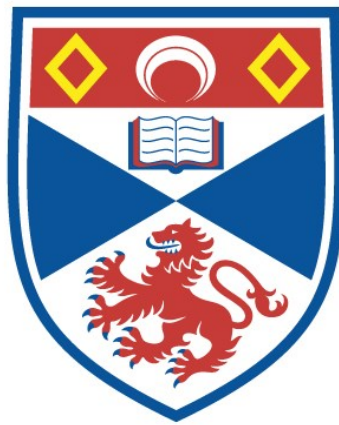


**'HAMLET ... MADE ANOTHER THING' :
AN EXAMINATION OF ADAPTED VERSIONS OF
HAMLET**

Donna Kathleen Boyd

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of MPhil
at the
University of St Andrews



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**'HAMLET MADE ANOTHER THING':
AN EXAMINATION OF ADAPTED VERSIONS OF HAMLET**

by

Donna Kathleen Boyd

Submitted in application for the degree of M.Phil. (Mode A)
at the University of St. Andrews

September 1992



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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an analysis of three centuries of adaptations of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and of how artistic considerations and political events affected the adaptors' decisions in choosing and altering *Hamlet*, and of how the adaptations, in turn, may have influenced dramatic values and increased public awareness of political and social mores. *Hamlet* was chosen for examination because its enduring popularity has provided numerous alterations and adaptations for study and because the play itself deals with art and politics. Hamlet alters a play, *The Murder of Gonzago*, in an attempt to test whether or not his uncle is guilty of regicide. Hamlet also gives explicit instructions to the players as to how this play should be acted.

Chapter one of this thesis looks at the following Restoration and eighteenth-century alterations of *Hamlet*: the 1676, 1703, 1718, and 1751 texts of *Hamlet* which were published by the Cornmarket Press in 1969 and David Garrick's alteration of *Hamlet*.

Chapter two examines the following nineteenth-century burlesques of *Hamlet*, all of which are included in Stanley Wells's *Nineteenth-Century Shakespeare Burlesques*, Volumes I-IV (London: Diploma Press, 1977-8): John Poole's *Hamlet Travestie* (1810), Charles Beckington's *Hamlet the Dane* (1847), *Hamlet Travestie* (attributed to Francis Talfourd, 1849), *A Thin Slice of Hamlet!* (anon., 1863), W.S. Gilbert's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* (1874), and A.C. Hilton's *Hamlet, or Not Such a Fool as He Looks* (1882).

Chapter three is a survey of twentieth-century *Hamlet*s and a discussion of Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1967), *Dogg's Hamlet*; *Cahoot's Macbeth* (1979), *Jumpers* (1972), and *Travesties* (1975) and of Charles Marowitz's *Marowitz Hamlet* (1963) as they relate to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

DECLARATIONS

(i) I, Donna Kathleen Boyd, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 60,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record or work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

date 30 September 1992 signature of candidate

(ii) I was admitted as a research student under Ordinance No. 12 in October 1988 and as a candidate for the degree of M. Phil. (Mode A) in May 1989; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St. Andrews between 1989 and 1992.

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(iii) I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of M.Phil (Mode A) in the University of St. Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

date 30 September 1992 signature of supervisor

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I would like to express my gratitude to the staff at the following libraries: the University of St. Andrews Library, the University of Georgia Main Library, the Birmingham Shakespeare Library (where I found much of the material on burlesques), and the National Library of Scotland. I should also like to thank the secretarial staff at the English department (especially Dorothy Black) who have been very kind and helpful.

Long-term study and research can be difficult for foreign students, and I am extremely grateful to the following families who, through their friendship and support, have provided me with homes away from home: my Rotary family -- Angus and Wendy Peters and their children, Stephen and Jennifer; Mr. & Mrs. Ian Murray and their children, Sarah and David; and Mr. & Mrs. R.J. Hyder.

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INTRODUCTION

"The play's the thing"

Hamlet : cue for critical clichés: one of Shakespeare's greatest tragedies and one of the world's literary masterpieces; vivid profound, mysterious; its protagonist the most enigmatic character in the history of drama. The *Hamlet* industry continues to expand; experts claim that this play has generated a greater quantity of discussion, exegesis, scholarly controversy and textual debate than any other: Hamlet himself has exerted a powerfully varied cultural influence; and the play defiantly retains its vitality on stage, while reaching a mass audience via the cinema and television.

By now it is a text burdened with the massive weight of its own fame, blurred by the vast aureole of its own glory, and haunted by the long reputation of its enigma; doomed to quote and mimic itself.¹

To say that there are thousands of books, articles, and theses about *Hamlet* is an understatement. There are studies devoted to every aspect of the play from textual and literary criticism to the history of actors who have played the Dane. What is left to say about *Hamlet*? The answer is quite a lot, actually, especially if one is interested in stage adaptations and alterations of the play. This thesis is an analysis of three centuries of adaptations of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* which looks at how artistic considerations and political events affected the adaptors' decisions in selecting *Hamlet* for adaptation and their methods of altering *Hamlet*. This thesis also examines how the adaptations, in turn, may have influenced dramatic values and increased public awareness of political and social mores.

¹ Watts, Cedric. *Harvester New Critical Introductions to Shakespeare: Hamlet* (Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire: Harvester, Wheatsheaf, 1988), p.xii.

Chapter one looks at the following Restoration and eighteenth-century alterations of *Hamlet*: the 1676, 1703, 1718, and 1751 texts of *Hamlet*, all of which were published in facsimile editions by the Cornmarket Press in 1969, and the alteration of *Hamlet* by David Garrick.

Chapter two examines the following nineteenth-century burlesques of *Hamlet*, all of which are included in Stanley Wells's five-volume collection of *Nineteenth-Century Shakespeare Burlesques* (London: Diploma Press, 1977-8): John Poole's *Hamlet Travestie* (1810), Charles Beckington's *Hamlet the Dane* (1847), *Hamlet Travestie* (attributed to Francis Talfourd, 1849), *A Thin Slice of Ham let!* (anon., 1863), W.S. Gilbert's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* (1874), and A.C. Hilton's *Hamlet, or Not Such a Fool as He Looks* (1882).

Chapter three is a survey of twentieth-century *Hamlet*s and a discussion of Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1967), *Dogg's Hamlet*; *Cahoot's Macbeth* (1979), *Jumpers* (1972), and *Travesties* (1975) and of Charles Marowitz's *Marowitz Hamlet* (1963) as they relate to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

These texts were chosen for analysis because of their availability and because they best represent the contemporary mode of alteration and adaptation in their respective centuries as it was applied to *Hamlet*. I use the 1982 Arden edition of *Hamlet* as a standard text with which to compare the adaptations. It will be referred to as "Arden" throughout the thesis.

I have chosen to examine adaptations of *Hamlet*, as opposed to adaptations of another one of Shakespeare's plays, or indeed of a play by any other author, because *Hamlet*'s enduring popularity has created numerous alterations and adaptations in every century since Shakespeare's. "If English literature is a vital component of English culture, and Shakespeare is the crowning symbol of that literature, then surely *Hamlet* is the text most known,

most quoted, most parodied."² *Hamlet*'s consistent popularity over four centuries has spawned numerous alterations, adaptations, and off-shoots of the text. However, quantity of material was not the only consideration. The motivating factor behind the adaptations was also considered.

Changes to plays are sometimes a result of social and political censorship, or of an attempt by an adaptor to suit contemporary critical and popular taste. *Hamlet* itself is an adaptation by Shakespeare of an older story. The basic source for *Hamlet* is a twelfth-century story of Amleth in Saxo Grammaticus's *Historiae Danicae*. In the sixteenth century, Francois de Belleforest adapted and expanded Saxo's tale in his *Histoires Tragiques* (Paris, 1582). There was also an Elizabethan "Hamlet" (1589) that pre-dated Shakespeare's. Now lost, it is attributed to Thomas Kyd, author of the Elizabethan revenge tragedy which is most often compared with *Hamlet* -- *The Spanish Tragedy*. Scholars date Shakespeare's *Hamlet* at 1601. There are several versions of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The "bad" Quarto of 1603 is approximately half the length of the "good" Quarto of 1604. The 1604 Quarto is two hundred lines longer than the Folio of 1623, but it omits eighty-five lines which are included in the later text. In addition to length, there is also varying language and punctuation in the three versions. Hamlet's most famous soliloquy, "To be or not to be", is not quite the same in the 1603 Quarto:

To be, or not to be, I there's the point,
To Die, to sleep, is that all: I all:
No, to sleepe, to dreame, I mary there it goes . . .
(1603 Quarto of Hamlet)

Not only is the language different, but the position of the speech occurs before the players arrive at Elsinore rather than between the first scene with Hamlet and the players and the play they perform. While the Quartos and the Folio are certainly different versions of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and therefore may be

² Diamond, Elin. "Stoppard's *Dogg's Hamlet*, Cahoot's *Macbeth* : The Uses of Shakespeare", *Modern Drama*. 1986 December; 29 (4): 593-600., p.598.

considered by some to be alterations of *Hamlet*, they will not be discussed in this thesis. This very brief history of pre-Shakespearean *Hamlet*s and description of the Quartos and the Folio illustrates how Shakespeare himself can be regarded as an adaptor of "Hamlet" and how dis-similar versions of the same text can be.

Not only is *Hamlet* an oft-adapted play, it is also a play about adaptation. Hamlet alters "The Mousetrap"; he gives advice on acting to the players. This touch of dramatic criticism combined with the political nature of *Hamlet* have made Shakespeare's most famous play a particularly attractive choice for adaptors who wish to comment upon or to satirize dramatic values and/or contemporary social and political mores.

The combination of art and politics in *Hamlet* is a very interesting one. Hamlet uses a play to test whether or not his uncle is guilty of regicide.

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
They have proclaim'd their malefactions.
(Arden II.ii.584-8)

Hamlet's hidden agenda in "The Mousetrap" parallels generations of adaptors' use of *Hamlet*; by altering specific words and lines, adaptors can impose their own interpretations upon the play or subtract meanings that might be read into it as a result of contemporary political and social events. For example, during the Restoration, adaptors may have used alteration (*i.e.* cutting lines and changing offensive or archaic words and phrases) not only to appeal to critical and popular tastes, but also to hide any possible political implications. In the twentieth century, adaptors sometimes use the art of adapting a play to justify and/or cloak ideological messages they have imposed on Shakespeare's text. Interestingly, writers in the Renaissance may have been doing just the opposite;

they may have been using moral lessons or, in *Hamlet*'s case, a politically intriguing plot to hide their dabbling in poetry.

During the Renaissance, art and poetry may have been considered somewhat suspiciously by those who felt literature should be morally improving. After all, Plato expelled poets from the State in the *Republic*. Spenser's Bower of Blisse in Book II of the *Faerie Queene* depicts art as perfect and yet -- deceiving, for it houses corruption. In *Paradise Lost*, Milton gives the classical epic qualities of a hero to Satan and at one point has him speak like a Cavalier poet. "When a poet like Donne or Herbert or Vaughan -- and a dramatist like Shakespeare or Tourneur -- expresses an ascetic revulsion from and rejection of the sensuous, their asceticism seems to express itself, paradoxically, in thoroughly sensuous terms, so that the physical world has returned, as it were, by a back door. . ."³ Hamlet justifies art by attempting to use it to promote moral and civil order and, in various ways, without explicitly seeing this and saying so, this is what adaptors still do.

³ Cruttwell, Patrick. *The Shakespearean Moment* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1954), p.140.

CHAPTER I THE RESTORATION & EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The *Hamlet* of the late seventeenth century and of the entire eighteenth century was more self-assured, quite as single-minded, and less reflective than his Renaissance counterpart. Adaptors of what was considered to be Shakespeare's greatest tragedy were compelled to cut lines, scenes and characters and to alter diction to meet the changing technology of the theatre and style of acting, the rules and expectation of the critics, the criteria of censors who were alert to anything politically or socially unsavoury, and the tastes of fickle audiences. The result was a streamlined, straightforward *Hamlet* made narrow by the elimination of foreign and domestic politics, save the activity within Elsinore, and bereft of much of its universality by the diminished roles of the supporting characters and by the reduction of symbolism and reflection. The world of this new *Hamlet* more closely resembled a soap opera than an actual working kingdom.

To gain a better understanding of Restoration and eighteenth-century adaptations of *Hamlet*, some understanding of the period's cultural and political background is necessary. The period from 1660 to 1800 involves some very complex literary, social, and political issues. What follows is an outline of the history and the trends of the time which is intended to serve as an introductory background in preparation for a detailed analysis of the adaptations.

With the restoration of the British Monarchy in 1660 came the dissolution of the Commonwealth ban against acting, and the theatre became popular once more. Although drama did not completely disappear during its eighteen-year prohibition, the Commonwealth government kept

such a tight rein on what was produced that playwrights and theatre companies found it difficult to exist. Charles II promptly granted patents to Thomas Killigrew and to Sir William Davenant stipulating that they should build their own playhouses and form their own companies.

The 1660 patents also asked that women, not boys, be allowed to play female roles "to the end that plays might be esteemed not only harmless delights but useful and instructive representations of human life".¹ The vogue for actresses originated in France, where Charles II and members of his court had witnessed actresses in productions and found them highly acceptable. Besides enhancing verisimilitude, female actors enhanced attendance at the theatre. Audiences were keen to see women on stage in fancy gowns or, better yet, in breeches. Whether the script called for disguise or directors and stage managers thought a woman suited a boy's role which called for a light, saucy manner, women dressed as men could expose their legs in costume. That dressing women as men was not done for dramatic purpose alone is proved by the fact that there are numerous epilogues of the time spoken by actresses, often young actresses dressed as beaux.² These epilogues were specially advertised. The popularity of actresses encouraged adaptors to create extra roles for women in plays. Ladies were given companions or maids or sisters.

Other innovations that reached British theatre via Europe were changeable scenery and elaborate set design made popular in Italian operas. The two patent playhouses were competitive, and an eye-catching scenic show in one playhouse could empty the other one of its audience. In 1661,

¹ Brown, John Russell and Bernard Harris, eds., *Restoration Theatre* (London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1965), p. 179.

² Nicoll, Allardyce. *A History of Early Eighteenth-Century Drama 1700 - 50* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1925), p.49.

Hamlet was the first Shakespearean play performed with scenery in the public theatre.³ Betterton played the lead, and his wife, Mary Saunderson, was the first actress ever to play Ophelia -- this being the first production of *Hamlet* after the introduction of women actresses.⁴

New theatres had to be built not only to accommodate new equipment, but to seat growing audiences who had been starved for spectacle and entertainment during Puritan rule. Until the mid-eighteenth century, some members of the audience sat either backstage or onstage. Gallants and privileged gentlemen would pay to watch from backstage. However, they could cause confusion for the stagehands and mechanics and sometimes for the actors. On benefit nights, playgoers were often crowded *onto* the stage. "When Charles Holland, at his benefit on Tuesday 20 April 1756, essayed the part of Hamlet for the first time, he adopted the business of letting his hat fall off as he started back from the Ghost, but one 'ignorant man, not realising that the trick was deliberate, promptly picked it up and 'clapt it upon his head.'"⁵ Once the theatres were rebuilt for increased seating capacity, there was no longer a need for tiers of seats at the sides and the back of the stage. The larger theatres contributed to profits, but not to performances. Acoustics were not always adequate. Audiences in further parts of the theatre had difficulty seeing and hearing. The poor acoustics of the new, large theatres meant audiences could not hear the ordinary tone of voice. The large stage of these new theatres "necessitated a greater attention to motion and forbade informality".⁶ As a result, actors' performances became louder and more banal. The mode of tragic delivery was formal

³ Odell, George C. D. *Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving*, Vol. I (London: Constable, 1963), p.179.

⁴ Mander, Raymond and Joe Mitchenson. *Hamlet Through the Ages*. (A pictorial record from 1709.) (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1955), p.93.

⁵ *The London Stage 1660-1800*, Vol. IV, ii, Ed. William Van Lennep (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965), p.539.

⁶ Boaden, James *Mrs. S.*, Vol, II, Pp. 284-90, quoted in Campbell, p.198.

recitative speech accompanied by mechanical gestures. "Tragedy roared in a most unnatural strain; rant was passion; whining was grief; vociferation was terror, and drawling accents were the voice of love."⁷ Managers found that only the broadest effects proved successful and "accordingly intensified the tendency towards spectacle in serious drama."⁸

Entr'acte entertainment such as singing and dancing proved popular and added to the spectacle whether or not it added to the play. In addition to entertainment, entr'acte performances were a means of circumventing the law and enabling some theatres to remain open. The Licensing Act of 1737 required that all new dramas be sent to the Lord Chamberlain for approval and that only places of entertainment with formal "patents" should be allowed to operate. Theatres such as Goodman's Field circumvented the law by advertising musical concerts. In the intermission of the concert a play would be performed, but payment was specifically for musical entertainment. The theatre had become a "concert hall".⁹

While some of the effects of a play might be influenced by the way it was acted and by the way in which it was presented, changing critical values could influence the script itself. The neo-classic rules of dramatic criticism, influenced by French and Italian writers and formed during the Restoration by men such as John Dryden and Thomas Rymer as well as, in earlier years, Sir Philip Sidney and Ben Jonson, were the strictures which would most greatly affect late seventeenth-century and eighteenth-century adaptors. The neo-classic rules insisted that a play conform to the unities of time, place and

⁷ Murphy, Arthur. *The Life of David Garrick, Esq.* Vol. I (London: 1801), p.17., quoted in Campbell, p.174.

⁸ Nicoll, Allardyce. *A History of Late Eighteenth-Century Drama, 1750-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927), p.23.

⁹ Nicoll, Allardyce. *The Garrick Stage*, Ed. Sybil Rosenfield (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1980), p.3.

action, that characterization be consistent, that there be no mixture of comedy and tragedy, that violent scenes be suppressed, that there be a didactic element in the plays, and that the language be clear.

In the Restoration there was much debate as to whether or not Shakespeare had been taught or had read classical literature. The general consensus was that he had not, otherwise he would have employed the ancients' rules of drama. Shakespeare's non-conformities or "faults" were a result of his education and the age in which he lived, and he was praised for excelling the ancients despite being ignorant of them. In 1712, John Dennis wrote the following of Shakespeare: "Tho' he lay under greater Disadvantages than any of his successors, yet he had greater and more genuine Beauties than the best and the greatest of them. ... If *Shakespear* had these great qualities by Nature, what would he not have been, if he had join'd to so happy a Genius Learning and the Poetical Art?"¹⁰

Of the unities, continuity of action was most important. Eighteenth-century audiences, unlike those of the Renaissance or twentieth century, expected clear, simple, and probable dramatic patterns. If changing scenes "interfered with a clear understanding of the relationship between those scenes, the shifting was to be avoided. Thus, the unity of action was the real concern, and the unity of place was simply a means of safeguarding that more important unity."¹¹ However, after Johnson's attack on the unities in his 1765 preface to Shakespeare, adaptors seemed more concerned with matters other than the unities of time, place or action.

¹⁰Dennis, John. "On the Genius and Writings of Shakespeare" (1712), *Eighteenth Century Essays on Shakespeare*, Ed. D. Nicol Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), pp.23-24.

¹¹ Branam, George C. *Eighteenth-Century Adaptations of Shakespearean Tragedy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956), p.23.

As the unities and thus plot structure declined in significance, the importance of characters increased. Neo-classicism had called for a rigorous preservation of character type; a king must act like a king. Many of Shakespeare's characters showed inconsistent behaviour, and this was likely to be corrected. Conformity to character type was considered a virtue in the early eighteenth century. That Shakespeare created his characters to be individuals was recognized as a "natural" thing to do, but artistic stereotypes of characters were preferred. Adaptors continued to alter characterization late into the eighteenth century. Even Garrick, who popularized the natural style of acting made the characters in his 1772 *Hamlet* conform to types. However, there was growing popular and critical interest in the personalities of individual characters, and Maurice Morgann's *Essay on the Dramatic Character of Falstaff* (1777) reflected that interest and foreshadowed the type of appreciation for characters which would be fully expressed in the writings of Charles Lamb and William Hazlitt.

Just as conformity to type was considered a virtue in characterization, conformity to genre was considered essential to a play. Neo-classicists considered the mixture of comedy with tragedy inappropriate as perhaps mixed drama meant that emotional focus strayed and it detracted from the serious nature of a tragic play. Violence was also banned, not because it was shocking, but because audiences found it comical. "A *battle, duel or death of an hero* seldom, or never fail to dissolve the strongest theatrical illusion, and wipe away all its sympathetic effect with a laugh."¹² In *Some Remarks on the Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, anonymously published in 1736 (but attributed to Thomas Hanmer), the author lists the following defects of *Hamlet*, many of which he describes as comic or jocular and therefore as unsuitable for tragedy.

¹² Cooke, William. *Elements of Dramatic Criticism* (London, 1775),p. 111.

- (i) Letter to Ophelia, read by Polonius, 'too Comick for this piece'.
- (ii) The whole conduct of Hamlet's madness too ludicrous for his character and for the state of his mind.
- (iii) Hamlet's puns 'too low and mean for tragedy'.
- (iv) Hamlet's Address to the players not suitable to the dignity of the play.
- (v) Hamlet's conduct before the King, while the play is being acted, 'has too much levity in it'.
- (vi) Indecency of his remarks to Ophelia.
- (vii) 'Wretched verse' in the scene represented by the Players. ('in almost every Place where Shakespeare has attempted Rhime, either in the Body of his Plays, or at the Ends of Acts or Scenes, he falls far short of Beauty and Force in his Blank Verse.')
- (viii) Hamlet's 'pleasantry upon being certified that his uncle is Guilty.'
- (ix) Hamlet's 'inhuman' speech.¹³

Adaptors usually struck comic elements from *Hamlet*, although Davenant did not. Garrick, however, removed the gravediggers in his 1772 version of *Hamlet* because of their comic nature, although Johnson had vindicated the mixture of comedy and tragedy in Shakespeare's plays in 1765. Garrick's move proved unpopular with the public and after his death the gravediggers were restored.

Unlike comedy, moral instruction was regarded by neo-classicists as an integral part of tragedy. The didactic element of the play was not so much to teach the audience what they did not know as to "comfort and strengthen

¹³ *Readings on the Character of Hamlet 1661-1947*, compiled by Claude C.H. Williamson (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1950), p.7.

them in the beliefs and values they already possessed."¹⁴ Plays were meant to express "generally accepted concepts of right human behaviour"¹⁵ and from that point of view one can see why rigid characterization was more than an aesthetic necessity and why a violation of this rule was serious. If a king in a play did not behave in a kingly fashion, that play might be regarded as making a political statement, for instance, criticizing the royal family or encouraging revolution. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century adaptors of *Hamlet* were compelled to whiten some of their characters, and their treatment of Claudius will be seen to be a prime example of such white-washing. Poetic justice was often used to help establish a moral point: the villainous were punished, the virtuous rewarded; this might explain the popularity of Nahum Tate's *King Lear* (1681), in which Lear is restored to his throne and Cordelia and Edgar marry.

It is likely that Restoration and eighteenth-century adaptors altered Shakespeare's language to make his plays more understandable to the audience and to make them conform to the audience's taste in tragedy which was considered to be more "refined" than that of a Renaissance audience. Coherence was established by changing terms and by re-wording passages to clarify the sense or to bring the language up-to-date. Davenant did both to modernize his 1676 adaptation of *Hamlet*. The current vogue for tragedy called for blank verse as a proper medium. Although there are exceptions, Shakespeare generally allowed only clowns and lower-class characters to speak in prose. Adaptors changed this, of course; they sometimes retained scene-ending or act-ending rhymes and, in *Hamlet*'s case, kept the rhymed lines in the play within the play. Shakespeare's use of bawdy language was dismissed as pandering to the low taste of his audience

¹⁴ Branam, p.133.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.62.

and was, of course, deleted. Adaptors also objected to puns and quibbles because they believed them to be a kind of false wit as they disregarded sense and relied on sound for humour. "The only way ... to try a piece of wit is to translate it into a different language, if it bears the test you may pronounce it true ..."16 In the late 1700s critics and scholars made a careful examination of Shakespeare and, as audiences began to appreciate the individualism of his characters, it was recognised that variety in language was part of this individualism, and verbal and textual preference shifted back to the original Shakespeare. As Dr. Johnson noted in 1765:

iv.5.81 KING In *hugger-mugger* to inter him] All the modern editions that I have consulted give it,
 In private to inter him.
 That the words now replaced are better, I do not undertake to prove; it is sufficient that they are Shakespeare's. If phraseology is to be changed as words grow uncouth by disuse or gross by vulgarity, the history of every language will be lost; we shall no longer have the words of any author; and, as these alterations will be often unskilfully made, we shall in time have very little of his meaning.¹⁷

The shift in preference was a gradual one, and it was the nineteenth century by the time it had taken full effect. The most influential trend on Restoration and eighteenth-century adaptors' use of language was the neo-classical idea of language; and that language, "... with the new emphasis on

¹⁶ Addison, Joseph. *Critical Essays from The Spectator*, Ed. Donald F. Bond (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p.15.

¹⁷ Wimsatt, W.K. *Dr. Johnson on Shakespeare* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1969), p.140.

'correctness' and 'perspecuity' -- and so reflecting the ideals of Tory 'common sense' -- was only one remove from politics."¹⁸

When Charles II came to power in 1660, Britain had a need for "a governmental system which would ensure that a Civil War did not break out again."¹⁹ Tension mounted in 1678 with the Popish Plot to replace the Protestant Charles II with his Catholic brother James. James II succeeded Charles II in 1685, but fled to France in 1688 after trying to make Catholicism the religion of Britain. After the horror and shame of the regicide of the Civil War, Britain was especially respectful to and protective of her monarchs despite Parliament's dominance in English affairs. Censors were quick to catch any hints of criticism of the monarchy -- intentional or not -- in Restoration and eighteenth-century drama.

The political censorship of plays was much stronger than moral censorship. At the beginning of the Restoration there was strong anti-stage sentiment due, for the most part, to the "loosening of the moral reins which the Commonwealth had held tightly."²⁰ As a result, nearly everyone involved with playhouses was conscientious about avoiding offensive passages. Only occasionally was a play banned for moral reasons. "The censorship of plays was not always a question of party politics; it was most often due to the personal desire of particular politicians, and even sometimes of individuals wholly or largely unconnected with the Whig and Tory machines."²¹ When the French Revolution broke out in 1789, political emotions were extreme and national sentiment was rising. "A typical example of the foolish wave of enthusiasm for the established order" is the

¹⁸ Bateson, F.W. *A Guide to English Literature* (Garden City, New Jersey: Anchor Books -- Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1965), p.94.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.93.

²⁰ *London Stage* Vol. I, p. lxiii.

²¹ Nicoll, 1700-1750, p.21.

considerable offence taken to the following line from Thomas Holcroft's play *Love's Frailties* (Covent Garden, 1794). "I was bred to be the most useless, and often the most worthless, of all professions; that of a gentleman."²² However, political prejudice antedated the outbreak of the Revolution. If the political beliefs of an author were unpopular, his play could be doomed. As a result, some authors brought out their plays anonymously.

Plays could be banned outright or could be given partial restrictions. The Master of Revels and the Lord Chamberlain had the authority to do either. Until 1660, the Master of Revels had a certain power over all plays, theatres, actors and companies, and in 1660 he wished to extend this power to include the two patentees -- Davenant and Killigrew. Groups of actors had to pay the Master of Revels' office forty shillings for each new play performed and twenty shillings for each revived one. By 1662 the patentees were required to pay this fee.

Just as critical as the censors and perhaps more influential in determining what would appear onstage were seventeenth- and eighteenth-century audiences. The type of audience that attended the theatre changed drastically over the one hundred and forty years. The Restoration audience was principally aristocratic. Members of Charles II's court, including Charles himself, attended the theatre as did the odd country cousin, and the inevitable footmen and prostitutes, as well as ordinary people like Pepys. Although London's population had doubled since Shakespeare's day, "it could scarcely support two theatres. When one was full, the other was almost sure to be empty".²³ By the early eighteenth century, the richer

²² Nicoll, 1750- 1800, p.17.

²³ Kroll, Daniel Ronald. *Hamlet from Edwin Booth to Laurence Olivier: Some Changing Interpretations Reflecting Changes in Culture and in the Tastes of Audiences* (PhD.

members of the merchant class became interested in drama and joined the aristocracy in the theatre. Theatre attendance was larger than it had been during the Restoration, but the audience as a whole was not as discriminating as Restoration audiences had been. This new audience was, perhaps, less intelligent and dilettante. There were too many counter-attractions such as cards and concerts to distract them from the theatre. Although the theatre had always been a meeting place, its social aspect rose during this time, and, simultaneously, the theatre's role as a place of art declined.²⁴ In 1730, dramatists wrote more plays than there was demand for, but in 1780 the public could absorb more than dramatists could produce. The percentage of middle-class theatregoers had increased again by the latter half of the eighteenth century, and A. S. Collins "credits *The Tatler*, *The Spectator*, and *The Gentleman's Magazine* for stimulating middle-class interest in intellectual activities".²⁵ The extreme political emotions of the period (previously discussed) and the sensibility and prudery of this period's audience, which was more "correct" and puritan than any audience since the age of the Commonwealth, had a deleterious effect upon the drama of the time. This prevented playwrights from dealing with events in a striking or natural way and led "towards artificiality in characterization and denouement".²⁶

As the types of audiences changed over the years of the Restoration and eighteenth century, their taste in drama fluctuated. On November 26, 1661, John Evelyn wrote in his diary, "I saw *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, played, but now the old plays begin to disgust this refined age, since his

Dissertation at Columbia University, 1959), p. 30. Kroll quotes Fred B. Millett and Gerald Eades Bentley, *The Art of the Drama* (D. Appleton -- Century Company, 1935), p. 60.

²⁴ Nicoll, 1700-1750, p.8.

²⁵ Kroll, p.33.

²⁶ Nicoll, 1750-1800, p.15.

Majestie's being so long abroad."²⁷ *Hamlet* may have disgusted Mr. Evelyn, but it had huge potential as a comedy for His Majesty and his court as they and the Restoration wits found subjects such as adultery, death, and the failures of a king potentially funny. Members of Charles's court found humorous things which the eighteenth century would regard with awe or horror, and which the Elizabethans had treated seriously. "More really than a breach of neo-classical rules underlies the sad comment of Dryden's *Lisideius*: 'I have observed that, in all our tragedies, the audience cannot forbear laughing when the actors are to die; tis 'the most comic part of the whole play' (ed. Watson, I. 51)."²⁸ However, by the early eighteenth century, sentimentalism was banishing laughter from the stage; pantomime corrupted audiences' taste for higher forms of tragedy. Yet *Hamlet* remained popular. In his 1702 *Discourse upon Comedy*, George Farquar noted, "[*Hamlet*] is long the Darling of the English Audience, and like to continue with the same Applause, in Defiance of all the Criticism that were ever publish'd in Greek, and Latin."²⁹ Modern critics often remark that the interest and attendance of the merchant class in the theatre lowered the discerning taste of the audience as a whole. Contemporary critics and theatre enthusiasts concurred. *A Dialogue in the Shades, between the celebrated Mrs. Cibber, and the no-less celebrated Mrs. Woffington* (1766) records that "the multitude are incapable of distinguishing; and if their ears are but tickled, and their sight gratified, they re-echo applause, and go away contented; so that [Harlequin] Doctor Faustus, or the Coronation in Harry the Eighth, will bring in a full house very often when *Hamlet* or *Othello* might be a losing play."³⁰

²⁷ *Readings on the Character of Hamlet 1661-1943*, p.1.

²⁸ *Restoration Tragedy*, pp. 136-7.

²⁹ *Readings on the Character of Hamlet*, p.4.

³⁰ Price, Cecil. *Theatre in the Age of Garrick* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1973), pp.75-6, quotes *A Dialogue in the Shades, Between the celebrated Mrs. Cibber, and the no-less celebrated Mrs. Woffington* (1766), pp.15-6.

It would be interesting to chart Restoration and eighteenth-century audiences' reactions to *Hamlet* to determine the rise and fall in the play's popularity. However, it would not be an accurate experiment (not in the strictest sense), for there would be no control element. The audiences were constantly changing as were their tastes. *Hamlet* was changing as well, and not just because of the actors' performances or the staging or the costumes or the interpretations of the director; although all of these influence the way in which audiences perceive a play. The text of *Hamlet* was changing. Adaptors were altering plays to meet moral and political restrictions and to suit critical and popular tastes. Restoration audiences may have seen Davenant's *Hamlet*; late eighteenth-century audiences may have seen Garrick's *Hamlet*. Some editors were wrangling with the plays in the name of "restoring" the original text. Early editors worked under the assumption that the most recent printing of Shakespeare was the most authentic. Therefore errors of previous publications were not always eradicated, but were sometimes multiplied. Editors also felt it their duty to "correct" Shakespeare and to clarify his language. Shakespeare's plays as he wrote them would have been just as difficult to obtain from contemporary scholarly editions as from the stage. "Even in 1744, many people, not having read Shakespeare, believed that Davenant's corruption of *Macbeth* was the play as Shakespeare wrote it. When James Quin heard of Garrick's announcement to restore the text of *Macbeth*, he was supposed to have remarked, 'Indeed, and don't I play *Macbeth* as Shakespeare wrote it?'"³¹

Adaptors and editors must have felt that they were improving Shakespeare's plays. Many may have regarded their work as literary improvements of Shakespeare while others, mainly early adaptors, changed

³¹ Kroll, p.52

enough of the text to consider the plays as their own with borrowings from Shakespeare. *Hamlet* was cut more than it was altered, and compared with other Shakespearean plays, it was changed very little. However, what little was cut or altered was enough to change *Hamlet* considerably.

On 12 December 1660, an edict of the Lord Chamberlain reserved certain "old plays" as the property of William Davenant. *Hamlet* was one of these plays. Davenant altered *Hamlet*,³² and his *Hamlet* -- based on Q6 (1637) -- was printed as a quarto in 1676 (followed by re-prints in 1683, 1695, and 1703). Davenant cut *Hamlet* ruthlessly, although no more so than twentieth-century directors and actors cut it.

The "message to the reader" in the 1676 quarto says that the play was cut because it was considered to be "too long to be conveniently Acted". With the re-opening of theatres in 1660, performances sometimes began at three or three-thirty p.m. Pepys often wrote of having dinner before attending a play in mid-afternoon. It is possible that plays may have been shortened to fit into theatre and audience schedules. Surely, if there were more than one performance per day, there must have been some time allowed between performances to enable the theatre to prepare for the second performance. Theatre managers would also have wanted plays which would hold an audience's interest and give them less time to misbehave. An uncut *Hamlet* is a rather long play. Davenant may have shortened it for any of these reasons as well as any political, critical or artistic ones.

In addition to cuts that may have been made because of

³² See Hazelton Spencer's "Shakespeare Improved" for more examples and for arguments that it was Davenant who created the 1676 Quarto. Spencer compared Davenant to Q6.

Hamlet's playing time, Davenant changed Shakespeare's diction throughout the play in lines that were retained, and he also omitted lines. Many verbal changes were made in the name of clarity and of elegant diction. Some changes were modernizations such as "meet/Ophelia here" for "here/Affront Ophelia" (III.i.30-31) and "Obscurely to inter him" for "In hugger mugger to inter him" (IV.v.80). Other changes were simplifications. "In dreadful secrecie impart they did" became "They did impart in dreadful secrecie" (I.ii.169). There are numerous literalizations of figures of speech; for instance, "this Mourning cloke" for "my inkie cloke" (I.ii.77). However, some changes appear to be the result of mere whim -- "As I was reading in my Closet" for "As I was sewing in my closet" (II.i.77)³³ (perhaps Davenant wanted to portray a more intelligent Ophelia) and "Break not your steps for that" instead of "Break not your sleeps for that" (IV.vii.30). Many omissions are words and phrases which were considered offensive. Davenant's patent did request him to purge the plays. Expressions such as "by heaven", words such as "damned" and exclamations with reference to God or to the devil were deleted or changed and are examples of moral censorship by Davenant. There are also passages such as III.iii.375-8 which may be the results of careless editing and altering.

<i>Hamlet</i>	... I will come by and by.
<i>Polonius</i>	I will say so
<i>Hamlet</i>	'By and by' is easily said. -- Leave me, friends.
	<i>Arden</i>

The 1676 quarto reads as follows:

<i>Hamlet</i>	I will come by and by; Leave me friends. I will say so. By and by is easily said.
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³³ Q6 sowing.

In his article "Shakespeare Improved", Hazelton Spencer argues that unusual word substitutions are incorrect readings that could have been rectified had Davenant or the editor of Q6 consulted the Folios. Spencer believes that it is this sort of accidental "mutilation of Shakespeare's diction" that makes the 1676 *Hamlet* an adaptation.³⁴ I believe that Davenant's intentional *omissions* make his *Hamlet* an adaptation³⁵ and am most interested in the effect the cuts have on the play as a whole.

Surely Davenant's main purpose in adapting *Hamlet* was to make it dramatically effective and acceptable for *his* audience. His *Hamlet* is very different from Shakespeare's; however his audience may not have realized this because of the lapse in acting during the Civil War and Commonwealth era and because of the difficulty in obtaining a copy of Shakespeare's text.

The first major deletion Davenant makes is that all but the briefest mention of the Fortinbras/Norway sub-plot is omitted. Without the sub-plot, there is no need for Cornelius or Voltmand. Fortinbras's role remains, but it does not have as much significance as it does in Shakespeare because Davenant cuts the lines which tell us that Fortinbras's father was king, that Fortinbras's uncle became king when his brother died, and that Fortinbras believes the throne belongs to him and is taking action to regain it. Therefore we do not have the comparison of similar situations in Denmark and Norway nor the contrast of a resolute, active Fortinbras and an indecisive Hamlet. All references to England are also omitted save the fact that Hamlet will be sent there. These cuts result in a play which concentrates on Denmark alone. Since domestic politics are also deleted --

³⁴ Spencer, Hazelton. *Shakespeare Improved* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1927), p.177. Spencer's actual word is "alteration".

³⁵ In his *15-Minute Hamlet*, Tom Stoppard changes no diction, but cuts most of the play. Surely his cuts make the play an adaptation.

Hamlet does not talk about Danish tradition, and Laertes is never mentioned as the people's choice to replace Claudius as King -- the play's focus is on the inhabitants of Elsinore.

Davenant may, perhaps, concentrate on Elsinore in deference to the neo-classic emphasis on unity of time and place. Although Shakespeare's *Hamlet* physically leaves Elsinore twice -- to go on the march with Fortinbras and for Ophelia's burial -- the references to other places and events distract from Elsinore.

Another reason Davenant may have avoided references to Norway was the implication of civil war. These were the early years of the Restoration. The Popish Plot to replace Protestant Charles II with his Catholic brother James would be uncovered two years later, in 1678, but already usurpation would have been a sensitive subject. For this reason the ominous reference to Rome and Caesar in Act I may have been cut as it hints at assassination. (However, Polonius's statement that he once played Julius Caesar and was killed is retained in III.ii. -- probably because it foreshadows the murder of Polonius.)

Because the business aspect of Elsinore (politics) has been cut, the play focuses even more on the personal lives of its inhabitants of Elsinore, and in that sense the adaptation resembles a modern day soap opera more than it does the world of a working kingdom. Like any soap opera, this 1676 one has stereotyped characters. These characters are particularly bland, however, because dramatic characters often had to be made more decorous and moral to suit the critical and dramatic strictures of the seventeenth century which called for a rigorous preservation of character type. For example, a king must invariably act like a king, and it was considered in

poor taste to display a king behaving in any other fashion. The Claudius in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is most unregal according to neo-classic ideas. So Davenant made a few changes.

Davenant cut Claudius's flattery of Laertes and some of his lecturing of Hamlet. Claudius now appears more sincere and caring. For instance, he does not mention Wittenberg to Hamlet at all. If he does not ask Hamlet to stay, we cannot suspect him of having reasons for keeping him at Elsinore. Claudius's confession of guilt -- "How smart a lash that speech doth give my conscience./ The harlot's cheek, beautiful with plast'ring art,/ Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it/ Than is my deed to my most painted word." (III.i.49-53) -- is deleted. The foreshadowing of Hamlet's plan to determine Claudius's conscience via a play and of his catching Claudius confessing in prayer is lost. If the audience has any doubts about Claudius's guilt or about Hamlet's plan to discover it, these have yet to be dispelled. The deletions from soliloquies in which Claudius mulls over his own character also improve his image because some of his scheming and hints of confession are cut, making him less of a practical villain. A nice Claudius reflects on Hamlet's character, which is discussed next. What follows is an act by act analysis of changes to Hamlet's character as a result of Davenant's alterations.

In Act I, some of Hamlet's elaboration of sadness and grief is cut, and immediately we lose a sense of his over-excitement, his desperate state of mind. We do not get his full disturbance at his mother's marriage to his uncle. From Hamlet's first soliloquy Davenant cuts the last thirteen lines. We lose the sense of immediacy of Gertrude's marriage with the omission of "ere those shoes were old". The examples of Gertrude's grief which follow are also cut, thus the full impact of her quick marriage after such an

emotional period of mourning is missing. The line about "incestuous sheets" is in this section and was probably deleted because it was thought to be indecorous. Without it, we lose a clue to what lies behind Hamlet's reaction to his mother's brief period of mourning. This section ends with "It is not, nor it cannot come to good", but this ominous summation is also deleted.

Also cut from Act I are Hamlet's speech on drunkenness -- the result of which makes him seem less concerned about other men and their problems. Half of his speech to the Ghost is cut. Some of the omissions from this speech are descriptions which Davenant may have thought to be unnecessary as the audience can see the ghost for themselves: as Voltaire notes in *Theatre Complet* (1768), "the ghost of Hamlet's father has a most striking theatrical effect".³⁶ Yet what is descriptive preparatory discourse for the reader also has a purpose for the audience. If Hamlet is addressing the ghost at length, and the ghost does not reply, this adds to the horror of the ghost and to our and Hamlet's terror. The omission of these lines diminishes the "striking" effect, giving Hamlet less time to react, and it deprives us of some valuable information. We do not hear Hamlet debate as to whether or not the ghost is a good or a damned spirit nor do we hear him address it as his father, in "I'll call thee Hamlet, King, father, royal Dane" (I.iv.44-5). Although he may believe what it tells him, Davenant's Hamlet does not acknowledge the ghost as his father until III.iv.107 when he asks it "Do you not come your tardy son to chide . . .?". This Hamlet does not seem so superstitious or so desperate to believe.

In Act II, Hamlet's recollection of a play he had seen is cut, perhaps as extraneous material. He merely mentions the speech he heard a player

³⁶ *Some Readings on the Character of Hamlet*, p. 19.

recite. Hamlet's demonstration before Polonius that he can act is cut, and a clue to Polonius that Hamlet's madness may be fabricated is lost. Polonius praises Hamlet -- "My lord well spoken, with good accent and good discretion" (II.ii.462-3) -- for a few lines he recites. Much of Hamlet's ranting and raving is cut from his "rogue and peasant slave" soliloquy at the end of the Act. What remains is his plan to discover his uncle's guilt. This Hamlet is not desperate, but decisive.

Hamlet's instructions to the players on how to act are completely struck from Act III. We do not see this lighter side of Hamlet, which includes the demonstration of organized thought and direction. Later in the Act we do hear Hamlet say he will wait to kill Claudius when Claudius has less chance of salvation rather than while he's praying, but Davenant cuts Hamlet's lines asking that Claudius's soul be black and damned to go to hell. The line "honeying and making love over the nasty sty" is also cut. It is likely that both lines were thought to be inappropriate; whatever the reason, their deletion prevents us from witnessing a harder side of Hamlet's nature. Some of Hamlet's commands to his mother to resist Claudius's advances are also cut, probably for the same reason.

In Act IV Hamlet's riddle about kings and things is omitted. Davenant completely strikes Hamlet's "How all occasions do inform against me" soliloquy from the text. This is a resolute soliloquy on the nature of man in which Hamlet determines to get on with what he must do. Perhaps redundancy is the reason Davenant cuts this. Many of the lines he deletes in the play are repetitious, and Hamlet has said several times before that he must revenge his father.

However, all of Hamlet's soliloquies are important because they contribute to the dramatic rhythm of the play by giving pauses for reflection at crucial points, and they increase tension by creating a delaying effect. They also tell us things about Hamlet and the other characters that cannot be learned elsewhere in the text. They tell us about the past and prepare us for things to come. When Davenant or any other adaptor cuts even part of a soliloquy, a dimension of the play is missing.

Overall, Davenant's omissions serve to make this Hamlet rather bland. Hamlet does not rant and rave so much nor does he bemoan his circumstances as much as Shakespeare's Hamlet does. This Hamlet is less introspective, less philosophical about man, more self-assured and even-tempered, and he is quite single-minded as compared with Shakespeare's Hamlet. In fact, he is somewhat a two-dimensional figure. Davenant's changes may make Hamlet more active and decisive, but they also rob him of his depth of character. He does not express his inner conflicts as much as previous Hamlets, so the audience cannot agonize with him and sympathize with his delay in revenging his father. Instead, they are more likely to wonder why he does not get on with it.

Davenant's simplification and stereotyping of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* can also be seen in his treatment of the other characters. Davenant's ghost, for instance, must rely on his costume and theatrical effect to be frightening because much of Marcellus's description of him is omitted, as is much of Hamlet's description (as previously mentioned). The ghost's role is slightly reduced by the omission of some of his criticism of Claudius's treachery. Because of the increasing anxiety over Charles II's successor, fratricide would have been a tricky subject in 1676, especially when it involved regal brothers.

As for Gertrude, only a few of her lines are omitted. One of them is her supposition that Hamlet is unhappy because of his father's death and her hasty marriage. This line may have been cut because we already know the cause of Hamlet's grief. It may be redundant, but it also indicates how well Gertrude knows her son. This omission of Gertrude's insight somewhat distances her from her son.

