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What Happens (And Doesn't) In Hamlet (And Who Cares?)

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What Happens
And Doesn't
In *Hamlet*
And Who Cares?

By Joanne E. Gates

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[Headnote: This is one of several presentations or papers delivered on *Hamlet* while teaching at JSU. Strategies and observations may overlap and still not capture the full experience of appreciating *Hamlet*. Sources and handout are listed in the Addenda at the end of the paper. Poster for the event is a separate document.]

My title is a deliberate appropriation of the famous book length study by John Dover Wilson, first published in 1935, *What Happens in Hamlet*.

I must have discovered it as an undergraduate in what would seem now a very inexpensive edition. It is still in print. Just about every library has a copy.

Some of Dover Wilson's arguments have had lasting impact. Some are over-convoluted. Some bring such simple clarity to the study of Shakespeare's most analyzed play --they are so surprising and refreshing-- that they appear

commonplace yet disguise important criticism. Here's one brief example. Dover Wilson suggests that Hamlet's announcement of his intention to play mad--his famous put an antic disposition on-- could be, probably is, a "cover" for the fact that he is aware his mind is somehow not all his own. Dover Wilson did not then have the vocabulary of bi-polar disorder, of the manic-depressive state, but he did have a good enough hunch to suggest that there such complexities in the text they are not settled easily.

We will return to specifics of the Happenings as Wilson explains them momentarily, but first an explanation of the Homage to the title itself: The student who sees this book title on the shelf of bookstore or library is one who sees the simple subordinate clause turned into independent statement and thinks, "Aha! Reading THIS will get me an A on my Hamlet paper!" As a teacher, one is immediately drawn by the title and assumes, "Yes, I've got to master this work of explication in order to master the teaching of *Hamlet*!"

Yet notice MY title is borrowing from but simultaneously expanding / undercutting Dover Wilson. I include a tease about What Doesn't Happen in *Hamlet* to remind us that Wilson did not settle a lot of things about the curious state of inaction in this play. Most of us have heard the dismissive classification of Hamlet's so-called flaw: that he "delays" his revenge, and that is his doom. What else does not happen? There is no evidence in the text that Hamlet lies in bed / makes love to Ophelia, as the Kenneth Branagh film version suggests. Nor does Osric die by the attacking Fortinbras army. Hamlet does not kill the king at Prayer. The King has not really been praying. Hamlet does not <u>seem</u> to return from England fierce for revenge, despite his earlier pledge to himself and his letter to Claudius, that he has a new conviction. And of course, Hamlet is NOT a successful revenger, not at least until a mortal blow has sealed his doom.

We'll return to more of the What Does Not Happen points in a moment, as well.

First though, a brief preview and justification of my "And Who Cares?" parenthetical in the title. I seized upon this phrasing after toying with a more straightforward implication: *Why* should we care? Who Cares? Each captures the cynicism, the dismissal, the shrugging-off of the necessity of becoming engaged by the text of *Hamlet*. I want to admit--even encourage--that that cynicism can be one's a valid reaction, especially because it is so easy to either become infected by Hamlet's own cynicism or to be turned off by his exaggerated concerns, and especially when it seems as if all the criticism published on Hamlet seems merely "Words, Words, Words."

(We should notice that Shakespeare scholars are fond of inserting the direct language of the play. Our recognition of the allusion to the specific language is one reason to Care.)

Yet who genuinely cares?

Or to put it another way, is not caring the real essence of tragedy? Doesn't caring make possible catharsis? That is a question I feel worth returning to. How DOES this play make purging of pity and fear possible, and why does it move us?

What really happens in *Hamlet*?

Even before I enumerate John Dover Wilson's points, I want to give a brief overview of the action in the way that I outline it for my Freshman 102 classes. I find it useful to squeeze the play into some manageable categories. I

sort out the main dramatic strategies in this very peculiar style of Shakespeare's interlocking plots.

One thing I recommend to students or teachers overwhelmed with the vastness of *Hamlet* is to work through the play soliloquy by soliloquy. For this brilliantly streamlined approach to the action, I must credit a Vassar professor I did not have the occasion to study under, Philip Finklepearl. But I did have the opportunity to sit in on his *Hamlet* class as a returning alumna very shortly after my graduation.

