

**A Picture in Little Is Worth a Thousand Words:
Debasement in *Hamlet* and *Measure for Measure***

This article proposes that the corruption that pervades *Hamlet*'s Denmark extends to new coinage issued by Claudius, and that the plot of *Measure for Measure* is actually an allegory for debasement of the coinage. The "debasement" hypothesis provides new answers in the debate on the timing and authority of the different versions of *Hamlet*, and offers a solution to some if not all of the "problems" of *Measure for Measure*.

In *Hamlet*, debasement yields a consistent and reasonable interpretation of three passages that have not yet been satisfactorily interpreted. When Hamlet says that Claudius's "picture in little" is selling for up to one hundred ducats, he is alluding to the fact that Claudius's picture appears on debased coins that people must accept for value. When Hamlet demands that his mother look upon the "pictures" of old Hamlet and Claudius in a "counterfeit presentment," he is showing her two coins, one of which is debased. When the "picture in little" and "two pictures" passages are understood to involve debased coins, it becomes evident that the reference to an "innovation" that prompted the "picture in little" line signifies the debasement itself, which has thrown the city into economic turmoil and has caused the tragedians to leave their residence in search of work.

The debasement theory of *Hamlet* sheds light on the timing and authority of the different versions of the play primarily because the aforementioned and other debasement references are missing from Hamlet's first quarto. The omission of debasement references, combined with the first quarto's more sympathetic treatment of the Queen, suggests that the first quarto was a version of the play that had been edited and revised to avoid offending King James, either by a reference to his having debased the Scottish coinage, a perceived attack on his "divine right" to debase the English coinage, or a suggestion that his mother had been complicit in his father's murder.

The debasement theme in *Hamlet* resonates with the interest in monetary policy that Shakespeare expressed in other plays including the Lancastrian tetralogy, *Troilus and Cressida* and *The Merchant of Venice*. Moreover, it supports and is supported by a view of *Measure for Measure* as allegory for debasement: In *Measure for Measure*, a man named for a coin (Angelo) is debased and at risk of further debasement, and other aptly-named characters join forces to prevent further debasement and to stabilize the coinage. Among other things (as explained in detail below), the debasement hypothesis provides straightforward explanations for (1) Isabella's refusal to trade her chastity for Claudio's life; (2) the 5-

year period since Angelo abandoned Mariana; (3) Mariana's continued love for Angelo over that period; (4) Isabella's remark that Mariana would be better off dead; (5) Mariana's remark that the Duke has "oft still'd [her] brawling discontent," (6) the contemporary basis for Mariana's brother, the "great soldier Frederick"; (7) the contemporary basis for Mariana's "moated grange"; (8) the abrupt "romance" between the Duke and Isabella; (9) the 14–19 year slippage of the laws of Vienna; (10) the excision of *Measure for Measure* from the Valladolid copy of the Second Folio; (11) the removal of the Mariana role from William Davenant's 1662 revision of the play; and (12) why a play that appears to endorse mercy would have a title suggestive of retribution. In addition, the Spanish elements in the play identified in this article, coupled with Shakespeare's service as a "groom of the chamber" to the Spanish peace delegation at Somerset House in August 1604, provide strong evidence that the play was largely written between August 1604 and its first performance that December, somewhat later than previously thought.

Debasement in Context

At least since the time of Aristophanes, writers have used debasement of the coinage as a metaphor for human debasement.¹ Shakespeare's use of the device in *Hamlet* has been described as "pervasive."² In the First Act, Polonius chastises Ophelia for having taken Hamlet's "tenders for true pay//Which are not sterling" (1.3.106–07).³ Also in the First Act, Hamlet vows that the idea of avenging his father will live inside him "unmix'd with baser matter" (1.5.104), and calls the ghost "truepenny" (suggesting that not all pennies are true) (1.5.158). In the Second Act, Hamlet hopes that the boy-actor's voice "like a piece of uncurrent gold, be not crack'd within the ring" (2.2.423–25),⁴ and calls himself a "dull and muddy-mettled rascal" for not acting more quickly (2.2.562). In the Third Act, Hamlet would prefer to sit next to Ophelia, who is "metal more attractive" than his debased mother (3.2.108). In the Fourth Act, the Queen makes an obscure comment comparing Hamlet's madness to a pure "ore among a mineral of metals base."⁵

In *Measure for Measure*, the "coin image" has been said to "run[] throughout the play."⁶ Examples include punning "peace" with "piece" in referring to impure coinage;⁷ the "sweat" that has caused Mistress Overdone to become "custom-shrunk;"⁸ several references to payment by weight (as opposed to by "tale," *i.e.* face value⁹);¹⁰ Claudio's plea for Isabella to "assay" Angelo (1.2.171); Isabella's assertion that she would bribe Angelo not with "tested gold" (2.2.150) but with prayer; Angelo's characterization of illegitimate pregnancy as "coin[ing] heaven's image//In stamps that

59 West Virginia Shakespeare and Renaissance Association are forbid” (2.4.45–46)¹¹ and his remark that “’Tis all as easy//Falsely to take away a life true made, //As to put mettle in restrained means//To make a false one (2.4.46–49); Isabella’s contention that women are “credulous to false prints” (2.4.128); and Isabella’s reference to Angelo’s “filth within being cast” (3.1.93). Indeed, even the line from which the play’s title derives alludes to debasement: “An Angelo for Claudio; death for death.//Haste still pays haste, and leisure answers leisure; //Like doth quit like, and Measure still for Measure” (5.1.407–09).¹²

While these allusions and metaphors mean little to us, living as we do in an age in which nearly all the currencies of the world are completely “debased” (that is, have no precious metal content), they played upon the concern that Shakespeare’s audiences had for the stability of the English currency. Throughout the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance, government-controlled mints produced coins made primarily of gold and silver, and monarchs faced a constant temptation to add base metal to the coinage in order to turn a quick profit. In England, the “Great Debasement” under Henry VIII and Edward VI netted the crown approximately 1.27 million pounds over the period 1542–1551.¹³ Apart from the devastating effects of the debasement—it caused immediate inflation, economic turmoil, and was blamed for famines that occurred both during the debasement and thereafter¹⁴—it earned Henry the nickname “Old Coppernose,” for the fact that his “silver” coinage was plated so thinly that the inner layer of copper shone through in the nose of his image.¹⁵

It was left to Henry’s daughter and Edward’s sister—Elizabeth—to restore the coinage to a pure precious metal standard. This she did, to great acclaim.¹⁶ But the man most likely to become the next English King at the time *Hamlet* was written—James VI of Scotland—had debased the Scottish coinage almost continuously during his reign there,¹⁷ with the result that in Shakespeare’s lifetime alone, the Scottish pound had depreciated by two-thirds compared to the English pound.¹⁸ Owing to his own debasements and those of his predecessors over the centuries, Scottish pence, shillings and pounds bearing James’s picture had one-twelfth the precious metal content of their English counterparts.¹⁹ Accordingly, any Elizabethan encountering James’s coinage would immediately associate James with debasement.

As Elizabeth’s reign drew to a close, it is likely that Shakespeare—and others whose livelihood depended on a stable economy—would have feared that James would consider it his “Divine Right”²⁰ to debase the English coinage.²¹ These concerns would have reached their peak during the period 1599–1605, which included the writing and possible first performance of *Hamlet* between 1599–1601, King James’s accession in 1603, the

publication of *Hamlet*'s first quarto in 1603, the publication of *Hamlet*'s second quarto in 1604–05, and the performance of *Mesur for Mesur* by "Shaxberd" before the King on December 26, 1604.²²

Picture in Little

In *Hamlet*, Claudius debases practically everyone and everything he comes into contact with. He debases Gertrude, Laertes, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and possibly Polonius. He has debased the throne of Denmark, and his drunken revels debase the image of the Danes to the world (1.4.17–22). It would be in character for Claudius to have debased the coinage as well.²³ Moreover, the costly preparations for war with Norway (1.1.74–82), coupled with England's neglect of its tribute (3.1.171–72), practically cried out for a debasement of the coinage. A new and perhaps unpopular ruler seeking to rally the country in wartime would think twice before imposing new taxes on his people. For most medieval monarchs, debasement would have been the only answer.

The first overt clue that Claudius has debased the coinage occurs after Rosencrantz informs Hamlet that the tragedians of the city are traveling:

Ham. How chances it they travel? Their residence, both in reputation and profit, was better both ways.

Ros. I think their *inhibition* comes by the means of the late *innovation*[?].

Ham. Do they hold the same estimation they did when I was in the City? Are they so followed?

Ros. No indeed are they not. . . .²⁴

Ham. It is not very strange; for my uncle is king of Denmark, and those that would make mouths at him while my father lived, *give twenty, forty, fifty,²⁵ a hundred ducats apiece [a peece]²⁶ for his picture in little*. 'Sblood, there is something in this more than natural, if philosophy could find it out.' 2.2.328–34; 359–64 (emphasis added).

Hamlet's reference to Claudius's "picture in little" has an accepted and superficially plausible interpretation. A picture in little is a "miniature portrait"²⁷ and people have historically purchased and worn such objects to express their devotion to popular leaders. In Shakespeare's time, Queen Elizabeth's courtiers proudly wore her "picture in little" pinned to their chests.²⁸ Under a literal, single-meaning "miniature portrait" interpretation, it is therefore not necessarily surprising that in corrupt Denmark the courtiers have facilely shifted their alliances from Old Hamlet to his successor. It is also not particularly surprising that this would irk Hamlet.

Nevertheless, there is no good reason for Shakespeare to import this particular Elizabethan artifact into medieval Denmark, and, as other scholars have found, a literal interpretation fits uneasily with the rest of the play.²⁹ If Claudius was an admired king, then why is there a pervading sense that “something is rotten in the state of Denmark?” (1.4.90). Why did Fortinbras have a “weak supposal” of Claudius’s worth? (1.2.18) How did Laertes so easily rouse the populace to revolt over the death of his father, a mere councilor? (4.5.99–108).

Understanding “picture in little” as a reference to coinage bearing Claudius’s image solves these problems, and makes for a better line. Even without props, Shakespeare’s audience would have caught the double-meaning: “Picture” was slang for coin—as in “whose purse was best in picture” (*WT* 4.4.603)³⁰—and “picture in little” helps to drive the point home. As if that weren’t enough, Shakespeare’s “a peece”—another synonym for coin³¹—points to the same meaning.

Analogous treatments of coins in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Cymbeline* support the coinage interpretation. In *Romeo and Juliet*, after describing the evil of gold and handing over forty gold ducats to the apothecary, Romeo says: “I sell thee poison; thou hast sold me none” (5.1.83). Thus Romeo, like Hamlet with his “picture in little” line, describes the purchase of a good as the sale of a coin.

In *Cymbeline*, Shakespeare uses “piece” for “coin” in a manner that also resembles the “picture in little” line:

For Innogen’s dear life take mine; and though
 ’Tis not so dear, yet ’tis a life; you coin’d it.
 ’Tween man and man they weigh not every stamp;
 Though light, take pieces for the figure’s sake.

(*Cym.* 5.5.116–119)

As David Bevington explains, the injunction to “take pieces for the figure’s sake” refers to the fact that “even if some coins may be under the exact weight, men accept them for the sake of the image stamped thereon, i.e. the image of the king.”³² The “picture in little” line similarly alludes to the fact that the image on the coin is, in the end, what people are giving value for.

