

"I shall be a Dain, with the cursed Dain blood in me.... The number of my own crimes will be to my advantage, on the theory that nobody but a lunatic could have committed so many. And won't they be many? I'll produce crimes and crimes, dating from the cradle."....

"You'll probably make a go of it," I said.... "And, legally, you're entitled to beat the jump if ever anybody was."

"Legally entitled?" he repeated, the mirth going out of his eye. He looked away, and then at me again, uneasily. "Tell me the truth, am I?"

I nodded.

"But damn it, that spoils it," he complained.... "It's no fun if I'm really cracked."

—Dashiehl Hammett, *The Dain Curse* (NY, 1972), ch. XXII, 202-203.

Robert Zaslavsky Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: "Very like a whale"

I

Since *Hamlet*,¹ like *Moby Dick*,² has borne the darts of so many critical harpooners already without succumbing,³ it might seem the height of audacious monomania for someone to hurl yet another. But we interpreters "know not seems" (I. ii. 76/76), for we "have that within which passes show" (I. ii. 85/85), and when the play beckons us, as the ghost beckoned Hamlet, we must—however cautiously—follow it through the "flood" of its action to "the dreadful summit" of its meaning (cf. I. iv. 69-70/69-70). But where do the floodgates open, where does the meaning begin? Presumably it begins with the title.

Hamlet, Prince of Denmark is one of three Shakespearean plays whose titles consist of an individual name, a designation, and a place, the other two being *Othello, the Moor of Venice* and *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*. *Othello* is unique in that his designation is racial and the place not his native place, whereas both *Hamlet* and *Pericles* bear political designations attached to their native places. By title, then, *Hamlet* and *Pericles* suggest that their themes are most concretely political. But *Hamlet* and *Pericles* react differently to political exigencies: whereas *Pericles* is in Tyre only long enough to leave it for a life of suffering the vicissitudes of fortune which beset him on the high seas, *Hamlet* is in Denmark to stay for a life of acting against a "sea of troubles" (III. i. 59) which is political in origin, nature, and effects. *Hamlet*, then, has the political as its theme, and to understand that theme, one must begin with an understanding of the concrete political situation of the Denmark of the play. For Shakespeare—as all too few commentators

¹ All citations to *Hamlet* are to the New Variorum Edition, ed. Horace Howard Furness (NY, 1963 © 1877), two volumes. However, since my approach to the text is extremely conservative, which in the case of *Hamlet* means regarding it as dangerous to go against any unanimous readings of the quartos, I have restored as a rule such readings which Furness emended, and I have noted these as well as other textual decisions. In addition, since there is no standardized lineation of Shakespeare's plays, I have given a second reference (to the right of a slash) to the Arden edition, ed. Harold Jenkins (London, Methuen, 1982).

² The subtitle of this paper (*Hamlet* III. ii. 365/373) is the sixteenth extract supplied by the sub-sub-librarian as part of the prefatory material for *Moby Dick* (Norton Critical Edition), 3. Cf. extracts 21, 22, and 4. Also see extracts 64 and 9; and 80 and 11.

³ Cf. *Moby Dick*, extracts 17, 20, and 4; 45 and 6; 65 and 9; 76, and especially 79 and 11.

have observed—was never as careless in creating the settings of his plays as his critics have been in their understanding of those settings.⁴

The regime in Denmark has been treated as though it were a simple hereditary monarchy, even though it is not. Rather it is an elective monarchy in which no one becomes ruler without an election by the people. The most explicit statements of this are from Hamlet himself:

He that hath kill'd my king, and...
Popp'd in between the election and my hopes
(V. ii. 64-65 / 64-65)

But I do prophesy the election lights
On Fortinbras; he has my dying voice
(V. ii. 342-343 / 360-361)⁵

If one puts aside for now the question of what gives Hamlet the right to designate a successor to the throne, one can see that a two-part process is involved in filling the Danish kingship, first the designation of a successor by the current monarch (cf. III. ii. 324 ff./331 ff.), and then a popular election to ratify that selection.⁶ In the final analysis, then, the people decides who will be king, and if this popular ratification seems like a formality, it is not merely so, as Claudius well knows.⁷ One example of this is the process whereby he arranges to dispose of Hamlet by sending him to England:

[King.] Come, Gertrude, we'll call up our wisest friends;
And let them know both what we mean to do,
And what's untimely done
(IV. i. 38-40 / 38-40)

[King.] To bear all smooth and even,
This sudden sending him away must seem
Deliberate pause
(IV. iii. 7-9 / 7-9)

⁴ Among the few are Allan Bloom, *Shakespeare's Politics* (NY, 1964), and Paul Arthur Cantor, *Shakespeare's Rome, Republic and Empire* (Ithaca, 1976). Cf. Bloom, 3: "These essays are intended as first steps in the enterprise of making Shakespeare again the theme of philosophic reflection and a recognized source for the serious study of moral and political problems. The task is doubly difficult, for, not only must the subtle plays, difficult in themselves, be interpreted, but the authentic intellectual atmosphere in which they were written must be recovered." Also cf. Cantor, 9: "Critics who habitually make light of Shakespeare's interest in politics might attribute this apparent confusion to the playwright himself... But it is not Shakespeare who is confused". Also cf. Coleridge's remark, cited as from *Seven Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton* (London, 1856), 141, in *Variorum*, II, 154, that Shakespeare "never wrote anything without design." Finally, cf. George W. Keeton, *Shakespeare's Legal and Political Background* (London, 1967), v: "Shakespeare's legal knowledge differed little from that of other writers of his time, but his observation was closer and more accurate, and there were prominent lawyers of his day—notably Sir Edward Coke—who interested him greatly. The legal and political ideas which he incidentally expresses were part of the intellectual equipment of all educated men of his time, and his touch was sensitive." [This book is Keeton's revised and expanded version of his *Shakespeare and His Legal Problems* (London, 1930), although no explicit acknowledgment of this is to be found in the later version.]

⁵ Cf. Norton Critical Edition, ed. Cyrus Hoy (NY, 1963), note ad V. ii. 65: "election i. e., to the kingship, Denmark being an elective monarchy." Unfortunately, this is all that Hoy says. he does not explain the other passages which allude thus to Denmark's regime, and none of the critical essays employ it for understanding the play. Also cf. Furness's bracketed interpolation, *Variorum*, II, 355: "nigh a hundred years ago, Stevens called attention to the fact that Denmark was an elective monarchy." But Furness's tone and the context suggest that he regards this as merely incidental. However, he cites selections from Karl Werder *Vorlesungen über Shakespeare's Hamlet* (Berlin, 1875), *Variorum*, II, 354-371. Werder is indeed sensitive to some of the ramifications of the political setting, and in what follows I am somewhat indebted to his remarks. See Appendix A. I on the contemporary view of elective monarchy.

⁶ Hamlet's soul mirrors the political structure of Denmark. As he says to Horatio (III. ii. 58-60/63-65): "Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice, / And could of men distinguish her election / S'hath seal'd thee for herself."

⁷ See Appendix A. II on the right of the people to choose.

approximately two months after the elder Hamlet's death (I. ii. 138/138; cf. III. ii. 119-123/125-129), and one month after the marriage of Gertrude to Claudius (I. ii. 145-157/145-157), and Hamlet speaks as though he were present at both the funeral and the wedding (I. ii. 147-149/147-149, 154-156/154-156, 176-181/176-181). And for him to be present at the funeral, which must have taken place rather soon after the death considering the condition of the body (cf. I. v. 63-73/63-73, esp. 71-73/71-73), since the journey from Wittenberg would have taken approximately two weeks, he would have had to leave Wittenberg at least two weeks before the funeral, i. e., before his father's death. And when he first meets Horatio, his friend (I. ii. 163/163) and fellow Wittenbergian (I. ii. 164/164, 168/168), their initial interchange (I. ii. 160-161/160-161) indicates that they have not seen each other for quite some time. Horatio has come to Elsinore to attend the elder Hamlet's funeral (I. ii. 176/176), but he has come almost two months late. Why? Presumably because at least a month would have elapsed before the news reached Wittenberg and Horatio completed his journey to Denmark, probably considerably more than a month, because since Hamlet was not there, the news would not have been rushed. In addition, the active role which the people's love for Hamlet assumes in the play would be baffling without his presence to bolster it. The reason that he has been in Denmark is unclear, although perhaps one does not need to look further than his relationship with Ophelia for it, a relationship whose intensity would seem to have required Hamlet's presence. In any case, Hamlet has surely been in Elsinore for some time. Hamlet himself suggests that he has been there for three years.¹¹ And since Hamlet is "loved of the distracted multitude" (IV. iii. 4),¹² had he wanted to succeed his father, he presumably could have done so (cf. V. ii. 384-385). But Hamlet does not want to rule.

So, for Claudius's now being on the throne, Hamlet is in large part responsible. For Hamlet prefers privacy to publicity, i. e., he is philosophical not political. And as a philosopher, or rather as an antique philosopher, he believes that politics is corrupt and that the public arena is to be abjured.¹³ Claudius, on the other hand, is a modern political person, a Machiavellian, as we will see later.

The contrast between Claudius's publicity and Hamlet's privacy is evident in the first court scene. Claudius opens the scene with a decorous, balanced, and highly artificial, yet in its way blunt, apology for the haste of the marriage. This indicates that Hamlet's indignation over this—however excessive that indignation may be—is not unjustifiable [see Keeton (1967), 196-197]. Claudius presents his decision to marry as a victory of discretion over nature (I. ii. 5/5), and thus presenting it is a victory of language over reality, since discretion refers to succumbing to one's natural urges while nature refers to observing mourning customs. And his justification for this rests on a complete identification of the king and the kingdom, the body human and the body politic (I. ii. 2-4/2-4), the natural and the conventional.¹⁴ The description of Norway shows

¹¹ As Hamlet himself says (V. i. 130-131/134-135: "By the Lord, Horatio, this three years I have took note of it." Hamlet can only be referring to the time that he has been in Denmark since he left Horatio at Wittenberg.

¹² Cf. IV. vii. 16/16, 18/18: "The other motive, /.../ Is the great love the general gender bear him."

¹³ Cf. Plato, *Gorgias* 502d10-503d3, 515b6 ff., *et passim*. Also cf. Socrates's assertion, 521d6-8 (tr. mine): "I believe myself, together with [only] a few [other] Athenians, [whom I add] so that I do not bespeak myself alone, [—I believe myself] to take in hand the so truly political art and myself alone of contemporary [Athenians] to enact the political things." The irony here is that Socrates's claim that he is *the* political individual means that the truly political life is the life of the philosopher who abjures politics, while the lives of those who are the acknowledged political individuals are inauthentically political lives.

¹⁴ The problem of the monarch's bicorporality was central to Elizabethan considerations of the question of succession. It is precisely to this doctrine that the following interchange (IV. ii. 26-29/26-29) refers: "*Ham*. The body is with the king, but the king is not with the body. The king is a thing. *Guil*. 'A thing,' my Lord. *Ham*. Of nothing" In the concrete context, Hamlet is asserting that the body (i. e., Polonius's corpse) is with the king (i. e., the elder Hamlet), but the king (i. e., Claudius) is not with the body (i. e., is not dead, as he should be); and so long as this is the case, the king (i. e., Claudius) is a thing of nothing (i. e., he is a ruler over no subjects in any true sense, because his deeds have reduced the *res publica* to a *nulla res*). However, in the larger political context, Hamlet is pointing to the difficulty surrounding the notion of a bicorporal monarch who as monarch has a body politic (and hence immortal and incapable of evil) and as merely human has a body natural (and hence mortal and subject to evil). This is a conception which has been traced by F. W. Maitland and his followers. Cf. Frederic William Maitland, *The Collected Papers of Frederic William Maitland*, ed. H. A. L. Fisher (Cambridge, 1911), volume 3, "The Corporation Sole," 210-243, and "The

us that the constellation of rule there is parallel to that in Denmark: in both places, the ruler is the brother of the deceased former king, whose son is a more or less intractable presence in the kingdom. Since the parallelism is so strong, and since we know that Claudius has gained the rule through a political murder, are we to assume that there was also foul play in the killing of the elder Fortinbras by which his brother Norway came to rule? We will see.