I do not have Professor Finklepearl's finesse, nor, usually do I have the privilege of sitting with a half dozen students around a seminar table and leading those students, Socratic method style, through the mysteries of the soliloquy language. But I have adapted his streamlining technique to make it my own, and, as my handouts suggest, I have made a convenient chart of these which I invite fellow teachers to use. I've been known to assign papers and discussion groups around this strategy. I want to advise the teachers and future teachers here of a few cautions:

Do not merely talk about this list of speeches in the abstract. Use each subsequent soliloquy moment as a marking point which summarizes all the action since the last. What has happened since the last soliloquy? What has just happened that prompts a moment of speaking to the audience with no one else capable of hearing? How what is spoken advance the plot, deepen the character development or add exclamations or sharp contrasts to what has expired? I appreciate it when I have time to show film clips of some of these moments. But it <u>is</u> labor intensive to "cue up" the scenes and have them ready. Even when NOT showing clips from the many film productions of the play, make sure to present alternate interpretive strategies. For instance, I suggest that in Hamlet's "My Tables, My Tables, meet it is I set it down," the dramatic choices include just saying the line, pounding or penning into one's fist. Taking out a little read book and writing this carefully (In the ASF production this was a key prop that carried

through and was handed over to Horatio at the moment before death). Beating one's forehead and stomping around with long sword to hit the rocks and make them spark is also a legitimate choice.

Be prepared for students to wrongly assume that Hamlet's "madness" carries over into the soliloquies. This is their "excuse" for finding the denser, more poetic language of the soliloquies incomprehensible. USE the poetic language of the speeches to find and identify poetic devices. In 102 I usually teach *Hamlet* shortly after we have studied these in a poetry unit, or as a culminating exercise of the semester.

Some points for teachers and for future teachers: Plan for a longer time for *Hamlet.* Consider the usefulness of Memorizing. I tried assigning memorization, just once. I would never again require memorization for a grade or even a teaching help, but those who consider themselves novices at studying the play, let me pass on how much I benefited from learning select passages. Once memorized, I could recite repeatedly and thus explore possibilities for the emphasis and pausing, and from that discover fresh ways of understanding.

Another way I ask students to focus the play is by examining the parallels and tangents in the ways the multiple foil characters complement Hamlet's.

In short, I encourage students to understand how Laertes, Ophelia, Fortinbras, each experience the loss of a father and how they thus parallel Hamlet. Their difference is what makes Hamlet distinguished. Laertes and Fortinbras act to revenge. Both are diverted by the clever Claudius. Ophelia loses her sanity, putting into a useful perspective how Hamlet's "pretend" madness might be understood. Horatio, more of a confidant that a foil, might be inserted into the category of Foil, because, like Hamlet, he is a fellow student. Hamlet

shares with Horatio his uncertainties about the ghost. His status at court becomes elevated as the play progresses.

Of course, there is more to the Interlocking plot developments than these simple foils: Polonius comes up with stratagems to expose or clarify the cause of Hamlet's strange behavior. The Players arrive. They seem a diversion within a diversion. Hamlet uses them to continue his taunting and toying with Polonius.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, former friends of Hamlet, are sent to spy. Hamlet shows off his resentment. Then, almost out of the gesture of self scolding as he compares his lack of emotional response to the packaged emotion of the Player, he comes up with a way to countercheck the ghost's implication of Claudius. Hamlet plots, reasoning that "Guilty creatures sitting at a play have by the very cunning of the scene been struck so to the soul that presently they have proclaimed their malefactions."

To observe Claudius's reaction to Lucianus' poison, will give Hamlet confirmation. Then what happens? Polonius calls him to his mother's, but on the way, he encounters Claudius "at prayer."

If we study the intent of that "Now I Might do it" soliloquy carefully, we note that Hamlet's delay here has a moral basis. Thus, inaction cannot be his *error*. His killing of Polonius, behind the arras, has to be the opposite of delay. He is rash, he jumps to the wrong conclusion, but he cannot be charged with acting on un-sound grounds. He's almost more a victim of the other characters' counterplotting.

