

# Dramaturgy of the Acting Version of the First Quarto of *Hamlet*

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It is relatively known that the First Quarto of *Hamlet* (1603), the first text ever printed in which the tragical history of the Prince of Denmark is related to the playwright William Shakespeare, presents a version notably different from the one commonly known, from the standard version which is reflected in the texts of the Second Quarto (1604/5) and the First Folio (1623).

Among its most striking differences we could point out the following. It is a much shorter version, 2,220 lines, just over half as long as the Second Quarto (the longest textual version) or any modern critical edition. Variation in dialogue ranges from passages of total similitude, paraphrases, to fragments unique to the First Quarto (about 130 lines), together with a number of transpositions and echoes. Some characters bear different names, for instance, Corambis for Polonius, Montano for Reynaldo<sup>1</sup>, or Rossencraft and Gilderstone for Rosencrantz<sup>2</sup> and Guildenstern. There are important structural differences, especially at two points where the line of action is markedly altered: 1) the soliloquy “To be, or not to be” and the subsequent nunnery episode occur immediately after Corambis plans to “loose” his daughter to Hamlet<sup>3</sup>, and 2) after Ofelia has become mad, Horatio informs the queen of Hamlet’s return in a scene which is unique to the First Quarto. And finally, characterizations are different, especially the queen who in the closet scene unambiguously denies any complicity with the murder of Hamlet’s father and vows to assist his son in his revenge.

Textual critics have provided various explanations for the origin of this different *Hamlet*, narratives which could be grouped into the following two basic ideas:

- a) It reflects a first conception of the play (so that the version we have in the Second Quarto is a revision of this first version)<sup>4</sup>, either a full play, a sketch, or a partial revision by Shakespeare of the so called *Ur-Hamlet*. This first conception could be either genuine as it stands, or adapted, shortened and degenerated during its transmission.
- b) It is posterior to the Second Quarto version, being the result of short-hand report, of memorial reconstruction, or of revision, adaptation and abridgement<sup>5</sup> (a

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<sup>1</sup> Corambis is the name in the German play *Der bestrafte Brudermord oder Prinz Hamlet*. Reynaldo is the name in the Second Quarto, in the First Folio it is Reynoldo.

<sup>2</sup> Rosencrantz is a standardization of Q2 Rosencraus and F1 Rosincrance (sometimes Rosincrane).

<sup>3</sup> This peculiar arrangement of scenes is also present in *Der bestrafte Brudermord*, and has been adopted by theatre productions such as Laurence Olivier’s at the Old Vic in 1963 (with Peter O’Toole as Hamlet), Ron Daniel’s with the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1989, or by the film version directed by Tony Richardson.

<sup>4</sup> Among the most important contributions to this view, we should name Furnivall, 1879; Hubbard, 1920; De Groot, 1923; Parrot & Craig, 1938; Craig, 1961; Weiner, 1962; Urkowitz, 1986; Sams, 1988.

<sup>5</sup> Beside names cited in next note, see Collier (1843) and Tager (1880-2) for short-hand report theory; Poel (1922) and Burkhart (1975) for adaptation and abridgement theory, and Nosworthy (1965) and Melchiori (1992) who maintain that the First Quarto is a memorial reconstruction of an official stage version, resulting from authorial revision and abridgement of the full play reflected in the Second Quarto and the First Folio texts.

process that, on the one hand, could be Shakespearian, collaborative or entirely non-Shakespearian, official or unauthorized, and on the other hand, could be previous to the performance, synchronic to the reporting, or the job of a hack poet after the reporting).

Other arguments deal with the legitimacy of its publication, whether the First Quarto is an unduly published text or was authorized for printing.

A general consensus of the majority of critics<sup>1</sup> sentences this first published Shakespearian *Hamlet* as a “bad quarto”, a reported, pirated, garbled and corrupted text, concocted from memory in order to provide a version for some provincial tour, by an actor or group of actors who performed either in the full play or in some stage abridgement.