This distancing effect among family members is even more obvious with Polonius, Laertes, and Ophelia. Polonius's lines are severely reduced. Much of his advice to Laertes and his directions to Ophelia for helping him and Claudius spy on Hamlet are omitted. The omissions serve to make Polonius less a meddling fool, but also make him less of a father. Hamlet's murder of what is in this version of *Hamlet*, a minor character, seems trivial and unnecessary. In Shakespeare, Polonius is an obvious cohort of Claudius. He may have helped Claudius to the throne, and he certainly spies for Claudius in the play. In Shakespeare, Hamlet's murder of Polonius aids his plan for revenging his father's death simply by getting Polonius out of the way, but as Polonius interferes less in the 1676 version, Hamlet's murder of him seems pointless.

Laertes's role is also diminished. Because we do not witness the concern he shows for Ophelia's welfare or the respect he gives his father, Laertes is much more the rash young man when he seeks revenge for Polonius's death. The main omission from Ophelia's repertoire is the bawdy repartee between her and Hamlet. Decorum probably made these cuts necessary, but by having them converse less, the deletions reduce the importance of Hamlet and Ophelia's relationship. Regardless of whether Hamlet is teasing Ophelia or trying to offend her, his actions in Shakespeare's text tell us he cares for her. When he thinks she may have

betrayed him, he is rude to her to show her his pain. We do not see any of this in the 1676 *Hamlet* .

As there is no obvious reason for the reduction of familial or private relationships, it may be that Davenant chose to make the following omissions in order to streamline the plot. The family relationships may have been reduced because they are sub-plots which distract from the main story and from Hamlet. Polonius and Laertes advise Ophelia because they are worried about her relationship with Hamlet. Perhaps warning one's daughter or sister about sex was considered inappropriate or unnecessary in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In Shakespeare, Polonius and Laertes are not subtle about their meaning. Perhaps Restoration audiences would have accepted a mother or a woman as likelier counsels for a young woman. Or maybe such advice was unnecessary because pre-marital sex by a young woman of the court was unthinkable behaviour.

Another sub-plot, the scheme to send Hamlet to England, is also reduced, and therefore so are the roles of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are depicted more as Claudius's spies than as friends of Hamlet, although this works against the whitening of Claudius's image. Claudius never mentions that they were childhood friends of Hamlet, and Hamlet neither jokes with them nor converses with them casually. Some of the deletions are bawdy jokes between Hamlet and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and the riddling section about Denmark being a prison is not even in the 1676 version³⁷ because of the Quarto on which it was based, but the most probable reason for the deletions would be compliance with character type. The neo-classic preference for straight-forward characters probably influenced Davenant here; Rosencrantz and

³⁷ The 1676Q gives the entire text with " marks to indicate omissions.

Guildenstern could be spies or friends of Hamlet, but they could not be portrayed as ambiguously as they were in Shakespeare.

Davenant's treatment of another set of tertiary characters, the players, seems to emanate from a desire to streamline the plot and to avoid implied political connotations. Many of the player's lines are cut, including those in which the Player Queen admits that her betrayal of her first husband was tantamount to murder "A second time I kill my husband dead, when second husband kisses me in bed" (III.ii. 179-80). Such lines cast condemnation upon Claudius and Gertrude and indicate that royalty is not above murder, even regicide. Implications like these would be unsuitable after the regicide that led to the Civil War in England. Censors were protective of the monarchy's reputation, and Davenant must have known these lines would have to be cut to ensure that Claudius and Gertrude conformed to the character type of king and queen.

As mentioned earlier, Hamlet's instructions to the players on how to act are struck from the play. They may have been cut for brevity's sake, or they may have been cut for political reasons. The play which Hamlet asks the players to perform is used indirectly to affect politics; Hamlet uses it as a test to try his uncle's innocence. If Claudius is guilty, Hamlet can carry out the revenge of his father, and in doing so, rid Denmark of her king. Again, this could be interpreted as an inappropriate political reference. Art affecting politics was just what censors did not want, which is why plays were cut and banned. Anything implying or symbolic of civil war was to be avoided.

In this 1676 adaptation of *Hamlet*, it is clear that Davenant wished to avoid the impression that art could affect politics. By cutting lines which

were suggestive of political subversion, he was his own "political censor". Of course the play is also cut for other reasons. Bawdy lines, animal imagery and references to a physical relationship between Claudius and Gertrude are omitted for decorum. Speeches or lines which consist of generalization, description or reflection are often reduced, perhaps for the sake of brevity, but also for artistic reasons. Scenery and costumes may make description unnecessary, and action may take the place of reflection.

The overall effect of the 1676 deletions is a more straightforward *Hamlet*. Some characters are less extreme in their personality because they are made to conform to stereotype. Other characters lose many of their lines, and thus their personality so that they seem rather two-dimensional. Many primary characters are reduced to secondary importance, and most secondary roles become tertiary.

With potential political symbolism reduced -- for example, less stress on the power of the players and the relevance of the Pyrrhus play to *Hamlet*, and the sub-plots of foreign and domestic politics and personal relationships practically eliminated, the play focuses on Elsinore, on Hamlet and Claudius and on the conflict they have with each other and with themselves. Viewers in 1676 were likely to be captivated by this comparatively fast (or faster) paced *Hamlet* and by the human interest aspect of *Hamlet* rather than by the reflective, symbolic implications of the play. The reductions have robbed *Hamlet* of its universality, made many of the characters superficial, and made the world of the play seem unrealistic.

There is a 1703 adaptation of *Hamlet* which is a reprint of Davenant's text. The cast lists and omissions are the same. However, the notes of omissions have been newly set up. In "Improving Shakespeare", Spencer

notes that there are two issues of the 1703 Quarto; the catchword is the last word in the text on page 1. One version has "Bornardo", the other -- "Barnardo". I examined the latter.

A 1718 adaptation of *Hamlet* printed for an M. Wellington retains most of the 1676 omissions with a few exceptions. It has new deletions. The stated reason for omissions is the same as Davenant's; the play was thought to be too long to be acted upon the stage. These new omissions affect the play in a different way from those of Davenant, and, I suspect, they were made for different reasons from his.

In this adaptation the entire Norway sub-plot is deleted. Fortinbras never appears in this play, although he is mentioned. As in Davenant, the plan to send Hamlet to England remains, but some of Claudius's references to it are cut. There are a few lines indicating that the Danish populace want Laertes for their king, but overall the element of foreign politics fades to a whisper here also, and the play focuses on its title character even more than the 1676 version does.

Hamlet's role is somewhat increased in this version. Some of the 1676 deletions are put back in. The "Angels and ministers of Grace" address to the ghost is kept in its entirety, thus we do experience Hamlet's terror and the horror of the ghost, and are aware early in the play that Hamlet believes the ghost to be that of his father. The conversation between Hamlet and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern about Denmark being a prison is deleted. This was not in the 1676 version at all because that version was based on a different Quarto, but with this deletion, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern lose an opportunity to interrogate Hamlet, thus diminishing their role as Claudius's spies as well as depriving us of yet another riddle of Hamlet's.

Hamlet's conversation with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern about child actors is deleted, perhaps because it dates the play to the Renaissance. Even more of Hamlet's memory of the Pyrrhus play is omitted, but there is much more of his "rogue and peasant slave" soliloquy than there was in the 1676 *Hamlet*. Owing to its inclusion, some universality is restored to the play, and some decisiveness is restored to Hamlet. Hamlet's instructions to the players on how to act are retained (they were not kept in the 1676 version), exposing Hamlet's nature. Hamlet's line telling Claudius to drink the poison is deleted, as is Laertes's observance, "He's justly serv'd, it is a Poison temper'd by himself" (V.ii.332-333). This gives the impression that Claudius dies from the rapier wound and loses the irony that both of Claudius's treacherous plans against Hamlet should backfire. Claudius's death by a rapier is more noble than being caught in his own web of deceit. By including the "Angels and ministers of Grace" speech, most of the "rogue and peasant slave" soliloquy, and the directions to the player, the 1718 *Hamlet* restores superstition, an open mind, decisiveness, and creativity to Hamlet. This Hamlet is more versatile than the 1676 one. He is more credible as a "real" person because he has a wide range of emotions. We wonder what he will say and do next.

Claudius stands out in the 1676 *Hamlet*, but his role decreases in this version although his characterization as a good king is maintained. More of his analysis of Hamlet's behaviour is cut making him appear less perceptive. His symbolic remark about prayer -- "And what's in Prayer, but this twofold Force, To be forestalled e'er we come to fall, Or pardon'd being down?" (III.iii. 48-50) is cut. This foreshadows Hamlet's near-attempt to murder Claudius, and is removed here because it reminds us of Claudius's unregal murder of his brother when he did not give him a chance to repent. One of Claudius's references to England that is cut is a line telling Hamlet that he is

being sent there for protection. It is still plain that Claudius is sending Hamlet away to die, so perhaps this line is cut to make Claudius appear less of a schemer. Claudius's sympathetic lines about Ophelia are cut as are his queries about his Swissers. The latter are vaguely incriminating since tyrants often have bodyguards. The adaptor would not have wanted this insinuation in the play because it detracts from the image he is trying to create of an ideal king.

Paradoxically, this version includes something not in the 1676 version which taints Claudius's whitened reputation. More of the ghost's criticism of Claudius and Gertrude is cut in this version of *Hamlet* than in the 1676 one, yet the ghost admits that he had no opportunity to confess his sins before dying. That admission was left out of the 1676 version probably because it adds to the wickedness of Claudius's deed.

Noticeable omissions from Gertrude's role are her description of Ophelia's death which, alongside the deletion of Claudius's lament over Ophelia's madness, reduce the importance of Ophelia's role and the size of Gertrude's. Gertrude's "The Drink, the Drink -- I am poisoned" (V.ii.315) is also omitted.

All of the bawdy lines between Hamlet and Ophelia are cut. (Some suggestive ones were retained in the earlier editions.) Also cut are entire songs of Ophelia's which have suggestive lyrics.

Although Hamlet's advice to the players is retained, and the role of art is thereby reinstated, the play within the play is made shorter by further reduction of the Player King's lines. Because the play within the play is so brief, it comes across more as a device to determine Claudius's guilt than as

court entertainment. In Shakespeare, art is used to hide what is essentially a public trial of Claudius. Had the adaptor left it as Shakespeare wrote it, the "Mousetrap", although still a testing device, would not be so obvious a one. This is another incongruity by the adaptor. He seems to be adhering to former adaptors' practice of idealizing Claudius and avoiding any reference which might be seen as a comment on government. However, restorations such as the speech to the players seem to indicate tht he is trying to remain true to Shakespeare's plot. Perhaps these inconsistencies are a result of the combination of the two. He avoids offending the monarchy by putting Claudius in a better light, but does not disguise the fact that Claudius is a murderer.

At the end of the play it is Horatio who pays tribute to Hamlet, as Fortinbras is not in the play. Horatio takes Fortinbras's lines, and in doing so takes the voice of authority and, perhaps, a role of power. The directions for a gun salute to Hamlet are omitted, however, as they were in the 1676 play.

The aims of the omissions in the 1718 Hamlet seem to be brevity, simplicity of both plot and symbolism, character decorum, and political acceptability. Early eighteenth-century audiences are described as less intelligent than Restoration ones and as going to the theatre solely for entertainment. This type of audience would not be interested in the subtleties of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, nor is it likely that they would catch and understand nuances if they were included in the play. However, decorum would have been an important element of drama for this conservative and prudish middle class audience, which constituted a larger percentage of theatre audiences by the early eighteenth century.

The changes to the 1718 text have the effect of highlighting Hamlet and his conflicts more than the 1676 version did by stripping the play of everything that does not relate to Hamlet. Other characters' roles have been reduced so that Hamlet's is the only substantial one. Dramatic interest shifts even closer to the life of the tragic hero regardless of whether or not the script was altered with this in mind. The end of the eighteenth century and the dawning of the Romantic period would bring this shift into critical, dramatic and social consciousness.

The 1751 adaptation of *Hamlet* for J.&P. Knapton follows the 1718 exactly. Like the 1703 *Hamlet*, it is a virtual reprint of a previous version.

The most remarkable adaptation of *Hamlet* in the eighteenth century was by the actor David Garrick. Garrick's adaptation was largely influenced by criticism of the play by Voltaire, who called *Hamlet* a "gross and barbarous piece". Voltaire made *Hamlet* "the subject of an ironic analysis, meant to establish once and for all Shakespeare's obvious inferiority. His re'sume', with 'translations' from the text, was a deliberate travesty. Only the plot and external aspects of the play were described; emphasis was placed on the vulgar or obscene details".³⁸ Garrick leaves the first four acts of the play virtually untouched, retaining some theatre-cuts and restoring others. He omits the following from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: the account of the sea-voyage, the pirates, the deaths of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern (IV.v.), Horatio receiving Hamlet's letter (IV.vi.), Claudius's and Laertes's knowledge of the letter and their plot to murder Hamlet (IV.vii.), the account of Ophelia's death (IV.vii.), the gravediggers and the funeral scene (V.i.), Osric and the wager (V.ii.), the duel, the poisoned rapier, the poisoned

³⁸ Bailey, Helen Phelps. *Hamlet in France* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1964), pp.12-13.

drink, the death of Guildenstern from Claudius's poison, the death of Laertes, and the return of Fortinbras (V.iii).

George Steevens had much praise for Garrick's adaptation, but then he had advised him on the adaptation. Garrick seems to have had his eye on critics such as Steevens and Voltaire when adapting *Hamlet*, for this is surely *Hamlet* altered as implied criticism of Shakespeare. Garrick was also concerned with tightening up the plot, with having Hamlet act decisively and with making a moral statement in the reconciliation between Hamlet and Laertes in the final scene. Despite his innovations as an adaptor of *Hamlet*, it was for his performances of the play's lead role that Garrick was most favourably remembered.

So realistic was Garrick's performance of Hamlet in the Ghost scene that Henry Fielding allowed the sceptical Partridge to be taken in by it in *Tom Jones*.

Partridge gave that credit to Mr. Garrick, which he had denied to Jones, and fell into so violent a trembling that his knees knocked against each other. Jones asked him what was the matter, and whether he was afraid of the warrior upon the stage? 'O la! sir,' said he, 'I perceive now it is what you told me. I am not afraid of anything; for I know it is but a play. And if it was really a ghost, it could do no one harm at such a distance, and in so much company; and yet if I was frightened, I am not the only person.' -- 'Why, who,' cries Jones, 'dost thou take to be such a coward here besides thyself?' -- 'Nay, you may call me coward if you will; but if that little man there upon the stage is not frightened, I never saw any man frightened in my life.' ... And during the whole speech of the ghost, he sat with his eyes fixed partly on the ghost and partly on Hamlet, and with his mouth open; the same passions which succeeded each other in Hamlet, succeeding likewise in him.³⁹

³⁹ Henry Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones*, Vol. II (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1972), p.308.

Although Garrick's alteration enjoyed a brief popularity, in April 1780 John Bannister restored the traditional eighteenth-century text at Drury Lane, and when John Philip Kemble, one of the most famous nineteenth-century Hamlets, joined the company in 1783, he followed suit. In contrast to Garrick, who was known for his natural acting style, Kemble played Hamlet with a more classical style which was somewhat akin to that of James Quin. Hazlitt disapproved of Kemble's portrayal of Hamlet. "Mr. Kemble plays it like a man in armour . . . Mr. Kemble's (Hamlet) is too deliberate and formal."⁴⁰ Kemble used a text based on the 1718 *Hamlet* by John Hughs. However, he replaced some of the traditional playhouse emendations with the genuine Shakespeare. Hamlet was allowed to speak of the "native hue" rather than of the "healthful face" of resolution. Horatio heard "whirling" not "windy" words. Kemble was the first to speak the lines "that was to this Hyperion to a satyr" since Davenant altered the text for the stage. However, words such as "incestuous sheets" were still deemed indecorous.⁴¹ Despite using what was (despite other restorations and minor cuts) essentially an eighteenth-century text, one which depicted Hamlet as a man of action, Kemble portrayed the prince as being weighed down with melancholy. In this respect he was anticipating a Hamlet that would be moulded for the nineteenth century largely by the Romantics.

⁴⁰ Hazlitt, William. *Lectures on the Literature of the Age of Elizabeth, and Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*. (London: Bell & Daldy, 1870), p.81.

⁴¹ Mills, pp.55-7.

CHAPTER II THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Perhaps the single most influential critical act of the Romantics was to reinvent Hamlet in their image. "It is *we* who are Hamlet", remarked Hazlitt. "I have a smack of Hamlet myself, if I may say so", confessed Coleridge. A conversation between Byron and Shelley (the recording of which is attributed to Mary Shelley) attests to how strongly the Romantics identified with Hamlet.

. . . Shelley placed himself beside Lord Byron, who led the way through the trees: 'You seem very ineffable this evening,' said he.

'I have been reading,' he replied, '*Hamlet*.'

'No wonder then you are melancholy.'

'No,' said Lord Byron, ' 'tis not so much melancholy, but I feel perplexed, confused, and inextricably self-involved; a nightmare sensation of impotence and vain endeavour weighs upon me, whether my own or Shakspeare's. Nor do I at all recognize in my feelings that calmness and grandeur which you said the other day one always felt in the presence of great genius.'

Shelley I understand you! 'Tis a feeling one but too often feels; when an object stands before one, unintelligible, 'wrapped in its own formless horror like a ghost.'

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Byron What *is* Hamlet? What means he? Are we, too, like him, the creatures of some incomprehensible sport, and the real universe just such another story, where all the deepest feelings, and dearest sympathies are insulted, and the understanding mocked? And yet we live on, as we read on, for

Who would lose
Though full of pain, this intellectual being,
These thoughts that wander through eternity?

And who can read this wonderful play without the profoundest emotion? And yet what is it but a colossal enigma? We love Hamlet even as we love ourselves. ¹

Hazlitt explains why the Romantics were so taken with the character in some of his remarks on *Hamlet*. "It is the one of Shakespear's plays that we think of the oftenest because it abounds most in striking reflections on human life, and because the distresses of Hamlet are transferred, by the turn of his mind, to the general account of humanity. Whatever happens to him we apply to ourselves, because he applies it to himself as a means of general reasoning." ² This self-involvement and pre-occupation manifested itself in the work of the Romantics, further developing what has become known as "character criticism" and influencing the treatment of *Hamlet* on the stage.

As early as 1777, the year in which Maurice Morgann's famous *Essay on the Dramatic Character of John Falstaff* was written, critics were admiring and devoting themselves to the study of Shakespeare's characters. Hazlitt wrote, "The character of Hamlet stands quite by itself. It is not a character marked by strength of will or even of passion, but by refinement of thought and sentiment."³ This statement contains two important Romantic views on Hamlet. The character did indeed stand alone. The Romantics were more interested in Hamlet than in the play as a whole, and this placement of Hamlet above the rest of the characters and above the play was transferred to the stage in that straight versions of the play were cut further to emphasize the position of the prince and further to highlight the role for the actor. One went to the theatre, not to see *Hamlet*, but to see Hamlet as he was acted by the famous tragedian of the day. The Romantic perception

¹ Bate, Jonathan, ed. *The Romantics on Shakespeare* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1992), pp.335-7. Bate quotes from "Byron and Shelley on the Character of Hamlet", unsigned dialogue, possibly by Mary Shelley, in *New Monthly Magazine*, NS 29 (1830), no.2, pp.327-36.

² Hazlitt, William, p.75.

of Hamlet as the reflective prince also influenced the nineteenth-century stage in that there were very few decisive, active Hamlets. As early as 1763, when the actor Thomas Sheridan won Boswell's approval for his account of Hamlet which described the prince's character as " 'irresolute', wanting 'strength of mind', striving towards 'manly boldness' but 'in vain' ", the depiction and perception of a heroic Hamlet was on the wane.³ So strongly did the Romantics believe Hamlet to be a man of thought and emotion, that they felt the play was unsuited to the stage. "We do not like to see our author's plays acted, and least of all, 'Hamlet'. There is no play that suffers so much in being transferred to the stage. Hamlet himself seems hardly capable of being acted", wrote Hazlitt.⁴ Lamb elaborated on the Romantic view that *Hamlet* was inappropriate for the stage.

. . . nine parts in ten of what Hamlet does, are transactions between himself and his moral sense, they are the effusions of his solitary musings These profound sorrows, these light-and-noise abhorring ruminations, which the tongue scarce dares utter to deaf walls and chambers, how can they be represented by a gesticulating actor, who comes and mouths them out before an audience, making four hundred people his confidants at once? . . . I am not arguing that Hamlet should not be acted, but how much Hamlet is made another thing by being acted.⁶

Like all critical readings, the Romantics' reading of *Hamlet* was selective; highlighting features which appealed to their understanding of the play and ignoring those which did not. For instance, Coleridge does not tell us much of "Hamlet's camaraderie with the common players and of his sympathy with the popular voice (Hamlet is a threat to Claudius not least because of

³ Jenkins, Harold. "'Hamlet' Then Till Now", *Shakespeare Survey* 18 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), p.37.

⁴ Hazlitt, p.80-1.

⁶ Bate, pp.115-116 quoting Charles Lamb, "On the Tragedies of Shakespeare, considered with reference to their fitness for stage representation", *Works* (London, 1818), no page number given.

the 'great love the general gender bear him' -- IV,vii,18)." ⁶ The Romantics replaced the emphasis and the opinions of previous critics with emphasis and opinions of their own. They pointed out that Voltaire and Dr. Johnson were mistaken in their criticism because they misread *Hamlet*. For example, Johnson found it morally reprehensible that Hamlet should not want to kill Claudius while he is praying because that might send him to heaven rather than to hell. Coleridge pointed out that Johnson had misread the scene. Hamlet's reason was an excuse for delay. Johnson had not calculated that essential element of Hamlet's character in with his criticism of the scene. The critical and popular attitude to Shakespeare and to *Hamlet* was shifting. The Romantic perception of Hamlet which replaced that of the eighteenth-century critics found its way to the stage where, despite Romantic opinion that the "essence" of Hamlet did not transfer well from the page to the boards, it caught the imagination of the public and became so deeply ingrained in actors' portrayals of Hamlet and in the critical and popular perception of Hamlet and *Hamlet* that critics, actors and directors would spend the first half of the twentieth century trying to right what they believed to be the *Romantic* misreading of *Hamlet*.

The actor who best epitomized the Romantic ideal of Hamlet, however, emerged as late as 1874, when Henry Irving first played the Dane before a London audience on 31 October. His production of *Hamlet* achieved an unprecedented record of two-hundred consecutive performances. Four years later, Irving chose the play to inaugurate his managership of the Lyceum. Irving, who had a very natural style of acting, fulfilled Hazlitt's requirements that Hamlet should be both "a scholar and a gentleman". "Irving was widely perceived as having given the stage its most cerebral Hamlet. 'It is not an actor's view of Hamlet but the scholar's,' wrote

⁶ Bate, p.23.

the critic for *Era*, 'and still the actor has splendidly triumphed with the scholar's view. It is the picturesque acting forth of the *mind* of Hamlet, not the mere exhibition of his actions. We see Hamlet think. We do not merely hear him speak, we positively and actually watch his mind.' (3 November 1874)."⁷ Hazlitt, Goethe, and Coleridge have all been named by critics as the source of Irving's intellectual characterization. There are numerous works on the Hamlets of Henry Irving and of other famous nineteenth-century actors. A discussion of the texts used by those actors would be interesting, but would not be as enlightening on the tradition of *Hamlet* alteration and adaptation as would a discussion of other nineteenth-century *Hamlet* texts. Kemble, Kean, Macready, and Irving may have been some of the most famous nineteenth-century Hamlets, but they had a rival for popular, if not critical, acclaim. Their challenger was a rhyming Hamlet, a singing, saucy, slanging Hamlet, a Hamlet who punned and danced and swore. Sometimes rude, sometimes silly, but an infinitely more interesting barometer of the times was the Hamlet of nineteenth-century burlesque.

Nineteenth-Century Burlesques of "Hamlet"

"I believe the glory of sporting with sacred things is peculiar to the English Nation." (John Wesley, 26 June 1738)

To be or not to be; that is the bare bodkin
 That makes calamity of so long life . . .
 But soft you, the fair Ophelia:
 Ope not thy ponderous and marble jaws,
 But get thee to a nunnery -- go!

(*Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain)

All of the plays examined in this chapter are classified as burlesques. *Burlesque*, as defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), means

⁷ Mills, p.15. Mills gives no footnote.

"laughter by caricature of the manner or spirit of serious works". For example, Buckingham's *Rehearsal* (1671), Fielding's *Tom Thumb* (1731), and Sheridan's *The Critic* (1779) are three well-known burlesques. Buckingham uses his burlesque as an attack on Dryden, Fielding's burlesque is a satire on dramatists and critics, and Sheridan's is an attack on aspiring theatre patrons, on dramatists, and on the bombastic style of then-contemporary drama. Some of the burlesques examined in this chapter contain the word "travesty" or "travestie" in their titles. The *OED* defines *travesty*, a term often confused with burlesque, as "a literary composition which aims at exciting laughter by burlesque or ludicrous treatment of a serious work". *Parody*, another related term, means "a composition in which the characteristic turns of thought and phrase in an author or class of authors are imitated . . . to make them appear ridiculous". Further to clarify or complicate matters, *to burlesque* means "to turn into ridicule by grotesque parody or imitation; to caricature [or] travesty". Henry Jacobs and Claudia Johnson, authors of *An Annotated Bibliography of Shakespearean Burlesques, Parodies, and Travesties*, have attempted to elucidate these definitions. They explain that it is "virtually impossible to distinguish between travesty and burlesque; neither dictionaries nor popular usage provide any clear distinction between the two." However, they go on to say that it is possible to differentiate between travesty and burlesque as opposed to parody. "Travesty and burlesque define a type of literature which is *loosely* modeled after the object of ridicule. Parody, on the other hand, is very *closely* modeled after the original, often following line for line or even word for word."⁸ There is also a difference between the burlesque and the

⁸ Jacobs, Henry E. and Claudia D. Johnson. *An Annotated Bibliography of Shakespearean Burlesques, Parodies, and Travesties* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1976), p.11.

burletta. George Rowell writes that the

essential characteristic of the burletta was its form, whilst that of the burlesque was its subject and the spirit in which that subject was treated. But the confusion (in the nineteenth century) was inevitable, for the interpolation of music and song which established the burletta form lent itself very easily to the purposes of burlesque. Moreover, at the minor theatres, obliged by law to confine themselves to the burletta, the audiences welcomed the exuberance and exaggeration of burlesque no less heartily than the thrills of spectacle and melodrama. A high proportion of burlettas, therefore, were in fact burlesques⁹

The following "playbill", which is meant to be a joke, describes a performance which would classify as a burlesque despite its inclusion of music. Although the description of the "performance" sounds ridiculous, it could easily be a description of a real burlesque.

AN IRISH PLAYBILL.

Kilkenny Theatre Royal.

By His Majesty's Company of Comedians.

The last night, because the Company go to-morrow to Waterford.

On Saturday, May 14, 1793, will be performed, by command of several respectable people in this learned metropolish for the benefit of Mr. Kearns, the tragedy of

HAMLET.

Originally written and composed by the celebrated Dan Hayes, of Limerick, and insarted in Shakespeare's works.

Hamlet, by Mr. Kearns (being his first appearance in this character), who, between the acts, will perform several solos on the patent bagpipes, which play two tunes at the same time.

⁹ Rowell, George. *The Victorian Theatre*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), p.66.

Ophelia, by Mrs. Prior, who will introduce several favourite airs in character, particularly "The Lass of Richmond Hill" and "We'll all be unhappy together," from the Reverend Mr. Didbin's oddities.

Polonius, the comical politician, by a young gentleman, being his first appearance in public.

The Ghost, the Gravedigger, and Laertes by Mr. Sampson, the great London comedian.

The parts of the King and Queen, by directions of the Rev. Father O'Callaghan, will be omitted, as too immoral for any stage.

The characters to be dressed in Roman shapes.

To which will be added an Interlude, in which will be introduced several sleight-of-hand tricks by the celebrated surveyor, Hunt.

The whole to conclude with the Farce, by Mr. Kearns, of

MAHOMET.

Tickets to be had of Mr. Kearns, at the sign of the Goat's Beard, in Castle-street. ¹⁰

The plays to be discussed in this chapter are all burlesques, although the individual plays may or may not use parody within their texts. All of these plays employ burlesque devices such as puns, physical gags, slang and modernization of language, and topical references. All but one of these burlesques employ rhyming couplets (W.S. Gilbert's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* does not) and all but one (again Gilbert's burlesque) contain songs and music, and therefore might be called burlettas. The songs and music are used for humour, but also for legal purposes which will be discussed later.

¹⁰ From *Parodies*. Part 20, Vol 2. Collected & Annotated by Walter Hamilton (London: Reeves & Turner, 1885), p.169.

The nineteenth-century *Hamlet* burlesques were not unique as a genre or for their choice of material to burlesque. There is a long tradition of burlesquing and parodying Shakespeare's works. The first printed reference to Shakespeare appears in *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit* (1592) which parodies a line from one of Shakespeare's plays with satiric rather than comic intent. Beaumont, in *The Woman-Hater* (1606), burlesques a couple of lines from *Hamlet* not by altering them, but by quoting them in a ludicrous situation. Stanley Wells explains the situation in Beaumont.

A rare fish has been caught; an umbrana -- so rare, indeed, that the only occurrence of its name in the *OED* is in a quotation from this play. 'As a rare novelty', the head has been 'appointed by special commandment for the Duke's own table, this dinner.' Lazarillo, known as 'the Hungry Courtier', goes to great lengths to manoeuvre an invitation to taste 'this sacred dish'. But disaster strikes; and Count Valore breaks the news to him:

Valore . . . hear me with patience.
Lazarillo Let me not fall from myself!
 Speak! I am bound to hear!
Valore So art thou to revenge, when thou shalt hear.
 The fish head is gone, and we know not
 whither.
 (*Hamlet* II. i.)

The transference of lines in which the Ghost of Hamlet's father prepares Hamlet for the information that he was murdered to the trivial situation of the theft of a fish-head constitutes a literal parody, but the joke is against Lazarillo rather than against Shakespeare.¹¹

Individual lines from Shakespeare were parodied in his own time, but the first full-scale travesty of a Shakespearean work came more than a half-century after his death. The Epilogue of Thomas Duffett's *The Empress of Morocco* (1674) burlesques the elaborate productions of the witch scenes in

¹¹ Wells, Stanley, ed. *Nineteenth-Century Shakespeare Burlesques*, Vol. I (London: Diploma Press, Ltd, 1977), p. x.

William Davenant's adaptation of *Macbeth* (performed in 1673). Duffett also wrote *The Mock-Tempest, or the Enchanted Castle* (1674); it burlesques a production of *The Tempest* at a rival theatre. Once again, a theatrical production or technique, not Shakespeare, was the object of the satire.

As for burlesques of *Hamlet*, Jacobs and Johnson have counted fifty-one plays, seventeen scenes, and one-hundred-and-six passages in existence which burlesque or parody *Hamlet*. They have done the same for Shakespeare's other plays, and their research shows *Hamlet* to be the most popular Shakespearean play for this kind of comic treatment. One of the earliest burlesques of *Hamlet* is dated 1772. In that year Arthur Murphy wrote *Life of Hamlet, with Alterations; A Tragedy in Three Acts*, a theatrical satire which parodies the ghost scenes in *Hamlet*. In Murphy's satire, the ghost of Shakespeare appears to David Garrick and complains about the alterations made to his plays, especially to *Hamlet*, which Garrick had recently performed in a particularly mutilated text. But the complaints are to no avail. After Shakespeare vanishes, Garrick is joined by his brother George and by his bookseller Mr. Becket, and tells them,

The Ghost is pleased with this my alteration,
And now he bids me alter all his Plays.
His plays are out of joint, -- O cursed spite!
That ever I was born to set them right! 12

Here Murphy is criticizing Garrick's alteration of *Hamlet* and anticipating a favourite target of nineteenth-century burlesque, *i.e.* theatre. Classical mythology, tragedy, melodrama, contemporary productions of any play, actors and acting styles, all provided fodder for the burlesque. However,

12 Vickers, Brian, ed. *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage, Vol.V 1765-1774* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), p.470.

burlesques were also capable of lampooning more serious subjects whereas serious drama was, by law, restricted from doing so.

The frivolous nature of nineteenth-century burlesques allowed them to escape censorship and include blatant references to social, literary, and political figures and situations. The Licensing Act of 1737, brought in by Walpole, had primarily been aimed at silencing Henry Fielding's satiric criticism of his regime. The Theatre Act of 1843 abolished the monopoly of the "patent" theatres (Covent Garden and Drury Lane) which had been granted by Charles II in 1660, and strengthened the Lord Chamberlain's powers of dramatic censorship

by requiring submission to his office of every new play or addition to an old play, and, when an unlicensed or banned piece was staged, by empowering him to fine the offending theatre, or worse, deprive it of its licence. The statute of 1737 had conferred upon the Lord Chamberlain an unfettered power of veto, with no indication of the grounds upon which he was to act: the Act of 1843 vaguely restricted his powers of prohibition to cases in which 'he shall be of opinion that it is fitting for the preservation of good manners, decorum or of the public peace to do so.' ¹³

The person who had to read all of these plays was not the Lord Chamberlain, but the Examiner of Plays. He acted as a judge of public taste as well as a defender of public morals. The inclusion of religious, political and moral subjects in plays was a risky business.

For most of the nineteenth century, in the interest of maintaining religious decorum, the Examiner insisted on a complete ban on biblical incident and quotation of passages or phrases from scripture, and on the elimination of most religious references, even to the extent of excising, or substantially reducing, such

¹³ Woodfield, James. *English Theatre in Transition 1881-1914* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), p.109.

common phrases as 'thank Heaven'. . . . Political and personal satire was the object of great suspicion, and was effectively prevented by the ban on the portrayal of or allusion to notable personages -- especially politicians and members of the Royal Family -- and on references to current events. ¹⁴

The inclusion of music seems to free plays from close scrutiny. Opera was given much more latitude than drama, and music halls were not subject to censorship, so productions occurring in such halls could get away with all sorts of religious, political and moral misdemeanours. This freedom from censorship gave burlesque writers the opportunity to use *Hamlet* to comment on a variety of topics within a comic structure, and in doing so they anticipated the production and treatment of *Hamlet* in the twentieth century by directors and adaptors. These factors make nineteenth-century burlesques of *Hamlet* infinitely more interesting than their serious counterparts.

HAMLET TRAVESTIE

by
John Poole

The first full-length Shakespeare burlesque was John Poole's *Hamlet Travestie*, published in 1810 and reprinted seven times in Britain and twice in America. Poole's text begins with a preface which includes a lengthy assurance that his intention is not to criticize Shakespeare. His aim has been "to afford an hour's amusement", and Poole expresses his desire that the parody be performed as well as read. This desire was fulfilled on 17 June

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.110.

1813 when it was performed in two acts at Drury Lane with Mathews as Hamlet, Mrs. Liston as Gertrude, and Mr. Liston as Ophelia. ¹⁵

A main feature for the reader of Poole's travesty is the annotations he provides at the end of the text in "an imitation of the general style, manner, and character of various commentators" (p. 6). He declares the purpose of his annotations to be "an attempt to produce the ludicrous by the application of the pomp and affectation of critical sagacity and of controversial asperity, to subjects light, trifling and insignificant" (p.6). He makes no apology to the editors and critics he parodies, calling them polluters of Shakespeare's text, but does make an exception of Dr. Johnson who "*even as a Shakespeare commentator, is entitled to our respect; and of whom it may truly be said, that he never wrote without the intention, and scarcely ever without the effect, of rendering mankind wiser or more virtuous*" (p.6).

While pompous or misleading annotations are the butts of these "notes", Poole's two-fold reasons for parodying *Hamlet* are quite different. Firstly, he believes that it is the best tragedy in the English language for receiving a burlesque because of the "force of its sentiments, the beauty of its imagery, and above all, the solemnity of its conduct" (p.6). Because of *Hamlet's* qualities, Poole can create an effective mock-heroic, for the parody's sentiments have no force; its imagery is not beautiful nor its conduct, solemn. Secondly, he explains that the play is well-known to the public, having been frequently performed, generally read, and constantly quoted. For the uninitiated he even goes so far as to explain the purpose of a parody: "the object . . . is to convey the precise sentiments and ideas of the author, but in language, and in manner, unsuited to their subject and the character of the speaker" (p.6). However, Poole's definition contradicts itself,

¹⁵ *Dictionary of National Biography*, p.97.

for how can one change the personality of the characters and remain true to "the precise sentiments and ideas" of the author? Poole proves you cannot.

To begin with, we know there will be no contrast of the hesitating Danish prince with the active, determined Norwegian one when we look at the list of characters. Fortinbras does not appear. Reynaldo, Francisco, the Norwegian and English ambassadors, and a Gentleman have also been omitted for the sake of brevity and simplicity of plot. A look at the structure of Poole's text tells us that brevity is a motivating factor in omissions; there are but three acts to the Arden edition's five. In looking through the play, the cuts to most and omissions of many speeches and soliloquies are apparent at a glance. The text is largely made up of one and two-liners with everyone speaking in rhymed couplets. Exceptions to this near-pattern are much-abbreviated speeches and soliloquies -- many of which are sung. Poole's burlesque will depend more on familiarity with the plot than on acute knowledge of Shakespeare's text. An outline of the play will demonstrate its nature.

Poole's plot is a streamlined version of Shakespeare's with complete omission of the Fortinbras sub-plot. Poole skips the battlements scene; his version opens with the court scene in which Laertes requests permission to go to France (Arden I.ii.). Poole's I.ii. (Arden I.iii.) is merely Laertes warning Ophelia. Polonius's role is trimmed-down, and as a result his advice to Laertes is omitted, and he does not appear in this scene. Hamlet's "though I am a native here/ And to the manner born . . ." speech is omitted in I.iii. (Arden I.v.), and in I.iv., the Ghost's soliloquy is cut in half, omitting the part about incest. Hamlet's "cursed spite" lines are reduced and changed to "The world's gone mad -- Curs'd fate that I/ Was born to have a finger in the pie" (p.19). Poole's I.iv. (Arden II.i.) is notable for being the second I.iv. in

this parody (a misprint, no doubt). Most of this scene is taken up by Ophelia singing her description of Hamlet's behaviour. The act ends with scene v, which is an abbreviated version of Arden II.ii. and includes one of the few un-sung soliloquies by Hamlet in Poole's parody. This is not a soliloquy from Shakespeare, but is a collection of information we need to continue with the parody -- namely that Hamlet will pretend to be mad and that he plans to trap the King with a play. Hamlet says that a play about the murder of his father will make a charming "ballet-pantomime" (p.22).

While Poole's Act I scenes and speeches are much shortened compared to Shakespeare's text, they remain very close to Shakespeare in form and in content. For example, Hamlet sings his "sullied flesh" soliloquy, retaining almost all of Shakespeare's points and much of his language. Poole leaves out the bits on "increase of appetite" and "incestuous sheets" for decorous reasons. Poole's omissions inevitably create an accelerated pace for the plot.

The language -- modern (*i.e.* early nineteenth-century) English with slang, *e.g.* "dad" for "father" and expressions such as "by jingo" -- is refreshing and flippant. Poole has a predilection for substituting proverbs for lines of Shakespeare. For example, in Act II scene iii Hamlet kills Polonius because he believes him to be the King, but when he discovers his victim's true identity, he proclaims, "They who throw stones should mind their windows" (p. 35). Poole often keeps all of Shakespeare in a line, merely inserting a word of his own.

Yet before one could whistle, as I'm a true man,
He's forgotten? -- Oh frailty, thy name sure is woman.
(p.11)

Insertions such as these do not add much to the humour of the play and certainly interrupt the rhyme scheme.

The rhyming couplets, of which the text is composed, are amusing initially, but become monotonous and eventually dull one's senses to the meaning behind the rhymes. They create a barrier, making it more difficult for the audience and the reader to follow, much less become involved, in the play. While comedy does not demand the same kind of involvement a tragedy does, one should be caught up in it, not distracted from it.

Poole manages to tighten his hold on our interest and further increase the dramatic pace in Act II with some lively innovations. In II.i. (Arden III.i.), Hamlet sings his "To be or not to be" soliloquy. Ophelia tells us that her "remembrances" from Hamlet are "worsted garters from the Easter fair" (p.25). Hamlet sings his chastisement of Ophelia; the refrain, "Won't you , won't you to a nunnery go?" (p.26), echoes the repetition of "Get thee to a nunnery" in Shakespeare's text. The scene ends with a recitative and a duet sung by Hamlet and Ophelia based on the tune "I've kissed and I've prattled". The duet is not based on any of Shakespeare's lines. Poole's annotation for it says: "This, and all that follows to the end of the scene, is in almost all of the old copies (for what reason I know not) omitted. By restoring it, I remove the langour under which, destitute of a pathetic love-scene, the play has hitherto laboured. -- Johnson." (p.60). In their duet, Hamlet and Ophelia proclaim their love for one another. Ophelia's "O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown" soliloquy is omitted as is the conversation between the King and Polonius. The scene closes with Hamlet and Ophelia dancing. This proves to be one of the funnier and cleverer of Poole's scenes because of the comical songs which occur one after the other creating a sense of non-stop hilarity, and because Poole has heightened his contrast to Shakespeare by changing the plot. Many of Poole's scenes are pared-down versions of Shakespeare with humorous lines substituted for

serious ones. This scene deviates from Shakespeare by adding a love interest, and this bit of originality catches the audience and the reader by surprise, thus heightening their interest in the action and their anticipation for the next scene.

Poole displays his originality again in II.ii. when Hamlet's advice to the players instructs them to do the opposite of what Shakespeare's Hamlet instructs: for instance, "Always garnish the authors, when playing the clown,/ Like M_____ or D_____ with wit of your own" (p.28). M_____ and D_____ stand for actors Mathews and Dowton. Poole criticizes various actors in this section in the same manner, including John Kemble and Henry Siddons.

Other changes in this scene are minor ones. The Player King and Queen are described as a Duke and Duchess in Poole. She is prone to utter vows quite a lot and to swig from the Duke's medicinal bottle. It is Claudius, not Gertrude, who notes that, "The lady vows too much" (p.31). Claudius faints at the end of the play, and Hamlet sings "O dear what can the matter be?" The scene ends with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern delivering the Queen's message to Hamlet and admitting they cannot play the fife. The riddling between the three has, however, been deleted as has Polonius's part in the scene. Hamlet finishes the scene by singing the "witching time of night" speech to the tune of "Hey randy dandy O".

Poole skips the scene in which the King prays for forgiveness and in which Hamlet refrains from killing him. The next scene (II.iii -- Arden III.iv) is the closet scene. Hamlet sings the "Look here upon this picture and on this" speech, and when the Ghost appears in the scene, he sings a trio with Hamlet and the Queen. The Queen says she cannot see the Ghost, so

Hamlet says, "Straight through the stage door now he's going" (p.37) -- a reflexive remark because it calls attention to the mechanics of dramaturgy by commenting on the staging. At the end of the scene, Hamlet merely tells the Queen to kick the King out of bed, omitting the rest of that speech.

Act II strays from Shakespeare, with Ophelia and Hamlet declaring their love for each other. Poole's note says "The rest of this scene is generally omitted" (p.26), in other words, he is calling our attention to the fact that the rest of the scene is of his own invention. Poole's changes have made this act livelier than Act I. The effect of his omissions on the scenes and characters is quite noticeable too. Poole's cuts have created two-dimensional characters and cartoon-like scenes reminiscent of Jarri's *King Ubu*.

By this point in the play we have read or seen enough of it to know that it rarely strays from Shakespeare's plot, therefore we more or less know what is going to happen. Poole's III.i. is a greatly condensed version of Arden IV. i, iii, v, and vii. (Shakespeare's scenes ii, iv, and vi are omitted.) The King, Queen, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern discuss Polonius's whereabouts and decide to send Hamlet to England. Ophelia sings a slightly bawdy song, then Laertes arrives at court. The King tells the Queen to hold Laertes back, saying, "I'll get out o' the way;/ He's twice as big as I am" (p.42). Ophelia reappears dressed with "straws and flowers" (p.42) and splashed with mud. She offers the Queen vegetables, and sings songs of tragic love affairs. The King arranges a boxing match between Laertes and Hamlet because Laertes is a "famous pugilist" (p.44), and he tells Laertes of his plan to put arsenic in a mug of ale for Hamlet to drink. The scene closes with the Queen singing about Ophelia's death, calling her a "sad slut" (p.45).

The Gravedigger opens III.ii. (Arden V.i.) with a song (not the one he sings in Shakespeare). Then Hamlet sings about death. Poole's III.iii. omits most of Arden V.ii. save the news to Hamlet of the boxing match. The final scene is the fight between Hamlet and Laertes. As in Shakespeare, the Queen dies having drunk the poison, and Hamlet and Laertes wound each other. Laertes says " 'tis all dickey with us both" (p.52), and Hamlet kills the King. The Play ends with Hamlet's and Laertes's deaths and Horatio's tribute to Hamlet.

Poole has achieved his mock-heroic by reversing Hamlet's qualities, which he lists as the "force of its sentiments, the beauty of its imagery, and . . . the solemnity of its conduct" (p.6). Because the play is well-known, this inversion can work successfully, *i.e.* amusingly. Omissions, rhymes, comic adaptations and comic songs weaken sentiment, rob Shakespeare's imagery of its beauty and prevent any solemn conduct. For instance, the pathos and sentimentality of Ophelia's mad scene is reduced by her offering vegetables to the Queen. Compare the imagery of Horatio's tribute in Shakespeare -- "Now cracks a noble heart. Good night, sweet prince,/ And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest." (Arden, V.ii.364-5) -- to that in his tribute in Poole: "Well, here's a noble fellow gone to pot!/ This altogether's been a pretty plot!/ To see dead bodies strew'd about like cattle,/ Were better suited to the field of battle./ Charon, in safety, o'er the Styx will ferry 'em:/ And all that we can do now -- is to bury 'em." (p.53). Poole's Hamlet can hardly be said to conduct himself in a solemn way; he is more jocose than morose. A jolly, mischievous Hamlet does not remain true to the "precise sentiments" of Shakespeare. Poole does a better job of being faithful to the "precise . . . ideas" of Shakespeare by keeping his adaptation close to Shakespeare's text in form and content.