Interruptions within interruptions. Dover Wilson is good at explaining Hamlet because he does not simplify. He makes some crucial points but one has to follow the logic of his reasoning and even his tributes to other scholars in

footnotes or the long dedicatory letter to get the most out of his study. I originally thought Dover Wilson refreshing because focused on how the play came across on stage. One of his enlightening major claims is to point out there are two indictments of the King in the Mousetrap scene. One is in dumb show; the other is accompanied by Lucianus' speech, "Thoughts black, hands apt." Why are there two; and if there are two, why is Claudius not able to recognize the mimed action? Dover Wilson leads us through the long explication that is fairly convincing: Claudius is apparently distracted and not watching the mimed version!

Dover Wilson also has some major points on the nature of the Ghost and the nature of melancholy. Another lengthy examination of precise action brings him to an important conviction, that Hamlet mistreats Ophelia at the end of the nunnery scene not because he has some general hatred of woman kind (certainly that's a possible reading of his disgust at women's painting), but because he is making his point to those he knows are spying. Ophelia cannot answer honestly "Where's your father?" Once he has suspicions, even evidence that he has been spied upon, the abusive language has a different target than the poor victim sent to provoke him.

Hamlet tries to say that Polonius's death is justified, for he was in the wrong place at the wrong time. But what does Polonius's death DO to Gertrude?

And What might be her guilt? Gertrude's "stance" in the so-called closet scene continues to fascinate critics long after they have ceased to be swayed by the "Freudian" reading. Most obviously problematic on the surface is that Gertrude "witnesses" the presumed murder of her second husband (Hamlet assuming this, with his question, "Is it the King?"). Then she witnesses Hamlet talking to a spectre that she cannot see. Hamlet tells her he is only "mad in craft." His admonishment not to sleep with Claudius complexifies her next move.

I've often wondered why-- after the heart-to-heart we feel Hamlet has given her-- she turns around and tells Claudius that her son is stark mad. Is this behavior, this contradictory response, her elaborate "Pose"? Is she so convinced of Hamlet's persuasiveness that she, too, latches on to a deceptive ploy? Is she so scared, now, of her position with Claudius that she falls into his sphere of influence? I cannot watch a production of Hamlet without waiting to see a Gertrude that is increasingly haunted by the crimes and sins of Claudius.

Although this has been a long-standing concern of mine, my need for some complex ambiguity in her character has been reinforced recently by Stephen Greenblatt, when he was interviewed by Brian Lamb on *Booknotes*, last November, and stressed this basic phenomenon: that just around mid-career and when adapting *Hamlet* from its sources, Shakespeare began to develop his tendency to erase motivation from his characters. Where Richard III grandly announces plot-stratagems based on his lust for power and the resentments caused by his physical deformity, Macbeth, Claudius, Gertrude, do not pre-announce motivation. Iago for all his made-up reasons, is removed from those which in the source are seen as real and becomes, in Coleridge's famous phrase, the villain with "motiveless malignity."

Hamlet is the arch vacillator and the supreme self-critic, and Greenblatt so succinctly summarizes this one important relationship of Shakespeare to his source that it is worthy of some consideration. There's another aspect of motivation, hinted at as I introduced Greenblatt, that can be seen even in the transition from the Quarto 1 of 1603 to the much more Shakespearean feeling and sounding later text. To conclude the closet scene, we have this in the early quarto:

> *Ham.* [Idle, no mother,] my pulse doth beate like yours,
> It is not madnesse that possesseth Hamlet.
> O mother, if euer you did my deare father loue,

> Forbeare the adulterous bed to night,
> And win your selfe by little as you may,
> In time it may be you wil lothe him quite:
> And mother, but assist mee in reuenge,
> And in his death your infamy shall die.
> *Queene Hamlet,* I vow by that maiesty,
> That knowes our thoughts, and lookes into our hearts,
> I will conceale, consent, and doe my best,
> What stratagem soe're thou shalt deuise.