Whatever the case, it certainly reflects, or is, a version of the play, a version for the stage, whose dramatic qualities deserve our appreciation. It is then the purpose of this paper to assess the dramaturgy, the art of dramatic composition, of the acting version that the First Quarto of *Hamlet* represents. First I will sum up some of the most significant contributions dealing with different aspects of dramaturgy such as construction of plot and of structure, and characterization; and secondly I will concentrate on one aspect of dramatic composition which is dialogue writing or dialogue adaptation.

Since 1823 when the First Quarto was rediscovered (Furness, 1877, vol.2, p.13), few scholars have unfavourably criticized its theatricality, although few studies have been devoted to analyzing the dramatic qualities of this version. It was praised by the eminent critic Granville-Barker (1930, p. 188-98), and even William Poel, the first modern producer that staged the First Quarto in 1881 (Hubbard, 1920, p. 32) believed that it was the text that represented most truly Shakespeare’s dramatic conception of the play, that possessed more dramatic coherence and was more stageworthy than the Second Quarto, even though this was a greater work of literature (Rosenberg, 1992, p. 242-1)<sup>2</sup>.

Indeed the First Quarto *Hamlet* (Q1) is a dynamic piece of theatre, agile, with a “strong, effective dramatic action” (Hubbard, 1920, p. 32) and brief in comparison with the accepted *Hamlet* represented by the Second Quarto and the First Folio texts. It exhibits a compact, tight structure centred around a turning or climatic point in the famous “play within the play” at almost two thirds of performing time, so that later events briskly roll on to the catastrophe in a vigorous revenge tragedy.

As Giorgio Melchiori (1992) shows, this dramatic agility and expediency —as compared with the structure of the standard *Hamlet*— is achieved by the way episodes follow one another. Schüking stated that the arrangement of scenes in Q1 was “incomparably more logical than in the second quarto” (1935, p. 181). If we look at the sequence of Hamlet’s monologues in the Second Quarto, Hamlet goes from

- 1.— a state of desperation in his soliloquy “O that this too too sallied flesh would melt” (I.ii), to
- 2.— a moment of acceptance of vengeance (I.v), then to
- 3.— a recrimination, “What a rogue and peasant slave am I” , and reinforcement of decision, “I’ll catch the conscience of the king” (II.ii), then
- 4.— back to desperation (III.i) “To be, or not to be”, and

<sup>1</sup> See narratives by Mommsen, 1857; Gray, 1915, p.174; Rhodes, 1923, p.72-81; Van Dam, 1924; Ramello, 1930; Chambers, 1930, p. 408-25; Cairncross, 1936; Duthie, 1941, p. 271-4; Hart, 1942; Nosworthy, 1950; Greg, 1955, p. 300-7; Jenkins, 1982, p. 18-36; Edwards, 1985, p. 24-7; Hibbard, 1987, p. 67-89; Taylor & Wells, 1987, p. 396-8; Irace, 1992; and commentaries in accordance with the above by Wilson, 1934, p. 19-20; Hubbler, 1963, p. 175-7; Campbell, 1966, p. 284; Evans, 1974, p. 1186; Melchiori, 1978, p. 15-6; Spencer, 1980, p. 362-4; Fanego, 1982, p. 37; Jackson, 1989, p. 60-7; Hoy, 1992, p. 102; “Instituto Shakespeare”, 1992, p. 47, y Andrews, 1993, p. xlv-xlvii.

<sup>2</sup> Other favourable commentaries by Weiner, 1962; Nosworthy, 1965, p. 186-215; Jones, 1988; Urkowitz, 1986, 1988 y 1992; Irace, 1992, p. 90-1 y 1994; McMillin 1992; Loughrey, 1992; Melchiori, 1992, p. 201-8.

5.– recrimination “How all occasions do inform against me” and final resolution (IV.iv) “From now on my thought be bloody or be nothing worth”.

