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Hamlet's Doubles

RALPH BERRY

IN THE RSC *HAMLET* OF 1980, MICHAEL PENNINGTON'S *HAMLET*, listening intently to the Player's account of Pyrrhus,

So as a painted tyrant Pyrrhus stood,
And, like a neutral to his will and matter . . .

anticipated the player to complete the sentence himself:

Did nothing.

(II.ii. 476–78)

A bold touch, and perfectly in keeping with the play's echoic, self-referential quality. Everything that happens in *Hamlet* relates to the consciousness at the drama's center; and Hamlet, with his supreme self-awareness, constantly sees in others images of himself: Laertes and Fortinbras are only the most obvious examples. The Player, in the passage cited, reminds Hamlet of what he knows, and would as soon forget.

Now this quality of *Hamlet* animates the doubling possibilities that are coded into the text. Given a company of 15–16, the assumed strength of the Chamberlain's Men, extensive doubling was inevitable. Full casting—a different actor for each part—was an indulgence of the Victorian/Edwardian London stage, a demonstration of lavish production values. Most stages, and the provinces everywhere, have had to accommodate more austere castings. *Hamlet* is designed for productions in which actors appear and reappear in different guises, hauntingly reminding the audience of what was said and expressed earlier in similar voices, other habits.

What, in the most general sense, is the effect? A. C. Sprague distinguishes between deficiency doubling (together with emergency doubling) and virtuoso doubling.¹ The first variety is aimed simply at making good the numerical deficiencies of the company. Doubling has often been concealed (by such devices as “Walter Plinge,” together with his American associate “George Spelvin”), the management being ashamed to admit the company's limitations. It follows from this perception that the actor's chief triumph was to submerge himself, unrecognizably, in his several roles. The second variety, on the contrary, glories in a display of character acting. As Sprague and Trewin note, “Polonius and one of the Gravediggers (most likely the First) . . . was once the most popular of all Shakespearian doubles.”² This double goes back to 1730, and Sprague, in the appendix to his monograph, lists many instances. Neither variety of

¹ *The Doubling of Parts in Shakespeare's Plays* (London: Society for Theatre Research, 1966), p. 14.

² Arthur Colby Sprague and J. C. Trewin, *Shakespeare's Plays Today: Customs and Conventions of the Stage* (Columbia, S.C.: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1971), p. 17.

doubling, I think, exists in the same form today. Deficiency doubling there must always be, but nobody is ashamed of it; the actors tackle their assignments openly. The concept of virtuoso doubling is scarcely mainstream, and the actor playing Polonius is unlikely to relish the implication that this is the first leg of a comic double. Poloniuses are usually praised for not overdoing the comic touches. Broadly, then: doubling is not a uniform mode, implying a single variety of audience response. It will depend on the circumstances and attitudes of the stage in its era. And a history of *Hamlet* doubling is well beyond my scope. I want here to examine, first, some aspects of the doubling problems which the text of *Hamlet* discloses; second, some solutions which theatrical practice, in London and Stratford-upon-Avon, has proposed in the past century. And finally, I will use these solutions to return to the nature of the text itself.

I

Shakespeare's two-part structures are fundamental to his dramaturgy. From *Richard III* to *The Winter's Tale*, there are numerous before-and-after compositions, some of them, like *Timon of Athens*, exceptionally clear-cut. The schema calls for a number of lower/middle-order parts, which will appear and disappear before the midpoint, whose actors can be re-deployed in the later stages of the play. It is a principle of organization, not a fixed plan of allocation. Shakespeare must be aware that the actor playing Strato will come from the pool containing Flavius, Marullus, and Casca; the disposition of company forces can be made, without preconception, in the light of the available talents. The doubling charts that have been drawn up for *Richard II* and *Julius Caesar* show us how the thing was done.³ The two-part structure accommodated the doubling that was basic to performance in Shakespeare's day, a practice, says G. E. Bentley, of which audiences were fully aware.⁴

