

Joshua R. Held

The Queen in Shakespeare's Q1 *Hamlet*: Gertred and the Politics of Motherhood

Although long maligned, the 1603 first quarto of Shakespeare's Hamlet (Q1) portrays a strong queen and mother figure in Gertred, specifically in a scene that is unique to this version of the play. While some grant that Gertred may be a more sympathetic character than her counterpart Gertrud in the second quarto (Q2) or Gertrude in the Folio (F), critics generally neglect the Q1-only scene involving her and Horatio, finding it repetitious and dull. This essay's close reading of this scene shows that Gertred excels at diplomatic intrigue, building strategic alliances through a distinctive politics of motherhood.

This article argues for the importance of the 1603 first quarto of *Hamlet* (Q1). In particular, I highlight this play-text's strong queen figure Gertred, advancing scholarly efforts to rehabilitate the play and the character. As this essay will suggest, the Q1-only scene involving Horatio and Gertred has appeared to most critics repetitious and dull, hence evidence of Q1's inferiority. This critical view of the Q1 scene is only half right. Horatio's part in the scene is comparatively lacklustre; but this critique highlights the queen's political skill in discerning the implications of what he reports — Hamlet's return home and his attempted murder by the king. Although the action of the scene involves Horatio's report, its main impact is through Gertred's response, especially her first speech, which highlights the king's 'treason' (Q1 H2v 15, 14.10) and her plan to oppose it.¹ This scene, properly understood, bolsters the political resistance that various scholars have highlighted in the play, showcases the queen's role in this political resistance, and raises her profile along with that of the Q1 text.²

Joshua R. Held (jheld@se.edu) is an assistant professor of English, humanities, and languages at Southeastern Oklahoma State University.

Critiques of Q1 *Hamlet* and Its Unique Scene

Q1 *Hamlet* has long been considered by critics³ as the least compelling of the three early printed versions of *Hamlet*, ranked after the second quarto of 1604/5 (Q2) and the 1623 First Folio text (F). The tendency to demean Q1 *Hamlet* begins at least as early as the printing of Q2, for its title page declares it to be 'Newly imprinted and enlarged to almost as much againe as it was, according to the true and perfect Coppie', implying that the previously printed version was neither 'perfect' nor 'true'.⁴ The address 'To the great Variety of Readers' in F also asks these readers to consider its texts as the true authorial versions by contrast with the previous 'diuerse stolne, and surreptitious copies', which some of the foundational New Bibliographers and their heirs identified as the 'bad quartos', including Q1 *Hamlet*.⁵ Worse in fortune than even many other 'bad quartos', Q1 *Hamlet* was lost for many years until its chance rediscovery in 1823, only to be consigned by the New Bibliographers less than a century after that to the 'bad' category. Some scholars have affirmed the designation 'bad' by positing inferior qualities in these texts, such as in Q1 *Hamlet* the different placement and content of the 'To be' soliloquy.⁶ They postulate that the plays were pirated, whether recorded by stenographers or memorially constructed by actors, and some scholars continue to support a version of this origin story.⁷

Some have attempted to rehabilitate Q1 *Hamlet* through its stylistic qualities such as versification, typography, rhetoric, attention to French sources, and designation of commonplace materials.⁸ Terri Bourus in particular has done much to galvanize respect for this short text.⁹ Q1 has long been thought a good indicator of performance practices, and the text is also becoming more respected among editors, printed in editions from Arden and Cambridge and included in the most recent *Norton Shakespeare*.¹⁰ Many others who defend the text show its significance to understanding what Shakespeare meant to audiences across the centuries, and what he means now. Zachary Lesser argues that the belated reappearance of Q1 can provide many insights into the historical process of evaluating the texts of *Hamlet*.¹¹ Leah Marcus has issued a forceful *tu quoque* to detractors of Q1, suggesting that disapproval reflects more powerfully on constructions of scholarly categories of good and bad than on the text itself.¹²

Critics who might otherwise endorse the importance of Q1 have maligned the most substantial portion of text unique to Q1 *Hamlet*.¹³ This portion constitutes a whole scene of about thirty-five lines in which Horatio tells Gertred of Hamlet's return near the end of the play, and the two make plans to aid the prince. A chief proponent of the memorial construction theory in the play, G.I. Duthie, referring

particularly to some irregular lineation, argues, 'Whether or not any conversation such as this between Horatio and the queen took place in any authentic *Hamlet* play, we need have no hesitation in attributing the actual lines of Q1 scene xiv to the reporter-versifier'.¹⁴ Kathleen O. Irace, the play's editor for the Cambridge Early Quartos, a series committed to providing good editions of Shakespeare's putatively 'bad' quartos, also downplays the scene as 'a patchwork of materials otherwise omitted in Q1'.¹⁵ G.R. Hibbard generally concurs in a back-handed compliment, stating that the scene 'does exactly what a good piece of abridgement should: it simultaneously conflates and simplifies'.¹⁶ Still more recently, MacDonald P. Jackson refers to the scene's 'drab and primitive style', and John Jowett to its 'stylistically bland dialogue'.¹⁷ Jowett continues, 'The Q1 scene is long enough for it to be expected statistically that there would be more than one suggestive Shakespeare parallel if the text were written by Shakespeare and accurately transmitted'.¹⁸ For Jowett, who has edited the play for the *New Oxford Shakespeare*, the scene's deficiencies of style are parallel to its lack of Shakespearean authorship.¹⁹ In terms of quality, the scene is commonly seen to belong to a category outside what another important editor of the play, Harold Jenkins, calls 'the essential *Hamlet*'.²⁰

Against the general degrading of this scene, this article argues that it is significant, that it enhances Q1 *Hamlet*, and that arguments regarding the texts of *Hamlet* — especially those that already find value in Q1 — should account for the merits of the scene. In one sense, this article joins an ongoing attempt to revalue Q1 *Hamlet*, focusing on its most extensive, unique passage. In another sense, this article starts a new line of argument in favour of Q1 *Hamlet* by making the Q1-only scene a fresh orientation for understanding what is valuable about that text. It does so by providing a close reading of the scene focused on the queen, constructions of female character, and the politics of motherhood.

