

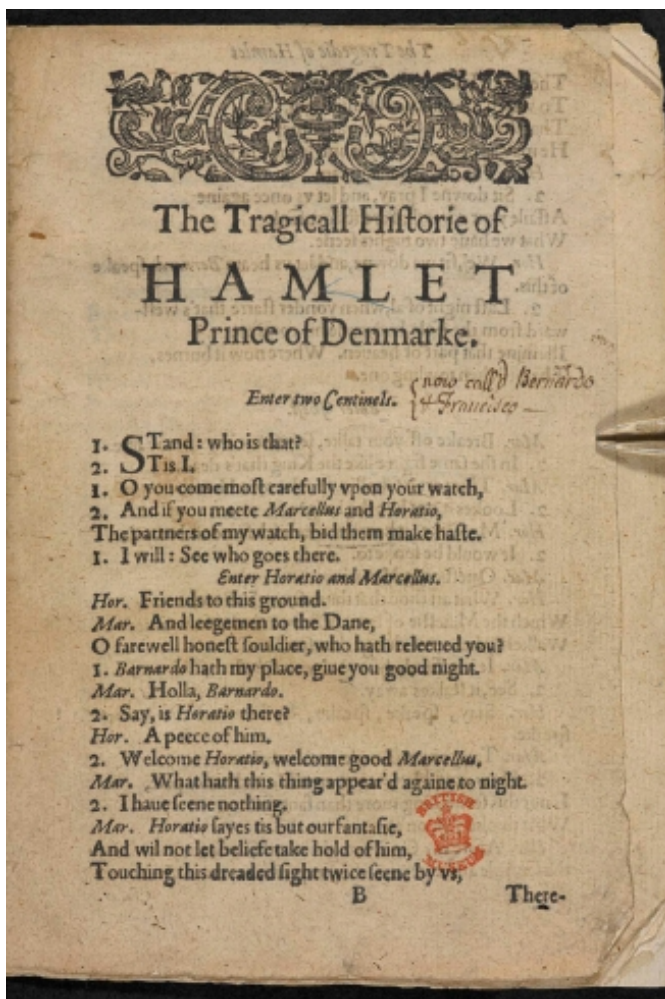
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Shakespeare's Badass Quarto

On the trail of a centuries-old Hamlet mystery

By Ron Rosenbaum | FEBRUARY 07, 2016



The British Museum

One of only two known Horatio copies of the earliest printed versions of the play, from 1603

Have you noticed that every few years a controversy arises over a claim that an old portrait found in someone's attic is the true face of William Shakespeare? Most recently the British publication *Country Life* gave front-cover, stop-the-presses treatment ("The Greatest Discovery in 400 Years") to a pathetically generic engraving that "secret cyphers" supposedly proved was Shakespeare's face. While serious scholars disputed the claim, the search for a "genuine" representation of Shakespeare

goes on, a silly celebrity-culture version for Bardolators of the longing to believe the Shroud of Turin was a true portrait of Jesus.

But far more intriguing than a dusty canvas of dubious origin would be a document that could offer a portrait of Shakespeare's mind. Of something that might illuminate the consciousness that gave rise to the astonishing language and thought.

And that's precisely what's at stake in the latest controversy over *Hamlet*, what makes the dispute so intellectually seductive, and why it deserves examination outside the circle of textual adepts. It's a controversy over the so-called Bad Quarto of *Hamlet*, the long-disparaged, though first-published (in 1603), text of the play. The provenance of the Bad Quarto has long been shrouded in mystery, but a clash of two new theories reopens questions about *Hamlet* as a play, Hamlet as a character, and Shakespeare as an artist.

Specifically did Shakespeare write an early version of *Hamlet* when he was as young as 25 — a decade before the conventional late 1590s date of composition? Or is this purported "early version," the Bad Quarto, just a botched and stunted bootleg of one of the later canonical versions?

The chief disputants who have reopened this long-running schism are two female scholars, reflecting the way women have come to play pivotal roles in what was once a male-dominated realm. There is, on the one hand, Tiffany Stern of Oxford, who has been called "the leading theater historian of her generation." Called that, in fact, by her nemesis, Terri Bourus, a professor and theater director at Indiana University-Purdue University at

Indianapolis whose 2014 book, *Young Shakespeare's Young Hamlet* (Palgrave Macmillan), is at the heart of a challenge to conventional wisdom.