Hamlet is not a self-evidently two-part structure, and commentators who assume such a structure have disputed whether the midpoint lies in the Play Scene or the Closet Scene. Nevertheless, the "centered symmetry," the careful structural balancing which Keith Brown adduces between the outer Acts cannot be gainsaid, and I find his "centric view" of the larger Act III cogent. On Brown's showing, *Hamlet* is indeed symmetrical, but its midpoint is itself a "central act" covering several scenes, with the play dividing into Acts I-II; III-IV.iii; and IV.iv-V.⁵ Suppose we apply this tripartite division to the doubling problem; it corresponds reasonably well to the challenges of organizing roles other than the major ones. The early stages of *Hamlet* require decent middle-order casting for Marcellus, Bernardo, Francisco, Voltmand, Cornelius, and Reynaldo. These parts disappear before the middle stages, which call upon Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, First Player (presumably, Player King), Player Queen, Prologue, Lucianus, Norwegian Captain, and Fortinbras. Fortinbras will be needed for the later stages, which also require two Gravediggers, Sailor, Priest, Osric, and English Ambassador. Without taking note of attendants, or such immediate

³ William A. Ringler, Jr., "The Number of Actors in Shakespeare's Early Plays," in *The Seventeenth Century Stage*, ed. Gerald Eades Bentley (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 110-34.

⁴ *The Profession of Player in Shakespeare's Time* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1984), p. 229.

⁵ "'Form and Cause Conjoin'd': *Hamlet* and Shakespeare's Workshop," *Shakespeare Survey*, 26 (1973), 11-20.

possibilities as a conflation of Lucianus and Prologue, one sees at once that half-a-dozen decently capable actors are called for in the early stages, again in the middle, and again in the later stages of the play. They can accomplish their tasks in various permutations of tripling, which grow progressively less onerous as the cast numbers available move up between 6–7 and 20.

All this assumes a full text, or something like it. *Hamlet*, the quarry-text par excellence, invites cuts aimed at reshaping the material (and not merely reducing the bulk). The major possibilities are too well-known to need elaboration. Theatregoers today collect Reynaldos in the way their ancestors collected English Ambassadors and Fortinbrases. An assiduous but unscholarly Victorian/Edwardian playgoer might have imagined that *Hamlet* ends at “And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.” And, in Olivier’s film, even Rosencrantz and Guildenstern found no place. Serious cutting, of the surgical order, finds it easy to eliminate parts as well as lines from *Hamlet*. This obvious but unpursuable fact I record and abandon. The discussion of doubling here takes for granted an approximation to a full text, whether of Folio or Second Quarto.

The complexity of this situation disposes of any idea that there can be a natural track whereby certain dispositions taken early on lead to convenient options after the interval. Instead, the actors are conducted through the “junction” of the mid-section—which is, for our purposes, the Play Scene—after which they are to be re-deployed in new and unpredictable ways. Let us take the opening scene as the simplest illustration of the problems. Three soldiers are required, in addition to Horatio and the Ghost. Of these, Francisco is the least substantial; he exits early, does not re-appear, and is available for recasting at all later points. Bernardo must remain throughout scene 1, and is with the group that announces the news of the Ghost to Hamlet in I.ii. Marcellus, the most important of the three, is additionally present in the battlement scenes of I.iv. and I.v. Thereafter he, like his colleagues on watch, must return to the acting pool. From there he will emerge later in ways that defy prescription. The director may take the view (a) that Marcellus, having already had a reasonably substantial part, must now submit to something less distinguished, or (b) that Marcellus, an actor of some ability in a lean company, must be given something at least as good later on. Of the three on guard duty, the actor with the most soldierly bearing might be retained for Fortinbras; the second such, Norwegian Captain. How are parts re-assigned via the “junction”? What is the previous existence of the Priest? Is a tripling feasible, or does the director save a part by combining Lucianus/Prologue, thus yielding a spare actor who could take over Francisco, always provided that Captain could return as Sailor, granted that English Ambassador is taken care of . . . ? The combinations spin and re-form. Always the director is in the business of playing to strength and masking weakness, of trying to match numbers with burly sailors, soldierly soldiers, lizard-like courtiers and reverend priests, not to mention bloat kings and Gertrudes who are not too obviously younger than Hamlets. He must avoid being end-played with reverend soldiers or lizard-like sailors. To arrive at performed answers to these puzzles would seem beyond the wit of man.

Thus the text, as it discloses itself to initial reflection. Scene 1 is not in itself especially important as a casting problem. The director is likely to start elsewhere, from the perception that such a one is an ideal Osric and another is one of Nature’s Guildensterns, and to build up his castings from that point. It is simply that scene 1 comes first, even if closed out late in the casting process. From it one can trace the network of options criss-crossing into a mathematical

blur, as the tracks lead away from the apparent simplicities of Francisco, Bernardo, and Marcellus. They, too, have an identity problem. Who are they going to play next?