Throughout Claudius's initial remarks (I. ii. 1-39/1-39, 41/41), which conclude with his charge to the ambassadors Voltimand and Cornelius, he employs the royal "we."¹⁵ However, when he addresses Laertes, he shifts from the royal "we" (I. ii. 43/43) to the personal "I" (I. ii. 46/46), which indicates that he has a certain affection for Laertes, or that he prefers Laertes to Hamlet, or that he wishes to seem to prefer him to Hamlet.¹⁶ And he seems to ground this preference in the strength of his debt to Polonius when he expresses his willingness to be in this case as instrumental to Polonius as, we may assume, Polonius has been instrumental to him. In so doing, Claudius allies Polonius with heart and mouth and himself with head and hand. Not only does he thus continue the equation of the body human and the body politic, but he also thus characterizes both himself and Polonius—or perhaps we should say that Shakespeare does so through him—with remarkable efficiency. For that Claudius is allied with head and hand suggests his narrowly shrewdly political character, i. e., he is a cunning grasper. And that Polonius is allied with heart and mouth suggests his ambition-laden desire.¹⁷ And since Laertes indicates—and this is in sharp contrast to Horatio—that he has come to Denmark out of his duty to attend the coronation which he has attended and which is now over, this must be Claudius's first public appearance after that event, which must have taken place within the preceding few days. And this fits the geographically establishable chronology, because it would have taken less than a month for the news to reach Paris and for Laertes to journey back. But still there is something puzzling about this interchange: why does Laertes need the king's permission to leave? Hamlet certainly does not feel such a need with regard to his return to Wittenberg. Why, then, should Laertes? Perhaps because he has a political future in Denmark with which his leaving might seem incompatible, a future which would perhaps involve at the least his succeeding his father as chief political adviser, or at most his succeeding to more than

Crown as Corporation," 244-270; Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: a study in mediaeval political theology* (Princeton, 1957); Mortimer Levine, *The Early Elizabethan Succession Question, 1558-1568* (Stanford, 1966); Marie Axton, "The Influence of Edmund Plowden's Succession Treatise," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 37, 1973/1974, 209-226; Marie Axton, *The Queen's Two Bodies: drama and the Elizabethan Succession* (London, 1977). The locus classicus for these studies is the following passage from Plowden's *Reports* (1571): "The King has two Capacities, for he as two Bodies, the one whereof is a Body natural, consisting of natural Members as every other Man has, and in this he is subject to Passions and Death as other Men are; the other is a Body politic, and the Members thereof are his Subjects, and he and his Subjects together compose the Corporation...and he is incorporated with them, and they with him, and he is the Head, and they are the Members, and he has the sole Government of them; and this Body is not subject to Passions as the other is, nor to Death, for as to this Body the King never dies, and his natural Death is not called in our law...the Death of the King, but the Demise of the King, not signifying by the Word (*Demise*) that the Body politic of the King is dead, but that there is a separation of the two Bodies, and that the Body politic is transferred and conveyed over from the Body natural now dead, or now removed from the Dignity royal, to another Body natural. So that it signifies a Removal of the Body politic of the King of this Realm from one Body natural to another." (Cited Kantorowicz, 13. Cf. Maitland, 250; Levine, 111-112; Axton, 1977, 12 ff.) This is what Maitland (256) calls licentious objectification or reification, which, he suggests, is a futile attempt to make a thing out of what is jurisprudentially no-thing (256), and hence results in metaphysical/metaphysiological nonsense (249). Apparently, it was hoped that the treatment of the monarch as a "corporation sole" would produce a purification of the body natural by the immutable and inviolable body politic. Shakespeare, on the other hand, seems to be arguing rather that the body natural infects and corrupts the body politic, so that what appears to be divinization is in actuality bestialization. In this sense, Maitland is certainly correct when he says that in this doctrine, "the frontispiece of [Hobbes's] Leviathan is already before our eyes." (248)

¹⁵ I. ii. 1/1, 2/2, 3/3 (bis), 6/6, 8/8 (bis), 10/10, 14/14, 16/16, 18/18, 19/19, 20/20, 22/22, 25/25, 26/26, 27/27, 33/33, 41/41.

¹⁶ Claudius's fourfold repetition in only nine lines of the name "Laertes" (I. ii. 42/42, 43/43, 45/45, 50/50) supports this. It is as though Claudius is deliberately impressing the name into the minds of the assemblage.

¹⁷ For the connection between mouth and ambition, see IV. iv. 47-50/47-50; also cf. III. ii. 88-89/93-94. For the connection between heart and desire, see I. iii. 29-35/29-35, III. ii. 149-150/154-155, IV. vii. 110/108.

that. And what better political training ground could there be than the France which produces such persons as Lamord (cf. IV. vii. 82 ff./80 ff.)? I will return to this.

At last Claudius turns to Hamlet, whom he addresses in the personal “I” as cousin and son (I. ii. 64/64), terms of personal relationship. Hamlet’s reply, his very first remark in the play, sets him off in his privacy from the rest of the speakers in their publicity, since he speaks an aside which no one hears, i. e., he speaks first to himself alone:

Ham. A little more than kin, and less than kind.
(I. ii. 65/65)

The word “kind” means both “benevolent” and “natural,” and the word “kin” is a pun on “kine.”¹⁸ Therefore, Hamlet’s remark characterizes the personal relationship between himself and Claudius as: (1) more than a simple blood relationship, and either (a) less than benevolent or (b) less than natural; and (2) more—but only by a little—than bestial. This is typical of Hamlet’s early public utterances: they are either unheard, or when they are heard, they either are layered with so many strata of meaning as to be virtually unintelligible to the hearers or are ostensibly cliché as a screen (cf. I. ii. 120/120). Consider the next interchange:

King. How is it that the clouds still hang on you?
Ham. Not so much, my lord; I am too much i’ the sonne.
(I. ii. 66-67/66-67)

Since the “sun-son” pun was a common one, the following meanings emerge from Hamlet’s remark. First, he dislikes the brightness of public life, of the court. Second, since proverbially “to be out in the sun” means “to be fallen or sinful” (cf. *Genesis* 3: 19), he is too surrounded by sin and corruption (cf. the citation from Dyce, *Variorum*, note ad loc.). Third, by being the son of both the elder Hamlet and now Claudius, he is a son in excess, a double son, a multiplied son. Fourth, since “to be sunburned” proverbially meant “to be bereft of one’s nearest and dearest” (cf. the citation from Hudson, *Variorum*, note ad loc.), by being related to excess, he is relativeless, isolated, alone. Fifth, he is too much the son of his first father to abjure mourning so soon after his death. Finally, if we look ahead a bit to Hamlet’s later remark about the sun (“Let her not walk i’ the sun; conception is a blessing; but as your daughter may concieve”—II. ii. 183-184/184-185), we see that since the sun is the source of generation, Hamlet feels too much entrapped by generation. Indeed, whatever else Hamlet’s later comparison of his father to Hyperion (I. ii. 139-140/139-140) may be, it is also a shorthand reference back to this remark.

In the interchange which follows (I. ii. 68 ff./68 ff.), Hamlet contemptuously denigrates the “common” (I. ii. 72-74/72-74) and scorns all appearances, i. e., all seeming as opposed to being, which include the apparel or “forms, moodes, shapes of grief” (I. ii. 76 ff./76 ff.) and which are nothing more than theatrical roles (I. ii. 84/84). In what follows (I. ii. 87-117/87-117), however, Claudius shows himself to be a worthy rhetorical adversary to Hamlet. He responds to Hamlet’s being too much in the sun/son by multiplying fathers (I. ii. 88-90/88-90, 104/104, 108/108, 111/111), to Hamlet’s denigration by an elevation of the common (I. ii. 98/98, 103/103), to Hamlet’s unwillingness to accept the realities of life by a “This must be so” (I. ii. 106/106). In addition, he accuses Hamlet of violating heaven, the dead, nature, and reason. Yet he declares that he wishes—as we have seen—to publish to the world Hamlet’s closeness to the throne.

Throughout his address to Hamlet, Claudius slips from the personal “I” of his first remark to the royal “we” (I. ii. 98/98, 100/100, 106/106, 107/107, 109/109, 114/114, 116/116, 117/117 bis; cf. 122/122).¹⁹ In other words, Claudius’s initial embrace of Hamlet yields to a distancing

¹⁸ See Helge Koekerlitz, *Shakespeare’s Pronunciation* (New Haven, 1953), 119-120. It is curious, however, that she cites only 2 *Henry IV* and not *Hamlet*.

¹⁹ The only exception is the obviously artificial “I” (I. ii. 112/112) which he employs when speaking in calculatedly personal terms to Hamlet. To see that Claudius’s advice to Hamlet here is grounded in political calculation, one should compare the very different advice that Claudius gives to Laertes at IV. vii. 108 ff./106 ff.

which suggests that Claudius speaks out of purely political motives. This is especially evident if one compares Claudius's first address to Hamlet in the personal form as cousin and son (I. ii. 64/64) to his final address to Hamlet in the royal form as "courtier, cousin, and...son" (I. ii. 117/117). The addition of the designation "courtier" completes the political enfolding of Hamlet by Claudius in front of the assembled multitude.

Then Claudius's call for the firing of "the great cannon" (I. ii. 126/126) leads to the Everlasting's canon in Hamlet's first soliloquy, which is in many ways a private response to Claudius's public utterances. In the soliloquy, the first of seven,²⁰ Hamlet declares the world to which Claudius wishes to publicize himself to be corrupt (cf. 133-134/133-134 to 108/108), the nature that he is accused of violating to be corrupt (cf. 135-137/135-137 to 102/102), Claudius and Gertrude to be the violators of the dead (cf. 138/138 to 102/102), and Gertrude to be the violator of reason (cf. 150/150 to 103/103).

Two other parts of the soliloquy deserve special mention. Hamlet begins by expressing an alternative: (1) the possibility of being separated from one's body (129-130/129-130); (2) the possibility of separating oneself from life (131-132/131-132), i. e., the possibility of committing suicide. These two possibilities are not the same. As to the first, on the basis of the equation between the human body and the body politic, Hamlet's wish that he be separated from his body is a wish to be free of the political involvement and responsibility which leads to a life that is "wary, stale, flat, and unprofitable" (I. ii. 133/133) and "rank and gross" (I. ii. 136/136), a life characterized by "wicked speed" (I. ii. 156/156) in which one loses one's "discourse of reason" (I. ii. 150/150). And Hamlet is no more drawn to politics than he is like Hercules, which at this time seems to be very little indeed.

Further, Hamlet says that as he is to Hercules, so is Claudius to the elder Hamlet (I. ii. 152-153/152-153). What Hamlet does not say and does not know yet is that very soon he will begin to become like Hercules: he will be given a labor to perform, and ultimately he will perform it.²¹ Does this, then, suggest that just as there is more of a resemblance between the younger Hamlet and Hercules than at first meets the eye, so too there is more of a resemblance between Claudius and the elder Hamlet than at first meets the eye? At the least, one could perhaps infer that

²⁰ The currently received act and scene divisions are too firmly institutionalized to be abandoned. But they are not Shakespeare's. Shakespeare's own dividers would seem to be Hamlet's seven soliloquies. Therefore, the play would have to be divided into the following eight parts: (1) I. i. 1-ii. 159/159 [the first watch (= the ghost's third appearance: cf. I. i. 33/36), the first court scene, the first soliloquy]; (2) I. ii. 160/160-v. 112/112 [Horatio and Marcellus's report to Hamlet, the Polonius-Laertes-Ophelia advice trio, the second watch (= the ghost's fourth appearance), the ghost's report to Hamlet, the second soliloquy]; (3) I. v. 113/113-II. ii. 581/601 [the swearing, the Polonius-Reynaldo spying/Polonius-Ophelia closet scene, the recruitment of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, the second court scene, the schoolfellow scene, the first players scene, the third soliloquy]; (4) III. i. 1-88/1-88 [Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's report, Polonius's plan to loose Ophelia, the fourth soliloquy]; (5) III. i. 88/88-ii. 382/390 [the nunnery scene, the second players scene, the first new paradigm (i. e., Horatio), the play scene, the play-upon scene, the cloud interlude, the fifth soliloquy]; (6) III. iii. 1-98/1-98 [the plan to send Hamlet to England, Claudius's prayer soliloquy/the sixth soliloquy] (I include as part of this division the couplet spoken by Claudius which is usually printed after Hamlet's sixth soliloquy, because I believe that one must regard these lines as spoken simultaneously with the final couplet of Hamlet's speech; this duet would serve as a dramatically embodied prefiguration of Hamlet's remark at III. iv. 209-210/211-212: "Oh, 'tis most sweet/When in one line two crafts directly meet."); (7) III. iv. 1/1-IV. iv. 66/66 [the closet scene/murder of Polonius, the deliberation, the where's-the-body scene, the trial and sentencing of Hamlet, the second new paradigm (i. e., Fortinbras), the seventh soliloquy]; (8) IV. v. 1/1-V. ii. 390/408 [the first Ophelia mad scene, Laertes's rebellion, the second Ophelia mad scene, the first letter, the Hamlet-did-it scene, the second letter/the scheme, the death of Ophelia, the graveyard, the burial, Hamlet's report to Horatio, the challenge/Osric, the duel/last court scene]. The chronology of these events, then, would be the following: (1) midnight to dawn (two months after the elder Hamlet's death); (2) the next day from dawn to just after midnight (Laertes leaves for France); (3) the next day and a day two months later (cf. III. ii. 120/126); (4) the beginning of the next day; (5) the rest of the same day; (6) the next day; (7) that night (Hamlet leaves for England); (8) three days later (allowing approximately three days from Hamlet's sailing to his return: cf. IV. vi. 14/14—"Ere we were two days old at sea") and the next day. I should add that with regard to the names of the scenes, some I have appropriated from Harry Levin, *The Question of Hamlet* (NY, 1961), others I have adapted from Levin, and still others I have simply coined as appropriately as I could.

²¹ Cf. II. ii. 345/357; V. i. 279-280/286-287. Through Prodicus's story about him, Herakles (Hercules) also became paradigmatic with respect to facing a choice between which of two fundamental lifetimes one should lead. Cf. Xenophon, *Memorabilia* II. i. 21-34, for the extant version of this story.

insofar as Claudius and the elder Hamlet are both political individuals, they must be steeped or rooted in crimes of some sort.

II.