So the Bad Quarto, like the Ghost in Hamlet, once again is stalking the battlements of Shakespeare scholarship. Despite its popular image of pedantry, textual scholarship can be dramatic and enlightening. Texts, you sometimes come to feel, develop characters of their own. Scholars now prefer to call the Bad Quarto "Q1," but I *like* calling it the Bad Quarto — as in delinquent, disobedient, disruptive. The Badass Quarto.

It's defined mostly by what it's missing, which admittedly is a lot. Only 2,200 lines compared with the so-called Good Quarto (Q2), which has some 3,800 lines (these counts, for various reasons, are not exact) and was published under mysterious circumstances in 1604. (For those late to the party, a quarto is a single-play text about the size of a contemporary trade paperback.) The third of the original three *Hamlet* texts appears in the First Folio, a compendium of Shakespeare's plays the size of a coffee-table book and published in 1623, seven years after Shakespeare's death. The *Hamlet* in F1 — as that one is known — runs some 3,570 lines and includes one profoundly radical absence: Hamlet's final 35-line soliloquy, "How all occasions do inform against me." The one about thinking about thinking, consciousness of self-consciousness, the very essence of what makes Hamlet Hamlet.

Now, stay with me here. There are some, including Bourus, who have argued that Shakespeare wrote the 1623 version before the 1604 Good Quarto, even though it was printed long *after*. That would make the Good

Quarto's "How all occasions" soliloquy the finishing touch, Shakespeare's "final considered intention," as the textual specialists call it. And would pull the rug out from under certain scholars who have tried to make a narrative from the Folio version purportedly following the Good Quarto because Shakespeare supposedly wanted to cut Hamlet's final soliloquy to speed up the pace.

Complex, I know, but important. This is *Hamlet*, after all.

Bourus's most radical assertion is that she's proved beyond a doubt that the Bad Quarto is the first version of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. If she's right, the Bad Quarto would reveal to us Shakespeare's own later revisions and tell us something more about what was in his mind as he reworked his greatest creation.

To understand the nature of the "badness" imputed to the Bad Quarto, recall first the familiar opening lines of the signature soliloquy in the standard texts:

"To be or not to be — that is the question; Whether 'tis nobler in mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
And by opposing end them. To die; to sleep ..."

And then compare them with the way they first appeared, in 1603, in the Bad Quarto:

To be or not to be — ay, there's the point
 To die, to sleep — is that all? Ay all.
 No, to sleep, to dream — ay marry, there it goes,
 For in that dream of death, when we awaked
 And borne before an everlasting judge
 From whence no passenger ever returned —
 The undiscovered country, at whose sight
 The happy smile and the accursed damned.
 But for this ..."

As for the rest of the Bad Quarto, it's not always so bad. The biggest differences are those of omission. One scholar, Kathleen O. Irace, estimated that in the Bad Quarto Hamlet speaks only 60 percent of the lines he has in the Folio version. So many scenes are left out or abridged that the character of the play and the character of Hamlet seem changed: Instead of Hamlet "thinking too precisely on the point," he seems hasty, "more focused on revenge," according to Irace. And the Bad Quarto moves more swiftly to its bloody climax, so that it could be said to lose — or never have *had* — the very quality that gave birth to the phrase "Hamlet-like."

Most people don't realize the *Hamlets* they read are not the *Hamlets* Shakespeare wrote. They're, more often than not, a cut-and-paste, conflated version that mixes and matches some of the best bits from the Good Quarto and the Folio. "The pales and forts of reason," "the mote it is to trouble the mind's eye," and "nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so" are each in either the Quarto or the Folio but not in both.

The Bad Quarto, meanwhile, has long lingered out in the cold, uninvited to this conflation party, despite its rightful claim as first-published. Nevertheless, should the Bad Quarto inflect our sense of who Hamlet was? Or who Hamlet became, as he evolved through the three versions? So much depends on what theory of the Bad Quarto's origins you believe.