Gertred, Gertrude, Feminism

Janet Adelman posits of *Hamlet's* queen that 'the extent of her involvement in the murder of her first husband is left unclear.... her character remains relatively closed to us'.²¹ Yet other feminist scholars have asserted that the queen — Gertred in Q1, Gertrude in Q2, Gertrude in F — is a 'strong' or 'strongminded' character.²² Scholars who focus more specifically on Q1's Gertred reflect this range of opinion, some finding her still more limited than the figures in Q2 or F. G.B. Shand writes of a 'systematically contained Queen': 'the Q1 Queen-role is a prescriptive project to deny the Queen-actor multivalent or disruptive

options'.²³ Tommaso Continisio also limits her by contending that 'Q1 emphasises Gertred's role as mother' and characterizing her as a 'domestic, maternal and peace-keeping Gertred, whose silence and religious speech ensnare her into the corollary of obedience to male authority'.²⁴

Some scholars attempt to present Gertred more positively. Irace notes that 'differences between Gertred [in Q1] and Gertrude [in F] ... make the first quarto's queen a more sympathetic character, plotting with her son and his friend against the king'.²⁵ But Dorothy Kehler unpacks the potentially negative underside of this sympathy for Gertred: 'Overall Q1 presents a cohesive enough but neutral character who is neither temptress nor villain; she does and says what is expected of her and little more. In this regard Q1 seems less misogynistic than Q2/F1, but because the price of being more "sympathetic" than her counterparts is a lack of vitality and distinctiveness, one might more accurately conclude that Q1 merely wears its misogyny with a difference'.²⁶ While gesturing toward the 'sympathetic' reading of Gertred, Kehler argues instead that 'the plot allows her repentance but denies her full integrity'.²⁷

Steven Urkowitz begins to anticipate my emphasis on Gertred's political resistance, claiming that Q1 shows 'the Queen being an active ally of Hamlet, knowledgeable about the risks he faces'.²⁸ Yet Urkowitz does not go far enough. Gertred is not merely 'knowledgeable' about Hamlet's own 'risks' but also identifies treason in the king and makes plans herself to oppose this, not least by placating him so he does not so quickly recognize Hamlet's plot. Through evidence in the Q1-only scene, this article presents Gertred as a stronger, smarter, more politically central character than does Urkowitz or any of these other critics.

Sujata Iyengar is right that 'Gertrude's gaze ... directs us to feminism'.²⁹ Yet at this point in the development of feminist theory and of gender theory, there are many feminist frameworks. Some early feminist critics argued that Shakespeare generally portrayed female characters less than favourably, especially in tragedies.³⁰ More recently, some scholars have highlighted important female roles in Shakespeare's England, including those related to literary (and theatrical) production.³¹ Two of the more constructive arguments for the significance of female figures in Shakespearean contexts are Mary Beth Rose's emphasis on the heroism of suffering and Kathryn Schwarz's on the power of consent.³² A still more aggressive argument can be made for Q1's Gertred, who excels at political intrigue, building strategic alliances while also concealing her plot from those in power.

This article builds on two particular studies that emphasize the queen, even as it diverges from them regarding the reasons for her importance in *Hamlet*. Katherine Eggert stresses the queen's influence in her son's attempt to gain political

power. Eggert focuses on the title ‘imperiall ioyntresse’ (Q2 B2v 24; cf. TLN 187; 1.2.9), which Claudius accords his wife in Q2 and F (but not Q1).³³ Based on inferences from this phrase and some others, Eggert asserts that ‘In terms of the crown as well as of psychology it is thus not the usurper Claudius, but rather the too-authoritative Gertrude who blocks Hamlet from his father’s place’.³⁴ The problem with Eggert’s claim is that Hamlet focuses not on his mother but on his uncle as the one who obstructs his own desire for kingship. Hamlet’s particular resistance against the king is clear in Q2 / F, for in a late segment in those texts (but not Q1), it is Claudius, Hamlet states, who ‘kild my king and whor’d my mother’, and ‘Pop’t in between th’election and my hopes’ (Q2 N2r 12–13; cf. TLN 3568–9; 5.2.63–4), decisively positioning his mother as one offended by Claudius, like himself, rather than an offender. Hamlet’s opposition against his father — and alliance with his mother — is still more patent in Q1 since Hamlet plots more openly with Gertred against the king. Further, while Eggert focuses on the queen’s impact on Hamlet, I focus on her qualities apart from him, particularly the cleverness and influence she reveals in the scene with Horatio.