Denmark, then, is an elective monarchy, and Claudius is the presumably rightfully elected monarch, however unrightfully he became so. Hamlet has in no way impeded Claudius's ascension to the throne, since he himself has only distaste for the business of politics, and he would rather lead a life in accordance with his desire, on the one hand, for knowledge and, on the other hand, for Ophelia. But this raises a problem for the succession. If Hamlet were to remain obdurate in his abstinence from politics, since he would be the preeminent popular choice to succeed Claudius, there would be a gap in the expected succession. Who in Denmark would fill that gap? I would suggest that Laertes—with his father's help—would become the most probable choice. This, I believe, explains why both Polonius and Laertes are so insistent against the marriage of Hamlet and Ophelia (I. ii. 5-511/5-51, 88-136/88-136), an insistence which would otherwise be puzzling in the light of Gertrude's remarks indicating that the marriage would have been acceptable, even welcome, to her (III. i. 38-42/38-42; V. i. 232/237). These remarks are made in the presence of others, including Claudius, and no one objects. Therefore, the argument adduced by Laertes that the marriage is impossible because of a difference in their ranks is fallacious, as is the extremity of Polonius's denunciation of Hamlet's character. They must have unspoken reasons for discouraging the marriage. It does not seem extravagant to suppose these reasons to be political calculations designed to put Laertes on the throne.

Why would the marriage impede such a design? Is it not that although the aspect of Hamlet's desire which inclines him toward knowledge draws him back to Wittenberg, the aspect of his desire which inclines him toward Ophelia might draw him to remain in Denmark where his physical presence might translate into a political presence, however unwilling Hamlet himself might be to enter politics. Their best chance lies, then, in forcing Ophelia to reject Hamlet, thereby driving him away from Denmark toward a life of scholarly expatriation, and leaving Laertes free to become Denmark's chief political individual. This too is why Polonius is so eager to participate in any plan which will remove Hamlet from Denmark, whether it be to Wittenberg or to England.

We must be careful never to underestimate either Laertes or Polonius.

As to Laertes, that he can so quickly muster an army of citizens to storm the castle (IV. v. 95 ff./99 ff.) is an indication that he has been secretly building support. He is even in Denmark, having "in secret come from France" (IV. v. 84/88), at the very moment when Polonius is instructing Reynaldo to spy on him in France,²² i. e., he has returned sooner than expected without having notified Polonius, who is killed before Laertes can interrupt his own business to notify his father that he has returned. Of Laertes's ruthlessness there can be no doubt. After all, it is he who later suggests the poisoning of the swords (IV. vii. 141 ff./139 ff.),²³ whereas

²² One should compare this conversation with the conversation concerning Prince Hal between Henry IV and his son Thomas, 2 *Henry IV* IV. iv, especially (Arden ed., but reading and spelling with the First Folio) 36-41: "His temper therefore must be well observ'd./Chide him for faults, and do it reverently,/When you perceive his blood enclin'd to mirth;/But being moodie, give him Line, and scope,/Till that his passions (like a Whale on ground)/Confound themselves with working. Learn this Thomas." It should be added that Polonius's spying extends to Ophelia too (cf. I. iii. 94-95/94-95).

²³ It is no accident that the name "Laertes" is the Greek word for a kind of wasp. Cf. Claudius Aelianus, *De natura animalium libri XVII. Varia historia epistolae fragmenta*, ex recognitione Rudolphi Hercher (Leipzig, Teubner, 1864-1866, 2 volumes, X. 42: καὶ σφήκας δὲ τινὰς ἐκάλουον λαέρτας ("and they called also certain wasps 'laertesese'"). Murray J. Levith [*What's in Shakespeare's Names* (Hamden, CT, 1978), 51-52] correctly identifies the name as Greek, but he unaccountably fails to give its meaning, a meaning which would easily have been known to Shakespeare. Cf. Claudius Aelianus, *On the characteristics of animals*, with an English translation by A. F. Scholfield (Cambridge, MA, Loeb Classical Library, Harvard, 1958-1959), 3 volumes, introduction, xxiv: "For subsequent ages Aelian was an authority not to be neglected. There are echoes of his "learning" in that remarkable compound of animal lore and pious allegory known as "the Bestiary"." Also cf. Albin Lesky, *A History of Greek Literature*, tr. James Willis and

Claudius's initial suggestion was only that Laertes's sword be unblunted (IV. vii. 137-139/135-137), although once the poison is suggested, Claudius is quick to formulate the back-up plan of the poisoned drink. Clearly, then, one can teach an older Machiavellian new tricks, especially if the teacher is an up-and-coming younger Machiavellian.

As to Polonius, although he may be no match for Hamlet in intellectual fencing, he is shrewder than he appears to be. Consider the following interchange:

[Ham.] you played once i'the university, you say?
 Pol. That did I, my lord, and was accounted a good actor.
 (III. ii. 92-95/97-100)

Polonius, then, is a skilled actor, and if he acts doddering on occasion, one should not assume that he is a dodderer. Rather he must be seen as a political calculator through and through: even the root of his name is identical to the root of the word "politic."²⁴

The first indication that Polonius is angling for the throne comes in his conversation with Reynaldo (II. i.). He refers to himself there as a person "of wisdom and of reach" (II. i. 64/64). And what are "wisdom" and "reach" but Polonius's version of Claudius's "head" and "hand" (cf. I. ii. 47-49/47-49), an implicit elevation of himself to the kingship. The next indication comes when Hamlet's growing assumption of his own political business makes him aware of Polonius's designs and leads him to refer obliquely to them:

Ham. O Ieptha, judge of Israel, what a treasure hadst thou!
 Pol. What a treasure had he, my lord?
 Ham. Why one fair daughter, and no more, The which he loved passing
 well.
 Pol. Still on my daughter.
 Ham. Am I not i'the right, old Ieptha?
 Pol. If you call me Ieptha, my lord, I have a daughter that I love
 passing well.
 Ham. Nay, that follows not.
 Pol. What follows, then, my lord?
 Ham. Why, as by lot, God wot, and then, you know
 it came to pass, as most like it was,—
 the first row of the pious chanson will show you more....
 (II. ii. 384-400/399-416)

Cornelius de Heer (NY, 1966), 853-854: "In its most ancient form this collection of marvels from natural history could have been produced in Alexandria in the second century A. D. Later, cast into a Latin version and provided with Christian symbolism, it largely influenced the world of ideas in the Middle Ages." In addition, of course, Laertes was (as Levith correctly states) the father of the wily liar Odysseus, whose grandfather was the famous thief Autolycus, and who cleansed his house of unwanted suitors.

²⁴ "Polonius" is a complex amalgam of Greek roots. He is first and foremost concerned with ἡ πόλις, the city, and in a sense he is ὁ πόλιος, the pivot (an appropriate name for one who regards himself as a kingmaker). He is certainly πολίος, gray (cf. II. ii. 196/197, 477/495; IV. v. 189/192). In addition, he is a seller [cf. the verb πωλέω (I sell), the noun ὁ πώλης] and a buyer [cf. the verb ὠνέομαι (I buy)] who himself can be bought [cf. the adjective ὧνιος (bought): cf. his use of "tender" at I. iii. 99-109/99-109. See Levith, 51, for a somewhat narrower view of the name. The politic root of Polonius's name could almost lead one to read the conversation between Sir Politic Would-Be and Peregrine in Ben Jonson, *Volpone* IV. i., as a literary gloss on, a caricature of, the conversation between Polonius and Laertes in *Hamlet* I. iii.: cf. *Volpone* (ed. Philip Brockbank, NY, Mermaid Dramabook, 1968) IV. i. 3-7, 12-13, 13-15, 15-21, to respectively *Hamlet* I. iii. 58-59/58-59, 70-74/70-74, 59-60/59-60, 61-65/61-65. Sir Politic makes explicit what Polonius is too prudent to reveal openly (22-27): "And then, for your religion, profess none;/But wonder, at the diversity of all;/And, for your part, protest, were there no other/But simply the laws o'the land, you could content you:/Nick Machiavel, and Monsieur Bodin, both,/Were of this mind." Also consider Peregrine's remark (IV. iii. 19-22): "This is rare!/Sir Politic Would-Be? no, Sir Politic Bawd!/To bring me, thus, acquainted with his wife!/Well, wise Sir Pol...." Also cf. Variorum, note ad *Hamlet* IV. v. 189. Finally, cf. *Merry Wives of Windsor* (Arden, but reading and spelling with the First Folio) III. i. 92-93: "Am I politicke? Am I subtle? Am I a Machivell?"

But what is the more which the ballad's first stanza will show? It is this: "Great warrs there should be,/and who should be the chiefe, but he, but he."²⁵ Hamlet is also aware that Laertes shares his father's designs, but by the time that he expresses this, he is so thoroughly politicized that it engenders in him not contempt but fellow-feeling.²⁶

Polonius and Laertes, then, are two of a kind, which is reflected even in their speech:

Pol. Ay, springes to catch woodcocks.
(I. iii. 115/115)

Laer. Why as a woodcock to mine own springe, Ostrick; I am
justly kill'd with mine own treachery.
(V. ii. 293-294/312-313)

In addition, consider the following interchange between Claudius, who is about to suggest the plan of the unblunted rapier, and Laertes:

[*King.*] what would you undertake,
To show yourself in deed your fathers sonne
More than in words?
Laer. To cut his throat i'the church.
(IV. vii. 125-127/123-125)

Father and son, then, are perfectly matched: they think alike, they speak alike, and they are both justly killed with their own treachery.

Is there an analogous matching of the two Hamlets?

III

To speak about the two Hamlets is to speak about the ghost, and those scenes in which the ghost first appears, is discussed, and speaks (I. i., I. ii. 160-257/160=258, I. iv., I. v.) will lead us to the core of the political dilemma with which the play wrestles.

The first scene is rich in implications which will echo throughout the play. The scene—and the play—opens with a challenge and a question. But the challenger, Bernardo, who is not on guard—Francisco is on guard—challenges him who should be the challenger, and hence Francisco immediately corrects him and challenges back in turn. However, Bernardo is so frightened that he gives the wrong answer to the challenge. Instead of saying, "Friends to this ground and Liegemen to the Dane" (cf. I. i. 15/16), he says, "Long live the king!" Bernardo is

²⁵ See Variorum, note ad loc. The full biblical account is in *Judges* 11: 1-12: 7. Jephthah was the bastard son of Gilead and a harlot (11: 1), who was forced, despite his recognized bravery (11: 1), to flee by his father's legitimate sons (11: 2-3). He fled to Tob, where he formed a band of "vain men," i. e., pirates, mercenaries (11: 3). However, when Israel was attacked by Ammon, the Gileadites sought Jephthah's help, which he consented to give if the Israelites would vow to make him their leader if he should be victorious (11: 4-11). "And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, if thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return...shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering" (11: 30-31). When the victory was given to Jephthah and he returned home, the first to greet him was his own daughter, his only child (11: 32-34). "And it came to pass at the end of two months, that...her father...did with her according to his vow which he had vowed [i. e., he sacrificed her as a burnt offering to the Lord]; and she knew no man" (11: 39). Hamlet's reference, then, to Polonius as Jephthah is a reference both to his political ambition and to his willingness to sacrifice his own daughter to advance his political ends. In addition, the Biblical account contains many elements and motifs which reappear in Shakespeare's play, e. g., the invasion of Fortinbras in the retelling of Israel's journey from Egypt (11: 14-23). This Biblical passage, therefore, should be added to any anthology of sources for the play. It is conspicuously absent from the Variorum, volume II, from the Norton Critical Edition, and from *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, ed. Geoffrey Bullough, volume VII (London/NY, 1973).

²⁶ Hamlet says to Horatio of Laertes (V. ii. 77-78/77-78): For, by the image of my cause, I see/The portraiture of his

disoriented, and his disorientation derives from a fixation on the death of a king. Bernardo and Francisco are both simple, honest soldiers (cf. I. i. 16/18); they are a matched pair even in name, both their names being Frankish (Old High German) in origin. The only difference between them at this point is that whereas Francisco has not seen the ghost, Bernardo has. The effect that this has had on Bernardo is a hint as to the effect that it would have on the populace as a whole if it were to become generally known: things would be as they were in “Rome,/A little ere the mightiest Julius fell” (I. i. 113-114/116-117). The political danger posed by the mere appearance of the ghost, then, would be enormous, yet greater still would be the danger posed by publicizing his revelations, as we will see.

The simultaneous appearance of Horatio and Marcellus unites them as a pair separate from the guards as a pair, and the repetition of the challenge, however naturalistic it may be, serves to emphasize this. In addition, both have Roman names: Marcellus’s name is a diminutive form of the name of the god of war, Mars; Horatio’s name, the name of a Roman *gens*, can be seen as an inspired fusion of the Latin words *hora*, *oratio*, and *ratio*. Marcellus, then, is preeminently a warrior, while Horatio is an ancient political philosopher²⁷ and skilled rhetorician.²⁸ And they divide their answer to the challenge in accordance with their names, Horatio uttering the more politically general half and Marcellus uttering the more politically concrete half.

When the ghost appears, neither Marcellus nor Horatio are shaken as Bernardo was: they are both above the general. Horatio’s first remark to the ghost is a question stated so precisely that it makes us feel as ambiguously about the ghost as Hamlet will feel. Horatio calls the ghost a usurper (I. i. 46/49, the first occurrence of the word “usurp” in the play). In addition, he makes a fine distinction (I. i. 46-49/49-52) between the usurper of the night and the form with which it appears. The two, then, may not be the same. The ambiguity is deepened when Horatio invokes heaven (I. i. 49/52) and the ghost immediately “stalks away” (I. i. 50/53).

There is another peculiarity about the ghost: it is wearing “the very armour [that the elder Hamlet] had on/When he the ambitious Norway combated” (I. i. 60-61/63-64). Why does the ghost appear in armor? In other words, why is the ghost not attired as he was when he died or when he was buried? And why this armor?²⁹ Does this imply that his crimes, to which he will refer in speaking to Hamlet, have something to do with the battle in which he killed the elder Fortinbras? Perhaps. When Horatio refers to “our valiant Hamlet—/For so this side of our known world esteem’d him” (I. i. 84-85/87-88), one must ask how accurate the Danish estimation of the former king and the battle is. Does the other side estimate them differently? If so, which version is correct (see note 27)?