The two theories emerged only after the Bad Quarto did a strange disappearing act in the two centuries after its 1603 publication. By 1821 it had been almost entirely forgotten, until a certain Sir Henry Bunbury came upon a copy in a back closet of a newly inherited old mansion in Suffolk. For a long time after that, opinion has been dominated by two theories of the Bad Quarto's origins: "memorial reconstruction" and "early draft." Memorial reconstruction holds that the Bad Quarto was pieced together by an actor or actors from memory and published as a "pirated" edition inferior to the enlarged and expanded "Good Quarto" (Q2) that appeared the following year.

In the 1980s, however, an influential faction of Shakespeare scholars began arguing that some long-dismissed quartos might have been first or early drafts of "Shakespeare's final intentions," and that, therefore, we can

in the alterations from early to later versions catch Shakespeare in the act of changing his mind, deepening his thoughts, expanding the reach of his words — "Shakespeare at work," as the Oxford scholar John Jones put it.

I recall some 15 years ago when a copy of the Bad Quarto was set before me at the Huntington Library in Pasadena, Calif., one of only two copies known to exist in the world. For those who keep up with such things, it's the one that Bunbury discovered (no connection to Oscar Wilde's Bunbury). I know it sounds superstitious, but there was something numinous, like a malevolent grimoire about it. A dark power.

In the years since I saw it, there has been no resolution of the schism over how to characterize the Bad Quarto. The authoritative Arden Shakespeare edition of *Hamlet* became a scholarly landmark because, in 2006, the editors printed all three separate — thus deconflated — texts of the play, but the editors virtually threw up their hands when it came to the Bad Quarto's origin story: "Very few now see [the Bad Quarto] as an early draft of a play by Shakespeare, but even so there has been no agreement on how the text came into being."

I'd say that more than a "very few now" think that way; a number of respected Shakespeare editions have subsequently brought out versions of some pre-Folio quartos on the theory they are likely early drafts, the 1605 Quarto of *King Lear*, for instance. It's true that the Bad Quarto of *Hamlet* is less often regarded that way. But Stephen Greenblatt's new Norton edition of *Hamlet*, following the Arden edition's lead, will present all three texts of *Hamlet*. Still the Arden disclaimer of certainty is a

fascinating and radical statement if you think about it. Two explanations — "memorial reconstruction" and "early draft" — though neither convincing. The Bad Quarto exists; it had to come into being somehow.

What difference does it make? Here are two instances in which the Bad Quarto suggests the possibility of Shakespeare rethinking and re-inking passages of *Hamlet*.

Consider this single, two-line discrepancy between the Bad Quarto and the two later versions. You may remember the scene where Claudius, who murdered Hamlet's father to claim the kingship and the Queen, seeks to pray for forgiveness. But at the close of his attempt he tells us (in the two later, canonical versions of *Hamlet*):

"My words fly up, my thoughts remain below/ Words without thoughts never to heaven go." But in the Bad Quarto, it's written this way: "My wordes fly up, my sinnes remaine below/ No King on earth is safe if God[']s his foe."

Tiffany Stern, the Oxford theater historian who believes neither of the leading theories about the Bad Quarto's origins are adequate, cites this change to argue for her new thesis: that the differences in the Bad Quarto are the result not of actors' bad memories of a production they were in,

nor of Shakespeare's rewriting, but of "fast writing" note-takers in the audience trying to render an account of a performance of the play we know.

And getting it wrong. Specifically, getting the second line — the reference to a controlling God — wrong.

The opposing school, most recently and radically championed by Bourus (who, incidentally, is a general editor of the new Oxford edition of Shakespeare's plays), would have us see the Bad Quarto version not as a distorted misremembering or bad notation of the longer versions that have come down to us. But, rather, as Shakespeare's first draft of the now-standard versions. It's an important thematic question since one could say that if the change came from Shakespeare's pen, he's giving us a further, more ambitious, ambiguous — and despairing — formulation of his view of the moral universe. The removal of a watchful and punitive God as an active "foe" from a crucial moment in *Hamlet* seems no small matter, no mere glitch of memory. Because here we are at the heart of the enigma of *Hamlet*: Is the moral universe ruled by some form or figure of justice, divine or not? Is it in any way a moral universe at all?

