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Hamlet, the Ghost, and a New Document

David George, *Urbana University*

If we think messages from the afterworld belong to the Victorian period at latest, consider this story from Brazil, dated August 9, 2014. The head of a criminal organization named Joao Rosa was shot dead in a gunfight with his mistress's lover and his mistress, one Lenira de Oliviera. The two were charged with murder, but Lenira went to see a spirit medium, who got in touch with her dead lover Joao. She got a letter from him, channeled by the medium, saying that he died because of his jealousy, and containing details that only people who knew him well could have known. The letter was accepted as evidence by the judge presiding over the case. The town where the court was located is Uberaba, the center of a religion called spiritism, which has a doctrine of reincarnation and communication with the dead. Lenira and her new lover were acquitted of the crime, although a plea of self-defense was also a factor (Garcia-Navarro, NPR).

Similarly, many Elizabethans would have believed in messages from the afterworld and also “would have believed that ghosts are real and able to appear to some persons and not others” (Bevington 81), but Elizabethans were in the midst of a theological war as to whether ghosts were truthful or liars, or the product of an enfeebled brain. As we shall see, Catholics tended to believe in them as special apparitions from God, Protestants to believe they were the devil or a demon, and educated skeptics to believe they were the result of a mental process of self-deception.

The Ghost's Identity

Shakespeare's ghost is not merely “a conventional literary figure still trailing on to the stage all the trappings of classic myth while Shakespeare gives visible form to the fears of the popular mind. In *Hamlet*, from the first apprehensions of the soldiers on the watch to the moment when the apparition at length breaks silence with its dreadful tale, the circumstance with which it is imagined is in accord with the progression of events” (*Hamlet*, ed. Jenkins 101). When the play opens, the audience is treated to a mystery as to what to call the ghost of Hamlet's

father. Horatio inquires of the two sentinels on watch on Elsinore's battlements, Marcellus and Barnardo, "What, has this *thing* appeared again tonight?" having apparently told them earlier it "is but [their] *fantasy*." But Marcellus prefers the word "*apparition*" five lines later, and Barnardo, recognizing the ghost's resemblance to the late king, calls it "the same *figure*." To Horatio, it is "that fair and warlike *form*," but Barnardo questions whether Horatio's dismissal of the thing as fantasy can be correct, and again reiterates his word "figure" – a "portentous figure." Horatio, however, sticks to his earlier dismissal of the thing as a fantasy, calling out to it, "Stay, *illusion!*" and labeling it "a guilty *thing*," one typical of an "extravagant and erring *spirit*."

So we have, in the space of 133 lines (1.1.21-154), "thing," "fantasy," "apparition," "figure," "form," "illusion," and "spirit." These seven terms reflect Elizabethan doubts about ghosts: in 1584 Reginald Scot used the word "apparitions," which he dismissed as "seene in the imagination of the weake and diseased" (517). Likewise, in 1586 Timothy Bright wrote of "a false illusion [that] will appeare vnto our imagination" and of "phantasticall apparitions" (103). *OED*, Spirit, 3, defines it as "a supernatural, incorporeal, rational being or personality, usually regarded as imperceptible at ordinary times to the human senses, but capable of becoming visible at pleasure, and freq[ue]ntly conceived as troublesome, terrifying, or hostile to mankind." But a spirit could have a positive connotation, as Richard Tarlton, in c. 1590, explains to his narrator, "Therefore sith my appearance to thee is in a resemblance of a spirite, think that I am as pleasant a Goblin as the rest" (2).

When Hamlet enters in 1.2, however, the nomenclature consistently changes. To him, the thing is "my father's *spirit* in arms" (255), and either "a spirit of health or goblin damned" in the next scene, and "a questionable shape" (1.4.40,43). After his private interview with the spirit, however, he tells Horatio and Marcellus that it is a "*vision* . . . an honest ghost" (1.5.137-8).

So, for Hamlet, the "thing" is a ghost, a spirit, and a vision, all religious terms, as opposed to the more vulgar words "thing," "fantasy," and "form" used by Marcellus, Barnardo and Horatio in act 1, scene 1. A "vision," according to the *OED*, meaning 1, is especially "an appearance of a prophetic or mystical character, or having the nature of a revelation, supernaturally presented to the mind either in sleep or in an abnormal

state.” Quotations from about 1290 to 1584 show that the recipient of a vision was generally in a holy state; after that date, the sense of the word became secularized to mean any picture of events far off or in the future, which could even be “dreadful.” But when Shakespeare first used the word, in *1 Henry 6*, it was in the religious sense: “God’s mother deigned to appear to me / And in a vision full of majesty” (1.2.79). These lines are spoken by Joan of Arc. Shakespeare continued to use “vision” in a spiritual or magical sense in nine later plays. Hamlet’s “vision” is vouched for by St. Patrick, who in legend was the keeper of the gate of Purgatory (1.5.136).

But what are we to make of Hamlet’s wild and disrespectful remarks about the Ghost when it has gone beneath the stage and cries “Swear”? Hamlet calls him “truepenny,” “fellow,” “old mole,” and “worthy pioner.” A “pioner” was “one who digs a trench, pit, etc.; a digger, excavator; a miner,” according to the *OED*. The idea is that the Ghost is digging a passage under the stage, and, as Jenkins says, to “‘work i’ th’ earth’ like a ‘pioner’ was the trick of underground spirits, who in popular belief often assumed the shape of miners.... Yet a ‘pioner’ need be no more than a ‘fellow in the cellarage’.” Whether Hamlet believes, or affects to believe, that he is talking to a devil is perhaps too rational a question” (*Hamlet*, ed. Jenkins 458).

But very likely the flippancy is designed as prologue to Hamlet’s “antic disposition” (2.1.175). On this point, as Jenkins writes, the episode “gives more than a touch of the burlesque; and this ‘comic relief’ (for in the strictest sense it is that) has, in a manner characteristically Shakespearean, serious and even sinister overtones. The situation and dialogue are pertinently matter-of-fact, and yet have an aura of diabolism. We shall have accepted, along with Hamlet..., the Ghost’s account of its purgatory, and its presence down below will seem to accord with this. But ‘under the stage’ is the traditional theatrical location of hell, with possibilities of a kind mockingly suggested in Dekker’s *News from Hell*, ‘Hell being under every one of their stages, the players...might with a false trap-door have slipped [the devil] down, and there kept him, as a laughing-stock to all their yawning spectators’” (*Hamlet*, ed. Jenkins 457-48). But we will find a sixteenth-century instance from Southwark of a ghost in a real cellar.

The Truthfulness of the Ghost

In 2.2, Hamlet asks the leader of the visiting players whether they can act *The Murder of Gonzago* the next night, and then inquires whether he will “study a speech of some dozen or sixteen lines which I would set down and insert in’t” (480-1). The Player assents. At the end of this scene, Hamlet soliloquizes on his impotent reaction to the Ghost’s revelations, first accepting their truth (“a king / Upon whose property and most dear life / A damned defeat was made”) and then moving to the revenge question (“prompted to my revenge by heaven *and* hell”) (508-10, 523). But of course he cannot be prompted by both, and hence *The Murder of Gonzago* must be the test and proof of the Ghost’s claims. As 2.2 ends, Hamlet inclines to the “spirit” he has seen being a devil, with the “power / T’assume a pleasing shape.” He mentions his “weakness” and “melancholy” and the Devil’s potency with such spirits, his aim being to damn him (537-42).