Accordingly, Elizabethans would have readily appreciated that a “picture in little” of a monarch selling for up to a hundred ducats “a peece” referred primarily to the appearance of the monarch’s picture on coins. Hamlet is making a biting comment on the fact that people who used to despise Claudius—including presumably Hamlet himself—are now forced to exchange value for Claudius’s “picture,” because Claudius’s picture now appears “in little” on the coins of the realm. The fact that “picture in little” could mean a miniature portrait as well as a coin makes the line better—

and more consistent with the delight Hamlet takes both in punning and in confusing Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

The ordinary Elizabethan playgoer might have stopped the analysis at this point (or long before), and laughed with Hamlet at the double entendre for coins. But a more contemplative playgoer—or someone *reading* the play closely—might have noticed something else. Given that ducats in other European countries during Shakespeare's time were coins having significant value (on the order of a few shillings), the introduction of a 100-ducat coin could only mean that the currency in question had been debased. Only in a debasement could a mint produce a 100-ducat coin of a manageable size.³³ Shakespeare thus picked these high values to symbolize the inflationary effect of a debasement, and to remind his audience that during a debasement, the concept of value loses meaning.³⁴ Hamlet's commentary on this state of affairs—"Sblood, there is something in this more than natural, if philosophy could find it out"—can more readily be seen to refer to the unnatural circumstance of having to exchange significant value for coins made of base metal than to the shifting popularity of Claudius.

The theory that "picture in little" refers to coins is bolstered by the presence of two other references in *Hamlet* to Claudius's coinage. One of these occurs in a later encounter with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, when Hamlet says that like a sponge, Rosencrantz "soaks up the King's countenance, his rewards, his authorities" (4.2.14–15). Although "King's countenance" has typically been translated as the king's "favour"³⁵ or "favorable looks,"³⁶ realizing that the King's countenance appears on coins of the realm helps us see that this is another double-entendre for coins: Hamlet is telling the courtiers that he knows they have been bought.³⁷

Coinage of the Brain

The second reference to Claudius's picture on coins occurs in the Queen's Closet Scene. Shortly after killing the eavesdropping Polonius, Hamlet confronts his mother:

Look here upon this *picture*, and on this,
 The *counterfeit presentment* of two brothers.
 See what a grace was seated on this brow,
 Hyperion's curls, the front of Jove himself,
 An eye like Mars to threaten and command,
 A station like the herald Mercury
 New lighted on a heaven-kissing hill,
 A combination, and a form indeed
 Where every god did seem to set his seal
 To give the world assurance of a man.
 This was your husband. Look you now what follows.

Here is your husband, *like a mildew'd ear,*
Blasting his wholesome brother. Have you eyes?
 3.4.53–67 (emphases added).

No one knows how Shakespeare intended this scene to be staged. In some productions, Hamlet pulls two miniature portraits out of his cloak, perhaps on the assumption that the scene is supposed to be staged with miniatures, consistent with the “picture in little” line.³⁸ In others, the picture of Claudius is on the wall while Hamlet pulls the picture of his father out of his cloak; in still others, both pictures are on the wall, or are tapestries, or the different pictures are in lockets or medallions around Hamlet’s and his mother’s necks.³⁹ None of these typical stagings is perfectly satisfactory—it has been argued that Hamlet would never have deigned to carry a miniature of Claudius on his person,⁴⁰ that the textual reference to a “station” (*i.e.* a stance) suggests a full-length portrait rather than a miniature,⁴¹ and that, despite the fact that the Elsinore of Shakespeare’s day (*i.e.* Helsingor’s Kronborg castle) was famous for its tapestries depicting Danish Kings, a painting or tapestry would not likely be found in the queen’s closet.⁴²

The difficulty in determining the type of paintings Shakespeare intended raises the question whether Hamlet is showing his mother paintings in the first place. After all, one would not expect Claudius’s portrait to depict him as a “mildewed ear,” that is, a mildewed ear of grain such as wheat or corn.⁴³ In addition, there is no sense in which one painting or miniature might “blast”—infect⁴⁴—another. And because Hamlet is using the present tense—“Here is your husband, *like a mildew'd ear, Blasting his wholesome brother*”—the line would not appear to describe Claudius’s poisoning of old Hamlet.

These difficulties fall away if the “two pictures” passage is staged with coins and the Claudius coin is debased. We have already seen that “picture” was slang for coin in Shakespeare’s day, and Hamlet already used “picture” in that sense in the “picture in little” line. The language of coinage—“counterfeit”—provides another strong hint that Shakespeare was contemplating coins in general and debased coins in particular for this scene.⁴⁵ The “*counterfeit presentment*” line is thus another double-entendre: The coins are a “counterfeit presentment” in that they contain two pictures (counterfeit being a synonym for picture);⁴⁶ but the comparison of the two coins is also a “counterfeit presentment” in the sense that it shows one to be a counterfeit—a counterfeit (debased) coin depicting a counterfeit (debased) king.⁴⁷

When the two pictures are viewed as coins, the lines “Here is your husband, *like a mildew'd ear, // Blasting his wholesome brother,*” come into focus. If the “pictures” are coins and the Claudius coin is debased, Hamlet can be seen as referring to the fact

that when mingled together—in a palm, in a purse, or in the circulation of the currency of the realm—the debased Claudius coins “infect” the “wholesome” coins bearing Old Hamlet’s image.

“Ear” as metaphor for coin resonates with two earlier references to ears in the play. When the ghost tells Hamlet that “the whole ear of Denmark is by a forged process of my death rankly abused” he is using the language of debasement—“forgery”—in saying (in the subtext) that the whole ear of Denmark—the Danish coinage—is “rankly abused”—debased. Likewise, Claudius’s method of murdering Old Hamlet—by pouring poison into his ears—becomes a metaphor for the debasement of the currency, where the physical consequences to the dying king correspond to the economic consequences to a nation undergoing a debasement. If the circulation of the blood represents the circulation of currency, a debasement “doth posset/And curd, like eager droppings into milk,/The thin⁴⁸ and wholesome blood.” (1.5.65–73).

In naming the usurping issuer of debased coins “Claudius” and referring to coins as “ears,” Shakespeare may have been recalling the Roman Emperor Claudius’s reconquest of Britain from Cunobelin (Shakespeare’s model for Cymbeline). The coinage of both rulers featured ears of grain,⁴⁹ but whereas Cunobelin’s coinage was pure, Claudius’s supplanting coinage was—to Shakespeare’s eyes—debased.⁵⁰ The notion of the coinage of a heroic king (old Hamlet, Cunobelin) being supplanted by debased coinage of an illegitimate ruler named Claudius may thus have had its roots in Britain’s early history.⁵¹ That Shakespeare was familiar with the coinage of Cunobelin and Claudius is not improbable—such coins were plentiful, coin collecting was a popular pastime and the subject of a growing literature on the continent, and the coins themselves represented the most tangible connection that Renaissance writers often had to their Roman or Greek subjects.⁵² Indeed, Shakespeare had referred to antique coins in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, calling “the face of an old Roman coin” a “Death’s face in a ring” (5.2.606–07). The Claudius coins, being debased, would have been particularly inexpensive and thus accessible.

Returning to the Queen’s closet scene, we come upon a line that ties together all the references to coins. Hamlet sees and speaks to the ghost and is surprised that Gertrude cannot see it. She thinks it’s a manifestation of his madness:

“This is the very coinage of your brain.” (3.4.139)

This is simply a much better line if Hamlet has been showing her coins, and it demonstrates that Gertrude too is capable of wordplay. It is also the first documented use of “coinage” as metaphor in the English language.⁵³ Any argument *against* a

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coinage interpretation of the “two pictures” scene must now ascribe
the use of the words “counterfeit” and “coinage” to coincidence, and
ignore the fact that “picture” was to Elizabethans a familiar slang
term for coins.⁵⁴

The Queen’s closet scene contains several additional
allusions to the debased coinage. By presenting the debased
Claudius coin to Gertrude, Hamlet forces her to “turn[] [her] eyes
into [her] very soul, where she sees “black and grained spots,”
3.4.89–90, recalling the black and uneven quality of debased
coins.⁵⁵ Similarly, in referring to “the fatness of these purse times”
(3.4.155), Hamlet evokes the image of purses fat with debased
coins, just as calling Claudius a “bloat king” (3.4.184) calls to mind
the inflation caused by a debasement.⁵⁶ Hamlet’s reference to
Claudius as a “king of shreds and patches” (3.4.103) might also
refer to the appearance of debased coins whose veneer has worn off
unevenly.

In the absence of any other hint of financial wrong-doing
by Claudius, the proposed debasement neatly explains why Hamlet
calls Claudius a “cutpurse of the empire and the rule, that from a
shelf the precious diadem stole, and put it in his pocket” (3.4.99–
101). The diadem at issue is not Old Hamlet’s crown—which was
on Old Hamlet’s head, not a shelf—but the royal prerogative to
debase the coinage. Shakespeare acknowledges that debasement is a
royal prerogative—as he would again in *King Lear*, by having Lear
say “they cannot touch me for coining, I am the King himself”⁵⁷—
but insists that it be maintained on a shelf, presumably to be used
only when necessary for the common good. It is wrong for the
monarch to debase the coinage to line his own pockets, as Hamlet is
accusing Claudius of doing.⁵⁸

Debasement as Innovation

Having considered the mutually reinforcing
references to debasement of the coinage in the “picture in little” and
“two pictures” lines, we are now ready to revisit the dialogue that
leads up to the “picture in little” line. In that exchange,⁵⁹
Rosencrantz tells Hamlet that he believes the players’ “inhibition
comes by means of the late innovation.” This line has been the
subject of a wide range of mutually exclusive conjectures, with
proposals for “inhibition” ranging from a London Privy Council
order of June 22, 1600,⁶⁰ to a hypothetical Danish order depriving
the players of residence, to the closure of theaters due to the London
plague of 1603⁶¹; and proposals for “innovation” including an
unnamed political disturbance, the Essex rebellion of 1601, the
threatened rebellion of Fortinbras against Danish dominion,⁶² the
accession of James I to the throne in 1603,⁶³ and the “innovation” of
the child actors themselves.⁶⁴ Obviously, several of these

possibilities require the line to have been added after *Hamlet* was first staged around 1600, and, given their mutually exclusive nature, most of these possibilities are wrong.

In fact, they are probably all wrong. A simpler explanation is that the actors' "inhibition" arises from the inflation and other economic turmoil caused by the "innovation" of new, debased "Claudius" coins being issued to finance the war with Norway (and possibly to line Claudius's pockets).⁶⁵ Accordingly, in this exchange, Rosencrantz and Hamlet are *both* talking about coinage in general and the debasement in particular, as both the "inhibition" of the actors, and the seemingly high "prices" paid by the public for Claudius's picture, are caused by the issuance of the debased coinage. Under this theory, Rosencrantz's lack of certainty—"I *think*" the inhibition comes by means of the late innovation⁶⁶—also makes sense: Rosencrantz doesn't have personal knowledge as to why the players are on the road, but it stands to reason that during economic hard times, people in the city will spend less money on entertainment, and even established actors may have to leave the city in search of a livelihood.⁶⁷ This passage thus reflects the personal stake that Shakespeare had in maintaining a pure coinage: just as a debasement forced the esteemed tragedians to travel, it could equally wreak havoc on the livelihood of the Lord Chamberlain's Men—not to mention Shakespeare's own plans for a secure income in his retirement.⁶⁸

Moreover, the players themselves can be seen as metaphors for a fluctuating coinage—with each role, a player is coined anew. The impact of the "innovation" on the players—causing them to travel—calls to mind that during a debasement, a country's precious metal holdings tend to leave the country, as foreign merchants refuse to accept the debased currency.⁶⁹ Thus, the tragedians—the "pure actors," like the remaining "pure" coinage—are forced to travel by the debasement.

Consistent with this metaphorical use of players for coins, Hamlet later instructs the players not to step outside of their roles, to "o'erstep not the modesty of nature" (3.2.19). He complains that he has "heard others praise,⁷⁰ and that highly" (3.2.29–30) actors that "imitated humanity . . . abominably" (3.2.35). Here, Hamlet is observing that hollow and unnatural actors are poor representations of humanity, just as debased coins are poor substitutes for pure coins.

