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What Doesn't Happen in *Hamlet*

Rory Loughnane

Abstract

W.W. Greg first identified the dumb show in *Hamlet* as problematic: if Claudius sees the dumb show, which replicates his murder of Old Hamlet in mime, then why does he not react until much later? Many explanations have been offered, and this article responds to (in title and argument) John Dover Wilson's influential account in *What Happens in Hamlet* (1935) which inspired much further debate. First discussing the anomalous nature of the dumb show in *Hamlet*, before turning to the different versions of the dumb show as they appear in the three substantive texts of *Hamlet*, this article considers the nature and content of the information supplied by dumb shows and the critical arguments that can be developed from these slippery inset performances.

Keywords: alternative versions, ambiguity, dumb show, editing, folio, quarto, Shakespeare

Brevity, 'the soul of wit', is not a feature one regularly associates with *Hamlet*, Shakespeare's longest play (7.90). The protagonist's prolixity is one of his defining characteristics; his seemingly ceaseless series of agonised monologues of self-reproach might be his most memorable stage quality. *Hamlet*, the longer version that most know, provides for its characters a surplus of words and ideas, reasons and motivations. A performance of either the complete second quarto (Q2) or Folio (F) text, or the traditional editorial conflation that combines them both, takes four hours or more. As a piece of theatre, it is long and demanding, resistant to interpretative efforts. With *Hamlet*, Shakespeare offers abundance; his play is consciously expressive and excessive.

Some attendant quandaries produced by such a glut of words and information are familiar to all who encounter the play. As T.S. Eliot observed, *Hamlet's* 'problems' are many.¹ Why does the protagonist procrastinate? What is the provenance of the Ghost? Is Gertrude an adulteress before the murder? Does Ophelia commit suicide? Realising that the play provides no *one* answer for each of these questions is the first step towards moving past them; understanding that its over-supply of facts, explanations, information is part of the play's *modus operandi* allows us to engage more meaningfully as critics. Ponderousness, verbosity, attention to the act of interpretation and to the production of meaning, are each central to *Hamlet*.



I begin with these points to note that some of the hermeneutical difficulties with *Hamlet* are related to its length. The play provides considerable space for competing interpretations to emerge. Yet an earlier-printed version of the play exists, the much-maligned 1603 first quarto of *Hamlet* (Q1), that is more incisive and energetic, a 'picture in little', perhaps (7.283). At a punchy 15,983 words, it is shorter than any of the texts included in the 1623 first folio collection of Shakespeare's *Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies* and some 44% shorter than the Q2 *Hamlet* text. *Hamlet* at speed – 'most wicked speed', indeed – it follows almost exactly the structure of the longer Q2 and F texts (2.156). It includes one additional scene, an exchange between the Queen and Horatio, that does not appear in the longer versions; what it does not include, broadly considered, are the long chunks of meditative material familiar to readers of Q2 and F. Poetically, the longer versions of *Hamlet* are undeniably the finer works. Few teachers of Shakespeare would send their students to the Q1 version first. But, theatrically, Q1 can be a highly effective work. It tells a story succinctly, if bluntly, without committing an audience to the sort of slow-burn meditation about life, love, familial duty, revenge and mortality for which the longer play is renowned. Q1 offers a short, action-packed tale, wherein almost everything that *happens* pushes along the revenge narrative towards its bloody conclusion.

In John Dover Wilson's landmark study of the play, *What Happens in Hamlet* (1935) – by which he means a conflated text – he writes at length about the sort of interpretative difficulties raised by the play. Chapter titles include 'Ghost or Devil?' and there are appendices on 'The adultery of Gertrude' and 'The funeral of Ophelia'.² Central to his discussion, and of course central to all three versions of *Hamlet*, is the play-within-the-play.³ Wilson's fifth chapter, 'The Multiple Mouse-trap', offers an invigorating account of the staging difficulties of this scene. Within this chapter, and of course within all three versions of *Hamlet*, is the dumb show that precedes the play-within-the-play. Wilson's subtitle, channelling Eliot and responding to the critical work of W.W. Greg, reads 'The problem of the dumb-show'.⁴ The familiar 'problem', first identified by Greg, is whether Claudius sees the dumb show, and, if so, why might he not react? Wilson presents a list of explanations, some of which we will consider later.

Dumb shows, as a theatrical device, are a kind of compressed action. Through mime-like action, they communicate an extended narrative in a compact stylised way, speedily supplying significant information but often in a manner that lacks nuance and detail. Brevity need not necessarily be uninformative. But at some point, economy of statement becomes an enemy to understanding. To engage with an idea, a concept, we must be supplied adequately with the tools required for its explication. If we fail to understand, we are more prone to misinterpretation; we, as interpreters, impose our own meaning on what we see, read or hear to make sense of what it is that we are engaging with. With Peter Quince and company's 'tedious brief scene',

Shakespeare shows himself aware that somewhere along the spectrum from 'brief' to 'tedious' there must be an optimal length (7.56).⁵

The dumb show in *Hamlet*, by which at first I mean all three versions of the play, is an exercise in economy of statement, and, in preceding *The Mousetrap*, a theatrical exemplar of interpretative difficulty. We, as an actual or imagined audience, watch as those on the stage fail to understand the meaning of the dumb show. Its mysteries, though questioned, are never explicated by Hamlet or another for the onstage audience. This is the exact opposite of what happens next, where the play performance of *The Mousetrap* is supplemented by Hamlet's frequent interruptions as an interpreter (he is 'as good as a chorus', according to Ophelia [9.219]), a role he actively refuses for the dumb show. During the play performance, Hamlet provides a wealth of detailed additional information that would be unattainable from the performance itself: the setting, character names, relationships, motivations and so on. Comparatively, the dumb show's brevity and non-verbal form produces an information deficit for audiences both on and off the stage; the actors' movements gesture towards a detailed narrative not yet communicated.

Analysis of dumb shows fell out of vogue until recently. Perhaps never the most arresting of topics, the dumb show in *Hamlet* – meaning invariably Q2's or a Q2/F amalgam in a conflated text – has always received a disproportionate amount of critical attention.⁶ Yet dumb shows were abundant in the period and the phrase evidently held significant cultural resonance at the time.⁷ In what follows, we will first consider this wider usage of 'dumb show', before discussing how the dumb show in *Hamlet* fits within the dramatic tradition. Our analysis will then focus on variant readings between the three extant early versions of *Hamlet*, before considering more broadly the dumb show's importance to our interpretation of the play(s).

