

And that his soul may be as damned and black
 As hell whereto it goes. My mother stays. 95
 This physic but prolongs thy sickly day. *Exit*
 CLAUDIUS My words fly up, my thoughts remain below.
 Words without thoughts never to heaven go. *Exit*

[3.4] *Enter GERTRUDE and POLONIUS*

POLONIUS A will come straight. Look you lay home to him.
 Tell him his pranks have been too broad to bear with,
 And that your grace hath screened and stood between
 Much heat and him. I'll silence me e'en here.
 Pray you be round with him. 5

HAMLET (*Within*) Mother, mother, mother!

GERTRUDE I'll warrant you, fear me not. Withdraw, I hear him coming.
 [*Polonius hides himself behind the arras*]

Enter HAMLET

HAMLET Now mother, what's the matter?

GERTRUDE Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.

HAMLET Mother, you have my father much offended. 10

GERTRUDE Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue.

Act 3, Scene 4 3.4] Capell 1 A] Q2; He F 4 e'en] e'ene F; euen Q2 5 with him] F; not in Q2 6 HAMLET ... mother!] F; not in Q2; Mother, mother Q1 7 warrant] F; wait Q2 7 SD *Polonius ... arras*] Rowe; not in Q2, F

96 This physic Hamlet sees his decision as a medicine temporarily preserving Claudius's life. Some commentators think the physic is Claudius's prayer.

Act 3, Scene 4

3.4 'This is generally known as the 'closet scene' (see 3.2.299), a closet being a private apartment. See Introduction, 45.

1 lay home to him charge him to the full.

3 screened acted as a fire-screen – as the sentence goes on to illustrate.

4 I'll silence me Dowden thought this ironical, since it is Polonius's shout (24) that causes his death. Q1's reading is gruesomely apt, 'I'll shrowd myself behind the arras.'

5 round See 3.1.177.

6 Mother, mother, mother! Not in Q2, though in keeping with Hamlet's behaviour.

HAMLET Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue.
 GERTRUDE Why, how now Hamlet?
 HAMLET What's the matter now?
 GERTRUDE Have you forgot me?
 HAMLET No by the rood, not so.
 You are the queen, your husband's brother's wife, 15
 And, would it were not so, you are my mother.
 GERTRUDE Nay, then I'll set those to you that can speak.
 HAMLET Come, come and sit you down, you shall not budge.
 You go not till I set you up a glass
 Where you may see the inmost part of you. 20
 GERTRUDE What wilt thou do? thou wilt not murder me?
 Help, help, ho!
 POLONIUS (*Behind*) What ho! Help, help, help!
 HAMLET (*Drams*) How now, a rat? Dead for a ducat, dead.
Kills Polonius
 POLONIUS (*Behind*) Oh, I am slain!
 GERTRUDE Oh me, what hast thou done? 25
 HAMLET Nay I know not, is it the king?
 GERTRUDE Oh what a rash and bloody deed is this!
 HAMLET A bloody deed? Almost as bad, good mother,
 As kill a king and marry with his brother.
 GERTRUDE As kill a king?
 HAMLET Ay lady, 'twas my word. 30
 [*Lifts up the arras and reveals the body of Polonius*]
 Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell.
 I took thee for thy better. Take thy fortune.
 Thou find'st to be too busy is some danger. –

12 a wicked] Q2; an idle F 16 And, would it] And would it Q2; But would you F 20 inmost] F; most Q2 22 Help, help, ho!] F; Helpe how. Q2 23, 25 SD *Behind*] *Capell*; not in Q2, F 23 Help, help, help!] F; helpe. Q2 24 SD *Drams*] *Malone* (*after rat*); not in Q2, F 24 SD *Kills Polonius*] F; not in Q2 30 'twas] F; it was Q2 30 SD] *following Capell* (26) and *Cambridge*; not in Q2, F 32 better] Q2; Better F

14 forgot me forgotten who I am.

14 the rood the cross of Christ.

17 can speak Is this the understatement 'will have something to say to you'?

