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Bad Quarto

Bob De Smith
Dordt University, bob.desmith@dordt.edu

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Bad Quarto

Bob De Smith – September 2020

He's not a bad student, really—
Smart, responsive, willing to talk,
Though often without much forethought,
Or even the precondition of having read the text.

But there he was, crumpling
A photocopy of the First Quarto's
"To be or not to be,
I there's the point"
Around a crinkling disposable water bottle,
Depositing it in the wastebasket.

It was the sound of contempt,
Though I doubt he thought it so.

He may have read the line literally
And decided to create a metaphor—
The stray leaf of text crumpled
Into oblivion.

But I don't think so.
He wouldn't be giving
The quartos another thought,
"I may there it goes."

So the Bad Quarto
Gets trashed again.

"The undiscovered country"
Of the trash bin,
To the dumpster,
To the infernal incinerator.

So to, I fear,
The mind thoughtless,
Unenriched, blithe,
Unencumbered by the cares
Of thought.

"And thousand more calamities besides."

Just a page, just a leaf,
Fragile, compostable,
Like those under my rake
As I lament.