



Female Subjectivity in *Gertrude Talks Back* and 'Gertrude to Hamlet'

The revisionist rewriting of Shakespearean figures cultivate diversity within literary representations, enabling writers to give voice to marginalised characters. David Lucking claims, 'these alternative stories are not inherently implausible or devoid of their own kind of credibility',¹ as they provide alternative genealogical explorations of minor Shakespearean figures and new speculative insights that challenge canonical portrayals of these characters. In Shakespeare's 1604-5 text of *Hamlet* (Q2),² Gertrude is delimited within a patriarchal culture that considers her weak and lascivious, whilst Ophelia is demarcated as mad and subservient. Margaret Atwood's *Gertrude Talks Back*³ is a modern rewriting of Gertrude in 3.4, investigating female sexuality, agency and motherhood. Atwood posits Gertrude's subjectivity at the forefront of her narrative. Similarly, Lee Upton's 'Gertrude to Hamlet'⁴ examines Gertrude's biological and emotional experiences, emphasising her self-consciousness. The artistic tension between the three texts complicates the representation of Gertrude, creating discrepancies to expose nuances of her character. Thus, these two texts will present cross-referential links to Q2 (unless stated otherwise) *Hamlet*. This essay will show how through a subversive reinscription of femininity, Atwood and Upton challenge Early Modern gender roles in order to depict Gertrude as autonomous, but also confined to her roles.

The fluidity of Gertrude's gender identities, from mother to wife and queen, is complex. Inherent in motherhood is the dependency of a child, forging permanent

¹ David Lucking, 'Hamlet and the Narrative Construction of Reality', *English Studies* 89:2 (2008), 152-165, (p. 157).

² William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, eds. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2006)

³ Margaret Atwood, 'Gertrude Talks Back' in *Good Bones and Simple Murders* (New York: Nan A. Talese, 1994), 16-19.

⁴ Lee Upton, 'Gertrude to Hamlet', *The Iowa Review* 25:3 (1995), p. 79.

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biological ties. Consequently, Gertrude's non-biological gender roles of wife and queen are more flexible. The flexibility of these roles are in contention with the rigid fixity of motherhood; Gertrude's maternal identity inhibits the liberation of her other gender roles, consequently it is diminished in all three texts to assert her independence.

Hamlet's construction of womanhood, 'Frailty, thy name is Woman' (1.2.146), inscribes a patriarchal and misogynistic attitude of femininity. However, Atwood's reimagining of Gertrude exploits 'discourses of infraction'⁵ to undermine Hamlet and reconstruct female subjectivity. Michel Foucault suggests 'discourses of infraction' ridicule codes of decorum to valorise and intensify indecent speech.⁶ Atwood's Gertrude refutes Hamlet's representation of women through her verbal playfulness and comic inflections: The rank sweat of *what?* My bed is certainly not *enseamed*, whatever that might be! A nasty sty, indeed! Not that it's any of your business, but I change those sheets twice a week, which is more than you do, judging from that student slum pigpen in Wittenberg (16). Gertrude infracts Hamlet's discourse by undercutting his accusation in 3.4.89-92 with humour to reclaim her subjectivity. Gertrude's modern idiom juxtaposes Hamlet's Shakespearean language, indicating the convergence of two temporal dimensions, in which the modern idiom takes precedence by debunking the authority of Hamlet's discourse: 'My bed is certainly not *enseamed*, whatever that might be'. Gertrude's linguistic forms are valorised to develop a feminine idiom that reconstitutes female subjectivity. By subverting the usage of 'nasty sty' to implicate Hamlet in 'corruption' (3.4.91) rather than herself, Gertrude negates Hamlet's accusations concerning incest. Hamlet's 'slum pigpen' habitation postulates a biological transmission of corruption, reinforced by John Dover Wilson's assertion: 'Hamlet felt himself involved in his mother's lust; he was conscious of sharing her nature in all its rankness and grossness; the stock from which he sprang was rotten.'⁷ Atwood reforms

⁵ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Volume 1(1976), trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, 1978), p. 18.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ John Dover Wilson, *What happens in Hamlet* (Cambridge: CUP, 1951), p. 42



Christian theology, exploring the possibility of a hereditary sin that encompasses Hamlet within his mother's immorality to decentre Hamlet's autonomy. Furthermore, the comic inflections such as, 'not that it's any of your business', disrupt the severity of Hamlet's accusations, perforating the intensity of the scene. Atwood's manoeuvring within discourses of infraction enables Gertrude's subjectivity to challenge Hamlet's construction of her through sharp witticism; she is reconfigured as self-governing, rather than fragile.