II

Hamlet will always be a Rubik's cube of the director's art. What can theatrical practice tell us about the solutions? Of the infinite mass of material available in theory, I select two major samplings for their convenience and appropriateness. J. P. Wearing's calendar of the London stage now extends from 1890 to 1929.⁶ Michael Mullin's catalogue-index covers a century of productions in Stratford-upon-Avon (and latterly, London).⁷ The cast lists, save for the remoter years in Stratford-upon-Avon, are reasonably full. Together, these catalogues cover a hundred productions of *Hamlet*. It is enough to stimulate generalization.

The main conclusion is marked. There is nothing approaching a central, continuing tradition of *Hamlet* doubling. Historic situations change, for one thing. The London stage, as I have mentioned, adopted a standard of lavish, full casting. In the entire Edwardian era, there were only a handful of doublings (most of them in Wearing, 09.14). One is startled to come across a doubling of Bernardo and the Ghost, but one's sense of hallucination fades with the knowledge that William Poel arranged the text (Wearing, 14.12). During the 1914–18 war years, certain exigencies were obviously forced upon managements. Even so, Martin Harvey at His Majesty's (Wearing, 16.93) kept alive Beerbohm Tree's practice of full casting. (Tree, in keeping with the opulent standards of his day, used to add a Court Jester to his cast.) After the war, Lilian Baylis's frugal reign at the Old Vic involved regular and frequent doubling. At Stratford-upon-Avon, Benson, of course, had to cut corners; and Bridges-Adams, operating under the fiscally conservative Sir Archibald Flower, had to deploy his forces with great care. Since 1945 the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, later the Royal Shakespeare Company, has generally been able to cast as it pleased. There was, however, a remarkable production in 1975 by the late Buzz Goodbody at The Other Place (Mullin, 0280) in which triple castings were normal. Charles Dance, for example, was well reviewed for the unlikely combination of Reynaldo, Third Player, and Fortinbras. Of recent years, doubling at Stratford-upon-Avon has reflected not exigencies but the director's wish to make a point. To that I shall return.

Conditions, though changing, do not, I think, generate historic trends in patterns of doubling. What one finds are odd pockets of practices, which turn out to reflect the taste of a director able to return, over the years, to *Hamlet*. Benson, for example, liked to cast Marcellus and First Player, irrespective of the actors available. Bridges-Adams favored the doubling of Ghost and Fortinbras, doing so on four occasions from 1920 to 1929. Robert Atkins, who

⁶ *The London Stage 1890–1899: A Calendar of Plays and Players*, 2 vols. (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1976). Subsequent calendars for the London stage have been issued for 1900–1909, 2 vols. (1981); 1910–19, 2 vols. (1982); and 1920–29, 3 vols. (1984). The form used is the same throughout, and I treat it here as a composite work. In Wearing's system, the first two digits refer to the date. 09:14 means the fourteenth production listed for 1909.

⁷ *Theatre at Stratford-upon-Avon: A Catalogue-Index to Productions of the Shakespeare Memorial/Royal Shakespeare Theatre, 1879–1978*, compiled and edited by Michael Mullin with Karen Morris Muriello, 2 vols. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1980).

directed five *Hamlets* in London during the early 1920s, four at the Old Vic, also experimented with Ghost/Fortinbras (twice). Tripling was common at the Old Vic during that era, and no one combination dominated. One finds Frances L. Sullivan combining Francisco/Priest/English Ambassador (Wearing, 22.117). To approach the matter from another angle, suppose we sample the doubles with which Bernardo was associated: the first four decades of this century at Stratford-upon-Avon yield us Guildenstern (twice); 2nd Player (four times); Priest; Rosencrantz (twice); Fortinbras; 2nd Gravedigger. London, from 1900–1929, gives us Rosencrantz (three times); First Player (twice); Osric (twice); 2nd Gravedigger (twice); Priest; and Captain. It is tedious to demonstrate the obvious. Doubling practice in *Hamlet* is, and must always have been, overwhelmingly opportunistic.

A negative curiosity is worth mentioning. If we can be tolerably sure of any specific doubling in Shakespeare's own company, it is that of Marcellus and Voltemand. The first Quarto evidence seems to confirm an authentic practice of the Chamberlain's Men: that a single actor was responsible for Marcellus and Voltemand, together with Prologue and Lucianus.⁸ One might expect Marcellus/Voltemand to be at least a cult double, a purist's double. I can find no evidence of its popularity, now or in any era. Voltemand is an early candidate for elimination, as the director eyes his options together with the playing-text; Voltemand's lot may well be to join the woebegone Cornelius in the limbo reserved for non-players. But that does not account for the continuing irrelevance of a doubling practice from Shakespeare's own company.