A major influence on Poole's omissions, aside from brevity, is decorum. Poole cleans up the text by cutting unsuitable bits such as Hamlet's and the Ghost's references to incest and Hamlet's lines about "honeying and making love/ Over the nasty sty!" (Arden, III.iv.93-4), and by reducing the risqué patter between Hamlet and Ophelia in the play scene to: "Ophelia, may I lie upon your knees?/ O, surely; or wherever else you please" (p.30).

Poole's comic alterations and additions to *Hamlet* create effects used in vaudeville or ballad-opera productions such as songs, cross-talk, local jokes and consciousness of the stage. Songs and music serve three purposes in Poole. They convey information from Shakespeare's speeches and soliloquies, they provide comic relief, and they help maintain a lively dramatic pace. The cross-talk of one- and two-liners between characters also keeps the tempo quick while providing comedy in its very form.

Laertes.

My pretty maid -- this is too much to bear!
By Gemini she's mad as a March hare!

Ophelia.

(sings) Giles Scroggins courted Molly Brown,
Ri tol, &c.
The fairest wench in all the town.
Tiddy, tiddy, &c.

Laertes.

To see her thus - O, 'tis a doleful pity!

Ophelia.

What must be, must -- but hush! I'll end my ditty. (p.42-3)

Topical references add to the inclusion of slang in providing linguistic humour. For example, Wedgewood is mentioned, and Laertes tells the Gravedigger to pile the earth as high as "Greenwich-hill" (p.48). The consciousness of the stage is highlighted when Hamlet refers to his wig and points out to the Queen that the Ghost is going through the stage door.

Poole uses songs and music to as full an extent as later parodists would use them, but he only scratches the surface in employing linguistic gymnastics, topical references and stage-conscious reflexivity. These techniques would be more fully developed throughout the century, along with the employment of puns and artistic and political references which Poole does not use at all.

One feature in Poole which is unique, in that no later parodist includes it, is the annotations. Perhaps because Poole was relying on a reading public as much as, if not more than, potential audiences as a market for his parody, he used his annotations to their full comic potential. They are the funniest part of the parody.

Poole uses these annotations to justify and explain in a comic manner his inclusion of slang, contemporary phrases and his alterations of and substitutions for Shakespeare's text. They are written in the style of editors and critics of Shakespeare, and it is in them that we see the full extent of Poole's wit. When Ophelia speaks of vegetables in her mad scene, she says,

To bring a rope of onions, (f) too, I tried,
But father eat them all before he died.
(p.43)

The annotations on this read as follows:

(f) *Rope of onions* ---
I do not understand this. May we not, with greater propriety, read, a *robe* of onions? *i.e.* a fantastical garment ornamented with onions, in the same way as the dominios (sic) of masqueraders are sometimes studded with gingerbread nuts --- a dress such as Ophelia's phrensy might naturally suggest to her.

POPE.

Rope is, undoubtedly, the true reading. *A rope of onions* is a certain number of onions, which, for the convenience of portability, are, by the market-women, suspended from a *rope* : not, as the Oxford editor ingeniously, but improperly, supposes, in a bunch at the end, but by a perpendicular arrangement.

For the hints afforded me in the formation of this note, and for those contained in the note upon *pickled mutton*, I am indebted to a lady celebrated at once for her literary acquirements and her culinary accomplishments.

JOHNSON.

To bring a rope of onions, &c.

Let us suppose that Ophelia addresses this to the king, and we shall discover a peculiar propriety in its application. The king is represented as an intemperate drinker -- Ophelia, who, doubtless, has some skill in uroscopy, applies this speech to the king, with reference to the diuretic quality of onions. -- *Verbum sapienti*.

Should the concise manner in which I treat this subject expose me to the charge either of fastidious brevity or of delicacy of expression squeamishly refined, I trust that my celebrated note upon potatoes* (wherein I have so *clearly* and so *minutely* explained the various qualities of that valuable plant) will be received in refutation; and that it will convince the world that I want neither talent nor inclination to indulge in prurient description.

COLLINS.

(p.64)

Hamlet's last words are, "Here goes, Horatio -- (s) --- going ---- (s) ----- going -----(s) gone."(p.53). The annotation endeavours to explain:

(s s s) --- ---- -----

To a literary friend of mine I am indebted for the following very acute observation: "Throughout this play," says he, "there is nothing more beautiful than these "dashes; by their gradual elongation, they distinctly mark "the balbuciation and the increasing difficulty of "utterance observable in a dying man." To which let me add, that, although dashes are in frequent use with our tragic poets, yet they are seldom introduced with so good an effect as in the present instance.

JOHNSON.

(p.69)

Poole includes the usual quibbling among editors and their disputes by making them criticise one another. In these annotations, Poole not only pre-supposes a knowledge of the Hamlet story, but of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and of Shakespearian scholarly tradition. While Poole makes no attempt at social or political commentary in his parody, there is a sense of using art to comment on art in his literary annotations. He is certainly making fun of the annotators.

Poole's burlesque is notable for its gentle introduction of ideas and techniques which will be expanded as the centuries pass. For not only do nineteenth-century adaptors employ puns, songs, jokes, references and reflexivity for their own purposes, but twentieth-century adaptors continue the practice -- most notably Tom Stoppard. Whereas Poole felt he needed most of *Hamlet* for his burlesque, later adaptors, especially Gilbert and Stoppard, realised they did not. They saw the potential for adaptation centred on minor characters, perhaps because less is known about these characters whereas audiences have very fixed ideas about main characters. The story behind the scenes along with this interest in minor characters would develop more and more throughout the century. In the meantime, *Hamlet* (and Shakespearean) burlesque was off to a good start with Poole's "lighter" characterizations which, compiled with a stream-lined plot, cleaned-up text, and vaudeville traits give the effect of musical comedy as much as mock-heroic.

Hamlet the Dane

by
Charles Beckington

The next Hamlet burlesque to be considered, Charles Beckington's *Hamlet the Dane* (1847), is very much based on Poole's *Travestie*, and Beckington says in an advertisement for his play that Poole's work and its success inspired him to write his burlesque. However, Beckington is by no means plagiarizing Poole. He is freer with slang and bawdiness than Poole; he develops the use of songs within the play, adds dancing, and introduces a host of topical and political references. But the cleverest and most outstanding features of the play are Beckington's mastery of verbal and visual puns and his employment of *Hamlet* as a vehicle for lampooning the late King William IV.

The play is set in 1847. Beckington describes his costume list as: "Same as in Tragedy, with the addition of wigs; and excepting *Hamlet*, who afterwards appears as a sailor, and *Horatio*, who afterwards wears his highness's livery" (p.257). Beckington's character list is much the same as Poole's with the addition of a Dunghill cock and Policeman. Most characters are given a witty description such as: "Gravedigger, one who makes merry with a trade that's grave" (p.257). Poole's adaptation does not have a costume list, but one may presume that he preferred to adhere to costumes most closely identified with the tragic version of the play. By adhering to traditional costumes, to a cast list, and indeed, to Poole's format for *Hamlet* burlesque, Beckington retains a formula which had proven successful already and which also ensures a familiarity which will re-assure the audience while also providing a greater contrast for his own comic and plot innovations. Again, an outline of the play will show its main features.

The first scene is a three-line prologue which appears twice in Poole; once parodied in the text, and once verbatim in the annotations. The prologue is that of *Gonzago and Baptista* .

Scene ii is a variation of Poole's first scene. The King is at luncheon and tells us of his brother's death. He gives Laertes leave to go to France and aids the Queen in her attempt to cheer up Hamlet. They invite Hamlet to their wedding feast, then exit, leaving Hamlet to his "sullied flesh" soliloquy. The rest of the scene's action continues as it does in Shakespeare.

Beckington's scene iii is a slightly longer version of Poole's scene ii, (Laertes advising Ophelia). The most interesting things about this scene are a couple of ideas that have more to do with W.S. Gilbert than with Shakespeare, possibly suggesting that Gilbert knew this piece and certainly that *Hamlet* could be adapted to exploit some of the social situations beloved of melodrama. At the end of this scene, Ophelia has two lines which re-appear in Gilbert & Sullivan's *H.M.S. Pinafore* and (possibly -- if not verbatim then in idea) *The Sorcerer* . Beckington's "Love levels ranks" becomes Gilbert's "Love levels all ranks". Both *Pinafore* and *The Sorcerer* deal with the theme of love in the Victorian class system. Ophelia's line "I love, oh! how I love him" becomes *Pinafore* 's Josephine's "I love him. I love him. I love him." Both lines were probably typical of nineteenth-century melodrama, but it is possible that Gilbert would have read them in Beckington while preparing for his parody of *Hamlet* -- *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* .

Scene iv is much the same as Poole's scene iii, only Beckington has the ghost wear a white sheet and has music played at the end. In straight

versions of *Hamlet*, the ghost scene is considered to be a key emotional scene in the first Act. Much was made of the way in which Garrick and those after him acted their scenes with the ghost. George Steevens's comment in his *DRAMATIC STRICTURES on the Performance of HAMLET* [by Garrick] is a good example of a critical and of an audience reaction. "As no Writer in any Age penned a Ghost like Shakespeare, so in our Time no Actor ever *saw* a Ghost like Garrick. For my part I must confess he had made me believe my old Friend Bransby (who is tolerably substantial) to be incorporeal -- and I think for the Time with my Friend *Partridge* in *Tom Jones* ." ¹⁶ The sheet is a comic effect which causes the awe, fear and trembling usually created by the ghost to be replaced by mirth.

Scene v contains the second exchange between the ghost and Hamlet. At the end of the scene, Beckington has Hamlet outline the rest of the play ending with "Then murder every Dane, myself, and all"(p.274), anticipating the excesses of the finale. The music which closes the scene is merely an amusing coda which emphasizes the lighter mood, thus heightening the contrast between Beckington's *Hamlet* and the original.

Beckington's scene vi is a combination of the action in Poole's Act I, scenes iv and v and Act II scene i. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern do not appear, however. The scene begins with Polonius questioning Ophelia and her musical reply, after which the King and Queen enter to music and proceed to discuss Hamlet's madness with Polonius and Ophelia. Hamlet sings the "To be or not to be" soliloquy. Ophelia returns Hamlet's present -- again, garters -- but this time they are from Newcastle. Hamlet sings a shortened version of the "Won't you to a nunnery go?" tune, adapted from Poole's text, and Ophelia, in a version of "O what a noble mind is here

¹⁶ Vickers, Vol. V, p.450.

o'erthrown!" says "He presses me too much to take the veil; / I'd rather not -- I'd sooner take the *male*" (p.280). They have a brief tiff which Ophelia ends by telling Hamlet she loves him. They embrace, Hamlet kisses Ophelia, and then they launch into "I've kissed and I've prattled", pledging to marry each other. The jokey sentimentality of Hamlet and Ophelia is the central part of the scene and is also the liveliest.

Beckington's II.i., a variation of Poole's II.ii, finds the court watching a pantomime by Punch and Judy which re-enacts the circumstances of the murder of the late King. The scene proceeds as in Poole with the exception of the end. After saying he won't play the fife, Rosencrantz relents and plays it to Hamlet's dissatisfaction. Hamlet chases Rosencrantz and Guildenstern back and forth across the stage a couple of times and finally succeeds in hitting Guildenstern. Here Rosencrantz and Guildenstern become like Punch and Judy, and the comic violence between them and Hamlet is not only entertaining but reveals the potential for between-the-lines and behind-the-scenes drama.

Beckington restores Hamlet refraining from striking Claudius at prayer in II.ii. (omitted in Poole). This scene takes place in the Palace kitchen where Hamlet discovers Polonius hiding. Polonius snores, pretending to be asleep, but Hamlet kills him anyway. Polonius speaks as he dies, saying he's off to heaven. The scene then continues as in Poole's II.iii., but goes on to include action from Poole's III.i. Beckington's II.iii., the graveyard scene, follows Poole's III.ii. The final scenes have identical action too, only Horatio has the final word in Poole and Hamlet has the last word in Beckington. With one exception, Beckington's narrative from II.ii. to the end of the play dovetails Poole's. Beckington has clearly put a lot of careful effort into re-arranging Poole to ensure that his version is not regarded as a blatant,

textual copy of Poole's. However, Beckington does admit in his preface that he is indebted to Poole.

Aside from a similar plot, Poole's influence is evident in Beckington's language. Beckington retains much of Poole's phrasing and slang. Lines such as "So blow your nose, my dear" and "that's all my eye and Tommy" (both: Poole p.10, Beckington p.261) are lifted right out of Poole. At the end of I.v. Beckington gives his Hamlet Shakespeare's lines about "(t)he time is out of joint" followed by Poole's parody of them (p.274). However, Beckington proves he can be textually skillful in his own right: "E'en decent woe gives place to merry feats, / And winding shrouds are changed to wedding sheets" (p.263) is his own composition. Beckington can be witty too, as he demonstrates time and time again throughout the play.

Puns, verbal and visual, are Beckington's speciality. They are a main source of humour in the parody. For example, a pun by Claudius opens the play. Speaking of the mourning for his brother, he says,

Nay, what is worse, the custom, as we find it,
Is to draw down the *blinds*, keep us *blinded*.
But this is mummery I will soon relax,
Or make them *blindly* pay a window-tax.

(p.259)

Some puns are less obvious as Beckington incorporates them into Shakespeare's text. "Angels and ministers of grace" becomes "Angels and all ye men of *Greece*" (p.269). Remembering his father, Hamlet says,

Methinks I have him in my eye to-night.
Horatio. Which eye, my lord?

Hamlet. (Musing.) ---- He was always in the right. (p.264)

The puns and verbal pranks occur so frequently that the ear almost becomes accustomed to them. So Beckington complements them with visual puns to keep the audience's and reader's senses alert. In the episode in which Rosencrantz consents to play the fife, he plays the tune "Black Joke". Hamlet reacts:

Zounds! what a nincompoop you'd make me!
 Play your Black Joke on me! The devil take me,
 If I don't play, in sight of all beholders,
 As black a joke as yours upon your shoulders.

(p.287)

Hamlet then proceeds to chase them on and off the stage. As they run, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern hold a conversation which ends with Rosencrantz remarking, "How striking his replies are!" (p.287) just before Hamlet hits Guildenstern. The play also ends with a pun. Hamlet and Laertes put aside their boxing gloves, and begin using a pizzle to beat each other and the King.

Queen. It's dicky with me. (Dies.)
King. And me. (Dies.)
Hamlet. And I am *Richard the Third.*
 (p.309)

This pun has several verbal and visual layers and is, perhaps, Beckington's bawdiest.

Beckington has a curious way of censoring the language in his *Hamlet*, for, although he omits bits such as the "incestuous sheets" lines in the "sullied flesh" soliloquy and the lines about "making love over the nasty sty", and although Ophelia's songs are clean, he incorporates slang, expressions and actions which would rank as unseemly even today. The

pizzle features twice in the play. Hamlet enters the confession scene with a pizzle, presumably to flog the truth out of Claudius, and there is the final scene described above. Although Ophelia's mad songs are not bawdy, some of her conversations with Hamlet are. In returning her garters, she says to him:

I've had them ever since upon the shelf,
In hopes you'd come and pin them on yourself.
(p.279)

Prior to the Punch and Judy, Hamlet asks,

Ophelia, may I lie upon your knees?
Ophelia. O surely, or wherever else you please. (Lies
down.) (p.284)

As for slang, Horatio finds occasion to swear "Damnation" (p.270) and "God damn!" (p.273). Hamlet swears "Damn" (p.272), and the Queen calls Ophelia a "sad slut" (p.299). It may be that Shakespeare's bawdy bits were removed not because they were offensive, but because they did not convert into a parodic equivalent. They were, perhaps, too flowery to pack a punch, so Beckington replaced them with something more obviously crude. However, Beckington's improprieties do not tarnish the work, for they are few and far between compared to the puns, songs and antics which keep *Hamlet the Dane* moving at a fast and spirited tempo.

The musical element of the play contributes greatly to its tempo. Not counting incidental music, there are fifteen songs -- six of which were used in Poole. (Beckington has adapted the lyrics to these.) As in Poole, the songs are used in place of soliloquies or long speeches to convey that information. Hamlet's "To be or not to be" is sung to the then popular tune "Jump, Jim Crow" -- made famous by an American "negro" minstrel. The songs also

provide comedy because the feelings an audience expects from Shakespeare's words clash with those suggested by a familiar comic tune.

In addition to music, Beckington uses stage business to provide surprises or set up expectation. In I.i., Laertes dances during his scene with Claudius, and he exits dancing. Hamlet enters the same scene weeping. The Queen talks of going "on the hop" and dances as she speaks (p.262). Blue fire flares when the Ghost says "Swear" (p.273), and also at the end of the play. An Orange woman comes on selling fruit biscuits and beer at the end of the Punch and Judy pantomime (p.285) just as she might between acts of a serious production of *Hamlet*. Her appearance exploits the expectation of the King over-throwing the play. She turns a potentially tense moment (despite Punch and Judy) into a humorous one. When Hamlet spies the Ghost in his mother's chamber, or rather, the Palace kitchen in this version, the Queen asks "Oh! where?" "Going, going. . . . Gone through the trap-door.", Hamlet answers (p.292). Reflexive action such as this is frequently used for comic effect in parodies of Shakespeare, but in some adaptations, such as Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, it has a more serious purpose.

Another device used by Beckington for comic effect and for another, more interesting purpose, is the making of topical references. Like most parodists, Beckington relies on the use of specific references to create humour. Many are topical -- "Whitbread's own Entire" (p.262), the "Railway Buss" (p.263); some are literary -- "What book is this? Baron Mun--chau--sen:/ London, printed for Michael Lawson" (p.277), "Watt's Logic" (p.288). However, some references, though they appear to be merely topical humour at a glance, are furthering a more interesting satiric line when considered all together.

In addition to being a burlesque of *Hamlet*, *Hamlet the Dane* is also a lampoon of an identifiable nineteenth-century prince. The first and most obvious assumption is that it is parodying the late Prince Regent, George IV. Admittedly, there are many references which could apply to him. Of the various character traits and flaws the Hanoverian men shared, one biographer says, "Any family may be forgiven one profligate but when so many children go badly wrong ... somehow, somewhere, there must have been something beastly in the royal nursery."¹⁷ However, careful inspection of the text tells us that George IV is not Beckington's target. The object of the lampoon is surely the late King William IV, George's younger brother.

To begin with, the dates fit, for William died in 1837. The time between his death and this burlesque's publication was long enough to avoid offence but short enough for the burlesque to be topical. William had been a popular king although frequently satirized in the press. (For an example of William's persecution by the media, see page 223. The public would have been familiar with certain characteristics of the King and with his private life. Our first and biggest clue that Hamlet is William is the costume description under the "dramatis personae". Hamlet is to appear as a sailor in the latter half of the play. William was known as the sailor King, having spent 11 years in the navy and having served as Lord High Admiral. Another nautical clue turns up when Polonius suggests that the King could control Hamlet by using the "cat and nine tails" on him (p.288). As a young man, William had an "unpunctual German painter thrashed with a cat-o'-

¹⁷ Ziegler, p.12-13.

nine tails".¹⁸ Later as Lord High Admiral he forbade the use of the cat-o'-nine tails "except in extreme cases such as mutiny at sea".¹⁹

Hamlet is described as a flirt and a "gay Lothario" (p.267) and sings about his conquests in "I've kissed and I've prattled" (p.281). William was a great womanizer until he settled down with the actress Dorothy Jordan, who was famous for principal boy/ tight breeches roles and for her role of Ophelia.²⁰ Prior to Mrs. Jordan, one of his great loves had been Sir Thomas Martin's daughter, Sarah. Polonius could well be referring to her when he says, "I will not tell why day is day, Or Martin, Martin" (P.276). It is more likely, however, that he is referring to Admiral Sir Thomas Byam Martin, who was acquainted with William for fifty years.

In her interview with Hamlet, the Queen tells him, "You surely are an ass, or drunk, or crazy" and then decides, "I think you are an ass, for you do bray so" (p.292). William was noted for his drinking habits -- frequent as a young man, but more moderate after he met Mrs. Jordan -- and for his loquacity. He was prone to making speeches. "At dinner at Houghton he drank two bottles of wine single-handed and proposed six toasts, each prefaced by a speech. Before proposing Lord Spencer's health he indulged in a harangue which included biographical sketches of all the principal naval officers who had served during Spencer's lengthy tenure of office."²¹ Claudius describes Hamlet as "monstrous big" (p.294), and William was

¹⁸ Ziegler, p.59 quoting Byam Martin, *Letters and Papers* , Vol.I, NRS, p.70.

¹⁹ Ziegler, p.141.

²⁰ Ibid., p.77.

²¹ Zeigler, p.74 quoting *Farington Diary* , Vol.IV, p.205.

certainly a large man. Claudius also notes,

If Hamlet goes on thus, he'll make a racket;
Such crooked ways do merit a straight jacket.
And yet tag, rag, and bob-tail love the lad.
He'll make no worse a king although he's mad.
(p.294)

King George III was forever in strait-jackets in the latter years of his reign. George IV inherited his father's porphyria -- the disease behind the madness -- and William was sometimes thought to have a touch of it too. William was a much more popular ruler than George IV had been, however, and "(T)ag, rag, and bob-tail love the lad" is therefore an apt assessment. William was also a simpler man than George IV. Less extravagant, he loved farming at his home -- Bushy Park. When abroad, he wrote to inquire about vegetables. " 'Pleasure and a total forgetfulness of everything that is business are the order of the day at a German Bath,' he wrote disapprovingly to his steward at Bushy; then, in an addition which showed where his interests were really centred, 'I dread the fate of the Turnips.' " ²² The fruit and vegetables Ophelia carries to the King and Queen in her mad scene may be a reminder of William's agricultural interests, although Poole's Ophelia also carried vegetables, and Beckington may simply be following Poole in this detail.

Beckington's Hamlet returns because he is caught "by a roguish tailor" (p.289) -- a jab perhaps at the Hanoverian love of clothes and uniforms and their debts incurred by their love of decorative objects . When Hamlet re-appears, he is attired as a sailor and is accompanied by Horatio "in a dress of livery, as his servant" (p.301). During the first half of the play, Hamlet wears

²² Zeigler, p.130 quoting a letter from William to Daniell, June 29, 1826. Goff. mss.

"a funeral cloak, and a white hat surrounded with crape" (p.260). William wore a similar outfit on his way to George IV's funeral at Windsor in 1830.²³

While we have four apparently specific references to William's characteristics: his nautical career, his womanizing, his imbibing and his loquacity, and his vanity, there are also several allusions to biographical facts about him. Hamlet sings the "Alas, poor Yorick" speech which, in Beckington's version, contains what could be allusions to William's older brother, Frederick, Duke of York. "Alas, poor Yorick. I knew him, Horatio, a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy. He hath bore me on his back a thousand times . . ." (V.i.178-80.) *Yorick* sounds very much like *York*, and the Duke of York was George III's favourite son, "He was the jester of my dad" (p.301). The Duke of York was known for his gambling: Hamlet sings of Yorick, "His songs and gambols (gambles) now are o'er"; his debts: "The first and foremost in a spree", sings Hamlet; and his womanizing: "Now to the ladies' rooms repair" (all p.302). In other words, he was a true Hanoverian. The Duke of York died in 1827 leaving William to inherit the throne.

There are other, smaller references which also point to a Hanoverian Hamlet. Hamlet mentions going to Brighton (p.261); the Queen suggests Ascot and Epsom as alternative destinations (p.262). William did attend Ascot although he was not particularly fond of horses. He also spent a lot of time at the Pavilion in Brighton as a guest of George IV (who built it), and as king he had John Nash build a North and South Lodge at the Pavilion. William's reign saw the establishment of the foundation of the railway system. Horatio tells Hamlet he travelled by "Railway Buss" (p.263). And when Hamlet tells Ophelia to go to a nunnery, he may have had a particular

²³ Ziegler, p.144.

one in mind. William's sisters, who all lived together at Windsor, are known to have referred to the castle as "The Nunnery".²⁴

Aside from references which correspond to aspects of William's life, Beckington's Hamlet has something of William's character. Both are rough around the edges. Both are plain-spoken and, to a degree, tactless. Both love fun and games and a good song. Unpretentious and uncomplicated, they both have an air of being "one of the lads".

William was an obvious choice for Beckington to lampoon. He died in 1837, ten years before the publication of this parody and enough time to distance the lampoon from its subject's death without losing its sense of contemporaneity. Had it been published too soon after William's death it could have been considered tactless and vulgar. Had it been published years and years after William's death, the audience might not have picked up on some of the references and may have missed the point altogether. William had been a popular monarch; he supported the Reform Bill (1832) and was truly interested in the welfare of his subjects. Ten years after his death he would still be well-remembered, yet a gentle lampoon of him would not be considered disrespectful; indeed, he might well have thought it a good laugh. Certainly the jokes at William's expense would not have offended Queen Victoria; for all the modern assumptions that she could not be amused, she loved hearing and talking about her strange family.²⁵

Beckington advances the art of burlesquing *Hamlet* considerably, despite his dependence on Poole for structural ordering of the play and for phrasing and slang. Beckington's efforts in developing the use of slang and

²⁴ Hibbert, Christopher. *George IV* (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1972), p.258.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.160.

songs, adding dancing and special effects, including verbal and visual puns and topical references, all work to produce a burlesque which is much more entertaining than Poole's. However, his master-stroke is to lampoon William IV, for in so doing he creates a ridiculous Hamlet; one that defies previous burlesque and straight characterizations of the prince and anticipates future treatment of the character, for instance, Marowitz's Hamlet. Beckington also gives his play social and political relevance by using *Hamlet* to comment on relatively current events. Again, his treatment anticipates future interpretations of the play when political and social statements will be made in the form of textual omissions (as had been done in the Restoration and the eighteenth century), for humorous purposes in parodies and burlesques (the genre will continue into the next century), and as the *raison d'etre* for many straight productions of *Hamlet* in the twentieth century.

HAMLET TRAVESTIE
Oxford, 1849

In 1849 there appeared in Oxford a parody entitled *HAMLET TRAVESTIE*. Published anonymously, it has since been attributed to Francis Talfourd by Stanley Wells, among others. It combines a radically different version of Shakespeare's plot, with the puns and songs expected of a burlesque and a plethora of local, topical and political references. However, unlike Beckington's *Hamlet*, it does not concentrate on lampooning any one figure or subject, nor does it parody *Hamlet* in the way Poole does by calling attention to the beautiful imagery and tragic situation in Shakespeare's version and creating something humorous by a contrasting combination of ludicrous sentiments and imagery and a comic situation. However, this burlesque does contain "editorial footnotes" by Dr. Johnson,

various Romantics and diarists which remind one of Poole's editorial comments. Ironically, the Oxford *Hamlet* is somewhat self-defeating; by trying to include so many of the humorous characteristics and comic devices of burlesque, it fails to focus on any one idea which could make it coherent. Like many other amateur entertainments, it was probably amusing to those who were there at the performance, but this one is so dense with allusions, puns and jokes that both Hamlet's character and any sense of plot are almost obliterated.

The parody consists of two acts, each containing three scenes. The list of dramatis personae, which includes Francisco (who was omitted by Poole and Beckington), but omits Laertes, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Osrick and the gravediggers, makes it immediately clear how far the plot has been pared down. Invented for this production are a "First Naughty Courtier" and a "Second Naughty Courtier". Act I.i. opens with the changing of the guard between Francisco and Bernardo. As he leaves, Francisco encounters Marcellus and Horatio, who have come to inquire about sightings of the Ghost. The Ghost appears, accompanied by "Thunder, Lightning, Earthquakes, &c", but makes no reply when they speak to it.

In Act I. ii. the King calls the mourning of his brother to an end, and he and the Queen remove black ribbons from their garments, and the courtiers remove their black watch ribbons and false black moustaches. The King and Queen discuss Hamlet's sorrow, invite him to dine with them, and then decide something must be done about his attitude when he refuses. They exit with Polonius, whose contribution to the scene has been one song and two interjections -- all of no consequence. Hamlet gives his "solid flesh" soliloquy, which begins, "O, that this bust of mine indeed were *bust!*" (p.71), and then resolves to go with Horatio and Marcellus to seek his father's ghost.

The Ghost appears to them in Act I.iii. and, after much wasting of time and breath by all concerned, finally tells Hamlet how he was murdered: Claudius put rat poison in his gin and tonic. Horatio and Marcellus try to persuade Hamlet to tell them what has happened, but, after a warning from the Ghost, Hamlet agrees to be silent.

Act II.i. begins with Ophelia giving Polonius her account of Hamlet's strange behaviour, which includes Hamlet kissing her. Polonius concludes that Hamlet is mad and then recalls *his* days of courting Mrs. Polonius and talks to Ophelia about married life, ending with a negative portrayal of women. Ophelia then quotes verse -- which calls for Polonius to answer "My mother", "Your mother", or "My daughter" every few lines -- the purpose of which is to remind him of the invaluable worth of women. Her ploy works. Polonius is so moved that he proclaims, "Woman for ever! Scold they as they will,/ Marriage! with all thy faults, I love thee still!" and exits singing the air "Here's a health to all good lasses" (both p.90).

Hamlet's "To be or not to be" soliloquy, which has been changed to "to drink, or not to drink!", opens II.ii. Ophelia returns Hamlet's gifts, which include a profile, a dead canary, and faded posies. Hamlet admits his fondness of her to the audience, but tells Ophelia to go to a nunnery. He leaves Ophelia to recite her "noble mind o'erthrown" soliloquy.

In the final scene, there is some silly business with the First Naughty Courtier forgetting to remove his hat and the Second Naughty Courtier sitting in the King's armchair. The King admonishes them and threatens violence. After a song by Marcellus (requested by the King) and some hissing by Naughty Courtiers (which causes them to be sent away), Ophelia

enters speaking and singing nonsense. No one remarks that she is mad or even pitiful. Polonius simply demands, "I'll be revenged!" (p.100). The King proposes a fencing match between Polonius and Hamlet which is rigged, of course; there are to be no buttons, and the points will be poisoned. Polonius is then informed that Ophelia has drowned. The King asks the Queen to "mix" the wine -- mentioning in her presence that it will be poisoned for Hamlet. Hamlet and Polonius fence, with Horatio taking bets on who will win. The Queen inadvertently drinks from the poisoned cup, allowing Marcellus, Horatio and the Courtiers to do the same. They all die quickly. Polonius wounds Hamlet, they exchange foils, and Hamlet wounds Polonius and the King. They die. The Ghost and the ghost of Ophelia appear and pronounce the "morals" of the play: do not covet another's wife and do not become involved with a young man because he might jilt you. The ghosts of Hamlet and Gertrude and the "United Corpses" all sing at the end, then the Ghost and Ophelia's ghost slowly disappear.

Despite the puns, songs, and gags, this burlesque does not come across as being particularly amusing. It may be that it would benefit from clever direction and therefore would seem more humorous in production than it does on paper. The courtiers removing their black watch ribbons and false moustaches is the funniest bit in the play because it is unexpected and because it adds a visual element to the verbal comedy. The worst part of the play comes at the end. The talking corpses seem pathetic instead of amusing. Just as *Hamlet*'s multiple deaths sometimes caused mirth in earlier productions of the tragedy, they cause indifference in what is meant to be a comedy.

This burlesque relies on words rather than action to convey the bulk of its humour. Unfortunately the standard of the puns falls short even of

ordinary expectations and, compared with the puns of Beckington, many of these are simply inferior. Joseph Addison had classified the pun as a type of false wit and made a distinction between skillful puns and poor puns.

I shall here define it (the pun) to be a conceit arising from the use of two words that agree in the sound, but differ in the sense. The only way therefore to try a piece of wit is to translate it into a different language, if it bears the test you may pronounce it true; but if it vanishes in the experiment, you may conclude it to have been a pun. In short, one may say of a pun as the countryman described his nightingale, that it is *vox et praeterea nihil*, a sound, and nothing but a sound. ²⁶

In other words, for a pun to qualify as wit, it must rely on more than similar sounds for its humour; there must be hidden or unexpected meanings behind the words used. This burlesque does contain a few puns which might meet Addison's requirements for wit. When Marcellus and Horatio meet the Ghost, Marcellus says, "Horatio, you're a 'Vars'ty man, and pat in/*Dead* languages, so tackle him in Latin" (p.67). Hamlet denies giving Ophelia the gifts she returns: "I never gave you nothing -- but the wall." "*The lie*, my lord;" she replies, "for here behold them all!" (p.92). This is as witty and as bawdy as the Oxford *Hamlet* gets. The majority of the rest of the puns rely purely on sound for humour. Referring to the dead canary, Hamlet says, "Ornithology is not my forte." Ophelia agrees. "Your fort is Elsinore." "Else in our fort I am deceived", replies Hamlet (p.92). The worst pun occurs at the beginning of the first scene at the changing of the guard:

Francisco. Then is our *watch* wound up, and goes a pace.
Horatio. Now, Stupid! O the Watch, I see.
(p.65)

²⁶ Addison, Joseph. "Thursday May 10, 1711", *Critical Essays from The Spectator*, Ed. Donald F. Bond (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p.15.

In his essay on wit, Addison notes that "a famous university of this land was formerly very much infested with puns; but whether or no this might not arise from the fens and marshes in which it was situated, and which are now drained, I must leave to the determination of more skilful naturalists."²⁷ A note to this observation tells us, if we have not already guessed, that the university Addison refers to is Cambridge. "All schools, especially Westminster, train up scholars to declaim in an ironical manner, and make sharp and burlesque epigrams and poems. Colleges are famous for the like; puns are a main education in Cambridge; and practised and professed in all exercises and conversations."²⁸ If punning was practised at Oxford, and from the previous description one may assume that it is entirely likely that it was, then one can only hope that Oxford's skill at punning as expressed in the Oxford *Hamlet* is not indicative of the talent of its students or the efforts of its dons.

If the puns are a disappointment, the songs are even more so. There are some seventeen songs plus various pieces of background, entrance and exit music in this play. Perhaps much of their humour depends on knowledge of the tunes. Tune recognition contributes to part of musical humour, but words and timing are important too. In Poole and Beckington many speeches and soliloquies were set to music. They were contributing to the plot and pace of the play. Songs in the Oxford *Hamlet* slow it down because many are not furthering the plot. Of the seventeen songs in the play, half are unnecessary because they are either giving us information we already know or are simply ridiculous as opposed to humorous. An example of the latter is Polonius singing about roast beef when the King and Queen invite Hamlet to dinner. Clearly the purpose of songs like this was

²⁷ Ibid., p.14.

²⁸ Ibid., p.258 quoting John Henley, "An Oration on Grave Conundrums and Serious Buffoons", *Oratory Transactions*, no.vi (1729), p.12.

to add to the humour of the play, but in fact many of these songs merely serve to slow down the pace and therefore detract from the comedy. The funniest music is probably some to which the King, Queen and Polonius are to exit entitled "Rogues' March" (p.71). When Polonius is informed of Ophelia's drowning, the chorus (of courtiers) pipe up and sing "Down among the dead men" (p.102). This too is appropriate, but in general the songs are irrelevant distractions from what are comparatively cleverer features such as puns and visual gags.

Another source of verbal humour is the host of local, topical and political references in the play. There are numerous allusions to the town and university of Oxford and to collegiate life. For instance:

No, no he was brought up for better things,
A Cantab he, Sir, for he comes from "*King's*",
Or, where the Isis Ice is, when 'tis froze,
From the King's Hall and Coll. of Brazen-nose.
(p.67)

Topical references range from the late George IV -- "Sure, Prince, thou art the Prince of Whales for blubber" (p.69) -- to Jenny Lind, to Schweppes, to literature. Dickens is mentioned and reference is made to Tennyson: "Dry up your tears! you must have been, I wot? Peeling of onions -- "*Lady of Shalott!*" (p.94). There are foreign and domestic political references: "Tears cannot minister to kings departed,/ OR p'r'aps *Thiers* would, when Louis Phillipe started."(p.69). Polonius wants to shoot Hamlet, but Claudius says it is a "French fashion to shoot a prince" (p.100). The Vagrant Act (1824), the Habeas Corpus Act (1679), and references to Parliament and to politicians (for example, the Queen's Counsel Samuel Warren) are examples of domestic references. The references are as dense as they are diverse, but interestingly they do not focus on any one theme -- not even *Hamlet* or Hamlet.

As far as *Hamlet* is concerned, only the barest outline of Shakespeare's plot exists. Aside from the previously mentioned alterations, there are crucial issues and themes in Shakespeare's play which are never touched. Claudius's crime is mentioned only by the Ghost; neither Hamlet nor Claudius ever refer to it. Hamlet never speaks of revenge nor plans to do anything about his father's murder. The conflict between Hamlet and his mother is omitted. In fact, he sings "for she's a jolly good fellow, which nobody can deny"(p.76). The King and Polonius do not spy on Hamlet and Ophelia, so they can only guess at the cause of her strange behaviour later in the play, although, as stated previously, no one seems to notice it.

This is a very bizarre burlesque indeed. It is not parodying the language, plot or hero or Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.. One has to search to find parallels between the speeches and soliloquies in Shakespeare and those in this burlesque. The plot has been changed radically, and this Hamlet does not dominate the play, although the action is loosely centred on him.

The Oxford *Hamlet* does not lampoon a person or mock a situation in the way Beckington did. The author could have ridiculed royalty or, better yet, politics. A university audience would be well-informed of current events. The greatest curiosity is why he did not lampoon the university. He could have exploited further the fact that Hamlet, Horatio and Laertes are university students. But Laertes is omitted, and although the author does joke about university life a bit, he does not concentrate on it. In fact there does not seem to be a main theme here at all.

Hamlet was probably chosen as a text to work with because of the success of Poole's version. The editorial footnotes attest to this. But the author takes the barest outline of the plot, and only some of the characters, and imposes so many songs, puns, references and gags on it that the fragile

structure cannot support them and collapses. The play may very well have been written by one or a group of students, and in that case, may have been merely an excuse for a romp. Compared with Poole and Beckington, the *Oxford Hamlet* is an example of a freer form of Shakespearean burlesque. It is worth noting that its author does not deem it necessary to justify his use of Shakespeare or state the purpose of his adaptation. In the decades to come, authors will become even freer in their use of Shakespeare and will be more cavalier about their reasons for using him than any of those considered hitherto.

A THIN SLICE OF HAM LET! CUT FOR FANCY FARE

A THIN SLICE OF HAM LET! CUT FOR FANCY FARE (hereafter referred to as *Thin Slice*) was published in London in 1863 by "The Cooker-Up of 'The Duck's Motto'" (p.51).²⁹ *Thin Slice* is a short burlesque with a simplified version of Shakespeare's plot. The characters are limited to Claudius, Hamlet, Polonius, Horatio, Laertes, the Ghost, Ophelia and Gertrude (plus guards, attendants, etc.) and are described in a witty manner in the list of *Dramatis Personae*. Sometimes the descriptions are punning, for example, "Claudius, *the chicken-hearted King of Denmark, accused of fowl murder, a ruler of an erratic disposition caught by a mousetrap*" (p.52), and a few have a political slant to them, for instance, "Horatio, *our own correspondent for the 'Wittenberg Gazette', with a graphic description from the seat of war*" (p.52). The descriptions are indicative of the play's style,

²⁹ The author chose not to publish his name.

one which is heavy with contemporary allusions and references and absolutely full of puns.

The play opens at court with the King's announcement that the court is in mourning for his brother. The plot moves speedily along its Shakespearean outline with only two significant changes: neither Polonius nor Ophelia dies (although Ophelia still has a mad scene), and the duel at the end of the play is with pistols. It is a strange sort of duel; Hamlet and Laertes do not mark off steps, turn and shoot. Instead, they take turns shooting at each other. Laertes is going to cheat and shoot Hamlet during Hamlet's turn to shoot him, but he is thwarted by the Ghost who "knocks up the rifle" (p.73) and announces that he was not poisoned after all. Claudius is glad to hear it and hands him back the throne, saying, "This royal state is thankless at the most" (p.74). The Ghost proclaims "And I give up the ghost"(p.74), so he is no longer dead. Hamlet proposes marriage to Ophelia, Polonius blesses the match, and the finale, sung by the cast, tells us that the performance was a joke to make the audience laugh.

The author gives his reason for these changes to the plot on the title page:

In Which The Original Much-Disputed Text is Re-Arranged,
Condensed, And Amended, Also The Extremely Disgusting
Denouement Ameliorated & Consequently Rendered
More Palatable To The Fastidious Taste Of The
Present Refined Age.

(p.51)

This probably refers, in part, to Garrick's adaptation of *Hamlet* and is also a reaction to Hamlet's tragic ending. If Cordelia could live to marry Edgar in Nahum Tate's version of *King Lear*, so too could Hamlet and Ophelia survive to live happily-ever-after. (French adaptor Jean-Francois Ducis had

seen to this detail as early as 1769 when his version of *Hamlet* was first performed. Ducis's adaptation, in which Hamlet and Ophelia marry and reign together, afforded French audiences their first opportunity to see a stage version of a Shakespeare play.) The "Present Refined Age" probably found a happy ending "More Palatable" than one with bodies strewn all over the stage.

There are, of course, other alterations and slight additions plus various songs, all of which are included for humorous reasons. The stage directions are one element of comedy. They are specific and give a good indication of the kind of visual humour the author wants for his play. For example, in the opening scene, the King admonishes the court for failing to cheer for the Queen; the stage directions read, "*King thrashes the court, which choruses vociferously*" (p.57). The ghost informs Hamlet, via song, of his manner of death. During his song, the chorus are "*exhibiting the iniquitous operation*"; in other words, they are acting out the murder of King Hamlet (p.60). In the pantomime, the "*'Villyan' enters claret-bottle and funnel, tries to pour the contents into the monarch's ear, who directs the stream to his mouth*" (p.69). In her mad scene, Ophelia carries vegetables rather than flowers, but then this last alteration is nothing new, having been done in Poole and in Beckington.

Some of the additions in *Thin Slice* are clarifications of situations which are left ambiguous in Shakespeare's text. For instance, Polonius pushes Ophelia to return Hamlet's presents and instructs her, "don't be tame,/ But ask him at once what is his little game" (p.62). Ophelia does so under the watchful eyes of Polonius and the King, who hide behind the throne chairs. Hamlet sees the King and Polonius, tells the audience in an aside that he has seen them, and then proceeds to malign each of them as if

they were not there. Each laughs at the other when he receives abuse, while the recipient of abuse "threatens" Hamlet from his hiding place. The author has developed Shakespeare's situation into something rather humorous while making it clear that Hamlet knows the King and Polonius are suspicious of him. These sorts of additions, ones which guess at characters' motives and speculate what characters did and did not think, are indicative of the character criticism which was becoming popular in the nineteenth century.

Another change in *Thin Slice* is the language. Puns and slang aside, there are two instances in which Hamlet's language is altered to be a combination of things he said to different people in Shakespeare. For example, he tells Ophelia to, "Go to the scullery and -- wash your face./ Paint an inch thick, as I perceive thou hast" (p.64). This is an alteration of the original "get thee to a nunnery" and "I have heard of your paintings well enough. God hath given you one face and you make yourselves another" (Arden, p.283) combined with his words about Yorick, "Now get you to my lady's chamber and tell her, let her paint an inch thick" (Arden, p.386). Another combination occurs when Hamlet "(Takes clay pipe from side)" and asks Polonius, "Do you see yonder cloud, there, like a snipe?" "I do," Polonius answers. "Then try and blow one on this pipe." (p.66). This is a combination of

Hamlet. Do you see yonder cloud that's almost in shape of a camel?
Polonius. By th' mass and 'tis -- like a camel indeed.
Hamlet. Methinks it is like a weasel.
Polonius. It is backed like a weasel.
Hamlet. Or like a whale.
Polonius. Very like a whale.

(Arden, III.ii.367-73)

and

Hamlet. Will you play upon this pipe?

Guildestern. My lord, I cannot.

Hamlet. I pray you.

(Arden, III.ii.341-4)

In the original the pipe was a recorder, and Hamlet beseeched Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to play it for him. Why the changes? To begin with, both Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and the scene with Yorick's skull are cut from *Thin Slice*. Therefore the aforementioned scenes would not have appeared, yet may have been popular enough to have been missed by audiences. By taking famous words and lines from these scenes and inserting them into his work, the author maintains linguistic familiarity with the original while simultaneously updating his version. A clay pipe would have been a more common item than a recorder. As for the combined lines to Ophelia, perhaps the wearing of too much make-up was a social faux-pas, and "Go to the scullery" certainly would have been socially more degrading than "get thee to a nunnery".

Another alteration to *Hamlet*, which in this case is intended to provide humour as well as up-date the text, is the inclusion of topical references. Political ones seem to top the list and include police commissioner Sir Richard Mayne, statesmen -- Lord John Russell, the Greys and Eliots, William Gladstone, and the Earl of Derby -- and Italian revolutionaries Garibaldi and Mazzini. The most interesting political reference is to the Holstein question.

King. . . . to make it all serene,
And keep his widow's royal sorrow down,
We have presented her with half a crown.

Hamlet. Who has the other half?

King. Truth must be said,
Our cousins German snatched it from our head.

Hamlet. . . . Make the two bullies their aggression cease,
And bind them over both to keep the peace.

King. The piece of Denmark's realm that they have stole
Is all the peace they'll keep, perhaps the whole,

....

Laertes. . . . Besides, one subject injures my digestion,
I want to understand the Holstein question.
(pp.53-4)

This is a very clever and fitting reference by the author to the dispute between Denmark and Prussia and Austria over the Schleswig-Holstein provinces. Britain encouraged Denmark to uphold her right to the provinces and declared that Denmark would not stand alone should the situation lead to war. Yet Bismarck called Britain's bluff. Denmark had no ally when war came and therefore lost the provinces to Prussia and Austria in 1864 -- one year after the publication of *Thin Slice*. This is something of an up-dated version of a conflict mentioned early in *Hamlet* when Horatio remarks on the Ghost's appearance: "Such was the very armour he had on/ When he th'ambitious Norway combated./ So frown'd he once, when in an angry parle/ He smote the sledded Polacks on the ice" (Arden, p.169). A further reference to the Schleswig-Holstein situation may be in Polonius's reply to the King telling him, "Such fawning sychophants as you/ Are useful when there's dirty work to do;" (p.65). Polonius responds,

My leige, I'm flattered by your approbation;
The soul of statecraft is dissimulation.
To bully the weak and truckle to the strong,
And wink at kingly or imperial wrong;
To promise aid, and when the danger comes,

Sit still and twiddle your official thumbs;
 To let who will your helpless neighbour fleece,
 Is what *I* call the policy of peace.
 (p.65)

There are two other topical references in *Thin Slice* which are worth discussing. Polonius asks Hamlet what he is reading, and Hamlet replies that he is reading a playbill.