Dumb show as metaphor

In a telling comparison with emblems, another abstract representation of compressed meaning, Rosemary Freeman observes that both emblems and dumb shows are 'somewhat removed from reality and that [in both] the visible scene is only a vehicle for some deeper meaning'.⁸ Emblems are typically comprised of three parts: a title (*inscriptio*), image (*pictura*) and a written explanation (*subscriptio*). Where dumb shows separate the text (silently prescribing the mimed performance) from the image (performed on stage), with emblems the reader must concurrently connect the image to the text provided. The formalised action of interpreting the dumb show, often found in early modern drama though missing from *Hamlet*, offers a similar function to the *subscriptio* of the emblem. Freeman proposes that 'the *dumb show* of the stage is in both form and function only a more elaborate version of the pictures in an emblem book'.⁹ We might do more to tease out the connections between emblem and dumb shows in terms of supply and deficit of meaning; both are prone to be misinterpreted or too narrowly interpreted.

Early modern emblematisers were certainly aware of this danger. George Withers describes as follows an emblematic image of a snake wrapped around an upright sword at the beginning of the *subscriptio*:

A Sword unsheathed, and a strangling-Snake,
Is figur'd here; which, in *dumbe-shewes*, doe preach,
Of what the *Malefactor* should beware;
And, they doe *threaten too*, as well as *Teach*.¹⁰

The emblematic form is an exercise in prudence for those whose hearts are 'inclin'd/ to any kind of *Death-deserving-crime*' but it is both didactic and an image of 'death' to keep them 'in awe'.¹¹ In other words, multiple meanings converge between image and text and, invoking the dumb shows of the theatres, Withers warns against a singular interpretation. Francis Quarles uses the conceit of the structure of a play to describe the 'life and death of man', and, rather miserably, observes that our first breath on this earth is but a dumb show, a foreshadowing but not a full realisation, of the griefs to come; our new born cries are but the 'prologue' to the pitiful play of our lives.¹²

Early modern authors working outside the emblem tradition often use dumb shows as a metaphor in similar ways. In his plague pamphlet, *The Wonderful Year* (1603), Thomas Dekker observes that upon the death of Elizabeth I the country was in great mourning and the 'English Nation' had never seen so much black clothing as worn on the day of her funeral. But, Dekker notes, in a metaphor drawn from the theatre, the funeral was 'but the dumb shew' for 'the Tragicall Act hath bin playing euer since'.¹³ Similarly, in *News from Hell* (1606), Dekker describes the pitiful actions of Monsieur Money-monger on the banks of the river Styx, as wordless and not knowing what to say, like a player who has forgotten his lines, turning away from hope and towards evil.

In such a strange language was this *vltimum vale* sent forth, that Mounsieur Mony-monger stood onely staring and yawning vpon him, but could speak no more: yet at the last (coniuring vp his best spirits) he onely in a dumb shewe (with pittifull action, like a Plaier, when hees out of his part) made signes to haue a Letter deliuered by the Carrier of condemnation, to his sonne, (a yong Reueller, prickt down to stand in the Mercers books for next Christmas,) which in a dumbe shewe likewise being receiued, they both turnde backe the Vsurer, looking as hungriely, as if he had kist the post.¹⁴

More notably, what is emphasised here is that the communication is partial, incomplete; that the visual sign does not make up for the unspoken message; that gesture is not entirely redundant but is still somehow lacking. The longer texts, the letter and the mercer's book, both contain the same matter but in longer forms. The dumb show can gesture towards the fuller text but it cannot 'deliver' it in full.

Similarly, in *The Merchant of Venice*, when Portia discusses her potential suitors, she laments that though Fauconbridge, the young Baron of England, 'is a proper mans picture', his understanding of 'neither Latine, French, nor Italian' means she cannot communicate with him: she says, 'alas who can conuerse

with a dumbe show?’ (1.2.51–54)¹⁵ Though she continues to mock him for his clothing – a gentle mockery of the fashions of early English dandies – Portia’s primary frustration is with the dissonance between image and text (via language). In the anonymous *Euerie woman in her humor* (1609), Flavia, also overburdened by the affections of suitors, says she is better pleased with the ‘dumbe shewe of all their pictures’ than with being with any of them in person.

Teren. Why *Flauia* you haue many suitors.
Flau. Oh I am loaden with suitors: for indeede I am faine to beare
 with any of them, I haue a dumbe shewe of all their pictures,
 each has sent in his seuerall shadow, and I sweare I had rather
 haue them then the substance of any of them.¹⁶

Here, Flavia prefers the insubstantial abstract of the pictures, her suitors’ ‘dumbe shewe’, to the real ‘substance’ of their presence.¹⁷ A more dismissive comment about dumb shows occurs in Jonson’s *The Case is Altered* where Onion praises Antonio as being the ‘best plotter’ (a appraisal, by the by, reserved for Anthony Munday in Meres’ *Palladis Tamia*), and Antonio rejects this, saying, ‘I might as well ha bene put in for a dumb shew too’.¹⁸ What Antonio seems to mean is that for all the good his writing did him, he might as well have just composed a dumb show, the implied simpler activity.

Another recurring feature of such allusions is that there might be something less than sincere about dumb shows. For example, Barnabe Rich, in *Faultes faults* (1606), distinguishes between ‘outward appearance’ of religious devotion to ‘satisfie the world’ without dedicating oneself fully to Christ.

We speake of *Honestie*, but it is with halfe a lip; and for *Vice*, we seeme to shut it out at the broade gate, but we priuily take it in againe at the Wicket: we make a gappe where the gate stands open, and we seeke to enter by force, where the high way lyes by fauour. We desire to come to Christ by night with *Nichodemus*, that no bodie might see vs for feare of worldly losses, and it is a point of wisdome to take Christ in one hand, and the world in another, and to make some outward appearance a litle to satisfie the world, if it be but with a dumb shew.¹⁹

The idea of false outward show recurs in Thomas Adams’ sermon *The White Deuil, or The Hypocrite Vncased* (1612), where he proposes that ‘monstrous pride ... turns hospitallity into a dumbe shew: that which fed the belly of hunger, now feedes the eie of lust’.²⁰ More sinister yet, let us consider an excerpt from the trial of John Dorrell, who was accused of fraudulently ‘deluding the people by counterfeyt miracles’.²¹ Together, Dorrell and his co-conspirator Sommers perpetrated a hoax whereby Sommers feigned demonic possession and Dorrell pretended to cure him. Sommers, however, confessed and gave up Dorrell to the authorities.