Theatre practice, then, reveals no consistent pattern of doublings. Polonius/Gravedigger had two centuries of esteem, before fading; even Ghost/Laertes was practiced for a hundred years, an oddity which Sprague has preserved for us.⁹ Individual directors have favored or experimented with certain combinations. But there is no master key. The search for through lines yields only a crazy pattern of interconnected lines. One has then to accept that the play is like that: it is an infinitely complex set of possibilities, not a logical grid with well-defined paths.

III

A third variety of doublings I shall term "conceptual." This is a modern phenomenon. In conceptual doublings, the director looks beyond numbers, and beyond the physical characteristics of the acting corps, to couplings which have an underground linkage. Recognizing that the play's unity comprehends all its parts, the director wishes to italicize into a formal relationship two of them. Conceptual doubling brings a hidden relationship to light. Suppose we think of the play as a metro subway system, the characters as stations: to double parts with conceptual intent is to color-code the stations on the subway map. The play's meaning as realized in performance is then held to depend, not minimally, on a relationship whose intensity the director proposes. This tactic affords the director of *Hamlet* an especially inviting range of possibilities in those pairings which include the Ghost.

⁸ The exceptional textual accuracy of the speeches for these four parts seems almost certain to indicate that a single actor, playing all four parts, was the source for the First Quarto edition. This assumption is widely accepted, as in Harold Jenkins's New Arden edition of *Hamlet* (London: Methuen, 1982), pp. 20–21. But Ringler is startlingly certain that "the two parts cannot be doubled." Ringler, p. 127.

⁹ Sprague, Appendix, p. 35.

The Ghost is the animating spirit of *Hamlet*. Everything that happens in the play, from the initial "Who's there?" is an index of or reaction to his appearances. The play's subtitle is an adjustment: "Not the King of Denmark." Admonishing and dominating his son, the Ghost is (like Julius Caesar) "mighty yet"; and young Hamlet, going through a series of admissions and submissions that leads to the use of the royal seal and the taking-up of arms, acknowledges his kingly mentor. And yet the all-pervasiveness of the Ghost's influence does not march with the actor's duties. Two silent appearances in I.i, a major cadenza in I.iv-v, a brief intervention in III.iv: it is not much for the play's arbiter. Where else can the old mole re-emerge?

Peter Hall's *Hamlet* at the National Theatre (1975) offered a clearcut illustration of a possible answer. The National, operating to neo-Edwardian standards of luxury casting, has not tended to economize on actors. One reviewer indeed compared disparagingly the large cast at the National to the 14-strong RSC corps, then playing the Goodbody *Hamlet* at the Round House.¹⁰ In the National's production (which contained *two* English Ambassadors) there was a single major doubling: the Ghost and Claudius.

Everything a director does is liable to be construed as reductionist, but this looks like a severe case. The linkage of Ghost and Claudius is patently a homage to Freud, to Ernest Jones's Freud anyway. According to Jones, "The call of duty to kill his stepfather cannot be obeyed because it links itself with the unconscious call of his nature to kill his mother's husband, whether this is the first or second; the absolute repression of the former impulse involves the inner prohibition of the latter also."¹¹ An earlier generation of directors—Guthrie, say—might have put that quotation brazenly in the programme. Hall was content to leave the audience to draw its own conclusions. Vulgar Freudianism, which traditionally calls for an unseemly wrestling sequence between Gertrude and Hamlet on her bed, was thus rejected in favor of an understated gesture. Interested, the reviewers noted the doubling without hazarding an interpretation. "Subsequent original details consist of Denis Quilley's doubling of Claudius and the Ghost (who, for once, is a suffering rather than an admonitory spectre)" is Irving Wardle's cautious phrasing.¹² "Denis Quilley's booming, Wagnerian Ghost lays the revenge ball firmly in his son's court," is Michael Coveney's.¹³ "It was an interesting idea to double the roles of Claudius and the Ghost," says Robert Speaight, without, however, going on to expound the idea.¹⁴ Collectively, the reviewers were puzzled at Hamlet's failure to act, the more so as Albert Finney, a raw and virile presence, scarcely suggested Oedipal inhibition. The verdict on the experiment must be "not proven."