When the ghost reappears, Horatio makes four requests of it in hypothetical form, requests to which the ghost does not respond. The form of each request is “if X, speak!” Therefore, if the ghost’s silence is taken as a response, the following implications emerge. The first (I. i. 128-129/131-132) and fourth (I. i. 136-139/139-142) both suggest that the ghost is at least capable of deception, if not an outright deceiver: the first would imply that the ghost cannot speak, whereas we know and Horatio suspects (cf. I. i. 171/176) that it can; the fourth would imply that the ghost is not a miner, whereas we know from its subterranean cellaring (I. v. 151/159) and from Hamlet’s designation of it as “true-penny” (I. v. 150/158; see Variorum, note ad loc.) and “mole” (I. v. 162/170) and “Pioner” (I. v. 163/180; see Variorum, note ad loc.) that it is. The second (I. i. 130-132/133-135) would imply that there is a bad thing to be done which must be

²⁷ That Horatio is an ancient philosopher is signaled by his willingness to accept unmediated sensing as knowledge: cf. I. i. 56-58/59-61. For his political astuteness, cf. I. i. 60-125/63-128. Although Horatio is not a native Dane (see I. iv. 12/12, 14/14), he knows more about past and present political events in Denmark than the natives do. He even has the native Danish bias: compare his description of Fortinbras’s army as “lawless resolute” (I. i. 98/101) to the actual picture of them which we directly see (IV. iv. 1-30/1-30). We are meant to consider the captain as typical, and he is a person of decency, no different in kind from Bernardo and Francisco. Also see below. His philosophical rationality is indicated in Marcellus’s description of his attitude before seeing the ghost (I. i. 23-30/26-33). In addition, Marcellus calls him “scholar” (I. i. 42/45) and addresses him as “he that knows” (I. i. 70/73).

²⁸ Cf. I. i. 42/45 *et passim*. Also consider Hamlet’s final charge to Horatio (V. ii. 333-336/351-354). And if Horatio is the person for speech, Marcellus is the person for action: cf. I. i. 139-141/142-144.

²⁹ Cf. Hamlet’s remarking this at I. ii. 254/255. Also cf. II. ii. 465-470/483-488.

spoken to another, and the third (I. i. 133-135/136-138) that either the ghost is not “privy to [the] country’s fate” or the “country’s fate” cannot be avoided.

Then “when the cock crew,” the ghost “started like a guilty thing” (I. i. 147/152, 148/153), and that the crowing is meant to “Awake the god of day” (cf. I. i. 149-152/154-157) suggests that there is at the very least a certain tension between the elder Hamlet’s ghostly form and the god of day. May one then suppose that when the younger Hamlet compares his father to Hyperion (I. ii. 139-140/139-140; cf. III. iv. 56/56), the same tension obtains with respect to the elder Hamlet in the flesh, so to speak, and his son’s metaphorization of him? In other words, is Hamlet’s account of his father to be taken simply at face value? Or is Hamlet’s account of his father an idealization which would not fully square with the person himself? All that one can say at this point about the elder Hamlet is that he is regarded as a warrior and that his ghost appears dressed as a warrior.

In addition, the ghost began its nightly walks two nights before the night of the first scene (cf. I. i. 33/36, I. ii. 196/196). If one wants to know why it waited almost two months, perhaps one can conjecture that its first appearance coincides with the day on which Claudius officially became king, i. e., Claudius’s coronation must have taken place just three days before the first court scene. If this is so, the ghost is more concerned with Claudius as ruler than with Claudius as bed-usurper, i. e., this is a preponderantly political ghost.

Furthermore, the time of the year is carefully designated as near Christmas (I. i. 157 ff./162 ff.), i. e., a time of year which is propitious for the arising of saviors. In this connection, it may be well to note that there is a certain playing with Judaeo-Christian scripture in the play, e. g., there are a father, a son, and a ghost, whether holy or unholy remaining to be seen.

Finally, when Horatio announces the resolve to tell Hamlet (I. i. 168-173/173-178), Marcellus agrees, and his reply (I. i. 174-175/179-180) indicates his closeness to Hamlet in that he knows exactly where to find Hamlet. When Horatio, Marcellus, and Bernardo find Hamlet (I. ii. 160 ff./160 ff.), Hamlet greets both Horatio (I. ii. 160-164/160=164) and Marcellus (I. ii. 165-167/165-167) enthusiastically, Horatio the more enthusiastically because he has not seen him for some time, and he greets Bernardo (I. ii. 167/167) most perfunctorily. At this moment, then, the two persons in Denmark who are closest to Hamlet are Horatio and Marcellus. We will soon see why.

When Hamlet first sees the ghost, he utters a triad of parallel alternatives (I. iv. 40-42/40-42) which can be schematized as follows:

- (1) health spirit—damn’d goblin
- (2) from heaven—from hell
- (3) wicked intents—charitable intents

If one understands the intents to be primarily political, the implication is that a health spirit from heaven would produce wicked political effects, while a damned goblin from hell is the agent required to produce beneficial political effects. Thus when Horatio says, “Heaven will direct it,” Marcellus replies, “Nay” (I. iv. 91/91). This suggests that for Marcellus at least, heaven is ineffectual in the political sphere. In other words, heaven is inefficacious with respect to what “is rotten in the state of Denmark” (I. iv. 90/90), which already points to Claudius as the source of the rottenness, because the “state” was the Elizabethan stage designation for the prop seat which represented the throne.³⁰

Now we come to Hamlet’s interview with the ghost, to what the ghost unfolds. The first thing that the ghost mentions comes as something of a surprise when one considers the speech which Hamlet made when he was left alone after he was told about the ghost:

³⁰ See Bernard Beckerman, *Shakespeare at the Globe, 1599-1609* (NY, 1962), 78.

My father's spirit (in arms) all is not well;
 I doubt some *foul play*; would the night were come!
 Till then sit still, my soul; fond deeds will rise,
 Though all the earth o'erwhelm them to men's eyes.

(I. ii. 254-257/255-258, italics mine)

The emphatic use of the adjective "foul" by Hamlet standing alone impresses it on our minds, so that when the ghost first speaks, we are expecting talk of foul play, an expectation which is fulfilled in the mention of "foul crimes" (I. v. 12/12). However, the surprise is that the crimes are the elder Hamlet's, and only afterward do we hear of Claudius's "foul" (I. v. 25/25, 27/27, 28/28) crime (cf. III. iii. 52/52). So, both the elder Hamlet and Claudius are criminals (see above). And the elder Hamlet has committed many crimes, while Claudius is presented as having committed only one crime. Why, then, does the elder Hamlet's ghost present Claudius as the greater criminal? The answer seems to lie in the type of crime committed by each. The elder Hamlet calls his own crimes "foul crimes done in my days of nature" (I. v. 12/12), while he twice calls Claudius's crime "unnatural" (I. v. 25/25, 28/28). The distinction, then, is between natural crimes and an unnatural crime, and apparently even one unnatural crime outweighs a multitude of natural crimes. But what can the terms "natural" and "unnatural" mean here?

Let me begin with "natural." What were the elder Hamlet's "days of nature?" On the basis of the ghost's apparel, his days of nature were his days as a warrior-king. And if the body human and the body politic are taken as identical (one of the major assumptions of the play's political individuals), then—from the elder Hamlet's point of view—the natural and the political are identical, as are his own ear and the "whole ear of Denmark" (I. v. 36/36). A natural crime, then, would be a politically necessary and justifiable crime, e. g., the elder Hamlet's killing of the elder Fortinbras, while an unnatural crime would be one which is not politically necessary and justifiable, one which even threatens the very integrity of the political as such. In the play, then, the words "natural" and "unnatural" are now always used in their ordinary significations, and each usage must be scrutinized closely to determine in which sense the terms are being used in any given instance, to see in particular where "nature" means "the political," "custom," "convention," i. e. to see where "nature her custom holds" (IV. vii. 189/186), to see where "That monster, custom, who all sense doth eat (III. iv. 161/163) has eaten nature and assimilated it to itself.

The ghost commands Hamlet to commit a rectificatory crime, a natural crime (cf. I. v. 81/80; also III. ii. 378/384; III. iv. 178/180), a politically necessary crime. He is to kill Claudius, the serpent who poisoned Hamlet's father's ear in the garden (cf. I. v. 35/35 and 59/59 to III. ii. 249/255), and this serpent—who uses adders to assist him (cf. III. iv. 202-203/204-205)—is an avatar of that other serpent which "was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made" (*Genesis* 3: 1) and who also poisoned someone's ear in the Garden: he is a modern Satan, Old Nick himself, as it were. From poisoning the elder Hamlet, he has gone on to poison the entire nation (I. v. 36-38/36-38), and hence he must be killed. But how? Since Denmark is an elective monarchy, he must be killed in such a way that the electorate is convinced that the killing is just. In order to do this, Hamlet must publicly reveal Claudius's guilt on the basis of publicly discernible evidence. Hamlet, then, cannot simply and quickly murder Claudius. He must first try to wring from Claudius a public confession of his guilt. Much of what Hamlet does or does not do from this moment forward is grounded in this difficulty (cf. Werder, *Variorum*, II, 354-358, 363, 368-369, 370). Even toward the end of the play, after Laertes has convicted the king with his final words, when Hamlet stabs Claudius, the assemblage shouts, "Treason! treason!" (V. ii. 310/328), and this indicates precisely of what Hamlet has had to be wary in executing his political responsibility. This is why Hamlet follows the course that he does.

In his second soliloquy (I. v. 92-112/92-112), he dwells on the smiling villain who now rules Denmark (I. v. 106/106, 108/108). In his third soliloquy (II. ii. 523-581/544-601), he formulates his first plan:

The play's the thing
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.
(II. ii. 580-581/600-601)

The purpose of the play is twofold: (1) to confirm the testimony of the ghost, in which it succeeds; (2) to reveal Claudius's guilt publicly, in which it fails. This is why, after Claudius interrupts the play, when Hamlet says, "Would not this...get me a fellowship in a cry of players?" Horatio dryly replies, "Half a share" (III. ii. 263-267/269-273).³¹ The failure of the plan leads Hamlet to threaten Claudius ever more explicitly to keep pressure on while he formulates a new plan (cf. III. ii. 324-328/331-335). Claudius's initial reaction is simply to send Hamlet away to England (III. iii. 1-26/1-26).

Hamlet then is presented with what seems like a perfect opportunity to kill Claudius while he is praying (III. iii. 36 ff./36 ff.): there is no physical obstacle to his carrying out the deed. But Hamlet stays his hand. Why? Hamlet puts his reasons in theological language, but the language should not blind one to the political thinking behind it. It is important that Denmark know "how his audit stands" (III. iii. 82/82), that Claudius be caught in an act, if not *the* act (III. iii. 89-92/89-92).³² And when such an act immediately presents itself, Hamlet does not hesitate to act (III. iv. 21 ff./20 ff.), but he catches a rat (III. iv. 24/23) instead of the mouse (cf. III. ii. 227/232; III. iv. 183/185; I. i. 10/11).³³ This act, this baptism of murder, is Hamlet's first decisive step toward the kingship, and it enables him to feel more powerfully than before his identification with the ghost. Therefore, when he speaks of the trip to England, he describes himself as a miner (III. iv. 205-210/207-212; cf. I. v. 150-164/158-172).³⁴ The murder of Polonius is finally proof enough for Claudius of Hamlet's ultimate intentions, and he resolves to have the English kill Hamlet (IV. iii. 57-67/61-68). Hamlet has indeed forced Claudius's hand and has driven him to commit an act for which he may be shown to be guilty and for which he may be punished. What Hamlet has not counted on is that the act will be the murder of Hamlet. As Hamlet later says to Horatio:

Or I could make a prologue to my brains,
They had begun the play.
(V. ii. 30-31/30-31)

Thus Hamlet alters the king's commission into an order for the deaths of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and it is for this crime that he hopes to convict Claudius (V. ii. 1-55/1-55). By this act, in which Hamlet employs the king's signet, Hamlet becomes king *de jure* if not *de facto*. Hence, when Horatio is told about it, he remarks, "Why, what a king is this!" (V. ii. 62/62)

³¹ Although the scope of this essay makes a full treatment of the role of the players impossible, see Appendix B for a brief consideration of how they fit into the political theme.

³² Cf. Werder, *Variorum*, II, 363: "Hamlet, it is true, does not himself say this,—no! But the state of the case says it instead."

³³ At this point, Hamlet is still not able to think through clearly his proper course of action. Rather he divines it (cf. V. ii. 6-11/6-11, 48/48). But the clarification of his thinking begins here, although the final clarification comes through the interview with Gertrude, the reappearance of the ghost, and the altering of the commission. It was divination which put his "father's signet in [his] purse" (V. ii. 49/49), but it was calculation which put it to use for forging the letters sending Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to death.

³⁴ Further reinforcement of this is Hamlet's leap after Laertes into Ophelia's grave, which would have been represented by the trap (cf. Beckerman, 92-93, 239 n. 35). Although the ghost would have walked on stage when it stalked the parapet (see Beckerman, 200-202), the language of the swearing scene (cf. I. v. 151/159, "Cellarage," and 162/170, "i'the earth;" see above) requires—despite the reservations expressed by Beckerman (202)—that the ghost speak from the trap. The grave in the trap, then, mirrors the ghost in the trap, and a leap into the trap could be seen as a political act of self-identification with the ghost.

