

Dusting off the Classics: Shakespeare's *Hamlet*

Richard Sacks – Handout #4 (for class of 9/25/24)

A. Hamlet's Q2-only soliloquy as he looks at Fortinbras army (4.4.32-66)

4.4.32 How all occasions do inform against me,
4.4.33 And spur my dull revenge! What is a man
4.4.34 If his chief good and market of his time
4.4.35 Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more.
4.4.36 Sure he that made us with such large discourse,
4.4.37 **Looking before and after,** gave us not
4.4.38 That capability and god-like reason
4.4.39 To fust in us unused. Now whether it be
4.4.40 Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple
4.4.41 **Of thinking too precisely on th'event –**
4.4.42 A thought which quartered hath but one part wisdom
4.4.43 And ever three parts coward – I do not know
4.4.44 Why yet I live to say this thing's to do,
4.4.45 Sith I have cause, and will, and strength, **and means**
4.4.46 To do't. Examples gross as earth exhort me.
4.4.47 Witness this army of such mass and charge,
4.4.48 **Led by a delicate and tender prince,**
4.4.49 Whose spirit with divine ambition puffed
4.4.50 **Makes mouths at the invisible event,**
4.4.51 Exposing what is mortal and unsure
4.4.52 To all that fortune, death and danger dare,
4.4.53 Even for an egg-shell. Rightly to be great
4.4.54 Is not to stir without great argument,
4.4.55 But greatly to find quarrel in a straw
4.4.56 When honour's at the stake. How stand I then,
4.4.57 That have a father killed, a mother stained,
4.4.58 Excitements of my reason and my blood,
4.4.59 And let all sleep, while to my shame I see
4.4.60 The imminent death of twenty thousand men
4.4.61 That for a fantasy and trick of fame
4.4.62 Go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot
4.4.63 Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,
4.4.64 Which is not tomb enough and continent
4.4.65 To hide the slain. Oh from this time forth,
4.4.66 My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth.



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A1. "Rightly to be great / is..." (4.4.53-5)

The construction is clearly "Rightly to be great / is not [X] / but [Y]" – Hirschfeld in her note says we "should" fix the sense by adding an extra "not" ("not not to stir"). But it's worth observing that there is no comma after "straw" at the end of line 55 and thus the first part of line 56 ("When honour's at the stake") appears to be part of the "Y" in the construction. For what it's worth, here's a summary of the 22 attestations of -honour- in *Hamlet*:

7x in direct address phrases such as "my honoured/honourable lord, your honour, etc.

1.2.221, 1.2.252b, 2.2.207, 2.2.215, 3.1.91, 3.1.97, 3.2.13

2x with adjectival "honoured" (other than in direct address phrases as above)

1.4.16, 3.2.157

3x in 1.3 as **Polonius** preaches to **Ophelia** about her "honour" and Hamlet's courtship

1.3.29, 1.3.97, 1.3.111

2x in 2.1 as **Polonius** urges Reynaldo to quasi-"dishonour" **Laertes** as he spies on him

2.1.21, 2.1.27

3x in 2.2 of **Polonius'** "honour"

2.2.128, 2.2.361, 2.2.487

1x in 3.1 in Gertrude's brief speech to **Ophelia** referring to Ophelia and Hamlet's love

3.1.42

1x in 4.4.56 in the "Rightly to be great / is ..." soliloquy

3x in 5.2 of **Laertes'** honour v-a-v avenging **Polonius and Ophelia**

5.2.203, 5.2.218, 5.2.220

A2. Description of Ophelia at beginning of 4.5 before she enters (4.5.4-14)

Speaker 1 (Gentleman in Q2, Horatio in F)

4.5.4 She speaks much of her father; says she hears
4.5.5 There's tricks i'th'world, and hems, and beats her heart,
4.5.6 Spurns enviously at straws, *speaks things in doubt*
4.5.7 That carry but half sense. Her speech is nothing,
4.5.8 Yet the unshapèd use of it doth move
4.5.9 The hearers to collection. They yawn at it,
4.5.10 *And botch the words up fit to their own thoughts,*
4.5.11 Which, as her winks and nods and gestures yield them,
4.5.12 Indeed would make one think there might be thought,
4.5.13 Though nothing sure, yet much unhappily.