Polonius. What? of those folks who've come here from
 "Paris"
 To Frenchify our stage with accent odd,
 Changing our plain beef into "à la mode?"

Hamlet . Now Fechter's on your tongue.
 (p.66).

Charles Albert Fechter was an actor and dramatist of German origin who abandoned the French stage for the English one in 1860. He was a famous nineteenth-century Hamlet, and was the first actor to play the role as a blonde. (Olivier chooses to be a fair-haired Dane almost one hundred years later.) Fechter was a somewhat controversial Hamlet because he was not a native English speaker. It is also worth noting that in one of Fechter's productions of *Hamlet* in the 1870s, he used an illusionary device commonly known as Pepper's Ghost to portray the ghost. The Hamlet in this burlesque mentions the same device, suggesting that Horatio has been duped by an illusion rather than seeing an actual ghost: "Oh, that was very provoking! / Are you sure, my good friend, you're not joking? / It may be a trick / From the Polytechnic-- / Just a spectre of Pepper's invoking" (p.59). It is possible that straight productions of *Hamlet* were using Pepper's Ghost before Fechter did, but I have no knowledge of any. This may be yet another case of an alteration or burlesque of *Hamlet* foreshadowing future, straight productions of *Hamlet* .

Another rather interesting reference occurs much earlier in the play when Claudius criticises Hamlet for his manner of dress,

King. Small courtesy you show, to wear this rig
When all our court you see in such full fig;
It looks particular, and out of rule.

Hamlet. The fact is, pa, I have no tick with Poole.
(p. 56)

That Poole should be mentioned fifty years on hints that his parody had become something of a classic to audiences as well as readers of burlesques. (Its numerous reprints attest to the latter.) This reference is also an example of a type of literary self-consciousness. Literary references were usually to writers of "serious" drama, prose or poetry. That an author of burlesques is mentioned may point to the degree of popularity the genre had acquired.

If, in the years since Poole's *Hamlet*, burlesque playwrights had become braver than Poole about straying from Shakespeare, they certainly maintained one aspect of the craft which he employed: the use of puns. *Thin Slice* is overflowing with puns which often occur line after line.

Hamlet. There's something rotten in a Cheshire cheese
When mite makes right -- and greedy mites are these.
They've raised a precious bobbery no doubt;
Some British "bobbies" ought to be sent out,
To interpose the combatants between,
And by main force -- Sir Richard Mayne's I mean --
Make the two bullies their aggression cease,
And bind them over both to keep the peace.

King. The piece of Denmark's realm that they have stole
Is all the peace they'll keep, perhaps the whole,
(p.53)

The inclusion of topical names, for example "Sir Richard Mayne" in the above quotation, is also popular and often works hand in hand with puns.

Hamlet's "Gladstone and ministers in place defend us!" (p.59) is humorous for its reference to the statesman Gladstone (who became Prime Minister in 1868; five years after the publication of this burlesque), and for its pun on Shakespeare's "Angels and ministers of grace". Simple sound-related puns and visual puns are also to be expected. For instance, Hamlet sits reading a newspaper, and Polonius asks, "What are you reading there my lord?" Hamlet replies, "*The Times*. They're out of joint according to this sheet."(p.62). Here Hamlet calls attention to the pun by mentioning "this sheet". This is a gesture at a stage-conscious reflexivity.

This kind of reflexivity, which calls attention to the plot, to puns, and to the nature of burlesque and parody, is a technique that is used more and more as the century passes. It is much more prevalent in the next burlesque we consider, *HAMLET! The Raving Prince of Denmark!!* Here the author consciously uses reflexivity for comic purposes, but it is not until W.S. Gilbert's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* that stage-conscious reflexivity comes to the foreground of burlesque dramaturgy. That reflexivity occurs at all in *Thin Slice* is probably a coincidence. The author does not use it to its fullest comic potential, and it is very likely that he was unaware of using it at all. His main concern is with producing a burlesque which can "coax a laugh" (p.74), and he succeeds at that and at something authors of burlesques and parodies of *Hamlet* and directors of straight productions of *Hamlet* will attempt more and more in the future: to use *Hamlet* to comment on current political affairs.

HAMLET! The Raving Prince of Denmark!!

HAMLET! The Raving Prince of Denmark!! or The Baltic Swell!!! and The Diving Belle!!!! (hereafter referred to as *HAMLET!*) was printed in 1866 for "Private Representation" (p.75) and is described as "A Burlesque Extravaganza in Three Acts" (p.75) by its anonymous author. The play is set in Britain and contains many puns and topical references, but very little Shakespeare. Despite its length, *HAMLET!* has a "bare-bones Shakespeare" plot with famous lines from the original scattered here and there to maintain its link with *Hamlet* (no matter how far a burlesque strays from the original, famous lines are expected). There is also some parodying of original text. Although it has some interesting observations to make about art in general and about theatre tastes of the day in particular, the main purpose of the play is comic entertainment -- a point driven home at the end of *HAMLET!*

As with many other nineteenth-century *Hamlet* burlesques, the Fortinbras subplot is omitted, so Fortinbras and the ambassadors are excluded, as are Ferdinand, Barnardo, Marcellus, the gravediggers, Osric, and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Reynaldo has become Reynalda, Polonius's housekeeper. Ophelia is a nursery governess, and Horatio is Inspector of Police. Additions to the cast are a cook and a policeman referred to as "A.21".

The play opens with a flirtation scene between the latter two outside Marlborough House, and the first few pages and minutes of the play are far removed from Shakespeare. However, with Horatio's arrival we learn of the existence of the ghost, and the play continues more or less along the lines of Shakespeare's plot (despite changes in some characters' occupations and

reactions) until near the end. In the final scene, Hamlet encourages Horatio to drink the poison rather than dissuading him from doing so, therefore Horatio dies as well. At this point, a prompter enters looking puzzled at the multiple deaths: "What means this pause? There must be some mistake./ Not all dead, surely! Let's give each a shake." (p.138). Seeing that they are dead, he gives an epilogue which criticises and excuses the play, and then he suggests to the audience that applause will revive the cast, which it does. Ophelia, Polonius and the Ghost join those onstage in a final song which asks the audience to be kind and favourable to their performance.

There are many changes to and deviations from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* which serve to update the play and to create humour without radically altering the plot. As an instance of updating, Hamlet and Horatio watch for the Ghost on a lamplit street in the rain. The Ghost arrives by cab and tells Hamlet his grievances while Horatio has a smoke. Comic additions include, for instance, the strange behavior of Hamlet covering himself in flour and having the cooks throw him in the air because he thinks he's a pancake.

Hamlet is made less of a mystery and more of a sympathetic figure by wooing an indifferent Ophelia. He sends her love poems which Reynalda discovers, and he asks her to marry him, which she finally agrees to do. He also verbally repents having stabbed Polonius.

Although the audience may be pleased with a happy relationship between Hamlet and Ophelia, the Queen is not. She and the King are shocked to learn of Hamlet's love poems to Ophelia, and the Queen tells her:

D'ye think I'm going to let a minx like you,
 A nursery governess without a *sou*,
 Keep company with princes? No, missus, never.
 You leave the house this night. (p.103-4)

This is a sharp contrast to the Queen who comments in Shakespeare, "I hop'd thou shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife" (Arden, p.390). The Queen gives the play scene what might seem to twentieth-century audiences and readers an Oedipal twist when she invites Hamlet to sit on her lap. He declines, preferring to sit with Ophelia. These changes serve to make a fairy-tale, wicked Queen out of Gertrude, perhaps for the same reason that Hamlet appears more straightforward and decisive. The author wants black and white, concrete characters for his burlesque. Grey areas of emotion are not funny.

Other changes include Claudius fainting during the play scene when he sees art imitating life. That Claudius should faint during so trivial a play suggests that the author is not unaware of the power of art to invoke reality. Tom Stoppard will explore this theme further in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. Another change occurs in the duel between Hamlet and Laertes. Laertes accidentally knocks over the King, and the King repays him by stabbing him. These alterations render Claudius vapid, petty and grotesque rather than powerful.

Some actions are not altered, but merely clarified. Hamlet admits to the audience that he's playing the madman:

I think my plan will hit. They're caught, egad!
And all the family believe I'm mad.
(p.105)

Polonius makes a point of telling the Queen that he will be "listening in" to her conversation with Hamlet, and she agrees to direct the conversation to subjects of interest to the King. The audience knows for certain that Hamlet

is not mad and that the Queen conspires with Claudius and Polonius against Hamlet.

However, when Ophelia declares her fate in one of her mad songs, "My time is up I go; Polonius's daughter / Concludes to jump into the dirty water" (p.130), clarity is not the aim. We already expect Ophelia to drown. Her telling us she will do so calls attention to the play in a way that causes us to remember that we are watching a play, not reality. This is a Brechtian technique used not only by other nineteenth-century burlesque and parody writers, but also by twentieth-century dramatists such as Tom Stoppard in his play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. Stoppard not only reminds us that we are watching a play; he also calls attention to it in order to compare and contrast it with the original. This technique is present here as well. During an argument between Hamlet and Ophelia, she becomes provoked by his speech, and he tells her, "There's lots more of it darling; shall I quote it ?/ And be as rude to you as Shakespeare wrote it"(p.108). The parodic nature of the play is pulled into our consciousness here, as it is to a greater extent in the play scene. Hamlet's speech to the players is altered and is delivered to the audience. It describes the tastes of audiences and trends in theatres of the day and, as it refers to this and other burlesques and parodies, is very reflexive.

Fall'n is the Thespian art, alas! at any rate
 The public taste in plays is most degenerate;
 Where once the Drama reigned in all her glory,
 And dense-thronged houses hung on Shakespeare's story;
 Where the refinement of a polished age
 Forbade insane buffoonry from the stage;
 No more the great Macready you behold,
 In all the acts of scenic action old!
 No Kean, no Kemble now salutes you here,
 No Siddons draws the sympathetic tear!
 But what instead? the stage can condescend
 To soothe the sickly taste it cannot mend.
 A Menken can entice a wanton throng;
 A Vance, a Mackney, stammer out a song;

A Ballet call a blush to consecrate the scene,
 And bid the Drama be what she hath been!
 In fact, my friends, there animates the nation
 Our taste, one passion, one desire -- Sensation!
 (p.111)

To prove the point, Hamlet and the chorus sing a song called "The Great Sensation" which ends with the lines: "We've done our best to give it zest, and write with animation, / So hope our play, in its small way, will cause a slight sensation" (p.111). The prompter's epilogue is the most reflexive item in *HAMLET!*, for although the previous speech has justified the existence of parody as being necessary to please and entertain an audience jaded with serious drama, the author feels it necessary to excuse the nature of his play by seeming to criticize it --

And now kind friends, whatever can we say,
 For having murdered Shakespeare in this way?
 We know that many, 'stead of harmless fun,
 Can only see ill-breeding in a pun;
 And, supercilious, can but decry
 Contempt for genius in a parody.
 (p.138)

-- and to make plain that he was *not* criticizing Shakespeare:

The point and polish of th'immortal pen
 That hath delighted great and little men,
 We honour still; nay love him more today,
 Than e'er we did before we wrote this play.
 (p.138)

For all the author's apologies, the careful details of the play suggest that he was by no means repentant or ashamed of a work he had crafted so meticulously with explicit stage directions, with varied humour, with entertainment which include songs, dances, and puns, and with a myriad of topical references.

HAMLET!'s stage directions are very explicit compared to other parodies examined in this chapter. Not only does the author give such obvious instructions as "*Horatio. 'Why, here's the gingham;' (Hoists gingham.)*" (p.90), but he gives expressions to go with actions: "*A.21., in confusion*" (p.77), "*Exit Ghost menacingly*" (p.81). Sometimes he gives very detailed directions. For instance, in one of Claudius's speeches, he "*Looks fondly at Queen*", "*Plays with her hair*", and "*Wipes his eyes*" (p.86). At one stage, Hamlet "*fills a glass, and drinks slowly and thoughtfully*" (p.88). Adverbs such as "*Superciliously*" (p.80), "*(e)mphatically*" (p.93), and "*(j)ocularly*" (p.97) are given for lines or speeches along with several directions that certain lines be spoken "*tragically*"; Hamlet's curse of Claudius is one such instance (p.93). When the Ghost, Hamlet and Horatio swear, "*They assume tragic attitude*" (p.94) by crossing their umbrellas as they swear not to reveal the ghost's information. When Hamlet stabs Polonius, "*Polonius dies in stage convulsions*" (p.122). The author is quite possibly mocking the tragic acting style of the past or of the day. Hamlet's speech to the players supports this theory.

For the play scene, the cast "*take their seats after Maclise's picture*" (p.113). This direction invokes humour via association with contemporary art, and more significantly is an example of art imitating art imitating art. (For a picture of Maclise's painting, turn to page 228.)

If the author is specific about how he wants things said (the frequent adverbs), he also has a definite idea of how he wants things acted. Descriptions of gestures such as "*Enter Laertes, furious; rushes at King, and shakes fist in his face*" (p.127) and "*Laertes leans on Ophelia. Both sob*"

(p.130) are commonplace. The author even writes where he wants the actors to stand at the end of the finale and curtain call.

GHOST.

HORATIO.	HAMLET.	OPHELIA.	POLONIUS.	LAERTES.	REYNALDA.
	KING.		PROMPTER.		QUEEN.
	R.				L.

Such exactitude indicates a perfectionist nature in the author, who perhaps had either acted on or directed for the stage and therefore had a more precise idea of how he wanted a play acted than did other burlesque playwrights.

Another reason for such explicit stage directions may have been to increase the humour of the play by preventing misinterpretation in acting and mistakes in comic timing by actors who, considering that the play was written as entertainment for Christmas (p.138), probably would have been amateurs.

But stage directions are not the only expressions of humour; there are several instances in which the script calls for a dance. Hamlet and the Queen sing a song about hiding Polonius's body, and then they dance off with it. Hamlet and Laertes prepare for their boxing duel by singing a duet and dancing a war dance. Of course there are numerous songs which add to the jocularly and to the tempo of the play. Most of the tunes are what we would classify today as popular, folk, or nationalistic tunes. For instance, when Ophelia succeeds in drowning herself, the Queen sings about her in a song called "The Mermaid", and the Chorus sing, "Rule Britannia! Britannia rules the waves, Britons never, never, never shall be slaves!" (p.132). Interestingly, there are two tunes from Mozart's *Don Giovanni* in

the play. The use of classical music is a departure from the usual burlesque repertoire.

Dialect and rude slang have a considerable part to play in comprising *HAMLET!*'s humour. A.21. speaks with a Cockney accent: "And the next time missus 'as 'er hevening drums ,/ Jist bear in mend your Robert's partiality,/ For eyester patties; 'tis a work of charity" (p.77). There is some foul or rude language, "*Let not/ That naughty word escape -- or say it sot --- to voce*" (p.98-9), but not nearly as much as in earlier burlesques of *Hamlet*.. Comparing Ophelia to vegetables, "Than turnips whiter, than potatoes mealier, / Who can it be but lovely Miss Ophelia?" (p.107), may win a laugh for Hamlet, but language's greatest contribution to the humour of this play is the pun.

There are puns which call attention to themselves,

Horatio. What phantom? tell me.
A. 21. Oh! You air a *muff*.
Horatio. May I *in-fur* that you are joking?
 (p. 79)

puns which are related to the topic of discussion,

Horatio. His nose was always *puggy*.
A. 21. As *puggilistic noses* his.
Horatio. I *knows* it. (p. 81)

and puns which are topical, but are unrelated to the topic of discussion,

Queen. Enough of *Eatin', Harrowin'* fact, good Sir,
 (p.87).

There are puns on Shakespeare's language,

Hamlet. But to resume; this night a most bewitchin'
Play will be acted here in our back *kitchen*..
You mark my uncle.

Horatio. 'Tis the very thing/ For *kitchin'* of the conscience of
the king.

(p.112)

and puns which are simply cheeky,

Hamlet. (*speaking to Polonius about Ophelia*):
Why mayn't I *prop her* up? Why not, dear, lie
Within these arms? they are your *proper tie*
(p.113).

The author writes puns at every opportunity and works them into his rhyme scheme so well that a pun which ends one rhyme scheme often begins another.

Topical references, a further source of amusement, range from the political to the popular to Shakespeare. Names of politicians pepper the text, including those of political agitator Edmund Beales, Secretary of War, Sir John Somerset Pakington, and orator/ statesman John Bright. For instance, cries of "Reform! ", "Beales and Bright!" and "Down with the Tories!" (p.127) are heard when Laertes returns to court to seek revenge, and Fortinbras is claimed to have a Fenian Band with him.³⁰ However, despite the number of political references, nothing is made of them.

Popular references include place names such as Marlborough House, which was at that time the London residence of the Prince of Wales and is

³⁰ The Fenian Band were Irishmen and Irish sympathizers who raised insurrections in Ireland and twice tried to invade Canada.

the setting of *HAMLET!*'s first scene, and Cambridge, where Laertes is a student. These merely re-inforce the English setting for the play. More interesting is a poke at the Hanovers which may be a reference to King William IV.

A. 21. What, do you think it was the king?
Horatio. I do,/ I swear it was till I was black and blue.
 Those beery eyes and cheeks so full and pimply,
 I tell you 'twas his Royal Highness simply.
 (p.81).

Many non-political public figures are mentioned, including a string of literary ones. "I will not *Waver; lay . . .*" (p.123) and "Once *Falter* , and you shall go *Scot free*"(p.124) refer to the *Waverley* novels by Sir Walter Scott. Also mentioned are Tennyson, Wordsworth, Moore (either Thomas, an Irish poet, or Henry, Albert, John, and William -- three sons and a father, all painters) and Stuart Mill. Even Shakespeare gets a mention.

Polonius : Yes that's a mere preliminary move,
 Will to your royal highness' biceps prove
 A labour but of love.

Queen. Yet at your cost,
 If it fall out to be "Love's labour lost".
 (p.119).

A reference to events of the then present time is one to a meat shortage, also mentioned in *A Thin Slice of Ham let.*

And butchers' meat is so uncommon dear.
 That this piece of economy we've done,
 And lampooned the feast and funeral into one.
 (p.86-7).

Topical references are in the play because they, along with puns, songs and dances, became an ingredient for the burlesque and parodic humour formula.

We have come to expect this formula, yet are saved from being bored by it because each author puts a different twist on his play. Poole's burlesque is the first one and therefore is novel. Beckington develops the formula Poole invented into a lampoon of King William IV. The Oxford *Hamlet* centres on town and gown life. *Thin Slice* has a happy ending, and *HAMLET!* has a surprise ending. *HAMLET!*'s stage directions are an added interest for its reader, just as its reflexivity (*i.e.* calling attention to its parodic nature and the machinations of its plot and of its stage business) is for a reader or an audience. These parodies are all different yet they share the same formula for humour and are therefore variations on a theme. However, we are about to see a huge turn-about in the burlesqueing of *Hamlet*, for W.S. Gilbert throws aside the proven burlesque and parodic formula for something more original and more exciting.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern

by
W.S. Gilbert

For a nineteenth-century burlesque to have an aim other than entertainment was unusual. Burlesque was an extremely popular dramatic form in the nineteenth century, although its popularity was not centred on satiric or refined or improving purposes. " ' Smart writing, keen satire, and hard raps at social abuses, though they look well in print and are admired of critics and *habitues*, fail to elicit the loud roars that follow an ingeniously audacious pun, or a happy paraphrase or parody ', observed T.W. Robertson

on nineteenth-century burlesque." ³¹ William Schwenk Gilbert's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* (1874) is an unique literary work not only because it breaks with the nineteenth-century mould for burlesqueing *Hamlet* , but in so doing it becomes the first burlesque or indeed alteration of *Hamlet* to use Shakespeare's work to make direct comments on art, thereby revealing itself as an early precursor of twentieth-century ironic alterations of Shakespeare such as Charles Marowitz's *Hamlet* and Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* .

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern was written in 1874 and first appeared in three consecutive issues of the magazine *Fun* in December of that year. Its first performance, however, was not until 3 June 1891 at the Vaudeville Theatre in London. There are two versions of the play; one was printed in 1874, and one in 1891. The two versions have different endings which will be described shortly. The version discussed here is the 1891 version. The title page describes the play as "A TRAGIC EPISODE, IN THREE TABLEAUX, FOUNDED ON AN OLD DANISH LEGEND" (p.243) , and the "Dramatis Personae" lists Claudius, Gertrude, Hamlet, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, a First and Second Player and Ophelia. Hamlet is described as "*betrothed to Ophelia*", and Rosencrantz is described as "*in love with Ophelia*" (p.244).

The play strays from Shakespeare's storyline more than any other nineteenth-century burlesque of *Hamlet* ; indeed Gilbert's plot is very original. He gives a synopsis, or "argument" as he calls it, after the dramatis personae.

³¹ Booth, Michael R. *English Plays of the Nineteenth Century* , Vol. V (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p.28. Booth quotes from T.E. Pemberton. *The Life and Writings of T.W. Robertson* (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1893), p.113.

Argument.

King Claudius, when a young man, wrote a five-act tragedy which was damned, and all references to it forbidden under penalty of death. The King has a son -- Hamlet -- whose tendency to soliloquy has so alarmed his mother, Queen Gertrude, that she has sent for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, to devise some Court revels for his entertainment. Rosencrantz is a former lover of Ophelia (to whom Hamlet is betrothed), and they lay their heads together to devise a plan by which Hamlet may be put out of the way. Some court theatricals are in preparation. Ophelia and Rosencrantz persuade Hamlet to play his father's tragedy before the King and Court. Hamlet, who is unaware of the proscription, does so, and he is banished, and Rosencrantz happily united to Ophelia.

(p.244).

From Gilbert's argument we learn of the biggest changes to *Hamlet*. Hamlet is Claudius' son instead of his nephew and is only a secondary character. The play is about Rosencrantz's and Guildenstern's assignment to cheer Hamlet and about Rosencrantz's scheme to win Ophelia, hence the title -- *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*. Ophelia's unwanted betrothal to Hamlet and her love for Rosencrantz are clever alterations by Gilbert, but his master twist is to make Claudius the author of a failed and banned tragedy because it introduces the topic of dramaturgy and censorship into the play, making it a drama about drama. This is *not* a straightforward burlesque of Shakespeare's revenge tragedy; it goes beyond the introspection of other nineteenth-century *Hamlet* burlesques, where the self-referential language is mostly for humorous purposes. Gilbert's comments about drama are cloaked in comedy but are just as revealing as those statements on art by Tom Stoppard in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, *Dogg's Hamlet*; *Cahoot's Macbeth*, and *Travesties*.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern opens with Gertrude consoling Claudius, who is haunted by his Past -- *i.e.* the failure of his tragedy.

Claudius's play is a failure because he exaggerates his descriptions of emotions and circumstances with what Hamlet calls "windy fooling" (p.260). Lines which were intended to reduce the audience to tears reduce them to hysteric laughter.

Enter on platform a *Loving Couple*. Applause.

She.
Shouldst thou prove faithless?

He.
If I do
The(n) let the world forget to woo (*kneeling*),
The mountaintops bow down in fears,
The midday sun dissolve in tears,
And outraged nature, pale and bent,
Fall prostrate in bewilderment!
(*All titter through this -- breaking into a laugh at the end,
the King enjoying it more than anyone.*)

Ophelia.
Truly, sir, I hope he will prove faithful, lest we should all
be involved in this catastrophe.
(p.259)

Here Gilbert echoes great Romantic "unactables" like Byron's *Manfred* --

And you, ye crags, upon whose extreme edge
I stand, and on the torrent's brink beneath
Behold the tall pines dwindled as to shrubs
In dizziness of distance; when a leap,
A stir, a motion, even a breath, could bring
My breast upon its rocky bosom's bed
To rest for ever -- wherefore do I pause? ³²

and passages of second-rate, "poetic" pathetic fallacy in order to give the play a sense of scope, significance (nature in agreement) and expose its ridiculousness in Ophelia's reply. Gilbert is also mocking the extremely

³² Byron, Lord. *Manfred* (I.ii.13-19) from *The Works of Lord Byron. Poetry*, Ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge, rev.ed. (London: John Murray Co., 1901), Vol. 4.

popular nineteenth-century melodrama as well as the style of writing and acting of then-contemporary tragedies. At the time of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*'s 1874 publication, Irving, famous for acting Shakespeare and melodrama -- "often Shakespeare *as* melodrama" ³³ -- was appearing in *Hamlet* at the Lyceum. In the 1874 *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, which has a different ending from the 1891 version of the play, Hamlet is banished to the Lyceum.

Ophelia. Apollo's son, Lycaeus, built a fane
At Athens, where philosophers dispute:
'Tis known as the 'Lyceum'. Send him there,
He will find such a hearty welcome, sir,
That he will stay there, goodness knows how
long!

Claudius. Well, be it so -- and, Hamlet, get you gone!
(*He goes to the Lyceum, where he is much
esteemed.*) ³⁴

This is an obvious jab at Henry Irving. There is also an 1893 version of Gilbert's burlesque which is identical to the 1874 one, save an additional, final stage direction. "HAMLET rises, embraces OPHELIA, who expresses disgust, and then slowly crosses to R. and goes to the Lyceum, where he is much esteemed. As HAMLET goes off, the COURTIERS bow to him and OPHELIA throws herself into ROSENCRANTZ 's arms. Picture." ³⁵ Gilbert is also poking fun at himself. As a dramatist he worked in many of the popular nineteenth-century dramatic forms including pantomime, burlesque, comedy, farce, comic opera *and* melodrama, and therefore was almost undoubtedly guilty of "windy fooling". As an actor he certainly was.

³³ Rowell, George. *Plays by W.S. Gilbert* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p.18.

³⁴ Wells, Stanley, ed. *Nineteenth-Century Shakespeare Burlesques*, Vol. IV (London: Diploma Press, Ltd., 1978), p.xvi.

³⁵ Gilbert, W.S. *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* (London: Samuel French, 1893), p.24.

Gilbert played Claudius in a number of amateur productions of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* and at a charity matinee at the Garrick Theatre on 19 July 1904.

Melodrama remains a key target for Gilbert's satire throughout the play, as we shall see as we follow the plot. Claudius and Gertrude are concerned about their son's melancholy, which Gertrude hopes to cure by sending for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to "devise such revels in our Court -- / Such antic schemes of harmless merriment -- / As shall abstract his meditative mind / From sad employment "(p.247). Rosencrantz and Guildenstern encounter Ophelia soon after arriving, and Rosencrantz explains their presence.

Rosencrantz.

The Queen hath summoned us,
And I have come in a half-hearted hope
That I may claim once more my baby-love!

Ophelia.

Alas, I am betrothed!
(p.248)

Here Gilbert mocks melodrama again by employing two of its plot conventions: sudden discovery and revelation of a dire, secret problem.

Melodrama is not the sole object of Gilbert's dramatic scrutiny, however. Censorship is another target -- in the form of Claudius's play, as we have seen -- and operates via Polonius. Although Polonius is not listed in the *dramatis personae*, he is mentioned throughout the play for he is Lord Chamberlain, in charge of dramatic censorship, and therefore has the one remaining copy of Claudius's play. Ophelia describes him as spending "his long official days/ In reading all the rubbishing new plays" (p.250). She is

sent to find the manuscript, which she does, but is extremely upset by the experience.

Rosencrantz.

Why, what has happened that you tremble so?

Ophelia.

Last night I stole down from my room alone
 And sought my father's den. I entered it!
 The clock struck twelve, and then -- oh, horrible! --
 From chest and cabinet there issued forth
 The mouldy spectres of five thousand plays,
 All dead and gone -- and many of them damned!
 I shook with horror! They encompassed me,
 Chattering forth the scenes and parts of scenes
 Which my father wisely had cut out.
 Oh, horrible -- oh, 'twas most horrible! (p.254)

This description of banned plays coming to life (which foreshadows the portraits which come to life in Gilbert & Sullivan's *Ruddigore* [1887]) reminds us that dramatic censorship still existed and constituted, of course, one of the reasons for alteration and adaptation of plays. This passage is also mocking the censorship of art while condoning it -- ". . . parts of scenes/ Which my father *wisely* had cut out" (p.254). In describing to Hamlet the plot of Claudius's play, "Gonzago", ³⁶ Rosencrantz says it is "very long"(p.255) and that "The plot's impossible,/ And all the dialogue bombastic stuff" (p.256). Here again Gilbert seems to be mocking melodrama and the style of tragic acting of the day, and when Hamlet instructs Rosencrantz to "engage/ All the most fairly famed tragedians/ To play the small parts -- as tragedians should" (p.256), Gilbert implies that to give a tragedian a large part would ruin a play. Here it is the turgid style of acting, which was quite common in the nineteenth century, of which he is critical.

³⁶ The name of the play the players perform is maintained from *Hamlet* .

Hamlet's speech to the players contains the largest dose of dramatic criticism, however.

Hamlet.

. . . I have thought this a fit play to be presented by reason of that very pedantical bombast and windy obtrusive rhetorick that they do rightly despise. For I hold that there is no such antick fellow as your bombastical hero who doth so earnestly spout forth his folly as to make his hearers believe that he is unconscious of all incongruity; whereas, he who doth so mark, label, and underscore his antick speeches as to show that he is alive to their absurdity seemeth to utter them under protest, and to take part with his audience against himself. [*Turning to Players.*] For which reason, I pray you, let there be no huge red noses, nor extravagant monstrous wigs, nor coarse men garbed as women, in this comi-tragedy; for such things are as much as to say, 'I am a comick fellow -- I pray you laugh at me, and hold what I say to be cleverly ridiculous.' Such labelling of humour is an impertinence to your audience, for it seemeth to imply that they are unable to recognize a joke unless it be pointed out to them. I pray you, avoid it.

(p.258)

Gilbert says a lot about burlesque in this short speech. To begin with, he mocks his own play, for "pedantical bombast and windy obtrusive rhetorick" is just the description for this Claudius's manner of speaking. While Gilbert, via Hamlet, agrees that such a manner is despicable, he points out that it can be humorous if done in a way which indicates that the speaker is unaware of the manner in which he is speaking. To call attention to style of speech or humour, as characters in other *Hamlet* burlesques do -- e.g. "Observe, Polonius, I have made a pun"³⁷ -- detracts from the surprising effect and is an affront to the audience's intelligence as it "take(s) part with (the) . . . audience against (yourself) . . . Such labelling of humour is an impertinence to your audience, for it seemeth to imply that they are unable to recognize a

³⁷ *HAMLET; OR, NOT SUCH A FOOL AS HE LOOKS*, in Wells's *Burlesques*, Vol. IV. p.305. This burlesque will be discussed next.

joke unless it be pointed out to them" (p.258). In addition, Gilbert emphasizes subtle humour's superiority to slapstick. ". . . I pray you, let there be no huge red noses, nor extravagant monstrous wigs, nor coarse men garbed as women, in this comi-tragedy; for such things are as much to say, 'I am a comick fellow -- I pray you laugh at me, and hold what I say to be cleverly ridiculous' " (p.258). Overall these observations may apply to grotesque exaggerations in "straight" productions of *Hamlet* as well as burlesques of *Hamlet* , including Gilbert's own burlesque, which itself has elements of "pedantical bombast and windy obtrusive rhetorick" (p.258). The identification of bombastic dialogue surely could not have been Gilbert's motive for choosing Shakespeare's *Hamlet* , although he may have had in mind the "windy obtrusive rhetorick" expressed in contemporary theatrical productions of it and other plays, for the speech *does* point to melodramatic action, and melodrama was burlesque's favourite object of parody for over half a century.

The First Player's reply to Hamlet's speech is interesting because he says just the opposite of what Shakespeare's players say.

First Player.

Sir, we are beholden to you for your good counsels. But we would urge upon your consideration that we are accomplished players, who have spent many years in learning our profession; and we would venture to suggest that it would better befit your lordship to confine yourself to such matters as your lordship may be likely to understand. We, on our part, may have our own ideas as to the duties of heirs-apparent; but it would ill become us to air them before your lordship, who may be reasonably supposed to understand such matters more perfectly than your very humble servants.

(p.258)

This is a polite way of saying "Mind your own business. You don't know what you're talking about", and foreshadows Charles Marowitz's treatment

of Hamlet by having other characters in the play appear more knowledgeable and sensible than the prince. Not only does this plain speaking contrast with the players agreeing with Hamlet in Shakespeare, a contrast which points to possible toadying by Shakespeare's players, but it also mocks everything that has just been said about the art of burlesque. Hamlet sets out guidelines, and the First Player erases them. Gilbert gives rules for burlesque through Hamlet, some of which he follows, some of which he purposely ignores and by doing so leaves *himself* open to burlesque and to criticism. Then Gilbert turns around and, with the voice of the Player, says his rules amount to nothing. Hamlet's speech to the Players and their reply are the only direct parodies of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in Gilbert's play.

While the play makes direct comments on drama and acting through this parody of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, it nevertheless contains much "concealed" pastiche of Shakespeare's language which may be for one of several reasons. Perhaps it is part of the mockery of over-blown rhetoric as a substitute for real feeling in tragedy. Perhaps it is to point out our unfamiliarity with *Hamlet*'s text; we recognize the language of Shakespeare, but cannot identify the play to which it belongs. Perhaps he does it to avoid too close an association with Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, in order to emphasize his play's originality and to avoid any accusation that he is critical of Shakespeare's text. The many changes to Shakespeare's plot and to the details of *Hamlet*'s characters and story support this latter idea. This speech to the Players and their reply is the most significant example of direct parody, along with Ophelia's ". . . Oh, horrible -- oh, 'twas most horrible!" which is also taken from *Hamlet* I.v:80. However, the majority of the Shakespearian pastiches are from other plays.

Ophelia.

Alike for no two seasons at a time.
 Sometimes he's tall -- sometimes he's very short --
 Now with black hair -- now with a flaxen wig --
 Sometimes with an English accent -- then a French --
 Then English with a strong provincial "burr".
 Once an American, and once a Jew --
 But Danish never, take him how you will!
 And strange to say, whate'er his tongue may be,
 Whether he's dark or flaxen -- English -- French --
 Though we're in Denmark, A.D., ten -- six -- two
 He always dresses as King James the First!
 (p.249)

This passage from Gilbert is reminiscent of the exchange between Hamlet and Polonius over the shape of a cloud, --

HAMLET Do you see yonder cloud that's almost in shape
 of a camel?
 POLONIUS By th' mass and 'tis: like a camel, indeed.
 HAMLET Methinks it is like a weasel.
 POLONIUS It is backed like a weasel.
 HAMLET Or like a whale.
 POLONIUS Very like a whale.
Hamlet III.ii.367-73.

-- but is stylistically closer to *Midsummer Night's Dream* -- "Puck.
 Sometimes a horse I'll be, sometimes a hound,/ A hog, a headless bear,
 sometime a fire" (*Midsummer Night's Dream* III.i.103-4) -- or to *The Tempest*
 : "Ariel. . . . now on the beak, / Now in the waist, the deck, in every cabin, / I
 flam'd amazement. Sometimes I'd divide,/ And burn in many places;" (*The
 Tempest* I.ii.196-9). Ophelia's description does call to mind a line from
Pericles : "You sometimes famous princes, like thyself, / Drawn by report"
 (*Pericles* I.i.35-6), as it also pokes fun at the variety of actors who have played
 Hamlet and with what kinds of accent they have spoken Shakespeare, at the
 Elizabethan-style costume which many Hamlets had worn since Kemble
 introduced it in 1783, and at various critical interpretations of *Hamlet* .

Another example of parodying or pastiching Shakespeare's text is Rosencrantz's attempt to convince Hamlet to perform Claudius's play.

Rosencrantz.

'Tis an excellent poor tragedy, my lord --
a thing of shreds and patches welded into a form
that hath mass without consistency, like
an ill-built villa.

(p.257)

Rosencrantz's lines echo the words and cadences of the following ones:

Hamlet. A king of shreds and patches --

Hamlet III.iv.9102.

Macbeth. It is a tale

Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

Macbeth V.v.27.

Alongside this unusual interest in dramaturgy, Gilbert employs innovative techniques which are allied to those of his later operas. He chooses to write in blank verse rather than the standard burlesque form of rhyming couplets. Rather than rely on the usual nineteenth-century burlesque formula of superficial, sound-based comedy -- puns, songs, and dances -- Gilbert creates situations and dialogue which are themselves amusing and, though they seem very simple and straightforward, were quite innovative in the field of burlesque writing. The play does certainly contain a few puns.

Queen. And did the play succeed?

Claudius. In one sense, yes.

Queen. Oh, I was sure of it!

Claudius. A farce was given to play the people in --
My tragedy succeeded that. That's all!

(p.246)

Claudius. . . . I wrote an Act by way of epilogue --
 An act by which the penalty of death
 Was meted out to all who sneered at it.
 The play was not good -- but the punishment
 Of those who listened to it was capital.
 (p.247)

However, it does not contain a single song, which is surprising considering the trend for them in burlesque and also Gilbert's operatic partnership (begun in 1871) with Sullivan. Sullivan was not party to this work, although Gilbert, as a lyricist, could surely have adapted words to any well-known song. Instead, he chooses to concentrate on humour within his text. For instance, a very "Gilbert and Sullivan" device is used when Ophelia explains why her father has the only copy of Claudius's banned play: "*Ophelia*. In his capacity/ As our Lord Chamberlain* he has *one* copy. *All bow reverentially at mention of this functionary" (p.250). This sort of reaction -- showing respect to a person, institution, or convention being made fun of -- is a common feature of the Gilbert and Sullivan operas. Another feature of the operas is the existence of a plot and a sub-plot within the same work. This feature occurs here but is more aptly described as text (*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*) and sub-text (*Hamlet*), for Gilbert's work is only loosely based on Shakespeare's.

But of all his new departures -- ironic discussion of dramaturgy, hints of comic techniques to be developed later -- Gilbert's ability to weave in and out of a play is the most revealing for the study of twentieth-century burlesques of Shakespeare. He uses Shakespeare's plot as a basic framework and a common dramatic language to build upon, but then he surprises us by doing something completely different with it. Gilbert's play weaves in and out of Shakespeare's in such a way that we are simultaneously aware of both works and are not always certain which one we are in. This characteristic

makes *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* the most self-referential of all the nineteenth-century burlesques of *Hamlet*. For example, with a look back at Shakespeare and a jab at the critics, Gilbert's characters discuss Hamlet's condition:

Guildenstern. Oh, he is surely mad!

Ophelia. Well, there again
Opinion is divided. Some men hold
That he's the sanest, far, of all sane men --
Some that he's really sane but shamming mad--
Some that he's really mad, but shamming sane--
Some that he will be mad, some that he was --
Some that he couldn't be. But on the whole
(As far as I can make out what they mean)
The favourite theory's somewhat like this:
Hamlet is idiotically sane
With lucid intervals of lunacy.
(p.249)

While this summation is three-tiered -- simultaneously describing Shakespeare's Hamlet, Gilbert's Hamlet, and what the critics think of Shakespeare's Hamlet -- the following observation is mocking the way actors have played Hamlet and therefore describes the "seen" Hamlet, the interpreted Hamlet, the second-hand Hamlet, rather than the intellectually conceived Hamlet of the mind which is what Ophelia describes above.

Rosencrantz. How gloomily he stalks,
As one o'erwhelmed with weight of anxious care.
He thrusts his hand into his bosom -- thus --
Starts -- looks around -- then, as if reassured,
Rumples his hair and rolls his glassy eyes!

Queen. (*Appalled.*) -- That means -- he's going to
soliloquize!

(p.251)

The Queen asks Rosencrantz to "(p)revent this' . . . 'by any means! " (p.251) and the way in which he and Guildenstern do so contrasts Hamlet the prince with Hamlet the actor.

- Hamlet.* To be -- or not to be!
- Rosencrantz.* Yes -- that's the question ---
Whether he's bravest who will cut his throat
Rather than suffer all ----
- Guildenstern.* Or suffer all
Rather than cut his throat ?
- Hamlet.* (*Annoyed at interruption, says, 'Go away -- go away!' then resumes.*) --- To die --
to sleep ---
- Rosencrantz.* It's nothing more --- Death is but sleep
spun out ---
Why hesitate? (*Offers him a dagger.*)
- Guildenstern.* The only question is
Between the choice of deaths, which death
to choose. (*Offers him a revolver.*)
- Hamlet.* (*In great terror.*) -- Do take those dreadful
things away. They make
My blood run cold. Go away -- go away!
(*They turn aside. Hamlet resumes.*) To
sleep, perchance to ---
- Rosencrantz.* Dream.
That's very true. I never dream myself,
But Guildenstern dreams all night long out
loud!
- (p.252)

Gilbert weaves in and out of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in much the same way as Tom Stoppard will do nearly a century later in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* , albeit for a different purpose. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern interrupt Hamlet periodically, breaking him out of his Shakespearian mould and revealing his feeling and thoughts as an actor. The actor Hamlet's horror when confronted with death (Rosencrantz and

Guildestern offer him a dagger and a revolver) suggests that his soliloquy is mere stagey posturing, far removed from real feeling. Marowitz's Hamlet is represented as the coward that is implied by Gilbert. Stoppard's Guildestern reminds us of the "real" distinction between art and life, feigning and reality, in his arguments about death with the Player King. The blurring of the distinction between Hamlet the prince and Hamlet the actor, between art and reality, is maintained as Gilbert's Rosencrantz and Guildestern continue to interrupt Hamlet. He becomes angry and finally says,

Hamlet. (*Really angry.*) --- Gentlemen,
 It must be patent to the merest dunce
 Three persons can't soliloquize at once!
 (*Rosencrantz and Guildestern retire,
 Guildestern goes off.*)
 (*Aside.*) --- They're playing on me! Playing
 upon *me*
 Who am not fashioned to be played upon!
 Show them a pipe --- a thing of holes and stops
 Made to be played on --- and they'll shrink
 abashed
 And swear they have not skill on *that* ! Now
 mark--
 (*Aloud.*) ---- Rosencrantz! Here!
 (*Producing a flute as Rosencrantz comes.*)
 This is a well-toned flute;
 Play me an air upon it. Do not say
 You do not know *how* ! (*Sneeringly.*)

Rosencrantz. Nay, but I *do* know how.
 I'm rather good upon the flute --- observe ---
 (*Plays eight bars of hornpipe, then politely
 returns flute to Hamlet.*)

Hamlet. (*Peevishly.*) ---- Oh, thankye. (*Aside.*)
 Everything goes wrong!

(p.253-4).

In this short speech and exchange with Rosencrantz, Hamlet makes three points. First of all, he calls both attention and a halt to the humorous shenanigans of Rosencrantz and Guildestern finishing his sentences and interrupting his thoughts by making the practical observation: "Three

persons can't soliloquize at once!" (p.253). Secondly, he tells us exactly what Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are doing, "They're playing on me!" (p.253) *i.e.* taking over and making fun of the role of Hamlet, thus irritating Hamlet the actor. The end result is that both prince and actor appear incompetent. Gilbert has Rosencrantz and Guildenstern interrupt Hamlet not only for humorous reasons, but for serious ones as well. By turning the play inside out and exposing the thoughts and feelings of Hamlet the actor, he makes us think about the sincerity of Hamlet's anxiety. Rather than hearing and automatically accepting Shakespeare's famous words, we now reconsider the meaning behind those words. Rosencrantz surprises Hamlet and upsets Shakespeare's plot once again for a lighter, comic, effect when he proves he can play the flute and proceeds to play a hornpipe. Hamlet tells us Gilbert's third point, if we haven't guessed by now, that "Everything goes wrong!" (p.254) in this topsy-turvy version of *Hamlet* ; however, the confusion is necessary to serve Gilbert's purposes.

That is Gilbert's intention. *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* is more than a burlesque of *Hamlet* . It is a humorous work capable of standing on its own artistic merits which, aside from entertainment, also serves to make us think about some of the meanings behind Shakespeare's *Hamlet* . Gilbert's play is a dramatic essay on melodrama and burlesque, as discussed earlier, and on some aspects of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* such as the degree to which Hamlet is mad and the impact of the meaning behind his soliloquies.

Why did Gilbert write such a work? While other nineteenth-century *Hamlet* burlesques may have employed melodramatic techniques, they did not use them to comment on melodrama. John Poole, in his Hamlet's speech to the Players (*Hamlet Travestie* , 1810), poked fun at then-contemporary actors, and a few other *Hamlet* burlesques made passing jokes

or puns about actors, but no one else did what Gilbert did. Gilbert was the first dramatist to use *Hamlet* to comment on art. In *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, he uses art to discuss art: criticizing melodrama and bombastic acting styles, discussing rules for burlesque and the degree to which Shakespeare's Hamlet is mad or hypocritical, gesturing at censorship, and reminding us that art is only ever an approximation to life. But what motivated Gilbert to write a play about art, about drama?

As a dramatist, Gilbert was adept at nearly all of the popular nineteenth-century dramatic forms, and therefore was well aware of their advantages and faults as well as the current trends in theatre. Social comment was always a particular interest of Gilbert's -- the Savoy Operas are full of jibes at social and political institutions -- and he continues to parody the conventions of melodrama in his later plays, *Tom Cobb* (1875) and *Engaged* (1877), earning him the "flattery of imitation by Shaw (in the prevailing tone of *Arms and the Man*) and Wilde (in both tone and specific incidents in *The Importance of Being Earnest*)".³⁸ Therefore, *Hamlet*'s potential as a basis for dramatic criticism and commentary must have been obvious to Gilbert when he wrote *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* .

