

# **The Tragedy of *Hamlet***

c.1600

# The Text(s) of *Hamlet*

- *Hamlet* is unique among Shakespeare's plays in having three substantive texts: Q1, Q2, and F1.
- Q1 is a bad quarto; Q2 is a good quarto, believed to derive from Shakespeare's working manuscript and believed to be for the most part printed from it; F1 derives from a playhouse transcript showing some adaptation for the stage but also depends to some extent upon Q2.

T H E  
Tragicall Historie of  
HAMLET  
*Prince of Denmarke*

By William Shake-speare.

As it hath beene diuerſe times acted by his Highneſſe ſer-  
uants in the Cittie of London : as alſo in the two V-  
niuerſities of Cambridge and Oxford, and elſe-where



At London printed for N.L. and Iohn Trundell.  
1603.

*Hamlet (Q1)*

# The First Quarto of *Hamlet* (Q1)

- This is the first printed edition of *Hamlet* (1603). It is generally known as the bad quarto of the play.
- This edition is much shorter than subsequent versions (Q1 has 2154 lines against the 3723 of Q2).
- It is sometimes accepted that the principal agent in the creation of this text was an actor who had played the part of Marcellus. His speeches, and to a less degree the speeches of others while Marcellus is on stage, are more faithfully rendered than the bulk of the play. Marcellus presumably doubled other roles (the six-line speech of Lucianus is reproduced word perfect).
- Q1 of *Hamlet*, like other bad quartos, is derived from performance (recollections of memory) and lacks a direct manuscript link with what the author wrote.

# *Hamlet Q1*

- Q1 was lost until its rediscovery in 1823.
- Only two copies survived. The first one was discovered in 1823. The other copy resurfaced in 1856.
- The title page of one of these copies says that the play has been '**Diverse times acted by his Highnesse servants in the Cittie of London : as also in the two Universities of Cambridge and Oxford, and elsewhere**'. This may point to the fact that the text was a variant used for touring productions.
- The language of Q1 is often very far from what is traditionally considered 'Shakespearean.' Its versification is distinctly inferior.

# *Hamlet Q1*

A comparison with Q2 and F1 reveals

## ➤ **Omissions**

Q1 omits many passages:

- The first part of the King's first speech (I.ii)
- Over half of Laertes's long speech to Ophelia (I. iii)
- Over twenty lines from the Pyrrhus speech (II. ii)
- A dozen lines from Hamlet eulogy of Horatio (III. ii)
- The King's dialogue with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern at the beginning of the prayer scene (III. iii)
- Hamlet's account of his adventures on board ship (V. ii)

# *Hamlet Q1*

- **Additions:** a scene between Horatio and the Queen is introduced in Act 4 which changes the role of Gertrude significantly (she tells Horatio that she knew nothing of her husband's murder and that she will help Hamlet in his plot against Claudius).
- **Names:** substituting the names of Corambis and Montano for Polonius and Reynaldo. It is not clear why this happened.
- **Transpositions:** changing the position of the nunnery scene and the "to be or not to be" soliloquy.
- There are other examples of 'textual corruption' (all the signs of a play reconstructed from memory).

*T H E*  
Tragicall Historie of  
H A M L E T,  
*Prince of Denmarke.*

By William Shakespeare.

Newly imprinted and enlarged to almost as much  
again as it was, according to the true and perfect  
Coppie.



AT LONDON,  
Printed by I. R. for N. L. and are to be sold at his  
shoppe vnder Saint Dunstons Church in  
Fleestreet. 1605.

***Hamlet (Q2)***



# The Second Quarto of *Hamlet* (Q2)

- It is variously dated 1604 and 1605. Because it was printed over the New Year, some copies of Q2 were dated 1604 (three survived), and others 1605 (four survived) .
- On its title page, Q2 announces that it has been ‘**Newly imprinted and enlarged to almost as much againe as it was, according to the true and perfect Coppie**’. These lines are used by critics of Q1 to confirm its inferiority.
- Q2 is the longest of the three texts (it is longer than Q1 and F1).
- The character of Q2 text supports the assertion that it comes from an authentic manuscript; it is usually accepted that this manuscript is the author’s own foul papers.

## *Hamlet Q2*

Q2 lacks some passages which F1 gives. Most of these omissions are accepted to be unintentional. However, the excision of the passage which describes Denmark as a prison in Act 2 and the account of the boy actors also in Act 2 do not look accidental. There is no definite answer to why these passages were dropped in printing.

# ***Hamlet* in the First Folio (F1)**

- The date is 1623.
- *Hamlet* is included in the third section under Tragedies.
- F1 includes over seventy lines that are not found in Q2; F1 lacks something like 230 lines that Q2 has.
- The stage directions of F1 are fuller and more systematic.

Dover Wilson (1881-1969) established Q2 as the most authoritative text, but most modern editions of the play are based on a conflation of Q2 and F1.

# The Sources of *Hamlet*

## ❖ *Historiae Danicae* (1514) by Saxo Grammaticus

The story of Amleth that is mentioned in Saxo has the essentials of Shakespeare's plot: fratricide, incestuous marriage, feigned madness, and the achievement of a delayed revenge.

## ❖ *Histoires Tragiques* (fifth volume 1570) by François de Belleforest retold the story of Amleth. He added some complications to the plot and his version was longer than that of Saxo.

## ❖ The *Ur-Hamlet*

In 1596 Thomas Lodge made a reference to the play which indicated that it contained a “ghost which cried so miserably at the Theatre, like an oyster-wife, *Hamlet, revenge*” (*Wit's Misery*, 1596).