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‘To be, or not to be’: *Hamlet* Q1, Q2 and Montaigne

Saul Frampton

Abstract

The differences between the second quarto (1604-5) version of Hamlet’s soliloquy beginning ‘To be, or not to be’ and the version contained in the first quarto (1603) have often been used to argue for the authorial integrity of the former and the degenerate nature of the latter. However, recent research has questioned the customary primacy between these two texts, arguing instead that Q2 revises and expands Q1 (as the title page of Q2 claims). This article will attempt to substantiate this interpretation by showing that Shakespeare's revision of ‘To be, or not to be’ is inspired by the ideas and vocabulary of Montaigne’s essay ‘By diuers meanes men come unto a like end’, translated by John Florio and published in 1603. Shakespeare’s indebtedness to Montaigne has been noted before, most notably in *The Tempest*. But it is significant that possibly Shakespeare’s first direct encounter with Montaigne is inspired by the very first three pages of Montaigne’s *Essays*.

Keywords: *Hamlet*, Shakespeare, Montaigne, Florio, first quarto, second quarto

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Word count: 5446 words

'To be, or not to be': *Hamlet* Q1, Q2 and Montaigne

Saul Frampton

Hamlet's soliloquy beginning 'To be, or not to be' is probably the most famous passage in English literature. According to Douglas Bruster, it is a speech that has been 'imitated, translated, venerated, and parodied to the point of becoming a symbol of 'literature itself'.[1] But despite this degree of attention, no clear source for Shakespeare's most famous lines has emerged. Summing up centuries of commentary, the revised 2016 Arden edition offers interesting sources for specific images (for example that Hamlet's 'bodkin' may recall Chaucer's Monk's description of the murder of Caesar), but like most editions it offers no general inspiration for the speech as a whole.[2]

This situation is complicated by the textual history of *Hamlet*, in that the passage exists in three different versions: Q1 (1603), Q2 (1604-5), and F (1623). The Q1 version is very different from Q2 and F, which are almost but not exactly the same. The debate over the primacy of these texts need not be rehearsed here. But in this article, I would like to entertain the hypothesis that Q2 is an expansion of Q1 and that the title page of Q2 is therefore telling the truth: that it is 'Newly imprinted and enlarged to almost as much againe as it was, according to the true and perfect Coppie.' To be 'newly . . . enlarged' it must have been enlarged from something, and that something was Q1. In other words the publication of Q1 prompted its expansion and publication as Q2 the following year.[3]

[1] Douglas Bruster, *To Be or Not to Be* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), 5.
[2] Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, eds , *Hamlet* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016) , 286n.
[3] See Paul Werstine, 'The Textual Mystery of Hamlet', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (1988), 1-26; Margrethe Jolly, *The First Two Quartos of 'Hamlet': A New View of the Origins and Relationship of the Texts* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2014); Terri Bourus, *Young Shakespeare's Young Hamlet* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

If we entertain this hypothesis, then the addition of some twelve lines between Q1 and Q2 is more likely to bear the marks of outside influence than if they were omitted accidentally by Q1. Having to add to a play might suggest the need for literary refreshment or stimulation. Cutting (or failing to remember) lines requires none.

I would like to suggest that the outside influence that may be detected in these lines is that of Montaigne. Montaigne's essays were first published in English in 1603, in a translation carried out by John Florio. It has been claimed that Florio's translation influenced a number of Shakespeare's plays, most famously shown in Gonzalo's speech in *The Tempest* and its indebtedness to Montaigne's 'Of Cannibals'.[4] But it has also been said to have influenced *Hamlet*. In his introduction to the 1982 Arden edition, Harold Jenkins suggested that: 'of the ideas which Shakespeare so lavishly bestowed on Hamlet, a few at least were prompted by his recent reading in Florio's Montaigne.' More specifically, Walter N. King argues that *Hamlet* 'reflects and borrows from Montaigne's savage onslaught against human vanity in "An Apologie of Raymond Sebond"'.[5]

However, unlike *The Tempest*, the influence of Montaigne on *Hamlet* is complicated by the textual question. If *The Tempest* was written around 1610-11, Shakespeare would have had ample opportunity to consult Florio's translation of Montaigne published seven years before, and the near identical wording of the two passages in question suggests that this may have been the case. But if