This is a fluctuating, brusque movement that suits a complex puzzling character as is the prince of Denmark we all know. However in the First Quarto, episode 4 (“To be, or not to be”) is transposed before episode 3 (“I’ll catch the conscience of the king”): it is logical that after the shock of the ghost’s demand, Hamlet considers the possibility of suicide (even, I would add, when almost four hundred lines before, he said “I do not set my life at a pin’s fee”, I.iv.65 / TLN 654<sup>1</sup>), then rejects it, and plans action (moment 3) “What a dunghill idiot slave am I?”. After this line, moment 5 would be redundant for we had just left Hamlet in another moment of decision, and so it is eliminated.

The succession of events in Q1 then is more lineal, direct, and it has the benefit of condensing the story time from two days and two sequences into one single day and one sequence, thus providing the play with a speedy and agile running. As Melchiori (1992, 203-4) observed, the First Quarto, in referring to the performance of the murder of Gonzago, does not say “weele heare a play to morrowe” (II.ii.529 / TLN 1576) and “Weele hate to morrowe night” (II.ii.534 / TLN 1580), so that the performance takes place at night on the very same day. From the beginning of the seventh scene, where plans are set up to find the cause of Hamlet’s transformation until he is sent to England, less than 24 hours have gone by. In this condensed space of time all the tests by which Hamlet’s madness is observed, follow one another without delay, within the same dramatic sequence: the interview with Ofelia (the nunnery episode), with Corambis (the fishmonger episode) and the interview with Rossincraft and Gilderstone. The test of Ofelia is not postponed to the following day as it is in the standard version.

Another example of compression, of good dramatic economy, is the peculiar scene between the queen and Horatio. In 36 lines we find gathered up different motives that are scattered in three different places and amount to 125 lines in the standard version: the scene between Horatio and the sailors that includes Hamlet’s letter (IV.vi), the beginning of the scene between the king and Laertes (IV.vii) and the beginning the last with Hamlet’s direct account of the voyage to Horatio (V.ii).

The benefit of all this condensation is a more agile, logical and abridged version that solves the inconvenience of the excessive length of the standard *Hamlet*<sup>2</sup>.

Burkhart (1975) studied the processes of abridgement in the “bad quartos” especially in terms of economy of casting, speech-shortening and paraphrasing that involve compression of meaning and purging of rhetoric and discursive or ornamental passages.

As an acting version the First Quarto exhibits most of the features of other acting versions. Katherleen Irace (1994) has compared the Shakespearian “bad quartos”, or what she pointedly calls “short” quartos, with modern stage and film versions, and she has concluded that they share mechanisms of adaptation and abridgment in plot structure, characterization and stage action. As she constantly shows, Kemble, Irving, Olivier, Zeffirelli have carried out analogous omissions, transpositions, changes in speech prefixes, loans from other plays, etc. so as to “shorten the plays in order to speed up performances, simplifying staging, or eliminate characters for casting or other practical reasons” (1994, p. 25).

Looking at characterizations, we find patterns that also prove to be as consistent and as effectively wrought as in other “good” texts. The distrust the queen bears to her second husband is not only constructed by her overt confessions to Horatio in that peculiar scene, but also by the way she

<sup>1</sup> Line references are keyed both to the Alexander Text (1951), in its turn keyed to the second Cambridge edition of W.A. Wright and W. G. Clark (1891-5), and to the TLN (“through line numbering”) set up by Charlton Hinman (1968).

<sup>2</sup> The 1676 quarto of *Hamlet* qualified the play as “being too long to be conveniently acted” (A3r), and a similar view is held by Chambers, 1930, p. 229; Greg, 1955, p. 318; Nosworthy, 1965, p. 164-5; Melchiori, 1992, p. 195-201.

is shown as submissive during the first part of the play by means of cutting out, in a seemingly coherent pattern, most of her interventions in the standard *Hamlet*.