Gilbert was a man ahead of his time. Not only did some of the ideas in his plays inspire George Bernard Shaw and Oscar Wilde, but his ironic treatment of *Hamlet* foreshadows the works of *Hamlet* adaptors Charles Marowitz and Tom Stoppard nearly a century later. At the end of the 1891 version of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* , Hamlet is sent to England and Ophelia notes, "If but the half I've heard of them be true/ They will enshrine him in their great good hearts,/ And men will rise or sink in good esteem/ According as they worship him, or slight him!" (p.262). Marowitz and

³⁸ Rowell, *Plays* , p.13.

Stoppard have certainly risen in our esteem for seeing *Hamlet*'s potential for adaptation and artistic commentary, but Gilbert should be recognised as their precursor.

HAMLET; OR NOT SUCH A FOOL AS HE LOOKS

HAMLET; OR NOT SUCH A FOOL AS HE LOOKS (1882) [hereafter referred to as *NOT SUCH A FOOL*] was written by the author of *The Light Green* (whom Wells names as A.C. Hilton) and is an ingenious work which possibly shows the influence of Gilbert's burlesque. Structurally, this work is very interesting because of the way in which Hilton shapes the plot. The play opens to a chess match between the King and the Queen. The Queen wins the match, and the King starts an argument in which they each declare how much they prefer their former spouse. The Queen even goes so far as to wish that the late King would return from the grave. In the mean time, Hamlet conjures up the Ghost, who tells him he was murdered by Claudius and that, in order to convict Claudius of the crime, Hamlet must go mad. Hamlet reluctantly agrees. In this burlesque Ophelia avidly pursues Hamlet and pressures him to propose, which he does. The proposal is interpreted by the court as being a sign of madness in Hamlet and, as a way to cure him of it, Polonius suggests some entertainment by a Showman and his Punch and Judy act. Their performance leads Claudius to confess to murder. Hamlet condemns Claudius to death by decapitation, but then pardons him. Polonius moves that Hamlet reign as King and all agree. This burlesque suggests that Hamlet is *not* such a fool as the Hamlets in previous burlesques.

There are nice twists all through this plot which make it a more original and more entertaining burlesque of *Hamlet* than many of its predecessors. To begin with, this is the first burlesque to suggest that the King and Queen do not like each other. Not only do they argue, but each compares the other to his or her former spouse. This is a complete change from Shakespeare, where Claudius and Gertrude are (according to Hamlet) too happily married and in which there is no suggestion that Claudius has been previously married.

Secondly, Hamlet conjures up his father's ghost by turning a table; an idea possibly derived from current public interest in the paranormal. When the ghost arrives, "*Hamlet is perfectly unmoved* " (p.307), which is a contrast to Shakespeare's text and to the way in which actors played Hamlet's response to the ghost. As mentioned before, actors' reputations as Hamlet often relied on the way they acted certain scenes, and the ghost scene was one of the most important. The Ghost announces that Hamlet must go "*stark staring mad* " in order to convict Claudius. Hamlet is unsure of this ruse.

(*Aside .*) -- What would my own Ophelia say to see
Her Hamlet raving mad! (*Aloud .*) Your plan may be
First-rate, but somehow I don't see its beauty.
(p.309)

However, the Ghost assures him, "You must become, though it may not be pleasant,/ A greater idiot than you are at present" (p.309). The Ghost then whispers to Hamlet why this is necessary. Hamlet ends the scene by revealing answers to questions scholars have debated about Shakespeare's *Hamlet* such as, 'Was Hamlet mad or simply pretending to be mad?' and 'Was his own ambition for the throne the incentive for Hamlet's conviction of Claudius?'.

Hamlet . My madness must have method. If I rile 'em
 They'll put me in the lunatic asylum.
 How would it pay me to have laid my plan well,
 If I was under lock and key at Hanwell?
 (p.309)

Here this Hamlet takes pains to prevent his being sent away for being insane. As he continues speaking, he reveals his ambitions.

Let me succeed though in my deep design,
 And whose will Denmark's crown be then but mine?
 Who will sit proudly on my father's throne?
 I, Hamlet, will, if I *ham let* alone.
 (p.310)

This Hamlet plans to what extent he will pretend to be mad, and his desire to rule Denmark joins revenge as motives for a scheme to expose Claudius.

Another twist in the tale is that Ophelia chases Hamlet: "Prince Hamlet is so very hard to catch,/ I really cannot bring him to the scratch" (p.310). Instead of him sending her gifts, the reverse is the case: "I send him pretty little notes -- he tears them,/ I work him smoking caps -- he never wears them" (p.310). Despite these actions, we know Hamlet is interested in Ophelia from his concern about her seeing him mad. His interest re-emerges when he hears her entering the room.

But soft. I hear a step. I must dissemble. (*Listens* .)
 'Tis she! My manly bosom does thou tremble?
 Shall I resume my maniac's hateful mask?
 No, no -- deception were too hard a task --
 I'll pluck the mask from off my honest brow!
 I shall be made a fool of anyhow.
 (p.314)

His "To be or not to be" soliloquy follows but begins "To pop, or not to pop the fatal question?" (p.314). Hamlet decides to propose, and Ophelia accepts. The King, overhearing the proposal, tells Ophelia that she must disregard all Hamlet has said because he is mad.

Hamlet . (Aside .) -- Confusion, why this madness did I feign?
Ophelia . 'Twas love of me that made my prince insane.
Hamlet . (Aside .) -- It happens it was just the other way.
 (p.315)

Rather than unrequited love driving him insane, insanity leads him to fall in love with Ophelia. Although we have seen the Hamlet and Ophelia love-story embellished in previous burlesques, we are more acquainted with their thoughts in this one.

Another feature which has appeared in a previous burlesque (Beckington's) and which is elaborated upon here is the replacement of "The Mousetrap" with the Punch and Judy act. Here Punch and Judy join forces with the Showman (who is an entirely new addition) to produce a confession from Claudius. The Showman sings about his show, saying, "This superior performance/ Is not understood;" (p.317), and goes on to add,

The taste of the public
 Has fallen so low,
 The legitimate drama
 Is really no go.
 (p.318)

That the Showman regards the puppets Punch and Judy as legitimate drama, and therefore ranks them above "conjurers, minstrels, and marionettes" (p.318), is an ironic joke. Punch and Judy perform, and "*The King shows very strong emotion at the tragic parts*" (p.318). Claudius notes that "Punch was a murderer, and I'm another./ He killed his wife, and I dispatched my brother" (p.319). When the Showman tells him of his plans to repeat the performance "in the public street" (p.319), the King faints. When Claudius recuperates, he says, "That Punch and Judy has compelled my tongue" (p.319). The ridiculousness of Punch and Judy moving the King to confess is wonderfully amusing. Hamlet confirms Claudius's confession, saying that Claudius shot King Hamlet in order to succeed to the throne.

That Hamlet becomes king is remarkable. It is one of the most obvious things that could happen in a burlesque of *Hamlet*, and one half-expects it to happen when reading earlier burlesques. However, previous burlesquers have preferred to ridicule Hamlet rather than reward him. A weak Hamlet is much more in line with Shakespeare's story. More often than not, in both straight and comic versions of *Hamlet*, Hamlet has been portrayed as an indecisive, procrastinating prince rather than a man of action. There is obviously more room for satirical, social or political comment by keeping the plot close to Shakespeare's.

Another reason for the various changes to the plot is humour. A squabbling King and Queen, a Hamlet hounded by Ophelia, a Punch and Judy act which brings about justice -- all are very funny. There are also the usual types of burlesque humour present in *NOT SUCH A FOOL*, including physical gags, puns, topical references, and music. As in other burlesques, physical humour plays an important role in the entertainment. To prove he is mad, Hamlet performs various antics which are described in the stage directions.

Enter King and Hamlet from opposite doors. Hamlet runs his head into the King's stomach and doubles him up; then performs various antics about the stage.

(p.312)

Physical humour also joins forces with verbal humour.

Enter Hamlet, who falls over Polonius.

Hamlet . Ha, crawling on the floor! Just like your slyness.
Polonius . Picking up chessmen, please your royal highness,
 A knight is missing. Would you hold the light?

Hamlet . No, wait for *day* , and never mind the *knight* .
 Observe, Polonius, I have made a pun.
 (p.305)

This reflexive stage-consciousness, calling attention to his pun, is just the sort of humour Gilbert warns against in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* . By pointing out his comic effort, Hamlet diminishes its effect. Examples of topical humour include Hamlet calling up his father's ghost by turning and tapping a table.

Hamlet . Why didn't you answer when I tapped?
Ghost . Young chap,
 You don't draw *spirits* always with a *tap* .
Hamlet . Spirits and tap! Ha, ha, you funny dog!
 (*Pokes him in the ribs .*)
 (p.307)

Ghosts and spirit-tapping or rapping have been mentioned in previous *Hamlet* burlesques, and Hamlet's seance-like calling of his father's ghost is another example which points to public interest in the supernatural. Like the examples of physical humour, this exchange between Hamlet and the Ghost is also reflexive.

As in other burlesques, music has a humorous role to play. Unlike some of the previous ones, however, there seems to be a purpose for every song here. Hilton weaves them into the script so that they contribute to plot as well as provide entertainment.

Hamlet Now to say something utterly insane.
 Wanted some nonsense. Well, I can't be wrong
 If I perform a fashionable song.

(*Sings any extravagantly sentimental song, and exit .*)

Queen . Alas! I must believe the dreadful fact,
 The poor dear boy has gone completely cracked.
 Such idiotic singing proves him mad. (p.316)

In this example, the song's *raison d'être* is given before and after. It is a fluid transition from one idea to another, as opposed to instances in previous burlesques when songs are often inserted in texts for entertainment yet seem to have no relation to the plot whatsoever. This tighter craftsmanship may be a result of Hilton having read Gilbert's burlesque in which Gilbert gives reasons for actions and humour (although he has no songs in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*), or Hilton may possibly have seen a Gilbert and Sullivan production in which the transition between text and song is seamless. Another example of Hilton song transitions is the King's and Queen's chess squabble which develops into a song about their dislike for one another. Justifying his use of songs and comic devices is only one of the things for which the author is indebted to Gilbert. The overall style of *NOT SUCH A FOOL* is much tighter than previous burlesques of *Hamlet*. Hilton relies less on slapstick humour and puns, although there are a few of the latter, and concentrates more on providing situations for comic effect.

Aside from Gilbert's influence, there are clues that this author may have read *Thin Slice* and *HAMLET!* as well. As previously mentioned, jokes about spirits and table-rapping are common in *Thin Slice* and in this work. In *HAMLET!*, the characters are instructed to sit for the play scene "after Maclise's picture" (p.113). In *NOT SUCH A FOOL*, instructions are given for the costumes of all characters, save the Ghost and the Showman, to "be copied from Maclise's well-known picture, 'The play-Scene in Hamlet'" (p.302).

Other similarities between *NOT SUCH A FOOL* and previous *Hamlet* burlesques indicate that Hilton was familiar with the techniques of the

burlesque tradition, regardless of whether or not he had read other *Hamlet* burlesques. In addition to structural and stylistic improvements which were possibly a result of Gilbert's influence, this play also makes reference to various literary works and figures, following in the tradition of *HAMLET!*, among other burlesques. For example, there are several allusions to Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. After one series of shenanigans, Hamlet declares, "I am the original mad hatter!" (p.312). Polonius counters, "You tell me you are a mad hatter, but then/ I've always found hatters the shrewdest of men" (p.313). Ophelia tells Hamlet, "Ophelia would be faithful to you if you were/ Mad as the hatter or the wild March hare" (p.315). Published in 1865, *Alice in Wonderland* and its characters obviously were very well known by the time *NOT SUCH A FOOL* was written, and this burlesque's author apparently enjoyed drawing such parallels between Hamlet and the characters of Carroll's fantasy. *HAMLET!* had incorporated literary names into sentences by breaking down the names into syllables and using them for various parts of speech. "Is't wonderful thaT *any son* should say so?" (p.128) and "Your *Word's worth* nothing; tell me lies no *Moore*" (p.128) are just two examples from *HAMLET!* *NOT SUCH A FOOL* now goes one step further by quoting lines from various authors and then naming the authors. These lines are used by Polonius in a speech to Hamlet.

---Alas! what are these fancies that affect
 Your usually brilliant intellect?
 Why treat your uncle with such inhumanity?
 Are these indeed the symptoms of insanity?
 Is this the little rift within the lute
 That by-and-bye will make the music mute?
(*Aside to audience* .) Tennyson.
 Why roll so fearfully your eagle eyes?
(*Aside to audience* .) Shakespeare.
 Why let your naughty, angry passions rise?
(*Aside to audience* .) Watt's Hymns.
 Why speak so wildly in a tongue unknown?

Why banish queenly reason from her throne?

(*Aside to audience* .) Polonius.

Why do you err from honest Nature's rule?

(*Aside to audience* .) Tennyson again.

But to be brief --- Why play the common fool?

(p.313)

The technique of using famous lines from literature in a different context is humorous on its own, but Hilton expands it by having Polonius quote himself. The "serious" questioning by Polonius is also amusing for the inclusion of the authors' names. Hilton uses other writers' work and puts it in a different context for humorous reasons. This comic device not only reflects the burlesque and parodic treatment of Shakespeare, but also anticipates a time when Shakespeare's words will be used to carry specific messages for artistic, social and political reasons. Like these authors, Shakespeare is chosen because his works are a part of our vernacular.

Overall, *NOT SUCH A FOOL* is delightful entertainment. It manipulates Shakespeare's plot in a way that earlier burlesque playwrights would never have dreamed of doing. Poole, remember, kept his story-line very close to that of Shakespeare's for fear of seeming critical of Shakespeare. The humour in *NOT SUCH A FOOL* is also a result of greater stylistic freedom and innovation. Following a trail blazed by the authors of *Thin Slice* and *HAMLET!*, and Gilbert, Hilton is no longer dependent upon puns, dances, songs and slapstick for humour. These devices (with the exception of dancing) are used, but the altered plot allows for more comic situations than did the careful parodies of Poole and Beckington. Thanks (possibly) to Gilbert, wit is more cherished than coarse or silly humour. Perhaps the most interesting feature in this burlesque is its Hamlet, who is unlike any Hamlet we have seen in this genre. Neither fat, nor stupid, nor an indecisive prince, this Hamlet is almost unwillingly drawn into the

comic action. He is, if you like, the burlesque's straight man. That he becomes King is the crowning of the burlesque Hamlet's maturity. In no other adaptation that I know of, straight or comic, does Hamlet become King. The reason for this is two-fold. Not only is Hamlet becoming King too much like a fairytale, but the story of the cautious, tragic Hamlet is simply more interesting. Also, as mentioned earlier, there is obviously more scope for interpretation in the story of a tragic Hamlet.

Ironically, the crowning of Hamlet in *NOT SUCH A FOOL* not only signals the coming of age of the burlesque Hamlet, but also the beginning of the end of an era for the burlesque tradition which was built on puns, slang, music and dancing, special stage effects, physical gags, political, social, and topical allusions, stage-conscious reflexivity, and wit. The *Hamlet* burlesque tradition, which had begun with respectful parodies of Shakespeare's play with a few puns, songs, and topical allusions included, had grown into a very popular form of entertainment which included all of the above devices, but was only loosely based on *Hamlet*, and which provided comic and satiric comment on social, political and theatrical events and personalities. However, as the nineteenth century drew to a close, the popularity of the burlesque began to wane. The latter part of the century saw burlesque move from professional productions to amateur performances. There was also a return to the practice, common in the earlier half of the century, of presenting burlesques for reading only.

The burlesque genre had progressed from gentle parodies written by amateurs at the beginning of the century for a reading and a theatre public, to extravagant travesties which were often written expressly for the stage by professional comic writers in the middle of the century, to elegant and witty burlesques by professional writers (J.M. Barrie and A.A. Milne are two of the

more famous names, although they are not famous for their burlesques) at the end of the century, to burlesques again written by amateurs at the turn of the century. The heyday of burlesque was the middle of the nineteenth century; as audience tastes grew more refined, burlesque gradually lost its hold on the public to musical comedy, comic opera and the operas of Gilbert and Sullivan. Dramatists turned their attention to these new favourites and to the serious drama which was promoted by Shaw and Ibsen.

Hamlet was a very popular play to burlesque and parody in the nineteenth century; the burlesques discussed here represent only a fraction of known examples of *Hamlet* parodies and burlesques. "Burlesque was a part of the Victorian cultural phenomenon of parody. In cartoons, in prose and poetry, in comic journalism, comic opera and plays, Victorians relentlessly parodied any possible and well-known target they could find."³⁹ *Hamlet* not only provided a target but also a means to an end for parody. *Hamlet* was (and still is) considered to be the greatest Shakespearean tragedy; the more serious a play is, the better suited it is for parody. *Hamlet*'s plot easily guaranteed its targetting by parodists.

In addition to the host of parodic and burlesque plays, scenes, and passages, *Hamlet* was also the subject of numerous social and political cartoons and was even used for advertising purposes. Despite being used primarily for comic purposes, these *Hamlet* burlesques were also used for something much more serious. They were able to do something straight drama could not do in the nineteenth century -- make political and social comment. Whereas serious drama was legally prohibited from alluding to political situations and personages, especially royal ones, Beckington's

³⁹ Booth, Michael R. *Theatre in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p.196.

Hamlet lampoons King William IV outright, and *Thin Slice* has much to say about Britain's role in the Schleswig-Holstein situation. Despite the censors prohibiting such phrases as "By Heaven" in straight drama, the characters (male and female) in some of the burlesque *Hamlet*s swear often, even taking the Lord's name in vain. These *Hamlet*s also criticise and comment on the drama of the day as well as reflecting the Romantic conceptions of *Hamlet* which influenced the serious versions of the play. The gentler treatment of Ophelia by Hamlet in the straight versions is reflected in the love scenes in the burlesque plays, and the thinking, delaying Hamlet of the straight *Hamlet*s becomes Hamlet-the-incompetent in the burlesques. In addition to reflecting the political, social, and theatrical events of their day, these burlesques also anticipate future trends in serious *Hamlet*s. For example, in the first half of the nineteenth century there was such a thing as a "Dog Hamlet". In this condensed version of *Hamlet*, a dog would accompany Hamlet during the play and in the final scene would be let loose at Claudius, almost pinning him to the ground while Hamlet killed him.⁴⁰ There will be much stranger *Hamlet*s than this in the twentieth century; there will also be a curiously-named adaptation/off-shoot of *Hamlet* by Tom Stoppard called *Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth*. Also, the nonchalant attitude of the players in Gilbert's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* foreshadows the attitude of the players in Peter Hall's production of *Hamlet* and in Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* in the 1960s. Gilbert's treatment of Hamlet anticipates numerous ineffectual twentieth-century Hamlets, including Charles Marowitz's. But these are just a few specific incidents. The point is that it is another century before serious productions of *Hamlet* catch up with burlesque *Hamlet*s in their treatment of art and politics.

⁴⁰ Mander and Mitcheson, p.24.

CHAPTER III THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Twentieth-Century Burlesques and Parodies

Despite the decline in popularity of Shakespearean burlesques and parodies at the end of the nineteenth century, the genre did carry over into the twentieth century and continued to reflect the current literary styles and current literary criticism and to comment on the latest trends in theatre production. The kind of parody which elaborated on the personalities and activities of Shakespeare's characters and reflected the sort of character criticism practised in the nineteenth century was very popular in the early part of the century. In *Lost Diaries* (a collection of parodies which originally appeared in the *Eye Witness*, the *New Witness*, and the *Morning Post* around the turn of the century), Maurice Baring records the daily activities of famous characters. A chapter is devoted to excerpts "FROM THE DIARY OF HAMLET, PRINCE OF DENMARK, DURING HIS STAY AT ENGLAND, WHITHER HE WAS SENT TO STUDY AT THE UNIVERSITY AT OXFORD, UNDER THE SPECIAL CARE OF POLONIUS". This parody speculates on events before those in Shakespeare's play. Hamlet is at Balliol College, where he is friends with Horatio, a German undergraduate named Faustus, and a Spanish student named Quixote who advises him on how to get his revenge on Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, whom Hamlet knows to have rifled through his possessions.

Balliol College, Monday. --- Read aloud my Essay on Equality to the Master. It began: "Treat all men as your equals, especially the rich." The Master commented on this sentence. He said, "Very ribald, Prince Hamlet, very ribald."

In training for the annual fencing match between the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Doing my utmost to reduce my flesh, which is far too solid. . . .

Thursday. ---Coached by Polonius for two hours in Scottish history. Very tedious. In the afternoon went on the river in my boat the "Ophelia." Faustus has been sent down for trying to raise the Devil in the precincts of the College. It appears this is strictly against the rules. His excuse was that he had always understood that the College authorities disbelieved in a personal devil. To which the Dean replied: "We are all bound to believe in the Devil in a *spiritual* sense, Mr. Faustus." And Faustus imprudently asked in what other sense you could believe in him. ¹

Hamlet is eventually sent down for misconduct and goes to Wittenberg, as his father requests. In *Dead Letters* (a collection of parodies which originally appeared in the *Morning Post* at the turn of the century), Maurice Baring transforms Shakespeare's characters by making them speak like characters in Edwardian plays and novels. "AT THE COURT OF KING CLAUDIUS" is a letter by one of the players in *Hamlet*. The letter describes the events surrounding the play Hamlet has asked them to perform and recounts court gossip.

During the whole of the next day we were busy in study and rehearsal. The Lord Chamberlain was somewhat concerned as to the nature of the performance we were to give. He desired to be present at a rehearsal, but here again the Prince intervened with impetuous authority. The Lord Chamberlain then sought me out in person and said that he earnestly trusted there would be nothing either in the words of the play or in the manner in which it should be played that would give offence to the illustrious audience. . . .

Elsinore, like all courts, was rife with gossip, the common talk being that the Prince was courting the daughter of the Chamberlain, who, owing to the position she occupied, they professed to find beautiful, and who in reality is but an insipid minx and likely to develop on the lines of her doddering old father, while they say that she will not hear of his suit, being secretly but passionately enamoured of one of the minor courtiers, by name Osric.²

¹ Baring, Maurice. *Lost Diaries* (London: Duckworth & Co., 1913), pp. 206-207 and p. 212.

² Baring, Maurice. *Dead Letters* (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1938. [Re-print of the 1910 book with two additions.]), pp.104-105.

A burlesque which takes speculation on character and event a step further and concentrates on what happened after the end of *Hamlet*, is *The New Wing At Elsinore* (1901). The author explains that a sequel was necessary in order to clarify the political situation at the close of *Hamlet*. Horatio has ended up with the crown because Fortinbras was too slow. The action of the play shows Horatio confiding to a visiting Fortinbras that because the castle is haunted by those who died in *Hamlet*, he is turning it over to them and building a new wing for himself. However, Horatio soon discovers that this new wing is haunted by Shakespeare. The following scene is, perhaps, the most interesting in the play for its parodying of Elizabethan English.

SCENE II. --- *Before the New Wing of the Castle. the two CLOWNS, formerly gravediggers but now employed with equal appropriateness as builders, are working on the structure in the extremely leisurely fashion to be expected of artisans who are not members of a Trade Union.*

1ST CLOWN

[*In his best Elizabethan manner.*] Nay, but hear you, goodman builder ----

2ND CLOWN

[*In homely vernacular.*] Look here, Bill, you can drop that jargon. There's no one here but ourselves, and I ain't amused by it. It's all very well to try it on when there's gentle folk about, but when we're alone you take a rest.

1ST CLOWN

[*Puzzled.*] Ay, marry!

2ND CLOWN

[*Throwing down tools.*] Stow it, I say, or I'll have to make you. Marry, indeed! If you mean "Yes," say "Yes." If you mean "No," say "No."

1ST CLOWN

All right, mate.

2ND CLOWN

[*Grumbling .*] It's bad enough staying up all night building more rooms on to this confounded castle --- I should have thought it was big enough and ugly enough without *our* additions --- but if I'm to listen to *your* gab, s'help me -----!

1ST CLOWN

Hush! here comes someone.
[*They make a valiant pretence of work as HORATIO and FORTINBRAS enter .*]

HORATIO

[*Ecstatically, completely deceived by this simple ruse .*]
My Master-Builders !

FORTINBRAS

Idle dogs!

1ST CLOWN

[*Elizabethan again .*] Argal, goodman builder, will he, nill he, he that builds not ill builds well, and he that builds not well builds ill. Therefore, perpend !

HORATIO

[*Appreciatively .*] How absolute the knave is !

FORTINBRAS

He seems to me to be an absolute fool. ³

This type of play on language and play with language becomes one of the crucial issues in some of Tom Stoppard's plays. In *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1967), Elizabethan language confuses and isolates the disoriented protagonists, and in *Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth* (1979), Elizabethan English is completely foreign to the schoolboys who speak Dogg, yet it is comfortingly familiar to the audience/reader. Later in that play it is considered subversive by the authorities and then is translated into Dogg to confound the police, just as the two clowns in *New Wing* switch from modern English to Elizabethan English to confuse the "gentry".

³ Hanking, St. John. *Dramatic Sequels* (London: Martin Secker, 1925. Reprinted from *Punch .*), pp.24-5.

There are also burlesques and parodies which foresee the contemporization of *Hamlet* in production. "The Polonius Problem", a story in Christopher Ward's *Twisted Tales* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1924), is a prose account of the death of Polonius by Detective-Sergeant Higgs who reports to Horatio Smith that, in an attempt to discover a foul odour, janitors stumbled upon the body of a Mr. Polonius. This detective-style parody not only signals the popularity of detective fiction, but foreshadows straight productions of *Hamlet* that have a detective story slant. The same can be said of George S. Brooks's "Fortinbras in Plain Clothes" (*One-Act Plays for Stage and Study*, 4th series. New York: Samuel French, 1928), in which Detective Fortinbras attempts to solve the multi-murder mystery at Elsinore. He holds Horatio as a material witness, wonders if Polonius is the peeping Tom reported on his beat, and notes that there are "three dead already this week from bum hooch". He finally decides to "drag these stiffs out in the street and tell everybody they was hit by a truck. That's the easiest way to clear up this case."⁴ This play about Fortinbras also foreruns the serious 1991 play, *Fortinbras*. "HAMLET" IN MODERN RUSH (1931), which was first produced by Reginald Bach at the Arts Theatre on 28 June 1931, is a sort of *Jeeves and Wooster* parody of *Hamlet*.

Queen (to HAMLET): Cheer up, my boy! . . . *And drop that silly notion --- of going off to Wittenberg! Stay here --- with us!*

Hamlet: Oh --- *anything* to oblige.

King: *That's* what I like to hear! *That's* the spirit! . . . Which reminds me --- (to QUEEN) --- come on, Gertrude! . . . (*rises*) --- what about that drink!

Queen (*rises*): Yes, Claudius --- what about it!

(KING, QUEEN, POLONIUS and LAERTES *exeunt* Back Left, and the curtains are closed after them).

Hamlet (*soliloquising*): By Gad! I *do* feel a wreck! . . . This is a miserable world! . . . To think of it --- my old gov'nor not dead a month --- and mother back in harness already! . . .

(*Enter* HORATIO, down Left).

⁴ Jacobs, Henry E. & Claudia D. Johnson. *An Annotated Bibliography of Shakespearean Burlesques, Parodies, & Travesties*. (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1976), p. 22.

.... I say! Horatio! What are *you* doing here!
Horatio: Oh --- I came up for you father's funeral.
Hamlet: Yes --- *and* for my mother's marriage! By the way, old chap, did you notice that the meat we had at the wedding breakfast was what was left over from the funeral --- served up cold? *There's* economy for you!
Horatio: Damn good scout, your father --- *damn* good.⁵

"HAMLET" IN MODERN RUSH jokingly contemporizes *Hamlet* in the spirit of the twenties and thirties and may also be poking fun at modernized straight productions of *Hamlet* such as the 1925 one by Barry Jackson which will be discussed later. The following parody of *Hamlet*, which is written in the *Fun with Dick and Jane* reader format, contains an allusion to Freud and, by thus showing widespread common knowledge of the theory of an Oedipal Hamlet, indicates that the theory was still considered in straight performances of *Hamlet*. It appeared in the 20 July 1962 edition of *Time* magazine, and pre-dates by 14 years Tom Stoppard's *Fifteen-Minute Hamlet*, which consists of a ten-minute version of *Hamlet*, followed by an even shorter five-minute version as an encore. The *Fifteen-Minute Hamlet* was later incorporated into *Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth*. Although the following parody is intended for readers and Stoppard's is for reading and acting, the two are alike in their brevity and in their comic-book simplicity.

Fun With Hamlet And His Friends

See Hamlet run. *Run, Hamlet, Run.*

He is going to his mother's room.

"I have something to tell you, mother," says Hamlet. "Uncle Claudius is *bad*. He gave my father poison. Poison is *not good*. I do not like poison. Do you like poison?"

"Oh, no, indeed!" says his mother. "I do not like poison."

⁵ Stevens, Harold Charles Gilbard. *Sir Herbert is Deeply Touched; This Marathon Business, "Hamlet" in Modern Rush* (London: H. F. Deane & Sons, The Year Book Press, Ltd., 1931), p.28.

"Oh, there is Uncle Claudius," says Hamlet. "He is hiding behind the curtain. Why is he hiding behind the curtain? Shall I stab him? What fun it would be to stab him through the curtain."

See Hamlet draw his sword. See Hamlet stab. Stab, Hamlet, Stab.

See Uncle Claudius' blood.

See Uncle Claudius' blood *gushing* .

Gush, Blood, Gush.

See Uncle Claudius fall. How funny he looks, stabbed.

Ha, ha, ha.

But it is *not* Uncle Claudius. It is Polonius. Polonius is Ophelia's father.

"You *are naughty* , Hamlet, " says Hamlet's mother. "You have stabbed Polonius."

But Hamlet's mother is *not cross* . She *is a good* mother. Hamlet loves his mother very much. Hamlet loves his mother very, very much. Does Hamlet love his mother a little *too much* ? Perhaps.

See Hamlet run. Run, Hamlet, Run.

"I am on my way to find Uncle Claudius," Hamlet says.

On the way he meets a man. "I am Laertes," says the man. "Let us draw our swords. Let us duel."

See Hamlet and Laertes duel. *See Laertes* stab Hamlet . *See Hamlet* stab Laertes.

See Hamlet's mother drink poison. See Hamlet stab King Claudius.

See everybody wounded and bleeding and dying and dead.

What fun they are having!

Wouldn't you like to have fun like that?

Another modern parody of *Hamlet* is *THE SKINHEAD HAMLET* (1984) which describes itself as "Shakespeare's play translated into modern English" and contains the following editorial note: "Our hope was to achieve something like the effect of the New English Bible." This parody is obviously a statement against modernizing Shakespeare, and it is also a parody of contemporary *Hamlet*s, whether they be modern in language or in style, e.g. a punk *Hamlet*.. Act One reads as follows:

ACT 1 SCENE 1

The battlements of Elsinore Castle.
Enter HAMLET, followed by GHOST.
 GHOST: Oi! mush!
 HAMLET: Yer?
 GHOST: I was fucked!
 (Exit GHOST.)
 HAMLET: O fuck.
 (Exit HAMLET.)

SCENE II

The Throneroom.
Enter KING CLAUDIUS, GERTRUDE, HAMLET and COURT.
 CLAUDIUS: Oi! You, Hamlet, give over!
 HAMLET: Fuck off, won't you?
 (Exit CLAUDIUS, GERTRUDE, COURT.)
 h (Alone) They could have fucking waited.
 (Enter HORATIO.)
 HORATIO: Oi! Whatcha cock!
 HAMLET: Weeeeey!
(Exeunt.)

SCENE III

Ophelia's Bedroom.
Enter Ophelia and Laertes.
 LAERTES: I'm fucking off now. Watch Hamlet doesn't slip you one while I'm gone.
 OPHELIA: I'll be fucked if he does.
(Exeunt.)

SCENE IV

The Battlements.

Enter HORATIO, HAMLET *and* GHOST.

GHOST: Oi! Mush, get on with it!

HAMLET: Who did it then?

GHOST: That wanker Claudius. He poured fucking poison in my fucking ear!

HAMLET: Fuck me!

*(Exeunt .)*⁶

Carrying on the tradition of *Hamlet the Dane* (1847), some Hamlet burlesques and parodies made political personalities and situations the target of their barbs. M.S. Bazagonov's *Shakespeare in the Red. Tales From Shakespeare by a Soviet Lamb* (Flegon Press, 1964) contains a "Hamlet" in which the prince's revenge grows beyond that of a personal vendetta and becomes a struggle with social character. His soliloquy, "To be or not to be with the people", testifies to this struggle. "The Tragical History of Samlet, Prince of Denmark", by Jeremy Geidt and Jonathan Marks (*Watergate Classics . Yale Theatre* , 5, Special Issue [1974]), deals with the events surrounding the "Watergate" incident during U.S. President Richard M. Nixon's second administration (1972-74). The characters in Shakespeare's play become the political figures involved in the scandal. For example, Samlet is Senator Sam Ervin, the chairman of the Senate Watergate Committee. Horatio is Hubert Humphrey, Polonius becomes Felonius (John Mitchell), Claudius is Richard Nixon, and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern become Ehrlicrantz and Haldenstern. When the ghost, Uncle Samlet, informs Samlet that something is rotten in the state, Samlet collects tape recordings of suspicious characters and plays the part of a senile old man. Ehrlicrantz and Haldenstern fail to deter him, and in the end Claudius poisons everyone but himself. These twentieth-century political parodies lose their impact when one

⁶ *THE SKINHEAD HAMLET.* in *The Faber Book of Parodies.* Ed, Simon Brett (London: Faber & Faber, Ltd., 1984), pp.316-20.

considers that straight productions of *Hamlet* had been mirroring political events for years. (Political *Hamlet*s will be discussed later in this chapter.)

Another type of *Hamlet* parody which follows a tradition set by earlier burlesque and straight productions of the play is the kind that reflects modes of literary criticism. The 17 January 1900 edition of *Punch* contains a piece by A. R. entitled "Masterpieces Modernized. II. -- Hamlet. (Revised by G. B. S.)". The piece re-writes Hamlet's "To be, or not to be" soliloquy and burlesques his subsequent encounter with Ophelia in the style of George Bernard Shaw. The soliloquy begins, "William or G. B. S., -- that is the question?" and debates whether to endure Shakespeare's "horrid contradictory similes" or Shaw's "inartistic moralising shocks".⁷ This parody mocks Shaw's criticism of Shakespeare as well as Shaw's own style. *Punch* contains an even more interesting *Hamlet* parody in its 23 December 1903 edition. Inspired by a note in the *Westminster Gazette* which objected to the introduction of political allusions into contemporary drama, St. John Hankin wrote "Plays and Politics", an article which argues that, since such allusions are inevitable, they ought to be done in a "thoroughly artistic manner". He illustrates his point with a number of parodies on Shakespeare, including one of the grave diggers from *Hamlet* V.i. in which the two clowns discuss the corn tax in Elizabethan manner: "Prithee, good man delver, are you for a tax on corn or are you against?"⁸ As in previous centuries, writers and playwrights were still protesting at dramatic censorship in their work and were still using *Hamlet* to do so. It is doubtful that the author of the next *Hamlet* burlesque wrote his play to promote or denounce any particular mode of criticism, but it does reflect critical values all the same. In 1902, Rand, McNally & Company published William Hawley Smith's burlesque in Chicago. The play is titled:

⁷ Jacobs & Johnson, p.85 .

⁸ Ibid., pp. 84-5.

The New Hamlet, Intermixed and Interwoven With a Revised Version of Romeo and Juliet; the combination Being Modernized, Re-written, and Wrought Out on New Discovered Lines, as Indicated Under the Light of the Higher Criticism by William Hawley Smith and the Smith Family, Farmers. Printed from The Original Manuscript, With Text in Full, And as First Produced When Done in Action by The Smiths, Their Own company, Under The Haw Tree, On Their Farm, At The Thicket, June 17, 1902.

The two Shakespearean plays are re-written in order that each may have a happy ending. The Smiths were latent neo-classicists. The expressed purpose of the play is to make happy "those doubly grewsome plays of *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet* by unlikely but more felicitous unions". Tied in with the "Shakespearean" stories are allusions to the untimely deaths of U.S. Presidents Lincoln, Garfield, and McKinley and references to the Republican and Democratic parties (praise for the former, criticism for the latter). In spite of the political party "broadcast" that forms a kind of sub-text (or perhaps because of it: the Republicans are said to "save the day" while the Democrats only produce problems), *Hamlet* ends up marrying Juliet, and *Romeo* marries Ophelia. The play ends with the maxim: "For wisdom apply to your mother; and for farm products apply to farmers." In addition to their neo-classic and conservative tendencies, the Smiths also have definite ideas about the identity of Shakespeare. The foreword most emphatically states that Bacon is not the author of either play. On the back of the play's wooden binding is a final note: "This play was composed by Shakespeare and the Smith family. Then it was done into a book and bound into boards (No.2 fencing) *By Hand* , at the barn, by farmers."⁹ Another parody which displays neo-classic characteristics is "The Yiddish Hamlet" (by I. Zangwill, in *Ghetto Comedies* , Vol. 2., Leipzig, 1907), in which the audience at a performance of *Hamlet* makes demands worthy of

⁹ Smith, William Hawley & the Smith Family. *The New Hamlet Intermixed . . . etc.* (Chicago: Rand, McNally, & Co., 1902).

Restoration and eighteenth-century critics. The early half of the century would indeed see something of a neo-classic revival of Shakespeare, and the latter half would see *Hamlet*s -- straight and adapted -- much stranger than these.

All of these parodies were written for comic reasons, yet many of them herald themes and pre-occupations that will occur in later straight productions of *Hamlet* and in *Hamlet* adaptations and off-shoots. Recurring themes include political interpretations, versions that assert an artistic or critical ideology, modern productions, off-shoots based on characters in *Hamlet* and ones concerned with the power of language, whether it be Elizabethan or modern English. Of course the underlying principle behind all parodies and burlesques is to create humour, and most twentieth-century parodies and burlesques were written solely for this purpose. Typical of this single-minded motive are *The Lamentable Tragedy of Omelet and Oatmeal* . In *Song and Verse* (by Ona Winants Borlund. Chicago: The Dramatic Publishing Company, 1912), which includes characters called Postum, Baconius, Toastem and Milk, and Fraudius, and Richard Armour's "Hamlet" (in *Twisted Tales From Shakespeare*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1957), which is a kind of academic burlesque of the play. It contains an introduction which includes a critical history of Hamlet , a burlesque prose summary of the plot complete with comic footnotes, and a list of study questions which include: "Which is the most horrible line in the play? Not counting, of course, 'O, horrible! O, horrible! Most horrible (I.v. 80)."¹⁰

Twentieth-Century Hamlets

Despite the continuance of the genre into the twentieth century, the hey-day of parodies and burlesques was over and those which were written in this century are remnants; dust at the end of an era. The earlier years of the

¹⁰ Jacobs & Johnson., pp.20-1.

twentieth century brought a myriad of changes which would affect *Hamlet* in a variety of ways. Freudian psychology, the disillusionment following World War I which dispelled people's romantic views (thus contributing to a move away from Romantic portrayals of Hamlet), new attitudes towards women and towards sexuality (reflected in stronger and more sensual portrayals of Gertrude and Ophelia), increased educational opportunities, the acceleration of technology (which contributed to lighting and staging techniques of increasing variety and quality and which resulted in film, radio and television bringing the arts closer to the public as well as creating more leisure time for the public to enjoy the arts) all are just some of the factors which have influenced twentieth-century Hamlets and productions of *Hamlet*. However, the influence of critics and academics on the productions of the theatre is once again the major factor in considering straight productions of *Hamlet*, and a look at this influence will enlighten anyone considering alterations and adaptations of *Hamlet*.

Although the theatre and academia have always influenced and fed off one another, the twentieth century has seen a growing influence of critics and academics on the theatre to the extent that directors use plays to test critical theories and academics and directors actually collaborate on productions. For example, Ernest Jones, a disciple of Sigmund Freud and author of *Hamlet and Oedipus* (1949), was an advisor on Sir Laurence Olivier's 1947 film of *Hamlet*, which was a very Oedipal interpretation of the play. Charles Marowitz simplifies the process of collaboration, as he is a critic, a playwright and a director, and writes and directs plays which illustrate some of his critical theories. As an example of plays as theoretical laboratories, Tyrone Guthrie's 1937 production of *Hamlet* at the Westminster Theatre, London, attempted to incorporate John Dover Wilson's theories from *What Happens in Hamlet?* by making Claudius oblivious of the dumb show, showing Hamlet hear Polonius say, "I'll loose my daughter to him", and presenting the play in

continuous action as on an Elizabethan stage. John Gielgud asked academics to direct *Hamlet* in 1944-45. A 1973 production of the play at the Colorado Shakespeare Festival attempted to make "the first conscious stage test" of Eleanor Prosser's thesis that the ghost is a "goblin damn'd" rather than a "spirit of health".¹¹ The increase in Shakespearean criticism has led to what some term an "interpretation industry" as regards productions of Shakespeare. The number of what I will call unusual *Hamlet*s, which we will look at later, attests to the existence of such an industry. In order to understand the significance of unusual productions of *Hamlet* and alterations and adaptations of *Hamlet*, it is best to start with the critics.

One of the most influential twentieth-century discussions of *Hamlet* is by A.C. Bradley in *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1904). Bradley feels that the secret of Hamlet's tragedy lies in Hamlet's psychology and is due to the melancholy induced by the shock of his mother's hasty marriage. Hamlet's melancholic state affects his body and mind, making him incapable of action as well as unable to figure out why he delays. In addition to analysing Hamlet, Bradley examines Claudius, Gertrude and Ophelia. Character criticism occurs as early as the Restoration, and Bradley's type of analysis reflects the nineteenth-century pre-occupation with character. In this respect, Bradley is somewhat dated. However, in his attention to psychology, Bradley is almost ahead of his time.

As early as Garrick, actors showed a psychological understanding of Hamlet, but the first "psychologizing" of Hamlet was by an eighteenth-century Scottish professor, William Richardson, who tried to show that Hamlet is a psychologically consistent character. Furness's *Variorum Hamlet* contains several "diagnoses" by nineteenth-century doctors of Hamlet's mental condition; however,

¹¹ Babula, William. *Shakespeare In Production, 1935-1978. A Selective Catalogue* (London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1981), p.74.

there was no general consensus on the condition. In addition to Bradley, John Dover Wilson and O.J. Campbell are among the scholars who adhere to the "melancholy" interpretation -- one which, they believe, the Elizabethans accepted.

As early as 1900, Sigmund Freud had declared that an Oedipus complex was the cause of Hamlet's delay. Freud's theory was seized on by Ernest Jones, who believed it solved the mystery of *Hamlet*. "The reason for Hamlet's delay is that if he killed Claudius he would be killing someone who has fulfilled Hamlet's own repressed Oedipal desires; the destruction of Claudius would resemble the destruction of part of himself."¹² Jones wrote about his ideas as early as 1910, but his final study of the Oedipal Hamlet was his 1949 book. Just as Bradley was ahead of his time for his interest in psychology, Jones's interest in character dated his ideas. Interest in Hamlet's psychology would continue to grow, but interest in Hamlet, as opposed to *Hamlet*, was on the wane. In theatre and criticism, attention was slowly shifting from the character to the play.

Arthur Hopkins's 1925 production of *Hamlet*, which starred John Barrymore, is a good example of this shift in attention and of the growing interest in psychology. John Barrymore was the first notable actor to give a Freudian interpretation of Hamlet. George Bernard Shaw disapproved of the Freudian *Hamlet* and in a letter to Barrymore told the actor so in no uncertain terms: "You discard the recorders as hackneyed back chat, and the scene with the king after the death of Polonius, with such speeches as 'How all occasions do inform against me!' as absolute junk, and offer instead . . . that very modern discovery called the Oedipus complex. . . . You exchange Hamlet and Ophelia into Romeo and Juliet.

¹² Watts, Cedric. *Harvester New Critical Introductions to Shakespeare: Hamlet* (Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire: Harvester-Wheatsheaf, 1988), p.xxxvii.

As producer, you allow Laertes and Ophelia to hug each other as lovers . . . another complex! . . . the actor must play on the line and not between the lines . . . I wish you would try it, and concentrate on acting rather than on authorship, at which, believe me, Shakespear can write your head off."¹³ However, not everyone shared Shaw's disapproval. The 1922 production ran for 101 nights, breaking Booth's record of 100 nights in 1864-65. Another feature of this *Hamlet* was its revolutionary staging: the set consisted of a flight of stairs and the Ghost was represented by a moving spot of light. This production of *Hamlet* was also different because it was not built around Hamlet, as nineteenth-century productions tended to be, and the director, Arthur Hopkins -- unlike his nineteenth-century counterparts -- had no role in the play. The performers who acted with Barrymore were not second-rate. All of this was a change from the Victorian productions of *Hamlet*, as, for instance, ones by Booth and Irving. The changes in character representation, staging, and quality of actors were indicative of their time; change was in the air.

This interest in psychology was of course part of the more general literary trend towards greater naturalism. George Bernard Shaw wrote, "What we wanted as the basis of our plays was not romance, but a really scientific natural history . . . there is flatly no future now for any drama without music, except the drama of thought."¹⁴ Shaw headed a movement to bring serious drama into the theatre, and one can still see his influence in recent drama. In Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1967), some of Guildenstern's most effective dialogue "requires a delivery in the style of Shaw's elevated stage talk",¹⁵ and in Stoppard's *Travesties* (1975), the character

¹³ Barrymore, John. *Confessions of an Actor* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1926), pp.130-2 as quoted in Kroll, p.186.

¹⁴ *Pelican Guide to Literature*, Vol. 7, Ed. Boris Ford (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979), p.225, quoting Shaw. No source, publisher, date, or page no. for Shaw.