[4] See Jacob Feis, *Shakespeare and Montaigne* (London: Kegan Paul, 1884); J. M. Robertson, *Montaigne and Shakespeare* (London: A. and C. Black, 1897); Elizabeth Robins Hooker, 'The Relation of Shakespeare to Montaigne,' in *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, vol. xvii (1902); George Coffin Taylor, *Shakespeare's Debt to Montaigne* (New York: Phaeton Press, 1968); Leo Salingar, *Dramatic Form in Shakespeare and the Jacobeans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), 249-53; Robert Ellrodt, 'Self-Consciousness in Montaigne and Shakespeare,' in *Shakespeare Studies* 28 (1975), 37-50; Stephen Greenblatt and Peter G. Platt, eds, *Shakespeare's Montaigne: The Florio Translation of the Essays* (New York: New York Review of Books, 2014); William Hamlin, 'Montaigne and Shakespeare', in *The Oxford Handbook of Montaigne*, ed. Philippe Desan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 328-346.

[5] Harold Jenkins, ed., *Hamlet* (London: Routledge, 1982), 110; Walter N. King, *Hamlet's Search for Meaning* (Athens, University of Georgia Press, 2011), 58.

Q1 of *Hamlet* is a 'bootleg' copy of something like Q2 performed either in 1603 or some years before it makes consulting Florio's published translation either impossible or very tight. James Roberts recorded an entry for 'the Revenge of Hamlett' in the Stationer's Register on 26th July 1602. Florio's translation was published earlier than Elizabeth's death on 24th March 1603, as is shown by a bookplate in a copy belonging to her.[6] It is therefore possible that Q1 was published before Florio's translation. In terms of the text published in Q2, recent research has suggested that it was written after Elizabeth's death.[7] Normally critics have overcome any problems in dating Montaigne's influence by proposing that Shakespeare consulted a translation in manuscript, although as the editors of the New Oxford Shakespeare observe: 'scribal copies of such a large book would have been expensive, and we possess no manuscript, or other evidence that it circulated in advance of publication.'[8]

However, if Q2 is simply an enlargement of Q1, and it can be shown that Montaigne's influence is more present in Q2, then it suggests that Shakespeare may have simply consulted the published text of Florio's translation, a far more easily imagined scenario.

Obviously the first thing that is needed is a comparison of the two speeches. Here is Q1:

> To be, or not to be, I there's the point,
> To Die, to sleepe, is that all? I all:
> No, to sleepe, to dreame, I mary there it goes,
> For in that dreame of death, when wee awake,
> And borne before an euerlasting Iudge,
> From whence no passenger euer retur'nd,
> The vndiscouered country, at whose sight
> The happy smile, and the accursed damn'd.

[6] Gary Taylor and Gabriel Egan, eds, *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Authorship Companion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 542.
[7] Richard Dutton, Richard, '*Hamlet* and Succession', in *Doubtful and Dangerous: The Question of Succession in Late Elizabethan England,* ed. Susan Doran and Paulina Kewes (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), 173-91.
[8] Taylor and Egan, *The New Oxford Shakespeare,* 543.

> But for this, the ioyfull hope of this,
> Whol'd beare the scornes and flattery of the world,
> Scorned by the right rich, the rich curssed of the poore?
> The widow being oppressed, the orphan wrong'd,
> The taste of hunger, or a tirants raigne,
> And thousand more calamities be sides,
> To grunt and sweate vnder this weary life,
> When that he may his full Quietus make,
> With a bare bodkin, who would this indure,
> But for a hope of something after death?
> Which pusles the braine, and doth confound the sence,
> Which makes vs rather beare those euilles we haue,
> Than flie to others that we know not of.
> I that, O this conscience makes cowardes of vs all,
> Lady in thy orizons, be all my sinnes remembred.
> (TLN 1710-1744)[9]

If we then turn to Q2 we can identify (on this reading) the lines and phrases that are added to the text (here, in **bold**):