*Dorrell did interpret the sinnes which Sommers acted in a dumb shew, saying hee had scene others possessed doe the like.*²²

Dumb show here is not an abstract representation of some greater truth, but a hoaxster’s efforts to deceive through blunt mimed action subject to interpretation; the focus of fraud here is the interpretation of the action.

But dumb shows can still be as effectively affective as any primary method of storytelling; the signifier can carry similar weight to the sign. For instance, in his *Anatomy of Melancholie* (1621), Robert Burton warns that even a dumb show of a 'terrible object, heard or seen', such as a ghost story or tragedy, is to be avoided for those suffering from melancholy.

If the party be sad, or otherwise affected, consider saith Trallian, the manner of it, and all circumstances, and forthwith make a sudden alteration, by removing the occasions, avoide all terrible objects, heard or seene, monstrous and prodigious aspects, tales of diuels, spirits, ghosts, tragicall stories, to such as are in feare they strike a great impression, and renew many times, and recal many chimeras and terrible fictions into their mindes. Make not so much as mention of them in private talke, or a dumbe show tending to that purpose, such things saith Galateus, are offensiue to their Imagination.²³

What seems evident from such early modern references is that the meaning of 'dumb shows', alluding to either their supply and/or deficit of meaning, was unfixed in the period, and I would argue that we require a much broader conception of dumb show within the early English literary tradition; it is not simply stylised mime (though it could be), but can be understood as part of a wider cultural preoccupation with representation and misrepresentation, knowing and unknowing.

Dumb show as performance

The first dumb show to be found in an English play appears in Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton's *Gorboduc* (1561). The play, an otherwise fairly staid oratorical showpiece, is punctuated by a series of dumb shows before each Act. Early English dumb shows vary significantly in form. Often the shows are highly abstract, offering a symbolic comment on what has just happened or will happen next (for example, the series of kindermurders in *Gorboduc* in the dumb show before Act 4), but sometimes they provide important information (like the plot exposition before the beginning of the play proper of Thomas Hughes' et al. *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, or vital plot information like the 'moor's murder of his brothers to gain the throne for himself in the first dumb show of George Peele's *The Battel of Alcazar*).²⁴ Dumb shows can be reliably deployed to convey a huge amount of plot information in a conveniently short amount of time. This tradition continues in later drama. For example, in John Marston's *Antonio's Revenge*, the sequel to his *Antonio and Mellida*, the play opens with an extended summarising dumb show that informs the audience quickly of what has happened since the end of the previous play.²⁵ I will consider here some examples of how dumb shows supply information to (and deprive information from) audiences, and the difference in experiencing the dumb show as either a playgoer or as a reader.

Dumb shows may be accompanied by a 'presenter' who interprets and articulates the meaning of the stylised presentation. The most familiar of dumb shows before *Hamlet*, and perhaps the most influential due to the play's

enduring popularity, appears in Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (c. 1587). The character of Revenge acts as the presenter:

Enter a dumme shew.
Ghost. Awake Reuenge, reueale this misterie.
Reuenge. The two first the nuptiall Torches boare,
 As brightly burning as the mid-daies sunne:
 But after them doth Himen hie as fast,
 Clothed in sable, and a Saffron robe,
 And blowes them out, and quencheth them with blood,
 As discontent that things continue so.
Ghost. Sufficeth me thy meanings vnderstood ...²⁶

We will note here that the action of the dumb show itself is not prescribed by a stage direction, but rather revealed in the ensuing interpretation of its 'misterie'. Kyd's dumb show is an excellent example of an inset performance that privileges the experiences of an audience member over the reader. The audience member sees the dumb show while its meaning is being explicated by Revenge: the cue 'Awake Reuenge, reueale...' informs us that the dumb show is not performed before this act of interpretation, but rather concurrently with it. The reader, on the other hand, is given no clues to the action of the dumb show until they have retroactively pieced together the dialogic explication.

In John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (c. 1612–1613) we encounter a stylised pantomimic performance that, contrariwise, privileges the reader over an audience member. This is not a dumb show *per se*, but has significant crossovers with the tradition. A reader of the 1623 quarto would note that:

*Here is discover'd, (behind a
 Trauers;) the artificiall figures of Antonio, and his children; ap-
 pearing as if they were dead.*²⁷

Here, in performance, the apparently dead bodies of Antonio and his children with the Duchess are revealed to an audience. An audience has no reason to believe that what they are seeing is not real.²⁸ But a reader is immediately let in on this trick: the bodies are mere '*artificiall figures ... appearing as if they were dead*'.

Turning now to a more complicated case, in *Pericles*, Gower says 'what need speake I[?]' because all that needs to be known will be shown in the upcoming dumb show:

[GOWER]
 ...
 But tidings to the contrarie,
 Are brought your eyes, what need speake I.
Dombe shew
*Enter at one dore Pericles talking with Cleon. all the traine
 with them: Enter at an other dore, a Gentleman with a
 Letter to Pericles, Pericles shewes the Letter to Cleon;
 Pericles giues the Messenger a reward, and Knights him:
 Exit Pericles at one dore, and Cleon at another.*
 Good *Helicon* that stayde at home,

...
 Sau'd one²⁹ of all, that haps in Tyre:
 Howe *Thaliart* came full bent with sinne,
 And had intent to murder him;
 And that in *Tharsis* was not best,
 Longer for him to make his rest ...³⁰

During the dumb show, Pericles receives a letter from a gentleman, the contents of which neither audience nor reader can discern from the dumb show itself. Thus Gower, after the dumb show ends, is forced to inform the audience or reader about the letter's contents. Recalling Dekker's *News from Hell*, here the dumb show, through the onstage letter (itself a textual object), is demonstrably inadequate in its supply of meaning, and more text, delivered via Gower's monologue, is required for its explication. Thus, neither audience member nor reader is privileged – they must wait and wait until their curiosity is sated.

Something similar occurs in Thomas Heywood's *Four Prentises* (1615), where the dumb show is first prepared for when a character says 'we will make bold to explaine it in dumbe Show'.³¹ The dumb show that is prescribed by stage direction is highly detailed, eighty-one words in length, and involves a series of interactions between '*certaine Spaniards*' and '*certaine Citizens of Bullen*'. But when the dumb show ends, the 'Presenter' realises that nothing could be discerned from the dumb show unless the participants are identified. Thus, he must note that:

Those Cittizens you see were *Bullonoyes*,
 Kept vnder bondage of that tyrannous Earle³²

By doing so he retrospectively provides both reader and audience with information that could not possibly be gained by the mimed performance alone.