These lines, I think, show a more certain declaration of Gertrude's determination to align herself with Hamlet and mislead Claudius to do so. Greenblatt's confirmation that Shakespeare seemed interested in writing out of his plays after the Q2 *Hamlet* a motivational certainty is thus independently confirmed. We have, more emphatically, that hall of critical mirrors. Why did Shakespeare leave to us the find our way through this ambiguity? Greenblatt teases us with the sense that *Hamlet* has so much freight it defines who we are might easily dismissed as hyperbole. Still, it cannot be exaggeration that so much is written to decipher or propose readings of *Hamlet* that no class could possibly work through all of them in a single semester.

Here is a good place to confess that one important strand of analysis that I have come to only lately as a critic--partly because I have until recently found it tedious, too distracting for the classroom, and yes, too complex-- is to see the necessity of examining parallel texts.

Note that there are several big "IFs" in seeing this Q1 speech as revealing of Shakespeare's shift from clear motivation to less clear. There is the much larger question of the relationship of Q1 to the other, longer, more Shakespearean and later printings of Hamlet, the second quarto of 1604 and the

Folio, 1623. So different is Q1 of 1603 from *Hamlet* it has been called a "Bad" quarto. Some classify it as a pirating or a memorial reconstruction or both. Others are tempted to say it is more Shakespearean than that; it could be his earlier draft or the play company's cut version that was performed at the universities when London theatres were closed.

Every time I study it carefully, I am teased by a theory that Q1 is in part, a deliberate parody of *Hamlet.* I read a paper proposing such a reading, and in the audience was a former fellow at the Folger Institute who had with colleagues undertaken a performed reading of it: She confirmed that it had them all laughing. My arguments in that paper are quite dense. They depend on a good amount of textual evidence and material tangential to knowing the plays of Shakespeare. Soon, I expect its publication, in a journal volume, *As You Like Shakespeare.* Even as I take stabs at claiming parts of Q1 are parody, I know it is a stretch to prove. And I know that I need parts of Q1 to be as much by Shakespeare as by those who quote from him in order to parody.

One thing I regret leaving out of that paper, are the numerous, more contemporary parodies of Hamlet. That, I decided, may have to be a separate study than the one I had intended then, or the one I've prepared here.

Certainly, one way to answer "Who Cares" is to remind this audience of the many pop cultural references to *Hamlet*. In other words, we <u>better</u> care, or we just might not appreciate some of the spin-offs and cultural references. The film *Strange Brew* would not be *Strange Brew* if it were not anchored in a delightfully twisted version of *Hamlet*. Steve Martin began his film writing career with a token tribute to the great playwright. In his *L.A. Story*, he encounters a gravedigger whom is girlfriend to be recognizes. Previous generations were entertained by the way a performance of *Hamlet* could form the central plot of a

defeat- the- Nazis film, *To Be or Not to Be*. Even Bart Simpson has stepped into the shoes of Hamlet. One I'm fond of is a 1998 title, *Let the Devil Wear Black.*

But "Who Cares?" has a different implication when we weigh and measure the peculiarities of this tragedy. What is admirable about Dover Wilson's final, long chapter, is that he takes us through a step-by step understanding of the final action. He claims certain special knowledge, such as a careful depiction of the fencing sequence. But his ultimate purpose is to elevate the stature of *Hamlet*. He does this in multiple ways. He stresses the play as play. He hints that Shakespeare's *Hamlet* may have been informed by the fall of Essex. He examines the importance of Horatio to the final action. Whether Hamlet works for anyone, of course, depends upon a rich complexity of reactions. I disagree with more readings of the ending than I agree. At least two film productions have suggested that Gertrude drinks the poison knowingly, either to prevent Hamlet from being poisoned and or to warn him of the danger. But I am not sure anyone has written of whether this bold a Gertrude is a legitimate reading of the text.

One aspect I find most useful in the careful reading of the action that Dover Wilson gives us is the significance of Horatio. That seems also to be a paper in the making, a worthy enough study to make consider it more in depth. Compare the violent and abrupt end of *Titus Andronicus* with the violent yet well paced and protracted end of Hamlet. In one version of my teaching of the tragic end of Hamlet, I argue that Fortinbras's entrance MAKES POSSIBLE catharsis. In another I am indebted to the nuances of the recent JSU production in its very last night of performance which highlighted just how determined Hamlet is when he announces to Horatio "The interim is mine." This Hamlet was no complacent and apologetic dueler: He knows something is up and embraces a confrontation as a means to his own ends.