The king is a more villainous character, less skillful in handling language rhetorically, a more medieval king rather than a Machiavellian Renaissance prince. Notice the omission in Q1 of five lines (III.i.50-4) that displayed a remorseful conscience in the king, or the fact that it is the king that devises the three stratagems to kill Hamlet: the unbated sword, the poisoned cup, and the poisoned point of the sword (which in the standard *Hamlet* was proposed by Laertes instead).

Other aspects of the dramaturgy of Q1 are expounded in contributions of scholars such as Burkhart (1975), Jones (1988), Urkowitz (1986, 1988), Irace (1994), or the ones collected in a seminar lead by Thomas Clayton (1992).

However, one negative quality should be pointed out after so many praises: if language is also part of the dramaturgy of a play, Q1 is indeed verbally deficient, clumsy, sometimes disturbing.

Allowing for this important detrimental aspect of Q1, I would like to add arguments in favour of the theatricality of Q1 *Hamlet* by revealing the dramatic pertinancy of particular moments in the text which may also be explained as the result of a creative intention rather than of an accident, an intention that especially aims to abridge the dialogue.

Let us see the beginning of the seventh scene (II.ii. 1-167, line TLN 1019-1205), until the moment when Hamlet enters the stage “reading on a book”. The Second Quarto and Folio version have 180 lines approximately. The First Quarto has 110 lines. Nearly 40% is missing. If we analyze the absent lines in Q1 we will observe that they may have been selected for cutting on various dramatic grounds, and similar reasons may account for paraphrased and new lines.

Let us examine the very first speech of scene II.ii (Second Quarto text in the left column; Q1 text in the right column):

	<i>Florish. Enter King and Queene,</i>	<i>Enter King and Queene,</i>
	<i>Rosencraus and Guyldesterne.</i>	<i>Rosencraft, and Guildenstone.</i>
1	<i>King. Welcome deere Rosencraus,</i> <i>and Guyldesterne,</i>	<i>King</i>
	Moreouer, that we much did long to see you,	Right noble friends, that our deere cosin Hamlet
	The need we haue to vse you did prouoke	Hath lost the very heart of all his sence,
4	Our hastie sending, something haue	It is most right, and we most sorry
5	you heard	for him:

Of *Hamlets* transformation, so call

it,



- 19 *Quee.* Good gentlemen, he hath much  
talkt of you,  
And sure I am, two men there is not liu-  
ing  
To whom he more adheres, if it will  
please you  
To shew vs so much gentry and good  
will,  
As to expend your time with vs a while,  
24 For the supply and profit of our hope,  
25 Your visitation shall receiue such thanks Doe this, the king of *Denmarkeshal* be  
26 As fits a Kings remembrance. thankefull.

The Second Quarto fragment is only a reiteration of the idea of friendship between Hamlet and his school-fellows, and of the call for help. This, along with the absence of 12 other interventions by the queen in Q1, makes up a consistent pattern, observed by Kathleen Irace (1994, p. 50-1), of shaping the queen as a “more pliable”, “more sympathetic” character, more “in the background”. In our opinion this was deliberately altered with a view to give support to the queen’s overt inclining towards Hamlet in opposition to the king in the second part of the play (especially in the scene with Horatio, unique to Q1). By diminishing the queen’s presence and protagonism and showing her as submissive to her second husband the king in the first part of the play, her change to a stronger attitude in the second part can be better justified.