> To be, or not to be, **that is** the **question**,
> **Whether tis nobler in the minde to suffer**
> **The slings and arrowes of outragious fortune,**
> **Or to take Armes against a sea of troubles,**
> **And by opposing, end them**, to die to sleepe
> No **more, and by a sleepe, to say we end**
> **The hart-ake, and the thousand naturall shocks**
> **That flesh is heire to; tis a consumation**
> **Deuoutly to be wisht** to die to sleepe,
> To sleepe, **perchance** to dreame, I there's **the rub,**
> For in that **sleepe** of death **what dreames may come**
> When we **haue shuffled off this mortall coyle**
> **Must giue vs pause, there's the respect**
> **That makes** calamitie **of so long life**:
> For who would beare the **whips** and scornes of **time**,
> Th'oppressors wrong, **the proude mans contumely**,
> **The pangs of despiz'd loue**, **the lawes delay,**

[9] Line references to Q1 and Q2 are to the Internet Shakespeare Editions at http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/doc/Ham_Q1/complete/#tln-2985.3 and http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/doc/Ham_Q2/complete/#tln-2743.25

> The insolence of office, and the spurnes
> That patient merrit of th'vnworthy takes,
> When he **himselfe might** his quietas make
> With a bare bodkin; who would **fardels beare,**
> To grunt and sweat vnder **a** wearie life,
> But **that the dread** of something after death,
> The vndiscouer'd country, from **whose** borne
> **No** trauiler returnes, puzzels the **will**,
> **And** makes vs rather beare those ills we haue,
> Then flie to others that we know not of.
> Thus conscience **dooes** make cowards,
> **And thus the natiue hiew of resolution**
> **Is sickled ore with the pale cast of thought,**
> **And enterprises of great pitch and moment,**
> **With this regard theyr currents turne awry,**
> **And loose the name of action. Soft you now,**
> **The faire Ophelia, Nimph** in thy orizons
> Be all my sinnes remembred. (TLN 1710-1744)

If we were to summarize the differences between the two speeches we might say that Q1, despite its reputation, offers a fairly logical lesson in Stoicism. It asks whether one should live or pursue actions that may result in death – effectively suicide. If death was simply like untroubled sleep, there would be no problem. But instead the thought of an afterlife, and an everlasting judge, 'pusles the braine, / and doth confound the sence'. The key point from a Stoic perspective is that these checks on our behaviour are imaginative projections: they describe an 'undiscovered country', 'From whence no passenger euer retur'nd'. Our 'hope' of reward ('the happy smile'), and fear of punishment ('the accursed damn'd'), are potentially illusions, and outweighed by the harsh realities of our present existence: its 'hunger', 'sweat' and a 'thousand more calamities be sides'. Compared to the canonical version of the speech, Q1 therefore seems more direct, logical, and consistent.[10] Whereas Q2 raises a 'question' that remains perhaps undecided at the end of the speech, Q1 arrives at a

[10] See András Kiséry, *Hamlet's Moment: Drama and Political Knowledge in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 150; Zachary Lesser, *'Hamlet' After Q1: An Uncanny History of the Shakespearean Text* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 204-5

clearer 'point': thoughts of the afterlife illogically intrude upon our reasonings and valour.

When we then turn to Q2, this simple stoic lesson has become complicated. Perhaps the most significant change comes in the second line. No longer is the issue that of living or dying, but of passivity versus activity -- 'to suffer the slings and arrowes . . . / Or to take up armes'. This lurching gear-change has puzzled actors and readers for centuries: is it the same question as that of the first line, a development of it, or something totally different?

It is therefore interesting that Montaigne's essay 'By diuerse meanes men come vnto a like end' opens with a very similar debate: whether one should conduct oneself passively or actively in the face of a vanquishing force:

> The most vsuall waie to appease those mindes we have offended, when revenge lies in their handes, and that we stand at their mercie, is, by submission to move them to commiseration and pittie: Neverthelesse, courage, constancie, and resolution (meanes altogether opposite) have sometimes wrought the same effect. *Edward* the black Prince of *Wales* (who so long governed our Countrie of *Guienne*, a man whose conditions and fortune were accompanied with many notable parts of worth and magnanimity) . . .[11]