Kerrie Roberts argues that the queen in Hamlet is powerful in many aspects, with a focus on how to perform this dominance on-stage.³⁵ Roberts’s emphasis is salutary, though she does not consider differences among the texts and, somewhat like Eggert, overstates the implications of the queen’s designation as ‘imperiall ioyntresse’. Shakespeare’s neologism ‘ioyntresse’ (ie, jointress), which suggests the queen’s significance to the Danish state, would seem to gesture toward his knowledge of an account in which the queen holds regnal power, such as Saxo Grammaticus’s *Gesta Danorum*.³⁶ In the genealogical chart here (see Figure 1), the right bracket shows that Queen Geruthe derives from the royal line of Denmark (through King Rørick), while the left bracket shows that Fenge (Shakespeare’s Claudius) derives, like Haardeuendel (Shakespeare’s Old Hamlet), from a line of rulers of a mere Danish province, Jutland.³⁷ Yet Shakespeare, while revealing Geruthe’s prerogative, submerges it: Claudius is the one who names her role in a speech by which he broadly flatters the court. The queen does not assert her own authority and often functions elsewhere in the play as a subordinate of the king, who himself takes precedence in (among other things) the dispatching of diplomats, the receiving of Hamlet’s friends, and the overseeing of reveling, play-acting, and fencing. Although the prominence of Hamlet’s queen in historical record may have rested firmly on her lineage, the play — especially Q1, which omits the phrase ‘imperiall ioyntresse’ — raises her profile instead largely through her qualities of intelligence, canny speech, and loyalty.

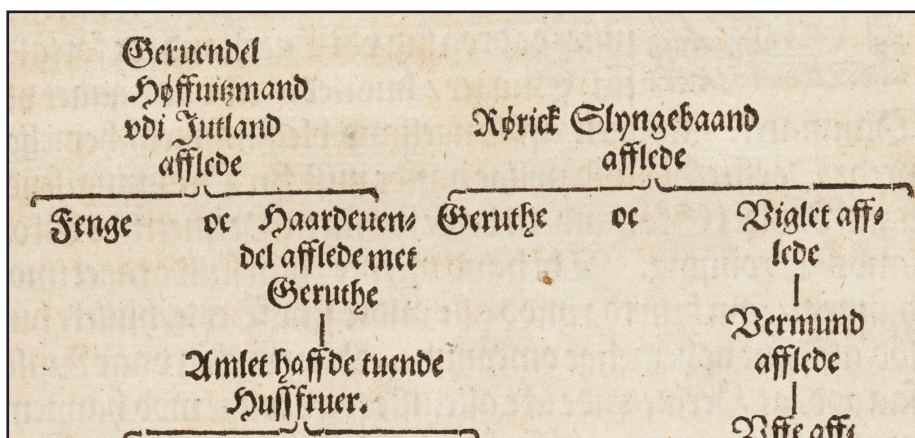


Figure 1. Saxo Grammaticus, *Den danske krønike som Saxo Grammaticus screff halffierde hundrede aar forleden: nu først aff latinene vdsat flittelige offuerseet oc forbedret aff Anders Soffrinsson Vedel* (Copenhagen, 1575), 62. Courtesy of The Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

The Q1-Only Scene: Gertred and the Politics of Motherhood

What may initially appear most striking about the Q1-only scene is the combination of Horatio and Gertred, two actors who are otherwise never alone on stage together in this version, and only briefly in F (but not in Q2). Horatio's genuine commitment to Hamlet is clear in all three early texts of the play; the queen's relation to her son and to the plot to kill Old Hamlet is less clear. The Q1 scene helps clarify her relation to these main elements of the play. In all three texts, she expresses some parental concern toward Hamlet early in the play, and again near the end at Ophelia's grave, while in the final scene she offers him a napkin to wipe his sweaty brow. Yet the Q1 scene confirms what an audience may have hoped would materialize more fully: Gertred's ignorance of the king's misdeeds, her sympathy toward her son, and her plan to help him act against the patently tyrannical king.

The scene opens with its longest speech, as Horatio reports the key facts of Hamlet's return from his forced trip to England. Even before Gertred speaks, the fact that the trustworthy Horatio tells her such a full account of Hamlet suggests the reliability that the rest of the scene confirms of her:

Madame, your sonne is safe arriv'd in *Denmarke*,
 This letter I euen now receiv'd of him,
 Whereas he writes how he escap't the danger,
 And subtle treason that the king had plotted,
 Being crossed by the contention of the windes,
 He found the Packet sent to the king of *England*,
 Wherein he saw himselfe betray'd to death,
 As at his next conuersion with your grace,
 He will relate the circumstance at full. (Q1 H2v 6–14; 14.1–9)

Whereas Hamlet in a later scene of both Q2 and F reports to Horatio the vague, if efficient, 'diuinity' (Q2 N1r 30; cf. TLN 3509; 5.2.10) that rescued him from Claudius's plot, here the circles of intimacy include Gertred. Q1's version of the encounter does not explain how Hamlet escaped through the interposition of 'Pyrat[s]' (Q2 L2v 32; cf. TLN 2988; 4.6.15). Instead, only 'the windes' help to create the break he needs to escape Claudius's plans. Although such 'windes' would presumably be more directly under divine control than would the activities of brigands, Hamlet does not claim here or elsewhere in Q1 that this was all done by divine 'prouidence' (Q2 N3v 15; TLN 3669; 5.2.198). Instead, it is Gertred who later in this scene praises 'heauen' for Hamlet's quick wit in transferring his 'doom' to Rossencraft and Gilderstone. Q1 thus presents a Hamlet who declines to appropriate divine authority and a mother who instead does this for him.

Horatio's opening speech is somewhat officious, especially 'Whereas' and 'Wherein', which exhibit the blandness that some critics have posited of the scene. Yet Horatio also conveys utmost respect for Gertred, addressing her not only as 'Madame' but also as 'your grace', and he tactfully broaches to the queen the issue of the king's treason, while conveying succinctly what will soon be relayed 'in full' in a subsequent 'conuersion', or conversation. Although Horatio focuses on Hamlet's return, and although the prince will presumably have much more to say to his mother about her husband's misdeeds, Horatio does not attempt to hide the 'treason that the king had plotted', specifically that Hamlet was 'betray'd to death'.