Hamlet himself has said the same when he shouted as he leaped into Ophelia's grave, "This is I, Hamlet the Dane!" (V. i. 245-246/250-251), because "the Dane" means "the king" (cf. I. i. 15/16; I. ii. 44/44; V. ii. 312/330).

IV

What, precisely, is the political danger that is inherent in Claudius's murder of the elder Hamlet? Claudius himself suggests an answer when he says that his crime "hath the primal eldest curse upon't, / A brother's murder" (III. iii. 37-38/37-38). In other words, Claudius has reenacted Cain's fratricide. Why is this so decisive?

Recall the Biblical account of Cain and Abel (*Genesis* 4-5). Cain and Abel were born to different ways of fallen life, Cain to farming (i. e., to natural production) and Abel to sheep-keeping (i. e., to natural herding). When the Lord preferred Abel to Cain for no discernible reason, Cain killed Abel, and when the Lord inquired after Abel, Cain denied knowledge of him, i. e., he denied being a keeper (as he should, for Abel was the destined keeper). When the Lord discovered that Cain had planted the body in the ground (as he should, for Cain was the destined farmer), the Lord punished Cain by cutting him off from natural production and by marking him with a sign which bestows on him immunity from murder. Of the Lord's punishment, one could almost say with Hamlet, "Why, this is base and silly, not revenge" (III. iii. 79/79).

It is to Cain's line that we owe the following things: (1) the building of cities (*Gen.* 4: 17), i. e., political herding; (2) the fine arts (4: 21) and their prerequisite the useful arts (4: 22), i. e., artificial production and leisure. In other words, the political, which once established presents itself as the embodiment of justice, has its origins in some fundamental act of injustice, an originary act which the regime's need to perpetuate itself demands that it obscure by something tantamount to a universal flood, a flood of forgetfulness (cf. I. v. 33/33). So, postdiluvian political justice must hide its antediluvian criminal origin. To reveal that origin to postdiluvian political humans is to threaten the viability of distinctly human life. One of the dangers that Machiavellianism presents is that it not only reveals that origin, but it legitimates it.³⁵ What distinguishes, say, Platonism from Machiavellianism is that while it recognizes the origin, it hides it rather than legitimates it, i. e., it disseminates a founding lie to cover over the founding truth.³⁶ In *Hamlet*, this task will be entrusted to Horatio, the antique political philosopher, by Hamlet, the antique political philosopher turned political warrior.

If Hamlet and Horatio are acting as bulwarks against the rising tide of Machiavellianism, then Claudius is the "head and source" (II. ii. 55/55) of that tide, as his high regard for Lamord, the fencing-master, reveals. Claudius describes Lamord's equestrianism thus:

this gallant
Had witchcraft in't; he grew unto his seat,
And to such wondrous doing brought his horse
As had he been incorpsed and demi-natured
With the brave beast.

(IV. vii. 85-89/83-87)

³⁵ See Niccolov Machiavelli, *Prince*, ch. 6, and *Discourses* I. 9 for a discussion of the parallel case of Romulus. In *The Chief Words and Others*, tr. Allan Gilbert (Durham, NC, 1965), the passages are in vol. I, 25, 217-218. All subsequent volume and page references to Machiavelli are to this edition.

³⁶ Cf. Plato, *Republic* 414b8-415d5, the discussion of the best regime's founding lie, which Socrates calls a noble or well-bred lie.

In short, the French Lamord³⁷ is a centaur,³⁸ and one who is presented as a model for princes.³⁹ A centaur who is a model for princes should call to mind the centaur who is the educator of princes, Cheiron, the half-human and half-beast teacher and guardian of Achilles and others:

Therefore [the prince] needs to know well how to put to use the traits of animal and of man. This conduct is taught to princes in allegory by ancient authors, who write that Achilles and many other well-known ancient princes were given for upbringing to Chiron the Centaur, who was to guard and educate them.

(*Prince*, ch. 18, I, 64-65)

Machiavelli makes it clear that it is the beast aspect rather than the human aspect which is primary.⁴⁰ And Lamord's being French supports his being the Machiavellian teacher of princes, because France was a hotbed of Machiavellianism in the sixteenth century and was so regarded by the English,⁴¹ something which Machiavelli himself, as prologue to Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*, tells us:

Albeit the world thinke *Machevill* is dead,
Yet was his soule but flowne beyond the *Alpes*,
And now the *Guize* is dead, is come from *France*,
To view this Land, and frolicke with his friends.⁴²

³⁷ Lamord is indubitably French. One of the points of Claudius's praise of French equestrianism (IV. vii. 84-85/82-83) is that the French as a nation are skilled, but even Lamord's being French would not alone explain his prodigious, almost magical, accomplishments. In addition, at IV. vii. 134/132, Lamord is explicitly called "The Frenchman." It cannot be accidental that the appearance of Lamord in Denmark seems to coincide exactly with the appearance of the ghost (cf. IV. vii. 82/80: "Two months since"). It is as though Shakespeare intended us to see these two figures as adumbrations of two opposing political perspectives, the ghost that of classical pagan antiquity and Lamord that of apostate Christian modernity. Finally, the name "Lamord" is a variant of the French "la mort," "death": cf. Levin, 53; Levin, 95.

³⁸ Cf. Levin, 95.

³⁹ Consider Innocent Gentillet, *Anti-Machiavel: Discours sur les moyens de bien gouverner et maintenir en bonne paix un Royaume ou autre Principautev...Contre Nicolas Machiavel Florentin*, Genève, 1576, ed. avec commentaire et notes par C. Edward Rathev (Genève, 1968), troisième partie, maxime XII, 402. The translation available to Shakespeare's contemporaries is in Innocent Gentillet, *A discourse...Against Nicholas Machiavell the Florentine*, translated into English by Simon Patericke, London, 1602 (Amsterdam/NY, 1969 reprint), 226. Both the Gentillet original and the Patericke translation constitute Appendix C. I. It should be noted that Gentillet distorts Xenophon's account, presumably deliberately, so as to condemn Machiavelli for perverse scholarship along with perverse politics. Xenophon, *Kynegetikos* I. 3-4. says that Cheiron did indeed live long enough to teach all those mentioned as his pupils: *εγεγονει μεν Ceivrwn provtero* "toutvwn, ejtelevthse de; u{stero", ejpei; jAcilleva ejpaivdeusen ("Cheiron was born earlier than these, and he came to his end later, since he educated Achilles"). In addition, among the unnamed poets who explicitly call Cheiron a centaur were Homer, *Iliad* 11. 832 (cf. 4. 217-219, 11. 828-832, 16. 140-144); Pindar, *Pythians* 3 *et passim*; Xenophon, *Symposium* 8. 23, *Kynegetikos* I. Finally, whereas Gentillet seems to reduce centaurness to a metaphor for excellent equestrianism, Shakespeare seems to elevate excellent equestrianism to a metaphor for centaurness.

⁴⁰ Cf. Leo Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (Glencoe, IL, 1958), 78. Also cf. *Hamlet* V. ii. 87/86-87: "let a beast be lord of beasts"; Gentillet, pt. 3, maxim 12. And just as Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are the adders lorded over by the serpent Claudius (see above), so too is Reynaldo the fox (cf. Levin, 52) lorded over by the rat Polonius (cf. III. iv. 24/23; IV. i. 10/10), although Polonius too becomes the fox which his agent Reynaldo is (cf. IV. ii. 29-30/—: "hide Fox, and all after." Although this remark is not in any of the quartos, and therefore must be rejected in preparing a definitive text of the play, its presence in the First Folio is suggestive nonetheless.)

⁴¹ For a consideration of the career of Machiavelli and Machiavellianism in Renaissance England, see Appendix C. II.

⁴² *Jew of Malta*, prologue, 1-4. Cf. Patericke, dedicatory epistle: "Moreover Sathan [i. e., Machiavelli] useth strangers of France, as his fittest instruments, to infect us still with this deadly poyson sent out of Italie, who have so highly promoted their Machiavellian bookes, that he is of no reputation in the Court of France, which hath not *Machiavels* writings at the fingers ends, and that both in the Italian and French tongues, & can apply his precepts to all purposes, as the Oracles of Apollo."

The figure of Lamord, then, focuses the Machiavellianism in the play on Claudius,⁴³ and with him on Laertes, whose admiration of Lamord is equal to Claudius's. Laertes's adding the poisoning plan to the unblunted rapier plan is, in a way, a fulfillment of the Marlovian Machiavelli's prophecy: "when they cast me off,/[they] Are poyson'd by my climbing followers."⁴⁴ Thus it is no surprise that the apparent repentance of the thoroughly Machiavellian Laertes culminates in his shifting the entire blame onto Claudius.⁴⁵ Laertes was born, has lived, and even dies following the teaching of Machiavelli, a teaching which he learned from his father.⁴⁶

Even the "*most beautified Ophelia*" (II. ii. 109/109-110) is tainted by the Machiavellianism of her nearest and dearest, nor does she fight against it. In accordance with her name, which derives from the Greek word meaning "beneficial" or "useful,"⁴⁷ she becomes useful indeed to Polonius and Claudius. She is an obeyer (cf. I. iii. 136/136), and she is dependent. Yet she is not simply her father's daughter, as her pre-play involvement with Hamlet suggests. But she is too much the daughter to resist becoming an accomplice to the Machiavellian plotters by whom she is surrounded, and her ultimate inability to live with her complicity in crime drives her insane.

The first major interchange between Hamlet and Ophelia is the nunnery scene (III. i. 88-188/88-190). The scene divides into two parts: (1) 88-102/88-102; (2) 103-188/103-190. In the first part, the conversation between them is marked by reticence and tenderness, and the language is flowing verse. But suddenly Hamlet shouts, "Ha, ha! are you honest?" (III. i. 103/103), and the language becomes jittery prose. There can be no doubt that at this point Hamlet notices that he is being watched (cf. III. i. 1-55/1-55). This means that whatever Hamlet says in the rest of the scene is said in full knowledge that it is being overheard.⁴⁸ And when Hamlet asks Ophelia where her father is, she lies in saying that he is at home (III. i. 130-131/130-132). Already, then, Ophelia has acquiesced in her father's wish that she break off with Hamlet, she has turned over to her father a private letter from Hamlet (II. ii. 109-123/109-123),⁴⁹ she has allowed herself to be used as a mere instrument of intrigue, and she has lied directly to Hamlet. After Hamlet leaves (III. i. 161/163), Claudius and Polonius emerge from hiding and discuss their plans for Hamlet. Although Ophelia does not speak here, she is present to hear the following:

Pol. To England send him, or confine him where
Your wisdom best shall think.

King. It shall be so.
(III. i. 186-187/188-189)

⁴³ Also cf. Claudius's comments about Hamlet's madness (II. ii. 4-10/4-10, 58/58, and context; III. i. 162-169/164-171, 187-188/189-190; III. iii. 1-7/1-7, 24-26/24-26; IV. i. 14-15/14-15; IV. iii. 2/2, 57-67/61-71) to Machiavelli *Discourses*, III. 2, vol. I, 423-424. The name "Hamlet" is the Danish/Icelandic equivalent of "Brutus": cf. Levin, 124, 128 note; Levith, 50.

⁴⁴ *Jew of Malta*, prologue, 12-13. Also consider The poem of Gabriel Harvey, *CAIRE* (London, 1578), cited in Meyer (see Appendix C. II), 22. The full text of the poem with my translation is in Appendix D.

⁴⁵ Cf. V. ii. 307/326, where Laertes says, "the king—the king's too blame." And in his final speech, Laertes declares (V. ii, 315) that the poison was tempered by Claudius, although we know that Laertes himself bought it from a mountebank (cf. IV. vii. 142/140).

⁴⁶ Claudius too dies unrepentant (cf. III. iii. 65-66/65-66). When Hamlet stabs him with what he knows to be a fatal poison, he says (V. ii. 311/329), "Oh, yet defend me, friends; I am but hurt." In other words, he pretends to be only wounded, and even with his final breath, he still attempts to accomplish the killing of Hamlet.

⁴⁷ Her name is the Greek ἡ ὠφελία (= ὠφέλεια), and (cf. Levith, 52) it might also be taken to suggest ὁ ὄφις, the serpent. Thus, the entire Polonius family is united in the Greekness of its names (see above, notes 23 and 24).

⁴⁸ There is evidence that Hamlet is aware of more than is explicitly indicated. As Polonius asserts (II. ii. 159-160/160-161), "sometimes he walks four hours together/Here in the lobby." In other words, Hamlet is constantly wandering about the castle, and he may even have overheard this very plan. Indeed, when he addresses Polonius (II. ii. 173/174) as "a fishmonger," there is every reason to suppose that he is referring to Polonius's remark to Reynaldo (II. i. 63/63) that "Your bait of falshood take this carp of truth." Also cf. IV. iii. 27-28/27-28.

⁴⁹ However hyperbolic the letter was, it was meant to reassure Ophelia of Hamlet's continued affection for her. But, as we know, it fails. Hamlet's progress in the play is from the total failure of this letter, to the partial successes of the play within the play and the murder of Polonius, to the almost total success of the murders of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, to the complete success of the duel.