Montaigne is clearly influenced by the humanistic tradition of arguing *in utramque partem,* on either side of a question, although in this case about a pressing issue during the violence of the French Civil Wars. But what is interesting from Shakespeare's perspective is how Montaigne moves from the notion of 'revenge', an issue obviously central to *Hamlet*, into a consideration of 'resolution'. This latter word is central to our modern understanding of the canonical 'To be, or not to be' but is absent from the Q1 speech. Yet the idea is central to Montaigne's essay who uses it in a variety of forms: *resolution* (x2), *resolute* (x1), *resolutely* (x1) *resolved* (x2). This is in

[11] Michel de Montaigne, *The essayes or morall, politike and millitarie discourses of Lo: Michaell de Montaigne* (London: Edward Blount, 1603), 1. All subsequent references will be placed in the text.

line with Montaigne's intention in the essay, which rather than the question of living or dying is concerned with questions of conduct, particularly in a military setting, and the effect our behaviour can have on others.

Other words used in these opening two sentences of Montaigne's essay also seem to find echoes in the Q2 additions (Montaigne first): *mindes/minde*, *opposite/opposing*, *so long* and not least *fortune*. And whilst Q1's concerns were more squarely philosophical, Q2 seems to have added another question: which is the 'nobler' action. Again this would seem to be in line with Montaigne's aristocratic register: *courage, conditions, notable, worth, magnamitie* all occurring within his text. The question is no longer what is philosophically valid (Q1), but what form of conduct is most *noble* – a pressing interest for a recently ennobled Gascon gentleman, less so for a Prince. And here one also wonders -- if Shakespeare was expanding *Hamlet* when he read this passage, might Montaigne's mention of the 'black Prince', have set off a connection in his mind with his own 'solemn black' Prince Hamlet (and 'incky cloake' and 'solembe blacke' are not present in the Q1 text).[12]

As Montaigne's essay continues we may see other words and locutions that could be seen to echo the vocabulary and phrasing of the additions to Q2 (bold added):

> . . . having bin grievously offended by the *Limosins*, though he by maine force tooke and entred their Cittie, could by no meanes be appeased, nor by the wailefull out-cries of all sorts of people (as of men, women, and children) be moved to any pittie, they prostrating themselves to the common slaughter, crying for mercie, and humbly submitting themselves at his feete, vntill such time as in triumphant manner passing through their Cittie, he perceived three French Gentlemen, who alone, with an incredible and undaunted boldnesse gainestood the enraged violence, and **made head against** the furie of his victorious **army**. The consideration and **respect of so** notable a vertue, did first **abate the dint of**

[12] A suggestion I owe to Terri Bourus in a personal communication.

> **his wrath**, and from those three beganne to relent, and shew mercie to all the other inhabitants of the said towne. (1)

Here Shakespeare may have been influenced by 'made head **against** . . . army' ('take up armes against') and '**respect of so** notable a vertue' (**respect** / That makes calamitie **of so** long life). The idea of a 'dint' – or sword stroke – of wrath being abated, might also be seen to look forward to the process by which 'resolution' is 'Is sickled ore' or weakened by thought.

Montaigne's essay then takes a more reflective turn, and brings his own self into the frame:

> Either of these wayes might easily perswade me: for I am much inclinded to mercie, and affected to mildnesse. So it is, that in mine opinion, I should more naturally stoope vnto compassion, then bend to estimation. Yet is pittie held a vicious passion among the Stoickes. They would have vs aide the afflicted, but not to faint, and cosuffer with them. These examples seeme fittest for mee, forsomuch as these **mindes** are seene to be assaulted and environed by these two meanes, in undauntedly **suffering** the one, and stooping under the other. It may peradventure be saide, that to yeeld ones heart unto commiseration, is an effect of facilitie, tendernesse, and meekenesse: whence it proceedeth, that the weakest natures, as of women, children, and the vulgar sort are more subject unto it. (1-2)

Here again, Montaigne's words – *minds, suffering* – seem to reverberate with the revisions to Q2: 'Whether tis nobler in the minde to suffer'.