Another instance occurs at the very opening of the drama. We're on the freezing battlements of Elsinore castle. The very first line of the Bad Quarto is uttered by the sentinel on the battlement above calling down to his replacement climbing up:

"Stand! Who is that?"

Then a strange but conspicuous change from this Bad Quarto version: In the Good Quarto and the Folio, the first line is not "Who is that?" but "Who's there?" And it's uttered not by the sentinel up on the battlement looking down, but by his replacement climbing up from below to take over. It's a reversal of roles; the sentry up top is not challenging the climber below to identify himself. Instead the climber-up is addressing the unfathomable darkness at the top of the stairs, conspicuously calling out to the black depths of the universe above him.

And asking the ultimate question: "Who's there?" A keynote which could be construed as "Is there a God"?

Thus does the Bad Quarto version seem to point to a small but profound, apparently deliberate, change in the later versions, a reversal of position and speech order that is less likely to be the result of mere memory or note-taking than Shakespeare deepening the play. Shakespeare ... or someone. "Who's there?" indeed.

In the chronicle of the new Bad Quarto controversy it could be said that Tiffany Stern struck first when, in 2013, she published an article in the respected annual *Shakespeare Survey*. Her argument offered a fascinating new way of looking at the "memorial reconstruction" hypothesis — the century-old view that the Bad Quarto was, in effect, a recreation from the often fallible memories of *Hamlet* actors.

Stern argued that this version of memorial reconstruction hadn't held up to scrutiny. She made her reputation with her vast command of 17th-century theater archival material, and she finds plentiful examples of

popular sermons being transcribed on "tablets" by note-takers. She also cites two dramatic instances of the practice in the theater. One in a play by Francis Beaumont, *The Woman Hater* (circa 1607), in which a playwright figure defiantly calls out to those in the audience he called "decipherers" wherever "they sit concealed," to let them know the author "defies them and their writing Tables." Stern asserts that several playwrights of the time had made complaint of "malicious note-takers."

One of those playwrights, Thomas Heywood, she tells us, "reminded the spectators that the version of the play that they had bought — first published in 1605 — had come about dishonestly; 'some,' he charged, 'by Stenography drew/The plot, put it in print (scarce one word trew).'" Stern makes a compelling case that at least in certain instances the audience, not actors, were to blame.

But was this also true of the Bad Quarto? Here Stern's case is less definitive. She asserts, for example, that the practice of note-takers' resorting to synonyms as they scratched on their tablets is responsible for the Bad Quarto's description of the Ghost who "did sometimes Walke," being a misconstrual of the later versions' "did sometimes march." But such a change doesn't rule out the possibility of Shakespeare himself altering "walk" to "march" for thematic reasons — an angry ghost rather than a strolling spirit.

Stern is on her strongest grounds when she deals with the "To be or not to be" soliloquy, carefully dismantling its stitched-together incoherences and plausibly making the case for inept note-taking. Stern concludes her

article by saying somewhat dismissively that the Bad Quarto "remains as a misty record of a staged performance, offering, through its stage directions, additional information about the production."

She also says that "textual oddities visible through or behind the noting process [of the Bad Quarto] still remain interesting witnesses to a different moment in the life of *Hamlet*."

Terri Bourus has no patience for any argument that attempts to redeem a "reconstruction" view of the Bad Quarto. She insists she has proven that the Bad Quarto is an early draft of a *Hamlet* Shakespeare wrote when he was not older than 25, first performed by 1589, nearly a decade before contemporary conventional wisdom has it.

Bourus's book, *Young Shakespeare's Young Hamlet*, is surprisingly persuasive on the genesis of *Hamlet*, once she gets past an unusually aggressive attack on Stern. At first Bourus builds up her adversary, depicting Stern as some Mephistophelean PowerPoint mesmerist. (Stern apparently has a reputation for dazzling oral presentations with powerful PowerPoint support.) The tribute sours as it turns into a kind of accusation — that Stern uses her PowerPoint skills to cloud the minds of her audience by creating a "sequential prose narrative" that, in Bourus's view, is deceptive.