In 3.2, Hamlet confides in Horatio that one scene of *The Murder of Gonzago* will be close to the killing of his father by poison poured into his ear. One speech in particular should cause Claudius to show his guilt – if not, the Ghost is “damnèd” (79-81). But though Hamlet has apparently inserted the poisoning episode into the dumbshow, it has no effect on Claudius. Only when the actor playing Lucianus, “nephew to the King,” pours the “mixture rank” into the player king Gonzago’s ear does Claudius rise and demand light for his exit (253, 261-4). The general explanation is that Claudius and Gertrude were not paying attention to the dumbshow – indeed Claudius is obliged to ask for the play’s “argument” or plot outline *after* the player king Gonzago falls asleep. At any rate, Hamlet tells Horatio, “I’ll take the ghost’s word for a thousand pound” (3.2.281-2).

And that is the last use of the word “ghost” in the play, apart from the stage direction at 3.4.102, “*Enter Ghost,*” to Gertrude’s chamber. In that scene Hamlet both sees the Ghost and hears his six lines, whereas Gertrude sees and hears nothing. She concludes that “This is the very coinage of your brain. / This bodiless creation ecstasy [madness] / Is very cunning in” (3.4.137-9). But Hamlet denies that he is mad--he can repeat the Ghost’s words if required to.

Spirits and Corpses

Now something strange happens to Hamlet's thinking--he has seen a truth-telling vision from one of the two realms, Heaven or Purgatory, both places where veracity is required. He has of course had trouble with the idea of revenge, which is a prompting of Hell. He would know the Scripture "Vengeance is mine,' saith the Lord; 'I will repay'" (Psalm 9:1, Hebrews 10:30, Romans 12:19). But instead of focusing on this conundrum, beginning in 4.3, he begins to focus on corpses, not on the souls of the dead. He tendentiously traces the fate of Polonius' body for Claudius' benefit; the old man is "Not where he eats, but where 'a is eaten. A certain convocation of politic worms are e'en at him." As for kings, they also turn into the worms that eat corpses, the worms become fishing bait, and the fish become human food (4.3.19-30). There is more of this graveyard humor in 5.1, the scene of Ophelia's burial, in which Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar are traced to their dust and beyond. Alexander's dust might be used as a clay stopper for a beer barrel, and Caesar's for clay to patch a wall (5.1.18 7-207).

This debasement from the spiritual vocabulary we find in Act 1 is one of those subterranean connections in Shakespeare's mind that mark his mature plays. Since neither Polonius nor Ophelia lend themselves to thoughts of the eternal life, in Act 4 Hamlet seems preoccupied with the consequences of the killing of Polonius, the death of Ophelia, and the graveyard before her funeral.

In Act 5, scene 2, however, Hamlet's intrinsic sense of supernatural intervention returns. Having escaped from the ship taking him to ostensible exile but really to execution in England, he tells Horatio that "our indiscretion sometime serves us well / When our deep plots do pall, and that should learn us / There's a divinity that shapes our ends, / Rough-hew them how we will" (5.2.8-11). The "ends" that he has in mind are presumably the reform of his mother and the dispatch of Claudius. The remark, based on the biblical idea that God is the ultimate disposer of events, is a fine metaphor taken from the cutting and shaping of fence posts in the countryside. When Hamlet rewrites the order for his execution to that of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's, he finds his father's signet ring in his purse, which makes the document authoritative. "Why," he tells Horatio, "even in that was heaven ordinant" (5.2.48). As for

agreeing to the duel with Laertes, Hamlet defies “augury,” and quotes Matthew 10:29, “There is special providence in the fall of a sparrow” (5.2.197-8). When he dies, the stoic and skeptical Horatio prays that “flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!” (5.2.343). This image, which indicates a spiritual change in Horatio, is probably from Renaissance art; Pietro Perugino’s painting of The Ascension of Christ (painted between 1496 and 1500) shows Christ ascending and surrounded by angels flying and playing stringed instruments. Antonio de Coreggio similarly pictures the Assumption of Mary, lofted skyward by singing or musical angels, in a fresco in the dome of Parma cathedral in Italy (begun 1520).

Hamlet is, among other things, a spiritual man. He “may respond to promptings from the powers beyond but not presume to pronounce their judgments. What we more appropriately have instead are the expression of faith in providence and the prayer of a fellow creature, in the lovely words of Horatio, for a heavenly benediction: Flights of angels sing thee to thy rest. Johnson is well known to have said that Shakespeare ‘seems to write without any moral purpose’; but this is perhaps a play in which a moral is implicit, both simple and profound. For it commands a man who, after questioning the meaning of creation, comes to accept a design in it beyond our comprehending, and who therefore, after seeking to withdraw from life through an abhorrence of all that is ugly and vicious in it, is finally — though tragically not until death approaches — content to live life as it is, able to acknowledge, in word and deed, “The readiness is all” (*Hamlet*, ed. Jenkins 159). It is in 3.4. that Shakespeare reveals Hamlet’s sense of the righteousness of heaven and the grief heaven shows at the corruptions of the world: “Heaven’s face does glow / O’er this solidity and compound mass / With tristful visage, as against the doom, / Is thought-sick at the act” (48-51). That is, God’s face is angry and sorrowful over this world, as He will be over the Day of Judgment when Gertrude’s “act” comes to be judged. Hamlet then proceeds to recommend to his mother the oil (“unction”) of grace: her “act . . . blurs the grace and blush of modesty”; she must not “lay . . . that flattering unction” to her soul that the Ghost has appeared, not to reform her “fighting soul,” but as a delusion to impose on Hamlet’s sanity. She soon acknowledges that her heart is broken (158), the spiritual prerequisite for reform of old corrupt habits that have eaten away sensitivity to evil (163-67). Hamlet tells her that restraint, to be put on if it is not sincere,

“shall lend a kind of easiness / To the next abstinence, the next more easy” (161-69). This advice derives from Psalm 34:19, “The Lord is close to the broken-hearted, saves those whose spirit is crushed,” and is a mark of Hamlet’s developing spirituality in the play.