Dover Wilson points out just how important it is that Hamlet persuades or forces Horatio not to drink from the cup. I would add to that the significance of Horatio's demands of Fortinbras. Now, most of us should know that Hamlet on the stage has a tradition of being cut. I first discovered how neatly this could be done in a cafe production of the play I took an AP English class to when I was teaching the play at a parochial school. Of course, numerous films, Gibson's, Williamson's, Olivier's cut the Fortinbras plot. Olivier even excises Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. The play, staged and filmed, has ended with "the rest is silence" or "Now cracks a noble heart ... flights of angels sing thee to thy rest."

In one reading this can be justified: it might seem mere formality to stretch the play too long past Hamlet's death, but I'd warn those contemplating messing with the ending to consider this: Whether Fortinbras's entrance is of a neutral presence, a menacing force, determined to take over, or Fortinbras is the hero survivor, the one whom Hamlet ridiculed earlier but turns over Denmark to in his death speech, the use of his entrance to qualify and contextualize the not so causal slaughters we have just witnesses is worth the effort. Some of us may be familiar with the long and drawn-out version of Fortinbras the menace approaching with his large army, that is the culmination of the Branagh film. The duel is cut away from to show the approach of this large army. When it invades the palace, it is that, an invasion, a take-over, not a neutral or heroic Fortinbras. Let me try to suggest where Branagh might have got some analogue to what he was trying to set up, one that for me, worked better to stimulate true Catharsis.

I want to conclude this talk with reference to a production if *Hamlet* I saw when it was on its World Tour. Ingmar Bergman directed a production in Swedish that I saw at Brooklyn Academy of Music in the late 1980s.

Before proceeding to this production's ingenious ending, a few details about the other themes of this production merit attention. Bergman made the most effective use of a single, recurring stage "picture," or "icon" that I have ever seen. It might be described best as a pairing of characters in a position that echoes the pietà, the traditional image of Mary holding, or cradling, the crucified Christ's body. Bergman used this over and over, with many variations, and one never tired of seeing the fresh, newly energizing way in which he grouped characters in this close embrace. The first time we saw it was in the context of Claudius making love to Gertrude. Their blatantly disgusting eroticism was graphically displayed; his hands crawled all over her body from above her shoulder; they made no effort to hide their pleasure; in fact, they performed it publicly and an audience of courtiers, robed and wigged as if to suggest they were judges, applauded politely.

The very next time Bergman uses the gesture, it takes on a totally different meaning. When the ghost comes to Hamlet, he approaches close enough to grasp him. Young Hamlet has heretofore been "playing an attitude" to protect himself from the hurt he is feeling. In his first scene, he distanced himself from Claudius' rule by playing his melancholy as if he were an indulgent and spoiled youngster. He hid behind sunglasses and acted as if he didn't care what anybody did to him next. But the ghost clasps Hamlet to him with a kind of desperation, as if (in his recounting of Claudius's crime) he were saying to his son, "I need you to revenge my death." Of course, that is exactly what the lines say, and of course Shakespeare meant to have Hamlet transformed by the report of the ghost, but this visitation is powerful because the ghost communicates his urgency through the physical gesture. He latches on to Hamlet as if this is the only thing keeping him from slipping into the abyss which is hell. To have the ghost so emotionally desperate transforms Hamlet utterly. This electrifying scene is echoed when, in the midst of Hamlet's advice to the players, he grabs hold of the Player King and recites, almost as aside to the man he might look

upon now as his father figure, the "To be or not to be" soliloquy. [This was the one, most notable, rearrangement of the scenes.]

Other repetitions of the stage picture include both Hamlet's scenes with Ophelia and with Gertrude. In the latter scene, he seems to be clinging to a last moment of childhood in his pleas for Gertrude to refrain from sleeping with Claudius. But his pleas change abruptly to rage when Gertrude makes a simple, seemingly natural gesture: she hears Hamlet beg her to refrain and then instinctively brushes her hair as is to pretty or prune herself. This sends Hamlet into more rage. This summary description of the action might come across as if he is overplaying his emotion, but the gesture was successful because we felt his genuine disgust.