Note that two lines of thanks-giving (25-6)

“Your visitation shall receiue such thanks  
As fits a Kings remembrance.”

are reduced to one and attributed to the king:

“Doe this, the king of *Denmarkeshal* be thankefull.” (parallel to line 25)

After the two paraphrased speeches of Rossencraft and Gilderstone that contribute to characterize them,

- |    |   |   |
|----|---|---|
| 27 | <i>Ros.</i> Both your Maiesties<br>Might by the soueraigne power you haue<br>of vs,<br>Put your dread pleasures more into com-<br>maund<br>Then to entreatie. | <i>Ros.</i> My Lord, whatsoeuer lies within our<br>power<br>Your maiestie may more commaund in<br>wordes<br>Then vse perswasions to your liege men,<br>bound<br>By loue, by duetie, and obedience.    |
| 31 | <i>Guy.</i> But we both obey,<br>And heere giue vp our selues in the full<br>bent,<br>To lay our seruice freely at your feete<br>To be commaunded.            | <i>Guil.</i> What we may doe for both your<br>Maiesties<br>To know the grieffe troubles the Prince<br>your sonne,<br>We will indeuour all the best we may,<br>So in all duetie doe we take our leaue. |

thanks are given again.

- |    |  |  |
|----|--|--|
| 35 | <i>King.</i> Thanks <i>Rosencraus</i> , and gentle<br><i>Guyldensterne</i> . | <i>King.</i> Thanks <i>Guilderstone</i> , and gent<br><i>Rossencraft</i> . |
|----|--|--|

*Quee.* Thanks *Guyldensterne*, and gentle *Rosencraus*.  
 37 And I beseech you instantly to visite  
 My too much changed sonne, goe some  
 of you  
 And bring these gentlemen where *Ham-*  
*let* is.  
*Guyld.* Heauens make our presence and  
 41 our practices  
 Pleasant and helpfull to him.

All this looks necessary in a polite courtly dialogue. But lines 37-41 are utterly dispensable:

And I beseech you instantly to visite  
 My too much changed sonne, goe some of you  
 And bring these gentlemen where *Hamlet* is.

that is, reiteration of their duty to see Hamlet, and

*Guyld.* Heauens make our presence and our practices  
 Pleasant and helpfull to him.

a reiteratively mannered and refined speech.

Then Corambis enters with his daughter, while in the standard version he enters on his own.

42 *Quee.* I Amen. *Exeunt Ros. and Guyld.*  
*Enter Polonius.* *Enter Corambis and Ofelia*

The presence of Ofelia is necessary to the development of the subsequent action: the Nunnery episode. This entry accords with Corambis' words "Lets to the King" in the previous scene. Polonius in the standard version said "Come, goe with mee, I will goe seeke the King" (II.i.101 / TLN 998) and "come, goe we to the King" (II.i.117 / TLN 1015) but now he enters alone. This has been regarded as a typical Shakespearian inconsistency (Chambers, 1930, p.417), a minor petty fault that Q1 aptly corrects.

On the other hand, Ofelia's presence in this moment when she will silently endure Hamlet's love letter being read aloud and her father's plans to "loose" her to the prince, looks rather awkward. But this awkwardness that Greg pointed out (1955, p. 303) may well emphasize Ophelia's victimization and passivity throughout the play. She is indeed the most wretched of all characters in the tragedy, and the image of Ophelia standing up in silence for 100 lines in which she is treated as an instrument, as a mere decoy, is impressive for its pathos.

43 *Pol.* Th'embassadors from *Norway* my  
 good Lord,  
 Are ioyfully returnd.  
*King.* Thou still hast been the father of  
 good newes.  
*Cor.* My Lord, the Ambassadors are ioy-  
 fully  
 Return'd from *Norway*.  
*King.* Thou still hast beene the father of go-  
 newes.

46	<i>Pol.</i> Haue I my Lord? I assure my good Liege I hold my dutie as I hold my soule,	<i>Cor.</i> Haue I my Lord? I assure your grace, I holde my duetie as I holde my life,
48	Both to my God, and to my gracious King; And I doe thinke, or els this braine of mine Hunts not the trayle of policie so sure As it hath vsd to doe, that I haue found	Both to my God, and to my soueraigne King; And I beleuee, or else this braine of mine Hunts not the traine of policie so well As it had wont to dow, but I haue found The very depth of Hamlets lunacie.
52	The very cause of <i>Hamlets</i> lunacie.	
52		<i>Queene.</i> God graunt he hath.