18 Come, come This is much more than the 'now then!' of Gertrude's 'Come, come' (12), as it prompts Gertrude to think she is under threat (21).

18 budge move away (to fetch the others).

19 glass a mirror, this time one which reveals actions in their sinful nature. See notes to 3.2.18 and 3.1.147.

24 rat proverbially associated with spying or chicanery (Tilley).

24 Dead for a ducat Possibly, as Kittredge suggests, a wager, i.e. 'I'll bet a ducat I kill it.'

30 As kill a king? ... word It is extraordinary that neither of them takes up this all-important matter again. Gertrude does not press for an explanation; Hamlet does not question further the queen's involvement. In Q1, Hamlet reiterates the fact that his father was murdered ('damnable murder'), and the queen says 'I never knew of this most horrid murder.'

32 I ... thy better Hamlet thought he was striking at Claudius.

- Leave wringing of your hands. Peace! Sit you down
 And let me wring your heart, for so I shall 35
 If it be made of penetrable stuff,
 If damnèd custom have not brazed it so,
 That it be proof and bulwark against sense.
- GERTRUDE What have I done, that thou dar'st wag thy tongue
 In noise so rude against me?
- HAMLET Such an act 40
 That blurs the grace and blush of modesty,
 Calls virtue hypocrite, takes off the rose
 From the fair forehead of an innocent love
 And sets a blister there, makes marriage vows
 As false as dicers' oaths. Oh such a deed 45
 As from the body of contraction plucks
 The very soul, and sweet religion makes
 A rhapsody of words. Heaven's face doth glow;
 Yea, this solidity and compound mass,
 With tristful visage as against the doom, 50
 Is thought-sick at the act.
- GERTRUDE Ay me, what act,
 That roars so loud and thunders in the index?

38 be] Q2; is F 44 sets] Q2; makes F 48 doth] F; dooes Q2 49 Yea] F; Ore Q2 50 tristful] F; heated Q2 52 That] F; *Ham.* That Q2

- 37 **brazed** made brazen, hardened like brass.
 38 **proof** armour.
 38 **sense** feeling.
 40 **Such an act** In the speech which follows, Hamlet quite certainly implies the breaking of marriage vows (see note to 1.5.46). But when Gertrude directly asks him 'what act?' (51), he does not directly answer 'adultery', but charges her with inconstancy, immoderate sexual desire, and a lack of any sense of value, in exchanging King Hamlet for Claudius. He does not pursue the charge of adultery, but nothing he says shows him forgetting it.
 42 **rose** A figurative rose, symbol of true love.
 44 **sets a blister there** Assumed to mean the burn-mark from the branding of a harlot on the forehead, with the backing of Laertes's speech at 4.5.119–20, 'brands the harlot / Even here, between the chaste unsmirchèd brow'. But Shakespeare is probably speaking figuratively, thinking of the forehead as the place which declares innocence or boldness (compare 3.3.7). The 'blister' then would indicate disease or taint. It was not the custom in Elizabethan times to brand prostitutes in the face, though this dire punishment was threatened by Henry VIII in 1513 and by the Commonwealth in 1650.
 46 **contraction** pledging, making vows or contracts.
 48 **rhapsody** a medley, a miscellaneous or confused collection.
 48–51 **Heaven's face ... at the act** i.e. the skies blush with shame, and the huge earth itself, with a countenance as sad as if it were doomsday, is distressed in mind by your act.
 49 **Yea** So F. Q2, substituting 'O'er' ('Ore') for 'Yea', treats the visage as belonging to the glowing sun and supplies 'heated' for 'tristful'.
 52 **index** table of contents (prefixed to a book).