Yet Hall had tried it before, in the 1966 revival of his RSC production starring David Warner. Eric Shorter identifies "the paternal Brewster Mason doing a Freudian double as Claudius and the Ghost."¹⁵ Mason's was a huge Ghost, towering over all: Hamlet would have to outgrow his parent. Thus the Ghost/

¹⁰ Bernard Crick, *The Times Higher Educational Supplement*, 13 February 1976.

¹¹ *Hamlet and Oedipus* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1949), p. 90.

¹² *The Times*, 11 December 1975.

¹³ *Plays and Players*, February 1976.

¹⁴ *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 28 (1977), 184. Richard David notes the double without offering an interpretation in *Shakespeare in the Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1978), pp. 78–79.

¹⁵ *Daily Telegraph*, 29 April 1966. The Ghost is described in David Addenbrooke, *The Royal Shakespeare Company* (London: William Kimber, 1974), p. 131; and Stanley Wells, *Royal Shakespeare: Four Productions at Stratford-upon-Avon* (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1977), p. 34.

Claudius double may be held to conflate a parent-figure, rather than promote a specifically sexual problem in Gertrude, Claudius, and Hamlet. Whatever the gloss, the Ghost/Claudius doubling was one that reviewers preferred to skirt around, in 1966 as in 1975. The idea remains essentially unproven and perhaps of dubious value. Practical directors, as Keynes might say, are slaves to some defunct critic.

I pass over with some reluctance the Ghost/Priest double, which Trevor Nunn experimented with in his RSC *Hamlet* (1970). That production was strongly imbued with religious values. III.i was set in a chapel, and Hamlet left Ophelia slumped in a pew. Hamlet wore a black cowl from the Players' wardrobe in III.iii, as also in IV.ii. He was brought before Claudius in a cloister where black-cowled monks were gathered.¹⁶ Was the Priest, then, a signal of reality after play-acting? There is a case for seeing the Priest as the reminder of what the Ghost had imparted to Hamlet. But none of the reviewers on file at the Stratford archives showed any interest in this doubling, and I prefer not to make out a theoretical case when its practice failed to make an impression on those who witnessed the production.

A much more important double has had significant if inconclusive testing. Robert Speaight, in his autobiography, writes of the 1923 Angmering Festival: "Gyles Isham had agreed to double the Ghost and Fortinbras—an excellent idea which I have never seen repeated."¹⁷ Speaight could in fact have seen the double in Stratford-upon-Avon and London during the 1920s, when it had something of a vogue. Bridges-Adams directed the play eight times at Stratford, four of them exploiting the Ghost/Fortinbras double (Mullin, 0259, 0262, 0263, 0264). The first occasion, in 1920, must have been accounted a false cast. The visual appearance of the Ghost was left to the audience's imagination, to the displeasure of the reviewers. The *Daily News* remarked acidly that "it is modernizing Shakespeare too much to omit the ghost and only to hear his voice. Apparently, Hamlet saw his father somewhere in the dress circle."¹⁸ From 1927 through 1929 Bridges-Adams tried again, this time giving the Ghost a corporeal presence. Gordon Bailey was the actor of the Ghost and Fortinbras in all three productions, evidently a satisfactory solution. In the 1927 production, the reviewers were well pleased with the Ghost's delivery, as also with the Hamlet of John Laurie and the Ophelia of Lydia Sherwood. In the following seasons, Bailey's distinctive and impressive Ghost continued to be singled out for praise. "His voice is remarkably good, reaching a note at the final 'Remember me' which moves one deeply and creates the feeling of suspense which is so vital at this point."¹⁹ And: "A special word of praise is due to Mr. Gordon Bailey's Ghost, a really impressive figure in spite of those persistent grey draperies. Does Mr. Bridges-Adams really think the King wore an old wedding-veil when he smote the sledded Polacks on the ice?"²⁰ The last point makes all clear. Bailey's Ghost had no face, but a presence and a voice; he transmitted his identity to Fortinbras as a vocal echo. What Fortinbras received as his genetic heritage from the Ghost was a distinctive and memorable voice.

In London, Robert Atkins more or less had the *Hamlet* concession during

¹⁶ See Peter Thomson, "A Necessary Theatre: The Royal Shakespeare Season 1970 Reviewed," *ShS*, 24 (1971), 123.