At this point, the following exchange takes place:

Ham.: . . . they imitated humanity so abominably.

First Player: I hope we have *reformed* that indifferently⁷¹ among us.

Ham.: O *reform* it altogether. And let those who play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them—for there be of them that will themselves laugh, to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too, though in the meantime some necessary question of the play be then to be considered. *That's villainous, and shows a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it*" (3.2.38–45) (emphases added).

The word "reformation" was used by Elizabeth herself to describe her correction of the debasement that occurred under Henry VIII and Edward VI.⁷² Hamlet's response to the first player thus warns that an isolated reformation may not be sufficient to protect against future debasements. If "clowns" is a pun on "crowns," then the instruction to the clowns is a warning against debasing the coinage (that is, against issuing coins that "speak" a greater value than what is "set down" for them based on their intrinsic value),⁷³ and Shakespeare is covertly calling any monarch who debases the coinage "villainous," "ambitio[us]," and a "fool."

Hamlet returns to the debasement theme in a later conversation with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. As already mentioned, when Hamlet tells Rosencrantz that like a sponge, he "soaks up the King's countenance" (4.3.14), Hamlet is telling the dynamic duo that he knows they are in the King's pay. A few lines later, the following exchange occurs:

Ros. My Lord, you must tell us where the body is, and go with us to the King.

Ham. *The body is with the King, but the King is not with the body. The King is a thing—*

Guil. A thing, my lord?

Ham. *Of nothing.* Bring me to him. (4.2.13–29).

Harold Jenkins posits that Hamlet's statement that "[t]he body is with the King, but the King is not with the body" may be a joke about the fact that Polonius is in the castle—that is, "with the King"—but that the King is not with Polonius, since the King is not dead.⁷⁴ Others have simply dismissed the remark as nonsense.⁷⁵ But Hamlet's remark can be taken as yet another reference to debasement, especially coming as it does on the heels of his comment about the King's "countenance." Thus, in "[t]he body is with the King," "body" refers to the substance of the coinage—its precious metal content—which has been taken out of the coin, and is now with the King. Likewise, "the King is not with the body" refers to the fact that the King's face now adorns debased coinage that does not contain the "body" (*i.e.* precious metal). Finally "[t]he King is a thing . . . [o]f nothing," means that both the King and his coin are of no substance—debased.

Debasement in All Versions

To this point, we have been looking primarily at the second quarto, in which the innovation line flows neatly into the picture in little line. In that version of the play, Hamlet's picture in little line is a fitting response to Rosencrantz's comment: Rosencrantz observes that the people have stopped following the players not by choice, but because of the debasement; Hamlet points out that people now appear to place high value on Claudius's picture not by choice, but because of the debasement.

Both the Folio version (F) and the first quarto (Q1) differ significantly from the second quarto (Q2) at this point, and these differences not only support the debasement hypothesis, but they also shed light on the interrelationships between the different versions of the play. The differences between the unedited versions of Q1, Q2, and F can be seen in the following table [*see fig 1*].

The different versions appeared in print as follows: Q1 in 1603, after James I's accession; Q2 in 1604–05 and F in 1623 (as part of the Folio collection that purported to contain all of Shakespeare's plays). Q1 has long been regarded as a "bad quarto," a memorial reconstruction by a bit player, although its genesis and relevance has recently become the focus of considerable scholarly attention.⁷⁶ There is continued debate as to whether F or Q2 should be considered the more authoritative.

In the lines in question, Q1 differs substantially from Q2 and F, but Q1 and F both contain references to children that are missing from Q2. A variety of theories exist as to when—or whether—the child actor passage that appears in F was added to Shakespeare's original text. Most scholars believe that it was added sometime after the original play was staged. Of these, some believe that it was in the source document on which Q2 was based, but was marked for deletion and therefore did not appear in Q2.⁷⁷ Others believe that it was not in the source document underlying Q2, and was thus a later insertion. It is also debated whether the abbreviated "humour of children" passage from Q1 is a condensation of the "little eyases" passage of F, or whether these reflect two different texts.⁷⁸

The hypothesis that "innovation" refers to debasement provides a natural explanation of the relationships between Q1, Q2, and F. The first thing to notice is how F differs from Q2. In F, the flow from the innovation line to the picture in little line—both of which refer to debasement—is interrupted by the child actor passage. But Hamlet's response to Rosencrantz's statement that the innovation has caused the players to travel—"How comes it, do they grow rusty?"—still indicates that he knows that the innovation

First Quarto	Second Quarto	Folio
Ham. How comes it that they traueill? Do they grow restie-	Ham. How chances it they trauaile? Their residence both in reputation, and profit was better both wayes.	Ham. How chances it they trauaile? their residence both in reputation and profit was better both wayes.
	Ros. I thinke their inhibition, comes by the meanes of the late innouasion.	Rosin. I thinke their Inhibition comes by the meanes of the late Innouation?
	Ham. Doe they hold the same estimation they did when I was in the City; are they so followed.	Ham. Doe they hold the same estimation they did
		When I was in the City? Are they so follow'd?
Gil. No my Lord, their reputation holds as it was wont.	Ros. No indeede are they not.	Rosin. No indeed, they are not.
Ham. How then		Ham. How comes it? Doe they grow rusty?
Gil. Yfaith my Lord, noueltie carries it away,		Rosin. Nay, their endeavour keeps in the wonted pace; but there is, sir, an eyrie of children, little eyases, that cry out on the top of the question, and are most tyrannically clapped fort. . . .
For the principall publike audience that Came to them, are turned to priuate playes, And to the humour of children.		* * * [19 lines relating to child actors] * * *
Ham. I doe not greatly wonder of it, For those that would make mops and moes	Ham. It is not very strange, for my Vnckle is King of Denmarke, and Those that would make mouths at him while my father liued, giue twenty, fortie, fifty, a hundred duckets a peece, for his Picture in little, s'bloud there is something in this more then naturall, if Philosophie could find it out.	Ham. It is not strange: for mine Vnckle is King of Denmarke, and those that would make mowes at him while my Father liued; giue twenty, forty, an hundred Ducates a peece, for his picture in Little. There is something in this more then Naturall, if Philosophie could finde it out.
At my vnckle, when my father liued, Now giue a hundred, two hundred pounds For his picture:		

Figure 1

was the debasement, and that the players are metaphors for coins: a debased coin will rust, whereas a non-debased coin will not. This difference strongly suggests that the additional lines in F were in fact an addition; whoever added those lines was careful to preserve the debasement allusion, but also had something to say about child actors.⁷⁹

The differences between Q1 and the other versions are far more dramatic. In Q1, the substitution of “novelty” for “innovation,” the addition of the theme of children, and the use of “restie” for the Folio’s “rusty” effectively remove the most direct reference to debasement. Similarly, the picture in little line itself is gone, along with the reference to 20, 40, 100 ducats—it now really is Claudius’s “picture” for which people are paying “one hundred, two hundred pounds” (7.251–52).

Likewise, Q1 is missing all of the references in the two pictures scene that would support the debasement theory—the “counterfeit presentment,” the “mildewed ear,” the present tense reference to “blasting” the “wholesome brother,” Gertrude’s metaphorical use of “coinage,”⁸⁰ the “black and grained spots,” and Hamlet’s references to these “pursey times” and to Claudius as “king of shreds and patches,”⁸¹ “bloat king,”⁸² and “cutpurse.” In addition, the King of the first quarto is no longer named “Claudius.”⁸³

In Q1, the passage in which Hamlet instructs the players has been rearranged and lengthened to include examples. Hamlet’s line “O, reform it altogether” has been changed to “The better, the better, mend it all together” (9.10),⁸⁴ and the line about what the clowns shall say no longer includes the “for them” ending of “what is set down *for them*” (9.17).⁸⁵ In addition, Hamlet’s statement that he has “heard others praise, and that highly” (3.2.29–30) the unnatural actors (where praise has the double meaning of “appraise”) has been changed to the unambiguous “heard others commend them, and that highly too” (9.11).

Similarly, Hamlet’s odd comment to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern—“The body is with the King, but the King is not with the body. The King is a thing . . . [o]f nothing” (4.2.26–29)—is missing from Q1; in fact, the preceding sponge passage has now been moved to a location in the play where Polonius is still alive (9.180–87). Various references by Hamlet to English currency—which might have reflected his preference for something other than debased Danish currency—are also missing from Q1. His comment that his thoughts are “too dear a halfpenny” (2.2.273–74) is entirely gone, and his assertion that he would take the ghost’s word for “a

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thousand pound” (3.2.280–81) reads as “I’ll take the ghost’s word
for more then all the coin in Denmark (9.155–56).”⁸⁶

Because of the substantial variance between Q1 and the other versions of the play, any single difference could be the result of a faulty recollection on the part of the suspected memorial reconstructor. Nevertheless, the fact that all of the many debasement references are missing from Q1 suggests that something more than poor memory may have been at work. Indeed, Q1 appears to reflect the editorial hand of someone intent on removing all possible traces of a debasement theme. This would be a natural precaution for the newly-ensconced “King’s Men,” who would above all wish to avoid giving offense to their new and royal patron by associating with the evil King Claudius a practice that King James himself had resorted to repeatedly in Scotland.⁸⁷

Gertrude Queen of Scots?

Independent support for the notion that the first quarto was meant above all not to give offense to King James comes from its benign treatment of Queen Gertrude (Gertred, in Q1). The parallels between Hamlet’s mother and King James’s mother—Mary, Queen of Scots—have been noticed before: Three months and six days after the murder of her husband (Lord Darnley, James’s father), Mary married the man who was roundly suspected of being the murderer, and within a few more months, the fallout from the event forced Mary to abdicate the throne of Scotland in favor of her then 13-month old son, James.⁸⁸ An acting company seeking to curry favor with its new sponsor and King would understandably be concerned about the parallels between Gertrude and Mary.

The easiest way to solve the problem would be to trim down and alter Gertrude’s role to remove ambiguities about her possible complicity in the murder and make her more sympathetic all around. That appears to be what was done. Among the many differences in Gertrude’s role between Q1 and the other texts are that (1) Claudius no longer refers to her as his “imperial jointress” and makes no other endearing references to her, (2) the ghost does not instruct Hamlet to leave her to heaven and her conscience, (3) in the closet scene, she categorically denies any involvement in the murder, (4) in the closet scene, the ghost asks Hamlet to “comfort” her, (5) she doesn’t call Laertes’s followers “false Danish dogs,”⁸⁹ (6) she doesn’t refuse to see Ophelia, and, most significantly (7) a whole scene has been added in which Horatio tells her of Claudius’s attempt to have Hamlet killed, and in which she places herself firmly on Hamlet’s side against Claudius (15.1–34). The result in Q1 is a more sympathetic character, and one less likely to give offense to the new king.

The seemingly methodical omission in Q1 of references which in Q2 and F refer to the debasement theme, together with the significant changes in the queen's character, point to the conclusion that Q1 is a version of the play that was edited by someone intent on not offending King James. This does not answer the question whether Q1 was a memorial reconstruction or not, but it does suggest that the text on which Q1 was based comes later in time than those on which Q2 and F were based, and was probably prepared either shortly before or shortly after King James took the throne in March 1603.⁹⁰

Accordingly, the proposed debasement not only resolves ambiguities in the picture in little, two pictures, and inhibition/innovation passages, but it also suggests that (1) of the three extant versions, the second quarto's handling of the picture in little line was closest to *Hamlet's* original source, and (2) that the first quarto—edited as it was for the sake of King James—could aptly be renamed the *King James Hamlet*.⁹¹

Debasement in *Measure for Measure*

The debasement theme in *Hamlet* converges neatly with a heretofore unappreciated debasement motif in *Measure for Measure*, and the presence of that motif in *Measure for Measure* in turn provides support for a debasement theme in *Hamlet*. Not only does *Measure for Measure* contain more coinage and testing imagery than any other Shakespeare play, but the character names and the plot make the play an allegory about debasement of the coinage. Because the precise contours of Shakespeare's allegory are difficult to ascertain, some of what follows admittedly is speculation. However, the kernel of it—that Shakespeare's Mariana represents Juan de Mariana and that the play is a commentary on debasement of the coinage—can only be rejected by assuming an improbable number of coincidences.