HAMLET Look here upon this picture, and on this,
 The counterfeit presentment of two brothers.
 See what a grace was seated on this brow; 55
 Hyperion's curls, the front of Jove himself,
 An eye like Mars, to threaten and command;
 A station like the herald Mercury,
 New-lighted on a heaven-kissing hill;
 A combination and a form indeed, 60
 Where every god did seem to set his seal
 To give the world assurance of a man.
 This was your husband. Look you now what follows.
 Here is your husband, like a mildewed ear
 Blasting his wholesome brother. Have you eyes? 65
 Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed
 And batten on this moor? Ha! have you eyes?
 You cannot call it love, for at your age
 The heyday in the blood is tame, it's humble,
 And waits upon the judgement; and what judgement 70
 Would step from this to this? [Sense sure you have,
 Else could you not have motion, but sure that sense
 Is apoplexed, for madness would not err,
 Nor sense to ecstasy was ne'er so thrall'd,
 But it reserved some quantity of choice 75

53 SH HAMLET] *Ham.* F; *not in* Q2 57 and] Q2; or F 59 heaven-kissing] F; heauc, a kissing Q2 65 brother] Q2; breath F 71–6 Sense ... difference] Q2; *not in* F

53 **this picture, and ... this** Hamlet displays images of Hamlet Sr and Claudius to Gertrude – he may point to two different portraits or tapestries hung on the wall or he may show her miniatures or lockets.

54 **counterfeit presentment** i.e. portraits, representations in art.

56 **Hyperion** See 1.2.140.

56 **front** forehead.

57 **Mars** in classical mythology, Roman god of war.

58 **station** stance, way of standing.

59 **New-lighted** Newly alighted.

60 **combination** i.e. of divine qualities.

61 **set his seal** place his confirming mark.

64 **ear** of corn.

65 **Blasting** Blighting.

67 **batten** feed and grow fat. (Not an easy thing to do on moorland. The 'fair mountain' is faintly biblical: Wilson suggests an undertone of 'black-amoor' in 'moor'.)

69 **heyday** excitement.

69 **blood** passions, sexual desire.

71–6, 78–81 F makes two major excisions in the remainder of this speech. See Textual Analysis, 257–8.

71–6 **Sense ... difference** Hamlet allows that Gertrude has ability to reason, but says that this ability was so severely impaired that she was unable to distinguish between Claudius and her former husband.

73 **apoplexed** paralysed.

74 **thrall'd** in thrall, enslaved.

To serve in such a difference.] What devil was't
 That thus hath cozened you at hoodman-blind?
 [Eyes without feeling, feeling without sight,
 Ears without hands or eyes, smelling sans all,
 Or but a sickly part of one true sense 80
 Could not so mope.]
 O shame, where is thy blush? Rebellious hell,
 If thou canst mutine in a matron's bones,
 To flaming youth let virtue be as wax
 And melt in her own fire. Proclaim no shame 85
 When the compulsive ardour gives the charge,
 Since frost itself as actively doth burn,
 And reason panders will.

GERTRUDE O Hamlet, speak no more.
 Thou turn'st my eyes into my very soul,
 And there I see such black and grainèd spots 90
 As will not leave their tinct.

HAMLET Nay, but to live
 In the rank sweat of an enseamèd bed,
 Stewed in corruption, honeying and making love
 Over the nasty sty.

77 hoodman] F; hodman Q2 78–81 Eyes ... mope] Q2; *not in* F 86 ardour] ardure Q2, F 88 And] Q2; As F 88 panders] F; pardons Q2 89 turn'st my] Q2; turn'st mine F 89 eyes ... soul] F; very eyes into my soule Q2 90 grainèd] F; greuced Q2 91 will not] F; will Q2 91 their] F; there their Q2 92 enseamèd] F; inseeded Q2

76 *serve ... difference* i.e. to assist in differentiating between the two men.

77 *cozened ... hoodman-blind* deceived you in a game of blindman's buff. (The devil substituted Claudius for King Hamlet when the blindfold Gertrude chose him.)

81 *mope* move around aimlessly, in a daze or trance.

82 *Rebellious hell* Hamlet's way of conflating sexual desire with the defiant as well as punitive force of hell, or his suggestion that the powers of hell encourage lower urges to rebel against judgement and reason.

83 *mutine* incite mutiny (*OED* v 2).

84–5 *To flaming youth ... fire* The argument runs that it is no good insisting on virtue as a rigid and unbending guide of conduct in the young, when age gives such a bad example. Virtue, in these circumstances, becomes a soft wax melting in the fire of youthful ardour.