¹⁷ *The Property Basket* (London: Collins and Harvill Press, 1970), p. 60.

¹⁸ 22 April 1920.

¹⁹ Bladon Peake, *Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*, 3 August 1928.

²⁰ *Birmingham Gazette*, 27 April 1929.

the 1920s. His Old Vic productions were well-regarded, offering successively Ernest Milton, Russell Thorndike, and Ion Swinley in the title role. Twice, Atkins doubled the Ghost and Fortinbras; first with Austin Trevor, then with Stephen Jack (Wearing, 22.117 and 25.112). These productions received few reviews, and *The Stage* and *The Era* have nothing of consequence to say. *The Times* was frankly gravelled: "It is difficult to understand the motives which have prompted the Old Vic's interpretation of the ghost—an overpowering Ghost, as pompous as Polonius and without Polonius's variety, in mind and form a most substantial Ghost."²¹ Another inconclusive experiment, it would seem. But Atkins must have had in mind that concept of a dominating Ghost, emerging into action as Fortinbras. Latterly the point has been made more clearly, in the practice of Jonathan Miller. For his production at The Warehouse (1982), he had Philip Locke double the Ghost and Player King. As Miller explained in an interview: "In the first production I did I tripled: Player King, Ghost, and Fortinbras, because these were the three models of decisiveness and vigour with which Hamlet unfavourably compares himself."²²

The logical terminus to this line of thought is the doubling of Hamlet and the Ghost. This, the most extreme possibility in Ghost doubling, was tested in Richard Eyre's production at the Royal Court (April 1980). "There is no Ghost in this production. Jonathan Pryce, in what is effectively his first soliloquy, plays both sides of the conversation between Hamlet and his dead father, adopting for the latter a deep voice wrenched from his stomach despite himself, causing considerable physical contortion."²³ The first scene was cut, and Hamlet's encounter with his father's spirit did not occur until I.v. "Instead of receiving the demand for revenge from his dead father, Hamlet pronounces it himself while in a state of apparent 'possession.'"²⁴ Illegitimate, of course. And yet the reviewers did not register a collective sense of outrage at the text's being violated. In part, their reaction was a tribute to Jonathan Pryce's acting, a performance of great intensity and power. "His body convulsed, eyes closed, head rocking back, Pryce belches up the Ghost's word from the depths of his stomach in an agonizing howl. It is a spectacular and mesmerizing effect that completely overshadows the substance of the words themselves, but introduces a sense of mystery and power fully in tune with the animal vigour of the Prince."²⁵ In part, it was an admission of exorcism as a then fashionable topic. But the reviewers also sensed a certain legitimacy in the director's tactic, stemming from the perception that the Ghost does in some way speak through Hamlet, that the double is a primal conflation of two selves.

The doubling of the Ghost and Hamlet crystallizes the underground logic of the play. Everything in *Hamlet* has the potential to bear upon the play's center, to offer a broken samizdat on Hamlet's consciousness. This potential could not have been realized in the performances of Shakespeare's day. There, the needs of repertory and a limited company (15–16) would have severely limited casual experimentation. Further, the conceptual doubling which reveals the play's underground logic depends upon a director, a functionary with no existence in England until the late nineteenth century. Thus the multiple possibilities within the text have had to await testing in the subsequent history of *Hamlet* in per-

²¹ 27 April 1922.

²² Charles Lewsen, "In various directions," *Plays and Players*, October 1982, p. 13.

²³ *The Listener*, 4 April 1980.

²⁴ Colin Ludlow, *Plays and Players*, May 1980, pp. 25–26.

²⁵ Ludlow, pp. 25–26.

formance. The doublings of stage history offer a mechanistic parallel to the castings of, and within, Hamlet. Conceptual doubling, a twentieth-century development, assumes a company of reasonable numbers and resources, and a director who is perceived to be making significant choices in his castings. Within this tradition, a line of modern directors from Bridges-Adams to Jonathan Miller and Richard Eyre has, I think, filed a major claim on *Hamlet*. It is this: doubling, executed with intent beyond the older categories of emergency and virtuoso, can express a ruling perception of the text's values. In the end, the possibilities within the great play, social and genetic, can be reduced to a single likeness (Hamlet/Hamlet), a single admonition ("Remember"), a single acknowledgement. The Ghost's pairings all aspire to the selves of Hamlet. And the last double, as the stage now proposes, is that of Hamlet and his father.