In *Measure for Measure*, a character named for an English coin (Angelo, for the English Angel)—whom others view as a model of purity—is actually debased and at risk of becoming irredeemably debased. If the character named for a monarch (Isabella) yields to his entreaties, both the coin and the monarch will be debased. Fortunately, a character named for a Spanish Jesuit who argued against monetary debasement (Mariana, for Juan de Mariana) intervenes, and prevents both from becoming debased. Orchestrating much of the action are characters based loosely on King James (the Duke-Friar) and Shakespeare himself (Lucio, the “fantastic”). The forced marriage of the coin (Angelo) to the anti-debaser (Mariana) reflects Shakespeare's hope that King James will

73 West Virginia Shakespeare and Renaissance Association pursue a policy of non-debasement, and the forced marriage of Lucio to Kate Keepdown mirrors Shakespeare's own shotgun wedding and thus conveys to the King the playwright's view that he has already been amply punished for any offense that the play might give.

Angelo is initially presented as absolutely pure.⁹² In his first substantive line in the play, he compares himself to a coin, in danger of being debased. He also makes a veiled reference to the fact that the coin for which he is named (the angel) replaced a coin named the "noble":

Now good my Lord
Let there be some more test made of my metal,
Before so noble, and so great a figure
Be stamp't upon it. (1.1.47–50)⁹³

Isabella seizes on the coinage metaphor when in her first encounter with Angelo, she tells him that if her brother Claudio "had been as you, and you as he, // you would have slipp't like him" (2.2.64–65). A slip was Shakespeare's way of denoting a counterfeit or debased coin.⁹⁴ Here, Isabella is prophetically telling the coin that he, like anyone else, is susceptible to becoming debased.

Angelo soon fulfills her prophecy by deciding that he will offer her Claudio's life in exchange for sexual favors. When he reaches this decision, he again alludes to coinage:

yea, my gravity
Wherein (let no man hear me) I take pride,
Could I with boot change for an idle plume
Which the air beats for vain. O place, O form,
How often dost thou with thy case, thy habit,
Wrench awe from fools and tie the wiser souls
To thy false seeming! Blood, thou art blood.
Let's write good angel on the devil's horn:
'Tis not the devil's crest. (2.4.9–17)

Here Angelo first points out that his apparent "gravity" is an illusion; that despite outward appearances, his true substance weighs less than a feather, just as a completely debased coin contains no gold or silver.⁹⁵ He then explains that the mere outer form of a coin—its "case," "habit," or "false seeming"—impresses fools and can also govern the actions of those who know better. He muses that if one were to make a coin of the basest material available—the devil's horn—and stamp the words "good angel" on it, it would pass for value, because, after all, the coin does not depict the devil's head (crest). This line describes debasement of the coinage perfectly: a base material can be passed as current merely because someone in authority has stamped it.

As mentioned, Isabella is a monarch figure who is put under enormous pressure to allow the coin (Angelo) to become debased, in the course of which she herself would become debased. Although Queen Isabella of Spain is a candidate,⁹⁶ it is more likely that by Isabella—the Spanish name for Elizabeth⁹⁷—Shakespeare intended Queen Elizabeth, who cured her father’s debasement of the coinage and rejected repeated proposals by others to debase the coinage throughout the duration of her reign.⁹⁸ Isabella’s self-righteous virginity, as well as her silence in the face of a proposal by a very suitable suitor, point to Isabella as representing the Virgin Queen. If Isabella is Elizabeth, then the final three lines of the play: “What’s mine is yours and what is yours is mine//So, bring us to our palace; where we’ll show//What’s yet behind, that’s meet you all should know” (5.1.534–36) refer not to the potential union Isabella and the Duke, but to the succession of Elizabeth by James.

From the Duke-Friar’s observation that Claudio is not “noble” (an English gold coin from a bygone age) in that all his “accommodations . . . Are nursed by baseness” (3.1.13–15) and Isabella’s echoing sentiment that Claudio is “too noble to conserve a life//In base appliances” (3.1.88–89), we know that Claudio is considered debased.⁹⁹ The debasement of Claudio and his fiancé Juliet draws on real life as well as Shakespeare’s past plays. In Shakespeare’s plays, “Juliet” is the woman’s name most clearly associated with coinage, as in: “O, speak again, bright angel” (*Romeo and Juliet*, 2.1.68). In real life, Elizabeth’s brother Edward VI had debased the English coinage,¹⁰⁰ just as Claudio has debased Juliet.

Claudio’s name is associated with debasement through *Hamlet*’s King Claudius and through the Roman Emperor Claudius.¹⁰¹ Claudio himself seems to understand the implications of the name he bears, when he laments that Angelo “for a name, //Now puts the drowsy and neglected act//Freshly on me: ’tis surely for a name” (1.2.158–60). The traditional explanation of this—that Angelo is doing it for personal fame¹⁰²—finds no support elsewhere in the play, and is most likely merely the second half of Shakespeare’s double-entendre.

The time shift worked by linking Claudio to Edward VI may also explain the fourteen or nineteen years that the laws have been allowed to “slip.”¹⁰³ Edward’s debased coins were in circulation for fourteen years—from 1547, the year of his accession, to 1561, the year that Elizabeth restored the coinage—and debased coins in general were in circulation for nineteen years from the outset of the Great Debasement (1542) to the restoration (1561). Both time periods thus have debasement linkages; perhaps

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Shakespeare couldn't make up his mind which one to use, or couldn't remember which one he had first used.¹⁰⁴

Mariana is Shakespeare's original creation, not found in his sources. While the name Mariana was a plausible woman's name, and was the adjectival form of Mary or Maria (and thus could be associated with the virgin Mary, Catholics, Queen Mary Tudor or Mary Queen of Scots),¹⁰⁵ it also happened to be the name of a famous Spanish Jesuit historian and economic writer who argued against debasement of the coinage—Juan de Mariana.¹⁰⁶ Apart from Mariana's antidebasement role in the plot of *Measure for Measure* itself—saving both Angelo the coin and Isabella the monarch from debasement—Shakespeare provided several clues that Mariana was meant to signify Juan de Mariana. He did this by tying Mariana to Spain as well as to Jesuits and by having both Mariana and Isabella allude to Juan de Mariana's most famous work.¹⁰⁷

Shakespeare tied Mariana to Spain by reference to her brother "Frederick, the great soldier who miscarried at sea" (3.1.210). This would have called to mind in Shakespeare's December 1604 audience the May 1603 death in a naval action against the Dutch of Federigo de Spinola, a wealthy Genoan who had participated in Spain's war efforts against the English and the Dutch as a leader and sponsor since 1593, and the presence of whose galleys in the English channel in the late 1590's instilled in Londoners the fear of a second Armada.¹⁰⁸ In May 1601, Federigo had undertaken to raise, at his own expense, six thousand Italian mercenaries and eight galleys for an assault on England, on the King's promise that he would receive 470,000 ducats in 1603.¹⁰⁹ Given the temporal proximity of Federigo's death to Shakespeare's writing of the play, it is doubtful that Shakespeare would have chosen the name "Frederick" if he did not thereby mean Federigo, and it is doubtful that he would have referred to Federigo except to indicate something about Mariana's identity. Federigo's contribution of his own money to the campaigns and his stature as Spain's foremost privateer made him a kindred spirit of Juan de Mariana—an outspoken advocate of privateering¹¹⁰—and he appropriately appears as Mariana's brother.¹¹¹

Shakespeare tied Mariana to Jesuits by placing her on a "moated grange" near St. Luke's (3.1.265–66). This would tend to make Mariana a Catholic,¹¹² which is a step in the right direction towards a Jesuit, and which in itself points to Juan de Mariana. But an express connection between Jesuits and a moated grange is found in Lyford Grange, the moated manor house where Jesuit missionary Edmund Campion was captured in 1581.¹¹³ In Shakespeare's day, Lyford would have been the most notorious "moated grange" in England. The intriguing possibility that Shakespeare as the 17-year-

old player William Shakeshafte had actually known Campion prior to his capture,¹¹⁴ if true, strengthens the case, but is not necessary to it.¹¹⁵

If the moated grange is Lyford Grange, and especially if Shakespeare was Shakeshafte, then Shakespeare may have renamed the local church (St. Mary's) in honor of Catholic missionary and martyr Luke Kirby. Father Kirby was captured in 1580 and stood trial and was found guilty of treason along with Campion and others on November 16, 1581.¹¹⁶ Although Campion and two of the others were executed fifteen days after the trial, Kirby's execution did not occur until May 30, 1582.¹¹⁷ On that day, he was drawn and quartered at Tyburn along with six other papists, including Thomas Cottam, the brother of Stratford schoolmaster John Cottom.¹¹⁸ The possible connections between the Cottom/Cottam brothers and Shakespeare/Shakeshafte have been explored by others.¹¹⁹

Shakespeare may have been treading on dangerous ground by using the name Mariana at all, much less portraying her sympathetically. Juan de Mariana, the most famous Spanish historian of his time, was best known for his controversial 1599 book *De Rege et Regis Institutione* ("On the Education of the King"), in which he advocated regicide as a solution to tyranny, and took positions diametrically opposed to those of King James on the "divinity" of kings.¹²⁰ Mariana's teachings have in modern times been blamed for the Gunpowder Plot (1605),¹²¹ and in Shakespeare's time were blamed for the 1610 assassination of the French King Henry IV by the Jesuit Raveillac.¹²² In 1615, James himself pontificated against Mariana as a "monster."¹²³ In 1604, however, these events were in the future, and perhaps it was enough for Shakespeare to have Isabella (Elizabeth) wish death for Mariana,¹²⁴ turning on its head Mariana's endorsement of regicide. In the same vein, having Mariana "admit" that the advice of the King James figure (the Duke) "[h]ath often still'd my brawling discontent" (4.1.9) might have been Shakespeare's way of reassuring King James that his writings on the divine right had refuted those of Mariana.

While references to the fourteen and nineteen year time periods correlate to periods in English monetary history—and thus are most closely associated with "English" characters Claudio (Edward) and Isabella (Elizabeth)—the five-year period associated with Mariana appropriately correlates to Spanish monetary history. Thus, the on again off again relationship between Angelo and Mariana tracks the relationship between Juan de Mariana's philosophy and the Spanish coinage. Until 1599—five years before the first performance of *Measure for Measure* in 1604—there had

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been no debasement of the Spanish coinage, consistent with the fact that Mariana and Angelo were “together” five years before the action in the play (5.1.220). In 1599, however, Philip III initiated a policy of debasement,¹²⁵ essentially allowing the coinage to abandon Mariana, just as Angelo abandoned Mariana five years before the action of the play.

Angelo’s primary excuse for having abandoned Mariana—that Mariana’s “reputation was disvalu’d in levity” (5.1.221)—could be a complaint that Mariana’s book *De Rege*—published in 1599—was lighter (had more “levity”) than it would have been had it included Mariana’s thoughts on debasement, which first appeared in the second edition of *De Rege*, dated 1605.¹²⁶ That Mariana’s views had become known prior to the December 1604 date of *Measure for Measure* is consistent with his outspoken character (he would hardly have maintained his silence through five years of debasement), his own testimony that he had consulted “many eminent personages,” including the Cardinal of Toledo,¹²⁷ prior to writing his thoughts on debasement,¹²⁸ as well as the fact that publication dates listed on books of that era—and Mariana’s books in particular—are not one hundred percent reliable.¹²⁹ The appearance of Mariana in *Measure for Measure* is strong evidence that his views were, in fact, known.