It is interesting to note that Q1 gives a peculiar intervention to the queen “God graunt he hath” (parallel to line 52). On the one hand, these words prelude her later remark “Good my Lord be briefe” (corresponding to “More matter with lesse art” line 95, TLN 1123), and are a sarcastic succinct commentary on the churlish Corambis that pointedly gives expression to the way the audience receives this foolish busybody. On the other hand, the “addition” of this sentence balances the “cutting out” of the following lines 53 to 61:

53	<i>King.</i> O speake of that, that doe I long to heare. <i>Pol.</i> Giue first admittance to th’embas- sadors, My newes shall be the fruite to that great feast. <i>King.</i> Thy selfe doe grace to them, and bring them in.	
57	He tells me my deere <i>Gertrard</i> he hath found	
59	The head and source of all your sonnes distemper. <i>Quee.</i> I doubt it is no other but the maine His fathers death, and our hastie mar- riage. <i>Enter Embassadors.</i>	<i>Enter the Ambassadors.</i>
61	<i>King.</i> Well, we shall sift him, welcome my good friends, Say <i>Voltemand</i> , what from our brother <i>Norway?</i>	<i>King NowVoltemar</i> , what from our brother <i>Norway?</i>

The motives in these lines are not only easily dispensable elements but details of characterization whose absence in Q1 is related to other characterizing touches. The “omission” of “O, speak of that! That do I long to hear.” (line 53) reveals a king in Q1 that is not really interested in Hamlet’s problem (something that we might suspect from his previous curt remark of sorriness for Hamlet’s distemper, parallel to l. 5. Nor seems he interested in partaking this concern with his wife (lines 57 and 58:

He tells me my deere *Gertrard* ...

(By the way, the Q1 king very rarely addresses her as “dear Gertrard”, the Second Quarto reading, or “sweet queen”, the Folio reading). The Q1 king goes directly to the political affairs that the ambassadors bring:

*NowVoltemar*, what from our brother *Norway?* (parallel to line 62)

This “Now, Voltemar” is an efficient way to change the subject of conversation.

By means of the sudden entry of the ambassadors, briefly heralded by Corambis' "the Ambassadors are ioyfully Return'd" (lines 43-4), the idea of his discovery of Hamlet's lunacy is forcefully kept in suspense.

And again in lines 59 and 60 we find another "excision" of a speech by the queen.

The ambassador speaks out his news in a speech that is 99% the same as in the standard version. Some acting versions, such as Olivier's, have suppressed the Fortinbras material, depriving the play of its political background. That is not the case with Q1 so the entire information of this speech is necessary and nothing is left out. Upon the exit of the ambassadors, Corambis insists in his discovery of Hamlet's distemper. In the following interventions (lines 90-155) we can also see a pattern of economic abridgement of the dialogue.

89-	[...] <i>Exeunt Embassadors.</i>	[...] <i>exeunt Ambassadors.</i>
-90	<i>Pol.</i> This busines is well ended.	<i>Cor.</i> This busines is very well dispatched.
91	My Liege and Maddam, to expostulate What maiestie should be, what dutie is, Why day is day, night, night, and time is time, Were nothing but to wast night, day, and time, Therefore breuitie is the soule of wit,	
96	And tediousnes the lymmes and outward florishes,	Now my Lord, touching the yong Prince Hamlet,
97	I will be briefe, your noble sonne is mad: Mad call I it, for to define true madnes, What ist but to be nothing els but mad,	Certaine it is that hee is madde: mad let vs grant him then: Now to know the cause of this effect, Or else to say the cause of this defect,
100	But let that goe.	For this effect defectiue comes by cause.