Whereas Horatio focuses on news of Hamlet, Gertred refocuses the scene around the key political detail, the implications regarding her husband the king. This shift is the major move in the scene: 'Then I perceiue there's treason in his looks / That seem'd to sugar o're his villanie' (Q1 H2v 15–16; 14.10–11). Since Horatio had most recently referred to 'He' as Hamlet, the queen's reference to 'his [the king's] looks' registers her preoccupation with Claudius and his treason,

which Hamlet suggested to her in the closet scene. This scene is the first time the king's 'treason' has been directly discussed among anyone else at court, except Hamlet and Horatio, and yet the queen swiftly reinterprets her perceptions of the king's 'looks', which seemed innocent but now appear hypocritical. Her phrase 'sugar o're' approximates one from earlier in the texts of Q2 and F (Q2 G2r 5; cf. TLN 1699; 3.1.47), when Polonius explains Ophelia's pretension to read in order to allay Hamlet's suspicion. MacDonald P. Jackson finds these the only two occurrences of this phrase in any dramatic work of the era, and suggests that one instance was 'transferred' to another.³⁸ Though this transference may have occurred, and though both instances reflect on the king's duplicity, Q1's use of the phrase is more critical of him. Just after Polonius speaks the phrase in Q2 and F, Claudius himself, presumably in an aside, confesses his own 'heavy burthen' (Q2 G2r 12; 3.1.53) as he reflects on his subterfuge in concealing himself with Polonius behind an arras to spy on Hamlet. Whereas Claudius is somewhat more conscious of his guilt in those texts, in Q1 he seems more ruthless, his stratagem discovered not by himself to an audience but by a courtier to his wife.

In the Q1-only scene, Gertred could join overt resistance against the king, but instead reveals her plan to counteract his hypocrisy with some of her own: 'But I will soothe and please him for a time, / For murderous mindes are alwayes jealous' (Q1 H2v 17–18; 14.12–13). These lines reveal cleverness, fortitude, and a willingness to enter a process of further deception and pretense that involves many others at court.³⁹ They not only move swiftly from a fresh realization of treason to a subtle plan to oppose this, but also ground this plan in an understanding of statecraft that András Kiséry has shown to inform many aspects of *Hamlet* for its early audiences.⁴⁰ That Gertred limits her deception to 'a time' suggests her own commitment to patience and to action when appropriate, all in protection of her son and a return to order in a kingdom that must now appear rightfully his.

Having responded initially and at some length to the king's treason, Gertred finally turns to the subject who stands against all this: 'But know not you *Horatio* where he is?' (Q1 H2v 19; 14.14). Gertred's reference to Hamlet as 'he' here looks back to Horatio's preceding speech that ended with the promise that 'He [ie, Hamlet] will relate the circumstance at full'. That Gertred referred implicitly to the king in the intervening four lines with the same general masculine pronouns ('his' and 'him') suggests the confusion she is experiencing but also, amid this, her continued focus on the king's treason. Although it may appear odd that Gertred asks about Hamlet — the focus of Horatio's message — only after she has mused about a counterplot against the king, this sequence mirrors her quickness and flexibility of mind in other segments of the play, whether in the cessation of grief

for her late husband or in the marriage to her new one.⁴¹ In the Q1-only scene, Gertred's reordering of topics and disorienting of pronouns are not themselves evidence of the poor style that critics have alleged in this scene, but follow from the perilous news she has heard, and from her still more dangerous plans.

Although the next exchange between Horatio and Gertred focuses on the whereabouts of Hamlet, it culminates in a still more developed plan for Gertred to help her son by opposing the king. Horatio's response to the queen returns attention to Hamlet rather than to the king's treason:

Yes Madame, and he [Hamlet] hath appoynted me
To meete him on the east side of the Cittie
To morrow morning. (Q1 H2v 20–2; 14.15–17)

Gertred's response turns again to the plot against the king, while also looking out for the well-being of her son:

O faile not, good *Horatio*, and withall, commend me
A mothers care to him, bid him a while
Be wary of his presence, lest that he
Faile in that he goes about. (Q1 H2v 23–6; 14.17–20)

Gertred's repetition of 'faile' in the short speech may seem clumsy but registers a parallel between her present context with Horatio and that of the deception they intend to practice. As she proposes to 'soothe and please' the king 'for a time' (Q1 H2v 17; 14.12), she enjoins Hamlet to make plans for just a 'while', ready to make his 'presence' less secret when circumstances change.

Given the foresight and depth of planning in this scene, Gertred reveals a political astuteness to rival that of the king. Her circumlocution 'that he goes about' would seem to refer to a surreptitious plot against the king, whom, Horatio reveals, is agitated by the same news that gladdens the prince's mother:

Madam, neuer make doubt of that:
I thinke by this the news be come to court:
He is arriv'de, obserue the king, and you shall
Quickely finde, *Hamlet* being here,
Things fell not to his minde. (Q1 H2v 27–31; 14.21–4)

Although Horatio surely deserves some of the critical attention that has come his way, these lines suggest that he is well behind the queen in responding to the news that he has known somewhat longer than she.⁴² He is most impressive as an interlocutor with Hamlet, as opposed to other courtiers earlier in the play, Fortinbras

later in the play, and here Gertred.⁴³ Having already accepted the imputation of the king's guilt, Gertred has made a plan to placate him deceptively, while Horatio is still encouraging her to 'obserue the king' to verify that he is in disarray, that 'Things fell not to his minde' when Hamlet returned.