So much then for the play’s spiritual progress; according to Horatio, Hamlet seems destined to ascend to heaven at the end, even though the Ghost’s command for revenge seems to have been fulfilled, however reluctantly, not by cold-blooded murder but in retaliation for a fatal attack. In short, Hamlet is a man more responsive to provocation than procrastinating killer. As Eleanor Prosser observed, “The [English] law was absolute: murder, as such, was never justified. Even if a man’s entire family had been brutally massacred by the most vicious criminal, even if the magistrates were so corrupt that they knowingly would let the murderer go free — even then, the man who planned and executed the death of the murderer would be equally a murderer in the eyes of the law. English law allowed only one exception. Instant retaliation for an injury was adjudged manslaughter, on the grounds that it was unpremeditated, and in the Elizabethan period might be forgiven by royal pardon. To be considered manslaughter, the killing had to be an immediate reaction to immediate injury. Any delay at all indicated premeditation, and Elizabethan law defined murder as unlawful killing by a sane adult with ‘malice prepensed’” (3). Hamlet meets these criteria for the killing of Laertes and Claudius, but the killing of Polonius by mistake for the king is an ambiguous case.

The Ghost’s Call for Revenge

Still, if the Ghost is from Purgatory, it ought not to call for revenge; it should only call for prayers to be released from Purgatory. But as Bevington notes, Shakespeare “does not use the term; [he] employs it only twice in all his plays,” once by Romeo and once by Emilia in *Othello*. The concept was Catholic; as Scot writes in *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1587), “These heauenlie or purgatorie soules...appeare most commonlie to them that are borne vpon ember daies, and they walke most vsuallie on those ember daies [Ember Days are days of fasting: Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays following the first Sunday in Lent, Whitsunday, Holy Cross Day (14 September), and St. Lucia’s Day (13 December)] bicause we are in

best state to praie for the one, and to keepe companie with the other” (518-19). In passing, we may note that the play opens just before the Advent season, as Marcellus suggests: “Some say that ever ’gainst that season comes / Wherein our Savior’s birth is celebrated, / This bird of dawning [the rooster] singeth all night long, / And then, they say, no spirit dare stir abroad, / The nights are wholesome” (1.1.158-162). Horatio, however, believes this only “in part” (1.1.165).

And yet the Ghost does call for revenge for “his foul and most unnatural murder” (1.5.25). As Hermann Ulrici noted in 1839, a ghost from Purgatory who calls for murder splits the play down the middle: Hamlet’s “purported delay [is] prompted not by psychological paralysis but by [his] perception that the code of revenge cannot be reconciled with Hamlet’s own Christian faith. He is beset with doubts and scruples that are highly moral and in accord with his Christian teaching, so that in him ‘we behold the Christian struggling with the natural man’” (qtd. in Bevington 127). Similarly, Greenblatt in 2001: “The trouble is that Purgatory, along with theological language of communion (housesing), deathbed confession (appointment), and anointing (aneling), while compatible with a Christian (and, specifically, a Catholic) call for remembrance, is utterly incompatible with a Senecan call for vengeance. Such a call for vengeance — and Hamlet understands that it is premeditated murder, not due process, that is demanded of him — could come only from the place in the afterlife where Seneca’s ghosts reside: Hell” (237).

Bullough, however, did not consider this theological split to be important: “we should not exaggerate the doctrinal strictness of Shakespeare’s approach or assume that he was a Catholic because he used the idea of Purgatory,” and he adopted Paul Siegel’s observation: “The Hamlet Ghost is a compound of the Senecan revenge ghost, the Catholic purgatorial spirit and the popular graveyard spook, created for an audience prepared by theatrical tradition, by what Cardinal Newman called ‘floating religious opinions’ (as against official dogma) and by current folklore to give it dramatic credence” (Bullough vol. 7:27, Siegel 661). Since Hamlet emphasizes “the innate sinfulness of the human condition,” that sinfulness, according to Bevington, “would help Elizabethan audiences understand why the Ghost of Hamlet’s father has had to spend time in Purgatory, even if some members of the audience

would no doubt regard the idea of Purgatory as Catholic superstition” (65).

Similarly with Bullough, Jenkins believes that the Ghost’s dual role as purgatorial spirit and demonic seeker of revenge is a construct of plot necessity and considerations of theatrical box-office. “We know that the Ghost in the *Ur-Hamlet*, with its white vizard and its cry of ‘Revenge’, left a deep impression on the memory of a spectator. But I think we too readily suppose that it must therefore have been like the Ghost in Shakespeare” (*Hamlet*, ed. Jenkins 101). Hamlet’s father’s ghost reveals “a countenance more in sorrow than in anger,” notes Horatio. Hamlet asks, “Pale or red?” to which Horatio replies, “Nay, very pale” (1.2.232-4), with a “sable silvered” beard (1.2.242).

But Hamlet’s father’s ghost owes much to the Senecan revenge ghost, which had appeared in Thomas Kyd’s spectacular hit of c. 1587, *The Spanish Tragedy*. As one ghost to another, Revenge tells Andrea, also a ghost, “This hand shall hale them down to deepest hell, / Where none but Furies, bugs, and tortures dwell” (4.5.27-28). By “them,” Revenge means Horatio and six other corrupt courtiers, one of whom is the King of Spain’s brother. Obviously, this extremely popular and vengeful ghost figure was one that Shakespeare could borrow from to great effect in his play. In fact, Kyd’s play and Shakespeare’s were associated in the popular mind, as John Gee noted in 1624: “Representations and Apparitions from the dead might be seen far cheaper at other Play-houses [i.e., than at a Jesuit-produced illusion of a spirit appearing from Purgatory]. As for example, the *Ghost in Hamlet*, *Don Andrea’s Ghost in Hieronimo*” (qtd. in Greenblatt 256). Kyd’s ghost probably wore a white sheet; certainly the one at the Theatre around 1596 that “cried so miserably...like an oisterwife, *Hamlet reuenge*” wore white-face make-up, or else a pale “visard” (Lodge 62). The woodcut that appears on the first page of *The Rest-less Ghost and Strange and wonderful News from Northampton-shire* features a white-faced ghost that is apparently naked except for a white sheet with one end knotted around its head. But while Shakespeare felt he had to introduce a vengeful ghost, he ennobled him, costuming him in armor and giving him elevated diction and martial authority.

The Elements of the Ghost

There is, of course, no ghost in Saxo Grammaticus's *Gesta Danorum*, or *History of the Danes*, and though the ghost of Amleth's father is in Belleforest's *Histoires Tragiques* (1570), he is merely referred to as "une ombre," or a shade. As Jenkins notes, "from a metaphorical shade to a visible speaking ghost is an immense imaginative leap and one for which Belleforest could provide no adequate springboard" (ed. *Hamlet* 93).

Paul Siegel concludes that the ghost of Hamlet's father must come from Purgatory, and hence that Shakespeare relied on Catholic tradition. As May Yardley wrote in 1929, "the Catholics had always assumed that through that other door by way of the return of the dead 'veris facilis datur exitus umbris' [an easy exit is given to true shades]...by a special intervention of God, the miracle might happen and a ghost appear for some special purpose, a ghost either from heaven, purgatory, or hell" (223-4). So the appearance of Hamlet's father is a miracle, or in Hamlet's word, a "vision" (1.5.137), which he defines to Horatio a few lines later as "a stranger," adding that "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio / Than are dreamt of in your philosophy" (1.5.168-70). ("Your philosophy" here means "the common skeptical philosophizing.") Richard Hooker remarked in 1594 that "The first...beginning here with a weake apprehension of thinges not sene, endeth with the intuitive vision of God in the world to come" (1: xi.82).