Ophelia, then, is an accomplice in the plan to rid Denmark of Hamlet. To say that she is unaware of the implications of these remarks is insufficient. After all, she is no dewy-eyed maiden, having for some time now surrendered her maidenhood together with her maidenhead, as her conversation with Hamlet at the play demonstrates (cf. III. ii. 105-114/110-120, 134-137/139-143, 234-240/240-246). Hamlet has no need to send her to a nunnery: she is already in one.⁵⁰

Ophelia's next appearance (IV. v. 21/21) is after the death of her father and the dispatch of Hamlet to England and—as she can very well conjecture—to his death. Although the messenger who reports her madness says, “She speaks much of her father,” he adds that she “says she hears/There's tricks i' the world” (IV. v. 4-5/4-5). Her first remark indicates that she is dwelling very little on her father and very much on worldly tricks. When she says, “Where is the beautiful majesty of Denmark?” (IV. v. 21/21), she means “Where is Hamlet?” Of course, she knows where Hamlet is, or rather her knowledge of where Hamlet is and her part in his being there have driven her insane. The content of her songs is preponderantly about a lost lover, who “let in the maid, that out a maid/Never departed more” (IV. v. 52-53/54-55), a lover who “tumbled” (IV. v. 60/62) the maid whom he had pledged to marry (IV. v. 61/63). And who is the maid, but she, but she. Ophelia, then, reveals that Hamlet is the source of her madness, and that her complicity in his death has reduced her from a human to a Machiavellian demi-beast:

They say the owl was a baker's daughter. Lord, we know
what we are, but know not what we may be.
(IV. v. 40-42/42-44)

The baker's daughter was punished for her misdeeds by being transformed into an owl, a beast which lives in darkness and scorns redemption.⁵¹ The mention of Lamord the centaur in the following scenes (IV. vii. 82 ff./80 ff.) reinforces the reference, and as if further to strike home the point, in the middle of the conversation in which the human-beast is mentioned, Ophelia's death is announced (IV. vii. 166/163) and described. Her death, which is not suicide but accidental drowning,⁵² is emblematic of her life. The very flowers of which her garland is composed signify the course which her life has taken (IV. vii. 171-173/168-170):

crow-flowers⇒ <i>fair maid</i>	nettles⇒ <i>stung [in]</i>	daisies⇒ <i>virgin bloom [by]</i>	long purples <i>dead men's fingers.</i> ⁵³
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As she dies, she appears to be a mermaid (cf. IV. vii. 178/175), i. e., half-human and half-beast, whose bodily configuration indicates that she is as “native” (IV. vii. 181/178) to water as Lamord is demi-natured with his horse.⁵⁴ In short, her “muddy death” (IV. vii. 185/182) is the perfect image of her muddy life. Ophelia, as she herself well knows, deserves to die.

⁵⁰ The prudish Variorum fails to gloss “nunnery” (cf. *NED* 1.b.), which as early at least as 1593 also meant a house of prostitution.

⁵¹ Cf. T. H. White, *The Bestiary, a Book of Beasts* (NY, 1960), 133-134.

⁵² Cf. Keeton (1967), 185-190.

⁵³ For the symbolism of the flowers, see Variorum, notes ad 170 and 171. There is also the obvious phallic suggestion in the phrase “long purples.”

⁵⁴ If anyone should doubt the connection between mermaids and Machiavelli, consider the end of the soliloquy of Gloucester, the future Richard III, at 3 *Henry VI* (Arden) III. ii. 182-193: “Why, I can smile, and murder whiles I smile,/And cry, Content, to that which grieves my Heart,/And wet my Cheeks with artificial Tears,/And frame my Face to all occasions./I'll drown more Sailors than the Mermaid shall,/I'll slay more gazers than the basilisk,/I'll play the Orator as well as Nestor,/Deceive more slyly than Ulysses could,/And, like a Sinon, take another Troy./I can add Colours to the Chameleon,/Change shapes with Proteus, for advantages,/And set the murderous Machevill to School.” On mermaids, see also *Comedy of Errors* (Arden) III. ii. 163; on smiling, murder and villainy, see also *Hamlet* I. v. 106/106, 108/108; on chameleons, see also *Hamlet* III. ii. 88-89/93-96. I should add that the only other explicit mention of Machiavelli by name in Shakespeare's plays—in addition to Gloucester's soliloquy and the Host's remark

The infection which Claudius has caused is far-reaching and fatal. His act has threatened political life as such. It has produced a situation in which it is as though “the world were now to begin, / Antiquity forgot, custom not known” (IV. v. 99-100/103-104). It is Hamlet who must restore the world to its wonted course. What does this involve? In order to preserve the viability of political life as such, Hamlet cannot reveal Claudius’s fratricide. Rather what he must do is to reveal Claudius’s guilt at the same time that he must conceal Claudius’s crime. But to reveal the one is to reveal the other.

So, the overriding demand of the preservation of the political is to conceal the crime, even if that means to conceal the guilt. On the other hand, the overriding demand of the Danish regime is for the populace to know that what is done is done rightly and not treasonously (cf. V. ii. 310/328). The concrete political situation, then, demands that Hamlet reveal both the guilt and the crime. Hamlet’s political dilemma, then, is that he must both reveal and conceal Claudius’s crime. This is a dilemma from which there is apparently no way out. Or if there is one, one suspects that the Hamlet who sets it in motion will not, indeed cannot, live to see its completion. It is in this that Hamlet’s tragedy consists. This is Hamlet’s political dilemma.

V

But before he could face his political dilemma, he had to face his personal dilemma, the dilemma of whether to be a philosopher or a warrior-king. But the political dilemma and the personal dilemma are not unconnected: it is only by virtue of his being a philosopher that he is able ultimately to see the extent of the political task before him and to accomplish it.

Let us look at Hamlet’s personal dilemma. In the swearing scene (I. v. 113-191/113-198), Hamlet makes a distinction between one’s business and one’s desire:

I hold it fit that we shake hands and part;
You, as your business and desire shall point you;
For every man hath business and desire,
Such as it is....

(I. v. 128-131 / 134-137)

In Hamlet’s own case, his business involves political responsibility (i. e., being a warrior), but his desire involves studying (i. e., being a philosopher). His business is represented by Marcellus the war-named, while his desire is represented by Horatio. This is one reason, I believe, behind Shakespeare’s having Bernardo refer to Marcellus and Horatio as the “rivals of my watch” (I. i. 13/14): the use of the word “rivals” in its archaic sense “partners” (see *Variorum*, note ad loc.) suggests that although they are the partner’s of Bernardo’s watch, they are also contenders for Hamlet’s soul. Marcellus never appears again after the swearing scene. The reason for this, I believe, is that Hamlet assimilates Marcellus to himself, i. e., he incorporates him. In other words, Hamlet begins to become a warrior, to do his business. On the other hand, he must exorcise his desire, and the change in Hamlet from his desire to his business is accompanied by a growing bloodlessness on his part, a bloodlessness which enables him to see murder, for example, as something which is merely necessary. As Hamlet’s desire becomes more and more exorcised, Horatio assumes a role of greater significance as the abode of Hamlet’s exorcised desire, as the externalization of that desire. Thus, Horatio becomes the incarnation of Hamlet’s desire for philosophy (cf. I. v. 166-167/174-175), and this is why Horatio comes more and more to live up to his ancient name (cf. V. ii. 328/346). Finally, when Hamlet dies, Marcellus will be reincarnated on a grand scale in the figure of Fortinbras.

in the *Merry Wives of Windsor* (see note 24 above)—is York’s mention of “that notorious Macheville” at *1 Henry VI* (Arden) V. iv. 74.

The personal choice which Hamlet must make is indicated most clearly in his first interview with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern (II. ii. 217-361/220-375)⁵⁵ and in his fourth and central soliloquy (III. i. 56-88/56-88). Let us take the soliloquy first, and in order to clarify the sequence of thought, I have divided and numbered it (*italics mine*):

(1) (56/56)	<u>A.</u>	(2) (56/56)	<u>B.</u>
	To be,	or —that is the question; (57/57)	not to be,
		Whether 'tis nobler	
(3) (57-58/57-58)	<i>in the mind to suffer</i>	(4) (59-60/59-60)	
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,		Or <i>to take arms</i> against a sea of troubles, And by opposing end them,	
(5) (60-64/60-64)	<i>To die, — to sleep, —</i>	(6) (64-69/64-69)	<i>to die; — to sleep; —</i>
No more, and by a sleep to say we end The heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks That flesh is heir too,—'tis a consummation Devoutly to be wisht		To sleep, perchance to dream! ay, there's the rub; For in that sleep of death what dreams may come When we have shuffled off this mortal coil, Must give us pause; there's the respect That makes calamity of so long life;	
(8) (76-82/76-82)	<i>who would fardels bear,</i>	(7) (70-76/70-76)	
To grunt and sweat under a weary life, But that the dread of something after death, The undiscover'd country from whose borne No traveller returns, puzzles the will, And makes us rather bear those ills we have Than fly to others that we know not of?		For <i>who would bear</i> the whips and scorns of time, The oppressor's wrong, the proude man's contumely, The pangs of despiz'd love, the law's delay, The insolence of office, and the spurns That patient merit of the unworthy takes, When he himself might his quietus make With a bare bodkin?	
(9) (83-88/83-88)			
Thus conscience does make cowards, And thus the native hiew of resolution Is sickled o'er with the pale cast of thought, And enterprises of great pitch and moment With this regard their currents turn awry And lose the name of action.			

In (1) and (2), Hamlet speaks of being and non-being. The being and non-being of what? Since Hamlet cannot be talking of suicide, to which he briefly alluded in his first soliloquy and which he has never considered a serious alternative, of what does he speak? According to (3) and (4), he speaks of the vicissitudes of things, which are called respectively "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" and "a sea of troubles." If we suffer them (3), we accept them and allow them to remain unchallenged in their being: this is the philosophical alternative. But if we act

⁵⁵ The German name "Rosencrantz" means "garland of roses," but it is also the designation for the rosary; the Dutch-German name "Guildenstern" means "golden star," which (cf. *NED*) is the ecclesiastical term for the bowl or goblet that serves as the container for the host in the Papal High Mass held on Easter Day. If Shakespeare had intended to sketch Catholicism's lack and/or loss of political efficacy, he could not have chosen a more subtle way than to consign these two persons to their deaths in England while having Hamlet a student on leave from Wittenberg, the site of the nailing of Luther's ninety-five theses. This is supported by Hamlet's reference to the Diet of Worms of 1521 (IV. iii. 20-22/19-21; cf. *Variorum* note ad loc.): "a certain convocation of politique worms are e'en at him. Your worm is your only emperor for diet." In addition, one could regard the implanting of the name "Osric," "divine ruler" (cf. *Levith*, 52), i. e., Pope, on a foppish courtier as a further dramatic embodiment of the theologico-political movement at issue here. However, this would be speculation. Cf. also V. i. 205-230/210-235.

("take arms") against them (4), we may cause their non-being ("end them"): this is the political/warrior alternative. Hamlet begins, then by opposing two ways of living.

He goes on to oppose the ways of dying which correspond to, and reflect the fundamental characters of, those ways of living. Each way of dying is analogous to a way of sleeping. The philosophical way brings freedom from bodily pain and the body (5), and the philosophical sleep is—as may be inferred by contrast to (6)—dreamless. Philosophical life, then, is like a dreamless, bodiless sleep: "'tis a consummation/Devoutly to be wish'd." On the other hand, the political way—if one sloughs off the confusion and turmoil which impede one's vision of it—is like a sleep with dreams (6). But what kind of dream is emblematic of the political life? A dream in which there is slavery to the body, i. e., a nocturnal emission, the kind of dream in which one's slavery to one's own body is most manifest. Hence, in order to specify the kind of dream that he has in mind, Hamlet says, "ay, there's the rub." To think of a complete lifetime in such a state indeed "Must give us pause." For such a life to be livable, it must be short. One could almost say that the contrast between the philosophical and political lives is the contrast between the tortoise and Achilles (cf. Aristotle, *Physica* Z. 9. 239b14-30).

The pause that considering the political gives causes Hamlet to dwell on it, so he thinks through the second alternative first in the next matched pair of utterances. He considers (7) that there are things which no one would bear "when he himself might his quietus make/With a bare bodkin." In other words, in the face of, say, "The oppressor's wrong," one must take arms against it, i. e., one must murder the oppressor. Hamlet has now made his choice for the political over the philosophical, for action over reflection, so that when he returns to the philosophical life in (8) and (9), he sees its reflective submission as cowardice that blocks action. There are indeed reasons and occasions, Hamlet suggests, when doing injustice is preferable to suffering injustice, if the doing injustice nullifies a prior and greater injustice and enables justice to be restored. There are times, then, when two injustices do make a justice. Hamlet is now resolved to do what must be done, and the external verbal signs of this in the soliloquy are that it is Hamlet's first soliloquy which does not begin with the exclamation "Oh!" and his only soliloquy which ends with the word "action."

The same contrast of ways of life is discernible in the preceding interview with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are drawn as quite distinct individuals, even from their first utterances (II. ii. 26-32/26-32). The major words which Rosencrantz employs there are "majesties...sovereign power...dread pleasures...into command," while those of Guildenstern are "we...obey...give up ourselves...our service...To be commanded." Rosencrantz shows his superiority to Guildenstern by speaking in an, as it were, active voice, while Guildenstern speaks in a passive voice. In addition, Guildenstern is the more naive of the two: he genuinely believes himself to be helping Hamlet (II. ii. 38-39/38-39). Furthermore, when they first meet Hamlet (II. ii. 219 ff./222 ff.), Hamlet and Guildenstern speak rather formally to each other: Guildenstern addresses Hamlet as "My honoured lord!" (219/222), and Hamlet greets him with a simple "How dost thou, Guildenstern" (221-222/224-225). On the other hand, Hamlet and Rosencrantz speak warmly and affectionately to each other: Rosencrantz addresses Hamlet as "My most dear lord!" (220/223), and Hamlet greets him with an impassioned "Ah, Rosencrantz" (222/225). Moreover, both Hamlet and Rosencrantz share an interest in and knowledge of the theater: when the players are discussed (305-351), Guildenstern virtually drops out of the conversation. Finally, when Rosencrantz and Guildenstern later report to Claudius and Gertrude (III. i. 1-28/1-28), Rosencrantz reveals little, while Guildenstern reveals much.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Cf. the replies of Rosencrantz at III. i. 5-6/5-6, 11/11, 13-14/13-14, to those of Guildenstern at 7-10/7-10, 12/12. (Unfortunately Tom Stoppard, in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (NY, 1967) has their characters reversed, as even the introductory descriptions show (11). For this reason, and for other misunderstandings of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* which one finds *passim*, the Stoppard play does not fulfill the expectations which its source would evoke.)