Gertred reveals still further awareness regarding the implications of Hamlet's return in her inquiry, 'But what became of *Gilderstone* and *Rossencraft*?' (Q1 H2v 32; 14.25). She not only demonstrates a care for these courtiers, which might highlight her graciousness, but also seeks to reconstruct more of the context that surrounds Hamlet's return, and hence perhaps to establish what the remaining loyalties are among Hamlet's potential friends at court. Horatio's response highlights Hamlet's cleverness:

He being set ashore, they went for *England*,
And in the Packet there writ down that doome
To be perform'd on them poynted for him:
And by great chance he had his fathers Seale,
So all was done without discouerie. (Q1 H2v 33–H3r 1; 14.26–30)

By describing the malice 'poynted for' Hamlet in the same language that Hamlet himself 'hath appoynted' (Q1 H2v 20; 14.15) Horatio to a meeting, Horatio makes more intimate the predestinating force of 'chance' that he names somewhat more glibly in the next line. Although the other *Hamlet* texts dilate more on the theme of chance, and make Hamlet its chief spokesperson, Q1 subordinates chance to divine favour in Gertred's benediction: 'Thankes be to heauen for blessing of the prince' (Q1 H3r 2; 14.31).⁴⁴ Gertred's attention to 'heauen' fits with a more religious tenor at other points in Q1, such as in the 'To be' speech, and in Hamlet's final line, 'Heauen receiue my soule' (Q1 I3 v 36; 17.111). The Q1-only scene, besides offering a stronger Gertred, also affirms her additional religious orientation, earning her a spot in inquiry concerning this topic, which has usually focused on her son and erstwhile husband-cum-Ghost.⁴⁵

Whereas the close of the scene might seem formulaic, it underlines the complexity of the preceding moments between Gertred and Horatio. Since Gertred says, '*Horatio* once againe I take my leaue' (Q1 H3r 3; 14.32), she may have attempted to leave earlier in the scene and then demurred, perhaps after her second speech. Here, she had finished her instructions to Horatio ('Faile in that he goes about'; Q1 H2v 26; 14.20) and could proceed to carry out her own part of the plan before Horatio's largely superfluous response. Alternatively, she might begin to depart after (or during) this speech of Horatio's and pause to ask her final question ('But what became of *Gilderstone* and *Rossencraft*?'; Q1 H2v 32; 14.25). However we

interpret Gertred's reference to leave-taking 'once againe', it suggests the intricacy of staging this scene and the relation of the characters within it. In Gertred's last line, 'With thowsand mothers blessings to my sonne' (Q1 H3r 4; 14.33), she affirms her support of her son and an alignment with his political hopes, a family pairing juxtaposed with the king, who appears on-stage directly afterward, talking with his own conspirator Laertes. Whereas some scholars emphasize Gertred's motherhood at the expense of her political sensibility, the Q1-only scene reveals that these two factors are allied.⁴⁶

Gertred's Other Distinctive Q1 Features

The Gertred of the Q1-only scene is not just more sympathetic, as critics have previously observed, but also an equal of the king in political stratagem. This distinctive scene demonstrates Gertred's commitment to help Hamlet in his resistance to the king, and Q1 prepares this in the colloquy with Hamlet in her closet. When Hamlet names the possibility that a person might 'kill a king, and marry with his brother' Gertred in Q1 responds, 'How! Kill a king!' (Q1 G2r 24; 11.18) while in Q2 and F she appears less shocked: 'as kill a King' (Q2 I2v 4; 3.4.28) or 'As kill a King?' (TLN 2411). She affirms this implication when, in a vow absent in Q2 and F, she avers to Hamlet, 'But as I haue a soule, I sweare by heauen, / I neuer knew of this most horride murder' (Q1 G3r 24–5; 11.85–6).

Gertred still further clears herself of suspicion and commits herself to Hamlet's side later in the closet scene when Hamlet reveals his revenge plot against the king, in a portion not available in Q2 or F. In Q2, and F, Hamlet instructs his mother, 'Repent what's past, auoyd what is to come' (Q2 I4v 16; cf. TLN 2533; 3.4.148), though when he specifies what this might be, he tells her merely to 'refraigne to night' (TLN 2544; cf. Q2 I4v 31; 3.4.163) from Claudius's bed. In Q1, he more boldly asks her,

O mother, if euer you did my deare father loue,
 Forbeare the adulterous bed to night,
 And win your selfe by little as you may,
 In time it may be you wil lothe him quite:
 And mother, but assist mee in reuenge,
 And in his death your infamy shall die. (Q1 G3r 30–5; 11.91–6)

Gertred matches Hamlet's confidence in asking her help in 'reuenge' by promising,

Hamlet, I vow by that maiesty,
 That knowes our thoughts, and lookes into our hearts,
 I will conceale, consent, and doe my best,
 What stratagem soe're thou shalt deuise. (Q1 G3r 36–G4v 3; 11.97–100)

While this speech might seem merely an attempt to acquiesce temporarily with Hamlet's view to avoid his wrath, the Q1-only scene reveals that Gertred was genuine in her response to Hamlet and that she remains of that mind even when further difficulties arise.

In the interim between the closet scene and the Q1-only scene, Gertred sustains her willingness to 'conceale' her conspiracy with Hamlet against Claudius, in part by emphasizing her conflict with Hamlet in a way quite distinctive to Q1. In Q2 and F, she says Hamlet is 'Mad' (Q2 K1r 16; cf. TLN 2593; 4.1.7) and then speaks of his 'brainish apprehension' (Q2 K1r 20; cf. TLN 2597; 4.1.11) against Polonius. In Q1, she instead emphasizes first Hamlet's violence against herself: 'he throwes and tosses me about, / As one forgetting that I was his mother' (Q1 G3v 13–14; 11.108–9). Alexander Dunlop reads the queen's description of Hamlet's behaviour in this section of the play as evidence that she is 'complicit in spying on him', even as he infers that 'she never appears uncomfortable in the company of Claudius or Polonius'; Dunlop hence insists that, 'Except for Horatio, he [Hamlet] is completely isolated'.⁴⁷ This seems unlikely even in Q2 or F, in which — among other things — Hamlet expresses a liking for the players and enjoins their help in his plot. In Q1, Gertred and Hamlet are still more deeply involved in a conspiracy against the king.