At any rate, the Ghost proves to have spoken the truth, and so it really is an airy vision. As with spirits in general, the Ghost "faded on the crowing of the cock" (1.1.161), just as Scot claimed in 1584, "Manie affirme ...that spirits are of aier, bicause they have beene cut...in sunder, and closed presentlie againe; and also bicause they vanish awaie so suddenlie" (517). Again, as Pierre Le Loyer affirmed in 1586, "If [souls] return perchance to this world by the will of God and appear to us, they take not a real but phantasmal body...it is only a phantom of air that they clothe themselves in, to appear visibly to men" (qtd. in Yardley 240-1).

The Ghost of Folklore

Ghosts were, in medieval and Renaissance days, absolutely terrifying. Hamlet's father's ghost creates fear to the point that Hamlet prays for protection against a possible evil spirit: "Angels and ministers of grace defend us!"(1.4.40), and Marcellus and Horatio attempt to stop Hamlet from following its beckoning him to a more secluded place (1.5.80-1). But as the belief in ghosts vanished with the late eighteenth-century Enlightenment, the Ghost became comic, as the caricatures of George Cruikshank in the 1850s testify. His engraving of the Ghost ascending by a platform trapdoor shows his legs being caned by two rather boyish gentlemen, one of them Robert Elliston, the manager of Covent Garden theater, presumably to make him grimace. Another shows the Ghost alone with Hamlet; the Ghost has a nightmarish oversized head and enlarged eyes; Hamlet's jaw has dropped and his hair stands on end, giving him the appearance of Mick Jagger on just learning that his concert tour has been canceled halfway through. By the 1920s, the Ghost had become an embarrassment, and was often reduced to a voice-over. However, it has certainly since then been rehabilitated, re-embodied by an actor and redignified since then, but it is now mostly presented as thrilling and mysterious rather than terrifying.

After tracing the Ghost back to Catholic belief and the Senecan revenge tradition, Paul Siegel makes the third element in the ghost "the popular graveyard spook," and guesses that Shakespeare used "current folklore to give it dramatic credence" (661). Ghost folklore of the sixteenth century is, however, notably sparse. In fact, the first real collection of English ghost stories was not published until 1661, beginning a period when broadsides and ballads about ghosts also began to appear. The first example I have found is the anonymous *Strange and true news from Long-Ally in More-Fields, Southwark, and Wakefield in Yorkshire* (1661), which has a Southwark ghost that appeared in a house "near the [F]alchion [inn] on the [B]ankside," wearing "the same clothes he used to wear when he was alive," and seeking his son. His concern was for a grand-daughter whom he had "dealt unjustly by before his departure, being rich, and leaving it [i.e., her] unprovided for as it ought to have been."

Probably the advent of the Catholic-leaning Charles II in 1660 was one factor that prompted the release of a backlog of stories that would earlier have been suppressed as popish. Indeed, “following the Reformation, Protestant theologians dismissed ghosts as Catholic inventions, delusions and frauds. A good Protestant should not believe in ghosts. ...During the second half of the 17th century, a profound intellectual debate flourished about the reality of ghosts and witches. For some, the possibility of modern miracles, and as a consequence the very foundations of Christianity, were at stake. Ghost sceptics were denounced as dangerous atheists” (Mason 2).

Two virtually unknown ghost stories are therefore well worth repeating today; the first is by Bishop Henry More (c.1586-1661), great-grandson of Sir Thomas More, who left an account of a ghost that appeared to Father John Cornelius in the late 16th century, between 1588 and 1592. Cornelius was familiar with the Catholic baron John de Stourton, whose widow took Cornelius into her home when his patron John Arundell died. De Stourton had died a Protestant in 1588, and when Cornelius learned of De Stourton’s deathbed sorrow that he had not received the Catholic last rites, he recommended prayers for the dead. The following day De Stourton appeared beside Cornelius, who was standing at the church altar, and earnestly beseeched Cornelius to have pity on him because he was burning in the flames of Purgatory. No one else present in the church could see or hear the ghost, and indeed those nearby had to prompt Cornelius to go on with the Mass. The story might have reached Shakespeare through John de Stourton’s mother, a daughter of Henry Stanley, earl of Derby, who died in 1593. Shakespeare was certainly connected in some way with the Stanleys, since four of his earliest plays were performed by Henry Stanley’s company or that of his son, Ferdinando, Lord Strange. The De Stourton story reached Henry Smith, “puritanically inclined,” anti-Catholic, and the best preacher in Elizabethan London, who wrote in “The Pilgrim’s Wish” (c.1592), “If thou say the soul is come to the body, and the body is risen to the soul for that time, then I can say no more to thee, but believe thine own eyes: if thou thinkest that it is such a man’s body that thou seest, look in the grave and open the ground, and then thou shall see the body where it was laid, even while the vizor walks in thy sight: therefore apparitions are no other than that which appeared to Saul. Thus the devil hath many ways to deceive,

and this is one, and a dangerous one, to draw us from God's word to visions, and dreams, and apparitions, upon which many of the doctrines of the Papists are grounded" (211-12).

De Stourton's story may well be the germ of *Hamlet* 3.4.103-144, when the Ghost re-appears in Gertrude's chamber and admonishes Hamlet not to forget his "almost blunted purpose." Hamlet replies,

Do not look upon me
Lest with this piteous action you convert
My stern effects. Then what I have to do
Will want true color tears perchance for blood. (127-30)

Gertrude does not hear or see the Ghost, who is wearing "his habit as he lived," just as John de Stourton was dressed in a costume recognizable to John Cornelius. Gertrude tells Hamlet that "this is the very coinage of your brain. / This bodiless creation ecstasy / Is very cunning in," but he remembers his own words to the Ghost, and he can "reword" them if Gertrude wishes (137-9, 143). Bright, writing in 1586, had taken Gertrude's position: "a false illusion will appeare vnto our imagination...this taking hold of the brayne by processe of time giueth it an habite of depraued conceite, whereby it fancieth not according to truth" (103-4). However, Gertrude is wrong since Hamlet can see and hear the Ghost, and we are left to intuit that she is spiritually unattuned while Hamlet is spiritually aware.

Fr. John Cornelius' experience was not unique, as Reginald Scot wrote, "Soules...neuer appeare to the whole multitude, seldome to a few, and most commonlie to one alone," but he added cynically, "for so one may tell a lie without controlment" (345-6).