Sometimes dumb shows can seem an utterly redundant concession to visual performance. In R.A.'s *The Valiant Welshman*, the character of the Bard or Welsh Poet, who acts as presenter, introduces a dumb show in a way that makes it feebly repetitive.

Now *Cornewall*, *Gloster*, twinnes of some *Incubus*,
 And sonne and heyre to hells Imperiall Crowne,
 The Bastard *Codigune*, conspire the death
 Of olde *Octauian*. Those that faine would know
 The manner how, obserue this silent show.

Enter a dumbe show, Codigune, Gloster, and Cornwall at the one dore: After they consult a little while, enter at the other dore, Octauian, Guiniuer, and Voada, the sister of Caradoc: they seeme by way of intreaty, to inuite them: they offer a cup of wine vnto Octauian, and he is poysoned. They take Guiniuer and Voada, and put them in prison. Codigune is crowned King of Wales.

Bardh. The trecherous Bastard, with his complices,
Cornewall and *Gloster*, did inuite the King,
 Fayre *Guiniuer* and beautious *Voada*,
 The sister of renowned *Caradoc*,
 Vnto a sumptuous feast...³³

First, we hear that Cornwall, Gloucester and Codigune ‘conspire’ to kill King Octavian. Then the dumb show shows the murder – he is poisoned when he partakes of an offered cup of wine. Then the Bard reappears to repeat what we have just seen. There is no explication, just a summarising of the facts. The only privilege for the reader is that they are more easily able to first identify each character in the dumb show (who are thereafter carefully identified by the Bard).

Finally, sometimes dumb show is used as a form of shorthand for a type of unspoken onstage action not formally recorded as a dumb show. For example, in the anonymous *The True Chronicle History of King Leir*, Ragan is infuriated by a letter given to her by a messenger from Goneril. She does not, and would not, tell the Messenger the contents of the letter, so the Messenger calls attention to her displeasure by noting aside to the audience that her anger will mean ‘more worke and more crownes’ for him.

RAG. How fares our royall sister?
 MES. I did leaue her at my parting, in good health.
 She reads the letter, frownes and stamps.
 See how her colour comes and goes agayne,
 Now red as scarlet, now as pale as ash:
 She³⁴ how she knits her brow, and bytes her lips,
 And stamps, and makes a dumbe shew of disdayne,
 Mixt with reuenge, and violent extreames.
 Here will be more worke and more crownes for me.³⁵

The Messenger here verbalises what we can deduce – Ragan’s displeasure – but we share in the Messenger’s lack of knowledge. We are as underprivileged as those watching on the stage.

The dumb show in *Hamlet* aligns exactly with none of these preceding models. It is highly unusual in that it is a dumb show for an inset play performance, and not the play-at-large itself. It is also unusual in that there is no presenter, no explication. Finally, it is unusual in that the larger audience is already deeply familiar with the plot it mimes out. It is important to remember that the dumb show is not for the audience of *Hamlet*; it is for the audience of *The Mousetrap*. As such, it does not provide us, the larger audience, with plot exposition for the longer work. And we already know the conditions of the murder from the Ghost’s report. We already know more than any other of Hamlet’s audience watching onstage. Rather, we are watching an onstage audience watching a dumb show for a play to be performed. The ostensible purpose of the dumb show in the play-world of Elsinore is to set out the play plot for the onstage audience. It fails miserably in this task. The ostensible purpose of the dumb show in *Hamlet*, the larger play, is, as we shall see, quite different. So, too, is the result.

Hamlets' dumb shows

Before *The Mousetrap*, Ophelia plays the role of an unhappily confused audience member in all three versions of the text. A dumb show is performed, its meaning is oblique for her, and Ophelia (or 'Ofelia' in Q1) asks Hamlet several times about its import. Hamlet, who knows the plot and is evidently unhappy that the events of the play are at least partially revealed in dumb show, tosses aside Ophelia's repeated queries, using the interaction to further insult his one-time love. Yet Ophelia's queries are not our own. We, as either audiences or readers, are in the privileged position of Hamlet, not Ophelia, in that we understand that the dumb show reflects the conditions of the murder and seduction previously only verbalised during the Ghost's revelation. Once verbalised, now visualised, but ne'er the twain will meet.

The following displays the dumb show and subsequent commentary upon it as it appears across all three texts. Passages in bold reveal substantive differences between the three texts. What is emboldened in Q1 is what occurs there but not in Q2. What is emboldened in Q2 is what is not found in Q1. What is emboldened in F is what is present there and not in Q2. Original settings and orthography are preserved in each case, though ligatures are not retained.

Q1 *Hamlet* (1603; STC 22275), sig. F3^r

Substantive variants from Q2 are marked in bold.

*Enter in a Dumbe Shew, the King and the Queen, he sits
downe in an Arbor, she leaues him: Then enters Lucianus
with poyson in a Viall, and powres it in his eares, and
goes away: Then the Queene commeth and findes him
dead: and goes away with the other.*

OFEL. What meanes this my Lord?

Enter the Prologue.

HAM. This is myching Mallico, that meanes **my chiefe**.

OFEL. What does this mean my lord?

HAM. **you shall heare anone**, this fellow will tell you all.

OFEL. Will he tell vs what this shew meanes?

HAM. I, or any shew you'le shew him,

Be not **afeard** to shew, hee'le not be **afeard** to tell:

O these Players cannot keepe **counsell**, thei'le tell all.

PROL. For vs, and for our Tragedi,

Heere stowping to your clemencie,

We begge your hearing patiently.

HAM. I'st a prologue, or a poesie **for** a ring?

OFEL. T'is **short** my Lord.

HAM. As womens loue.

*Enter the Duke and Dutchesse.*³⁶

Q2 *Hamlet* (1604–1605; STC 22276), sig. H1^v
Substantive variants from Q1 are marked in bold.

The Trumpet sounds. Dumbe show followes.

Enter a King and a Queene, the Queene embracing him, and he her, he takes her vp, and declines his head vpon her necke, he lyes him downe vpon a bancke of flowers, she seeing him asleepe, leaues him: anon come in another man, takes off his crowne, kisses it, pours poyson in the sleepers eares, and leaues him: the Queene returnes, findes the King dead, makes passionate action, the poysoner with some three or foure come in againe, seeme to condole with her, the dead body is carried away, the poysoner wooes the Queene with gifts, shee seemes harsh awhile, but in the end accepts loue.