¹⁵ Kelly, Katherine E. *Tom Stoppard and the Craft of Comedy*. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1991), p.73.

of Cecily argues that the "sole duty and justification for art is social criticism" (p.74). Ibsen, Strindberg and Zola were also exponents of socially-directed, thought-provoking drama. Where the Romantics had identified themselves with Hamlet and then created him in their own image, giving him either the values and characteristics of a moody, broody poet -- Hamlet `a la Byron -- or of a Victorian gentleman, modernists rejected the Romantic interpretation of *Hamlet* and began to rethink *Hamlet* altogether, not necessarily because Shakespeare's *Hamlet* had lost its ability to represent contemporary concerns, but probably because the nineteenth-century depiction of Hamlet was so overwhelming that it defied (temporarily anyway) any up-dated interpretations. Examples of the lasting popularity of the nineteenth-century Hamlet can be seen in the portrayal of Hamlet by early-twentieth-century actors.

Johnston Forbes-Robertson is seen as the link between Victorian and modern Shakespearean acting, just as Tree is an obvious link between Victorian and early twentieth-century production styles. Forbes-Robertson first played Hamlet, at Irving's suggestion, in 1897, when he was 44 years old. He was noted for the rapidity with which he spoke his lines and as being a natural actor. He also made a couple of textual restorations, one of which took the spotlight off Hamlet at the end of the play. One of his restorations was of Fortinbras's lines at the end of Act V. (He also restored Reynaldo.) In the final scene, Forbes-Robertson "went feebly to the empty throne, there died; Horatio placed the crown upon the dead Prince's knees, then, for the *first time in generations*, Fortinbras and his soldiers entered and bore Hamlet away on their shields." ¹⁶ In fact, the restoration made this production the most authentic of *Hamlet* by commercial

¹⁶ Sprague, Arthur Colby. *Shakespeare and the Actors* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1944), p.184 as quoted in Kroll, p.169.

theatre since the Civil War.¹⁷ The consensus was that he made *Hamlet* a more modern tragedy, but despite his abandonment of the grand theatrical style and his restorations, Forbes-Robertson's portrayal of Hamlet was considered to be closer to that of the Victorian tradition.

However, new ideas often make their way to the stage after they have been argued out on paper, and one of the crucial steps to a twentieth-century interpretation of Hamlet and, indeed, to twentieth-century adaptations of *Hamlet* occurred in 1910, a time when, generally speaking, the concept of human character began to change. It was in that year, world events aside, that a mid-western philosophy student at Harvard began writing "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock". "T.S. Eliot's character defines himself in opposition to Shakespeare's most famous character 'No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be', just as Eliot himself will later define his own poetic practice in opposition to Shakespeare's practice in *Hamlet*."¹⁸ Eliot's poem continues by expressing notions of the insignificance of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, which is how they have been regarded for centuries -- so much so that they were often cut from the text of *Hamlet*.

Am an attendant lord, one that will do
 To swell a progress, start a scene or two,
 Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,
 Deferential, glad to be of use,
 Politic, cautious, and meticulous;
 Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;
 At times, indeed, almost ridiculous --
 Almost, at times, the Fool.¹⁹

¹⁷ McClellan, Kenneth. *Whatever Happened to Shakespeare?* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1978), p.113.

¹⁸ Taylor, Gary. *Reinventing Shakespeare* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1990), p.232.

¹⁹ Eliot, T.S. "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock", *Collected Poems:1909-1935* (London: Faber & Faber Ltd., 1941), p.15.

What is interesting is that where previous writers identified themselves with Hamlet, Eliot's Prufrock compares himself to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. The two courtiers have begun to replace Hamlet in his role as "Everyman". Written some fifty years after "Prufrock", Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1967) indicates that the relegation is complete enough to write a play with the courtiers as protagonists.

If the turn of the century witnessed a diminishing of Hamlet's role as 'Everyman', it also saw a decline in the importance of Hamlet as compared to the play as a whole, and this is reflected in Eliot's belief that analysis of a work of art is more important than any study of that work's characters. In his 1919 essay, "Hamlet and His Problems", Eliot writes,

Few critics have ever admitted that *Hamlet* the play is the primary problem, and Hamlet the character only the secondary. And Hamlet the character has had an especial temptation for that most dangerous type of critic: the critic with a mind which is naturally of the creative order, but which through some weakness in creative power exercises itself in criticism instead. These minds often find in Hamlet a vicarious existence for their own artistic realization. Such a mind had Goethe, who made of Hamlet a Werther; and such had Coleridge, who made of Hamlet a Coleridge. . . ²⁰

Eliot goes on to praise E. E. Stoll for reminding us of the efforts of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century critics who ". . . knew less about psychology than more recent Hamlet critics, but . . . were nearer in spirit to Shakespeare's art; and as they insisted on the importance of the effect of the whole rather than on the importance of the leading character, they were nearer, in their old-fashioned way, to the secret of dramatic art in general."²¹

²⁰ Eliot, T.S. "Hamlet and His Problems", *Twentieth-Century Interpretations of Hamlet* . . . Ed. David Bevington (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), p.22.

²¹ *Ibid.*, quoting from Stoll, E. E., *Art and Artifice in Shakespeare*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933), no page number given.

The subordination of character to the play as a whole continued in the work of Harley Granville-Barker, who also had a distinguished career as an actor, dramatist and director, before he wrote a series of *Prefaces to Shakespeare* (the third series contained a book-length study of *Hamlet*) which stressed the importance of considering the plays as Shakespeare had intended them -- for stage performance. In 1930, G. Wilson Knight brought Eliot's and Shaw's ideas of defining Shakespeare in terms of music -- looking at the plays as a whole score rather than just as representations of human behaviour -- into mainstream criticism in his *Wheel of Fire*. A.J.A. Waldock, in his "'Hamlet': A Study in Critical Method" (1931), challenges Bradley by maintaining that Hamlet's procrastination is barely noticeable in the theatre, asking us to concentrate on what the text *says*, and appealing to our experience of the play as a whole. In his 1933 essay "How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth?", L.C. Knights rejected character criticism altogether for consideration of Shakespeare's work as dramatic poems. For the first time in two hundred years, Shakespearean criticism was again being shaped by serious dramatists. The views of Eliot, Shaw, and Granville-Barker may differ from those of Dryden and Rowe, but as practitioners of the art they criticized, all were aware of the differences between their work and Shakespeare's.²² And consistent with what had happened in the past, criticism again found its way to the stage.

Eliot's insistence on the importance of the work of art over its main character predicted and perhaps influenced the changes in *Hamlet* on the stage. There was an increasing regard for teamwork as the gulf between the star and the supporting cast narrowed. M. St. Clare Byrne, in "Fifty years of Shakespearian Production: 1898-1948", notes that since World War I, "instead of

²² A point made by Gary Taylor in *Reinventing Shakespeare*, p.236.

going to see X's performance people went to see Y's production".²³ However, in more recent years, directors such as Sir Peter Hall have swayed from ensemble playing to linking "the tradition of star actor with that of the powerful director wedded to ensemble principles".²⁴

Another critical interest that influenced the stage was an effort by Eliot and contemporaries such as E.E. Stoll, L.L. Schucking, and William Poel, to put Shakespeare back in his theatrical context, albeit for varied reasons. Schucking and Stoll "emphasize the conventions that Shakespeare shared with his contemporaries and did not share with modern drama; Eliot, by contrast, sought in Shakespeare's contemporaries what he could not find in Shakespeare".²⁵ Poel was interested in historical accuracy in the production of Shakespeare as opposed to historical reality, *i.e.* re-constructing the period in which the author has set the play. Where Macready, Irving and Booth had tried to reconstruct the historical reality of the plays themselves, Poel believed that all one needed to know to understand Shakespeare was the conventions of Elizabethan art.

Poel believed that if we wished to see Shakespeare as he intended it, then we should see his plays as he saw them -- in an Elizabethan context. In order to do so, one needed an authentic text. Although *Hamlet* suffered little at the hands of restorers and directors when compared with some of Shakespeare's other plays, the latter part of the nineteenth century saw a desire to see the play in its entirety. Poel was one of the first directors to attempt to grant such a wish.

In addition to an authentic text, Poel is noted for the style of his productions, which resulted from his insistence on historical accuracy. For

²³ M. St. Clare Byrne, "Fifty years of Shakespearian Production: 1898-1948", *Shakespeare Survey* II, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1949), p.15.

²⁴ Crowe, Samuel. "'Hid indeed within the centre': The Hall/Finney *Hamlet*", *Shakespeare Survey* 41 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p.47.

²⁵ Taylor, p.237.

example, he believed that the picture-frame stage interferes with the flow of a Shakespearean play and that scenery clutters the stage and acts as a distraction from the text as well as necessitating cuts to allow time for scene changes. He also believed that act and scene divisions were not authentic, as they are not in the first or second Quartos, but were added later. His study of the First Folio led him to believe that capitalized words were meant to be emphasized, and his study of *Hamlet* Quarto 1 resulted in his belief that parentheses were used to indicate key words.

In April of 1881 the Elizabethan Stage Society, under the direction of Poel, presented the First Quarto (1603) version of *Hamlet* on a bare platform at St. George's Hall. The production was staged again in February 1900 at Carpenters Hall. In January 1914, at the Little Theatre, Poel produced a version of the Quarto 2 (1604) *Hamlet* which restored many scenes usually deleted, but which omitted Act I, scene i, all appearances by the Ghost until the Closet-scene, the "To be or not to be" soliloquy and the Gravediggers, and emphasized the Claudius role, because Poel, like the adaptors of the Restoration and eighteenth century, believed that Hamlet was a "political" figure, not a "psychological" figure. In 1924, at Oxford and in London, Poel produced *Fratricide Punished*, an English version of *Der Bestrafte Brudermord*, a seventeenth-century German version of *Hamlet*. Poel explains his approach to Shakespeare in an interview in the 3 September 1913 edition of the *Daily Chronicle*:

Some people have called me an archaeologist, but I am not. I am really a modernist. My original aim was to find out some means of acting Shakespeare naturally and appealingly from the full text, as in a modern drama.²⁶

²⁶ McClellan, p.114.

Poel's approach would continue to influence directors for years. A 1961 production of *Hamlet* at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival had no act or scene divisions, no intermissions, a quick pace and was performed in an Elizabethan manner on an Elizabethan stage.

Poel was not the only director to insist on an authentic text of *Hamlet*. Sir Frank R. Benson produced a composite text of the Second Quarto and the First Folio at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre at Stratford in 1899, at the Lyceum in London in March 1900 (the production lasted six hours!), again in July 1911, and later in the United States. Unfortunately, audiences took their chances on *hearing* the whole text as presented by Benson because of a certain distraction to the actors.

Benson's ruling passion was for sport. He cared little what his actors did with Shakespeare's lines so long as they were good at games. He himself, having spent the afternoon playing cricket instead of looking over his part, would cheerfully talk any old gibberish on the stage, and after one exit said to a bemused prompter who had given up trying to follow him, 'Or words to that effect'.²⁷

Sir Philip Ben Greet was also instrumental in reviving authentic Shakespeare. In April 1916, the Old Vic company acted the full text of the Second Quarto under the direction of Greet (who had directed it in America in 1905). Greet directed the First Quarto (1603) version in London in 1928, 1929, and 1933. Unfortunately for audiences, Greet was as infamous for his inattention to lines as was Benson, "and on one occasion when he was playing First Gravedigger, his altercation with Second Gravedigger (Wilson Featerston) as to which of them was due to speak the next line was audible at the back of the gallery".²⁸ Although Poel, Benson and Greet did use authentic texts of *Hamlet*, they seldom used a full text. However, by insisting that "the play's the thing" and anticipating theories espoused by

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.117.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.119.

Granville-Barker, among others, they became part of the beginning of a trend to bring scholars and directors together in the production of Shakespeare.

However, Poel's advocacy of authentic Shakespearean productions backfired in more ways than one. The authenticity he desired could not be achieved because

for Shakespeare's original audiences Elizabethan dress and Elizabethan conventions had been ordinary and hence invisible; for Poel's audiences Elizabethan dress and Elizabethan conventions were exotic, foreign, obtrusive. . . . Paradoxically, Poel's method quickly led to its natural antithesis. If Shakespeare's actors had originally performed in contemporary costumes, then it would be more 'authentic' for modern actors in a modern revival to perform in equally contemporary costumes. In 1923 Barry Jackson's Birmingham Repertory Theatre produced *Cymbeline* in modern dress, and in 1925 they brought their modern-dress *Hamlet* to London. The courtiers sported monocles, drank cocktails, smoked cigarettes; Hamlet wore plus fours; Laertes showed up in Oxford 'bags'; Ophelia bobbed her hair and wore a skirt of 'inescapable shortness'; the characters played jazz and bridge.²⁹

Poel's ideas of authenticity contributed to the twentieth-century contemporizing of Shakespeare in setting and costume. The idea of making Shakespeare modern or topical by performing his plays in a contemporary context is not a new one, as we have seen; it began as early as the Restoration and continues today.

Critic Cleanth Brooks dismisses all historical dramatic scholarship. He finds Shakespeare updated to modern times and modern costume just as unsatisfactory as Shakespeare in Elizabethan costume. Brooks's belief that the only way to update Shakespeare is by modernizing the Shakespearian text³⁰

²⁹ Taylor, p.269.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.294.

stems from his practice of "New Criticism", a movement strongly influenced by the ideas of Eliot and I.A. Richards, among others, which places great emphasis on the text. One tenet of New Criticism is that there is thematic unity in the multiple plots of Shakespeare's plays.

Unlike the New Critics, who sought to identify in Shakespeare's plots a common denominator, and in direct contrast to neo-classic critics and dramatists, who were so irritated by Shakespeare's narrative multiplicity that they radically altered and simplified Shakespeare's plots, the New Historicists find Shakespeare's technique of multiplicity so praiseworthy that some, like Stephen Greenblatt, adopt it as a model for their own criticism.³¹ Practitioners believe that weaving several seemingly unrelated anecdotes can uniquely define a time and place. Tom Stoppard, whose play *Travesties* is a good example of concurrent storylines, is one of the modern dramatists who have followed this concept. Stoppard's multiple-plot plays based on or containing bits of *Hamlet* will be examined later.

Another way in which critics and directors sought to interpret Shakespeare's work was via its social and political relevance. Marxist critics bring to literary analysis their view of history, in which the class struggle is central. They are particularly interested in connections between the literary work and the social, political and economic structure in which it was written. Rather than concentrating solely on the text, they like to examine it in its historical context in order to learn what social and political questions it raises and to comment on the work's values and ideas. Marxists' interest in sociology and politics separates them from structuralists and post-structuralists, who are mainly concerned with the language of texts. Examples of the former are Bertolt Brecht, who believes that every play is a social and political act, and Jan Kott, who believes that *Hamlet* is a political play

³¹ Gary Taylor discusses Greenblatt's work in *Reinventing Shakespeare*, pp. 347-52.

and that its characters act parts which are imposed on them. The latter, who believe that any concept of order is formed by convention and ideological imposition, welcome the contradictions and inconsistencies in a text such as *Hamlet*. These movements serve as examples of how far literature has come since the nineteenth century, let alone the Renaissance.

Literature no longer has to justify its existence by the inclusion of religious and moral lessons, and it has surpassed its former classification of being essentially a mode of entertainment. It is a discipline in its own right. In 1892, in a paper given to the Modern Language Association of America, Francis A. March observed that American professors "can now make English as hard as Greek".³² By the end of the nineteenth century, literature had been accepted as a course of study at universities, and in what was a combination of the furtherance of scholarship and their careers, teachers and critics furthered the reputation of literature.

In *Shakspeare and His Predecessors* (1896), Frederick S. Boas described *Hamlet*, along with a few other works by Shakespeare, as a "problem play". "By defining Shakespeare as a complex of problems, critics and scholars redefined themselves as problem solvers."³³ They essentially created a market for themselves, for their skills. By making the study of literature difficult, they made it respectable. In this kind of academic climate, Shakespeare's popularity could only grow. Where the difficulty and obscurity of Shakespeare's poetry had once been objectionable, it became, at the turn of the century, a literary virtue. And in this case, virtue had its reward.

³² Ibid., p.246.

³³ Ibid., p.245.

The renewed interest in "authentic" Shakespeare (as has already been described) occurred, and with the rediscovery of what were regarded as "simple conventions of a primitive theatre"³⁴ came a problem: how to wed Shakespeare's textual difficulty with the crudity of some of his jokes, with the obscenities and violence, with his "extravagant grossness", and with what was considered "mere foolish verbal trifling". If the problem sounds familiar, it is because it is the same one which has been around for centuries -- with a twist. The neo-classicists were unenamoured of Shakespeare's multiple plots and objected to the same features as did the critics just described, but they admired Shakespeare for his vivid characters. What to do? They dealt with it by cutting the offending text and changing it to suit the accepted conventions of their time. Neo-classic critics argued that, by catering to the low tastes of his audiences, Shakespeare tainted his genius. Twentieth-century scholars found their answer for the Bard's "faults" in Shakespeare's audiences, which consisted of upper and lower classes. Robert Bridges argued that Shakespeare "deliberately played false to his own artistic ideals for the sake of gratifying his audience".³⁵ However, Bridges's conclusion, that Shakespeare's audiences would be too ignorant to notice the inconsistencies in his plots, assumes either that all Renaissance audiences were incredibly stupid or that Shakespeare was even more intellectually superior than previously thought. Q.D. Leavis notes that "Most of the audience could not possibly understand . . . *Hamlet*".³⁶ Gary Taylor sensibly points out that "if 'most' did not, then implicitly 'a few' did. *Hamlet* must have been aimed at the more cultured members of Shakespeare's audience. And so Shakespeare's plays could be interpreted on two levels of intellectual sophistication corresponding to the social division between

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.246.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.247 quoting Robert Bridges, "On the Influence of the Audience", *The Works of William Shakespeare*, 10 vols. (1904-7), X, 322-25.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.247 quoting Q.D. Leavis, *Reading Public*, p.85.

educated upper classes and uneducated masses".³⁷ The belief that Shakespeare had written his best work for the upper classes became, for some, an excuse to argue that he no more belonged to the masses in the twentieth century than he did in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This misconception that Shakespeare is only for the culturally elite, coupled with his growing critical and theatrical popularity and respectability, lent prestige to the Shakespearean canon.

Literature had become more than entertainment, more than a course of study, more than an intellectual challenge; it became prestigious. Prestige has led literature to a position that is 180 degrees from where it was when Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet*. Art in literature no longer has to be disguised; it is the disguiser. This is very evident in the theatre, because a play is re-interpreted, albeit intentionally or not, each time it is performed. Drama has become the carrier for whatever interpretation a director wants to impose upon it. As the cream of the crop, and because of his narrative versatility, Shakespeare is a prime target for imposed social or political ideals, and as the *crème de la crème*, *Hamlet* is often chosen as the carrier. As we have seen, sometimes the imposition is a result of a director's critical or theoretical beliefs, and sometimes the imposition is a result of attempts to modernize Shakespeare, but sometimes it is a more subversive manipulation -- an attempt to impose one's own message onto Shakespeare's story. The following examples illustrate both categories.

In the name of modernity, Shakespeare has been "contemporized" countless times. Leslie Howard's 1936 *Hamlet* was described by American critic George Jean Nathan as a production in which Hamlet "was the Duke of Windsor out to get Stanley Baldwin and wife, with Winston Churchill playing

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.247.

both Rosencrantz and Guildenstern".³⁸ As a straight production which calls attention to the then problems of the Royal Family, it is reminiscent of the nineteenth-century parody of William IV, *Hamlet the Dane* (1847) by Charles Beckington. Of course Howard's *Hamlet* was also reflecting the constitutional crisis threatening Britain at that time.

Maurice Evans's *G. I. Hamlet* was a version designed to entertain the American soldiers during the second World War. Maurice Evans, who had been a leading man at the Old Vic (1934-35), where he played the lead in an unabridged *Hamlet*, was made a major during the second World War and put in charge of entertainment for the U.S. Army's Central Pacific Area. His *G.I. Hamlet* was especially designed for servicemen. Not surprisingly, action was the keynote of the production. The "G.I." *Hamlet* was considerably abridged to a performance time of 2 hours and 45 minutes. Evans cut references to the political background, among other things. The production was so successful that Michael Todd presented it to the civilian public of New York in 1945. It played on Broadway for 147 performances before going on tour.

Military and political *Hamlet*s are very popular. There has been a *Watergate Hamlet*, a *Falklands Hamlet*, and there have been numerous *Elsinore-as-dictatorship Hamlet*s. The Abbey Theatre's (Dublin)1983 *Hamlet* included soldiers drilling onstage and the sound of helicopters before the production began. It portrayed the image of a state preparing itself for war, and ended with men parachuting onto the stage. A 1986 *Hamlet* at the Octagon Theatre in Bolton reflected war-torn Beirut and emphasized political uncertainty and violence, showing Fortinbras as a potential threat and his assumption of power at Elsinore as a coup.³⁹

³⁸ Davison, Peter. *Hamlet* (London: Macmillan, 1983), p.38.

³⁹ *Shakespeare Survey* 41, p.184.

Of course setting *Hamlet* in a political context is only one way of challenging an audiences' intellect. A 1948 Stratford-upon-Avon Festival production gave the play a Victorian setting and emphasized the visual groupings, pictures and movement of the play. This nostalgic interpretation recalls productions of the nineteenth century, when painting-like groupings were popular. The American Shakespeare Festival (Stratford, Connecticut) gave a 1958 production of the play with a setting suggestive of a baseball ballpark complete with bleachers on which the actors continuously ran up and down. (Benson would have loved this!) The Bristol Old Vic set its 1967 New York production of *Hamlet* in Napoleonic times and cut the text to give the play a melodramatic, detective-story interpretation. The 1989 Norwegian film *Hamlet Goes Business* has Hamlet roaming the corridors of his murdered father's business empire. The business has fallen into the hands of his mad uncle, who wants to corner the world market in the manufacture of rubber ducks. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are sent on a trade mission to Norway, where they expect to be bored to death. All of these *Hamlet*s are attempts to place the play into a context (baseball, big business) or a genre (romantic novel, melodrama/detective story) that audiences can recognise.

There have been numerous *Hamlet*s with what one might call shock-effect tactics. Michael Rudman's 1975 production at the Delacorte Theater in New York featured a Hamlet so incestuous that he even kissed Claudius on the lips. Peter Zadek's 1977 Bochum production had Gertrude expose her breasts to the audience. What some would consider to be another shock tactic, although to be fair it is rarely meant as one, is to have a woman play Hamlet.

A female Hamlet is nothing new. Sarah Siddons was the first woman to play the role in 1777. Charlotte Crampton, Eliza Warren, Alice Marriott and Charlotte

Cushman are some of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century actresses to play Hamlet. They were given favourable critical and popular attention -- something not seen before or since. Reviewing Alice Marriot's Hamlet, the 1 December 1859 edition of the Liverpool *Daily Post* said, "The young prince of Denmark never found a more fitting representative than in this gifted lady."⁴⁰ Edwin Booth went so far as to lend Charlotte Cushman his costume for her 1861 portrayal of the Dane. Female Hamlets were very popular at this time. During the nineteenth century no fewer than 50 professional actresses (in France, Italy, Australia, Great Britain and the United States) played the part.⁴¹ Why were female Hamlets so popular and successful? Janie Caves McCauley thinks it is because "theatre-goers of the past did not associate a player's enacting the role of one of the opposite sex with sexual reversal or ambiguity; the justification for a woman's playing Hamlet was her own capability of doing so".⁴²

From the end of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century, Sarah Bernhardt played the role many times, and her *Hamlet* was the first to appear on film (1900). Katharine Hepburn recites the "To be or not to be" soliloquy in the 1933 film *Morning Glory* to prove her character's talent as an actress, but Hepburn never played the role onstage. Eva LeGallienne and Siobhan McKenna are twentieth-century actresses who have played the Dane. Perhaps more well-known is Dame Judith Anderson, who at age 72 is probably the oldest actress to play Hamlet. As recently as 1982, Diane Venora played Hamlet in a Joseph Papp production of the play, Madeline Bellamy played the prince in a 1986 production at the Young Vic in London, and in the 1980s film *Outrageous Fortune*, Shelley Long plays an actress who aspires to the role and succeeds in playing it by

⁴⁰ McCauley, Janie Caves. "The Dame as Dane: A Comparative Analysis of Two Female Hamlets", *Hamlet Studies*, Vol. 12 (1990), p.112.

⁴¹ Wadsworth, Frank W. "Hamlet and Iago: Nineteenth-Century Breeches Parts", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 17 (1966), p.130.

⁴² McCauley, p.112.

the end of the film. Why cast a woman as Hamlet? McCauley believes one rationale for doing so is to emphasize the character's feminine qualities, which she lists as precision, refinement, sensitivity, emotional expressiveness, and procrastination. However, she notes that "the perception of what is 'feminine', is of course, relative to prevailing sexual stereotypes. . . . the degree to which feminine traits are acceptable in a male character varies in each age and culture".⁴³ Booth believed he was a successful Hamlet because he emphasized Hamlet's femininity. Bernhardt believed Hamlet was a woman. "I cannot see Hamlet as a man. The things he says, his impulses, his actions, entirely indicate to me that he was a woman".⁴⁴ So does a woman playing Hamlet detract from the production of the play? Is it an imposed interpretation on Shakespeare? It is no more a distraction or imposition than it was to have boys play women's roles in the Renaissance. If the audience accept the illusion the way they accept the illusion of the entire production (for that is what acting is), then a female Hamlet should not be a problem.

There is a difference between putting Shakespeare in a historical or political context in an attempt at contemporary relevance or in an attempt to enlighten audiences of possible meanings of Shakespeare's plots and putting Shakespeare in a social or political context for the sake of putting forth a political or ideological view. The intent of the former is to enlighten the audience. The intent of the latter is impose a viewpoint on an audience. They are examples of telling the audience what to think rather than allowing them to interpret Shakespeare for themselves. Kenneth McClellan believes that "once a director is not even following his own whims, but those of a political regime, his

⁴³ I bid.,p.117 quoting Leslie Bennetts, "Why not a Woman as Hamlet?", *The New York Times*, 20 November 1982.

⁴⁴ Buell, William Ackerman. *The Hamlets of the Theatre* (New York: Astor-Honor, Inc., 1968), p.73.

work has relinquished all connection with art".⁴⁵ The following productions are examples of directors using Shakespeare to convey a critical, social or political message.

McClellan describes one such production in *Whatever Happened to Shakespeare?*, noting that Stanislavsky's reaction to the production was "Well, art has perished there".

The production in question was Nicolai Akimov's *Hamlet* (Vakhtangov Theatre 1934). Akimov decided that the dynamic modern Soviet audiences would find the soliloquies hard to follow, and boring to boot, adding that in any case they had no philosophical significance. 'For Shakespeare and his characters, the seizure of the throne is the vital thing'. The Hamlet in his production was bald, fat, ugly and hearty.

The Ghost was an illusion faked up by Hamlet and Horatio. Hamlet spoke 'To be or not to be' holding the crown in his hand and examining it, the words being altered to mean 'To be or not to be king'. Ophelia was presented as both a nymphomaniac and a dipsomaniac, and her madness was reduced to delirium tremens. Her drowning was caused by her falling into a river after a drunken orgy. A Moscow magazine published a cartoon called 'A New Way of Obtaining Energy'. This showed the Vakhtangov company performing *Hamlet*. Beside the theatre was the grave of Shakespeare in cross-section. He was spinning in his grave. Cables attached to his body led to a dynamo, which provided the energy for lighting the stage.⁴⁶

In 1926 Leopold Jessner produced a *Hamlet* in Germany which emphasized the background of Elsinore's court intrigue in its attempt to draw parallels with modern German history. Claudius was meant to remind audiences of Kaiser Wilhelm II, and Polonius, of Bethman-Hollweg.⁴⁷ In 1929-30, the German

⁴⁵ McClellan, p.145.

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp.145-46.

⁴⁷ Davies, C. "The German theatre as an artistic and social institution", *Brecht in Perspective*, Eds., Bartram & Waine (London, 1982), p.120.

playwright Gerhardt Hauptmann re-wrote the Schelgel-Tieck translation of *Hamlet* in order to show the prince as a man of action. Hauptmann "inserted five substantial passages amplifying the Norwegian war threat. There was a scene of confrontation between Claudius and the English ambassador. Fortinbras actually invaded Denmark. Hamlet, not Laertes, led the revolt against Claudius. Some of Hamlet's and Laertes's speeches in the graveyard were interchanged. 'To be or not to be' was spoken just before the duel." ⁴⁸ Hauptmann made the changes because he believed the "Ur-Hamlet" portrayed Hamlet as an active man. In altering Shakespeare, he felt he was being true to the original story. However, his alterations foreshadowed the imperialistic motives and actions his country would show later in the decade. A 1935 German *Hamlet* which "tried to express the back-to-primitive 'alt Deutsch' style in its costumes and settings and the iron will-to-power of the 'master race' reflected the ideals of Nazi Germany." ⁴⁹ The 1957 production at the Stratford Shakespeare Festival in Ontario, Canada, in which Ophelia's madness and suicide are prompted by pregnancy, answered the age-old, irrelevant question "Did they or didn't they?" and imposed a meaning not in Shakespeare. Joseph Papp's production, at the 1967 New York Shakespeare Festival, was described by Robert Brustein (in the 20 January 1968 edition of the *New Republic*, [pp.23-5]) as follows:

A one-and-a-half-hour production in which the text is cut, speeches reassigned, and character list reduced. Guards in G.I. uniforms, Claudius in the beard and cigar of a Latin American dictator, Gertrude in negligees and miniskirts. Music ranges from torch songs to blues. Ophelia in straw hat and tights. A Dadaist performance where everything is done for effect rather than for meaning. Language leads to confusion, not communication. Bizarre stage business -- the ghost in long underwear and black

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.131.

⁴⁹ Mander, Raymond and Joe Mitchenson, *Hamlet Through the Ages; A Pictorial Record from 1709*, Ed. Herbert Marshall (Bungay, Suffolk: Richard Clay and Company, Ltd., 1952), p.61.

rubber fingers of a candy store monster. Hamlet sleeps in a coffin. Horatio photographs the play-within-the-play with an 8-mm movie camera.⁵⁰

This production was the product of an era in which Tom Stoppard wrote *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, and its style very much foreshadows the style of Stoppard's *Travesties*, in which Stoppard comments on this type of ideological subversion of Shakespeare by having Tzara use Shakespeare for his own ends despite his dadaist objection to it as literature. Later that year, Papp directed another production of *Hamlet* which interpreted the play as an inter-racial political comedy. Hamlet was black, Claudius and Gertrude were white, and Ophelia was portrayed as a rock-n-roller. Horatio hits Claudius with a cream pie and Hamlet delivers his "Oh what a piece of work is man" soliloquy as a revivalist sermon. Papp's additions turned the play into "an absurdist comedy".⁵¹ 1968 also saw an "avante-garde production" of *Hamlet*, again by Papp, which began with a rock overture, featured an underwear-clad Hamlet who sold peanuts and balloons to the audience, and portrayed the ghost as a trapeze artist in sneakers (trainers), Ophelia as a whore and Horatio as a convict. *Hamlet: The Drama of Vengeance* (1920), which is considered to be one of the best of the silent Shakespearean films, re-interprets one of the basic assumptions of Shakespeare's play. Hamlet is a woman.

Based on Edward P. Vining's eccentric book, *The Mystery of Hamlet* (Philadelphia, 1881), it features a prince who, though actually a woman, for reasons of state has been raised by Gertrude as a young man. Burdened with this secret, Hamlet at Wittenberg falls in love with Horatio. Naturally Hamlet rejects Ophelia but still feels pangs of jealousy when Horatio falls in love with Ophelia. Only at Hamlet's death when Horatio holds her in his arms is the prince's true gender revealed. . . . Vining's interpretation of Hamlet as a young woman disguised as a man 'explains' Hamlet's

⁵⁰ Babula, William. *Shakespeare In Production: 1935-1978. A Selective Catalogue* (London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1981), p.67.

⁵¹ Babula, p.67.

lack of the kind of macho qualities exhibited by, for example, Laertes, who never hesitates to avenge the death of his father. It would also account for Hamlet's rejection of Ophelia and other hints of repressed homosexuality that Victorians were reluctant to bring out of the closet.⁵²

Needless to say, Hamlet was played by a woman -- the German actress Asta Nielsen. The Papp productions and the Nielsen film are radical interpretations of the play, but they do, more or less, stick to Shakespeare.

However, there are productions of *Hamlet* (or ones that incorporate *Hamlet*) that veer so far away from Shakespeare in plot and/or interpretation that they become something altogether different. There have been *Hamlet* comedies: the 1932 film, *Hamlet and Eggs* (about a Shakespearean actor on vacation in Arizona), the 1942 film *To Be Or Not To Be* (in which Hamlet's most famous soliloquy becomes the key device for signalling a member of the audience that the way is clear for a backstage rendezvous with the performer's wife). Made during the second World War, this film also serves as anti-Nazi propaganda (Mel Brooks remade this film in 1983), and there have been cartoon *Hamlet*s such as *Enter Hamlet* (1965), which is a 10-minute sequence based on the "To be or not to be" soliloquy. There have been *Hamlet* westerns: the film *My Darling Clementine* (1946) (a western saloon becomes the setting for a performance of *Hamlet* by a troupe of Shakespearean actors) and the 1972 film *Johnny Hamlet*. There have even been *Hamlet* musicals. *Hamlet . . . The Musical* was written in 1987 by three members of a writers' collective⁵³ called the Southern Theater Conspiracy and was performed at Atlanta's Academy Theatre in 1988 and 1989.

⁵² Rothwell, Kenneth S. and Annabelle Henkin Melzer. *Shakespeare on Screen. An International Filmography and Videography* (London: Mansell, 1990), p.57.

⁵³ Phillip DePoy, Levie Lee, and Rebecca Wackler.

Even more unusual are films such as *Ophelia* (1962), which is a post-modernist film that offers three planes of reality: the world of a French village, the world of a neurotic young man named Yvan, and the world of "a fabled Hamlet". *Shakespeare on Screen* describes it as being about

the process of adaptation and interpretation. The film depends more on versions and adaptations of the original tragedy than on *Hamlet* itself . . . a whimsical and half-heartedly frightening parody of the entire enterprise of adaptation, . . . Shakespeare himself repeated his *Hamlet* from some unknown ur-*Hamlet* which formed part of the large body of legends and stories about the Danish royal line; Olivier repeated Shakespeare's text as read by Freud; Chabrol repeats Shakespeare's, Freud's and Olivier's texts.⁵⁴

Equally distant from Shakespeare's text is the 1991 play *Fortinbras* by Lee Blessing. Blessing's play begins where Shakespeare's ends and examines whether or not Fortinbras proves himself a better leader than Hamlet could/would/might have been. *Time* magazine says the play is mainly concerned with the shallowness of modern politics. Fortinbras is portrayed as a "yuppie warrior" who speaks in clipped modern diction. "Dumb luck makes him an epic hero. . . . The man of action, it turns out, is as storm tossed on the seas of fate as any man of thought -- and far less equipped to handle the swings of fortune. Any parallels to George Bush and the gulf war are obviously intentional." ⁵⁵

The number of alterations, adaptations and offshoots of *Hamlet* testify to the play's enduring popularity and to its malleability for carrying artistic and political interpretations and ideologies. They also indicate *Hamlet*'s mythic status. For example, Barry Jackson's "*Hamlet* in Modern Dress" exploited the "mythical method" of "manipulating a continuous parallel between

⁵⁴ Rothwell, p.67 quoting Karen Newman, "Chabrol's *Ophelia* ", *Shakespeare on Film Newsletter* 62 [March 1982], 1.

⁵⁵ Henry III, William A. "Elsinore on the Potomac", *Time* , 15 July 1991, p.70.

contemporaneity and antiquity".⁵⁶ *Hamlet* is part of our common vocabulary. Performers such as *The Reduced Shakespeare Company* can give the briefest performance of the play (under sixty seconds) and expect children to have heard of it and to have some understanding of what happens in the play.⁵⁷ Writers need only mention *Hamlet* or Hamlet to summon a host of allusions. Cedric Watts believes *Hamlet*'s status comes from it being so well-known: "... its most spontaneous-seeming and interestingly unconventional features have also become parts of a time-hallowed ritual".⁵⁸ Graham Holderness says that Shakespeare's plays transcend history and "represent truths that transcend particular circumstances. That is the idealist conception of myth".⁵⁹ Charles Marowitz's theory about *Hamlet*'s mythic status is a combination of Hazlitt and Saxo Grammaticus.

... I have always contended, there is a kind of cultural smear of Hamlet in our collective unconscious and we grow up knowing *Hamlet* even if we have never read it, never seen the film or attended any stage performance. The 'myth' of the play is older than the play itself, and the play's survival in the modern imagination draws on that myth.⁶⁰

Of all the twentieth-century by-products of *Hamlet*, perhaps two of the best known are *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* by Tom Stoppard and *The Marowitz Hamlet* by Charles Marowitz. Both of these plays use Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as a starting point for their plots, and both rely on the myth of *Hamlet*

⁵⁶ Taylor, p. 269 quoting T.S. Eliot, "Ulysses, Order, and Myth", *Dial* 75 (1923), p.483.

⁵⁷ *The Reduced Shakespeare Company* appeared on Children's ITV on 12 September 1992 and gave a forty-something second performance of *Hamlet* as well as a performance of the play which lasted less than three seconds. The first performance was coherent and covered all of the main points of the play; the second was not and did not.

⁵⁸ Watts. p. 67.

⁵⁹ Holderness, Graham.,ed. *The Shakespeare Myth*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988.) p. 133.

⁶⁰ Marowitz, Charles. *Recycling Shakespeare* (London: Macmillan, 1991), p.19.

for plot comprehension. The next section will examine these plays as well as other plays by Stoppard which incorporate *Hamlet* .

Stoppard and Marowitz

"I made my song a coat/ Covered with embroideries/ Out of old mythologies."

---W.B.Yeats

Tom Stoppard

So much has been written about the theatre works of Tom Stoppard that there is now a small but growing canon of literary criticism on them. While it may seem somewhat difficult to say something new about Stoppard's plays, it is necessary to include some comment on *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (RGD) , as well as *Dogg's Hamlet* , *Cahoot's Macbeth* , *Jumpers* and *Travesties* when considering twentieth-century adaptations of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* .

In Stoppard, *Hamlet* is used for contemporary, albeit implicit, comment not in the burlesque or parodic mode of the nineteenth century, but by a re-working of the "myth" to fashion a peculiarly twentieth-century tragedy. RGD is not a modern alteration of *Hamlet* , but is an independent work which uses *Hamlet* as mythic background in the way other plays use the Bible or the classical mythologies.

RGD is probably the best-known of Stoppard's plays and is the one with the strongest links to *Hamlet* . The idea of the play came from Stoppard's agent Kenneth Ewing in 1963. Ewing had wondered if King Lear might not have been the King of England to whom Rosencrantz and Guildenstern were sent by

Claudius. What if Rosencrantz and Guildenstern found Lear insane on the beach at Dover? Stoppard was inspired and came up with a tentative title for the play: *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern at the Court of King Lear*. The play came to life in the summer of 1964 when Stoppard attended a Literary Seminar in Berlin courtesy of a Ford Foundation grant. By then it was titled *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Meet King Lear*, and Charles Marowitz, who saw a production of this first version, described it as "a lot of academic twaddle".⁶¹ The play was re-worked, re-named *Guildenstern and Rosencrantz*, and was performed at the Questors Theatre, Ealing, in that October. Then it was re-worked and re-named again, and *RGD* was performed in the Edinburgh Festival Fringe at Cranston Street Hall by the Oxford Theatre Group in August 1966. In April 1967, at the Old Vic Theatre in London, the National Theatre Company performed what has become the standard version of *RGD*, *i.e.* the one most commonly performed.⁶² Described by Robert Brustein as a "theatrical parasite",⁶³ *RGD* contains evidence of influence and borrowings from Shakespeare, Beckett, Eliot, Pinter, Pirandello, Saunders and Wilde. However, Shakespeare is the most pervasive influence, as *Hamlet* provides Stoppard with plot, characters, language, and purpose, for Stoppard's creation -- for all its uniqueness in style and structure -- is still a tragedy, and foremost among its accomplishments is that it enables us to see *Hamlet* from a different, very twentieth-century perspective.

Stoppard's *RGD* is just as much a "play within a play", as it is sometimes described, as it is a play about a play. Stoppard never really alters *Hamlet*'s

⁶¹ Marowitz, Charles. *Confessions of a Counterfeit Critic: A London Theatre Notebook 1958-1971* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1973), p.123.

⁶² This chapter will examine the standard version of *RGD*. The 1967 version originally began with a messenger waking Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. This was later cut. There is also a 1968 version of *RGD* which contains several changes to the 1967 text, including a different ending.

⁶³ Giankaris, *Comparative Drama*, p.224 quoting Robert Brustein, *The Third Theatre*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), p.149.

plot, instead he embellishes it by adding a plot of his own creation. He fleshes out Shakespeare's storyline to give us a behind-the-scenes look at *Hamlet*, to show us another part of the story, the other side of the coin. It is Stoppard's modern technique in doing this which throws us off the scent of what his play is about. Rather than attempt to execute his "embellishment" in an Elizabethan style like Garrick, Stoppard imitates the twentieth-century dramatic structure of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and uses mostly modern English thus creating a stark contrast between not only his plot (the plight of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern) and his sub-plot (*Hamlet*), but also between Shakespeare's plot (the plight of Hamlet) and one of his sub-plots (that of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern). *RGD* runs parallel to *Hamlet*; it simply happens to be in the foreground for a change.

Stoppard creates his story by inverting Shakespeare's plot; he shows us the negative of the photograph of *Hamlet*. What was major becomes minor and what was black becomes white. Norman Berlin explains this difference between the two plays very clearly:

All the world is a stage for Stoppard, as for Shakespeare, but Shakespeare's art fuses world and stage, causing the barriers between what is real and what is acted to break down, while Stoppard's art separates the two, makes us observers and critics of the stage, and allows us to see the world through the stage, ever conscious that we are doing just that. The last is my crucial point: Stoppard forces us to be conscious observers of a play frozen before us in order that it may be examined critically. Consequently, what the play offers us, despite its seeming complexity and the virtuosity of Stoppard's technique, is clarity, intellectual substance, rather than the shadows and mystery we find in *Hamlet* or the pressure of life's absurdity that we find in *Waiting for Godot*.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Berlin, Norman. "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead: Theatre of Criticism", *Modern Drama* 16., p.275.

What do we see when we "see the world through the stage"? We see ourselves, for in selecting two minor characters from Shakespeare to be the protagonists in his play, Stoppard gives us men with whom we can readily identify. Stoppard intends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to be "emblems of common humanity".⁶⁵ In both *Hamlet* and in *RGD* the principal characters try to make sense of the situations in which they find themselves, although the stark, modern world, unlocalised and uncertain, of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern is more familiar to a twentieth-century audience than the court of Hamlet's Denmark. Through *RGD*, Stoppard conducts an "investigation into the notion of theatre as a metaphor for life. This preoccupation links the related concerns with the problem of identity and the nature of art. By turning *Hamlet* upside-down Stoppard asks whether tragedy is an adequate metaphor for the way we live our lives."⁶⁶ If we answer yes, if we understand and identify with what happens to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, then we begin to understand and identify with Hamlet. Using *RGD* as a medium, Stoppard persuades us that Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is indeed, for all time; a somewhat different view from that of the adaptors of the Restoration and the eighteenth century.

RGD opens with a long series of coin-spinning by the protagonists. Katherine Kelly describes this as Stoppard's equivalent to the talk about ghost sightings at the beginning of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: "both events signal the suspension of the ordinary and the entry into art."⁶⁷ To begin with, the coins always land on heads, giving a fated air to the place occupied by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, described as being "without any visible character" (p.11).

⁶⁵ Cave, Richard Allen. *New British Drama in Performance on the London Stage: 1970 to 1985* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1987), p.72.

⁶⁶ Sammells, Neil. "Giggling at the Arts: Tom Stoppard and James Sauders", *Critical Quarterly* 1986 Winter; 28 (4), p.76.

⁶⁷ Kelly, p.74.

This contributes to a Beckettian atmosphere which is not surprising, given Stoppard's admission of Beckett's influence. As they spin coins, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern discuss theories of probability, and then try to remember their origins in an attempt to recall when they arrived and to calculate how long they have been spinning coins. Their memories of the past and their knowledge of their current situation are hazy and are not helped much by the arrival of the Player and the Tragedians, except, upon learning that the Tragedians are bound for the court, Guildenstern offers his influence there, giving us the first indication that he has an idea as to where he and Rosencrantz are headed. Next Rosencrantz and Guildenstern witness a wordless scene between Hamlet and Ophelia, described by Ophelia to Polonius in *Hamlet* II.i.77-100, which is a perfect example of Stoppard's inversion of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. We see something which was mentioned in Shakespeare, but which happened off-stage. The scene happens as Shakespeare described it via Ophelia and so therefore Stoppard describes it in Elizabethan English, but it is wordless because it does not contain interaction with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. This is followed by the scene from Shakespeare (*Hamlet* II.ii.1-49) in which Claudius and Gertrude ask Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to cheer Hamlet and to learn what troubles him. This scene is extracted verbatim from *Hamlet*'s text, thus providing an Elizabethan contrast to Stoppard's twentieth-century action. Here Stoppard weaves his story onto the surface of *Hamlet* only to submerge minutes later to the underworld, the off-stage world of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, where, having learned of their purpose sixteen pages after Guildenstern says, "Then what are we doing here, I ask myself" (p.20), they "play at questions"(p.42) in an effort to establish further their identity. The questioning is interrupted by a very brief appearance by Hamlet reading a book and thereafter takes on a different tone as Rosencrantz and Guildenstern try to "glean what afflicts" Hamlet, with Guildenstern pretending to be Hamlet as

Rosencrantz questions him. This practising is put to the test as Hamlet re-appears and the act ends with Rosencrantz's and Guildenstern's first meeting with Hamlet in Shakespeare, *Hamlet* II.ii.202-26. Act 1 is the longest in the play, and, despite discovering their current purpose in life, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern remain in a state of confusion about who they are and what lies ahead for them.