Now I come to one of the more overlooked "problems" of the play: Why doesn't the play end with Hamlet's death? Why is Fortinbras' entrance necessary? We've only seen Fortinbras once, briefly. He is, yes, a "foil" to Hamlet, in the way he differently responds to his father's death. As readers of Shakespeare, we might observe that Shakespeare makes a pattern of bringing on a lesser character than the tragic hero, as a way of restoring order. The sense is supposed to be that we will never live to see such greatness, but at least we can carry on. In production, however, how do we interpret the scene? Most attempts take too easy a way out: the character and the whole Fortinbras motif is more often cut than retained. Horatio has enough of a tribute to Hamlet to conclude the play.

But Shakespeare gave the last lines to Fortinbras. Why? What might we make of him? In the Bergman production, perhaps the most powerful image of this cradling of one character by another happens when Horatio is holding the dead Hamlet. Just as Horatio is given a brief moment to acknowledge his admiration for the fallen prince, however, the entire world explodes. We have

been watching the action performed on a bare stage. The few set pieces, such as a platform for performing "The Mousetrap," are brought into a circle of light that defines the playing space. We can see, dimly in the background, the bare back wall of the theatre that exposes two back doors. But they only appear to be heavy metal fire-doors at the back wall of the building. Bergman brings on Fortinbras and his army by having them burst through these fake back doors. They are not metal but glass painted black. The soldiers smash the glass with their semi-automatic rifles. On the backside of the glass doors are mirrors, making their shattering explode like strobe lights against the piercing light. Fortinbras's men bring with them two large boom boxes, the space is invaded with the thunderous heavy metal music that seems to draw us in, commandingly. His theme song invades our bones, as it were, to say, this is NOW. Fortinbras is an urban gang leader, or a terrorist commander, heavily protected in motorcycle helmet and high boots. Gussow suggests that this is a futuristic element of the production. I was more struck by the fact that this was a glaring reminder of what is already here, threatening, murderous without reason. And that is exactly how this Fortinbras performs. He barks a few sharp questions, only enough to get the essential details of the situation. With merciless nonchalance, he orders his men to clear the stage of all the other dead bodies (except Hamlet's) and they are dumped carelessly into a pit. Then his men, again following a harsh command, rip Horatio away from Hamlet's body. Horatio attempts to cling for all he's worth, but to no avail. The powerful soldiers quickly drag and kick and force Horatio off stage, and then we hear a sharp volley of shots. This is the moment at which I stopped reacting technically, excited or moved or absorbed as a critic might be, familiar with the play and watching "how" it was being done. This bold playing, perhaps a violation of Shakespeare, the offstage assassination of Horatio, was something that ripped through me, made me ill in the way real violence or horror might. More chillingly, the end of the play sustained the blatant evil of this new order taking over. A television crew, a reporter with microphone and camera man shouldering a portable camera, gravitated to

Fortinbras. Like a super-cool superstar, aware of his moment in the spotlight, Fortinbras made a show of paying tribute to Hamlet. He pretended he honored him, we knew the hollowness of his pretense, and still we saw the camera crew recording it as "genuine." Again, the scene was powerful because it reminded us of what happens everyday.

Even though Gussow reacted negatively to the ending, calling the violence especially gratuitous, I have to confess my being moved in a way I had never been before. The rapidity of the changing emotions, from startling surprise of the glass shattering, to disbelief at what could be done so cruelly to Horatio, to the cool way Fortinbras took charge when the camera was on him, to the final, fierce, volley of gunfire as his army's farewell to us, was tremendously emotional in itself. The entire audience leapt to its feet for the curtain call, applauding and cheering, I guess through tears, for what seemed like a full five minutes.