OPH. What meanes this my Lord?

HAM. Marry this munching *Mallico*, it meanes mischiefe.

OPH. **Belike this show imports the argument of the play.**³⁷

HAM. We shall know by this fellow,
The Players cannot keepe, they'le tell all.

*Enter Prologue.*³⁸

OPH. Will a tell vs what this show meant?

HAM. I, or any show that you will show him, be not you **asham'd**
to show, heele not **shame** to tell you what it means.

OPH. **You are naught, you are naught, Ile mark the play.**

PROLOGUE. For vs and for our Tragedie,
Heere stooping to your clemencie,
We begge your hearing patiently.

HAM. Is this a Prologue, or the posie of a ring?

OPH. Tis **breefe** my Lord.

HAM. As womans loue.

Enter King and Queene.

Folio *Hamlet* (1623; STC 22273), sig. Oo6^r (p. 267)
Substantive variants from Q2 are marked in bold.

Hoboyes Play. The dumbe shew enters.

Enter a King and Queene, very louingly; the Queene embracing him. She kneeles, and makes shew of Protestation unto him. He takes her up, and d[e]clines his head vpon her neck. Layes him downe vpon a Banke of Flowers. She seeing him a-sleepe, leaves him. Anon comes in a Fellow, takes off his Crowne, kisses it, and powres poyson in the Kings eares, and Exits. The Queene returnes, findes the King dead, and makes passionate Action. The Poysoner, with some two or three Mutes comes in againe, seeming to lament with her. The dead body is carried away: The Poysoner Wooes the Queene with Gifts, she seemes loath and unwilling awhile, but in the end, accepts his love. **Exeunt**

OPHE. What meanes this, my Lord?

HAM. Marry this is Miching *Malicho*, that meanes
Mischeefe.

- OPHE. Belike this shew imports the Argument of the Play?
- HAM. We shall know by **these Fellowes**³⁹: the Players cannot keepe **counsell**,⁴⁰ they'l tell all.
- OPHE. Will they tell vs what this shew meant?
- HAM. I, or any shew that you'l shew him. Bee not you asham'd to shew, hee'l not shame to tell you what it meanes.
- OPHE. You are naught, you are naught, Ile marke the Play.
- Enter Prologue.*
For vs, and for our Tragedie,
Heere stooping for your Clemencie:
We begge your hearing Patientlie.
- HAM. Is this a Prologue, or the Poesie of a Ring?
- OPHE. 'Tis briefe my Lord.
- HAM. As Womans loue.
- Enter King and his Queene.*

Let us begin by noting what is common to all three texts. In each, there is a dumb show enacted, which involves the characters of a King and Queen who enter to a setting in nature. In each, the Queen departs from the King. Then another man enters. This man kills the King. He does so by pouring poison into the King's ears. The poisoner then leaves. Next, in each, the Queen returns. She finds the King dead. She then interacts with the poisoner who has returned. The dumb show ends with the Queen in the company of the poisoner. In each, it is Ofelia/Ophelia who responds first to the dumb show, and in each version she is puzzled by its meaning. Hamlet, in each, seems angered by the performance, lamenting that the players will 'tell all'. In each a prologue follows, mocked by Hamlet as but a 'P/po(e)sie' that might be found in a ring. Hamlet compares the prologue's duration to a woman's love. Then, in each, the married male and female protagonists of the to-be-performed play enter.

Such self-evident correspondences in language and scene structure would alert any reader to the fact that they are encountering different versions of a similar episode. But we should not overlook the significance of some of the differences, and the consistent nature of the differences between the versions. Our chief focus here will be on variants between Q1 and Q2, but I will also note variants found in F.

Q2 and F include most of the action prescribed by Q1. Even the four substantive variants in Q1's dumb show are largely unremarkable – the explicitly stated entrance of the characters 'in a Dumbe Shewe' (implicit in Q2 but also stated in F), the specification of an arbour (it is a natural setting in Q2 and F also), the named receptacle for the poison (the poison has to be carried in something), and the naming of the poisoner (a detail provided in the larger play).⁴¹ What is more remarkable is the action only prescribed in the later texts. The directions for Q2 and F are not simply longer; with the additional information they supply, they produce significantly different versions of the scene:

1. In Q1 no reason is initially given for the murder of the King; in Q2 and F the murderer takes up the crown and kisses it.

That is, in both longer versions the murderer clearly signals his ambition to gain the crown, an aspect omitted in the Q1 text.

2. In Q1 the Queen goes away with the murderer immediately after finding the King's body; in Q2 and F she at first resists but then accepts the murderer's love only after receiving gifts.

There are two significant points of difference here. One, leaving with the murderer in Q1 after the murder might reasonably imply cooperation. Two, leaving with the murderer in Q1 might reasonably imply a pre-existing love relationship. Neither implication could be plausibly communicated given the stage action prescribed by the stage directions in Q2 and F.

3. In Q1 the King's body is left on the stage when the Queen and the murderer leave; in Q2 and F, followers of the murderer carry the body away *before* the courtship begins.

Q1 is a tad messier here, with the body left on the stage. Q2 and F are tidier, and again absolve the Queen of any culpability in the murder plot, as the love plot is made temporally and spatially distinct.

Each of these points of difference between Q1 and Q2/F relates significantly to the Queen; what is expanded upon in the prescribed action of the stage directions in Q2 and F minimises the Queen's involvement with the crime. In Q2 and F the poisoner (a) displays his ambition for the crown, (b) has a cohort of other followers who help him dispose of the body ('three or four'; 'three mutes'), (c) condoles or laments with the Queen on her loss (which obviously indicates the Queen's lack of awareness), and (d) woos the Queen with gifts and, only eventually, wins her over. In Q1, the nature of the Queen's involvement is much more ambiguous, but perhaps tending towards accusatory. This is not the only place in Q1 where greater emphasis is placed on the Queen's culpability. As the Arden Three editors Anne Thompson and Neil Taylor note, the line 'None weds the second but she kills the first', a variant reading on Q2/F's 'who kild the first', makes Q1 'more explicit in the accusation of the Queen'.⁴²