Shakespeare’s opportunity to learn of Mariana’s views could have come when he served as a “groom of the chamber” for Ambassador Juan Fernandez de Velasco and the Spanish peace delegation at Somerset House for eighteen days—which included no acting responsibilities—from August 9–27, 1604.¹³⁰ Presumably, a number of the dozens of Spaniards in attendance would have enjoyed speaking with Shakespeare, who in addition to being England’s foremost dramatist, was a man of considerable means and had a gentlemen’s coat of arms. For his part, Shakespeare might have been gathering material for his next play. He would have heard Queen Elizabeth spoken of as “Isabella,” and would have heard how, even as the peace talks (which included the Dutch) were proceeding, Ambrosio Spinola was in the process of avenging his brother Federigo’s death by taking Ostend for Spain.¹³¹ He might have seen debased Spanish coins and (consistent with his interest in debasement shown in other plays) pressed the Spaniards for details. If the conversation turned to regicide—another of Shakespeare’s interests—Mariana’s name would almost certainly have come up, and Shakespeare might have learned of Mariana’s published book *De Ponderibus et Mensuris* (1599) (*Of Weights and Measures*), which discussed weights, measures, and coinage in ancient times and in sixteenth-century Spain, and which could have formed a basis for a discussion of Mariana’s views on debasement. Finally, he might have learned of Mariana through Pedro Mantuan, the

ambassador's secretary, who had written a book critical of Mariana just the year before.¹³²

One of Shakespeare's earliest known "critics" appears to have recognized Elizabeth in Isabella or Juan de Mariana in Mariana, or both. The director of the English Seminary at Valladolid, Spain, had been authorized by the Spanish Inquisition to censor a copy of the 1632 edition of Shakespeare's second Folio. His censorship consisted of crossing out every reference to Thomas Cranmer¹³³ and Elizabeth, and deleting the entire text of *Measure for Measure*, an excision that Frank Kermode considers "baffling[]." ¹³⁴ As Kermode notes, the censor's failure even to touch the anti-papistical play King John demonstrates that the censoring was not from Catholic motives.¹³⁵ The removal of *Measure for Measure* makes perfect sense, however, if Isabella represents Elizabeth and Mariana represents Juan de Mariana (who once worked for the Inquisition but was ultimately condemned by it).¹³⁶

By the same token, William Davenant's removal of Mariana's name and role in his post-restoration play *The Law Against Lovers* (1662)—a blend of *Measure for Measure* and *Much Ado About Nothing*¹³⁷—may be further evidence of the significance of the name. As Shakespeare's purported god-(if-not-biological)-son and self-styled literary heir, Davenant was in a position to know what Mariana's name represented. At a time when Juan de Mariana's name was well-known in England and was synonymous with treason,¹³⁸ Davenant—an ardent royalist—would have needed little prompting to remove all traces of the old fomenter of regicide from his version of the play.

As others have observed, the Duke in *Measure for Measure* resembles King James.¹³⁹ The Duke's foisting of Angelo—a man that only the Duke knows is debased—on the city of Vienna is reminiscent of the first stages of a debasement, in which only the monarch knows that the coin has been debased.¹⁴⁰ As Angelo slips into further debasement, the Duke himself employs the coinage metaphor: "O what may man within him hide! Though angel on the outward side!" 3.2.264–65.¹⁴¹ The Duke's use of the bed-trick and the head-trick show, however, that he is in fact looking out for the purity of the coinage: by substituting Angelo's betrothed (the willing Mariana) for Isabella, and the head of a dead pirate for that of Claudio, he prevents Angelo from actually committing the irredeemable acts that he intended to commit. Similarly, the Duke's decree that Angelo—the coin—be married to Mariana—the anti-debasement writer—reflects Shakespeare's opinion that Mariana's view should govern the coinage of England and perhaps

West Virginia Shakespeare and Renaissance Association congratulates James for not having significantly debased the coinage in the first year of his reign.

Shakespeare may have cast himself in the play as the “fantastic” Lucio, the giver of light who sheds light—both true and false—on the duke of dark corners. As Lindsay Kaplan has pointed out, the “fantastic” in plays of this era normally signified the dramatist himself.¹⁴² This fits particularly well in *Measure for Measure*, where Lucio drives the action and often goads the main characters into taking the action that they need to take—as though he is scripting them. He also displays a sort of omniscience that can readily be explained if he is, in fact, omniscient.¹⁴³ Perhaps the best clue to Lucio’s identity is his forced marriage to the woman he has gotten pregnant, a direct parallel to Shakespeare’s own biography.

The names, identifying features, and conduct of the characters—not to mention the frequent metaphorical use of the debasement theme—all support the theory that *Measure for Measure*, like *Hamlet*, contained a commentary on debasement itself. Once the debasement allegory is understood, the “problems” of this problem play are no longer problematic. Isabella’s unwillingness to give up her virginity even to save her brother’s life and her silence in the face of the Duke’s proposal are understandable if Isabella represents the Virgin Queen. Mariana’s obsessive love for Angelo and willingness to marry him makes sense if Mariana represents Juan de Mariana and her love for Angelo represents the Jesuit’s concern for the stability of the coinage. Indeed, everyone’s willingness to forgive Angelo at the end of the play is necessary to the survival of the coinage. Finally, the punishment Lucio receives for his in-your-face slander (which some think is too light and others think is too severe) is perfectly appropriate and is in fact Shakespeare’s way of saying that (1) he didn’t mean any offense, (2) if he is to be punished, let King James follow the Duke’s example and marry him to someone he has gotten pregnant, and (3) since Shakespeare has already married someone that he has gotten pregnant, he must be beyond punishment.

It is difficult to resist a final bit of speculation about the genesis of *Measure for Measure*. Perhaps someone asked Shakespeare if he had intended “The Rape of Lucrece” as an allegory for debasement: After all, in that poem, a woman who is a model of purity and whose name happens to be practically synonymous with money (lucre) is debased by a member of a royal family (Tarquin), with the inevitable consequence that the woman dies and the royals are overthrown in favor of a republican government. Shakespeare’s response might have been that the allegory was unintentional—“Lucrece” was merely a truncation of “Lucretia,” the name in his original source, which as far as he knew did not pertain to debasement. But perhaps this caused him to think

about how one might insert a debasement allegory into a play. The result was *Measure for Measure*.

This article has consisted of two distinct but related and mutually-reinforcing parts. The new interpretations in *Hamlet* are important because they bear on our assessment of Hamlet's character (in that under the coinage interpretation of the picture in little line, Hamlet is less whiny and more sarcastic); they suggest new ways of staging both the picture in little line and the two pictures passage; and their absence in the first quarto provides evidence that they were deliberately removed from that version of the play, possibly to avoid giving offense to King James. If the interpretations of Hamlet are correct, it is all the more likely that Shakespeare worked the debasement allegory into *Measure for Measure*. The observation that Mariana represents Juan de Mariana provides an explanation for the play's persistent coinage, testing, and debasement imagery; ties together connections that others have made between the Duke and King James, Isabella and Elizabeth, Lucio and Shakespeare, and Angelo and the "angel" coin; and offers answers to many of the questions that the play has raised.

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NOTES

¹ An early example occurs in Aristophanes's *The Frogs* (405 B.C.): "We ourselves no longer like [the former silver and gold coinage] and prefer to use for cash [a] debased barbaric tender—this new-fangled copper trash! So, too, *men* of weight and substance . . . we reject for something trashy." *The Complete Plays of Aristophane*, ed. Hadas (New York: Bantam 1962), 391–92.

² Margaret Ferguson, "Hamlet: Letters and Spirits," in *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, ed. Parker and Hartman (New York & London: Methuen Press, 1985), 292, 297 (noting Hamlet's "pervasive concern with debased currency").

³ Unless otherwise noted, quotations from the text of *Hamlet* are from *Hamlet*, ed. Jenkins, *The Arden Shakespeare* (London: Methuen, 1982). Quotations from the first quarto of *Hamlet* are from *The First Quarto of Hamlet*, ed. Irace (Cambridge U.P. 1998). Quotations from the text of *Measure for Measure* are from *Measure for Measure*, ed. Lever, *The Arden Shakespeare* (London: Methuen, 1965). Quotations from other Shakespeare plays are from *William*

Shakespeare: The Complete Works, ed. Wells and Taylor (Oxford U.P. 1988). Where a source cites a Shakespeare play, the line numbers used by the source are left intact.

⁴ Because of the intrinsic value of the metal used in coins, coins that had been clipped—i.e. had some of their precious metal shaved off—were common. See Peter L. Bernstein, *The Power of Gold—The History of an Obsession* (NY: John Wiley & Sons Inc. 2000), 176, 178–79. A coin that had been clipped beyond the ring encircling the sovereign’s head was considered not legal tender. Jenkins, ed., 262 (note to lines 424–25).

⁵ “[H]is very madness, like some ore//Among a mineral of metals base//Shows itself pure.” (4.1.25–27). Compare AWW 3.6.38–39 (“to what metal this counterfeit lump of ore will be melted”).

⁶ Rosalind Miles, *The Problem of Measure for Measure: A Historical Investigation* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, Harper & Row Publishers Inc., 1976), 208. See also Lever, ed., 62 n.129 (referring to the “recurrent coin image”).

⁷ Assuming along with Lever and others who contend that coming “to composition with the King of Hungary” (1.2.1–2) alludes to the peace with Spain (e.g. Lever, ed., xxxi), the first gentlemen’s comment to Lucio, “Heaven grant us its peace, but not the King of Hungary’s” (1.2.4–5), refers as much to the actual peace as to a debased Spanish “peece.” This pun—obvious to anyone who knew that the Spanish coin had been debased—explains how Shakespeare could have gotten away with a line that otherwise would seem to be critical of an achievement in which James took great pride.

⁸ Mistress Overdone’s “sweat” (1.2.75) has been taken as a reference to the plague (see, e.g., Lever, xxxii), or a treatment for syphilis (see, e.g., John Jowett and Gary Taylor, “‘With New Additions’: Theatrical Interpolation in *Measure for Measure*,” in *Shakespeare Reshaped*, ed. Taylor and Jowett, (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1993), 107, 178–79), but the term was at least as commonly used to describe the practice of “sweating” a bag of gold coins by shaking it and keeping the residue. See OED.15 (“to lighten (a gold coin) by wearing away its substance by friction or attrition”); see also Coburn Freer, “John Donne and Elizabethan Economic Theory,” *Criticism* 38:4 (Fall 1996), 506 (noting Donne’s pun with the “mony which you sweat”). Although Shakespeare might have intended a double entendre with one or the other medical reference, the term “custom shrunk” suggests that a least one sense of the line referred to the practice of sweating coins.

⁹ William Warburton referred to the phrase “pay down by weight” as “‘A fine expression, to signify paying the full penalty. The

metaphor is taken from paying money by *weight*, which is always exact; not so by *tale*, on account of the practice of diminishing the species [i.e., specie].” *Measure for Measure*, ed. Eccles, *A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare* (New York: Modern Language Ass’n of Am. 1980), 32 n.212 (quoting Warburton, ed. 1747); see also Jean Bodin, *Response to the Paradoxes of Malestroit* (1568), transl. & ed. Tudor and Dyson (Bristol: Thoemmes 1997), 121 (explaining that a gold or silver coin debased with copper will weigh less than a pure coin of the same size); *Measure for Measure*, ed. Gibbons, *The New Cambridge Shakespeare* (Cambridge U.P. 1991), 36 (noting that “scales are used to weigh coins and assay their true metal and real worth”).