Gertrude and Spiritual Vision

Gertrude is no Catholic; she has married her late husband's brother, which was such a close relationship that Saxo, Belleforest, and the Catholic and Anglican churches called it incest. The term pre-dates Christianity in Denmark, and perhaps Shakespeare simply picked it up from his sources. Yet incest was a matter on which one could take one's theological pick: the matter of incest was a living issue for some

Elizabethans because Henry VIII had married Katharine of Aragon, the wife of his deceased brother Arthur, in 1509; the marriage had required a papal dispensation to be valid because of the doctrine of that period, that it was canonically incestuous for a man to marry his brother's widow. This prohibition is found in Leviticus 20:21, which forbids a man to marry his brother's wife: "it is an act of impurity; he has dishonored his brother; they will be childless." The Church construed the phrase "act of impurity" as incest. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* notes that "It is commonly held, with regard to those related by consanguinity or affinity, that with the exception of the first degree in the direct line [i.e., parent and child] all forms of incest are, morally speaking, of the same species, and therefore for the integrity of confession there is no necessity to distinguish between them. It must be noted, however, that carnal sins between those who are spiritually or legally related within the degrees that would render their marriage invalid, are separate species of incest" ("Incest").

The text supporting Rome's dispensation of Henry's potential incest might be the Levirate custom from Deuteronomy 25:5: "If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son,...her husband's brother shall take [the widow] and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her." (Levirate is from Latin *levir*, a husband's brother) However, when Henry divorced Katharine and married Anne Boleyn in 1533, he had Archbishop Cranmer pronounce the marriage to Katharine invalid, probably on Catholic grounds. This resulted in Rome's condemnation of the second marriage as adulterate, and therefore for Catholics, Henry's children by Anne were illegitimate, including Queen Elizabeth. And so any child that Gertrude might bear to Claudius would be, in Hamlet's eyes, illegitimate; and perhaps Gertrude cannot see any visionary apparitions because she is adulterate. As the 1710 German version of *Hamlet* called *Der Bestrafte Brudermord* has Hamlet tell Gertrude, "I can readily believe that you see nothing, for you are no longer worthy to look upon his form." Hamlet, on the other hand, is prayed for by Horatio as he dies.

The Southwark Ghost

The "current folklore" mentioned by Siegel was not documented by Bullough in his *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*

(7.165-9). One likely source for this folklore is an account written around the 1550s about a ghost in Southwark, the borough just south of the Thames. This account survives in three or possibly more versions from 1674-75: in the six-page *The Rest-less Ghost: Or, Wonderful News from Northamptonshire, and Southwark* (1675); in the ballad *Strange and Wonderful News from Northampton-shire, OR, The Discontented Spirit* (1675), and in a letter copied by the Northamptonshire barrister-at-law and antiquary Francis Morgan, who sent it along to Robert Hooke, the greatest physicist of his time, on January 17, 1674/5. This letter is the earliest and most authoritative version of the three.¹ We can surmise that Morgan's account of the haunting, which follows the behavior of Hamlet's father's ghost (in 1.4, 1.5, and 1.6), was not judged to be sufficiently dramatic; hence, *The Rest-less Ghost* pamphlet makes the murder more local and circumstantial.

This latter account had been taken down from the mouth of William Clark, a maltster of Hennington (so spelled in the pamphlet), and could be vouched for by William Stubbins, John Charlton, and John Stevens, "to be spoken with any day at the Castle Inn without Smithfield-Barrs," and many others. Clark lived at a farmhouse known as Old Pell's house, after the family name of earlier occupants. Twelve months previously, a series of disturbances began: doors were unlocked or unbolted during the night, flung off their hinges, or window panes were broken. No agent had been seen until about three weeks before when, as Clark was walking a little way off from the house, "the Spirit on a sudden became visible to him, at first in a very horrid, but immediately after in a more familiar and humane shape." Although frightened, Clark calmed himself by uttering "In the name of Almighty God, blessed for ever." Asked what it wanted, the apparition answered "with a pleasant friendly countenance and distinct voice ...*I am the disturbed Spirit of a person long since Dead, I was murdered neer this place Two hundred sixty and seven years, nine weeks, and two days ago, to this very time, and come along with me and I will show you where it was done.* It led Clark to the side of a hedge and said, "Here was I killed, my head being separated from my body." When Clark asked why he had been killed, he said it was for "lucre and covetousness of my Estate." He was unable to rest because he had lived in London, at Southwark, and before his death had buried some money and writings in the cellar.

The ghost's name was perhaps Pell, murdered 267 years before near his Hannington farmhouse; for a while after the murder, he haunted the place, "but was at last laid, and bound down by the Magical Art of a certain Fryer...for two hundred and fifty [years], during which time he was confined from appearing on earth." At last it appealed to William Clarke to go to Southwark and dig up a metal box with the money and writings in it. The local minister and neighbors advised Clark to go; the ghost added that he had left behind a wife and two children. Clark did so on Saturday, January 9, 1675, met the ghost (wearing "the common habit of man") on Sunday, and asked questions about the ghost's supernatural abode: "he demanded, whether it had been all this while in Joy or Torment, and whether when he had done and performed all its will, it would go into a state of eternal happiness, but to neither of these questions it would not answer one word." The writer did not wish to reveal the location of the Southwark house because "thousands have already been there" and he did not want to attract more.

Clark, having dug about eight feet in the cellar floor, "found a pot and in it a considerable quantity of gold, & at the bottom of that some Writings," the paper ones crumbled away and the parchment ones whole. He distributed the find to the family living there, and the ghost reappeared "in a very joyful contented manner," desiring Clarke that the story should be made public. He arrived back home on Thursday, January 14.

The reader will observe that 250 years after c. 1407 and a short early haunting period of fifteen years or so is c. 1672, by which date friars had vanished in England and Protestant ministers had taken over the spiritual care of the people.

Strange and Wonderful News, which runs to 120 lines of doggerel verse, offers a rougher ghost and adds gory detail; having met Clarke at his house-door,

INto the Orchard it him shove,/in the name of Jesus Christ, said he
[Clarke],/Crying out, was much amaz'd/whither wilt thou shove me./Be
not afraid, the spirit said, no harm shall come to thee at all,/But to thee I
must declare my mind/And look thou dost fulfil it all./Two hundred sixty
and seven years/since a servant man there did him slay,/But conjur'd
down it now appears/as the spirit unto him did say./I was a man the
which was kil'd/two hundred sixty seven years ago,/By a servant man that
dwelled here/for that I had the truth is so./He also did cut off my

head,/and wounded me very sore,/And in this place me buried/what could he against me a done more.” By this date, “hundreds knows it to be true.” This version omits the questions about the afterlife that the letter Morgan wrote to Hooke, and *The Rest-less Ghost*, contain.

Morgan’s letter (now Sloane 1039, ff. 96v -97v, in the Sloane Collection at the British Library) is much subtler and much closer to details in Hamlet (Appendix). It concerns a Southwark man murdered about the time of Henry IV’s reign (1399-1413); the murder took place near his house and the murderer buried the corpse in the orchard. The man’s wife and children never knew what had become of him, though he reappeared as a ghost who “walked sometimes in a cellar in the house,” where he had buried “some money and writings.” This part of the letter fills the second half of f. 96r, and the ghost claims that the murder took place “267 yeares agoe 9 months & two dayes.” That takes the incident back to about 1407.