Speaker 2 (Horatio in Q2, Gertrude in F)

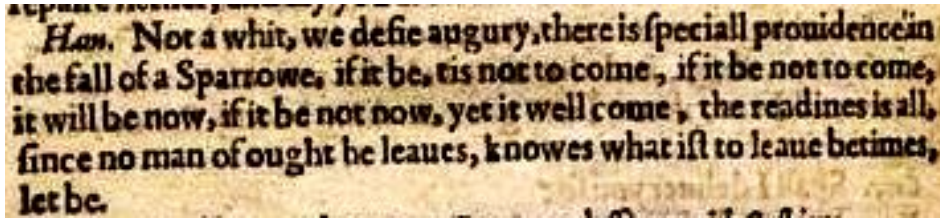
4.5.14 'Twere good she were spoken with, for she may **strew**
4.5.15 Dangerous conjectures in ill-breeding minds.

note: "straw(s)" in *Hamlet* only at 4.4.25, 4.4.55, 4.5.6 (all within 48 lines)
etymologically related verb "**strew(-)**" only in *Hamlet* at 4.5.14 of Ophelia
and then 2x at Ophelia's burial in 5.1 – 5.1/200 "strewments") and
5.1.213 ("strew")

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B. Q2 version of "Not a whit, we defy augury" speech (5.2.192-6)



Not a whit, we defy augury, there is speciall prouidence in the fall of a Sparrowe, if it be, 'tis not to come, if it be not to come, it will be now, if it be not now, yet it will come, the readines is all, since no man of ought he leaues, knows what ist to leaue betimes, let be.

B1. from the entries for "whit" in the Online OED

1. whit, n. A very small, or the least, part or amount; an iota, a jot, a bit. Without negative, esp. in every whit: every last thing, every little bit.
2. whit, variant of wit, n. The faculty of thinking and reasoning in general; mental capacity, understanding, intellect, reason.
3. whit, variant of wight, n. A human being, man or woman, person.

B2. from the entries for "providence" in the Online OED

1. Foresight; anticipation of and preparation for the future; prudent management, government, or guidance.

Note the only other use of "providence" in Hamlet (4.1.16-19):

Alas, how shall this bloody deed be answered?
It will be laid to us, whose **providence**
Should have kept short, restrain'd, and out of haunt,
This mad young man.

2. In full providence of God (also nature, etc.), divine providence. The foreknowing and protective care of God (or nature, etc.); divine direction, control, or guidance.
3. An act or instance of divine intervention; an event or circumstance which indicates divine dispensation.

B3. "sparrows" in the New Testament – Luke 12.6-7 (similar to Mth. 10.29-31)

(from the Geneva Bible (1560/1599), most likely Shakespeare's "go-to" translation)

⁶Are not five **sparrows** bought for two farthings, and yet not one of them is forgotten before God? ⁷Yea, and all the hairs of your head are numbered; fear not therefore, ye are more of value than many **sparrows**.

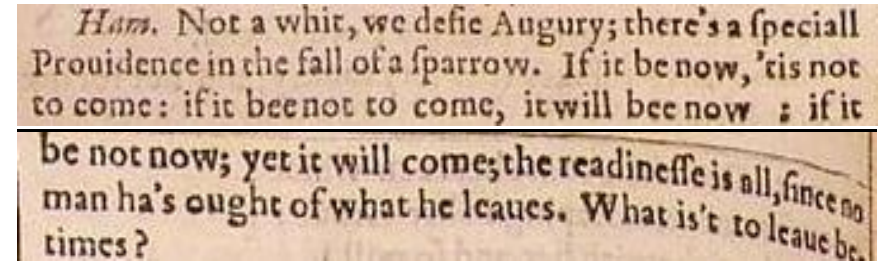


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B. F1 version of "Not a whit, we defy augury" speech (5.2.192-6)



Not a whit, we defie Augury; there's a speciall Prouidence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come: if it bee not to come, it will bee now: if it be not now; yet it will come; the readinesse is all, since no man ha's ought of what he leaues. What is't to leaue betimes?

B4. "sparrows" in Shakespeare (select examples)

Measure for Measure (3.2.164-5, Lucio speaking)

Sparrows must not build in his house-eaves, because they are lecherous.