It is at this point that she begins a harshly worded critique of Stern's methods and conclusions: "rickety," "anachronistic," "discredited," "misrepresentations," and "selective citations." Bourus finally offers 15 steps that she claims would be necessary to make Stern's note-taker thesis

true, thus supposedly disqualifying it on the basis of overcomplexity. But Bourus's argument from too much complexity is not decisive. A true reading of Occam's razor ("Entities ought not to be multiplied beyond necessity") does not — despite frequent misinterpretation — contend that the simplest answer is always the best. But rather that what one wants is the simplest true and necessary answer. Extraordinarily complex explanations are not *prima facie* untrue. Things sometimes happen in very complex ways. And Bourus fails to dislodge the centerpiece of Stern's argument: Thomas Heywood's claim that the practice of illicit audience note-taking was real.

Nonetheless, Bourus's theory of the Bad Quarto merits consideration. She's not the first to argue it was a first draft by a young Shakespeare, but she makes the case with greater granular attention to textual variations than I have seen in the course of decades of writing about *Hamlet* text controversies.

Indeed, I believe it should — and will — create an important debate over the conventional wisdom, particularly in its proposed solution to the longstanding "*ur-Hamlet*" mystery that lies beneath it.

The *ur-Hamlet*? Yes, I know. Let me explain.

If the Bad Quarto is a specter haunting Shakespeare studies, the *ur-Hamlet* ("ur" meaning original, primal source) haunts the Bad Quarto. It is a mystery that confounds attempts to account for the origins of *Hamlet*

and our sense of Shakespeare's evolution as an artist. Even more frustrating, it's been invisible to the eye. Unless, as Bourus argues, it's been hiding in plain sight.

The story goes like this: The play we now know as *Hamlet* had its origins in an Old Norse legend (he is a Dane, recall) that was translated into Latin circa 1200 by a fellow known as Saxo Grammaticus. His hero was called Amleth, or Ambleth, a youth whose father had been murdered by his evil brother Fengo, and who acted mad/played dumb to disguise a plot to revenge his father's death. A version of this story appeared in a collection of "historical" tragedies by François de Belleforest published in 1570 in French.

The years from 1570 to 1603, when the Bad Quarto was published, however, are years of perplexity.

Was there a now-missing play based on the 1570 French Belleforest version, a play that Shakespeare drew upon, adopting and transcending "source plays" as he frequently did? Has this so-called *ur-Hamlet* been lost to history? Was it perhaps a lost play of Thomas Kyd, Shakespeare's more rough-hewn revenge-tragedian predecessor?

Or could it be that the Bad Quarto itself was the missing source play, but in this case one written by Shakespeare himself?

All attempts to answer these questions revolve around enigmatic echoes in obscure theater pamphlets and theatrical account books that speak of a *Hamlet* as early or earlier than 1589. If the echoes refer to a play named *Hamlet* by Shakespeare, it would upend the conventional wisdom

represented in books by James Shapiro and Stephen Greenblatt, who both stick to the consensus that *Hamlet* emerged full blown from Shakespeare's brow between 1597 and 1601, the approximate date of the first record of its public performance.

Most have eschewed linking the echoic *Hamlets* to Shakespeare because it would have meant he'd written a version earlier than, or early in, 1589. He didn't really make a name for himself until 1593's lascivious but astonishingly accomplished poem about female desire, *Venus and Adonis*. Was he or his *Hamlet* familiar enough to arouse contempt in 1589?

That is exactly what Bourus's early draft theory of the Bad Quarto wants us to believe: Shakespeare wrote a *Hamlet* that read much like the Bad Quarto when he was just 25.

Indeed a *Hamlet* play (without Shakespeare's name attached as author) became well known enough to be a subject of ridicule in public pamphlets as early as 1589. That earliest echo appears in a screed by Thomas Nashe, a poet and pamphleteer most famous for his melancholy line "brightness falls from the air." Nashe makes a reference in a derisive joke about the pretensions of a new crew of popular playwrights, snarking at one in particular, a fellow he calls "English Seneca" who, "if you entreat him fair on a frosty morn, he will afford you whole Hamlets, I should say handfuls of tragical speeches."