Act 2 begins with a continuation of the previous scene (*Hamlet* II.ii.363-79), but soon fades into Rosencrantz and Guildenstern trying to ascertain what they have learned from Hamlet. As their dilemma continues, an argument introduced by the Player in the first act, about the relationship between art and life, develops. According to Susan Rusinko, "The Player's comments throughout the second act echo Pirandellian attitudes regarding art as a means of giving order and, therefore, meaning to life."⁶⁸ The argument develops through events from Shakespeare and Stoppard and becomes, perhaps, most interesting when intertwined with the Tragedians' performance of *The Murder of Gonzago*. Rosencrantz, offended by some realistic grappling between the Player King and Queen, protests, causing the Player to ask, "What do you want . . .?"

Ros: I want a good story, with a beginning, middle and end.

Player(to Guil): And you?

Guil: I'd prefer art to mirror life, if it's all the same to you.

Player: It's all the same to me, sir.(pp.80-1)

The Tragedians resume their mime, which takes on the shape of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. While the Player narrates, Shakespeare's closet scene is represented, followed by events which are unsurprisingly familiar to us and which touch a chord in Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

⁶⁸ Rusinko, Susan. *Tom Stoppard* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986) , p. 32.

Player: . . . The King --- . . . tormented by guilt --- haunted by fear -- decides to despatch his nephew to England --- and entrusts this undertaking to two smiling accomplices --- friends --- courtiers --- to two spies -- . . . giving them a letter to present to the English court---! And so they depart --- on board ship ---. . . and they arrive --- . . . --- and disembark -- and present themselves before the English king --- . . . The English king --- . . . But where is the Prince? Where indeed? The plot has thickened --- a twist of fate and cunning has put into their hands a letter that seals their deaths! . . . Traitors hoist by their own petard? --- or victims of the gods? --- we shall never know! (pp.81-2) ⁶⁹

Rosencrantz thinks he knows the "spy" portraying him; this is triggered by the fact that the spies are wearing coats identical to those worn by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. However, he talks himself out of any recognition, and Guildenstern, who becomes more and more rattled during the Tragedians' production, approaches the other "spy", but, instead of questioning him about the mime, involves the Player in an argument about death. Their uneasiness is never resolved. The art and life theme continues as the Player explains that acted death is more credible on stage than real death, and he cites an incident in which he had a man hanged in the middle of a play: ". . . and you wouldn't believe it, he just *wasn't* convincing. It was impossible to suspend one's disbelief -- . . . the whole thing was a *disaster* !" (p.84). Despite the eerie finality of the mime and the irony of Guildenstern's and the Player's discussion about death, Rosencrantz's and Guildenstern's moment of truth has not yet arrived. They learn they are to accompany Hamlet to England, and, although Guildenstern is concerned ("If we'll ever come back"), Rosencrantz notes that, "anything could happen yet" (p.95).

Act 3 follows as the mime predicted. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern find themselves on a boat with Hamlet and realise they are on their way to England.

⁶⁹ ". . ." indicates omitted stage directions.

Worried about what happens to them after they escort Hamlet to the King of England, they open the letter -- thinking it may contain further instructions for them -- and discover that Hamlet is to be killed. Guildenstern reasons aloud and decides it is better to "leave well alone" and to tie up the letter. Rosencrantz protests asking, "What's the point?", and noting, "He's done nothing to us" (pp. 110-11). Here Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have a choice. They could tear up the letter or show it to Hamlet, but instead they do nothing. Later, Hamlet finds the letter and replaces it. Rosencrantz's and Guildenstern's fate is sealed. While some critics argue that it was always the case that they are bound to the fate Shakespeare gives them and hence the title and the dependency of *RGD* on *Hamlet*, nevertheless William Gruber eloquently explains that the fate of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern is not decided until after the crucial moment when they ignore the letter.

... *Hamlet*, as is true of all myths, is what is predicted, not what is ordained. ... Stoppard here invites his characters to invent their history according to their will. He offers them alternatives, if not absolute choice. ... No one -- not Fate, not Shakespeare, and not Tom Stoppard -- 'had it in for them.' Where Guil and Ros erred was ... when they chose freely to be cowards ... Stoppard stresses their cowardice, not their ignorance, and his irony here flatly contradicts those who see Ros and Guil as powerless victims.⁷⁰

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern discover the Tragedians on board, and no sooner have the two explained their mission to the Player (omitting the detail about Hamlet's death) than the pirates attack. After the attack, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern discover Hamlet is missing and begin to worry about how they will complete their mission. They try to imagine what they will say to the King of England, and Guildenstern reads the letter aloud by way of explanation to Rosencrantz's mock king. He reads aloud his and Rosencrantz's death sentence,

⁷⁰ Gruber, William E. "'Wheels within wheels, etcetera': Artistic Design in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*", *Comparative Drama*, 15 (1981-2), pp.302, 305-6.

and then re-reads it silently with Rosencrantz. Suddenly the Player shouts, "They've gone! It's all over!" (p.122). The Tragedians re-appear and begin circling Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. The argument about death re-emerges between Guildenstern and the Player, and, in an attempt to prove one cannot act death, Guildenstern plunges a dagger into the Player, who slowly dies. When he is completely still, the Tragedians applaud, and the Player jumps up. The dagger was fake, the death realistic but, we discover, not real, and the Player has made his point. Guildenstern is taken in by this Player's acting just as Hamlet is deceived in Shakespeare when he believes that the player shed real tears when he recited the tale of Priam and Hecuba (*Hamlet* II.ii.56-67.) The mime of Act 2 resumes from the point where the Player Queen dies by poison. The Player kills the "King", duels with a Tragedian, and the two "spies" (dressed like Rosencrantz and Guildenstern) are stabbed, as before. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern find themselves alone on stage, still confused. After a final attempt to reason out their existence and their fate, Rosencrantz disappears, and then so does Guildenstern. Immediately the final scene from *Hamlet* is revealed, with two English, rather than Shakespeare's Norwegian, ambassadors and Horatio standing amid the corpses. An ambassador announces that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead, and Horatio launches into a synopsis of the events that led to the tragic slaughter.

What began as Stoppard ends with Shakespeare, but to what end? Together, *RGD* and *Hamlet* "assert a view of human activity that stresses men's ultimate responsibility -- whether prince or actor or lackey -- for what they do, and so for who they are".⁷¹ Stoppard has shown us that tragedy, whether Shakespearean or modern, can be a metaphor for life, and in doing this he

⁷¹ Gruber, p.308.

re-affirms the message and timelessness of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. *RGD*, remember, is only the other side of the coin. Regardless of whether a coin lands heads or tails, its value remains the same.

Could Stoppard have achieved this without *Hamlet*? Perhaps. If so, then why did he incorporate Shakespeare? Stoppard has admitted he had difficulty working out plots, so using *Hamlet* relieved the pressure of composition.⁷² But why choose *Hamlet* over other Shakespearean or classical tragedies? Stoppard has said that *Hamlet* is probably "the most famous play in any language; it is part of a sort of common mythology".⁷³ Because *Hamlet* is so well-known and because it has mythic status, it proved an ideal choice for Stoppard -- as it did for other twentieth-century playwrights -- on which to base a modern play about art and tragedy. Much earlier adaptors had taken the play in a spirit of criticism and used it to make social and political points; by 1967 Stoppard had an established myth which he could exploit, although nevertheless drawing out his themes with equal clarity. However, *RGD* is strikingly different from the *Hamlet* collages of Charles Marowitz and Joseph Papp. Although *RGD* may not have a "clear theatrical precedent",⁷⁴ there is one play which is closer to Stoppard in style and in technique, if not final effect, than any other -- W.S. Gilbert's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*.

The most obvious distinction between the plays is a matter of plot. Stoppard embellishes Shakespeare's story while never actually altering the

⁷² Levenson, Jill. "Hamlet Andante/Hamlet Allegro", *Shakespeare Survey* 36 (1983), p. 22.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Gruber, p.291. However Charles Marowitz suggests possible forerunners might be "those wicked little scenes that Brecht wrote into *Romeo and Juliet* and other 'classics' for rehearsal purposes" -- Marowitz, *Counterfeit Critic*, p.125.

excerpts of Shakespeare's text he uses.⁷⁵ On the other hand, Gilbert deviates from Shakespeare's story, creating a new plot, and parodying and altering the passages of Shakespeare he uses. What is astonishing is the nature and variety of the many similarities between Gilbert's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern (RG)* and Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead (RGD)* -- a fact which may not seem surprising as they are both based on *Hamlet* and centred on Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, but which is intriguing, considering the different eras in which the plays were written. As has been shown, Gilbert's play was written in a century that saw numerous burlesques and parodies of Shakespeare, yet his play is neither. Stoppard imitated many twentieth-century dramatic styles and was greatly influenced by Beckett, but his play remains distinct from them. Each play is unique for its century and genre.

Similarities extend further than this simple fact of a common basis and uniqueness in their own time, however. Gilbert's *RG* was intended for reading, but was performed, and Stoppard's *RGD* was written primarily for performance although some stage directions written in Shakespearean style indicate he was also thinking of the reader. These playwrights, who had dual "audiences" also had dual results. Gilbert uses *Hamlet* as the basis for a comedy which, ironically, makes us think about Shakespeare's tragedy. Stoppard employs *Hamlet* as the foundation for his tragedy which highlights the comedy in Shakespeare's work, adds to our appreciation of Shakespeare's humour by virtue of Rosencrantz's and Guildenstern's perspective, as well as being humorous in its own right. In addition to using the same play for source material, having the same protagonists, having dual audiences, and inducing reflection on the tragedy and comedy of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Gilbert and

⁷⁵ Although he does omit some of the dialogue between Hamlet and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in one scene.

Stoppard use structures and forms which are similar in places, and they use Shakespeare to make comments on art, albeit for different purposes.

As far as structure goes, each play has a similar beginning: Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are called upon to cheer Hamlet. This leads to the crux of the action -- Hamlet performing Claudius's play which results in his banishment in *RG*, and Rosencrantz's and Guildenstern's search for identity and purpose, and their decision to let Hamlet die, which instead results in their own deaths in *RGD*. Concerning form, because both plays are based on *Hamlet*, they contain a plot within a plot, giving the effect of a play within a play. In addition, both Stoppard and Gilbert dabble in Shakespearean pastiche. There are excerpts of their pastiches which are remarkably similar.⁷⁶ For instance:

Guildenstern . Oh, he is surely mad!

Ophelia . Well, there again
 Opinion is divided. Some men hold
 That he's the sanest, far, of all sane men--
 Some that he's really sane but shamming mad--
 Some that he's really mad, but shamming sane--
 Some that he will be mad, some that he was--
 Some that he couldn't be. But on the whole
 (As far as I can make out what they mean)
 The favourite theory's somewhat like this:
 Hamlet is idiotically sane
 With lucid intervals of lunacy.
 (*RG*, p.249)

⁷⁶ Thomas R. Whitaker also refers to Gilbert's and Stoppard's similarity in pastiche in *Tom Stoppard* (London: The Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1983.), p.49, when he notes that "Gilbert's burlesque come fairly close to the verbal texture of Stoppard's play." I believe it is fairer to say that it is Stoppard who matches Gilbert's style, as Gilbert did write *RG* almost 100 years before Stoppard wrote *RGD*.

Player . How is he mad?
Ros . Ah. (*To Guil:*) How is he mad?
Guil . More morose than mad, perhaps.
Player . Melancholy.
Guil . Moody.
Ros . He has moods.
Player . Of moroseness.
Guil . Madness. And yet.
Ros . Quite.
Guil . For instance.
Ros . He talks to himself, which might be madness.
Guil . If he didn't make sense, which he does.
Ros . Which suggests the opposite.
Player . Of what?

Small pause.

Guil . I think I have it. A man talking sense to himself is no
 madder than a man talking nonsense not to himself.
Ros . Or just as mad.
Guil . Or just as mad.
Ros . And he does both.
Guil . So there you are.
Ros . Stark raving sane.

(*RGD* , pp.67-8)

Just as Gilbert's Hamlet has little control over his situation -- falling prey to Rosencrantz's and Guildenstern's manipulations, his Shakespearean soliloquies interrupted by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's asides, additions and questioning -- so Stoppard's Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have limited control over their circumstances, with their questioning interrupted by scenes from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and by the Player's additions and asides. Both Gilbert and Stoppard invert *Hamlet* ; Gilbert does so, however, by making Hamlet weak and ineffectual (as Marowitz does in his *Hamlet*) and by making

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern assertive and dominant. Although Stoppard's play also focusses on Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, these two characters remain passive and are no more in control of their destiny than is Gilbert's Hamlet. Incapable of acting, they are acted upon.

Of all of their similarities, the most significant and interesting one is the thematic use of Shakespeare to talk about art. Gilbert reminds us that dramatic censorship was still effective in the late nineteenth century, and he mocks melodrama, melodramatic acting of Shakespeare, and the then-contemporary style of playwriting as well as poking fun at himself. He also gives detailed instructions on the art of burlesque acting. Stoppard examines whether tragedy is an adequate metaphor for life, and he looks at the relationship between art and life: examining art as it holds the mirror up to nature, and nature as accomplished artifice, and asking us which is more credible. Gilbert reminds us that art is only ever an approximation to life; Hamlet may not mean what he says. Stoppard, via the Player, suggests that art is more credible than life.

Despite their similarities in content, in structure, in form, in language and in theme, Gilbert and Stoppard might be thought to have created different effects. Gilbert adapts *Hamlet* to extract comedy, but he also exposes the thoughts and feelings of Hamlet the actor and makes us re-consider the sincerity of Hamlet's anxiety and the hypocrisy of some of his soliloquies. Stoppard turns *Hamlet* inside out and thereby re-affirms the message and validity of Shakespeare's original. These apparently different treatments, one of reconsidering and the other of re-affirming, have the similar final effect, however, of making us study the different meanings of Shakespeare's text.

They wrote for different effects, but their plays give us insights about art and about Shakespeare. Gilbert and Stoppard saw *Hamlet* as a means of

conveying varied comment on art, and they made their respective statements in similar ways. However, as Gilbert did so ninety-two years before Stoppard, surely he can be credited with setting a dramatic precedent for playwrights of the twentieth century.

Another play in which Stoppard uses Shakespeare for source material is *Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth* (DHCM). DHCM began life as two separate playlets written by Stoppard at the request of Ed Berman. Berman approached Stoppard in 1971 and asked him to write a piece for Berman's Inter-Action experimental theatre group. Berman's company, called Dogg's Troupe, performed *Dogg's Our Pet* (an anagram of "Dogg's troupe") at the opening of the Almost Free Theatre in Soho in December 1971. In this early version of what would become part of *Dogg's Hamlet* (DH), an English-speaking workman, Charlie, is assisted by schoolboys in building a platform with lettered blocks. The students use English terms but in an entirely different language context from standard English. For instance, "plank" means "ready", and "slab" means "okay". While Charlie is building the platform he is able to communicate to a reasonable extent with the students because the words they use have sensible, though different, meanings to each party. But after the construction is completed, a sort of school speech day ceremony begins, and speeches are delivered which sound scatological to our and Charlie's ears, but when translated are typical oratories for a speech day. The strange language is called Dogg, after the school's headmaster, and Dogg is meant to represent Berman. This playlet is a linguistic exercise in which Stoppard, who was then interested in certain theories expressed by Ludwig Wittgenstein in *Philosophical Investigations*, is able to pursue "his Wittgenstinian cogitations on establishing meaning in language".⁷⁷ Stoppard is trying to demonstrate Wittgenstein's

⁷⁷ Giankaris, p.227. For a detailed explanation of what Stoppard does with Wittgenstein's theories, see Roger A. Shiner's article, "Showing, Saying, Jumping", *Dialogue*, XXI (1982) pp.632-6.

point that meaning is not an exclusive relationship between a word and an object. Stoppard remarks, "The appeal to me consisted in the possibility of writing a play which had to teach the audience the language the play was written in".⁷⁸

The second playlet, *The (15-Minute) Dagg's Troupe Hamlet*, was written by Stoppard for Berman's company in 1972. Berman requested a skit which could be performed on top of a double-decker bus, and Stoppard produced a condensed version of *Hamlet* using the play's most famous lines. The adaptation lasted thirteen minutes and had a two-minute encore which was an even more truncated version of *Hamlet*. Four years later, Berman's company performed the skit on the parapets of the new National Theatre as a prelude to a production of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* inside the theatre. The *DH* half of *DHCM* is a conflation of the above two works.

Cahoot's Macbeth (*CM*) was also written for a group of actors, not for performance but as a tribute. Stoppard met fellow Czech and playwright Pavel Kohout as well as actor Pavel Landovsky during a short visit to Prague in 1977. Landovsky had been banned from working by the Czech authorities and, like Kohout, was one of many in the theatre who suffered under Czech censorship. In 1978 Kohout wrote to Stoppard that he had formed a Living-Room Theatre in which banned "theatre-people" like Landovsky could perform for those who wanted to see the forbidden artists at work. The company opened with Kohout's adaptation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and eventually performed it in flats all over Prague. Stoppard's play was inspired by this artistic triumph over communist censorship and is dedicated to Kohout (Cahoot), although Stoppard states it is not intended to be a replica or representation of Kohout's adaptation.

⁷⁸ Stoppard, Tom. *DHCM* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 8.

CM's existence required the current form of *DH*, which was written in 1979 as a prelude and companion to *CM*. *DHCM* came together as one play in 1979, when its first performance was at the University of Warwick Arts Centre and when it was first published. In his Preface to the published text, Stoppard notes that *DH* could be performed on its own, but not *CM*, as it is dependent on *DH*. Therefore, it is fair to say that *DH* could also be discussed separately, for our interest lies in adaptations of *Hamlet*. However, a brief synopsis of the entire text will explain the distinction and relationship between the two works.

In Act 1 of *DHCM*, the *DH* half, Stoppard uses *Hamlet* as the play within a play. This first half is very like *Dogg's Our Pet*, with slight alterations (for instance, the workman's name is changed). The act opens with three schoolboys playing ball and testing a microphone; all the time conversing in Dogg's language -- English words which have different meanings from those which we associate with them. After a while they begin practising lines for a school play which will be performed in its original language -- English. The play is *Hamlet* and the boys struggle with Shakespeare's lines, which are comfortingly familiar to the audience. Eventually the workman, now called Easy, delivers a van of building blocks and, with the aid of the schoolboys, begins to construct a platform. Although they speak different languages, they are able to communicate because the sound of Easy's commands match words in Dogg with meanings which make sense in the context they are used. For example, "block" means "next", and "cube" means "thank you". However, when the boys mis-use English according to Easy's understanding of the words, comic confusion ensues. After the platform is completed, a school speech day ceremony begins with speeches which are scandalous to our ears although they are perfectly proper in Dogg's language. After the speeches, a wall -- which was constructed with the platform -- collapses. It is built of lettered blocks and

has fallen several times before. Each time it is built it spells a different message:

MATHS	MEG	GOD
OLD	SHOT	SLAG
EGG	GLAD	THEM

This time it is rebuilt to spell "DOGGS HAM LET". Easy, who has gradually picked up the Dogg language, now introduces the play: the *15-Minute Hamlet*. Dogg appears as Shakespeare, gives a prologue which begins, "For this relief, much thanks" and ends "Cat will mew, and Dogg will have his day!" (*DHCM*, pp.31-2). Stoppard's abbreviated version of the play follows, with the schoolboys acting with cut-out props, which help to trivialize the tragic feeling in *Hamlet* and to transform it into comic parody. The two-minute encore, a reduction of the thirteen-minute version, is ended with a curtain call by the boys, and then Easy appears, thanks the audience -- "Cube...", and begins to remove the platform, thus ending the play and the play within the play.

The two playlets benefit mutually from their merger, but what is the purpose of *DH*? Performing the abbreviated *Hamlet* gives Easy and the boys a reason for building the platform, thus for communicating. Taken on their own, the verbal games combining language from Dogg, English and Shakespeare prove that word meanings can be learned from actions and inflections. It is not just Easy who learns Dogg; by the end of this act the audience also becomes acquainted with it, but to what end other than a linguistic exercise? That will become apparent in *CM*. As for the condensed version of *Hamlet*, no doubt Stoppard meant it as a comic parody. Thomas Whitaker believes that the schoolboys' "absurd condensation of *Hamlet* . . . suggests a woefully inadequate grasp of its tragic richness; but it is also, of course, a lightly satirical

comment on our own reductive schooling".⁷⁹ The reduced *Hamlet* could also be a comment on the tendency of modern playwrights to adapt Shakespeare for their own purposes, as well as a jibe at modern theatre companies who cut and update Shakespeare. However, the most likely reason for the inclusion of the *15-Minute Hamlet* is that it already existed, it fits in well with *Dogg's Our Pet*, and that, together, the two playlets combined to make a necessary if light-hearted prelude to *CM*. Stoppard's reason for choosing *Hamlet* will be further discussed later.

CM opens with an abbreviated witches' scene from *Macbeth*, and a shortened version of Shakespeare's play proceeds for several pages with no hint or explanation as to what is happening beyond the adaptation except that, after the witches' scene, stage directions tell us that the action is taking place in a living room. Lighting makes this obvious to the audience. After Macbeth kills Duncan, police sirens are heard, then the sound of car doors slamming. A sharp rapping ensues, but instead of the porter emerging, an Inspector enters. Within moments it is evident that the house is bugged for sound and is under surveillance. The Inspector has arrived to charge the company with acting without authority. However, his curiosity moves him to demand that the actors continue the play, and he threatens to arrest them if they do not. At the end of the players' act, the Inspector begins questioning them, checking to make sure he has everyone's name. After warning them that he expects the place to return to normal in the next five minutes, the Inspector leaves.

The performance continues and much to the surprise of Cahoot and the other actors, Easy appears "on stage" in the middle of a scene speaking a mixture of English and Dogg. He has delivered a van of wood and needs someone to sign for it. When the hostess tries to discover who Easy is and why

⁷⁹ Whitaker, Thomas. *Tom Stoppard* (London: Macmillan, 1983), p.155.

he's in her living room, Easy produces a Dogg phrase book which she uses to act as his translator. The Inspector re-appears and is just as perplexed by Easy as the actors and guests are. The hostess and actors quickly catch on to Dogg and soon are conversing wholly in the language. The hostess asks the Inspector to leave the stage as they are going to continue with *Macbeth*, but he threatens that "anything you say will be taken down and played back at your trial" (DHCM, p.74). However the actors are now performing in Dogg, and the Inspector cannot understand a word, although he notes, "if it's not free expression, I don't know what is!" (DHCM, p. 75). The Inspector gradually learns or "catches" some Dogg⁸⁰ and is able to understand the actors enough to realize that they are defying him. He instructs his flunkies to wall the actors in, but *Macbeth* continues. The actors have won. Felicia Londre regards the wall as a brilliant metaphor: "artists under a totalitarian regime are physically walled in, but their thought and creative imaginations find their own form of expression -- if necessary, a whole new language".⁸¹

In *CM* Stoppard draws a political parallel between *Macbeth*'s tyrannized Scotland and Cahoot's totalitarian, communist Czechoslovakia. "Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* dramatize the corruption of power by tyrants and the eventual restitution of society to the forces of good. Stoppard's drama, however, deals with the abuse of language as a means of continuing power and views social restitution as consisting only in the ability of the individual to resist tyranny for himself."⁸² *CM* depends on *DH* to make this statement, because Dogg, the link between the two acts, is introduced and

⁸⁰ INSPECTOR: Dogg?

CAHOOT: Haven't you heard of it?

INSPECTOR: Where did you learn it?

CAHOOT: You don't learn it you catch it.

DHCM, p.74.

⁸¹ Londre, Felicia. *Tom Stoppard* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1981), p.164.

⁸² Rusinko, p.92.

learned in the first half of *DHCM* and is carried by Easy into the second act. Stoppard has Easy deliver Dogg to Cahoot's actors so that they may continue to act without authority and without political censorship.

Stoppard's reasons for choosing to parallel Cahoot's situation in Czechoslovakia to that of Macbeth's Scotland are surely obvious.

Macbeth can be considered Shakespeare's most overt paradigm of wrongful totalitarianism being overcome by forces of justice. In many of Shakespeare's other tragedies, the new regime at play's end gives no assurance of being more just than the power deposed. With *Macbeth*, no matter how well-intentioned the motive of the despoiler, tyranny is shown irrefutably defeated. And *that* is the ultimate message both Cahoot and Stoppard wished to convey.⁸³

How and why is tyranny defeated? Words. Power rests in language. Because they have spoken out against the government, Cahoot and his friends are prohibited from acting professionally lest their acted words be interpreted as having double meanings. Their words challenge authority, therefore authority censors their words. Easy's arrival is a metaphor for Birnam Wood coming to Dunsinane. The load of timber he delivers is not Cahoot's and his company's salvation; it is, in fact, used to wall them in and away from their audience. It is Easy's knowledge of Dogg -- which comes under cover of the wood, which is not noticed because all anyone sees, at first, is a man trying to unload a van of timber-- that is the key to artistic and personal freedom for Cahoot and his colleagues. They defy and triumph over authority by learning a new language. Macbeth aspires to power because of the spoken prophecies -- words -- of the witches. He never stops to think that those words might have double meanings, therefore his mis-interpretation leads to over-confidence, which leads to his

⁸³ Giankari, p.239.

downfall. Birnam Wood really does come to Dunsinane, and Macbeth is killed by man not born of woman. Macbeth did not explore the meanings behind the witches' words to their full extent. Instead he took what they said at face value. . . which brings us back to *DH* and Stoppard's fascination with the relationship between words and meaning.

There can be no question but that *Macbeth* was the obvious choice (out of Shakespeare's canon anyway) for Stoppard to use as a parallel to Cahoot's Czechoslovakia. But what about the first act of *DHCM* ? Does Stoppard's selection of *Hamlet* as the play Dogg's schoolboys perform hold any special meaning? Stoppard cites the play's familiarity to audiences as influencing his choice. Audiences are able to recognize *Hamlet* in spite of its bare-bones form, even if they've never read Shakespeare's play. There are other well-known Shakespearean plays, but if Stoppard wanted to hint at the theme of tyranny and oppression to be dramatized in Act two, *Hamlet* is certainly the most popular of the Shakespearean tragedies and is better known than *Measure for Measure* or the Roman plays. *Hamlet* itself uses drama for subversion when Hamlet attempts to expose Claudius through *The Mousetrap* . It is also the type of play a school would choose for a special performance. However, *DH* began as an exercise in word-play and languages. Did Stoppard believe *Hamlet* 's text held some affinity with Wittgenstein's theories? Jill Levenson suggests " Within this context, the high-speed performance of *Hamlet* demonstrates how cultural factors effect the communication of a sophisticated joke: the language-game of the fifteen-minute *Hamlet* makes sense only in cultures which value Shakespeare as an artist and witty inventiveness as a mode of expression".⁸⁴ Levenson's observation does not eliminate other Shakespearean plays as possible choices for adaptation nor does it prove that *Hamlet* alone would

⁸⁴ Levenson, Jill. "'Hamlet' Andante/ 'Hamlet' Allegro", *Shakespeare Survey* , 36 (1983), p. 27.

suffice as a play-ground for Stoppard's verbal high-jinks and linguistic experiments. Stoppard's reason for choosing *Hamlet* -- other than its popularity, its suitability for a school performance, and its thematic similarity to the political oppression of the second act -- was surely convenience rather than significance. He knew the play inside-out from his work with it in *RGD* , and *The Fifteen-Minute Hamlet* was already written and still available for use. Stoppard uses Shakespeare's tragedies in very different ways in *DHCM* , but where *Hamlet* was convenient for the plot, *Macbeth* was essential.

Hamlet also briefly turns up in two other Stoppard plays -- *Jumpers* (1972)⁸⁵ and *Travesties* (1975)⁸⁶ . In *Jumpers* a murder has been committed, and Stoppard uses the whodunnit form to explore an intellectual argument which pits moral philosophy against logical positivism. Like most of Stoppard's plays, *Jumpers* includes allusions to other literary works including T.S. Eliot's *Waste land* and "Prufrock" and Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* , but it is not a reworking or offshoot of any these, and the biggest contribution from *Hamlet* is that the protagonist George's pet turtle is named Pat, so that at one point George may say "Now might I do it, Pat" (p.43) and draw a small parallel between himself and Hamlet. But George is not Prince Hamlet, nor did Stoppard intend him to be.

George is yet another one of Stoppard's protagonists who happens to be a minor character in the world of the relevant play. His musings on death are reminiscent of those of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in *RGD* ; he is like *Travesties* 's Henry Carr in that he functions one remove from the centre of events and is like *DHCM* 's Easy in that he needs to find explanations that

⁸⁵ The first performance of *Jumpers* was on 2 February 1972 by the National Theatre at the Old Vic in London.

⁸⁶ The first performance of *Travesties* was on 10 June 1974 at the Aldwych Theatre in London.

contradict outward appearances. George, like so many of Stoppard's protagonists, is an everyman through whose eyes the audience learns Stoppard's latest moral lesson as it unravels the usual apparently labyrinthine plot -- for *Jumpers*, like *RGD* and *DHCM*, is about a seemingly absurd situation, but one which makes sense when viewed from the right perspective.

Travesties also follows the Stoppardian formula of an "Everyman" protagonist and a perplexing plot. Its verbal echoes of *Hamlet*, its use of a play within a play and its discussions on art and politics make it structurally and thematically similar to other plays discussed in this work, and therefore worthy of analysis.

Travesties is a memory play filtered through the foggy recollections of Henry Carr, former and minor British consulate official in Switzerland, and is mainly concerned with the concepts of art and politics and with the relationship between them. Set in Zurich in 1917, the play revolves around three revolutionaries -- James Joyce, V.I. Lenin, Tristan Tzara -- and Henry Carr. Stoppard lampoons these characters to explore his theme of art and politics and parodies Oscar Wilde's *Importance of Being Earnest* as a framework for the entire play. Kenneth Hurren has noted that *Travesties* is similar to Anouilh's *The Rehearsal*, "in which the characters, rehearsing a comedy by Marivaux, were themselves involved in a situation that paralleled the events in their play. Anouilh wrote his piece in the style of Marivaux"⁸⁷ just as Stoppard writes his play in the style of Wilde.

Travesties was not a commissioned work, but was Stoppard's answer to an informal request for a play by the Royal Shakespeare Company director Trevor Nunn. Stoppard read voluminously for *Travesties* -- works on Wilde,

⁸⁷ Hurren, Kenneth. "Wilde about Stoppard", *Spectator*. 22 June 1974, p.776.

Lenin, Joyce, and Dadaist art. Each revolutionary (*i.e.* Lenin, Joyce, Tzara) promotes and debates his view on the nature and purpose of art (*e.g.* Lenin uses his theory of art to advocate social change) with the other two, however, the debate of ideas is "handmaiden to the brilliant inventive parodies of the style of Joyce, Tzara, and Lenin. The parodies themselves rather than the intellectual exchanges, constitute the debate".⁸⁸ Although this may seem to relegate Stoppard's theme of politics and art to second place, in fact it serves to strengthen it, admirably illustrating that our understanding of life and art comes from the process by which perception becomes conception, making the central focus of *Travesties* the process of making meaning,⁸⁹ as the end of the play demonstrates.

Of all the parodies in *Travesties*, the most important is the one of Wilde's *Earnest*, because it provides the structure for Stoppard's story. Dadaist Tristan Tzara has the role of Jack Worthing and is courting Henry Carr's (Algernon's) sister Gwendolen. Gwendolen works as a secretary to James Joyce (Aunt Augusta [Lady Bracknell]) in the library, where the librarian, Cecily, is a follower of Lenin. The Lenins do not take dual roles (Prism or Chasuable, for instance) as Stoppard felt such a powerful figure as Lenin could not, should not be trivialized. Tzara frequents the library posing as his older brother, the fictional Jack, because Cecily does not approve of Tristan Tzara and his Dadaist movement. When Carr goes to the library to spy on Lenin for the consulate, he disguises himself as Tristan Tzara and Cecily falls in love in spite of herself. Thus Cecily and Gwendolen find themselves in love with "the same man" as do Wilde's Cecily and Gwendolen in *Earnest*. There is also an accidental switch of Lenin's and Joyce's manuscripts, echoing the baby--manuscript switch in *Earnest*, which is not discovered until the end of the play, "where it reinforces

⁸⁸ Rusinko, p.46.

⁸⁹ Cooke, p. 526.

Stoppard's politicizing of Wilde's pointedly apolitical play".⁹⁰ Stoppard's play alternates between Old Henry Carr, as he is at present, and the events in Switzerland as Carr remembers them. In selecting *Earnest* for a framework, Stoppard has not chosen randomly but historically. Henry Carr really existed. He played the role of Algernon in James Joyce's Swiss production of *Earnest*. Carr and Joyce fell out over money: Carr wanted compensation for a pair of trousers he bought for the play, and Joyce claimed Carr owed him money for some tickets he was supposed to sell. Carr called Joyce a cad, Joyce sued him for slander and the ticket money. Carr had to pay for the tickets, but won on slander. Joyce then immortalized Carr in *Ulysses* as Private Carr, one of the "two drunken, blasphemous and obscene soldiers who knock Stephen Dedalus down in the 'Circe' episode" (*Travesties*, p.12).

Interestingly, in using *Earnest*, Stoppard is not only indebted to Wilde, but also, once again, to W.S. Gilbert. Howard D. Pearce notes that "The happy romantic and social outcome of Wilde's play, the paired couples being economically matched, becomes a travesty of Gilbert and Sullivan in Stoppard's 'discovery' scene."⁹¹ In fact, it is more than a travesty of Gilbert and Sullivan; it is Gilbert and Sullivan, well, Gilbert anyway. In *Tom Cobb* (1875) and in *Engaged* (1877), Gilbert comically depicts persons in every-day life. The plays share a common theme: "each features a barbed encounter between old schoolchums on which Wilde was to draw for Gwendolen's and Cecily's tea-party in *The Importance of Being Earnest*";⁹² both present a heroine espoused to a man of whom she knows next to nothing; both pivot on the dead-or-alive status of the hero, and the financial expectations of the other characters which

⁹⁰ Kelly, p.106.

⁹¹ Pearce, Howard D. "Stage as Mirror: Tom Stoppard's *Travesties*", *MLN* (94), 1979, p.1153.

⁹² Noted by Lynton Hudson in *The English Stage 1850 - 1950* (London, 1951), pp.102-5.

depend thereon".⁹³ Stoppard borrowed from Wilde who had borrowed from Gilbert.

As for other parodies, Stoppard uses Joyce's *Ulysses* (and mirrors one of its features: in *Ulysses* there are numerous allusions to *Hamlet*, and indeed, many of the scenes seem to turn into scenes from *Hamlet*, just as in *Travesties* many of the scenes are based on scenes from *Earnest*), Lenin's political theories, Tzara's Dadaist treatise, and various bits of Shakespeare to clever and humorous effect, as well as incorporating literary puns on works as varied as Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* and Cole Porter's "My Heart Belongs to Daddy". However, it is Shakespeare we are particularly interested in, and *Travesties*'s allusions to his works consist of a literary joke, a brief conversation and a shuffled sonnet. The joke occurs when Carr refers to the celebration of Joyce's *Ulysses* as "caviar for the general public", thus inverting the meaning from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: "The play, I remember, pleased not the million; 'twas caviare to the general" (*Hamlet*, II.ii.432-3). The conversation and the sonnet involve Gwendolen and Tzara. Tzara is courting Gwendolen and intends the shuffling of Shakespeare's eighteenth sonnet to be a tribute to her as well as a Dada demonstration designed to show that great, traditional art is not infallible and that avante-garde experimentation is just as effective as the Western masterpieces. Gwendolen recites the sonnet from memory -- "a celebration of art's immortalizing power"⁹⁴ -- and then defends it in a argumentative conversation with Tzara that is composed of tags from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, *As You Like It*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Henry V*, *I Henry IV*, *Othello*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and the thirty-second sonnet. At the end of the conversation, Tzara succeeds in persuading

⁹³ Rowell, George. *Plays by W. S. GILBERT* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p.11.

⁹⁴ Kelly, p.109.

Gwendolen to pull the words of Shakespeare's sonnet (which Tzara has cut up) one by one from a hat to create a new poem, but not before he says, "but since he died, and poet better prove, his for his style you'll read, mine for my -- love" (*Travesties*, p.54 [Shakespeare's thirty-second sonnet]). "Now borrowing from the Shakespeare he had reviled, Tzara implies that (like Hamlet or Orlando) the depth of his love may damn the style of his poetry but will at least ensure its sincerity."⁹⁵ The poem Gwendolen creates by reading the bits of Shakespeare is neither a true parody of Shakespeare's sonnet nor a genuine Dada composition. Although Gwen is choosing the words at random, Stoppard has chosen their ordering very carefully as the words fit too well to be a product of chance and when combined form a poem that reverses Shakespeare's polemic and offers physical love in the place of immortality. The poem serves to "frame the presumed differences between Gwendolyn's traditional and Tzara's avant-garde definitions of the 'poetical' " ⁹⁶ and to win Gwen for Tzara.

Why has Stoppard chosen Shakespeare for Tzara's experiment? Because Shakespeare is the epitome of the Western tradition Tzara rebels against, and as such not only proves an obvious choice for Tzara's experimentation and Stoppard's dramatization -- for if Stoppard via Tzara is travestyng Shakespeare's sonnet (the words are not strict parody, nor are they Dadaist as explained above) then even more so is he using Shakespeare to lampoon Tzara -- but proves a point which Stoppard makes with much of the parodying in *Travesties*: "Ideology proves to be contingent upon practical needs". ⁹⁷ Tzara uses -- not his own words -- but Shakespeare's to support his defence of Dadaism and to persuade Gwen of his love. Stoppard has James Joyce use "Mr. Dooley" -- Joyce's poem about the foolishness of war -- to persuade Henry Carr

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Kelly, p.108.

to fund and to take part in Joyce's production of *Earnest* by intentionally appealing to the type of "philistine nationalism" in Henry Carr that his poem condemns: "Night after night, actors totter about the raked stages of this alpine renaissance, speaking in every tongue but one -- the tongue of Shakespeare -- of Sheridan -- of Wilde" (*Travesties*, p.51). "Where parody focuses us upon the discrepancy between how a text customarily sounds and behaves and how it is sounding and behaving in front of us, Stoppard's citations focus our attention upon the difference between what a text seems to say and how the speaker is using it." ⁹⁸

And this is why his use of Wilde is so appropriate. *Earnest* is a parody of late nineteenth-century society, and Wilde was meticulous in his concern about how his plays were acted and produced. In a letter to the actress Gracie Hawthorne, written while he was completing *Earnest*, Wilde explains:

My plays are difficult plays to produce well: they require artistic setting on the stage, a good company that knows something of the style essential to high comedy, beautiful dresses, a sense of modern life, and unless you are going out with a management that is able to pay well for things that are worth paying for, and spend money in suitable presentation, it would be much better for you not to think of producing my plays A management that could not pay could not, I fear, give anything better than a travesty of my work. ⁹⁹

David N. Dorbin, in his *Explicator* article on Wilde's letter, points out that the letter is easily available to someone researching Wilde or *Earnest* (as Stoppard did) and that not only are its concerns -- management, production, style, dress,

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Wilde, Oscar. *Letters*, Ed. Rupert Hart-Davis (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1972), p.374.

luxury and royalties -- concerns in *Travesties* but that the letter was also the source for Stoppard's title. ¹⁰⁰

Wilde wrote art for art's sake, but his work was dismissed by critics as "frivolity". However, Stoppard gives to *Earnest* meaning Wilde couldn't have hoped for and may not have wished for. While Joyce's production of *Earnest* in Stoppard may have been the type of travesty Wilde warned against for lack of money, Stoppard's *Earnest* (the play within *Travesties*) is used to aid discussion of artistic meaning and significance in ways Wilde could not have dreamed of and therefore is a different kind of travesty. Part of that discussion argues Wilde's viewpoint on the relationship of art and politics. He did not believe they were compatible.

Whenever a community or a powerful section of a community, or a government of any kind, attempts to dictate to the artist what he is to do, Art either entirely vanishes, or becomes stereotyped, or degenerates into a low and ignoble form of craft. A work of art is the unique result of a unique temperament. Its beauty comes from the fact that the author is what he is. It has nothing to do with the fact that other people want what they want. ¹⁰¹

Stoppard has not only parodied Wilde by casting his own characters in the *Earnest* roles, but travestied him by changing the meaning of *Earnest* through what has been described as an "ideological subversion", ¹⁰² giving his play artistic and political significance. Although *Earnest*'s new significance may be a type of belated critical triumph and revenge for Wilde, would he have approved of it? In discussing Wilde's point about art and politics, surely Stoppard goes against what Wilde was saying in the passage above.

¹⁰⁰ Dorbin, David N. "Stoppard's *TRAVESTIES*", *Explicator* 1981 Fall. 40 (1) p.63-4.

¹⁰¹ Wilde, Oscar. "The Soul of Man Under Socialism", *The Artist as Critic: Critical Writings of Oscar Wilde*, Ed. Richard Ellmann (New York, 1969), p.272.

¹⁰² Kelly, p.107.

Carr's ultimate view on art and politics is that "art doesn't change society, it is merely changed by it", but Cecily thinks that the "sole duty and justification for art is social criticism" (p.74). Stoppard ultimately shows that these ideas are not exclusive, that they are compatible, because art and society reflect and change each other in a cyclical fashion. In *Travesties* Stoppard shows revolutionaries (artistic and political) using art to change society and he shows society changing art and history through Carr's faulty memory. Thus Stoppard, while refuting Wilde's belief that art and politics are not compatible and demonstrating this through an ideological subversion of *Earnest* , simultaneously illustrates an observation made by Oscar Wilde: "The ancient historians gave us delightful fiction in the form of fact; the modern novelist presents us with dull facts under the guise of fiction".¹⁰³ In *Travesties* , Stoppard does a bit of both.

Travesties is a parody of *Earnest* because Stoppard uses Wilde's story as a structure on which to build his play. *Travesties* is a travesty of *Earnest* because it gives meaning to *Earnest* that Wilde didn't plan, and *Travesties* is a travesty of Stoppard's story because, for the most part, it never happened. At the end of the play we learn via Old Cecily that Carr was never the Consul, that he never even met Lenin, that he probably never knew Tzara and that he knew Joyce, but not until 1918. Despite the concentration on the parodies of Wilde, Joyce, Tzara, and Lenin, the emphasis of the play is that these parodies combine to form a travesty in Carr's imagination. In Wilde's *Earnest* , Miss Prism reminds Cecily that "Memory . . . is the diary that we all carry about with us."

¹⁰³ Wilde, Oscar, "The Decay of Lying", *The Artist as Critic* , Ed. Richard Ellmann (New York, 1968), p.293.

"Yes," Cecily replies, "but it usually chronicles the things that have never happened, and couldn't possibly have happened" (*Earnest* , p.367).

"Just as Rosencrantz and . . . (Guildenstern) attempt to grasp their significance in the story of Hamlet, so Carr attempts to define his in relation to Lenin's flight from Switzerland and the events that followed."¹⁰⁴ Carr is a "philistine narcissist who can produce neither art nor anti-art, nor revolution",¹⁰⁵ yet his jaundiced narration provides the plot, and his faulty memory and personal prejudice illustrate how the public's understanding and the critics' interpretation of an artist's work can influence the views of later generations towards that artist. In that regard he is a travesty of ourselves, and here we find a parallel with *Hamlet* and with Hamlet. Carr, like Hamlet, is another "Everyman" with whom we identify in our struggle to define ourselves and to find our niche in life and its events. And as Shakespeare has Hamlet use a play to parody real events in hopes to discover the truth about recent history and discover his role for the future, so Stoppard has Carr travesty a play (*Earnest*) in an attempt to create his (Carr's) role in the past and to illustrate that truth (artistic, historical and political) is rarely objective, but filtered through the biases of generations.

Charles Marowitz

Charles Marowitz is no stranger to *Hamlet* . As a London theatre critic he reviewed many traditional and non-traditional performances of the play and his reactions have been published in *Confessions of a Counterfeit Critic*:

¹⁰⁴ Sammells, Neil. *Earning Liberties: Travesties and The Importance of Being Earnest* ", *Modern Drama* (29)1986, p.381.

¹⁰⁵ Whitaker, p.128-9.

A London Theatre Notebook 1958-1971 . He saw Stoppard's first attempt at *RGD* in Berlin and later reviewed it in its final form. He has also written an "adaptation" of *Hamlet* , the result of which includes for him a minute knowledge of the play and a feeling that he half-owns *Hamlet* . He believes that his thorough familiarity with the work may have biased him against productions of it. He also believes that *Hamlet* cannot "work" for modern audiences.

I've never seen a satisfying production of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* , and frankly, I never expect to. Even if it was mind-bogglingly brilliant and universally lauded, it couldn't impress me -- feeling as I do that the original mechanism of the play is defunct and useful only as material for contemporary extrapolations."¹⁰⁶

Marowitz's adaptation, *The Marowitz Hamlet* , which began life as a twenty-eight minute collage in 1963 and was later re-written and expanded to eighty-five minutes, can best be described as a series of extrapolations or as a collage of the original. Shakespeare's order of events has been re-arranged and many of his characters' lines have been re-assigned to other characters. It is almost as if Marowitz took scissors to Shakespeare's text, cut up the scenes, mixed them up and then picked them out at random to create a new rendition of an old story, yet one that holds much of the same meaning as the original. This is not unlike what Tzara did to Shakespeare's eighteenth sonnet in Stoppard's *Travesties* ; however, neither work is random. Marowitz puts as much thought into his ordering of Shakespeare as does Stoppard via Tzara.

As an example of Marowitz's re-structuring, let us look at an event which takes place in the latter part of the play. Ophelia's burial scene occurs after the duel between Hamlet and Laertes and is interrupted by a flashback of Laertes counselling her. Then there is a scene between Hamlet and the Queen

¹⁰⁶ Marowitz, Charles. *Counterfeit Critic* , p.107.

in which he admits he loved Ophelia and that he is mad. Hamlet's mood swings from gentle and contrite to wildly accusatory, and he begins to rebuke the Queen for her attentions to his uncle. The King appears and proclaims Hamlet to be mad. Everyone (who has suddenly appeared out of nowhere) yells for "judgement", and a trial is arranged with Hamlet in the dock, Fortinbras as his counsel, and the King as judge.