Morgan, writing from Kingsthorpe in Northampton, added his own twist to this earlier haunting. This part of the story fills the opening of the letter’s f.96r and resumes at the end of 96v. The ghost returned in 1674, when he appeared in the night to the two sons of one Richard Clarke, evidently a later descendant, living in Hannington, Northamptonshire, 75 miles north of London. The boys “espyed the shape of a man in darke colourd close [clothes] in their fathers yard.” They woke their father, but when he went down to the yard, the ghost disappeared, so Clarke went back to bed. The sons saw the ghost again that night and called their father, who called in neighbors; all of them saw it, but it vanished with daybreak. The next time Clarke saw the ghost was New Year’s night, 1674/5; it got between Clarke and a door; terrified, he ran “in to another yard,” where he stopped and “askt what the spiritt would have.”

When Clarke agreed to go to London and meet the ghost there, the ghost began to add details of events we can date about 1407: “he had rec[eive]d much hurt in his Cattle by him [the murderer], that he shooke the house w[he]n his first wife lay in & frighted her so she dyed of it, but w[he]n this mony was found wth the writings & deliverd according to his order to Some of his relations liveing in Such a house in Southwark who were of Such a name at Suche a Sygne & were the fourth generation from him both the apparition should be at rest & Clarke troubled no more.” These Southwark relatives are mysterious; they must have been alive in

the early 1500s if we assume a generation is or was about 25 years, but they evidently did nothing about the ghost's revelations and its demand for excavation in the cellar of their house. Inexplicably, they are apparently still alive in 1674.

Clarke went to London within two or three days, saw the spirit several times on a Sunday, and on Monday "the spiritt past before him & led him to the house where he found Such persons the spiritt told him of." Clarke went down into the cellar, dug up the money and parchments, took them upstairs, and "in the interim the spirit came in[,] lookt cheerefully upon him and gave him thankes, & s[ai]d now he should be at rest and Spoke to those other persons were with him of his fourth generation relations but they had not Courage to answer." Clarke asked the Spirit several questions: "Some it resolved wch he would not communicate Some it would not answer too, wch were what became of his spiritt after he was dead, & whether in blisse or no." It told Clarke not to meddle with the coin, and not to say anything about the relatives until "here after."

Clarke had several brothers in London, and Morgan therefore asked Hooke to communicate with them about the Southwark ghost; Morgan promised to question Clarke's Hannington neighbors himself. Almost certainly Morgan disseminated the story; "in 1675, Justinian Isham wrote from Christ Church, Oxford, to his father that 'The report of the Hannington ghost was spread all over Oxford'" (Westwood & Simpson 266); and Morgan may have arranged for *The Rest-less Ghost and Strange and Wonderful News* to be published in London.

Several points in this letter correspond with Shakespeare's Ghost: (1) The apparition at Hannington was not willing to speak with anyone except its relative Clarke was a descendant, about ten generations after the ghost's death. (2) This ghost met with Clarke alone, after pursuing him "into another yard." (3) Clarke asked what the ghost wanted and offered to satisfy it. (4) The ghost wished Clarke to act to find money and writings it had hidden in the cellar. (5) When Clarke followed the ghost's instructions, he found the money and writings. (6) The ghost then "s[aid] now he should be at rest." (7) When Clarke asked the ghost questions about the afterlife, "Some it resolvd wch he would not communicate Some it would not answer to, wch were what became of his spiritt after he was dead, & whether in blisse or no."

However, since the Hannington apparition is over seventy years after *Hamlet*, it is possible that the incident shows borrowings from Shakespeare's play. This *prima facie* is perhaps not likely, given the lack of any linguistic parallels with *Hamlet*. The Ghost's unwillingness to speak to anyone but a blood relative; its moving to a private place for its revelations to its relative; Clarke's question about the ghost's wishes and his offer to satisfy them; and the buried money, all seem to point to folklore that spread after the enormous success of *Hamlet*. Thomas Betterton had played the lead role in that play on 31 August 1668, of which performance Samuel Pepys wrote: "To the Duke of York's playhouse, and there saw Hamlet, which we have not seen this year before, or more; and mightily pleased with it, but above all with Betterton, the best part, I believe, that man ever acted." The success of William Davenant's *Hamlet* productions with Betterton as his star actor, of which this was one, may have prompted the idea of copying the Ghost scenes. And in fact, Morgan begins his letter "To satisfye you that o[u]r County is the enchanted Island I give you an account of an apparition [that] was lately visible to many persons," a clear reference to *The Tempest, or The Enchanted Island*, by John Dryden and William Davenant. This "adaptation was first performed at the Duke's Theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields on 7 November 1667, and published in 1670. The play was revised and revived a number of times, and adapted as an opera by Thomas Shadwell in April 1674" (*The Tempest* 1). Apparently, Morgan is contrasting the spirit Ariel, usually invisible, with the Hannington spirit, visible to many.

Buried money is certainly another traditional motif, appearing in the *Strange News* collection of Tudor and Stuart ghost stories published in 1661; thus Horatio speculates that the Ghost may have returned because perhaps it "uphoarded in thy life/Extorted treasure in the womb of earth/For which they say your spirits oft walk in death" (1.1.139-41).

As Thomas Nashe speculated in 1594, "It will be demaunded why in the likenes of ones father or mother, or kinsfolks, he [the Devil] oftentimes presents himselfe vnto vs? No other reason can be giuen of it but this, that in those shapes which he supposeth most familiar vnto vs, and that wee are inclined to do with a naturall kind of loue, we will sooner harken to him than otherwise" (sig. Biiij). At any rate, Morgan's scientific friend Robert Hooke seems not to have acted on the request to interview Clarke's brothers in London, who apparently witnessed Clarke's search of the

Southwark cellar. And Morgan himself could be skeptical about ghost stories; as he says, “I beleeve we shall putte downe yr Drumming Devill of Tedworth,” a reference to a poltergeist case of 1662-63 that was promoted by Joseph Glanvill in his demonological work, *Saducismus Triumphatus* (1681). By Morgan’s day, this invisible spirit was considered to be a hoax.

But what really matters is not the Hannington ghost’s haunting of Richard Clarke, but the incidents in Southwark and their circulation in the sixteenth century. First, what we may term the Southwark apparition claimed to have been killed near his house in Southwark and buried in his orchard, and his wife and children never knew what became of him except that sometimes “he walked...in a cellar in the house.” Morgan, in his letter of 1674, ends his own remarks to Hooke with this remark: “I had this story from Mr. Clarke himself, though part of it, as concerns the country, from his neighbours.” In other words, the Hannington incidents belong to the mid-17th century, while the Southwark incidents belong to the early 16th century and before. That leaves us with the murder, the orchard, the uninformed wife, the walking in the cellar, and probably the ghost’s refusal to divulge in what realm it now lived.