When I wrote about some of the impact of the production in my journal, however, I was more excited about a general rediscovery of what is possible in Hamlet and about the way our imaginations work in response to a truly inspired production. While there were many electrifying treatments of the text that were one and the same time shocking and all too familiar, the lasting impact of the production was that Bergman's specific images gave new power to one's own interpretive abilities. There cannot be any "definitive" Hamlet because Hamlet is so richly fluid. (The Frank Kermode *Introduction* in our text reminds us of the deliberate ambiguity, of course, but suddenly that variety became empowering: there was a liberating feeling to the sense that there are so many possibilities in the interpretation of Hamlet.) Hamlet's own imagination is without bounds. In the grips of despair, he can rediscover assertive control. Just when he recommits himself to action, he turns into a pawn in somebody else's game. And when that other "game" is shown to be so glaringly close to modern, nightmarish, reality, we connect to the play in ways we thought we couldn't have

before imagined. But now, after experiencing Bergman, anything is possible. The mind is recharged to imagine its own gripping images: the boundaries of stage and play can be continually rebroken. We do not have to understand completely, or empathize with this Hamlet (we might feel closer to Ophelia or Horatio). We do not have to agree with Bergman. We get a recharged sense that there is a thrill even in uncertainty. And, if we don't fully comprehend Shakespeare today, we at least think we can grasp hold of a little piece of him, an appreciation for his complexity, or some bold and maybe sacrilegious brainstorm of how to restage his plays with an ingenuity that communicates to others.

Addenda

One: deleted text, used for accessory handout

This declaration by Hamlet, because of qualifying and interrupting clauses, risks losing sight of the main clause. He speaks it just after he's promised to honor the Ghost with "Remember," as he is announcing to his friends his intention to put on an "antic disposition." What is the main verb, the main clause that encompasses that verb in this Folio version of the speech? Here is the full passage, copied verbatim from the on-line text edited by Bernice Kliman, hence the old spelling:

Bernice Kliman, hence the old spelling:

864 But come,
865 Here as before, neuer so helpe you mercy,
866 How strange or odde so ere I beare my selfe;
867 (As I perchance heereafter shall thinke meet
868 To put an Anticke disposition on:)
869 That you at such time seeing me, neuer shall
870 With Armes encombred thus, or thus, head shake;
871 Or by pronouncing of some doubtfull Phrase;
872 As well, we know, or we could and if we would,
873 Or if we list to speake; or there be and if there might,
874 Or such ambiguous giuing out to note,
875 That you know ought of me; this {doe sweare,} <not to doe:>
876 So grace and mercy at your most neede helpe you:
877 Sweare.

What is the main verb? I think it is "Swear" But the real command of the speech is *not to* note, and *when and what not to note*. Moreover, the conditionals around the main clause are the key to understanding the whole. In short, Hamlet gets so carried away with illustrating his antic behavior that it interrupts the main point of his command, which is, *If* I do any of this, do not let on you know anything. In short, Hamlet is pre-announcing his intent to "play" mad. Or, as some critics and performers assume, perhaps he is fighting off his tendency to be excitable/mad with a "cover": the disguise is announced as a way to deflect is out of control manic behavior. Unless we look at the complexity of the sentence structure, we do not appreciate the ambiguity of the moment.

Addenda Two

References

Gussow, Mel. "A 'Hamlet' Stamped with a Bergman Seal." *New York Times (1923-Current file)*, 10 June 1988, originally on page C5. *ProQuest Historical Newspapers Databases/*

Wilson, John Dover. *What Happens in Hamlet.* Originally published 1935, Cambridge University Press. Three editions, and two reprints, then a paperback first issued in 1959 and reprinted 1960. Also at Archive.org, with sign in membership required, https://archive.org/details/whathappensinham00wils.

As stated in the body of the paper, the Text of *Hamlet* used for citations is *The Riverside Shakespeare*, second edition. Edited by G. Blakemore Evans and J. J. M. Tobin. Frank Kermode's introduction to the play is pp. 1183-89. [Classes at JSU shifted to the Norton Shakespeare 3rd edition in 2016, and the handout of soliloquies in *Hamlet* is keyed to both editions.]

Approaches to Teaching Shakespeare's Hamlet contains my essay on using key paragraphs in the Frank Kermode Introduction to Hamlet as an exercise in effective refutation, appearing in the "Short Takes" section (pp. 216-7) of:

Kliman, Bernice W., editor. *Approaches to Teaching Shakespeare's* Hamlet. New York: The Modern Language Association, 2002. ISBN 0873527682.