As we then come to the middle of the essay, Montaigne relates an episode from Diodorus of Sicily's *Bibliotheca Historica*:

> *Dionisius* the elder, after long-lingering and extreame difficulties, having taken the Cittie of *Reggio*, and in it the Captaine *Phyton* (a very honest man), who had so obstinately defended the same, would needes shew a tragicall example of revenge. First, he tolde him, how the day before, he had caused his sonne, and all his kinsfolkes to be **drowned**. To whome

> *Phyton*, stoutly out-staring him answered nothing, but that they were more happy than himselfe, by the space of one day. Afterward hee caused him to he stripped, and by his executioners to be taken and dragged through the Cittie most ignominiously, and cruelly **whip**ping him, charging him beside,s with **outragious** and **contumelious** speeches. All which notwithstanding, as one no whit dismaide, he ever shewed a constant and **resolute** heart. And with a cheerefull and bolde countenance went on still, lowdly recounting the honourable and glorious cause of his death, which was, that he would never consent to yeelde his Countrie into the hands of a cruell tyrant, menacing him with an imminent punishment of the Gods. *Dionisius* plainly reading in his Souldiers lookes, that in liew of animating them with braving his conquered enemie, they in contempt of him, and **skorne** of his triumph, seemed by the astonishment of so rare a vertue, to be moved with compassion, and inclined to mutinie, yea, and to free *Phyton* from out the hands of his *Satellites*, caused his torture to cease, and secretly sent him to be drowned in the **sea**. (2)

Here again words, ideas, and scenarios seem to echo the Q2 additions – *drowned* ('sea of troubles'), *whipping* ('whips'), *outragious* ('outragious'), *contumelious* ('contumely') , and *sea* ('sea of troubles'). The past tense verb 'scorned' is of course present in Q1, but in Q2 has become the plural nouns 'scornes' – perhaps closer to the singular noun of Montaigne's essay.

The general lexis of Montagine's 9496-word essay might also seem to be echoed in the Q2 text – i.e., to summarize, with Shakespeare in italics: *mind* (mind/s x4); *suffer* (co-/suffer/ing x3); *armes* (army x2, armes x1), *against* (3), *opposing* (opposite 2); *hart-ake* (heart x3); *thousand* (x2), *naturall (*natural x2, naturally x3); *mortal* (x1), *must* (x1); *respect* (respect/ed x2) *whip* (whipping x1), *time* (x2) *contumely* (contumelious x1), *love* (x1), *beare* x1); *resolution* (resolution x2, resolved x2, resolutely x1, resolute x1), *great* (x2), *name* (x1). A number of Montaigne's images also resemble certain other of the the Q2 revisions. There are two mentions of drowning (the idea of ending life in a 'sea of troubles'). He also tells of

how the Emperor Conrad told the besieged people of Guelph that only their women were allowed safe passage out of the city, bringing with them only what they could carry. They responded 'with an vnrelenting courage [and] advised and resolved themselves (neglecting all other riches or jewels) to carry their husbands, their children, and the Duke himselfe, on their backes' (2). The image that could be said to inform Hamlet's sense of strenuous forbearance in the face of life's viccissitudes: 'who would fardels beare'.

A case might therefore be made for the linguistic influence of Montaigne's essay. But what about its intellectual impact? The stoic lessons of Q1 were commonplaces in Elizabethan England. The grammar school system guaranteed an exposure to the moral temper of Cicero and Seneca, as Verena Lobsien affirms: 'Elizabethan students and grammar school boys . . . would have imbibed the kind of everyday Stoicism that provided the mainstay of early modern English *romanitas*.'[13] But Montaigne's essay subjects this stoic ideology to a sceptical circumspection that looks forward to his later essays. Sometimes stoic resolution works; sometimes it doesn't. This then leads onto a more general insight that might serve as epigraph for the *Essays* as whole: 'Surely, man is a wonderfull, vaine, divers, and wavering subject: it is very hard to ground any directly-constant and uniforme judgement vpon him' (2).