¹⁰ Examples include Claudio’s lament that “Thus can the demigod, Authority, // Make us pay down for our offence by weight” (1.2.112–13); Angelo’s taunt to Isabella “Say what you can, my false o’erweighs your true” (2.4.169); the Duke-Friar’s assurance that the “corrupt deputy” would be “scaled” (3.1.255–56); the Duke’s ostensible defense of Angelo that “if he had so offended, He would have weigh’d thy brother by himself // And not have cut him off” (5.1.113–15).

¹¹ Compare *Cym.* 2.5.4–7 (“[M]y father was I know not where // When I was stamped. Some coiner with his tools // Made me a counterfeit; yet my mother seemed // The Dian of that time . . .”).

¹² The requirement that those who brought a certain weight of bullion to the mint be repaid in coins of a proportional weight—rather than coins of a certain face value—was referred to as a “weight by weight” system and was the antithesis of debasement. See *A New History of the British Mint*, ed. Challis (Cambridge U.P. 1992), 278. In the years leading up to *Measure for Measure*, Shakespeare’s Stratford friend and printer Richard Field had published two economic tracts describing money as the “measure” of all things. Gerrard De Malynes, *The Canker of England’s Commonwealth* (London: Richard Field 1601), 7 (“By reason of whereof money was devised to bee coyned of the finest and purest mettals, to be the rule or square, whereby all other things should receive estimation and price, and as a measure whereby the price of all things might be set.”); *ibid.*, 11 (“For monie must always remaine to be the rule, and therefore is called Publica mensura.”); Gerrard De Malynes, *England’s View, in the Unmasking of Two Paradoxes* (London: Richard Field 1603), 153 (“[A]nd this thing you call Money, which is now a measure to set a price, or to measure every thing by . . .”); *ibid.*, 161 (“And to that end this measure of things, namely money, should not be falsified . . .”).

Thus, to Shakespeare's audience the phrase "Measure for Measure" had both economic and biblical overtones.

¹³ Challis, ed., 240.

¹⁴ See G.B. Shaw, *The History of Currency 1252–1896* (New York: August M. Kelley 1967), 122–29 (reciting contemporary criticism).

¹⁵ Sandra Fischer, *Econolingua: A Glossary of Coins and Economic Language in Renaissance Drama* (Newark: U.Del. P. 1985), 99 (noting that Shakespearean references to copper noses (*Tro.*

1.2.106) and bloody noses (*I Henry IV* 2.3.93–94) refer to these coins of Henry VIII); Colin Platt, *Medieval England: A Social History and Archaeology from the Conquest to 1600 A.D.* (London: Routledge revised ed. 1995), 208–09 (depicting Henry's "Old Coppernose" coins).

¹⁶ Challis, ed., 248 (noting that Camden said the restoration of the coinage "turned to her greater, yea greatest, glory").

¹⁷ See Julian Goodare and Michael Lynch, "James VI: Universal King?," in *The Reign of James VI*, ed. Goodare and Lynch (Trowbridge, Wilshire: Cromwell Press 2000), 10 (describing debasements that had taken place in the late 1570s, and from 1581–96); *ibid.*, "Chronology," 259 (noting "major currency debasement" of 1602); S.J. Houston, *James I* (New York: Longman Publishing 2d ed. 1995), 6 (stating that James I had debased the Scottish silver coinage between 1583 and 1596).

¹⁸ Rosalind Mitchison, *A History of Scotland* (London & New York: Methuen 2d ed. 1982), 134–35 (stating that "the pound Scots slipped from being worth a quarter of the pound sterling in 1560 to a twelfth in 1600").

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ See John Cramsie, *Kingship and Crown Finance Under James VI and I*, 1603–25 (Suffolk: St. Edmundsbury Press 2002), 41–42 (discussing James's *The True Law of Free Monarchies* and *Basilicon Doron*).

²¹ Jesse Lander has detected concern about a possible future debasement in Fulbecke's *A Parallele* (1601), based on its discussion of the question whether a debtor use debased coin to repay a debt incurred before the debasement. Jesse M. Lander, "Crack'd Crowns and Counterfeit Sovereigns: The Crisis of Value in 1 Henry IV," *Shakespeare Studies* (Annual 2002), 156.

²² Lever, ed., xxxi. A growing literature on the subject attests that Shakespeare's views on economics worked themselves into his plays. See, e.g., Fischer, *Econolingua*; Lander; Jonathan Gil Harris, *Sick Economies: Drama, Mercantilism, and Disease in Shakespeare's England* (U. of Pennsylvania P. 2004); Frederick

Turner, *Shakespeare's Twenty-First-Century Economics: The Morality of Love and Money* (Oxford U.P. 1999); Douglas Bruster, *Drama and the Market in the Age of Shakespeare* (Cambridge U.P. 1992); Nina Levine, "Extending Credit in the Henry IV Plays," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 51: 4 (Winter 2000), 403; Sandra K. Fischer, "'He Means To Pay': Value and Metaphor in the Lancastrian Tetralogy," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 40:2 (Summer 1989), 163; Stephen X. Mead, "'Thou Art Changed': Public Value and Personal Identity in *Troilus and Cressida*"; *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 22:2 (Spring 1992), 237. That *Measure for Measure* is recognized to contain more coinage references than any other Shakespeare play is apparent from a review of the notes by Lever, Gibbons, and Eccles in their editions of *Measure for Measure*; R.J. Kaufman ties these references together as evidence of a strong economic theme. R.J. Kaufmann, "Bond Slaves and Counterfeits: Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*," in *Shakespeare Studies III* (U. Cinn. 1967), 85.

²³ It would also be consistent with the play's theme concerning the division between appearances and reality. See John Paterson, "The Word in *Hamlet*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 2:1 (Jan. 1951), 47–55, esp. 50–52.

²⁴ As discussed below, the Folio version includes 24 lines relating to child actors here that do not appear in the second quarto.

²⁵ The number fifty appears in the second quarto, but not the Folio version.

²⁶ Both the Folio and second quarto use "a peece," which most modern editors have collapsed to "apiece."

²⁷ *The New Folger Library Shakespeare Hamlet*, ed. Mowat and Werstine (New York: Washington Square Press, 1992), 104.

²⁸ Peter Brimacombe, *All the Queen's Men: The World of Elizabeth I* (New York: St. Martin's Press 2000), 166–68.

²⁹ Both A.C. Bradley and Harold Jenkins, although accepting the literal "miniature portrait" interpretation, appear to stumble over the line. Bradley observes that Claudius is an insecure king even "though" people are paying large sums of money for his portrait. A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1904) (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications 1965), 142–43. His "though" suggests surprise at the underlying fact, which, it turns out, he has misinterpreted. Jenkins, relying on the "miniature portrait" interpretation, concludes that the line does not follow naturally in the second quarto, and deduces from this that the "little eyases" passage, present in the Folio but not in the second quarto, must have been cut from the second quarto (as opposed to having been added to the Folio). Jenkins, ed., 3.

³⁰ Fischer, *Econolingua*, 105 (providing additional contemporary examples).

³¹ Fischer, *Econolingua*, 105 (defining “piece” as “Any coin or piece of money,” and providing contemporary examples from Shakespeare and others). See also supra note 7 (noting pun of “peace” with “piece” in *Measure for Measure*).

³² William Shakespeare, *The Late Romances*, ed. Bevington (New York: Bantam Books 1988), 274.

³³ In Shakespeare’s lifetime, no country had issued a 100-ducat coin. 100-ducat coins issued by Poland in 1621 and the Holy Roman Empire in 1629 were on display at the Smithsonian Museum of American History in Washington, D.C., through August 2004.

³⁴ Members of the audience familiar with Scottish currency would have readily appreciated the “shrinking” effect that debasement has on the coinage. During Shakespeare’s time, Scottish currency included four, six, and twenty pound coins—denominations that would have resulted in coins of unthinkable size in English coinage—owing to the fact that over the years, Scottish coinage had been debased compared to English coinage by a factor of twelve.

³⁵ Jenkins, ed., 338.

³⁶ *Hamlet*, ed. Mowat and Werstine, *The New Folger Library Shakespeare* (New York: Washington Square Press 1992), 192.

³⁷ Shakespeare also equates “countenance” with the “face” on a coin in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, when Holofernes claims to have been “put out of countenance,” and his tormentors respond by giving him “faces,” including the face on an old Roman coin. *LLL*, 5.2.601–15.

³⁸ Alison Thorne, *Vision and Rhetoric in Shakespeare: Looking Through Language* (New York: St. Martin’s Press 2000), 129; Fredson Bowers, “The Pictures in Hamlet III.iv: A Possible Contemporary Reference,” *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 3:3 (Jul. 1952), 281).

³⁹ See, e.g., *Hamlet*, ed. Furness, *A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1877) (Dover reprint 1962), 1:290 (discussing the alternatives).

⁴⁰ Furness, ed., 1:290 (“Ham., who in a former scene had censured those who gave ‘forty, fifty ducats a-piece’ for his uncle’s ‘picture in little,’ would hardly have condescended to carry such a thing in his pocket” (quoting George Steevens)).

⁴¹ Furness, ed., 1:290 (“It is evident from the words, ‘a station &c.,’ that these pictures, which are introduced as miniatures on the stage, were meant for whole lengths, being part of the furniture of the queen’s closet” (quoting George Steevens)).

⁴² Jenkins, ed., 518. For an argument for tapestries, see Ralph Berry, “Shakespeare’s Elsinore (Place in ‘Hamlet’),” *Contemporary Review*, 273:1595 (Dec. 1998), 312.

⁴³ *The New Folger Library Shakespeare Hamlet*, ed. Mowat and Werstine, 174.

⁴⁴ Jenkins, ed., 322.

⁴⁵ “Counterfeit” was used to describe fake or base money in Shakespeare’s day, and Shakespeare used it in this sense on more than one occasion. See, e.g. *1 Henry IV*, 2.5.497–98 (“[N]ever call a true piece of gold a counterfeit”). Similarly, Dante used the Italian equivalent of counterfeiter—“falseggiando”—to describe the debaser Philip IV of France. Dante Alighieri, *Paradiso* XIX.119.

⁴⁶ As in “fair Portia’s counterfeit,” *MV* 3.2.115.

⁴⁷ The modern production in which Michael Redgrave used a coin for Claudius and a locket for Old Hamlet (*Shakespeare in Production: Hamlet*, ed. Hapgood (Cambridge U.P. 1999), 212 n.65) was therefore half right. See also Berry, 311 (stating but not elaborating on the fact that the scene has been staged with coins).

⁴⁸ Jenkins defines “thin” as “the natural condition of the blood in health.” Jenkins, ed., 219.

⁴⁹ See Graham Webster, *Boudica: The British Revolt Against Rome, AD 60* (New York: Routledge 2d ed. 2000), 44; C.H.V. Sutherland, *Coinage in Roman Imperial Policy: 31 B.C.–A.D. 68* (London: Methuen 1951), 132–33.

⁵⁰ It was only relatively recently that scholars concluded that the pervasive debased Claudius coins were counterfeits rather than official issues. See A.R. Burns, *Money and Monetary Policy in Early Times* (1929) (Sentry Press: reprint 1965), 167 (noting in 1929 that “[f]our-fifths of the issues of Claudius . . . are said to have been base,” but expressing doubt that the debased coins were official issues); see also Jonathan Williams, *Money: A History* (New York: St. Martin’s Press 1998), 53 (describing the “epidemics of forgery” in Britain that occurred during Claudius’s reign).