The Three-text Hamlet: Parallel Texts of the First and Second Quartos and First Folio is edited by Paul Bertram and Bernice W. Kliman. New York: AMS Press, 1991. A second edition appeared in 2003 (paperback), indicated as revised and expanded. It is this edition that is available for viewing (not downloading), for subscribers at the Internet Archive, https://archive.org/details/threetexthamletp0000shak/.

Bernice Kliman's online *Enfolded Hamlet* is now incorporated into *Hamlet Works*, http://triggs.djvu.org/global-language.com/ENFOLDED/index.php.

Russel Jackson's production diary of Branagh's *Hamlet* is published in *Kenneth Branagh: Hamlet by William Shakespeare, Screenplay, Introduction and Film Diary.* W. W. Norton, 1997. ISBN: 978-0393315059.

Stephen Greenblatt's *Will in the World* was the subject of Brian Lamb's last Booknotes program, 13 October 2004. In the C-Span archive with a transcript at https://www.c-span.org/video/?183799-1/will-world-shakespeare. In later studies of Hamlet I quote directly from the transcript.

Internet Shakespeare Editions at the University of Victoria, Michael Best original coordinating editor, provides excellent choices for studying authentic texts of the original printings of Shakespeare. The Q1 *Hamlet* is available there in both original and modern spelling, https://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/doc/Ham_Q1/index.html.

References made in passing to pop culture mentions of *Hamlet* are cited more formally in an earlier presentation, "Parodies of *Hamlet*, Then and Now," read at the Las Vegas, Nevada meeting of the Rocky Mountain Medieval Renaissance Association (May 2002).

Addenda Three: Soliloquies in *Hamlet* Dr. Gates

Red print = ***Norton* 3rd edition** pagination. Note also the final paragraph on next page, pointing to *Norton*'s justifications for renumbering scenes.

SPEAKER	**Page in text** First set of pages are **2nd ed *Riverside***	**Act, Scene, lines**	**first words**
1. Hamlet	1193a ***366***	1.2.129	O, that this too, too sullied flesh
2. Hamlet	1194b ***368***	1.2 254	My father's spirit in arms!
3. Hamlet	1198a ***376***	1.5. 92	O all you host of heaven!
4. Hamlet	1207a ***393***	2.2. 549/50 *line 468/9*	Now I am alone. / O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!
5. Hamlet	1208a ***396***	3.1 55	To be, or not to be, …
6. Ophelia	1209a ***398***	3.1. 150 *line 147*	Oh, what a noble mind is here o'er-thrown!
7. Hamlet	1214a ***407***	3.2. 388 *line 359*	'Tis now the very witching time of night
8. King (Claudius)	1214b ***408*** *bot.*	3.3. 36	Oh, my offense is rank, it smells to heaven
9. Hamlet	1215a ***409***	3.3.73	Now I might do it
10. King (Claudius)	1215a ***410***	3.3. 97-8	My words fly up
11. King (Claudius)	1219b ***418***	4.3. 58-end *3.6.55*	And, England
12. Hamlet	1220a ***420***	4.4. 32 *4.1.31*	How all occasions do inform against me

Some critics count the Lucianus speech of the play-within-the play as a soliloquy (3.2.255), 1212b *Norton page 405 at line 236.* Note also these major speeches of Hamlet while other characters are on stage:

Hamlet	1204a ***387***	2.2. 293 *line 255*	I have of late--but wherefore I know not—lost all my mirth
Hamlet	1209b ***399***	3.2. 1	Speak the speech I pray you
Hamlet	1231b ***442***	5.2 .219 *line 191*	Not a whit, we defy augury; there's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow

See NORTON Splits Tragedy pages *356-7* for renumbering of scene rationale. Though the logic is perhaps sound, be aware that almost every other edition of *Hamlet* will end 3.4 at line 217 and make the continuation lines into new scene numbered 4.1. Then Norton's *3.5* is 4.2; *3.6* is 4.3; *4.1* is 4.4; *4.2* is 4.5; *4.3* is 4.6; *4.4.*is 4.7.