86 *gives the charge* signals the attack.

88 *reason panders will* reason assists the

passions to obtain their ends.

90 *grainèd* engrained, deep-dyed.

91 *leave their tinct* surrender their colour.

92 *enseamèd* The word has to do with 'grease'. Its commonest context in Shakespeare's time was scouring or purging animals, especially hawks and horses, of (it was thought) superfluous internal grease or fat. But 'enseam' could also mean not to *remove* but to *apply* grease, especially to cloth. The least disgusting meaning here would therefore be 'greasy'. It is more than likely, however, that what is uppermost in Hamlet's mind is the idea of evacuated foulness. The echo 'semen' is surely present. The bed is greasy with offensive semen.

93 *Stewed* cooked. Shakespeare combines the heat, sweat, and greasiness with the odium of the brothels, widely known as 'the stews'.

93 *honeying ... sty* i.e. covering over foulness with sweet words and endearments; 'making love' has its usual pre-1950 sense of courtship, love-talk; sty is an area for swine (*OED* 3.1) but is also understood as a place of moral pollution generally (*OED* 3.3).

- GERTRUDE Oh speak to me no more.
These words like daggers enter in my ears. 95
No more sweet Hamlet.
- HAMLET A murderer and a villain,
A slave that is not twentieth part the tittle
Of your precedent lord, a vice of kings,
A cutpurse of the empire and the rule,
That from a shelf the precious diadem stole 100
And put it in his pocket.
- GERTRUDE No more!
- Enter GHOST*
- HAMLET A king of shreds and patches –
Save me and hover o'er me with your wings,
You heavenly guards! – What would your gracious figure?
- GERTRUDE Alas he's mad! 105
- HAMLET Do you not come your tardy son to chide,
That lapsed in time and passion lets go by
Th'important acting of your dread command? Oh say!
- GHOST Do not forget. This visitation
Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose. 110
But look, amazement on thy mother sits.
Oh step between her and her fighting soul:
Conceit in weakest bodies strongest works.
Speak to her, Hamlet.
- HAMLET How is it with you lady?
- GERTRUDE Alas, how is't with you, 115
That you do bend your eye on vacancy,

95 my] Q2; mine F 97 tittle] tythe F; kyth Q2 104 your] Q2; you F 116 do] Q2; *not in F*

97 tittle tenth part.

98 vice clown or trickster of the old drama.

99 cutpurse pickpocket, thief.

101 SD Q1 gives '*Enter the ghost in his night gowne.*'

102 shreds and patches i.e. the patchwork costume of the stage-clown.

107 lapsed ... lets go by failed or neglectful in the timely and passionate pursuit of revenge. If 'lapsed' = apprehended or arrested, then Hamlet is saying that he is taken or surprised by the Ghost.

108 important Neither 'momentous' nor

'urgent'; compare *All's Well* 3.7.21, 'his important blood will not deny'. We have no adjective which has the same sense of demanding or insisting: 'The acting – so urged on me and required of me – of your dread command'.

110 blunted purpose Hamlet is misusing his energies or is being distracted from the central goal of revenge. Compare Sonnet 95: 'the hardest knife, ill-used, doth lose his edge'.

111 amazement utter bewilderment. Compare 3.2.296.

113 Conceit Imagination.

- And with th'incorporal air do hold discourse?
 Forth at your eyes your spirits wildly peep,
 And, as the sleeping soldiers in th'alarm,
 Your bedded hair, like life in excrements, 120
 Start up and stand an end. O gentle son,
 Upon the heat and flame of thy distemper
 Sprinkle cool patience. Whereon do you look?
 HAMLET On him, on him! Look you how pale he glares.
 His form and cause conjoined, preaching to stones, 125
 Would make them capable. – Do not look upon me,
 Lest with this piteous action you convert
 My stern effects. Then what I have to do
 Will want true colour: tears perchance for blood.
 GERTRUDE To whom do you speak this? 130
 HAMLET Do you see nothing there?
 GERTRUDE Nothing at all, yet all that is I see.
 HAMLET Nor did you nothing hear?
 GERTRUDE No, nothing but ourselves.
 HAMLET Why, look you there – look how it steals away – 135
 My father in his habit as he lived –
 Look where he goes, even now out at the portal.