King Lear (1.4.206-7, Fool speaking):

The hedge-**sparrow** fed the cuckoo so long
That it had it head bit off by it young.

Rape of Lucrece (line 849)

... hateful cuckoos hatch in **sparrows'** nests?

B5. from the entries for "ought" in the Online OED

1. ought, variant of aught, pron., adj., & adv. ... anything; anything whatever, anything at all, even the least thing.
2. ought, variant of out, adv., int., & prep. Away from a central or inner point, or from a point of origin; in an outward direction.
3. ought, v. transitive. As past tense: possessed, owned. Cf. owe
4. ought, n.¹ That which should be done, the obligatory; a statement using 'ought', expressing a moral imperative. [note: 1st clear attestation from later in 17th century]

B6. from the entries for "betimes" in the Online OED

1. At an early time, period, or season; early in the year; early in life.
2. spec. At an early hour, early in the morning.
3. In good time, in due time; while there is yet time, before it is too late.
4. In a short time, soon, speedily, anon, forthwith.

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C1. Moving the "To be or not to be" speech (3.1.56-88) – Mel Gibson

End of 1.5 (scene in which Hamlet speaks to Ghost and which ends with "swearing")



2.1 skipping first part (Reynaldo instructions), instead right to our witnessing scene between Hamlet and Ophelia, but with no words



2.2 scene in which Polonius attributes Hamlet's madness to the rejection by Ophelia



2.2 ensuing scene of Polonius with Hamlet ("fishmonger" to "except my life")



*skipping a) R&G scene
and b) Players arriving plus Pyrrhus speech scene
plus d) followup soliloquy, right to*

3.1.37 "Ophelia, I do wish..." but not Claudius' confession, thru Polonius/King hiding



then, skipping "to be" speech, instead going right to

3.1.89 "Nymph, in thy orsions" scene with Hamlet and Ophelia (no "nunnery" lines) (but Hamlet earlier, we think, overheard watching plan); then to end of 3.1



"to be or not to be" speech **from 3.1** (in crypt looking at coffin with father's image)



R&G arriving and 1st scene with them (**from 2.2**)



Players arriving (**from 2.2**), but no Pyrrhus/Hecuba speech



Gives hawk/handsaw speech to R&G (2.2.347-8), sees them go off to report to King, then on to much-shortened post-Hecuba tortured soliloquy > "play's the thing"



Right to 3.2, the play-within-the-play scene thru end ("witching time of night") does not include dumb show, only spoken play
Polonius introduces play with 2.2.363-7 "tragical-comical-historical..." speech
Hamlet gives 3.1.119-26 "to a nunnery" speech while sitting with Ophelia



Then on to 3.3, 3.4, ...

C2. Moving the "To be or not to be" speech – Laurence Olivier

End of 1.5 (scene in which Hamlet speaks to Ghost and which ends with "swearing")



2.1 skipping first part (Reynaldo instructions), instead right to our witnessing scene between Hamlet and Ophelia, as a memory of Ophelia narrated in her voice



2.2 scene in which Polonius attributes Hamlet's madness to the rejection by Ophelia



2.2 ensuing scene of Polonius with Hamlet ("fishmonger" to "except my life")



*skipping a) R&G scene (R&G completely absent)
and b) Players arriving plus Pyrrhus speech scene
plus c) followup soliloquy, right to*

3.1.33 "Walk you here..." but not Claudius' confession, thru Polonius/King hiding



then, skipping "to be" speech, instead going right to

3.1.88 ("Nymph, in thy orsions.../...to a nunnery") scene with Hamlet and Ophelia, (but Hamlet earlier overheard watching plan); then to end of 3.1



"to be or not to be" speech **from 3.1** (on top rampart looking down at sea way below)



Players arriving (**from 2.2**), but no Pyrrhus/Hecuba speech



As players go off, just gives last line-and-a-half of 2.2 (delivered with great gaiety):
"The play's the thing / Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king."



Right to 3.2, the play-within-the-play scene thru end ("witching time of night") includes dumb show, but not spoken "play"



Right to 3.2, the play-within-the-play scene thru end ("witching time of night") includes dumb show, but not spoken "play"



Then on to 3.3, 3.4, ...