By emphasizing Gertred in Q1, this article counterbalances a critical tendency to emphasize Hamlet, which has dominated many interpretations since the Romantics.⁴⁸ This de-emphasis of Hamlet might seem especially salutary if he is seen to propagate a negative approach to life, which scholars such as Rhodri Lewis have argued.⁴⁹ Yet the negativity thesis is unconvincing, and the present emphasis on Gertred means not to detract from Hamlet but instead to suggest that these two characters move more in tandem with one another than is generally acknowledged.⁵⁰ Whereas some critics contend that Hamlet attempts to catch the conscience of the queen as well as that of the king through the play-within-the-play, this inference assumes a parallel between the king's activities and the queen's, which is especially hard to justify in Q1.⁵¹ And whereas all three texts of the play include Hamlet's pithy misogynist line, 'Frailtie thy name is woman' (Q1 B4r 15; cf. Q2 C1v 9; TLN 330; 2.66), Hamlet has time — particularly in his adventure at sea — to shift his thinking about women. Moreover, this sentiment

early in the play seems to arise partly from Hamlet's extreme grief, a quality that itself suggests his similarity to female tragic figures.⁵²

Segments that are unique to Q1 *Hamlet* showcase Gertred as subtle, politically astute, and sympathetic to her son. Q1 also omits some segments that in Q2 and F may compromise her integrity in working with Hamlet toward the 'stratagem' (Q1 G4v 3; 11.100) he suggests in the Q1 closet scene and that she later confirms with Horatio. Whereas Q1 includes a long colloquy between Gertred and Horatio, Q2 and F include a shorter colloquy between these characters at the start of a scene that introduces Ophelia's madness. In Q2, in the presence of Horatio and a gentleman, the queen confides,

'To my sicke soule, as sinnes true nature is,
'Each toy seemes prologue to some great amisse,
'So full of artlesse iealousie is guilt,
'It spills it selfe, in fearing to be spylt. (Q2 K4r 16–19; cf. TLN 2763–6;
4.5.17–20)

Gertrard's (and Gertrude's) reflection on her 'sicke soule', 'sinnes', and 'guilt' would seem to reveal her own culpability in some evil act, perhaps even a complicity in Old Hamlet's death, given the recent play-within-the-play and Hamlet's confrontation in her closet. Ellen MacKay proposes that the commonplacings here in Q2 reveal the speech to be 'banal' and 'cliché'.⁵³ If so, the speech highlights the contrasting behaviours of Q2's Gertrard here and Q1's Gertred, with her heartfelt confession to Horatio in the Q1-only scene. Yet a comparison with the F version of the queen's speech that is quoted above from Q2 suggests that any banality in these lines may reflect less the queen's disingenuousness than her struggle — like the queen figure in the Q1-only scene — to maintain poise amid a distressing emotional situation. In F, Gertrude speaks these four lines (not with quotation marks) to only Horatio, or perhaps as an aside while, in answer to the queen's own request, he admits Ophelia: 'Let her come in' (TLN 2761; 4.5.16). In Q2, it is Horatio who says, 'Let her come in' (Q2 K4r 14), so that when Ophelia enters, the queen's reference to 'guilt' appears more closely linked to the apparently undesired presence of this mad young girl, especially considering Gertrard's declaration at the start of the scene that she 'will not speake with' Ophelia (Q2 K3v 38; TLN 2745; 4.5.1). In a comparison of Q2's Gertrard and F's Gertrude here, at probably the queen's most introspective speech in those texts, F suggests a more generic 'guilt' perhaps linked to regicide, though perhaps also more genuinely penitent. Yet both Q2 and F, by including this speech, suggest more 'guilt'

for the queen than does Q1, which retains her greater sense of justice along with greater political acumen and commitment to her son.

Gertred as a Model for Queenship and Motherhood in *Hamlet*

This article has argued for the distinctiveness of Q1 *Hamlet*'s Gertred, apart from the other versions of the queen figure in Q2 and F, particularly through her political intelligence and associated traits. Yet the relation among the early printed texts of *Hamlet* is especially complex, even by comparison with other short Shakespearean quartos, since the play exists in three substantively different texts rather than two.⁵⁴ These may represent three separate stages of drafting, acting, revising, and transmitting what became three distinct texts. Alternatively, pieces that are present in one version but not in another, M.J. Kidnie has suggested, may have belonged to a common manuscript that was marked for cutting in various ways by various hands.⁵⁵ If so, Q1's Gertred may express less a fully separate character from Q2's Gertrard and F's Gertrude than an important version of a composite queen character who appears in a spectrum of different textual iterations. Whereas Q1's Gertred raises the feminine political aptitude in one significant version of the play, the version that is most distinct from the others, she also may suggest repercussions across the representation of queenship and the politics of motherhood in all three texts of *Hamlet*.

Notes

I am grateful to the editors and anonymous readers at *Early Theatre* for their helpful comments on this article.