Exit Ghost

- GERTRUDE This is the very coinage of your brain.
 This bodiless creation ecstasy
 Is very cunning in.

117 th'incorporal] Q2; their corporall F 130 whom] Q2; who F 137 SD] Q2; *Exit* F 139–40 This ... in] *as one line* Q2, F

118 **spirits wildly peep** 'In moments of excitement the *spirits* or "vital forces" were thought to come, as it were, to the surface, and to cause various symptoms of agitation' (Kittredge).

119 **as the sleeping ... alarm** like soldiers startled out of sleep by a call to arms.

120 **hair** (considered plural).

120 **like life in excrements** 'excrement' can be either what is voided from, or what, like hair and nails, grows out of, the body. Probably 'as though there were independent life in such outgrowths'.

121 **an end** A common form of 'on end'.

124 **how pale he glares** He is gazing fixedly with a ghastly expression; 'glares' is not necessarily an angry stare, 'pale' is several times used by Shakespeare in connection with a dying or lacklustre look of the eyes. Schmidt compares *Troilus* 5.3.81, 'Look how thou diest, look how thy eye

turns pale.'

126 **capable** receptive, sensitive.

127 **piteous action** behaviour which excites pity.

128 **effects** intended deeds (seen as issuing from anger and indignation). At their first meeting, the Ghost warned Hamlet not to pity him (1.5.5), presumably taking the same view that pity is not a state of mind likely to generate violent action.

129 **true colour** The 'effects' of pity would be colourless tears instead of blood. (The Ghost's reappearance seems to be weakening Hamlet's resolve instead of strengthening it.)

136 **in his habit as he lived** in the clothes he wore when alive.

138 **very mere**.

139 **ecstasy** madness.

140 **cunning** skilful.

HAMLET Ecstasy? 140
 My pulse as yours doth temperately keep time,
 And makes as healthful music. It is not madness
 That I have uttered. Bring me to the test,
 And I the matter will reword, which madness
 Would gambol from. Mother, for love of grace, 145
 Lay not that flattering unction to your soul,
 That not your trespass but my madness speaks;
 It will but skin and film the ulcerous place,
 Whiles rank corruption, mining all within,
 Infects unseen. Confess yourself to heaven, 150
 Repent what's past, avoid what is to come,
 And do not spread the compost on the weeds
 To make them ranker. Forgive me this my virtue,
 For in the fatness of these pury times
 Virtue itself of vice must pardon beg, 155
 Yea, curb and woo for leave to do him good.

GERTRUDE Oh Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain.

HAMLET Oh throw away the worser part of it
 And live the purer with the other half.
 Good night – but go not to my uncle's bed; 160
 Assume a virtue if you have it not.
 [That monster custom, who all sense doth eat,

140 Ecstasy?] F; *not in* Q2 144 And I] F; And Q2 146 that] Q2; a F 149 Whiles] Q2; Whil'st F 152 on] Q2; or F 153 ranker] Q2; ranke F 154 these] Q2; this F 156 woo] wooc Q2; woe F 159 live] F; leaue Q2 160 my] Q2; mine F 162–6 That monster ... put on] Q2; *not in* F

145 **gambol from** spring away from.

146 **unction** healing oil or ointment.

148 **skin and film** serve as a skin and film over.

149 **mining** undermining.

152 **spread ... weeds** She is not to use the good words of Hamlet as an encouragement to her vice, by supposing them to proceed only from his madness.

153–6 **Forgive me ... good** Hamlet is self-justifying in his apology, saying, in effect, 'I am sorry I have to apologize for speaking like this: virtue ought not to cringe before vice, but it is necessary because vice is so dominant these days.'

154 **fatness** grossness, ill condition (see note to 1.5.32 and 5.2.264).