Hamlet's conversation with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern (II. ii. 217 ff./220 ff.) begins with a discussion of Fortune as a woman which is reminiscent of Machiavelli.⁵⁷ When Guildenstern says that he and Rosencrantz are Fortune's "privates" (II. ii. 230/234), he says more than he realizes. Privates are not only sexual parts, but they are also military underlings. If they are regarded as privates in the latter sense, their commander is Claudius. So, Fortune's privates are Claudius's privates (cf. II. ii. 235-237/239-241). In some sense, then, Claudius is equivalent to Fortune. If he is, then Hamlet's alternatives in the fourth soliloquy with respect to the vicissitudes of fortune are also alternatives with respect to Claudius, i. e., Hamlet is asking there whether it is nobler to be killed by Claudius or not to be killed by Claudius (i. e., to kill him). His decision—as we have seen—is that acting is preferable to thinking. In what follows (II. ii. 238-248/242-253), the suggestion is made that since thinking is equivocal, it is ineffectual with respect to action. Thinking makes the world—and Denmark is but the world writ small—a prison, i. e., thinking confines one and renders action impossible.

Then two parallel arguments are offered, the one (II. ii. 249-256/254-262) more elaborate and the one (II. ii. 257-259/263-265) more dense and elliptical. The first may be schematized thus:

(249-251/254-256)	king, except for bad dreams;
(252-253/257-259)	bad dreams = ambition; shadow of a dream = substance of ambition;
(254/260)	dream = a shadow;
(255-256/261-262)	ambition = shadow of a shadow.

The second argument (257-259/263-265) may be schematized, on the basis of an implicit parallelism to the first, thus:

beggar, except for body dreams; body dreams = desire; ⁵⁸ shadow of a dream = substance of desire; dream = a shadow; desire = shadow of a shadow.
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These two arguments show the extent to which already Hamlet's business has usurped his desire; he is no longer a person who has business and desire, but rather he is now "a man to double business bound" (III. iii. 41/41).

So, in these scenes, Hamlet is resolved to be king. By the time that he returns from England, he *is* king. And in the graveyard, his survey of skulls is a survey of his course to the kingship as represented by all the persons in the play who are in a major way connected with what he has become and what his kingdom will be. In identifying the skulls (V. i. 73-77/74-79, 79-82/81-85, 93-105/96-110), he lists seven:

⁵⁷ Cf. Machiavelli, *Prince*, ch. 25, vol. I, 89-92; Gentillet, pt. 3, maxim 25; *Hamlet* II. ii. 471/489 (Hamlet must have had this speech in mind even while speaking to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern: cf. II. ii. 231-232/235-236).

⁵⁸ Desire seems to be the link between beggars and bodies which is analogous to ambition as the link between kings and the bad.

- | | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| (1) singer (73-74 / 74) | (1) Ophelia |
| (2) murderer (74-75 / 75-76) | (2) Claudius |
| (3) politician (75-76 / 76-78) | (3) Polonius-Laertes |
| (4) circumventer of God (7778-79) | (4) the ghost-Hamlet |
| (5) courtier (79-82 / 81-85) | (5) Rosencrantz and Guildenstern |
| (6) lawyer (93-97 / 96-101) | (6) Horatio |
| (7) real estate person (97-105 / 101-110) | (7) Fortinbras ⁵⁹ |

The final indication that Hamlet is king and hence has the right to designate a successor is the difference at the duel between the order of poisoning and the order of dying (V. ii. 265 ff. / 275 ff.):

order of poisoning

Gertrude (277 / 294)
 Hamlet (289 / 306, 330 / 348)
 Laertes (289 / 306; cf. 293-294 / 312-313)
 Claudius (309 / 327, 313 / 331)

order of dying

Gertrude (297 / 316)
 Claudius (314 / 332)
 Laertes (318 / 336)
 Hamlet (345 / 363)

In the order of dying, Hamlet and Claudius exchange places, and the exchange of places signifies a change of role. Hamlet dies as the warrior-king of Denmark, something to which Fortinbras gives recognition by ordering a soldier's funeral for Hamlet, so that the play ends as it began, with a discharge of cannon, this time also announcing a new regime, the new regime which Hamlet has made possible by his acts. However politically necessary those acts were, that they were crimes is not left in doubt, for the "fell sergeant, death, / Is strict in his arrest" (V. ii. 323-324 / 341-342).⁶⁰ Hamlet, then, dies a criminal. This is the "wounded name" (V. ii. 331 / 349) which he will leave behind him,⁶¹ and insofar as his name is wounded, he will appear no different from Claudius, whose name means "lamer" or "more defective."⁶² He looks to Horatio to disseminate the founding lie which will set things right and to Fortinbras to establish the right regime. And the head and hand which were corruptly unified in Claudius are purified and separated out into the right reasoning and strong arm⁶³ which the names Horatio and Fortinbras signify.

⁵⁹ When Hamlet lists the parts that players play (II. ii. 309-315 / 318-324), he also lists seven: (1) the player king; (2) his majesty; (3) the adventurous knight; (4) the sighing lover; (5) the humorous man; (6) the clown; (7) the lady. And this is preceded by a list of seven aspects of being human (II. ii. 296-299 / 304-307): (1) "noble in reason;" (2) "infinite in faculties;" (3) "in form and moving, ... express and admirable;" (4) "in action, ... like an angel;" (5) "in apprehension, ... like a god;" (6) "the beauty of the world;" (7) "the paragon of animals." Also see note 20 above for a discussion of Hamlet's seven soliloquies.

⁶⁰ The sergeant is the arresting officer: cf. Variorum, note ad loc. The legal meaning of "arrest" is derived from the primary meaning of arrest as the opposite of motion, as equivalent to rest. Both meanings seem to be intended here.

⁶¹ I read V. ii. 331-332 / 349-350 in accordance with the text of the quartos thus: "Horatio, what a wounded name, / Things standing thus unknown, shall I leave behind me!"

⁶² The word *claudius* is the neuter comparative of the Latin adjective *claudus*, "lame": cf. the verb *claudeo*, "I am lame." Also see Levith, 51.

⁶³ Cf. Levith, 52.

Appendix A: Popular Sovereignty

I

The notion of an elective monarchy would not have been alien to any Elizabethan English resident who was connected with and/or cognizant of the activities of contemporary lawyers or the lively debates—grounded in medieval political theology—concerning the question of succession to the throne. And part of the medieval legacy on this question was the notion of group or popular sovereignty or, as Otto Gierke calls it, *die Genossenschaftsidee* (the idea of a fellowship): cf. Gierke, *Political Theories of the Middle Age*, tr. with an introd. by F. W. Maitland (Cambridge, 1900), 37 (cf. 22-24). [This work is a translation of *Die publicistischen Lehren des Mittelalters*, a section of the third volume of Gierke's *Das deutsche Genossenschaftsrecht*.] Consider the following remarks by Gierke:

As, however, even in the Middle Age the thought of Popular Sovereignty was connected in manifold wise with the thought of the Ruler's Sovereignty, there was here a foundation on which the most diverse constitutional systems of an abstract kind could be erected: systems which might range from an Absolutism grounded on the alienation of power by the people, through Constitutional Monarchy, to Popular Sovereignty of the Republican sort...The victory of this manner of thinking was largely due to the decisive fact that just in relation to the very highest of all earthly Powers, the Jurists could find in the *Corpus Iuris* a text which seemed expressly to indicate the Will of the People as the source of Rulership. (38-39)

Still even the advocates of Ruler's Sovereignty...were unable to avoid the recognition of a right against the Ruler which still perdured in the Body of the People. Even they were compelled to regard the legal relationship between Ruler and Ruled as being in all respects a contractual relationship between the Body of the People—which Body could be treated as a corporation (*universitas*)—and its Head, so that the People had a strict right corresponding to the duty incumbent upon the Sovereign. Furthermore, throughout the Middle Age even the partisans of Monarchy were wont to concede to the Community an active right of participation in the life of the State. Political Institutions being what they everywhere were, some such concession was almost unavoidable. There was unanimity in the doctrine that the consent of the Whole Community was requisite for the validation of any acts of the Ruler which were prejudicial to the rights of the Whole.... Also men explained that, though as a matter of pure law this was not necessary, still a general custom required that the Monarch should of his own free will bind himself not to make laws or do other important acts of rulership without the consent of the Whole Body or its representatives.... Then there was a mediating tendency which sought to combine the idea of the Ruler's Sovereignty with that of the People's Sovereignty. It co-ordinated Ruler and Community and ascribed the supreme power to both of them in union. Those who occupied this position rejected Pure Monarchy and held that limited Kingship or a mixture of Monarchy, Aristocracy and Democracy was the best of Constitutions...[T]he relation between People and Ruler was a bilateral legal relationship.... However, no matter what the form of government, the People was always the true Sovereign, and this was expressly stated by the maxim '*Populus maior principe*.' (43-45; cf. 93)

The notions delineated by Gierke, which are derived ultimately from the political writings of classical antiquity, were very much alive in the Renaissance, and certainly Hamlet's residency at Wittenberg would have brought him into close contact with them.

II

Gierke (*op. cit.*) has the following to say about the issue of the role of the populace in legitimating the title of a ruler to rule.

Indeed that the legal title to all Rulership lies in the voluntary and contractual submission of the Ruled could therefore be propounded as a philosophic axiom. True, that concrete cases might demand the admission that the Power of the State had its origin or extension in violent conquest or successful usurpation. Still in such cases, so it was said, an *ex post facto* legitimation by the express or tacit consent of the People was indispensable if the Ruler was to have a good title to Rulership. (40)

In particular, however, from this same way of thinking was deduced the right of every People to choose a new Head in a case of necessity: provided that no mode of appointment by a superior and no strict right of succession had been established. For all power was originally based upon Choice, and Divine and Natural Law declared that, as a matter of principle, it was for the Whole Body of the ruled to institute its Head. True, that by a grant of lordship to a Whole Family, or, it may be, by other means, an Hereditary Monarchy might be validly created. None the less, the Elective Principle was preferable, being in fuller accord with Divine and Natural Law. Therefore it is that the Elective Principle prevails in the Empire.... The People may itself exercise the right of Election, or may delegate that right to others. (42; cf. 22-24)

Appendix B: The Players

Hamlet strikes the keynote for our view of the players when he asserts that actors “are the abstract and brief chronicles of the time” (II. ii. 501-502/520) and that “their writers do them wrong, to make them exclaim against their own succession” (II. ii. 336-337/348-349). In other words, the theatrical companies are analogues of political factions, and the problem of succession must be faced in the theater as well as in the state. This would have come as no surprise to the politically and theatrically sophisticated Elizabethan audience (cf. Axton, 1977, 54). See Robert Boies Sharpe, *The Real War of the Theaters: Shakespeare’s Fellows in Rivalry with The Admiral’s Men, 1594-1603, Repertories, Devices, and Types* (Boston/London, 1935): “For the Elizabethan dramatic companies were of course in politics, whether they wished to be or not; they were attached to the persons of the great place-holding nobles.” (1) “In the strictly censored state of Elizabethan public opinion, historical writings almost always had political implications read into them, whether the author intended them or not.” (54) “[There was] political competition ...between the two rival companies (59), i. e., they engaged in a “game of politico-dramatic chess” (60); “in such circumstances they cannot well have helped touching at least somewhat on politics” (143). Cf. Axton, 1977: “the situation throughout Elizabeth’s reign was unprecedented: a virgin queen and no immediate heir to the throne.” (4) “If Elizabeth sat on the stage for Inns of Court performances at Whitehall, as she did at Oxford and Cambridge, the “show” involved constant comparison of goddess, player king and Tudor Queen. Her regal chair, in full view of the audience, surmounted by an embroidered canopy, was known simply as “the state”.” (48) “Comedy, tragedy and romance were suffused with current political meanings at the Inns. Shakespeare must have seen this” (55). “London theatre of the late eighties and nineties was perhaps the freest forum for speculation about the future succession to the throne” (81). “It would be hard to find a period in which the language of poetry was more closely linked with that of law and politics. During Elizabeth’s reign both the Queen and her advisers made full use of an ideology which consisted of technical concepts, myth and metaphysics, suggestion, surmise, flattery and subtle coercion, to maintain a precarious balance of power.” (145-146) “During Elizabeth’s reign and in the first few years of the new century there seem to have been tacit assumptions about the vital relation between the stage and the state. As long as men could accept as politically viable a vision of the monarch’s two bodies, dramatists were perhaps best equipped to express its subtle complexity.... A dramatist could simultaneously express the ideal and the realities of political power at a time when not many men dared to do so. By 1608...there was comparably less need for dramatic ghosts come from the grave to diagnose evil in the body politic, less expectancy that a play might be skilfully designed to catch the conscience of a king.” (146-147) Cf. Levine, 89-90.