Six lines (91-96) are spared in Q1 in a cut that looks adequate when we see that it is part of Corambis' verbosity that has been reduced. There are still two more occasions in Q1 to show the wordiness of this character. For these six lines, Q1 uses a brief introduction, again beginning with "Now ..." (parallel to line 96)

Three and a half lines (97-100) that state Hamlet's madness are compressed to one: "Certaine it is that hee is madde: mad let vs grant him then" (parallel to line 97), which is a transposition of line 106 in the Second Quarto version.

101	<i>Quee.</i> More matter with lesse art.	<i>Queen.</i> Good my Lord be briefe.
	<i>Pol.</i> Maddam, I sweare I vse no art at all,	<i>Cor.</i> Madam I will: my Lord,
103	That hee's mad tis true, tis true, tis pittie, And pittie tis tis true, a foolish figure,	
105	But farewell it, for I will vse no art.	
106	Mad let vs graunt him then, and now re- maines That we find out the cause of this effect, Or rather say, the cause of this defect,	
109	For this effect defectiue comes by cause:	
110	Thus it remaines, and the remainder thus Perpend,	

	I haue a daughter, haue while she is mine,	I haue a daughter,
112	Who in her dutie and obedience, marke,	Haue while shee's mine: for that we
		thinke
113	Hath giuen me this, now gather and	Is surest, we often loose: now to the
	surmise.	Prince.
		My Lord, but note this letter,
		The which my daughter in obedience
		Deliu'er'd to my handes.

Continuing this transposition, lines 106-9 are located in an earlier place in Q1, a circumstance that has been explained as the result of the ineffective memory of the reporting actor. However this transposition could also be explained as a compensation for the cutting of the above mentioned six lines (91-96). Otherwise, Corambis' speech would have been too short for the queen's remark "Good my Lord be briefe" (parallel to line 101).

Three more lines that correspond to Polonius' flourishes of verbiage are distilled into the assertive phrase that has already been transposed "Certain it is that hee is mad". Corambis reduces his foolish figures, uses no art, in his "expostulation", so perhaps that is why the queen's remark is not "More matter with lesse art" but simply "Good my Lord be briefe".

However since phrases such as "But let that goe" (line 100), "But farewell it" (line 105) in which Polonius corrects his own digressions, are very interesting from the viewpoint of characterization, and these two examples are eliminated, the First Quarto version seems to rescue this characterizing touch and incorporate it into the funny remark about Ophelia being his father's property: "Haue while shee's mine: for that we thinke / Is surest, we often loose: now to the Prince" (parallel to lines 113-4). Thus the remark "have while she is mine" becomes explained, at the same time a confusing verbal tangle such as "Thus it remaines, and the remainder thus" (line 110) is removed. A more simpler speech in Q1 then remains.

Let us see now the motive of Hamlet's letter to Ophelia (lines 115-27)

115	<i>To the Celestiall and my soules Idoll, the most beautifed Ophelia, that's an ill phrase, a vile phrase, beautifed is a vile phrase, but you shall heare: thus in her excellent white bosome, these &amp;c.</i>	
116	<i>Quee.</i> Came this from <i>Hamlet</i> to her?	<i>King.</i> Reade it my Lord.
	<i>Pol.</i> Good Maddam stay awhile, I will be faithfull,	<i>Cor.</i> Marke my Lord.
121	<i>Doubt thou the starres are fire, Letter.</i>	Doubt that in earth is fire,
122	Doubt that the Sunne doth moue, <i>Doubt truth to be a lyer,</i>	Doubt that the starres doe moue, Doubt trueth to be a liar,
124	<i>But neuer doubt I loue.</i>	But doe not doubt I loue.
125	O deere <i>Ophelia</i> , I am ill at these numbers, I haue not art to reckon	To the beautifull <i>Ofelia</i> :
126	my grones, but that I loue thee best, o most best belieue it, adew.	
127	Thine euermore most deere Lady, whilst this machine is to him ( <i>Hamlet</i> ).	Thine euer the most vnhappy Prince <i>Hamlet</i> .