It is this questioning of the stoic model that seems to find its way into Shakespeare's revision. But what is also important – and this is why the textual history is so crucial to our understanding of the speech – is that the process of reflection seems to arise in the context of revision itself. We see words and images being transformed in the transition of Q1 into Q2: the 'euerlasting Iudge' of Q1 has disappeared, but seems to be revived in 'the lawes delay'. '[B]orne', used as the verb by which we are placed before the judge, has now become a noun, the sceptical boundary from which 'no traveller returns'. And whilst Shakespeare had started with a speech that

[13] Verena Lobsien, 'The Household of Heroism: Metaphor, Economy and Coriolanus', *Shakespeare Survey* 69 (2016), 198–227, here 221, doi:10.1017/SSO9781316670408.017.

seemed assured in its philosophical 'point' -- the illogicality of our fear of death -- re-visiting the speech, and re-reading it and revising it conjunction with Montaigne, seems to alter Shakespeare's outlook. Now the ethical dilemma has also become a cognitive, epistemological dilemma in line with the lexis of 'mind' that pervades Montaigne's essay. It is not only Hamlet, but *Shakespeare*, that is clouding over the over-confident stoicism of the previous text with editorial reflection, and the uncertainty that follows on from it. Self-consciousness thus arises from self-editing. The 'natiue hiew' of Q1's stoic certitude is 'sickled ore with the pale cast of' Shakespeare's second thoughts.

Self-editing, textual revision, linguistic reflection is therefore an object lesson in the fact that man is a 'vaine, diverse, and wavering subject', something that Montaigne himself was aware of through the successive three versions of his own *Essays*. Obviously, in terms of *Hamlet* this interpretation rests on the wider argument about the probability of Q2 being a revision of Q1. But one very simple fact makes the likelihood of 'By diuerse meanes' being an influence much more likely. It is the *very first essay* in Montaigne's text. Montaigne placed it there for a good reason. Although not the first essay that he composed, it was the one that laid down an important motif: the uncertainty and variablity of human nature. But in placing it first Montaigne also put it in a prime position in terms of its possible influence: that Shakespeare was able to find inspiration for his (1603?) revision of *Hamlet* by turning to the first three pages of the translation of Montaigne's *Essays* published in early 1603.

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The obvious question which then arises is: can Shakespeare's reading of Montaigne be detected in any of the other differences between Q1 and Q2? Certainly the claim has been made of the canonical play as a whole, and the more philosophical tone of Q2 would seem to be informed by a Montaignean sensibility. The Q2-added speech 'How all occasions doe informe against me' (5.4) seems a very deliberate

(and somehow unsatisfactory) rehash of rather obvious Montaignean themes, with its talk of 'beast', 'large discourse', 'godlike reason', 'thinking', and 'thought' (TLN: 2743.26-2743.36). Certain collocations from elsewhere in the play also seem to be inspired by Shakespeare's reading: Hamlet's words, 'your worme is your onely Emperour for dyet' (TLN: 2687), would seem to recall Montaigne's 'The heart and the life of a great and triumphant emperor are the dinner of a little worm' (266).

But one further example might come from an episode that seems to have been almost arbitrarily added to the play: Hamlet's encounter with the pirates, an event described by Alan Sinfield as 'improbable, and . . . unnecessary to the plot'.[14] In Q1, Hamlet is set back ashore after his ship is blown in the wrong direction: the 'subtle treason that the king had plotted, / Being crossed by the contention of the windes' (TLN: 2985.2-3). But in Q2 he is captured by pirates, who then agree to release him, an episode reported as Horatio reads out Hamlet's letter to him:

> Hor. Horatio, when thou shalt haue ouer-lookt this, giue these fellowes some meanes to the King, they haue Letters for him: Ere wee were two daies old at Sea, a Pyrat of very warlike appointment gaue vs chase, finding our selues too slow of saile, wee put on a compelled valour, and in the grapple I boorded them, on the instant they got cleere of our shyp, so I alone became theyr prisoner, they haue dealt with me like thieues of mercie, but they knew what they did, I am to doe a turne for them, let the King haue the Letters I haue sent, and repayre thou to me with as much speede as thou wouldest flie death, I haue wordes to speake in thine eare will make thee dumbe, yet are they much too light for the bord of the matter, these good fellowes will bring thee where I am, Rosencraus and Guyldensterne hold theyr course for England, of them I haue much to tell thee, farewell. So that thou knowest thine Hamlet. (TLN: 2984-3001)

[14] Alan Sinfield, 'Hamlet's Special Providence', *Shakespeare Survey* 33 (1980), 89-98, here 92, doi:10.1017/CCOL052123249X.009.