Dumb shows and *mise en abyme*

Critics have expended much effort on the question of why the dumb show is included at all, noting (often exasperatedly) that it gives away the plot before it is performed and that it seems absurd that Claudius would not respond to such an obvious act. Directors have often sought to evade this problem by having Claudius miss the dumb show somehow, perhaps distracted by Gertrude or others. Edward Dowden thought that Claudius might assume that the dumb show included material not 'developed through dialogue'.⁴³ A.W. Pollard famously coined the 'second tooth' theory, suggesting that Claudius could endure the first sighting of his murder but reacts upon the second (akin

to having more than one tooth removed at a dentist).⁴⁴ Dieter Mehl, noting that dumb shows were so stylised as to make them 'so different from the rest of the play and real life', thought it reasonable to assume that Claudius would not react to something that only vaguely reminded him of his guilt.⁴⁵ Stanley Cavell, in his typically contrarian way, proposed that Claudius did not react because Hamlet had the details of the murder wrong.⁴⁶ I care little about whether Claudius 'sees' the dumb show. He may, he may not; that is a director's prerogative – none of the early versions of the play make it explicit so we cannot say whether he does or not. What seems more important is to attempt to understand Shakespeare's intention, as a dramatist of great experience and understanding, in including the dumb show in the play given it creates such problems. Through Hamlet's annoyed response – the players 'tell all' – Shakespeare clearly, openly, adverts to the awkwardness of including this device. So why does he do it?

The dumb show does not advance the action of the main play through the supply of information; rather, it visually summarises what might potentially be performed. As such, the dumb show has been considered to be anticipatory and to lack emblematic quality. Resisting this, Tiffany Stern argues that because the dumb show is never interpreted and 'remains undirected' it is able to 'convey one set of symbolic messages to the fictional courtier audience, another to Claudius, another to Hamlet, and a further set to us, the actual audience'.⁴⁷ Stern, who has no problem with Claudius watching the dumb show, thus argues that the device 'ruins' Hamlet's plans in two ways: 'On the one hand, it forewarns Claudius, who does not respond to the play as intended; on the other, it forces an overwrought Hamlet, disastrously, to become interpreter himself'.⁴⁸ Stern acutely observes that various groups onstage and off experience the dumb show and subsequent play differently. However, Stern's analysis falls into a familiar critical trap. The critical response to the 'seeing' issue seems misguided.⁴⁹ By saying that the dumb show reveals a plot to be performed, critics are assuming that there is an *entire* play to be performed. That is, they are placing real-world expectations on what is a fictional construct. John Dover Wilson fell into this trap, too. Discussing the dumb show, Wilson notes that the typical usage of such a device is to either 'foreshadow the contents of a play (or an act) by means of a *symbolical* or *historical* tableau' or 'to save the dramatist the trouble of composing dialogue for part of the action by presenting it in pantomime' that might then be interpreted by a choric figure or presenter.⁵⁰ (Wilson here relies upon the work of Wilhelm Creizenach, and, as we have seen above, dumb shows can actually serve a much wider variety of purposes.) Wilson then notes that the dumb show in *Hamlet* fits neither category: 'it is an anticipation in full action of the spoken scene that follows, and as such would be entirely superfluous in any ordinary drama'.⁵¹ But, of course, there is no 'spoken scene that follows' that exactly mirrors the dumb show which precedes it; only half of what is promised from the dumb show is ever performed. Shakespeare, in writing *Hamlet*, knows that the play-within-the-play will not be played to completion. Shakespeare writes a passage of a

'play' – a 'play' that, in the play-world, is ostensibly adapted by Hamlet from another 'play' – that he knows will be concluded abruptly by his character Claudius before it is completed. There is no 'complete' *The Murder of Gonzago* or *The Mousetrap*. This may seem so obvious as to be inane, but the critical history of the dumb show makes it necessary to spell this out word by word: *all that exists of the 'play' is what is written and performed.*

But this is why the dumb show is so significant, so necessary for Shakespeare: it offers us a version of the extended, imagined 'play' that is never to be performed or, indeed, written. It shows us what doesn't happen in *Hamlet*. It provides us with an answer to the 'what happens next' for a dramatic sequence that is already complete at its moment of interruption. Without the dumb show, we would not know what Hamlet plans for the character of the Queen after the King's death with his little play. All we would have is, as is present in all three versions, a Queen character who protests that she would never marry again once widowed. But in Q1 the ambiguity present in dumb show alerts us to the hypocrisy of these protestations within the fictional world of the play, and, moreover, the play-world of *Hamlet* itself. In Q2 and F, we might at once reasonably believe the Queen's protestations while still knowing that she will go back on her word.

So much critical thought has gone into answering the question of whether or not Claudius sees the dumb show. But, for our purposes, perhaps the more interesting question is whether or not Gertrude does. After all, Hamlet's focus (as a would-be presenter, directing the reception and interpretation of what is performed) falls so often upon Gertrude and not Claudius. The majority of *The Mousetrap* in all three versions is taken up with the Queen's protests to the King. After the Queen/Duchess exits, the first extended exchange between Hamlet and the others present is about the Queen/Duchess's behaviour. Even after the introduction of Lucianus, 'nephew to the King', Hamlet's most bitter barbs are directed towards his mother forgetting her duties towards his dead father ('looke how cheerefully my mother lookes', Q1 reads). The significant difference between Q1 and Q2/F is that in the latter Hamlet appears to be viciously but redundantly haranguing Gertrude for her post-funeral actions, and thereby rejecting his Ghost father's request to 'leau[e] her to heauen' (as Q2 reads); in the former, Hamlet seems to be asserting and thereby testing her guilt in the murder plot.

Or, at least, this might be the case. Such a reading is drawn from an information shortfall in Q1's dumb show. In the fifty-one words of this dumb show, we can glean nothing about the existing relationship of the King and Queen, and therefore, given the incomplete nature of *The Mousetrap*, nothing about what Hamlet plans for his mother. The Player King and Player Queen enter. He sits down, she leaves. Consider for a moment all of the information that Q2 and F supply between this first entrance and exit. In the later, longer texts, the pair embrace, and there is prescribed the exact stage action of the King placing his head upon the Queen's neck. In F, mirroring the to-be-performed passage from the play, the Queen must visibly make a 'shew of Protestation'.⁵² In Q1

only the barest details of performance are prescribed. Its paucity of detail, its deficit of information, deters us from advancing the sort of critical readings that the dumb shows of Q2 and F encourage, and that more readily 'anticipate' *The Mousetrap*. Encountering such a shortfall, with nothing else to go on, we might then supply our own interpretation for what this lack of information means. Thus, I could propose earlier that 'Hamlet seems to be asserting and thereby testing her guilt in the murder plot'. But not because the text suggests this, only because the text does not tell us otherwise. In an instant, we have returned to the realm of 'but did Claudius see the dumb show?' and other such questions of an unproductive nature. *Horror vacui*, as we know.