145	Lord <i>Hamlet</i> is a Prince out of thy star, This must not be: and then I prescripts gaue her That she should locke her selfe from her resort, Admit no messengers, receiue no tokens, Which done, she tooke the fruites of my aduise: And he repell'd, a short tale to make,	Lord <i>Hamlet</i> is a Prince out of your starre, And one that is vnequall for your loue: Therefore I did commaund her refuse his letters, Deny his tokens, and to absent her selfe, Shee as my childe obediently obey'd me. Now since which time, seeing his loue thus cross'd,
150	Fell into a sadnes, then into a fast, Thence to a watch, thence into a weak- enes, Thence to lightnes, and by this declen- sion, Into the madnes wherein now he raues,	Which I tooke to be idle, and but sport, He straitway grew into a melancholy, From that vnto a fast, then vnto distrac- tion, Then into a sadnesse, from that vnto a madnesse,
155	And all we mourne for.	And so by continuance, and weaknesse of the braine Into this frensie, which now possesseth him: And if this be not true, take this from this.

we observe 20 lines in the standard version that are compressed into 14. Then we find another transposition,

156	<i>King</i> . Doe you thinke this?	<i>King</i> . Thinke you t'is so?
157	<i>Quee</i> . It may be very like. <i>Pol</i> . Hath there been such a time, I would faine know that, That I haue positiuely said, tis so,	<i>Cor</i> . How? so my Lord, I would very faine know That thing that I haue saide t'is so, posi- tiuely,
160	When it proou'd otherwise?	And it hath fallen out otherwise.
161	<i>King</i> . Not that I know.	
162	<i>Pol</i> . Take this, from this, if this be oth- erwise; If circumstances leade me, I will finde Where truth is hid, though it were hid in- deede Within the Center.	Nay, if circumstances leade me on, Ile finde it out, if it were hid As deepe as the centre of the earth.

“And if this be not true, take this from this” (parallel to line 155) which in the standard *Hamlet* occurs five interventions later (line 162). This circumstance seems to be in connection with the omission of the king’s “Not that I know.” (line 161), in its turn in connection with the fact that Corambis’ “And it hath fallen out otherwise.” is a statement and not a question, unlike Polonius’ “When it proou’d otherwise?” (line 160).

To conclude with this part of the scene before Hamlet’s entrance,

166	<i>King</i> . How may we try it further?	<i>King</i> . how should wee trie this same?
168	<i>Pol</i> . You know sometimes he walkes foure houres together Heere in the Lobby.	<i>Cor</i> . Mary my good lord thus, The Princes walke is here in the galery,
169	<i>Quee</i> . So he dooes indeede.	

- Pol.* At such a time, Ile loose my daughter to him,  
 Be you and I behind an Arras then,  
 Marke the encounter, if he loue her not,  
 174 And be not from his reason falne thereon  
 Let me be no assistant for a state  
 But keepe a farme and carters.  
*King.* We will try it.
- Enter Hamlet.*
- 177 *Quee.* But looke where sadly the poore wretch comes reading.      *King.* See where hee comes poring vppon a booke.

we should point out two more removals of interventions by the queen (line 157 and 169). Note that the Q1 king's inquiry "Thinke you t'is so?" (parallel to line 156) is addressed to Corambis and not to his wife, and the fact that the notice of Hamlet's "poring vppon a booke." is given to the king (parallel to line 177) and not to the queen, again in accordance with a pattern of giving her a more timid presence on stage in this first part of the play.

To put the whole matter in a nutshell: it is probable that the first published *Hamlet* is a "bad" quarto, but looking at its dramaturgy, and misquoting Polonius' comment on the prince (II.ii. 204/TN 1243-4), "Though this be *badnesse*, yet there is method in't", *dramatic* method in the First Quarto.

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