⁵¹ In fact, Cloten’s declaration in *Cymbeline* that “There will be many Caesars, // Ere such another Julius. Britain’s a world // By itself; and we will nothing pay // For wearing our own noses” (3.1.12–14) may refer to the fact that during Cunobelin’s reign, Cunobelin’s image (including his nose) on British coins came to supplant those of the Roman Emperors Tiberius and Augustus. See Norman Davies, *The Isles: A History* (Oxford U.P. 2001), 72; Fischer, 99 (explaining the connection between “nose” and coins). The fact that Cloten turned out to be dead wrong in that Cunobelin’s coinage was

soon superseded by that of Claudius may have been part of the joke. If Cloten was talking about coins, it's likely that Cymbeline's later reference to Mulmutius as "the first of Britain which did put/His brows within a golden crown" (3.1.59–60) was also a slight twist on Holinshed that made a gentle allusion to coins, albeit not supported by the historical record. W.G. Boswell-Stone, *Shakespeare's Holinshed: The Chronicle and the Plays Compared* (New York: Dover Publications 1968), 15 (referring to Mulmucius's "crowne of gold").

⁵² John Cunnally, *Images of the Illustrious: The Numismatic Presence in the Renaissance* (Princeton U.P. 1999), esp. 105–22 (discussing the popularity and proliferation of books about coin collecting in the 1500s); *ibid.*, 4 (observing that ancient coins "were the most fluid of all antiquities, enjoying a vigorous circulation in Renaissance Europe"); *ibid.*, 40 (noting that Thomas More (1478–1535) was a coin collector).

⁵³ Shakespeare's use of "coinage" in this line is the earliest use of coinage in the sense of "That which is made, devised or invented," listed in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED.6). In this case, Gertrude's metaphor may well have given rise to a whole new sense of the word.

⁵⁴ See supra note 30 and accompanying text.

⁵⁵ See, e.g., Goodare and Lynch (describing "the notorious 'black money' of James III [of Scotland]"). "Black and *grained*" spots is from the Folio version; the second quarto spots are "black and greeved." It is possible that greeved was a compositor's error for "greened," suggesting the presence of copper in the coinage, as well as recalling the "mildewed" ear line—since mildew is often green.

⁵⁶ Dante used the same device in depicting the debaser's Adamo stomach as bloated with dropsy. Dante Alighieri, *Inferno XXX.52–54*, 119–126.

⁵⁷ Quarto version, 1608 (20.83–84). See additional discussion of this line below in note 87.

⁵⁸ Shakespeare may have been intentionally ambiguous here. Those who, unlike Hamlet, see Claudius as an effective ruler are free to believe that the debasement was necessary in view of the impending war with Norway.

⁵⁹ Quoted in full above in the discussion of the "picture in little line."

⁶⁰ Jenkins, ed., 472.

⁶¹ Roslyn L. Knutson, "Falconer to the Little Eyases: A New Date and Commercial Agenda for the 'Little Eyases' Passage in Hamlet," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 46:1 (Spring 1995), 17 (citing W.J.

Lawrence, *Shakespeare's Workshop* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928), 105).

⁶² Steve Roth, "Hamlet, II.II.332: 'Their Inhibition Comes by the Means of the Late Innovation,'" *Notes and Queries* 50:1 (March 2003), 43–46.

⁶³ Roth, 43–44 (citing David Farley-Hills, *Shakespeare and the Rival Playwrights 1600–1606* (London: Routledge, 1990)).

⁶⁴ See generally Jenkins, ed., 471–73 (discussing various possible meanings for "inhibition" and "innovation"); Knutson, 17–23; Furness, ed., 1:162–64 n.320.

⁶⁵ Although it is true that Shakespeare elsewhere used "innovation" in the sense of "insurrection" (*1 Henry IV*, 5.1.78), "innovation" was also used during Shakespeare's time in the sense of "the alteration of what is established by the introduction of new elements or forms," OED.1, which could easily describe a debasement of the coinage.

⁶⁶ Rosencrantz's uncertainty is reinforced by the presence of a question mark at the end of this line in F (but not in Q2). While many editors have simply left the question mark out on the basis that its absence in Q2 suggests that it is merely a printer's error, it may well have been intentionally in the texts that underlie both F and Q2 to emphasize that Rosencrantz was just guessing (and the printer's error would therefore have been its omission from Q2).

⁶⁷ In contrast, if the "inhibition" referred to an official order (whether issued because of the plague or for some other reason), Rosencrantz would not have been uncertain as to why the players were traveling.

⁶⁸ Money saved or invested in fixed annuities could rapidly disappear in a debasement. Shakespeare appears to have hedged his bets against a possible debasement by purchasing crop-producing farmland. See Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (New York: W.W. Norton 2004), 363–64 (describing Shakespeare's real estate investments).

⁶⁹ See, e.g., Glyn Davies, *A History of Money from Ancient Times to the Present Day* (U. of Wales P. 2002), 205–06 (describing Gresham's law that "bad money drives out good").

⁷⁰ In Shakespeare's time, "praise" had the double-meaning of "appraise." OED.v.I.1 ("To set a price or value upon; to value or appraise").

⁷¹ "Indifferently" can be read as "moderately well." Jenkins, ed., 289 n.36.

⁷² See Lander, 144, citing *The Summarie of Certain Reasons which have moved the Queenes Maiestie to procede in reformatiōs of here base & corse monies*.

⁷³ See Mead, 237 (noting similar use of “set down” in Ulysses’s speech about Cressida in *Tro.* 4.5.54-63 where Cressida is the coin)

⁷⁴ Jenkins, ed., 338 n.26–7.

⁷⁵ Jenkins, ed., 525–26, esp. 525 (finding it “impossible to agree with Furness, Kittredge, and others that this or anything Hamlet says is meant to be mere nonsense”).

⁷⁶ See, e.g. Knutson, 7–13, esp. 11–12 (discussing scholarship on Q1). More recent scholarship includes Kathleen O. Irace, *Reforming the ‘Bad’ Quartos: Performance and Provenance of Six Shakespearean First Editions* (U. of Delaware P. 1994) (finding evidence of memorial reconstruction); Laurie Macguire, *Shakespearean Suspect Texts: The ‘Bad’ Quartos and Their Contexts* (Cambridge U.P. 1996) (finding that “a case can be made” that Q1 is a memorial reconstruction); see also Paul Werstine, “A Century of ‘Bad’ Shakespeare Quartos,” *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 50:3 (Fall 1999), 310–33 (arguing that attempts to verify the memorial reconstruction hypothesis have not been successful).

⁷⁷ See Jenkins, ed., 1–7, 472–73.

⁷⁸ See Knutson, 9; Jenkins, ed., 472–73.

⁷⁹ Given the apparent chronological distance between the “little eyases” passage and the foul papers, it is not necessary to assume that Shakespeare wrote this passage. Indeed, the opposite conclusion is quite plausible. See Knutson, 30 & n. 111 (suggesting that the passage’s obtuseness indicates it may have been written by someone else). On the other hand, Q1’s “do they grow restie” would seem to be evidence that F’s “do they grow rusty” was in the play before Q1’s publication in 1603.

⁸⁰ Based on the text of Q1, one can infer that any performance tied to Q1 was not actually staged with coins.

⁸¹ In Q1, this line has been changed to: “To leave him that bore a Monarch’s mind, // For a king of clouts, of very shreds” (11.43–44).

⁸² Assuming Q2’s “blowt” was meant to allude to inflation, F’s substitution of “blunt” might evidence an attempt to mute the debasement theme in the copy underlying F, which could also explain F’s insertion of the “little eyases” digression between the “innovation” line and the “picture in little line.”

⁸³ The King of Q1 has no name at all. In Q2 and F, the King’s name is never spoken, but appears in a stage direction.

⁸⁴ Given that Hamlet’s line responds to the player’s statement “My Lorde, wee haue indifferently *reformed* that among vs” (Q1) or “I

hope we haue *reform* 'd that indifferently with vs" (Q2), the substitution of "mend" for "reform" in Hamlet's response strongly supports the argument that if Q1 is a memorial reconstruction, the performance it was reconstructing differed significantly from Q2. Otherwise, the reconstructor would certainly have remembered that "reform" was used in the actor's statement as well as Hamlet's response. The presence of examples in Q1 that do not appear in the Q2 also strongly suggests a different underlying text.

⁸⁵ Without the notion of something being set down specifically for the clown—like a fixed value for a crown based on its gold content—the pun for crown, with the underlying theme of debasement, vanishes.

⁸⁶ While the line "more than all the coin in Denmark" would have looked like another reference to debasement if it had appeared in Q2, the absence of references to debasement in the Q1 makes this line uncontroversial, and in fact not as jarring as Hamlet's reference to "pounds" in Q2.

⁸⁷ "A different reason for the omission of passages in the performance of a play was political expediency. Both Elizabeth and James I frequently witnessed stage performances, and a natural consequence of this personal patronage was a strict censorship of plays presented before them." *The Cambridge History of English and American Literature*, ed. A. W. Ward & A. R. Waller (Cambridge: 1907–21), vol. 5, ch. XI, § 4.

There is evidence that King Lear's insistence on the royal prerogative may also have been controversial and subject to censorship. Whereas in the quarto version (1608), the mad Lear says "No, they cannot touch me for coining, I am the King himself," (20.83–84), the Folio (1623) substitutes the word "crying" for "coining" in this line (4.5.83–84). Quite possibly, "coining" was Shakespeare's original word, but the vision of putting what may well have been James I's words with respect to a debasement into the mouth of a deranged king may have been deemed imprudent or dangerous. Thus, a version containing the safer word ("crying") was used for staging the play, and this other version was used to prepare the Folio.

⁸⁸ For further discussion of the parallels, see Lilian Winstanley, *Hamlet and the Scottish Succession* (Cambridge U.P. 1921), 48–71.

⁸⁹ This change had the added benefit of avoiding offense to King James's wife, Anne of Denmark.

⁹⁰ The question whether Q1 is more closely tied to the text underlying Q2 or the text underlying F remains a matter of debate, which is beyond the scope of this paper to fully address. See, e.g., G.R. Hibbard, "The Chronology of the Three Substantive Texts of

Shakespeare's *Hamlet*," in *The Hamlet First Published*, ed. Clayton (Cranbury, New Jersey: Associated U.P. 1992), pp. 79–89. If anything, the contribution of this article to that debate is the observation that Q1's use of "restie" for F's "rusty" supports arguments that Q1 was based on the text underlying F.

⁹¹ There are several possible explanations for why Q2 was allowed to be published in spite of its potentially offensive contents. It may have been published by someone who was unaware of the references to debasement or the parallels with Mary Queen of Scots. On the other hand, perhaps by the time it was published in 1604 the publisher had reason to believe that James would not take offense.

⁹² It is not until the Third Act that we learn that he behaved badly toward Mariana five years before.

⁹³ See Kaufman, 89–90 (noting that "[t]he Duke's opening speech is heavily imprinted with the imagery of economics" and that Angelo's comment marks the "culmination of the metaphor").

⁹⁴ Fischer, 121 (defining "slip" as "a counterfeit coin," and citing examples from *Merchant of Venice*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Troilus and Cressida*).

⁹⁵ See note 9, *supra*.

⁹⁶ Isabella and Ferdinand are credited with having stabilized the Spanish currency in 1497, see J.H. Elliott, *Imperial Spain 1469–1716* (New York, St. Martin's Press 1963), pp. 122–23; John Porteus, *Coins in History* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons 1969), 151–53, and one could also argue that the legend that Isabella was willing to pawn her pearls to finance Columbus's voyage was a statement against debasement.

⁹⁷ See, e.g., Juliet Dusinberre, *Shakespeare and the Nature of Women* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan; 3rd ed. 2003), xxx (observing that "Isabella's name is the Spanish version of Elizabeth, the Virgin Queen who wasn't about to let any man be her master.").

⁹⁸ C.E. Challis, *The Tudor Coinage*, 205–08 (Manchester U.P. 1978) (discussing various proposals to address the problem of small change with debased coinage).