The second echo of the *ur-Hamlet* appears in 1594 when Philip Henslowe, a theatrical bookkeeper, records the ticket sales of a play named *Hamlet* by the Lord Chamberlain's Men, Shakespeare's acting company ("3 June 1594—seven shillings").

The third echo comes in 1595 from Thomas Lodge, one of the so-called university wits, a group critical of the newly popular playwrights they thought were panders to vulgar public taste. Lodge describes seeing a play in which an actor looks "as pale as the vizard [face] of a ghost who cried so miserably at the Theater like an oyster wife, 'Hamlet, revenge!'"

Yes, it's true there is an objection to the Lodge quote from those like Stern who pointed out to me in an email that the words "Hamlet, Revenge" do not appear in the Bad Quarto. But as Bourus countered in an email to me in response to that argument:

"For the exact same reason we misquote movies [No 'Play it again Sam,' exactly, in Casablanca], Lodge's memory could easily have compressed the onstage action of "Ghost: (Speaking to Hamlet:) Revenge! Into Lodge's memory of "Hamlet, revenge!"

Point for Bourus here.

But still we don't have the play referred to by these three echoes.

Or do we? Bourus believes she can prove that all three echoic references to a supposedly lost *Hamlet* or non-Shakespearean *Hamlet* are actually references to the Bad Quarto.

The core of Bourus's argument — or the section most persuasive to me — can be found on just six pages of her book. In those pages she claims she's proved that Hamlet is closer to 20 years old or less in the Bad Quarto version.

That's important because the question of Hamlet's age is an enigma. He's given the age of 30 explicitly in the later versions of the play, which has always seemed a mismatch to some aspects of his character. In the Bad Quarto one could say the studentish, impulsive romantic and political naïf character is more impetuously ready to leap to vengeance than is the stoic, even Chekhovian figure of contemplation and melancholy soliloquizing he becomes as the 30-year-old in the later versions.

What I found most convincing was a list Bourus offers of references to Hamlet as "young" and "youthful" in the Bad Quarto that she says far outnumber such references in the Good Quarto and the Folio edition we're familiar with. The consistency of youthful Hamlet instances, she argues, cannot be a result of accidental correlation, mere memory lapse or note-taking quirks.

For instance, the death of the jester, Yorick, in the Bad Quarto is not "three and twenty" years before Hamlet's graveyard scene with his skull — as in the two later versions. But rather the jester is "a dozen years" dead in the Bad Quarto. A conspicuous difference. In other words, if a 30-year-old Hamlet were playing childish games with Yorick a dozen years ago when Hamlet was age 18, it would be weird. So even if Hamlet's age is not explicitly enumerated in the Bad Quarto, he's got to be at least a decade

younger than the 30 years attributed to him in the later versions. If he were twentyish, as Bourus argues, then the childish jester antics a dozen years before would seem more age appropriate.

Stern, who indicated to me that she had not read Bourus's book, dismissed as *outré* the idea that Shakespeare wrote the *ur-Hamlet*, and disputed several of Bourus's citations of Hamlet's supposed youth in the Bad Quarto. She even directed me to a website of the three texts where you can count the use of words such as "young" and "youth," in the three plays, a count that supported what she believed to be a refutation of Bourus's "youth" word count.

Bourus countered by saying it was "presumptuous" of Stern to think she was unaware of that website. The tension between the two of them is quite evident.

Nonetheless, the more I studied both positions, the more it occurred to me there might be a way to find common ground. What if, I emailed both of them, the Bad Quarto was a "noted text" (Stern) made up of audience notes of a performance of an early draft (Bourus) of Hamlet?

Neither one liked it but neither one ruled it out.

Stern told me that while in principle she's prepared to believe that Q1 is a noted performance of an early draft, when she actually looks at the text, nothing seems to back that idea. Bourus also said she was, in effect, "prepared to believe" my resolution.

I found myself wondering if, in fact, there might be an answer to the mystery of the Bad Quarto. And maybe I had stumbled upon it.

Bourus offers what for me is a common-sense explanation for the possibility that there were, in fact, early and later versions of *Hamlet*. It has to do with the age of the principal actor in the company Shakespeare joined, Richard Burbage, who was famous for having played Hamlet. Here, from one of the many eulogies for Burbage (born in 1568, died in 1619), is a description of him playing Hamlet:

"Oft I have seen him leap into a grave Suiting the person, which he seemed to have, Of a sad lover, with so true an eye That there (I would have sworn) he meant to die."