The experiment which produced this sort of melange grew out of discussions with Peter Brook.

Would it be possible, we conjectured, to convey the multitude of nuances and insights which are to be found in *Hamlet* through a kind of cut-up of the work which thoroughly abandoned its progressive story-line? If the story proper would not be conveyed through such drastic reassembly, what would? The result was a twenty-eight minute collage stitched together from random selections of the play and wedged into an arbitrary structure (viz. the soliloquy 'How all occasions do inform against me'). The intention to fragment the work and then play it discontinuously forced us to devise a performance technique which would project such a collage form.¹⁰⁷

Marowitz's work, different as it is, retains many of the themes and much of the information that can be found in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

It became fashionable to say that if you knew *Hamlet*, this was a fascinating rescension which would provide a kind of salutary shock. But the fact is the collage was played before hundreds of people who had never read *Hamlet* or seen the film, and their impressions (derived from discussions after the performance) were as valid, and often as knowledgeable, as those of scholars and veteran theatre goers (*MS*, p.12.).

¹⁰⁷ Marowitz, Charles. *The Marowitz Shakespeare* (London: Marion Boyars, 1978), p.11. Hereafter referred to as *MS*. The *MS* is a collection of Marowitz's adaptations and contains the Marowitz *Hamlet*.

Marowitz's experiment proved his contention that the ideas in his collage were true to those of the original play. "Which begs the question: why cut it up in the first place? . . . I would say that the restructuring of a work, the characters and situations of which are widely known, is an indirect way of making contact with that work's essence" (MS , p.12). However, a collage can also "foster another concept" (MS , p.13). Talking about the speed of his collage format, Marowitz notes, ". . . not only do you change the nature of what is being said, you also change the purpose for saying it" (MS , p.13). The biggest effect that Marowitz's collage makes on Shakespeare's play is to challenge the audience's perception of Hamlet. Marowitz's work draws out and isolates characteristics of Hamlet which are inherent in Shakespeare's text and, in doing so, makes a statement on aspects of late twentieth-century politics and society.

I attempted to delineate a criticism of the type of person Hamlet was and, by inference, to indict the values which he represented; values which (i.e. misdirected moral concern, intellectual analyses as action-substitute, etc.) were, in my view, disreputable in our society and which derived much of their respectability and approval from traditional works such as Shakespeare's *Hamlet* . In short, by assaulting the character of Hamlet, one was deriding the supreme prototype of the conscious-stricken but paralysed liberal: one of the most lethal and obnoxious characters in modern times (MS , p.13).

Marowitz's ineffectual Hamlet is created out of more than juggled scenes and swapped lines, however; there are several additions and alterations which are crucial in shaping his milk-sop Hamlet. For instance, in a scene which, one would think, could not fail to provoke action on the part of the prince, the King begins to make love to the Queen in front of Hamlet. The Ghost, who steps out of a picture-frame (reminiscent of *Ruddigore* ; Gilbert's influence again), directs his "O Hamlet, what a falling-off was there" speech to the couple and then addresses Hamlet with "O horrible, horrible, most horrible / If thou has nature in thee bear it not". Hamlet does not act, but prefers to reflect, reciting his

speech that begins, "I have of late, but wherefore I know not, lost all my mirth". The Ghost, disgusted with Hamlet, leaves, only to re-enter with his arm around Fortinbras in a fatherly fashion. Marowitz shows the Ghost confiding in Fortinbras rather than in Hamlet, asking him to revenge his murder. Hamlet and Fortinbras "fight" for the right to defend the Ghost by placing fist over fist on the blade of a toy sword, and although Hamlet "wins", compared to Fortinbras, he is less convincing as a revenger of the Ghost's murder.

Marowitz undermines Hamlet once again when Hamlet is forced (by the Queen and Claudius) to pour poison into the ears of his father. This incident occurs as a flash-back and implies not that Hamlet definitely did this, but that he is as guilty as Claudius and the Queen. Whereas in Shakespeare Claudius is guilty of the actual murder, and the Queen of hypocrisy ("A second time, I kill my husband dead/ When second husband kisses me in bed") and, in Hamlet's eyes, of incest, Hamlet is only guilty of delay. Marowitz's implication is that Hamlet's delay in revenging his father's murder and allowing the murderer to go free is as incriminating as an act of murder and makes Hamlet a sort of accomplice.

Another major manipulation of the original plot occurs during the duel, which Marowitz describes as being performed "mechanically". In addition to physical duelling, Laertes and Hamlet also duel verbally, with the Court applauding or booing the effort of the participants. Laertes is always cheered; Hamlet is booed. The Court's reactions are based on the delivery of the lines and not the actual words, for each man is speaking some of Shakespeare's most famous lines in the play -- although the verbal rallies come from different parts of *Hamlet*. Hamlet's lines are *very* famous ones, but the ones Laertes speaks are ones that could or, Marowitz implies, should be spoken by Hamlet.

LAERTES. *(Still dueling. Stops .)*
 Both the worlds I give to negligence,
 Let come what comes: only I'll be revenged
 Most thoroughly for my father.

(The Court cheer LAERTES' poetry. The duel continues .)

HAMLET. *(Limply competing .)*
 The play's the thing
 Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King.

(All boo and hiss HAMLET's lame reply .)

(MS , p.52).

The end of the collage is, perhaps, the most dramatic part of the play. The duel is followed by Ophelia's burial scene, as already mentioned. Hamlet is put on trial with everyone (excluding Fortinbras, but including the Ghost) mocking and rebuking Hamlet, sometimes using Hamlet's own words against him. They send him up, thus enforcing Marowitz's idea of Hamlet, as a pathetic, ineffectual actor and prince. The shame and mockery bring Hamlet to his knees, and he is presumed dead and carted off by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Hamlet has one last burst of energy, however, in which he cries for vengeance and thrusts his sword into a

host of imaginary victims. After each thrust, a character falls to the ground, truly slain , until the corpses of all the characters lie strewn around HAMLET like a set of downed ninepins .

From . . . this . . . time . . . forth

(The corpses , still stretched out , begin derisive laughter .)

My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth.

(Corpses , laughing hysterically , mock HAMLET with jeers , whistles , stamping and catcalls , till final fade out .)

(MS , p.69).

Marowitz has often been quoted as saying that he believes that Shakespeare's work is no longer relevant to modern society and hopes that his own adaptations will revive the stories in Shakespeare. Yet, despite his intentions to revive *Hamlet* and to challenge society's assumptions about *Hamlet* by freeing it from the narrative, Marowitz's interpretation inevitably derives from his own narrative reading of the text. He frees *Hamlet* from a context and a history of pre-conceptions which he believes have made the play's mechanism "defunct", only to burden it with his own ideas and his own version of the story. If Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is defunct then it is vitally and successfully so, having continued to enlighten readers and audiences for centuries and having survived decades of imposed interpretations and ideologies. Marowitz admits that his "adaptations" are not Shakespeare, but are his translations of the "originals". The *Marowitz Hamlet* is interesting in its own right. Its depiction of Hamlet as the type of "conscience-stricken but paralyzed liberal" (MS , p.13) who equates taking a position with performing an action, makes it a social and political adaptation of *Hamlet* . However, for years there have been straight productions of *Hamlet* which depicted Hamlet as an ineffectual intellectual. Marowitz's adaptation does nothing new here, yet, thematically, it is too distant from Shakespeare to shed much light on his text and therefore does not do much to "revive" it. Ironically, by continuing to justify his "restructuring" as "an indirect way of making contact with that work's essence" (MS , p.12), Marowitz admits his dependence on Shakespeare and therefore fails to fulfill his proclaimed task: "to challenge the cultural authority of Shakespeare".¹⁰⁸

Marowitz and Stoppard are not only dependent on Shakespeare; they are also dependent on the tradition of performing, adapting and altering Shakespeare. They owe much of their style of adapting Shakespeare to the

¹⁰⁸ Holderness, Graham. *The Shakespeare Myth* , p.134.

directors, actors and actor-managers, playwrights, critics and scholars who have gone before them. Peter Davison's list of some of the features of Marowitz's collage which mirror past productions and anticipate future ones illustrates this point.

One section is presented like an old-time silent film ('against flicker-wheel effect'), though with dialogue; that seems to look back to Olivier's use of silent-film technique The 'duel of Speeches' that accompanies the fight with wooden toy swords is reminiscent of the verbal duels in Jonson's masques and Randolph's *Amyntas* (1630). . . . Hamlet's swinging on a rope (giving point to the Queen's line, 'This bodiless creation') looks forward to Brook's 'trapeze' production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* . 109

Using *Hamlet* as a canvas on which to paint various interpretations is not a phenomenon of the twentieth century. However, the twentieth century has seen the largest number and the greatest variety of *Hamlet* adaptations, and Stoppard's and Marowitz's work reflects this.

Michael Scott's description of Shakespeare's position in the twentieth century explains the literary burden Stoppard and Marowitz had to shoulder and the literary tradition they benefitted from when adapting Shakespeare. "Surrounding what we popularly consider to be Shakespeare's *Hamlet* or *The Merchant of Venice* is both a textual and an intertextual history. The former refers to literary attempts to discover the text, the latter to the traditions that have grown around it through its performance over the centuries. Keir Elam, drawing on work by Julia Kristeva, has instructively written about the intertextual nature of a play:

Appropriate decodification of a given text derives above all from the spectator's familiarity with *other* texts the genesis of the performance itself is necessarily intertextual:

109 Davison, p.74.

it cannot but bear the traces of other performances at every level, whether that of the written text (bearing generic, structural and linguistic relations with other plays), the scenery (which will 'quote' its pictorial or proxemic influences), the actor (whose performance refers back, for the cognoscenti, to other displays), directorial style, and so on. 'The text', remarks Julia Kristeva, 'is a permutation of texts, an intertextuality. In the space of a single text several enounces from other texts cross and neutralize each other.' "

110

Marowitz adapts Shakespeare because he feels that the original text has succumbed to one of the dangers of such intertextual neutralisation which is ceasing to challenge and confront audiences.

This particular belief of Marowitz's was influenced by French dramatic theorist Antonin Artaud (1896-1948), who was also concerned about what he saw as the inertia of Shakespeare and other classical drama. Artaud believed that drama must present reality not history.

Past masterpieces are fit for the past, they are no good to us. We have the right to say what has been said and even what has not been said in a way that belongs to us, responding in a direct and straightforward manner to present-day feelings everybody can understand. . . . In the long run, Shakespeare and his followers have instilled a concept of art for art's sake in us, art on the one hand and life on the other, and we might rely on this lazy, ineffective idea as long as life outside held good, but there are too many signs that everything which used to sustain our lives no longer does so . . . 109

Marowitz has admitted to attempting to re-vitalize Shakespeare for the twentieth century; Stoppard has been credited with doing so. That such a revival is deemed necessary is due, in part, to the work of Artaud.

¹¹⁰ Scott, Michael. *Shakespeare and the Modern Dramatist* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), p. 7 quoting Elam, Keir. *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama* (London and New York, 1980), p.93.

Another advocate of a theatrical revolution whose work influenced Marowitz and Stoppard was Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956). Much of Brecht's work (dramatic and theoretical) had political motivation, something lacking in Artaud's work and theories. However, Brecht shared Artaud's belief that Shakespeare's drama was losing its power and its relevance. An example of Brecht's position is his sonnet *On Shakespeare's Play Hamlet* .

Here is the body, puffy and inert
Where we can trace the virus of the mind.
How lost he seems among his steel-clad kind
This introspective sponger in a shirt!

Till they bring drums to wake him up again
As Fortinbras and all the fools he's found
March off to win that little patch of ground
'Which is not tomb enough . . . to hide the slain.'

At that his solid flesh starts to see red
He feels he's hesitated long enough
It's time to turn to (bloody) deeds instead.

So we can nod when the last Act is done
And they pronounce that he was of the stuff
To prove most royally, had he been put on. ¹¹¹

Marowitz treats Hamlet similarly to Brecht, and, while Stoppard's treatment of *Hamlet* differs, his plays have other Brechtian features, such as using drama as subversion in *DHCM* .

Another influence on plays and productions of the 1960s, including the work of Stoppard and Marowitz, was absurdism. One way its influence reached Stoppard and Marowitz was through the Royal Shakespeare Company's 1965 production of *Hamlet* . David Warner played Hamlet as a politically apathetic student of the 1960s complete with university scarf. His

¹¹¹ Willet, John. *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht* (rev. pbk edn, London: 1977), pp.120-1.

Hamlet refused to be drawn into a world of Establishment politics. Peter Hall described his, then, vision of the play as follows:

For our decade I think the play will be about disillusionment which produces an apathy of the will so deep that commitment to politics, to religion or to life is impossible. . . . There is a sense of what-the-hell anyway, over us looms the Mushroom Cloud. And politics are a game and a lie, whether in our country or in the East/West dialogue which goes on interminably without anything very real being said. This negative response is deep and appalling. ¹¹²

The influence of Jan Kott, who in his book *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* (1961) argues that drama should be relevant and reflect the problems and concerns of our time, is also seen in Hall's views and in his RSC production as well as in Stoppard and Marowitz. Both Stoppard and Marowitz adapted *Hamlet* for modern times. They wanted to make it relevant for the late twentieth century. As has been noted, they were not the first to do so and were greatly influenced by those who had previously worked with the play. However, Stoppard's interest in *Hamlet* does not stop at making it pertinent to our time. He also uses it, along with other Shakespeare plays, to talk about how the twentieth century uses Shakespeare.

Elin Diamond has observed that "Shakespeare's plays, whether read or produced, are never inviolate, they are always being manipulated by the culture that they help define." ¹¹³ This chapter's survey of modern *Hamlet* s has given numerous examples of social, political, and artistic manipulations of the play. What is unique about Stoppard is that he manipulates Shakespeare in order to discuss Shakespearean manipulation. For example, Stoppard's *DHCPM* discusses how and why Shakespeare's plays are used. Stoppard incorporates

¹¹² Davison, p.65. Davison does not give source.

¹¹³ Diamond, Elin. "Stoppard's *Dogg's Hamlet* , *Cahoot's Macbeth* : The Uses of Shakespeare", *Modern Drama* . Dec.1986; 29 (4), p.595.

Hamlet and *Macbeth* "because they represent two oppositional versions of the use of Shakespeare: on the one hand, a reified cultural institution in the service of authority; on the other, a linguistic space traversed and politically remapped by those who speak and enact its words and messages." ¹¹⁴ In *Travesties*, Tzara uses Shakespeare's work as a tool to get what he wants, despite his abhorrence for it as literature. Tzara's use of Shakespeare can be compared to the recent "political correctness" movement in society and academia in which we are strongly encouraged to use "acceptable, inoffensive" terms and phrases to reflect an enlightened, unbiased way of thinking. A major oversight by the "politically correct" is that such phrases give the *illusion* of objectivity and lack of prejudice, whether or not such attitudes are present. Use of politically-correct language does not necessarily mean that one's thoughts are politically correct; it merely means that one has mastered the lingo. Use of a certain type of language cannot be equated with one's attitudes and intentions. This is certainly the case with Tzara and Dogg who, in their use of Shakespeare, are "culturally correct". Tzara uses Shakespeare for romance; Dogg uses Shakespeare for prestige, despite the fact that the players and the audience in *DH* cannot understand a word of it. The covert use of language is what the Inspector fears in *CM*. Shakespeare is banned in the Czechoslovakia of *CM* because of the double-meanings it can carry. Stoppard's use of Shakespeare indicates how far Shakespearean production and adaptation has come in the twentieth century.

Shakespeare is not just culturally correct; his work has become the ultimate literary alibi. Use Shakespeare and you can get away with almost anything. This quality has added to the popularity of straight productions of Shakespeare and increased the number and variety of alterations, adaptations and aberrations of Shakespeare, as this chapter has shown with *Hamlet*. The

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.594.

play has proved especially popular because it has maintained its centuries-old reputation for being the epitome of Shakespeare's work.

CONCLUSION

Stoppard and Marowitz are merely the latest instalments in the long-running series that is "*Hamlet*, Made Another Thing". Taken in the context of the tradition and culmination of *Hamlet* adaptations, Stoppard and Marowitz are not that revolutionary. We have discussed or mentioned *Hamlet* alterations, adaptations, burlesques, collages, parodies, and even straight productions that anticipate the content, structure, style, and treatment of subject matter in Marowitz and Stoppard. Even the use of Shakespeare to talk about Shakespeare and art is not new. Gilbert was doing that a century ago. Stoppard and Marowitz are unique for their time, however. Their treatment of *Hamlet* made it relevant to the 1960s and 1970s, and is interesting for the stages it represents in *Hamlet* adaptation. And like *Hamlet* adaptations that have gone before them, their work anticipates the direction future *Hamlet*s may take. The 1982 film, *Hamlet Act*, takes its cue from Stoppard.

Its visual exploration of epistemological puzzles in *Hamlet* is analogous to verbal explorations in Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. . . . As a manifestation of the post-structuralist era, Nelson's film is designed to explore its own process by allegorizing the most self-consciously metadramatic scene in Shakespeare's play -- Hamlet's encounter with the Players. . . . (I)t involves the spectator in a series of dialectical games acted out between seemingly incompatible forms of mediation: theatre rehearsal/film, body/screen, film image/'live' video. . . . we see [Hamlet] shout at his own video-image, at the pale face that is his own shadow. . . . The play is the thing by which we are deceived." ¹

Like *RGD*, *Hamlet Act* is meant to challenge our perception and conception of reality. A work which is reminiscent of Marowitz's treatment of *Hamlet* is the

¹ Rothwell and Henkin, pp. 80-81.

1987 film *Hamlet*, produced by the Cambridge Experimental Theatre. There are four members in the cast, who double-up on roles. They not only take turns at playing Hamlet, but sometimes they all play him at once.

The cast of four turn themselves and their material inside out to capture the fragmented self that is the melancholy prince. All voices speak separately, together, and contrapuntally to create a sonic equivalent to the split self that Shakespeare created in Hamlet. . . . the production is not afraid to visualize as well as to vocalize the Hamlet text. The bodies of the actors writhe and twist in rhythmical but nevertheless strictly choreographed patterns reminiscent of Oriental theatre.²

The *Marowitz Hamlet*, with its rapid succession of scenes fading in and out of one another and its film terms for stage directions, has a filmic quality to it anyway, so comparisons with film are natural. However, this film's insertion of silent, acted scenes, its use of different actors to play Hamlet or portray Hamlet, and its technique of sometimes requiring characters to speak simultaneously, all work to create an atmosphere reminiscent of Marowitz.

Using *Hamlet* to draw out what other people have seen or might be able to see in the play is not revolutionary. Theatrical insights and ideologies often influence real ones. Hamlet knew this; this is why he selected and arranged "The Murder of Gonzago" for the court's viewing. During the Restoration and the early eighteenth century, some adaptors were concerned that *Hamlet* "as Shakespeare wrote it" could be used to influence people against, perhaps even topple, a government. So Shakespeare's text was cut. Another reason for textual changes and omissions by Restoration and eighteenth-century adaptors was artistic and literary taste. Shakespeare could be improved upon. Nineteenth-century adaptation saw the growth of Shakespearean burlesques;

² Ibid., p. 84.

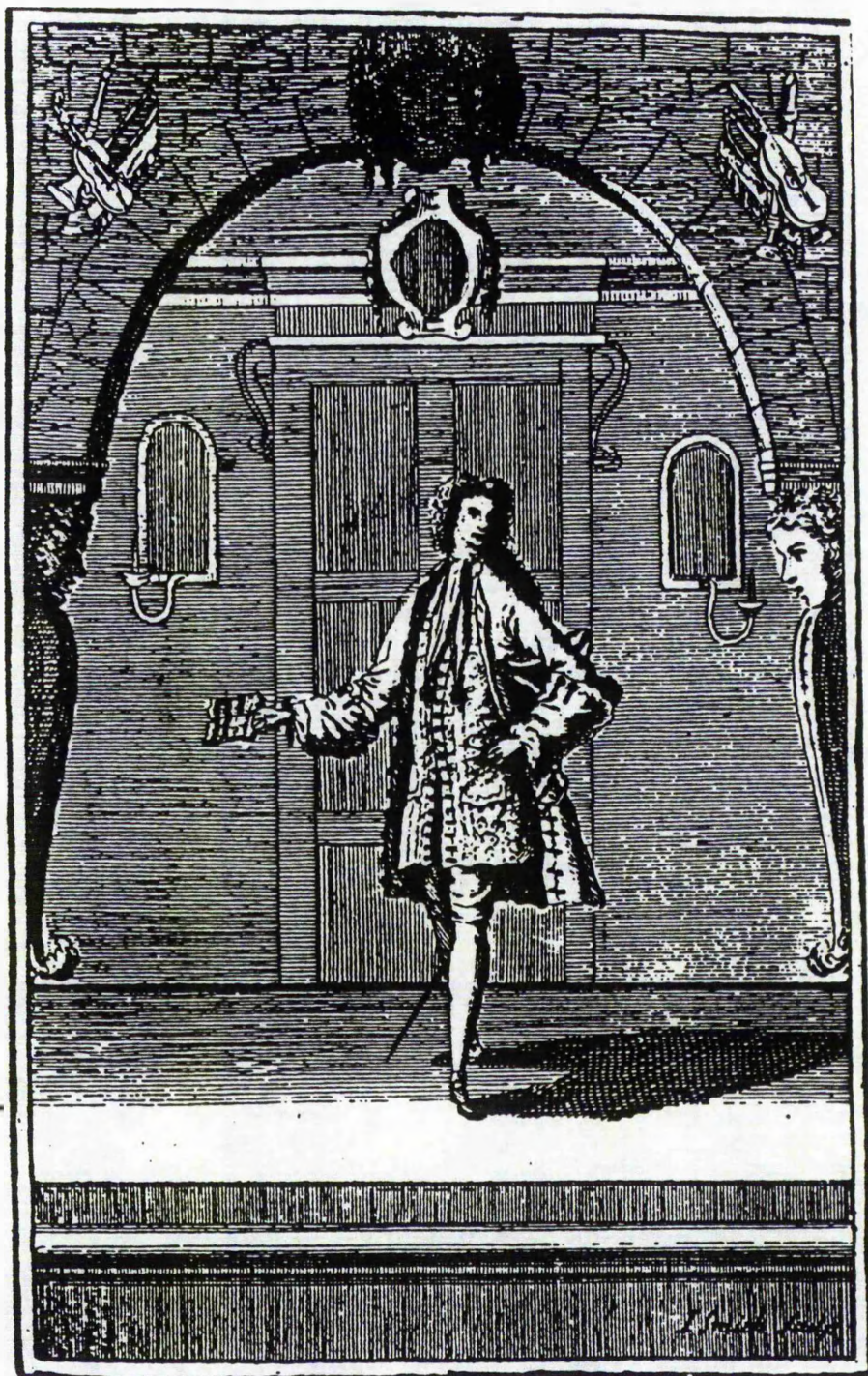
Hamlet was altered primarily for comic entertainment. However, beneath a humorous surface lay a sub-text of satiric comment on current events, politicians, even royalty. Fools rushed in where angels feared to tread, so to speak. Unlike "serious" theatre genres, burlesques -- which were not under the jurisdiction of the Lord Chamberlain or the Examiner of Plays -- had the artistic freedom to do and say as they pleased. Instead of changing and cutting *Hamlet* , to comply with artistic rules in the way the neo-classicists had done, burlesque authors adapted and embellished *Hamlet* to make artistic criticism on other plays, on other *Hamlet* s. These authors were not necessarily *trying* to be clever, in the way that Stoppard does, their main agenda being to entertain; but the critical and satirical sub-text was not accidental. By the early twentieth century, when serious drama was allowed the freedom burlesques had possessed for a century, *Hamlet* was used not only by theatre directors to comment on and criticize government, but also by governments to influence the public. Adaptation had turned one hundred and eighty degrees from where it was in the Restoration. Restoration and eighteenth-century adaptors altered *Hamlet* in order to avoid the risk of it making a political statement; twentieth-century adaptors have altered it to ensure that it would make a statement, and therefore have tailored it to their ideological specifications. Twentieth-century adaptors and directors have also exploited *Hamlet* for their own artistic aims. Adaptors have also altered *Hamlet* in attempts to update Shakespeare's *Hamlet* , and to talk about art in large terms, not only about other *Hamlet* productions (as in the nineteenth century), but also about the Shakespeare canon. *Hamlet* has even been used to comment on and criticize literary criticism -- a far cry from the Restoration and eighteenth century, when literary criticism shaped *Hamlet* . *Hamlet* invites adaptation because it contains dramatic alteration and criticism, political subversion, and instances within the plot of *Hamlet* disguising politics with art, as well as stylistic instances of Shakespeare

promoting morals and civil order to justify and disguise the presence of art in his text.

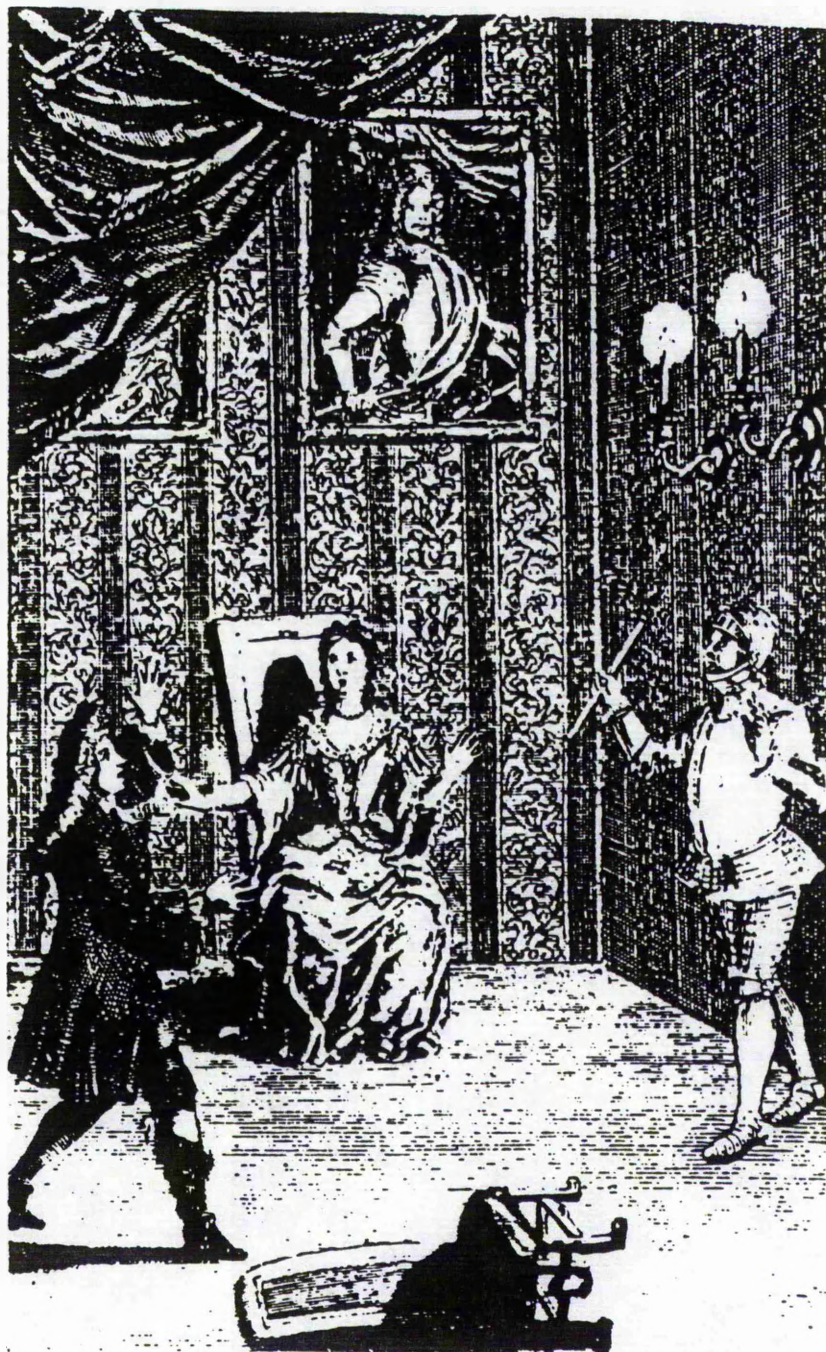
Hamlet adaptation is moving on. Each new work inspires or influences another, and all serve to keep *Hamlet* on our minds and in the public eye; not that *Hamlet* needs the publicity. People have been trying to change it, up-date it, make their mark upon it for centuries. However, none of these attempts serve to mar or replace *Hamlet*'s position in literature. Instead, they serve as reminders of *Hamlet*'s opal quality, of its meaning something to everyone, of its ability to take on and reflect a huge variety of interpretations, and of its use as a literary alibi. Looking at previous adaptations and productions of *Hamlet*, one can only guess what will happen next.

ILLUSTRATIONS

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A Hamlet of the Betterton Period



An interesting variant on the Closet Scene
From the Rowe edition of Shakespeare, published a year before Betterton's death



Hamlet meets the Ghost: Garrick

Hamlet meets the Ghost: Garrick (engraved by
McArdell after Benjamin Wilson)

PARODY IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY ADVERTISING



LOOK here upon this picture, and on this,
 The counterfeit presentment of two smokers;
 See what a grace is seated on this brow;
 Luxuriant smile, the type of joy itself!
 An eye all beams, so pleasant and upturned,
 Expressing pleasure at the dainty 'Olg.'
 Now lighted; mark the heaven-kissing curl;
 'Tis fascination to that precious weed;
 Wherefore man doth feverishly break the seal
 That gives the world assurance 'tis the GEM.
 This is one smoker; look you now what follows:
 Here is the other, like a sickly child,
 Taking its nauseous powder; hath he taste,
 That he can suck at such a weed,
 That scatters out its dust? Ha! has he eyes?
 You cannot say he has; for he would sure
 Seek out a better brand; the weed is humble,
 And palls upon the palate; and what palate
 Would take such stuff as his!
 Oh, man! for modest cash 'THE RICHMOND GEM'
 Is sweet and fragrant to the smoker's mouth;
 To youth its virtues are as plain—
 To smoke is to admire.

ALLEN & GINTER, RICHMOND, VIRGINIA, U.S.A.
 Manufacturers of the
 RICHMOND GEM, OUR LITTLE BEAUTIES,
 RICHMOND STRAIGHT CUT, No. 1,
 CIGARETTES AND SMOKING TOBACCOS.
 And other well-known Brands of TOBACCOS.

—A long way after Shakespeare.

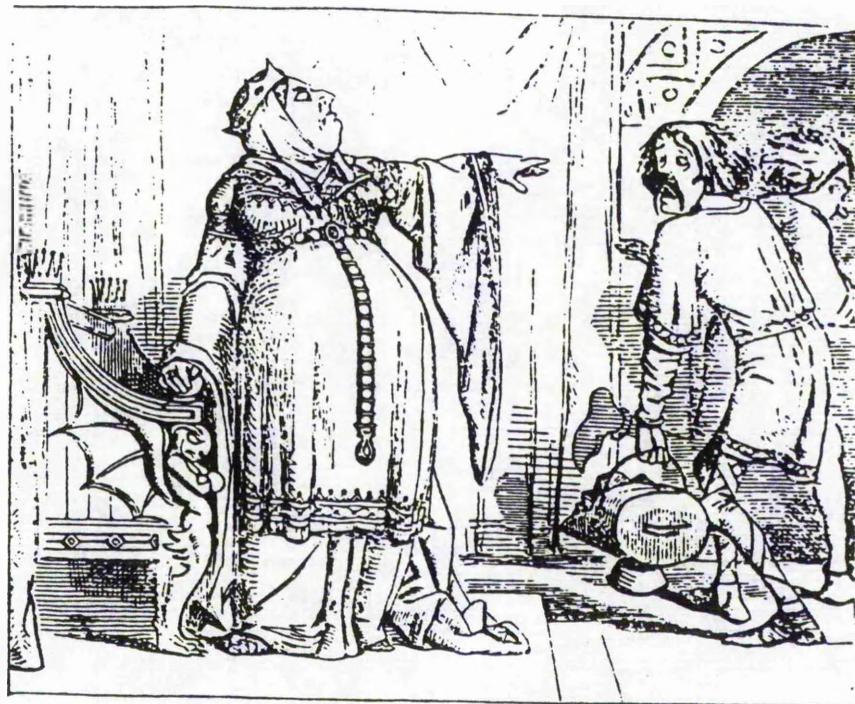
The above Engraving contains the Parody referred to on Page 165. Part xx of Parodies.

NAVAL ELOQUENCE..



*Damn all Bond St. Sailors I say, a parcel of small snocks!
They'd sooner creep into a Jordan than face the French. 'dam me!*

Gillray: a cartoon of 1795 presumably referring to the Duke of Clarence's efforts to play an active part in the war



PUNCH'S ILLUSTRATIONS TO SHAKSPEARE. 1855

"An eye like MARS (Ma's) to threaten and command."

Hamlet, Act iii., Scene 4.

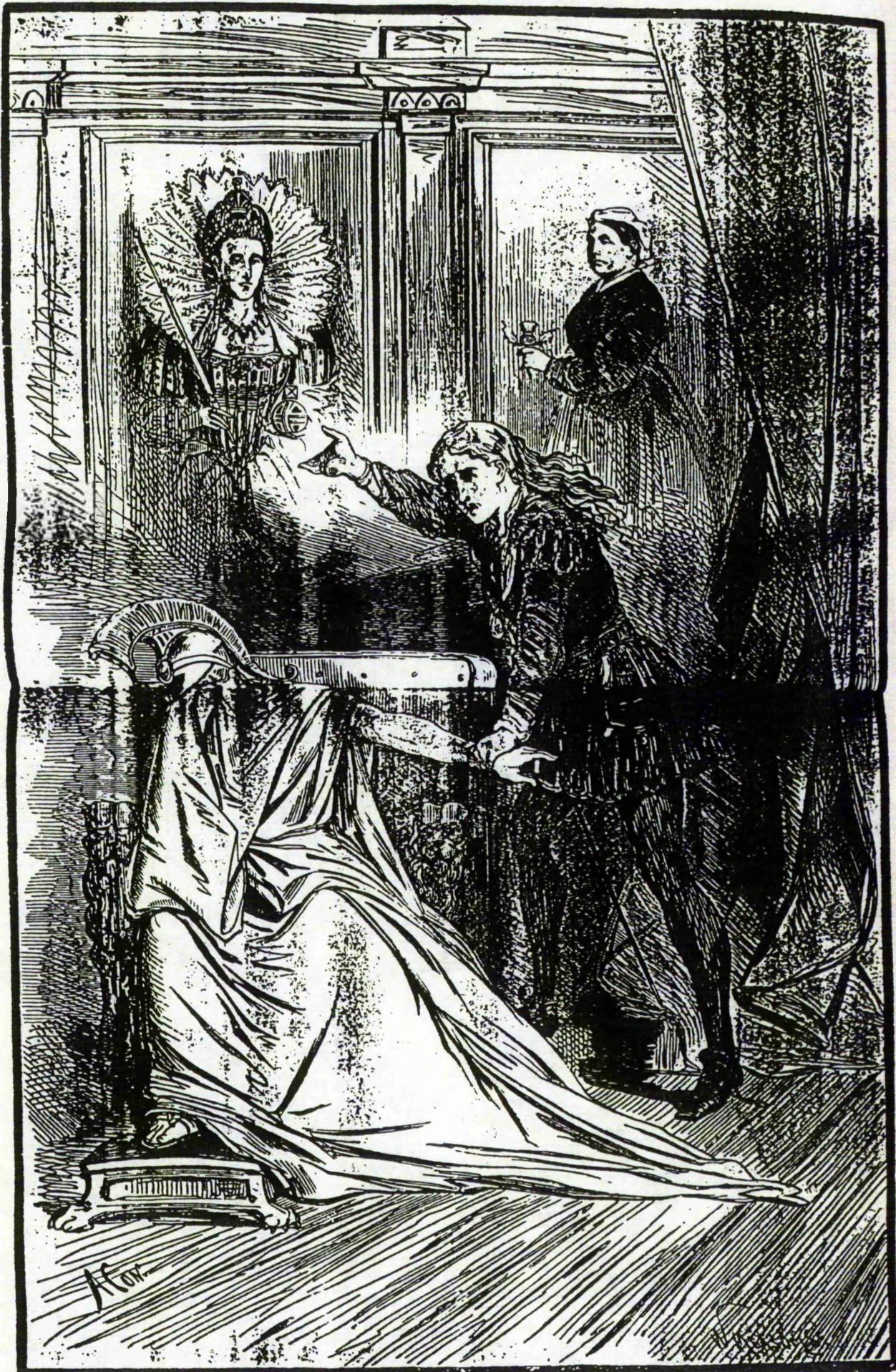
HAMLET BURLESQUE IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY POLITICAL
CARTOONS

F U N . — F E B R U A R Y 2 8 , 1 8 6 3 .



OPHELIA OF THE WEED.

Gladstone (sadly) :—“HERE'S 'BACCY FOR YOU. AND HERE'S 'BACCY FOR YOU, MY NOBLE SWELL. AND (to Tobacco Merchants) HERE'S RUIN FOR YOU!”



A COMPARISON.

ACT III SCENE 4

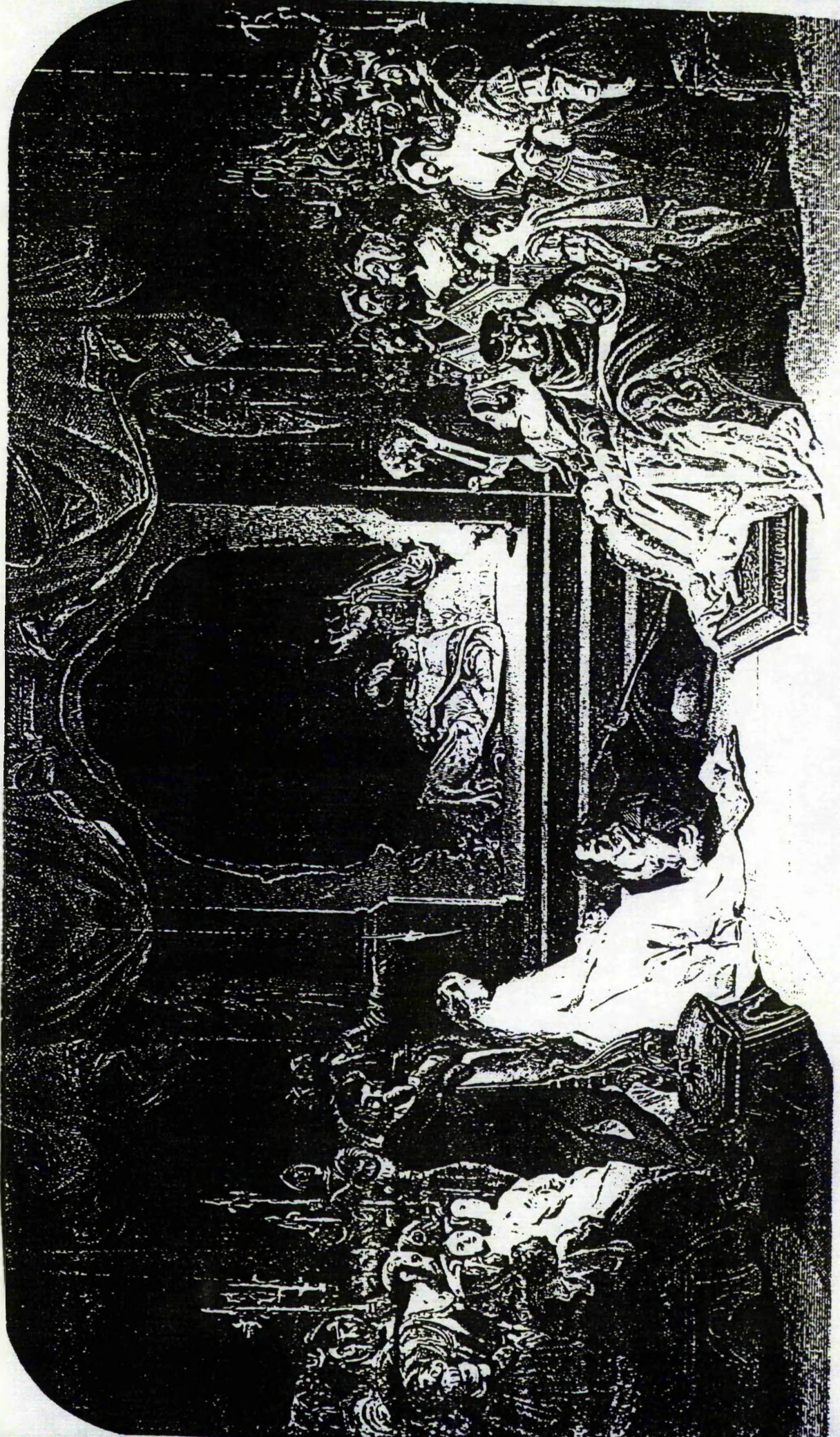
HAMLET: LOOK HERE, UPON THIS PICTURE, AND ON THIS
THE COUNTERFEIT PRESENTMENT OF TWO SISTERS.—ACT IV. SCENE III.

FUN.—OCTOBER 12, 1872.



A QUESTION MEET TO BE MET.

*Bull (as Hamlet):—“ Fresh meat, or potted meat, that is the question—
Whether 'tis nobler, in the purse to suffer
The bills and humbugs of outrageous butchers,
Or to take arms against domestic troubles,
And, by Preserved Meat, end them ?”*



Macbeth in the Play Scene
from the painting by Machin



"HAMLET AND OPHELIA"

--ROSSETTI

PRE-RAPHAELITE PAINTING DEPICTING A ROMANTIC CONCEPTION OF
SHAKESPEARE'S "LOVERS"

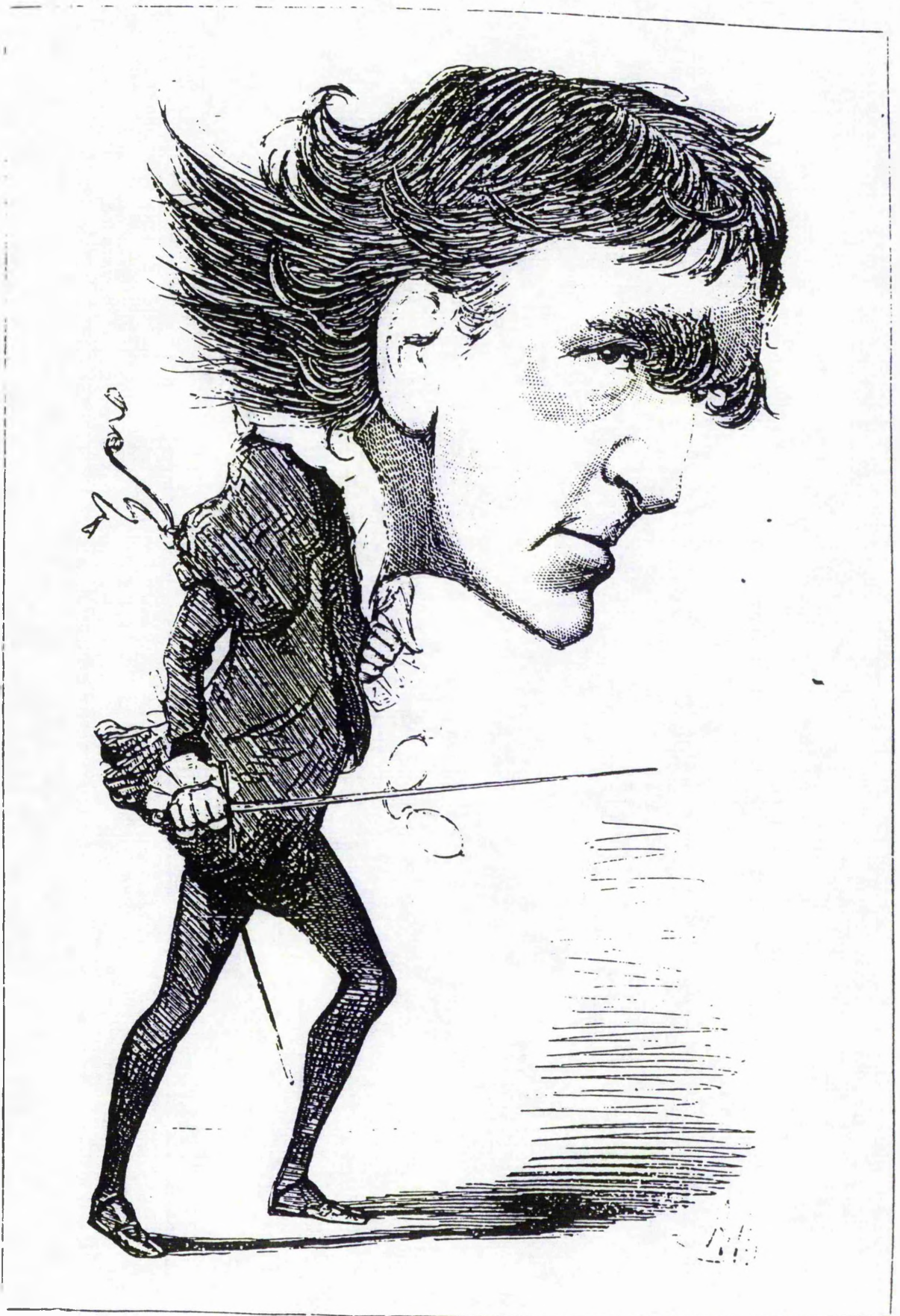


Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Sketch by Moyr Smith of a performance at the Prince's Hall on 19 November 1891, published in *Black and White*, 28 November 1891. The cast was identical with that of the original production at the Vaudeville on 3 June 1891, with the exception of Henry Dana who replaced S. Herbert-Basing as Rosencrantz



"Aye, sir: to be honest, as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of ten thousand"—Act 2, scene ii.

NOV. 1874
MR. HENRY IRVING AS HAMLET, AT THE LYCEUM THEATRE



MR. HENRY IRVING.

1874

"Now could I drink hot blood, and do such bitter business as the day would quake to look on."—HAMLET, Act III., Sc. 2.

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