154 **pury** This is the same word as 'pursive' and it meant both short of breath and flatulent; it

could be conveniently applied to a person who was grossly out of condition, panting, belching, and breaking wind. Compare *Timon of Athens* 5.4.12, 'pury insolence shall break his wind'. As *OED* indicates, the word had connotations of corpulence. The words 'fatness' and 'pury' move towards each other in meaning, suggesting in sum an overweight, pampered person in poor physical condition.

156 **curb** bow, make obeisance (Fr. *courber*).

162–6 This passage is not present in the Folio. See Textual Analysis, 259.

162–6 **That monster ... put on** Custom is a monster who destroys sensitivity or reason, and thus leads to devilish habits; but also an angel, in that he can make us accustomed to good actions; 'aply' = readily.

Of habits devil, is angel yet in this,
 That to the use of actions fair and good
 He likewise gives a frock or livery 165
 That aptly is put on.] Refrain tonight,
 And that shall lend a kind of easiness
 To the next abstinence, [the next more easy,
 For use almost can change the stamp of nature,
 And either ... the devil, or throw him out, 170
 With wondrous potency.] Once more good night,
 And when you are desirous to be blessed,
 I'll blessing beg of you. For this same lord,
 I do repent; but heaven hath pleased it so,
 To punish me with this, and this with me, 175
 That I must be their scourge and minister.
 I will bestow him, and will answer well
 The death I gave him. So again, good night.
 I must be cruel only to be kind;
 Thus bad begins, and worse remains behind. 180
 One word more good lady.

GERTRUDE

What shall I do?

HAMLET Not this by no means that I bid you do:

Let the bloat king tempt you again to bed,
 Pinch wanton on your cheek, call you his mouse,
 And let him for a pair of reechy kisses, 185
 Or paddling in your neck with his damned fingers,
 Make you to ravel all this matter out,

166 Refrain tonight] F; to refraine night Q2 168–71 the next ... potency] Q2; *not in F* 180 Thus] F; This Q2 181 One ... lady] Q2; *not in F* 183 bloat] blowt Q2; blunt F 187 ravel] F; rouell Q2

168–71 This passage is not present in the Folio. See Textual Analysis, 259.

170 either ... the devil A verb is missing. Many editions supply 'master' from the 1611 quarto.

172–3 when you are ... beg of you When you are contrite enough to ask God's blessing (or perhaps Hamlet's), I'll seek your blessing (as is appropriate for a son).

174–6 heaven ... minister It is the will of heaven, in making me the agent of their chastisement, that I myself should be punished by being the cause of Polonius's death, and that Polonius should be punished in his death at my hands.

177 answer well i.e. give good reasons for.

Jenkins also gives 'atone for'.

179–80 I must be cruel ... behind The remarkable change of tone in this couplet led one editor to suggest they were spoken aside. They do indeed have a meditative quality, and, in this recognition of the heaviness of his task, they resemble the couplet at the end of Act 2 – 'The time is out of joint ...'. His own cruelty repels him; he sees the death of Polonius as the bad beginning of a vengeance that will yet be 'worse'.

183 bloat bloated, swollen (with drink).

184 wanton wantonly, lasciviously.

185 reechy soiled, emitting smoke or other foul smells (*OED*).

187 ravel ... out unravel, disentangle.

That I essentially am not in madness,
 But mad in craft. 'Twere good you let him know,
 For who that's but a queen, fair, sober, wise, 190
 Would from a paddock, from a bat, a gib,
 Such dear concernings hide? Who would do so?
 No, in despite of sense and secrecy,
 Unpeg the basket on the house's top,
 Let the birds fly, and like the famous ape, 195
 To try conclusions, in the basket creep
 And break your own neck down.

GERTRUDE Be thou assured, if words be made of breath,
 And breath of life, I have no life to breathe
 What thou hast said to me. 200

HAMLET I must to England, you know that?

GERTRUDE Alack,
 I had forgot. 'Tis so concluded on.