This is particularly significant, initiates into the Bad Quarto mysteries have noted, because only in the Bad Quarto is there a stage direction that specifically calls for Hamlet to "leap into the grave" of Ophelia in order to fight Ophelia's brother Laertes over his right to mourn her death.

This doesn't mean that Hamlet must leap into the grave in every performance, but it does mean, very likely anyway, that it was a signature of Burbage. If we believe Bourus's "early draft" theory of the Bad Quarto, Burbage would have first been leaping into the stage grave as early as 1588 or 1589, when he would have been 20 years old or less, and thus playing the younger Hamlet Bourus feels is represented in the Bad Quarto. He might still be leaping into the grave in 1600 or so when he was 32 and the later (allegedly rewritten) version of *Hamlet* began playing on the stage.

But it doesn't seem an accident that the stage direction "leaps into the grave" is gone from the later versions, the ones that also insert the fact that Hamlet was 30 years old — "fat and scant of breath," as his mother uncharitably calls him in the duel scene. So Bourus's theory is that Shakespeare rewrote *Hamlet* for an older, heavier Burbage since Burbage was still playing the role, contemporary evidence shows, after 1600. He wrote it not just for his additional weight but for the additional weightiness of an older Hamlet's thought-world, the introspection for which "Hamlet-like" became famous.

Stern conceded that the insertion of a specific age (30) for Hamlet in the later familiar versions, a detail absent from the Bad Quarto, remains a puzzle.

But Hamlet is different in more than physicality; he's metaphysically different as well. The later Hamlet is, to sum it up crudely, more meta. He thinks about thinking. It is not the birth of consciousness, as Harold Bloom suggests, but it may be a landmark in the evolution of self-consciousness. (To thine own selfie be true.)

Bourus's case, radical as it might seem at first, has obtained some measure of respect and credibility from the heart of the Shakespeare scholar establishment. I consulted Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, who edited the authoritative 2006 Arden edition, which included the Bad Quarto. They had conceded there was still a mystery about the identity and nature of the Bad Quarto, although back then they somewhat disparaged the early draft theory by saying "few" believed it any more.

Speaking for both of them, Taylor wrote in an email that they are both still "agnostic" on the Bad Quarto but that there has been a shift in their views. After initial skepticism, Taylor said both he and Thompson agreed that Bourus "amasses masses of well-researched evidence, and her challenges to other theories are often hard to rebut." He adds judiciously that Stern has not so far chosen to respond in print, in detail, to Bourus, and thus the case is certainly not closed. Stern gave me no indication that she is planning to respond. She doesn't want to encourage the "haters," she said.

The inability to resolve the Bad Quarto question mirrors the inability to resolve the larger Hamlet question. Who is he? Why this duality to his character? Who's there? Is he of two minds, or is he of two texts? The play often strikes one as a double-exposed photograph, the Bad Quarto and the later versions superimposed, and every line of dialogue, every character, can be taken two ways.

The great British critic Frank Kermode once drew my attention to an essay by George T. Wright that argued this duality was reflected in the profuse use of the classical rhetorical figure of speech called "hendiadys" in *Hamlet*. Hendiadys as in "the book and volume of my brain," or "the abstract and brief chronicle of our time," and "a fantasy and trick of fame." Hendiadys is used no fewer than 60 times in *Hamlet*, far more than in any other Shakespeare play. I'd suggested to Bourus that the import of the Bad Quarto controversy is to stress the inability to find a unified field theory of the two Hamlets, the Bad Quarto punk version and the later, more Chekhovian figure.

She replied with what seemed like a well-thought-out elaboration:

"Human beings are not perfectly organized entities. ... Don't all of us, as we get older, contain fossils of our earlier selves? Don't the old us and the new us, or the present us and the past us, cohabit? Sometimes our past selves just erupt into the present. So maybe Hamlet has become such an iconic figure precisely because of the instability created by the overlapping textual strata."

We all are shadowed by Bad Quartos of ourselves.

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