Some have argued that Shakespeare's source was a passage from Alfred North's 1579 translation of Plutarch,[15] who begins his life of Caesar with an account of him being taken hostage at sea:

> When he had been with him a while, he took sea again, and was taken by pirates about the Isle of Pharmacusa: for those pirates kept all upon that sea-coast, with a great fleet of ships and boats. They asking him at the first twenty talents for his ransom, Caesar laughed them to scorn, as though they knew not what a man they had taken, and of himself promised them fifty talents. Then he sent his men up and down to get him this money, so that he was left in manner alone among these thieves of the Cilicians (which are the cruellest butchers in the world), with one of his friends, and two of his slaves only: and yet he made so little reckoning of them, that, when he was desirous to sleep, he sent unto them to command them to make no noise. Thus was he eight-and-thirty days among them, not kept as prisoner, but rather waited upon by them as a prince. All this time he would boldly exercise himself in any sport or pastime they would go to. And other while also he would write verses, and make orations, and call them together to say them before them: and if any of them seemed as though they had not understood him, or passed not for them, he called them blockheads and brute beasts, and, laughing, threatened them that he would hang them up . . . . So, when his ransom was come from the city of Miletus, they being paid their money, and he again set at liberty, he then presently armed, and manned out certain ships out of the haven of Miletus, to follow those thieves, whom he found yet riding at anchor in the same island. So he took the most of them, and had the spoil of their goods, but for their bodies, he brought them into the city of Pergamum, and there committed them to prison, whilst he himself went to speak with Junius, who had the government of Asia, as unto whom the execution of these pirates did belong, for that he was Praetor of that country. But this Praetor, having a great fancy to be fingering of the money, because there was good store of it, answered, that he would consider of these prisoners at better leisure. Caesar, leaving Junius there, returned again unto Pergamum, and there hung up all these

[15] Robert S.Miola, *Shakespeare's Reading* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 99; Jenkins, ed, *Hamlet*, 104n.

> thieves openly upon a cross, as he had oftentimes promised them in the isle he would do, when they thought he did but jest.[16]

The facts of the incident are the same, certainly. But the tenor of the scene seems the very different to Hamlet's encounter. Plutarch uses the episode to illustrate Caesar's ruthless determination. Upon his taking, he openly insults his captors, 'laughed them to scorn', and after turning the tables, and growing impatient with the procrastination of Junius, has them brutally crucified. By contrast, Hamlet attests to a sort of mutual respect between himself and his captors: 'they haue dealt with me like thieues of mercie, but they knew what they did, I am to doe a turne for them' -- i.e., a favour in return (the Folio reads 'a good turne' as if to make this explicit). Whereas Plutarch is all about resolution and revenge, Hamlet is all for forgiveness and reciprocity.

It is therefore interesting that Montaigne tells the same story in 'Of Crueltie'. Eleanor Prosser convincingly argues that this essay was an important influence on Shakespeare elsewhere, its opening lines influencing *The Tempest*, specifically in Prospero's recognition that, 'The rarer action is / In virtue than in vengeance' (5.127-28).[17] The main thrust of Montaigne's essay is that whilst virtue is traditionally seen to be achieved with difficulty, there are some (like Socrates) who achieve goodness with ease, and some (like himself) who find that an abhorrence of cruelty occurs naturally within himself : 'I cannot endure to behold the execution with an unrelenting eye.' He goes on to quote from Suetonius's *Life of Caesar*, who presents a more sympathetic portrait than that of Plutarch:

> Some one going about to witnesse the clemencie of *Iulius Cæsar;* 'He was (saith he) tractable and milde in matters of revenge. Having compelled the Pirates to yeeld themselves unto him, who had before taken him prisoner and put him to ranzome, forasmuch as he had threatned to have them all crucified, he condemned them to that kind of death, but it was after he had caused them to

[16] C. F. Tucker Brooke, ed, *Shakespeare's Plutarch* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1909), 2-3.
[17] Eleanor Prosser, 'Shakespeare, Montaigne, and the Rarer Action', *Shakespeare Studies* 1 (1965): 261-64

> be strangled.' *Philemon* his secretarie, who would have poysoned him, had no sharper punishment of him than an ordinarie death. (248)

Although strangling might seem still rather cruel, the tenor of the passage ('tractable and milde') seems much closer to the spirit of Hamlet's encounter than Plutarch. Here, Hamlet, like Prospero, opts for the 'rarer action' of virtue over vengeance. And again certain words might be seen here to echo the Q2 additions: 'compelled the pirates', perhaps being echoed in Shakespeare's 'compelled valour'.

