafty madness, keeps aloof,

When we would bring him on to some confession

Of his true state.

QUEEN: Did he receive you well? 10

ROSENCRANTZ: Most like a gentleman.

GUILDENSTERN: But with much forcing of his disposition.

ROSENCRANTZ: Niggard of question, but of our demands

Most free in his reply.

9. His soul's. 1. Bodily action. 2. Queen of Troy, Priam's wife. *Conceit*: imagination, conception of the role played. 3. Mope. *Muddy-mettled*: of poor metal (spirit, temper), dull-spirited. 4. Not really conscious of my cause, unquicken'd by it. *John-a-dreams*: a dreamy, absentminded character. 5. Kites (hawks) of the air. 6. Unnatural.

7. To work! 8. Flinch. *Tent*: probe. 9. Relevant. 1. Turn of talk, or roundabout way.