The real date of this Southwark story rests on its linguistic usages. The spelling “Sellar” (96^r) is typical of the sixteenth century and is used by Florio in 1598, but appears only twice in the seventeenth. The ghost told Clarke that “he had rec[eive]d much hurt in his Cattele by him [the murderer]” (f.96^v) “Cattele,” in the sense of wealth or goods, was obsolete by 1500, except as a plural, and the writer of *The Rest-less Ghost* took it to mean livestock. “Sygne” (f. 96^v) as a spelling of “sign” has no later example than 1542 in *OED*. “Sennit” (f. 96^v) for “seven-night,” or a week, seems to have become obsolete by 1549, except as dialect or archaism (*OED*). “Pixt,” of uncertain meaning, may mean “covered” (*OED*, Pitched...*ppl.* a2,...) “Smearred, covered,...otherwise treated with pitch,” with forms “pykked, pikit,” obsolete by 1600 in this sense. “Coyne” (f. 96^v, twice) was almost obsolete in 1618, and its *OED* entry cites Raleigh, who died that year aged 64. All these old words suggest that someone, possibly Morgan, blended the Southwark apparition with the Hannington story. Somewhere, probably among the Sloane collection of manuscripts in the British Library, is an account of the haunting by the sixteenth-century ghost, which Morgan had a copy of unless one is willing to believe the Hannington ghost told Clarke all this. Yet one source speaks of Morgan

receiving a letter from London in time for him to write his letter to Hooke. So far, research in London has not turned up Morgan's Southwark source, but then the Catalogue of the Sloane manuscripts is far from detailed enough for anyone to locate it without a long, slow search through all the items in that huge collection.

These points about the Southwark ghost occur in some form in Act 1, Sc. 5, of *Hamlet*: (1) The murder in the orchard and the concealment of the crime are described by Hamlet's father's ghost at 1.5.59-79. (Shakespeare, however, does not have the burial of Hamlet's father's corpse in the orchard, but in a marble sepulcher (1.4.46-51)). (2) The ghost walking in the cellar is used to great effect by Shakespeare: "You hear this fellow in the cellarage," Hamlet tells the guards and Horatio (1.5.154), and the Ghost, from beneath the stage, calls out "Swear." The effect is mysterious and electrifying. (3) The ghost wishes Clarke to act, to seek redress in some degree. (The Southwark murder is too long ago for revenge.) Hamlet's father's ghost similarly calls for redress and since Claudius is alive, redress means revenge (1.5.25). (4) Just as Clarke found that the ghost spoke the truth, so Hamlet finds that his father's ghost is verified--"O good Horatio, I'll take the ghost's word for a thousand pound" (3.2.281-2). (5) Clarke's ghost said "he should be at rest" after Clarke acted on its instructions. Hamlet tells his father's ghost, "Rest, rest, perturbèd spirit!" after Horatio and the guards swear in response to Hamlet's command "never to speak of this that you have seen" (2.1.185, 157). (6) The Southwark ghost answered some questions about the afterlife, but evidently cautioned Clarke not to "communicate" anything it told him. However, the ghost would not answer questions about "what became of his spiritt after he was dead, & whether in blisse or no." Similarly, Hamlet's father's ghost, though it reveals that it is "Doomed for a certain term to walk the night, / And for the day confined to fast in fires, / Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature / Are burnt and purged away," cautions "I am forbid to tell the secrets of my prison house" (1.5.10-14).

Now we do not know the age at which Hamlet's father was murdered, but Morgan gives a hint through a postscript: "The apparition was about 40 yeares of age had a little beard darke colour close [clothes], britches close to the thighs tyed below knees had Stockings of the same colour." If we assume Hamlet is about twenty, despite the Gravedigger's assertion that Hamlet is thirty (5.1.138-40, 152-3), then his father might

have been “about 40 yeares of age” at his death—and Hamlet reminds himself that Claudius “took my father grossly, full of bread, / With all his crimes broad blown, as flush as May” (3.380-81). May was traditionally “the early part of one’s life, especially the prime,” according to the *OED*.

The apparition’s “dark clothes” are typical men’s late Tudor costume, and perhaps suggested to Shakespeare Hamlet’s “inky cloak” and “customary suits of solemn black” (1.2.77-8).

The Melancholic Temperament

The question of Hamlet’s suicidal tendencies is also found in the traditions of ghosts haunting a kinsman. As Le Loyer writes in 1586, “The people he [the Devil] presents himself to are the superstitious, the simple, pure and undefiled children, the weak and melancholy” (qtd. in Yardley 225). Bright in 1586 notes that “neither only is common sense, and fantasie thus ouertaken with delusion, but memory also receiueth a wound therewith: which disableth it both to keepe in memory, and to record those things, whereof it tooke some custody before this passion, and after, therewith are defaced” (104).

Certainly Hamlet is melancholic, though the fact is mentioned only twice in the play. Hamlet, doubting the Ghost’s story, reflects that “The spirit that I have seen / May be a devil, and the devil hath power / T’assume a pleasing shape, yea, and perhaps / Out of my weakness and my melancholy, / As he is very potent with such spirits, / Abuses me to damn me” (2.2.537-42). Claudius refers once to his stepson’s melancholy: “There’s something in his soul / O’er which his melancholy sits on brood” (3.1.164-5).

Bright remarks on wounded memory, caused by “substantiall obscurity” in the brain after a false illusion appears to the imagination (103). Shakespeare uses a similar idea to make Hamlet fear that he will forget what the Ghost has imparted to him and resolve to “wipe away all trivial fond records, / ...And thy commandment all alone shall live / Within the book and volume of my brain, / Unmixed with baser matter.” He even pulls out a notebook to set down the fact that Claudius is a smiling villain (1.5.99-108).

Memory and forgetting run as a kind of sub-theme in Hamlet: “remember” occurs nine times, “memory” ten times, and “forget,” “forgot”

or “forgotten” nine times. The principal referents of “memory” are to Hamlet’s father, and variants of “forgetting” half the time to him

Shakespeare’s Compound Ghost

When Shakespeare began *Hamlet*, he gathered up all he could find and hear about on the subject of ghosts.² He would have known the Catholic beliefs in Purgatory and God’s permission for a soul in Purgatory to return to earth in a phantasmal body for some specific and good purpose. He would also have known the Protestant view that a ghost was the devil or an evil spirit, or even a coinage of the brain, especially the English Protestants who wrote against the Catholic view. King James had written in 1597 that a wraith might indeed describe “the way of his slaughter” but that it was always a deception (61).

However, we have to accept that Hamlet’s father’s ghost told the truth, as did Clarke’s ancestor from Southwark, and hence that Shakespeare accepted that there was truth from beyond the grave. And since the Globe was in Southwark, where *Hamlet* was probably first acted, the Southwark ghost story would have been in circulation among the common folk. Indeed, *Strange News* (1661) relates how many people would flock to the site of an apparition’s appearances (stanza 30). The Southwark report was an excellent story for dramatizing, with its ghost’s secret murder in an orchard, its night-time visitations in its recognizable clothing, its limited revelation of the actualities of the sphere beyond the grave, and its walking in a cellar.³

Notes

1. Scott (1904) dates Morgan’s letter “A1675/6” (378), and is followed by Gunther (1930): “1675/6 Jan. 17.” However, though Morgan wrote “Jan: 17. 75. Sunday” (Old Style dating), he almost certainly meant Jan. 27, which was a Sunday in 1674/5. Morgan met Hooke at Garaway’s coffee-house in London on 7 February 1674/5, though Hooke’s laconic diary entry for that day has no mention of the ghost story (*The Diary of Robert Hooke*, ed. Henry W. Robinson and Walter Adams (London, 1935), 145). One copy of “Strange and wonderful News from *Northampton-shire*” has a manuscript date of 1674 in an

old hand, but this ballad probably followed Morgan's letter in the early part of 1675 (March 25 was the Old Style date on which the New Year officially began). It ends "yet hundreds knows it to be true," indicating that someone, perhaps Morgan, had disseminated the story.