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If Montagine was an important source for Shakespeare's possible revision of Q1 into Q2, one question remains: what are we finally to make of Shakespeare's 'borrowings'? Are they purloining, graftings, rewritings? Are they plagiarism? Certainly it seemed to be a pressing issue at the time. In his address 'To the Curteous Reader' at the start of his translation, Florio defends translation as being different to 'usurping', but says that it is ultimately ourselves as readers who are to decide:

> What doe the best then, but gleane after others haruest? borrow their colors, inherite their possessions? What doe they but translate? perhaps, vsurpe? at least, collect? if with acknowledgement, it is well; if by stealth, it is too bad: in this, our conscience is our accuser; posteritie our judge: in that our studie is our aduocate, and you Readers our jurie. (A5r-v)

In *Volpone*, Jonson makes a related claim when Lady Politic Would-be identifies Montaigne as a popularly plundered author:

> All our English writers,
> I mean such as are happy in th' Italian,

Will deign to steal out of this author mainly,
Almost as much as from Montaignié. (3. 6. 87-90)

But the key distinction for Florio is whether it is done with 'acknowledgement' or 'stealth'. Might some – Florio possibly -- here lay the charge of 'stealth' at Shakespeare's door?

But at this moment we might turn to another Q2 addition to *Hamlet* -- in Hamlet's lines to his mother in the closet scene. His words are suffused with Montaignean ideas. He speculates that her senses may be 'apoplexed', recalling ideas from 'An Apologie for Raymond Sebond'. He refers to 'That monster custome, who all sence doth eate' (TLN: 2544.1) – a key interest for Montaigne's readers at the time, and one recalled in Samuel Daniel's reference to 'Custome, the mightie tyrant of the earth' (¶r) in his dedicatory poem to Florio's volume.[18] But Hamlet also holds up to her two pictures, one showing the graceful brow of her dead husband, the other the lecherous face of Claudius:

> This was your husband, looke you now what followes,
> Heere is your husband like a mildewed eare,
> Blasting his wholsome brother, haue you eyes,
> Could you on this faire mountaine leaue to feede,
> And batten on this Moore . . . (TLN: 2448-2451)

Most editors modernize the spelling, making the the allusion to a physical mountain more explicit. But some comment on the illogicality of the comparison. Surely a moor, or level plain would be be more lush than a rocky mountain?[19]

But one possible explanation is that Hamlet's 'faire mountaine' is not a metaphor, but rather an acknowledgement, a footnote, a reference to the urbane and humane Frenchman celebrated in

[18] See William M. Hamlin,'Florio's Montaigne and the Tyranny of "Custome": Appropriation, Ideology, and Early English Readership of the Essayes', *Renaissance Quarterly* 63, no. 2 (2010), 491–544.

[19] Thompson and Taylor comment that 'The contrast must be between "high" and "low", since there would not be much in terms of quality of pasture' (370n).

Matthew Gwinne's ('Il Candido') dedicatory sonnet to Florio and Montaigne at the start of Florio's translation:

> Who never shootes, the marke he never hitt's.
> To take such taske, a pleasure is no paine;
> Vertue and Honor (which immortalize)
> Not stepdame *Iuno* (who would wish thee slaine)
> Calls thee to this thrice-honorable prize;
> *Montaigne,* no cragg'd Mountaine, but faire plaine. (A7r)

If Hamlet's words are an allusion to Gwinne's poem (as may be possible), it also proves that Shakespeare was not working from the manuscript of a translation – as such a poem would only be included at the time of publication. Rather it shows that as Shakespeare sat down to compose what was to become the canonical form of *Hamlet*, he had two books in front of him: the 1603 first quarto of *Hamlet*, and the 1603 folio of John Florio's translation of Montaigne.