Finally, cf. in *Early English Classical Tragedies*, ed. John W. Cunliffe (Oxford, 1912), Thomas Hughes, *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, “An Introduction penned by Nicholas Trotte, Gentleman, one of the society of Greyes-Inne; which was pronounced in manner following, viz. Three Muses came upon the Stage appavelled accordingly, bringing five Gentlemen Students with them attyred in their usual garments, whom one of the Muses presented to her Maiestie as Captives: the cause whereof she delivered by speach as followeth,” 130-133: “How sutes a Tragedie for such a time?/Thus. For that since your sacred Maiestie/In gracious hands the regall Scepter held/All Tragedies are fled from State, to stadge.” Despite the obvious flattery of this remark, if one considers the politico-historical context, one can see that it is not unambiguous in import.

Appendix C: Machiavellianism

I: Gentillet on the Emblem of the Centaur

Gentillet, third part, maxim XII

Mais doit on appeler ou bestise ou malice ce que Machiavel dit de Chiron? OÙ a-il leu que Chiron fust homme et beste? qui luy a dit qu'il fut baillé au prince Achilles, pour luy enseigner ceste belle science d'estre homme et beste tout ensemble? Xenophon dit que Chiron fut frere de Juppiter (tant le fait-il grand) plain de grand savoir, et de toute vertu, generosité, pieté et justice. Il dit bien plus, que Esculapius, Nestor, Amphiarus, Peleus, Telamon, Theseus, Ulysses, Castor, Pollux, Eneas, Achilles, et presque tous les grands personnages, que la Grece a mis au rang des dieux, ont appris de luy la vertu, dont ils ont acquis louange immortelle, et reputation d'estre dieux. Il dit aussi que Chiron ne fut point du temps d'Achilles, ains long temps devant: mais parce que le prince Achilles fut instruit et nourry en sa discipline, vertu et maniere de vivre, l'on dit qu'il a esté l'instructeur d'Achilles. Bien est vray que les poètes ont dit que c'estoit un centaure, à cause qu'il se plaisoit à picquer les chevaux, et à la chasse: qui sont exercices bien dignes des princes. Mais bien qu'il aymast les chevaux, et l'exercice de chevalerie, il n'estoit pas pourtant estimev tenir rien de la beste, ains plustost de la divinitev, comme estant douev de toutes vertus excellentes, qui font approcher les hommes de Dieu, et qui les esloignent des bestes. Et partant se void la bestiale malice de Machiavel, qui se veut servir à fausses ensaignes de l'exemple de ce vaillant et generaux prince Achilles, pour persuader au prince de ne faire point de difficultev de se gouverner à l'imitation des bestes: veu que Achilles fut instruit (comme il dit) par Chiron le centaure, homme et beste, qui luy apprint comment il falloit vivre en homme et en beste. Car cela est faux et controuvev, et tenoit Chiron plustost de la divinitev que de la bestise, et ne fut onques Achilles instruit qu'en toutes vertus heroiques: et ne lisons point que jamais il fait tour de renardise ne tromperie, ne autre chose indigne d'un prince magnanime bien nourry et instruit en toutes hautes et royales vertus.

Patericke translation

But should we call this beastlinesse, or mallice, which *Machiavell* saith of *Chiron*? or hath he read, that *Chiron* was both a man and a beast? Who hath told him, that he was delivered to the prince *Achilles*, to teach him that goodly knowledge to be both a man and a beast? *Xenophon* saith, that *Chiron* was *Iupiters* brother (so great a man he makes him) full of great knowledge, and of all vertue, generositie, pietie, and justice: nay he saith further, that *Aesculapius*, *Nestor*, *Amphiarus*, *Peleus*, *Telamon*, *Theseus*, *Ullisses*, *Castor*, *Pollux*, *Aeneas*, *Achilles*, and almost all great persons, which the Grecians place amongst their gods, of him learned these vertues, whereby they have obtained immortall praise, and the reputation to be gods: Hee saith also, that *Chiron* was not in the time of *Achilles*, but long time before: but because the prince *Achilles* was instructed and nourished in his discipline, vertue, and manner of life, men say he was *Achilles* his instructor. True it is, that the Poets have called him a Centaure, because he tooke great pleasure in riding of horses, and in hunting, which are exercises well beseeming a prince: But although he loved horses, and the exercise of knighthood, yet was he never esteemed to hold any thing of a beast, but rather of the divinitie, as being endowed with all excellent vertues, which bring men nigh God, and take them farthest from beasts. And therefore the beastly mallice of *Machiavell* is seene, in perverslie abusing the example of that valiant and generous prince *Achilles*, to persuade a prince not to sticke to governe himselfe after the imitation of beasts; seeing that *Achilles* was instructed, as is said, by *Chiron* the Centaure, a man and a beast, which learned him how to live both like a man and a beast: for this is false and devised; for *Chiron* rather held of divinitie, than of a beast, neither was *Achilles* instructed, but in all heroicall vertues: And we never read, that hee ever used any foxlike subtiltie or unlawfull policie, or any other thing unwoorthie of a magnanimous prince, well nourished and instructed in all high and royall vertues.

II. Reception in Renaissance England

The contemporary loci classici for the career of Machiavelli in Renaissance England are Edward Meyer, *Machiavelli and the Elizabethan Drama* (Weimar, 1897; *Literarhistorische Forschungen*, bd. I), and Felix Raab, *The English Face of Machiavelli, a changing interpretation, 1500-1700* (London/Toronto, 1964), especially the latter, because even though the accumulation of literary references and allusions in Meyer is indispensable, he remained a victim of the fable that the English view of Machiavelli, especially as revealed in the drama of the time, was a caricature based not on Machiavelli's writings themselves but on Gentillet's so-called *Contre-Machiavel* in Patericke's English translation (see Appendix C. I., above). Raab, on the other hand, decisively demolishes this fable in the following way: "The simplest, the most vocal and by far the most widespread reaction to the teachings of Machiavelli among Elizabethan Englishmen was horror, and the most spectacular manifestation of this horror...was in the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean drama. The Machiavellian villain strutted the stage in innumerable guises... [¶] It now becomes necessary...to dispose of a myth: the myth of Gentillet and the *Contre-Machiavel*. The common form of this myth is that those who manufactured these monsters had not read Machiavelli at all and had created their villains on the basis of Gentillet's hostile distortion of his writings. [¶] Now this is a good myth, being simple, but as a piece of historical reasoning it has a number of flaws. In the first place, although Simon Patericke translated the *Contre-Machiavel* in 1577, only a year after it was written, the translation was not printed until 1602, by which time the Machiavellian villain had been a stock figure for some time. To argue that Patericke's translation exerted this tremendous influence in manuscript is clearly ridiculous in view of the proliferation of Machiavelli's works in England, nor is there any evidence that the French edition of Gentillet was being more widely read than Machiavelli.... [¶] Furthermore, there was, in essence, nothing new in this reaction to Machiavelli. It is true that the stage Machiavelli was saddled with crimes and misdemeanours to which no reference can be found in any of the Florentine's works. But a stage figure, as a stage figure, has a life and development of its own, often completely divorced from its origins. When the "politic villain," for instance, ceased to be good theatre, he was made into a figure of fun. [¶] But in a more fundamental sense also, the stage villain was nothing more than a continuation of a tradition which was well established before Gentillet wrote. Among the infinite variety of crimes and sins heaped upon Machiavelli on the English stage, two general accusations predominated.... One was a love of complicated, underhand stratagem, and the other was atheism.... [¶] Neither of these was new.... Both in England and in Europe Gentillet continued a tradition; he did not start one." (56-57) "Nor will it do to write this spectre off as a mere bogymen to frighten children.... Not because they were blind did [they] reject Machiavelli, but because they saw all too clearly the direction in which this particular signpost was pointing" (61). "The Tudor horror of Machiavelli, even in its most grotesque form (the stage version) was not a "distortion," due to ignorance or the (non-existent) popularity of Gentillet, it was the horror of a generation which saw its traditional *Weltanschauung* seriously and validly challenged." (70)

Also consider Raab's discussion of the works by Machiavelli, both in the original Italian and in English translation, which were then available in England, 52-53, 274-275. The historical setting is briefly this. English had been traveling to Italy since the eighth century (Raab, 27), and the rise of humanism in the sixteenth century caused an increase in the scholarly intercourse between Italy and England (Raab, 27-28). By the 1530's, Reginald Pole, Henry VIII's cousin, had already carefully read *Il Principe* (Raab, 30-31), and he attacks Machiavelli as "an enemy of mankind" and compares him to Satan (Raab, 31).^{*} William Thomas, co-author of an Italian grammar and dictionary and author of a guidebook to Italy (Raab, 40-41), referred in a letter of 1530 to the young King Edward VI to "those discourses, that are now my principal study, which I have gathered out of divers authors" (cited Raab, 42), and "'those discourses' turn out to be I

^{*} Patericke makes the same comparison in the dedicatory epistle of his translation—see note 42 above.

Discorsi, and their 'divers authors,' Machiavelli" (Raab, 42). Roger Ascham, who had visited Italy in the early 1550's, was writing in the 1560's as though Machiavelli were widely known (Meyer, 16-17; Raab, 32-34).

Machiavelli's *Arte of warre*, translated by Peter Whitethorne and dedicated by him to Queen Elizabeth, appeared in 1563, 2d ed. 1573 (cf. Meyer, 18). By the 1570's Machiavelli was being studied by such persons as Gabriel Harvey at Cambridge and Sir Philip Sidney at Oxford (Meyer, 17-18). In 1576, there appeared Gentillet's work, and in the 1580's Machiavelli was being studied by Robert Greene and Christopher Marlowe (Meyer, 21-22, 24-25, 27, 28, 30, 33-34). Also cf. Raab, 49, 51-52, 74, 76, 255-258; Meyer, 51, 53-54, 84-85, 87, 89, 93-94, 109, 116, 133.

Appendix D: Gabriel Harvey, *XAIPE* (London, 1578)

[Lineation in original is continuous.]

Epigramma in effigiem Machiavelli.	Epigram unto an effigy of Machiavelli.
<i>Machiavellus ipse loquitur.</i>	<i>Machiavelli himself speaks.</i>
Quaeris ego qui sim. Rex Regum: totius orbis Imperium digito nititur omne meo. Nemo regat, qui non Machiavellica dogmata callet:	You search for who I am. —King of Kings: all the empire of the whole orb is supported by my finger. Let no one rule, who is not callused [with respect to] Machiavellian teachings:
Nec sapuisse putes qui minus ista sapit.	Nor let you reckon [anyone] to have tasted wisdom who less has tasted wisdom [with respect to] such [things].
Caetera sunt umbrae, fumi, ludibria, risus,	Other [things] are shadows, puffs-of-smoke, playthings, laughingstocks,
Regna ego sola loquor, sceptrum ego sola loquor, Pacem optent pueri, vetulaeque, senesque, miselli,	I bespeak only kingdoms, I bespeak only scepters, Let boys opt for peace, and old-women, and old- aged [men], [all] wretched-little [persons],
Castra ego sola loquor, bella ego sola loquor. Plebis amor nihil est; nihilo minus, Indiga Virtus:	I bespeak only encampments, I bespeak only wars. Love of the plebeiate is nothing; Indigent Virtue [is] less than nothing;
Verba ego linquo alijs; facta ego mira patro.	I leave words to others; I father wondrous [things] done.
Ecce oculos: Furor ijs habitat: manus altera saxum;	Lo [my] eyes: Fury inhabits them: the one hand [brandishes] a rock;
Alter a ense torquet: toxica in ore latent.	the other [hand] brandishes a sword: toxins escape- notice in [my] mouth.
Spiritus hinc, atque hinc perfusus mille venenis:	Hence [emanates my] spirit/breath, but-also hence I have been drenched in a thousand venoms:
Ferrea frons, Orci pectora digna Deo.	An iron forehead, breasts deserving to the God of Orcus.
Emblema est, semperque fuit: <i>Iuuat ire per altum:</i>	[My] logo is, and always has been: <i>It helps to go through the high/deep [thing]:</i>
<i>Aut nihil, aut Caesar; noster Alumnus erat.</i> Nil mediocre placet: sublimia sola voluto:	<i>Either nothing, or Caesar; [this] was our Nursling.</i> Nothing middling pleases: I turn over [in my mind] only sublime [things]:
Lac pueris cibus est: sanguine vescor ego. Mille neces obeat vulgus, modo sceptrum capessam;	Milk is food for boys: I feed on blood. Let the vulgus go to meet a thousand killings, let me seize-eagerly scepters by-means-of [any] manner;
Non flocci cruor est, non laniena mihi.	Neither gore nor a butcher-shop is [worthy] of fluff to me.
Dispereant abiectae animae: truantur ad Orcum:	Let abject souls perish-utterly: let them be thrust to Orcus:
Solus ego sapio, vivo, triumpho mihi. Caetera quis nescit? <i>Fraus</i> est mea maxima Virtus:	I alone taste wisdom, I live to me I triumph. Who knows-not the other [things]? <i>Fraud</i> is my biggest Virtue:
Proxima, <i>Vis</i> : alios non ego nosco Deos.	Nearest [to it is] <i>Force</i> : I do not come-to-know other Gods.
Ingenij monumenta a mei Regalia volue:	Turn [over in your mind] the Kingly monuments of my innate-ability:
Nec post haec quaeres: Quis Machiavellus erat!	You will not after these [things] search-for: Who Machiavelli was!