HAMLET [There's letters sealed, and my two schoolfellows,
 Whom I will trust as I will adders fanged,
 They bear the mandate. They must sweep my way 205
 And marshal me to knavery. Let it work,
 For 'tis the sport to have the engineer
 Hoist with his own petar, an't shall go hard
 But I will delve one yard below their mines

189 mad] Q2; made F 201–2 Alack / I ... on.] *Capell*; Alack ... forgot. / 'Tis ... on. Q2; Alacke ... on. F 203–11
 There's letters ... meet] Q2; *not in F*

189 in craft by design.

189–92 'Twere good ... concernings hide
 Sarcastic. A respectable queen, as you consider
 yourself to be, has of course no reason to keep
 a secret from her loathsome husband.

191 paddock frog or toad.

191 gib tom-cat (an abbreviation of 'Gilbert';
 the 'g' is hard).

193 secrecy discretion.

194–7 Unpeg ... neck down Oddly enough,
 there is no record of this fable. It more or less
 explains itself, however. An ape takes a birdcage
 onto a roof; he opens the door and the birds fly
 out. In order to imitate them, he gets into the basket,
 jumps out and, instead of flying, falls to the ground.

196 To try conclusions To test results.

197 down Either an intensifier – 'utterly' or

'completely' – or adverbial – 'falling down'.

198–200 In Q1, the queen promises also to assist
 Hamlet in his revenge.

201 I must to England Though Hamlet has not
 yet been told explicitly of Claudius's plan to send
 him away (see 3.1.163, 3.3.4).

203–11 There's letters ... meet These nine
 lines are not found in F. See Textual Analysis,
 260–1.

205 sweep my way clear a path for me.

207 engineer one who constructs or designs
 military machines or contrivances, especially for
 use in sieges. Q2 gives it the normal spelling for
 the time, 'engineer'.

208 Hoist i.e. blown up.

208 petar bomb. Also 'petard'.

208 an't and it.

And blow them at the moon. Oh 'tis most sweet
When in one line two crafts directly meet.] 210

This man shall set me packing.

I'll lug the guts into the neighbour room.

Mother, good night. Indeed, this counsellor

Is now most still, most secret, and most grave, 215

Who was in life a foolish prating knave.

Come sir, to draw toward an end with you.

Good night mother.

Exit Hamlet tugging in Polonius; [Gertrude remains]

[4.1] *Enter* CLAUDIUS *with* ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN

CLAUDIUS There's matter in these sighs, these profound heaves.

You must translate, 'tis fit we understand them.

Where is your son?

GERTRUDE [Bestow this place on us a little while.]

[Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern]

Ah mine own lord, what have I seen tonight! 5

CLAUDIUS What, Gertrude? How does Hamlet?

GERTRUDE Mad as the sea and wind, when both contend

Which is the mightier. In his lawless fit,

Behind the arras hearing something stir,

Whips out his rapier, cries 'A rat, a rat!', 10

And in this brainish apprehension kills

The unseen good old man.

CLAUDIUS

Oh heavy deed!

216 foolish] F; most foolish Q2 218 SD *Exit ... Polonius*] F; *Exit* Q2 218 SD *Gertrude remains*] following *Wilson*; not in Q2, F Act 4, Scene 1 4.1] Q 1676 0 SD] *Wilson* (substantially); *Eenter King, and Queene, with Rosencraus and Guyldensterne* Q2; *Enter King* F 1 Matter] Q2; matters F 4 Bestow ... while] Q2; not in F 4 SD] Q 1676; not in Q2, F 5 mine own] Q2; my good F 7 sea] Q2; Seas F 10 Whips ... cries] Q2; He whips his Rapier out, and cries F 11 this] Q2; his F

211 in one line The image is of the mine and the countermine.

212 This man ... packing The murder of Polonius will make the king send me off immediately.

217 draw ... with you conclude our discourse.

Act 4, Scene 1

0 SD Since the 1676 quarto, most editors begin a new act at this point. Everyone agrees with

Johnson that the division is 'not very happy' because the action continues from the closet scene: Gertrude remains on stage, and Claudius enters to her. (Q2 gives a re-entry for the queen though no previous exit for her.) The Folio makes clear the continuity of the action, F also cuts out the awkward entry of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and their immediate dismissal by the queen.

11 brainish headstrong, rash.