So, we have versions of the play that is *Hamlet* and each of these versions includes its own skewed, partial versions of the back-story producing *Hamlet* via, first, the dumb show and, second, the play-within-the-play. *Hamlet*, in this sense, is endlessly recursive, a representation of a representation, a reflection of a reflection, *ad finitum*. Or rather, *Hamlet* in its three early texts offers us a set of representations of a representation, reflections of a reflection. Perhaps we should not reflect upon this for too long or it may become tedious.

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Notes

1. T.S. Eliot, 'Hamlet and His Problems', in *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1920), 87–94. Eliot thought the play an 'artistic failure' (90). Swayed by the work of J.M. Robertson, who argued that the play included George Chapman's rewriting of passages originally written by Thomas Kyd (as the supposed author of the ur-*Hamlet*), Eliot held that it was better to think of *Hamlet* as 'superposed upon much cruder materials which persists even in the final form' (88). Robertson's work had a similar title to Eliot's essay, *The Problem of Hamlet* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & Howe, 1920). All citations to *Hamlet* are taken from John Jowett's edition of the play in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Modern Critical Edition: The Complete Works*, gen. ed. Gary Taylor et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). Jowett's edition is based upon the second quarto text of 1604–5.
2. John Dover Wilson, *What Happens in Hamlet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935).
3. Indeed, it was W.W. Greg's discussion of the dumb show in *Hamlet*, and whether Claudius sees it, that Wilson identifies as the inspiration for his entire study. See his 'epistle dedicatory' to Greg, 4–5. Greg's initial article study was published in 1917: 'Hamlet's Hallucination', *MLR* 12 (1917), 393–421. This, in turn, inspired a flurry of correspondence in print between Greg

- and Wilson; see William Witherle Lawrence, 'Hamlet and the Mouse-trap', *PMLA* 54, no. 3 (1939), 709–735, for a summary account of this exchange.
4. *Ibid.*, 144–152. Wilson, however, seriously disagreed with Eliot's assessment of the play.
 5. All citations are to Terri Bourus's edition of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Modern Critical Edition. The Complete Works*, gen. ed. Gary Taylor et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).
 6. Dieter Mehl's *The Elizabethan Dumb Show* (London: Methuen, 1965) remains the standard-bearer study for the evolution of the form. For the dumb show in *Hamlet*, see, for example: William Witherle Lawrence, 'The Play Scene in Hamlet', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 18 (1919), 1–22; Andrew J. Green, 'The Cunning of the Scene', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 4, no. 4 (1953), 395–404; John Doeblér's 'The Play Within the Play: *Muscipula Diaboli* in *Hamlet*', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 23, no. 2 (1972), 161–169; Alfred Mollin, 'On Hamlet's Mouse-trap', *Interpretation* 21, no. 3 (1994), 353–372; Charles Edelman, "'The Very Cunning of the Scene': Claudius and the Mouse-trap', *Parergon* 12, no. 1 (1994), 15–25; and Steve Roth, 'Who Knows Who Knows Who's There? An Epistemology of *Hamlet* (Or, What Happens in the Mousetrap)', *Early Modern Literary Studies* 10, no. 2 (2004), 1–27. Lee Sheridan Cox devoted an entire book to *Hamlet's* dumb show: *Figurative Design in Hamlet: The Significance of the Dumb Show* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1973). Two recent essays by Jeremy Lopez and Tiffany Stern, heralding a not unwelcome return to these dramatic devices, both make the dumb show in *Hamlet* central to their arguments: see Tiffany Stern, 'Hamlet: The Dumb Show', in *Shakespeare Up Close: Reading Early Modern Texts*, ed. Russ McDonald, Nicholas Nace and Travis Williams (London: Methuen, 2012), 273–281, and Jeremy Lopez, 'Dumbshow', in *Early Modern Theatricality*, ed. Henry S. Turner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 291–305. Tiffany Stern has since written another study about dumb shows, 'Inventing Stage Directions; Demoting Dumb Shows', which also touches on some differences between the versions of the dumb show in the texts of *Hamlet*: in *Stage Directions and Shakespearean Theatre*, ed. Sarah Dustagheer and Gillian Woods (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 19–45.
 7. An *EEBO-TCP* trawl for the bigram 'dumb show' produces 173 hits across 134 texts printed between the opening and closing of the professional theatres (1576–1642). Search completed in March 2017. In Dieter Mehl's landmark work, he lists some 150 dumb shows across seventy-three plays. Leslie Thomson expands the definition of dumb show much further to include any 'action without dialogue – pantomime – typically by at least two (and usually more) figures'. Her count gives 186 dumb shows appearing in ninety-eight plays written between 1580 and 1642. See Leslie Thomson, 'Dumb Shows in Performance on the Early Modern Stage', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 29 (2016), 17–45, here 18–19.
 8. Rosemary Freeman, *English Emblem Books* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1948), 14–15.
 9. *Ibid.*, 15.
 10. George Withers, *A collection of emblemes, ancient and moderne* (1635; STC 25900a), sig. L2^r.
 11. *Ibid.*, sig. L2^r.
 12. Francis Quarles, *Divine fancies* (1633; STC 20530), sig. A2^r.
 13. Thomas Dekker, *The wonderfull yeare* (1603; STC 6535), sig. B2^r.
 14. Thomas Dekker, *Newes from Hell* (1606; STC 6514), sig. G4^r.
 15. All citations are to Rory Loughnane's edition of *The Merchant of Venice* in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Critical Reference Edition. The Complete Works*, gen. ed. Gary Taylor et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).
 16. Anonymous, *Euerie woman in her humor* (1609; STC 25948), sig. E4^r.
 17. A similar reference to dumb shows as something to be more desired and relished occurs in *Much Ado About Nothing*. The Prince tells Claudio: 'Let there be the same nette spread for her, and that must your daughter and her gentlewomen carry: the sporte will be, when they holde one an opinion of an others dotage, and no such matter, thats the scene that I woulde see, which wil be meerely a dumbe shew: let vs send her to call him in to dinner'. *Much ado about nothing* (1600; STC 22304), sig. D3^r. These two examples show that dumb shows might, for certain purposes or certain audiences, be preferred. In the same way that, in modern films, certain spectators may be more impressed by action sequences than dialogue.