⁹⁹ See Kaufman, 93.

¹⁰⁰ Glyn Davies, 200–01 (noting that the process of debasement "reached its nadir . . . under the young King Edward VI in 1551").

¹⁰¹ As discussed above in note 50 and accompanying text, Emperor Claudius—the victim of rampant counterfeiting in England—would have been seen as a debaser in Shakespeare's time.

¹⁰² Lever, ed., 17.

¹⁰³ "We have strict statutes and most biting laws . . . which for this fourteen years we have let slip." 1.3.19–21. In Shakespeare's

normal parlance, “letting slip” things that bite—like “the dogs of war” (*Julius Caesar* 3.1.276)—means releasing them so that they have maximum effect. Editors who overlook the coinage angle to this line are hard-pressed to explain why “letting slip” in this case seems to mean the opposite. See, e.g., Lever, ed., 20 (begging the question by citing the OED’s “withdraw the head from the collar” as a definition for slip). Understanding that a slip was a debased or counterfeit coin (see *supra* note 94,) suggests that the time period in question was a period of debasement, when laws regarding the purity of the coinage were ignored.

¹⁰⁴ Lever, ed., 17 (proposing a forgetful Shakespeare or a compositor’s error).

¹⁰⁵ James Ellison, “Measure for Measure and the Executions of Catholics in 1604,” *English Literary Renaissance* 33:1 (2003), 77.

¹⁰⁶ The publication in 1609 of Mariana’s complete views on debasement in *Of the Alteration of Money (De Mutatione Monetæ)* as one of a set of seven treatises (*Tractatus VII*) resulted in his arrest, trial and incarceration by the Spanish Inquisition. Guenter Lewy, *Constitutionalism and Statecraft During the Golden Age of Spain: A Study of the Political Philosophy of Juan de Mariana, S.J.* (Geneva: Librairie E. Droz 1960), 30–32.

¹⁰⁷ It has been argued that Shakespeare’s interest in Spain surfaces to varying degrees in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *King John*, *All’s Well that Ends Well*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Henry VIII*, *Cymbeline* and *The Tempest*. See Susan Onega, “The Impact of the Spanish Armada on Elizabethan Literature,” in *England and the Spanish Armada*, ed. Doyle and Moore (Canberra, ACT, Australia: University College, University of New South Wales 1990), 187–93.

¹⁰⁸ R.B. Wernham, *The Return of the Armadas: The Last Years of the Elizabethan Wars Against Spain 1595–1603* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1994), 269–72 (describing how reports of Spinola’s movements in the Channel in 1599 had prompted “defence preparations by sea and even more by land on a scale comparable to those of 1588”).

¹⁰⁹ See Paul C. Allen, *Philip III and the Pax Hispanica 1598–1621: The Failure of Grand Strategy* (Yale U.P. 2000), 62.

¹¹⁰ R.A. Stradling, *The Armada of Flanders: Spanish Maritime Policy and the European War, 1568–1668* (Cambridge U.P. 1992), 22, 24; see also Juan de Mariana, *The King and His Education (De Rege et Regis Institutione)*, ed. & transl. G.A. Moore (Washington, DC: North Washington Press 1948), 291 (recommending a policy

encouraging provincials to “build swift ships or ones of light draft out of their private funds, so that they may act as pirates and ferociously and fearsomely burst into the confines of the impious peoples”); *ibid.*, 293–94 (hoping for return to the days when “barons, in proportion to their fortunes and incomes, accompanied by a certain number of horsemen, went to the wars like kings”).

¹¹¹On Federigo’s claim to “greatness,” see Stradling, 11 (describing Federigo’s hereditary “maritime genius”), *ibid.*, 13 (“Naval historians now accept that Federigo’s flotilla made a powerful impact.”); R. Trevor Davies, *The Golden Age of Spain: 1501–1621* (1937) (New York: Harper Torchbooks 1967), 236 (“The Spinolas saved the situation. They paid their troops punctually, exacted perfect discipline as a consequence, and soon restored victory to Spanish arms. Frederick with an armada of Spanish galleons [sic; galleys] played havoc with Dutch commerce and destroyed a Dutch fleet, but lost his life at the moment of victory.”). After Federigo’s death, his brother Ambrosio completed his work by taking Ostend and went on to become Spain’s greatest soldier of the first part of the seventeenth century, and even earned a mention in John Fletcher’s sequel to *The Taming of the Shrew*. See John Fletcher, *The Woman’s Prize or the Tamer Tamed*, in *The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon*, vol. IV, ed. Bowers (Cambridge U.P. 1979), 30, 1.3.65–66 (“[S]he commands the workes://Spinola’s but a ditcher to her . . .”).

¹¹²Ellison, 77.

¹¹³The story of Campion’s capture included a meeting between informer Eliot and the house’s cook on the drawbridge. See Richard Simpson, *Edmund Campion: Jesuit Protomartyr of England* (London: Burns & Oates 1907), 315; *ibid.* 310 (describing Lyford as a “moated grange”); Evelyn Waugh, *Edmund Campion* (New York: Sheed & Ward 1935), 154 (describing the moat and drawbridge at Lyford Grange).

¹¹⁴See generally Richard Wilson, “Shakespeare and the Jesuits: New Connections Supporting the Theory of the Lost Catholic Years in Lancashire,” *Times Literary Supplement* (Dec. 19, 1997), 11–13; Ernst Honigmann, *Shakespeare: The Lost Years* (Manchester U.P. 1998); Greenblatt, 106–17.

¹¹⁵Richard Desper managed to find six references to Edmund Campion in a scant five lines of *Twelfth Night*: “Bonos dies, Sir Toby: for, as the old hermit of Prague, that never saw pen and ink, very wittily said to a niece of King Gorboduc, ‘that that is is’; so Im being master Parson, am master parson; for, what is ‘that’ but ‘that’; and ‘is’ but ‘is’? (IV.ii.15–19). C. Richard Desper, “Allusions to

Edmund Campion in Twelfth Night,” *Elizabethan Review* (Spring 1995). Similarly, Richard Wilson sees “Friar Patrick” in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* as an allusion to Campion, and suggests that Shakespeare’s “proximity to Campion’s mission may have shaped [his] entire dramatic stragey.” Richard Wilson, ““Every Third Thought’: Shakespeare’s Milan,” in *Shakespeare and the Mediterranean*, ed. Clayton, Brock and Fores (Newark: U. Del. P. 2004), 416, 421.

¹¹⁶ See E.E. Reynolds, *Campion and Parsons: The Jesuit Mission of 1580–81* (London: Sheed & Ward 1980), 167–98 (describing the trial).

¹¹⁷ David Hugh Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (Oxford U.P. 2d ed. 1987), 252.

¹¹⁸ Honigman, 40.

¹¹⁹ See Honigman, 6 (speculating that John Cottom was the “John Cotham,” who, along with William Shakeshafte, was a legatee under Alexander Hoghton’s will); *id.*, 40–49 (providing additional information on Thomas Cottam and John Cottom).

¹²⁰ *De Rege*, Moore, ed., 37–46.

¹²¹ Caroline Bingham, *James I of England* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson 1981), 75.

¹²² *De Rege*, Moore, ed., 47.

¹²³ David Mathew, *James I* (Alabama U.P. 1968), 189 (quoting from James’s “A Remonstrance for the Rights of Kings, and the Independance of their Crownes” (1615)). Gerard Yates, in his forward to Moore’s translation of *De Rege*, writes: “In his day—the twilight of the Spanish Empire—that name was odious to the absolute monarchs of Europe. It is said that the Maryland colony might have been called ‘Mariana’ but for the identity of that name with the one borne by the author of the *De Rege*.” *De Rege*, Moore, ed., xi.

¹²⁴ “What a merit were it in death to take this poor maid from the world!” (3.1.231–32).

¹²⁵ Lewy, 13–14.

¹²⁶ Lewy, 27. Alan Soons’s assertion that Mariana had denounced debasement in a chapter of *De Rege* prior to the onset of Philip III’s 1599 debasement (Alan Soons, *Juan de Mariana* (Boston: Twayne Publishers 1982), 16) may be evidence of a difference between 1599 editions.

¹²⁷ The speculation that Robert Arden, a canon of Toledo with connections to Edmund Campion, was related to Shakespeare’s mother (Wilson, ““Every Third Thought,”” 419), provides a very tenuous link between Mariana and Shakespeare.

¹²⁸ Thomas Kernan, *The Life and Works of Juan de Mariana* (Master's Thesis 1923) (available at Woodstock Library, Georgetown University).

¹²⁹ Lewy, 29 n.63 (noting that Mariana's *Tractatus VII*, nominally published in 1609, appeared in a 1608 bibliography of Jesuit writings).

¹³⁰ Samuel Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare: A Documentary Life* (New York: Oxford U.P. 1975), 196, 199; Ernest Law, *Shakespeare as a Groom of the Chamber* (London: G. Bell & Sons 1910).

¹³¹ After a siege that had lasted more than three years, Ambrosio entered Ostend on September 20th, 1604. Davies, 236.

¹³² Kernan, V-16. Those who insist on documentary proof that Shakespeare knew Mariana's views prior to using them in *Measure for Measure* may have to be satisfied with a theory that *Measure for Measure* was substantially revised after its 1604 performance. See Lever, ed., xxxi (noting that Dover-Wilson posited a large scale revision after 1606); Jowett and Taylor, ed., 190–236 (arguing that that *Measure for Measure* was revised by Middleton).

¹³³ Archbishop of Canterbury, burned as a heretic in 1556.

¹³⁴ Frank Kermode, *Shakespeare's Age* (New York: Modern Library 2004), 39; see also Roland Frye, *Shakespeare and Christian Doctrine* (Princeton U.P. 1963), 276–77, 291 (noting that the entirety of *Measure for Measure* “had been neatly cut out with a sharp instrument”).

¹³⁵ Kermode, 39.

¹³⁶ The prominent debasement theme might also explain why *Measure for Measure* was among the plays not published in Shakespeare's lifetime. It may have been written for private circulation or private performances, and the official performance before King James might have used different names. See also supra note 132 (noting theory that *Measure for Measure* was revised after 1606).

¹³⁷ Davenant, William, *The Law Against Lovers*, in *The works of Sir William Davenant* (London: Henry Herringman 1673), 272; Katherine West Scheil, “Sir William Davenant's Use of Shakespeare in ‘The Law Against Lovers’ (1662),” *Philological Quarterly* (Autumn 1997), 369.

¹³⁸ Mariana's *De Rege* was “apparently widely known and read” during the years leading up to the Commonwealth. Lewy, 156 & nn.24-25 (noting that Cromwell cited Mariana during the trial of Charles I, and quoting royalist Roger Twysden (1597-1672) as stating that copies of *De Rege* were “every where.”).

¹³⁹See, e.g., Carolyn E. Brown, “Duke Vincentio of ‘Measure for Measure’ and King James I of England: ‘the Poorest Prince in Christendom,’” *CLIO*, 26:1 (Fall 1996), 51.

¹⁴⁰See Challis, 234–35 (explaining that the government did not advertise that its mints were producing debased coin).

¹⁴¹See Lever, ed., 94 (“Angelo is the spurious “angel” in terms of the coin imagery . . .”).

¹⁴²M. L. Kaplan, *The Culture of Slander in Early Modern England* (Cambridge UP 1997), 93–98.

¹⁴³Kaplan, 98 (noting the “uncanny . . . accuracy” of Lucio’s predictions). Examples of Lucio’s omniscience include his statement to the Duke-Friar “I know what I know” (3.2.148), and his apparent knowledge that Claudio is not really dead, as when he tells Isabella, “I am pale at mine heart to see thine eyes so red: thou must be patient” (4.3.150–51).