- 1 Citations from Q1 are from William Shakespeare, *The Tragicall Historie of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* (London, 1603; STC: 22275). Cross-references by scene and line are to the Arden third series edition of Q1: Shakespeare, *Hamlet: The Texts of 1603 and 1623*, ed. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor (London, 2006), <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781408188125.00000018>.
- 2 On political resistance, see Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism* (Cambridge, 2005), 184–204, <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511483608>. For a comparatively negative view see Ethan John Guagliardo, ‘The Experience of Authority: *Hamlet* and the Political Aesthetics of Majesty’, *English Literary Renaissance* 51.3 (2021), 476–502, <https://doi.org/10.1086/715427>. For a more positive view, see Joshua R. Held, *Bold Conscience: Luther to Shakespeare to Milton* (Tuscaloosa, 2023), 37–53.
- 3 See George Ian Duthie, *The Bad Quarto of ‘Hamlet’: A Critical Study* (Cambridge, 1941); and John Dover Wilson, *The Manuscript of Shakespeare’s ‘Hamlet’ and the Problems of Its Transmission*, 2 vols (Cambridge, 1963).
- 4 Shakespeare, *The Tragicall Historie of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* (London, 1604; STC: 22276), title page.
- 5 *The Norton Facsimile: The First Folio of Shakespeare*, ed. Charlton Hinman (New York, 1968), A3r. For the label ‘bad quarto’, see Alfred W. Pollard, *Shakespeare Folios and Quartos: A Study in the Bibliography of Shakespeare’s Plays, 1594–1685* (London, 1909), 64–80; Duthie, *The Bad Quarto of ‘Hamlet’*; and Dover Wilson, *The Manuscript of Shakespeare’s ‘Hamlet’*. For a narrative of the development of the ‘bad quartos’ category, see Laurie E. Maguire, *Shakespearean Suspect Texts: The Bad Quartos and Their Contexts* (Cambridge, 1996), 12–13, <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511553134>.
- 6 See Lewis F. Mott, ‘II. The Position of the Soliloquy “to be or not to be” in *Hamlet*’, *PMLA* 19.1 (1904), 26–32, <https://doi.org/10.2307/456464>.
- 7 On stenography, see Bryan Crockett, ‘Shakespeare, Playfere, and the Pirates’, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 66.3 (2015), 252–85, <https://doi.org/10.1353/shq.2015.0041>; and Tiffany Stern, ‘Sermons, Plays and Note-Takers: *Hamlet* Q1 as a “Noted” Text’, *Shakespeare Survey* 66 (2013), 1–23, <https://doi.org/10.1017/sso9781107300699.001>. On memorial reconstruction, see Sidney Thomas, ‘*Hamlet* Q1: First Version or Bad Quarto?’ in *The Hamlet First Published: Origins, Form, Intertextualities*, ed.

- Thomas Clayton (Newark, 1992), 249–56; Kathleen O. Irace, *Reforming the Bad Quartos: Performance and Provenance of Six Shakespearean First Editions* (Newark, 1994); and Paul Menzer, *The Hamlets: Cues, Qs, and Remembered Texts* (Newark, 2008).
- 8 On versification, see Douglas Bruster, ‘Beautified Q1 *Hamlet*’, *Critical Survey* 31.1–2 (2019), 58–71, <https://doi.org/10.3167/cs.2019.31010205>. On typography see Erika Boeckeler, ‘The *Hamlet* First Quarto (1603) and the Play of Typography’, *Early Theatre* 21.1 (2018), 59–86, <https://doi.org/10.12745/et.21.1.3189>. On rhetoric, see William Davis, ‘Now, Gods, Stand up for Bastards: The 1603 “Good Quarto” *Hamlet*’, *Textual Cultures* 1.2 (2006), 60–89, <https://doi.org/10.2979/tex.2006.1.2.60>; and Christy Desmet, ‘Text, Style, and Author in *Hamlet* Q1’, *Journal of Early Modern Studies* 5 (2016), 135–56. On attention to French sources, see Margrethe Jolly, *The First Two Quartos of ‘Hamlet’: A New View of the Origins and Relationship of the Texts* (Jefferson NC, 2014). On the designation of commonplace materials, see Zachary Lesser and Peter Stallybrass, ‘The First Literary *Hamlet* and the Commonplacing of Professional Plays’, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 59.4 (2008), 371–420, <https://doi.org/10.1353/shq.0.0040>.
 - 9 See Terri Bourus, *Young Shakespeare’s Young Hamlet: Print, Piracy, and Performance* (New York, 2014), <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137465641>; Bourus, ‘The Good Enough Quarto: *Hamlet* as a Material Object’, *Critical Survey* 31.1–2 (2019), 72–86, <https://doi.org/10.3167/cs.2019.31010206>; and Bourus, ed., *Shakespeare and the First Hamlet* (New York, 2022).
 - 10 On performance, see Irace, *Reforming the Bad Quartos*. For editions, see William Shakespeare, *The First Quarto of Hamlet*, ed. Irace (Cambridge, 1999), <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316563915>; Thompson and Taylor, eds, *Hamlet: The Texts of 1603 and 1623*; and Stephen Greenblatt, ed., *Hamlet (1603)*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt, et al. (New York, 2016), 1855–1905.
 - 11 See Zachary Lesser, ‘*Hamlet*’ After Q1: *An Uncanny History of the Shakespearean Text* (Philadelphia, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.9783/9780812290394>.
 - 12 See Leah S. Marcus, ‘Bad Taste and Bad *Hamlet*’, in *Unediting the Renaissance: Shakespeare, Marlowe, Milton* (New York, 1996), 132–76, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203424445-9>.
 - 13 On unique segments of Q1, see Laurie Johnson, ‘Unique Lines and the Ambient Heart of Q1 *Hamlet*’, *Critical Survey* 31.1–2 (2019), 130–43, <https://doi.org/10.3167/cs.2019.31010210>.
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 - 15 Irace, ed., *The First Quarto of Hamlet*, 36.