2. Ron Rosenbaum's recent article on the 1603 Quarto of *Hamlet* (Q1, 2,200 lines) contrasted with the 1604 Quarto (Q2, 3,800 lines) touches only a little on the Ghost (described as walking rather than marching). Q1 offers this stage direction at 3.4.103, "*Enter the ghost in his night gowne,*" but in Q2, there is only "*Enter Ghost.*" To Q2's Ghost's six lines, Q1's Ghost speaks seven, noting Hamlet's "distracted looks." Quite likely the writer of these lines, possibly a reporter in the audience, was recording what he saw on stage. The woodcuts for *The Rest-less Ghost* and *Strange and Wonderful News* show the ghost in a long white sheet, rather like a night gown.
3. Other works I have profited from in writing this essay are Sean McEvoy, ed., *William Shakespeare's Hamlet: A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 2006); and Bernice W. Kliman, "The Ghost: lynchpin of the play" (triggs.djvu.org/global-language.com, 30 Sep. 2008), kindly drawn to my attention by Prof. Nicholas Clary, St. Michael's College, Vermont. Special thanks go to Julie McDaniel, Urbana University Librarian, for getting copies of several documents used in this essay, and to Jennifer Midgley and Melissa Runkle, library assistants.

Appendix: Morgan's letter

(transcription by Time Wales)

[96^r] To satisfye you that or County is the enchanted Island I give you an account of an apparition was lately visible to many persons at a Town within four miles of me cald Hannington, munday was five weeke on Ricd Clarke a husbandman on I knew very well orderd his two Sons of of [sic] 7 the other 12 yeares of age to call him up in the morning, they gott up before day & lookeing [^]through[^] a large hole in the wale of their Chamber they spyed the shape of a man in darke colourd close in their fathers yard they told their father who came & sawe it likewise & his wife, he went down into the yard & it disappeard, which made [^]him[^] Suspect what it what it was hee supposing his house haunted for these Seaven yeares, he went to bed again, his Sons Sawe it after & cald him up again, he went to Severall of his Neighbours who came to his house & sawe it too, by this

time twas day, & he Sawe it no more till new yeares night after the eclipse goeing to turne his Mault with a Candle & Lanterne it mett him, & got betwixt the dore & him he let his Lanterne fall & ran in to another yard there he was pursude & in Such a fright he could not run further then he askt what the spiritt would have & if in his power he would satisfye him, The spirit told him he had no reason to be afeard of him that he would doe him no hurte That he was kild by his house 267 yeares agoe 9 months & two dayes that he that kild him buryed him in his Orchard hard by & he would show him where if he would goe with him but he durst not, And further that he had a wife & two Children which lived in Southwarke who never knew what became of him, that he walkt some-times in a Sellar in that house, & then sais he to Clarke you are at quiett & w[he]n I am here they that live there are at quiett, that he had buryed Some mony & writings in that Sellar that he must immediatly goe

[96^v] thither & he would [^]meete[^] him there & shew him where it was hid he desird a fortnights time to consider of it, the apparation would not admitt that, told him he had recd. much hurt in his Cattle by him, that he shooke the house w[he]n his first wife lay in & frighted her so she dyed of it, but w[he]n this mony was found wth the writings & deliverd according to his order to Some of his relations liveing in Such a house in Southwarke who were of Such a name at suche a Sygne & were the fourth generation from him both the apparition & that man should be at rest & Clarke troubled no more, according to his promise he went to London within two or three dayes. On sunday was sennitt goeing to Church he Sawe the spiritt Severall times passe by him on munday morning goeing over London bridge the spiritt past before him & led him to the house where he found Such persons the spirit told him of went down into the Sellar with an Iron barre dugge the mony up wch was in a tin pott pixt all blacke with time the parchment writings faire & firme but in Suche a hand he could not reade it, the paper writings rotten, that he tooke it up carryed it into a roome, divided it according as the spirit had commanded him, that in the interim the spirit came in lookt cheerfully upon [^]him[^] and gave him thankes, & sd now he should be at rest and Spoke to those other persons were with him of his fourth generation relations but they had not Courage to answer, but Clarke talkt for them, & askt it severall questions Some it resolvd wch it would not answer too, wch were what became of his spiritt after he was dead, & whether in blisse or no, We expected to have Seen

Some of the Old Coyne & knowne the house and other persons, for the first he was forbidden by the apparition to meddle wth it for the other he may not yet communicate it & Severall other things the apparition told him but may here after, It must be Coyne of about Hen: 4 time, and will come [96r.] out amongst the Goldsmiths on time or other if care is but taken in it, methinkes it should make Some noyse in South-warke & might be found out there, He hath Severall Brothers in London whom he was wth perhaps Some discovery may be made of them of the place On is Sam: Miller a harnesse maker in St Martyns lane nere the Church another Doctr Wilson in Kings Streete Westm[in]ster in Bell Ally another on [blank] Figgott a Chandler in the s[ai]d Bell Ally a fourth Ricd. Turlington a farrier in Stanhope streete neere the Tobacco rroll, a fift Hen: Ramsy a Joyner in St Mary Acts at the Sygne of the Sugar loafe by London wall, I had this story from Clarke himselfe though part of it So much as concernes the Country from his Neighbours I will goe over on purpose to make a full discovery if possible I may give you a full account at Garraways next weeke, in the meane time informe yr Selfe what you can from his brothers, I omitt some circumstances for brevity, w[he]n I see you it shall be auctior & emenda-tior, my most humble Service to or Brethren of the Coffee house, for want of newes or comeing in of a packet boate this may be as Edifying as a Muddimans letter¹ I believe we shall putt downe yr Drumming Devill of Tedworth, If it give not Satisfaction it may be divertising and I have my ends in takeing an oppor-tunity to let you know I am,

Dear Sr

Yr Ever obliged & faithfull

Servt.

Fr: Morgan.

Kingsthorpe by North[amp]ton

Jan: 17.75. Sunday

a darke morning & like to be
snowe.

The apparition was about 40 yeares of age had a little beard darke colourd close, britches close to the thighs tyed below knees had Stockings of the same colour.

[97^v.]

For his much esteemed Mr Rob. Hooke
at his Lodgeings in Gresham
Colledge by Bishop gate streete,
London

post pd 2d.

Note 1. A “Muddiman’s letter” was a newsletter published by Henry Muddiman (1629-1692), intended for royalist and upper-class readers. Muddiman had a virtual monopoly on the news in Charles II’s time.

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