18. Ben Jonson, *His (i.e., The) Case is alterd* (1609; STC 14757), sig. A3^v.
19. Barnabe Rich, *Faultes faults, and nothing else but faultes* (1606; STC 20983), sig. R1^v.
20. Thomas Adams, *The white deuill, or The hypocrite vncased* (1613; STC 131), sig. D1^r.
21. Samuel Harsnett, *The Triall of Maist. Dorrell* (1599; STC 6287), sig. A2^r.
22. *Ibid.*, sig. D1^v.
23. Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621; STC 4159), 367.
24. In a short article, Eric Rasmussen argues that the unusual (though not anomalous) use of the past tense in the dumb shows in the play indicates that they were memorially reconstructed (a theory of textual provenance and integrity that has since been hotly contested); see his 'The Implications of Past Tense Verbs in Early Elizabethan Dumb Shows', *English Studies* 67 (1986), 417–419.
25. This functional purpose may be usefully compared to the use of anonymous omniscient gentlemen characters in the plays of the period, more frequently used by Shakespeare towards the end of his career. For example, think of the two Gentlemen who begin *Cymbeline* or the two brothel-going Gentlemen in *Pericles*, or the two Gentlemen who recount the downfall of Buckingham in *Henry VIII* (or *All is True*). For more on this choric function, see Rory Loughnane, 'Semi-choric Devices and the Framework for Playgoer Response in *King Henry VIII*', in *Late Shakespeare, 1608–1613*, ed. Andrew J. Power and Rory Loughnane (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 108–123.
26. Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedie* (1592; STC 15086), sig. I2^r–I3^r. Rather surprisingly, Leslie Thomson proposes that 'Dumb Shows require stage directions', when, as we see in this example from Kyd's play, that is not the case. Stage movement can also be prescribed by dialogue.
27. John Webster, *The Tragedy of the Dutchesse of Malfy* (1623; STC 25176), sig. I1^v.
28. In fact, as I have argued in print elsewhere, the actors playing the parts of Antonio and his children most likely performed in the role of the 'artificiall figures'. See Rory Loughnane, 'The Artificial Figures in Webster's *Duchess of Malfy*', in *The Arts of Remembrance in Early Modern England*, ed. Andrew Gordon and Thomas Rist (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), 211–228.
29. The phrase 'Sau'd one' is likely corrupt, and can be usefully emended to 'Sends word'. See Rory Loughnane, ed., '*Pericles, Prince of Tyre*', in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Complete Works: Critical Reference Edition*, gen. ed. Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 1374 (6.22).
30. Shakespeare and George Wilkins, *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* (1609; STC 22334), sig. C1^{rv}.
31. Thomas Heywood, *The foure prentises of London* (1615; STC 13321), sig. C1^r.
32. *Ibid.*, sig. C1^r.
33. R.A., *The valiant Welshman* (1615; STC 16), sig. C4^r.
34. A clear error in the quarto text: 'She' should read 'See'.
35. Anon., *The True Chronicle History of King Leir* (1605; STC 15343), sig. E1^{rv}.
36. The character designations change from the dumb show to the play performance. In the dumb show they are a 'King' and 'Queene'; in the performance, a 'Duke' and 'Dutchesse' (and consistently with speech prefixes also). Reinforcing such inconsistency, Hamlet later identifies the 'Duke' as Albertus before identifying Lucianus as 'nephew to the King'.
37. Note how Ophelia's second question becomes much more sophisticated in the Q2 text (also in F); in Q1 she essentially asks the same question twice, presumably because Hamlet does not answer it the first time she asks. The repetition in Q1 calls attention to Hamlet's refusal to answer.
38. The stage direction for '*Enter Prologue*' drops down two lines in Q2.
39. An interesting variant which (correctly) pluralises the number of actors onstage, though Q1 and Q2 might highlight the role of the poisoner in the dumb show's action (or even possibly by the Prologue who is about to appear).
40. The phrase 'keepe counsell' also occurs in Q1.
41. Of these, the 'arbour' is perhaps the most interesting as it recalls the setting of Horatio's murder in Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*. Whatever the provenance of Q1, about which there is little agreement, this is a detail that might have been borrowed from Kyd's play (either by the

- author, if we presume that Q1 represents an early version of the play, or by a reporter, if we presume that Q1 represents a corrupted text of the later versions).
42. Anne Thompson and Neil Taylor, ed. *Hamlet, The Texts of 1603 and 1623*, The Arden Shakespeare (London: Thomson Learning, 2006), 119n.
 43. Edward Dowden, ed., *The Tragedy of Hamlet* (London: Methuen and Co., 1899), 116n.
 44. John Dover Wilson attributes the coinage to A.W. Pollard (Wilson, *What Happens in Hamlet*, 151), though it is uncertain whether Pollard advocated such an interpretation. He did not publish on the theory, and the first reference to it (and most likely to Pollard also) appears in a footnote to W.W. Greg's article 'Hamlet's Hallucination': 'a theory (dubbed by a friend the "second tooth" theory)' (398). Roth, 'Who Knows Who Knows Who's There?' discusses this in further detail (n13).
 45. Mehl, *The Elizabethan Dumb Show*, 118.
 46. Stanley Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge: In Seven Plays of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), esp. 182–183.
 47. Tiffany Stern, 'The Dumb Show in *Hamlet*', in *Shakespeare Up Close: Reading Early Modern Texts*, ed. Russ McDonald, Nicholas D. Nace and Travis D. Williams (London: Methuen, 2012), 273–81, here 276.
 48. *Ibid.*, 276.
 49. In his article 'Did the King see the Dumb-Show' (*The Cambridge Quarterly* 6.4 [1975], 303–26) W.W. Robson offers a remarkably sustained study of this 'problem', detailing the various critical explanations offered and adding his own two cents ('there is no sign that the King was *publicly* exposed' to the dumb show, 320).
 50. Wilson, *What Happens in Hamlet*, 147.
 51. *Ibid.*, 147.
 52. This is a detail especially resistant to interpretation: how might it be effectively communicated through mime what it is that she is protesting against? Here, if anything, F seems to follow the opening speeches of *The Mousetrap* too closely, losing sight of the constraints of mimed performance.