- 16 William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. G.R. Hibbard (Oxford, 1987), 87, <https://doi.org/10.1093/actrade/9780198129103.book.1>.
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- 18 Jowett, 'Whose Hamlet', 343n5.
- 19 Jowett, ed., *Hamlet*, in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, Critical Reference edn, 2 vols, ed. Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus, and Gabriel Egan (Oxford, 2017), 1:1115–1228, <https://doi.org/10.1093/actrade/9780198759560.book.1>.
- 20 William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins (London, 1982), 13.
- 21 Janet Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays, 'Hamlet' to 'The Tempest'* (New York, 1992), 15–16, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203420652>. See also Richard Levin, 'Gertrude's Elusive Libido and Shakespeare's Unreliable Narrators', *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 48.2 (2008), 305–26, <https://doi.org/10.1353/sel.0.0009>.
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- 24 Tommaso Continisio, "'Brief Let Me Be': Telescoped Action and Characters in Q1 and Q2 *Hamlet*', *Critical Survey* 31.1–2 (2019), 144–52, 149, <https://doi.org/10.3167/cs.2019.31010211>.
- 25 Irace, ed., *The First Quarto of Hamlet*, 15.
- 26 Dorothea Kehler, 'The First Quarto of *Hamlet*: Reforming Widow Gertred', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 46.4 (1995), 398–413, 406, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2870979>.
- 27 Ibid, 409.
- 28 Steven Urkowitz, "'Well-sayd old Mole': Burying Three *Hamlets* in Modern Editions', in *Shakespeare Study Today: The Horace Howard Furness Memorial Lectures*, ed. Georgiana Zeigler (New York, 1986), 37–70, 48.
- 29 Sujata Iyengar, 'Gertrude/Ophelia: Feminist Intermediality, Ekphrasis, and Tenderness in *Hamlet*', in *Rethinking Feminism in Early Modern Studies*,

- ed. Ania Loomba and Melissa E. Sanchez (New York, 2016), 181–200, 200, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315606033>.
- 30 See Linda Bamber, *Comic Women, Tragic Men: A Study of Gender and Genre in Shakespeare* (Stanford, 1982); and Marianne Novy, *Love's Argument: Gender Relations in Shakespeare* (Chapel Hill, 1984).
 - 31 For example, see Wendy Wall, *Staging Domesticity: Household Work and English Identity in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge, 2002); Michelle M. Dowd, *Women's Work in Early Modern English Literature and Culture* (New York, 2009), <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230620391>; and Natasha Korda, *Labors Lost: Women's Work and the Early Modern English Stage* (Philadelphia, 2011), <https://doi.org/10.9783/9780812204315>. On literary roles, for example, see Margaret J.M. Ezell, *Writing Women's Literary History* (Baltimore, 1993), <https://doi.org/10.56021/9780801844324>; Julie Crawford, *Mediatix: Women, Politics, and Literary Production in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2014), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198712619.001.0001>; and Margaret W. Ferguson, *Dido's Daughters: Literacy, Gender, and Empire in Early Modern England and France* (Chicago, 2007), <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226243184.001.0001>.
 - 32 See Mary Beth Rose, *Gender and Heroism in Early Modern English Literature* (Chicago, 2002); Kathryn Schwarz, *What You Will: Gender, Contract, and Shakespearean Social Space* (Philadelphia, 2011), <https://doi.org/10.9783/9780812205039>.
 - 33 Q2 is cited by signature from William Shakespeare, *The Tragickall Historie of Hamlet, Prince of Denmarke* (London: 1604; STC: 22276). F is cited by through-line number (TLN) from Shakespeare, *The Norton Facsimile*, ed. Hinman. Cross-references by act, scene, and line are to the Arden, 3rd edn of Q2, *Hamlet*, ed. Neil Taylor and Ann Thompson (London, 2006). See Katherine Eggert, *Showing Like a Queen: Female Authority and Literary Experiment in Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton* (Philadelphia, 2000), 100–30, <https://doi.org/10.9783/9780812292619>.
 - 34 Eggert, *Showing Like a Queen*, 103–4.
 - 35 Kerrie Roberts, *Hamlet's Hereditary Queen: Performing Shakespeare's Silent Female Power* (New York, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003258612>. See also Abigail L. Montgomery, 'Enter Queen Gertrude Stage Center: Re-viewing Gertrude as Full Participant and Active Interpreter in *Hamlet*', *South Atlantic Review* 74.3 (2009), 99–117.
 - 36 On Shakespeare's possible indirect knowledge of Saxo, see Julie Maxwell, 'Counter-Reformation Versions of Saxo: A New Source for *Hamlet*?', *Renaissance Quarterly* 57.2 (2004), 518–60, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1261725>.
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- 38 Jackson, ‘Vocabulary, Chronology’, 32.
- 39 On pretending, see Jonathan Baldo, “‘He that plays the king’: The Problem of Pretending in *Hamlet*’, *Criticism* 25.1 (1983), 13–26.
- 40 See András Kiséry, *Hamlet’s Moment: Drama and Political Knowledge in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198746201.001.0001>.
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- 44 On chance, see Brian Cummings, *Mortal Thoughts: Religion, Secularity, and Identity in Shakespeare and Early Modern Culture* (Oxford, 2013), 207–35, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199677719.001.0001>.
- 45 See Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton, 2001).
- 46 On Gertred’s motherhood and political savvy, see Bourus, ‘Enter Shakespeare’s Young Hamlet, 1589’, *Actes des congrès de la Société française Shakespeare* 34 (2016), <https://doi.org/10.4000/shakespeare.3736>. I am grateful to an anonymous reader for this point, and for the reference to Bourus.
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- 49 Rhodri Lewis, *Hamlet and the Vision of Darkness* (Princeton, 2017). See also Andrew Cutrofello, *All for Nothing: Hamlet's Negativity* (Cambridge, 2014).
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