Upton's expands Atwood's revision of femininity in 'Gertrude to Hamlet' by utilising what Foucault calls a codified 'rhetoric of allusion and metaphor'⁸ to develop a sensory narration of Gertrude's subjectivity. The oddity of Upton's metaphors makes them difficult to decipher, however her artistic style appears to imitate Hamlet's use of metaphor in 3.4. For instance, 'Such an act/ That...takes off the rose/From the fair forehead of an innocent love/And sets a blister there' (3.4.38-42) is a metaphor communicating pure and innocent being tainted by Gertrude's remarriage. This metaphor is paralleled with Upton's metaphors: 'Inside the turned liver' and 'a blooming peony' (79). If, considering the detoxification function of the liver and the etymology of peony, deriving from the physician of the gods, alongside the perceived medicinal properties of a peony,⁹ Upton's focuses on Gertrude's healing by illuminating human anatomy and physiology. It is deducible that Upton's poem has a similar concern like *Hamlet* with Gertrude's body and fragmented identity. Hamlet's speeches in 3.4 are pervaded with sensory imagery: 'Look here upon this picture...See what a grace was seated on this brow...An eye like Mars...Have you eyes...What devil was't/that thus hath cozened you at hoodman-blind?/Eyes without feeling, feeling without sight' (3.4.51-76).

⁸Foucault, p. 17.

⁹ "peony, n. and adj.". *OED Online*. Oxford UP, March 2015
 <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/140403?redirectedFrom=peony>> (accessed 24/04/15).

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Hamlet's focus on vision suggests a concern with Gertrude's perceptivity and discernment. Hamlet's rhetoric of allusion draws upon different perspectives of sight to stress Gertrude's blindness. However, Upton's engagement with perceptivity is more codified, relaying Gertrude's 'purse of tears' and 'tears in bursting waves' that emphasise her emotions. Gertrude's vision is obscured by tears, which signifies her grief concerning Old Hamlet's death and suggests she is confined with her role as his wife and widow, unable to escape her sorrow. Upton enables Gertrude to convey her own perceptivity which illustrates her restriction within her gender roles but also foregrounds her subjectivity, whilst upholding Shakespeare's rhetoric of allusion.

In *Hamlet*, Gertrude's autonomy is most distinct in her narration of Ophelia's death. Gertrude's narrative is significantly aestheticized, for example, 'weedy trophies', 'mermaid-like', 'like a creature native and endued' and 'garments, heavy with their drink/Pulled the poor wretch from her melodious lay/To muddy death'(4.7.172-181), which conceptualises Ophelia's drowning as tragic and Otherly. R.D. Laing suggests in Ophelia's madness 'there is no integral selfhood expressed through her actions'.¹⁰ This argument is elucidated by Gertrude who supplants Ophelia's selfhood for creaturely alterity such as 'mermaid-like', diminishing Ophelia's agency. The 'garments, heavy with their drink' pacifies the horror of Ophelia's drowning, defamiliarising death and creating an alternative narrative of death. Gertrude depicts a visual biography of Ophelia's drowning using 'word-enactment',¹¹ termed by Stephen Ratcliffe, which illuminates Ophelia's passivity and Gertrude's agency. Words are substituted for action, alleged suicide is substituted for 'muddy death', suggestive of a deliberate concealment. It can be argued that Gertrude elides parts of her narrative to obscure the reality of the event, emphasising her autonomy and Ophelia's inaction. Ratcliffe argues, 'Gertrude's speech expands the theatrical dimensions of *Hamlet* by moving centrifugally outward, away

¹⁰ R. D. Laing, *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness* (London: Penguin, 1990), p.195.

¹¹ Stephen Ratcliffe, "What Doesn't Happen in *Hamlet*: The Queen's Speech." *Exemplaria* 10:1 (1998), 123-144 (p.129).



from the physical action being performed on stage toward action that is not performed except in words.¹² The death occurring offstage refracts conventional theatrical dimensions as Ophelia is unable to enact her own death. Therefore, Gertrude does it for her, stripping Ophelia of agency and illustrating her passivity even in possible suicide. Ophelia's actions performed in Gertrude's words, however, does enable her death to be framed within non-patriarchal and feminised language, which provokes creative exploration in Atwood's depiction of Gertrude's subjectivity.

Atwood examines and develops the complexity of female subjectivity that *Hamlet* negotiates through Gertrude's description of Ophelia's death. Ann Thompson argues, 'there is more to feminism than a simple championing of female characters'¹³ which Atwood demonstrates in Gertrude's subordination of Ophelia: 'A real girlfriend would do you a heap of good. Not like that pasty-faced what's-her-name... If you ask me, there's something of about that girl. Borderline. Any little shock could push her right over the edge.' Gertrude divests Ophelia of her name and identity; her usage of 'real' also marginalises Ophelia's personhood. Atwood's portrayal of Gertrude's sentiments towards Ophelia is opposed to Gertrude in *Hamlet*. At Ophelia's funeral Gertrude says, 'I hoped thou shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife' (5.1.232). Shakespeare's Gertrude professes a fondness for Ophelia to become her daughter-in-law. This conveys a positive kinship between the two women. However, Atwood's retrospective insight allows her to reconfigure this relationship, subjugating Ophelia because of her '[b]orderline' behaviour that induces emotional instability. Gertrude is still delimited within her motherhood, protecting Hamlet from a potential unstable relationship to the detriment of 'championing' Ophelia. *Gertrude Talks Back* reveals how foregrounding female

¹² Ibid., p.124.

¹³ Ann Thompson, 'Hamlet: Looking Before and After: why so many Prequels and Sequels?' eds. Sarah Brown, Robert I. Lublin and Lynsey McCulloch (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013): 17-31 (p. 19) <<http://www.myilibrary.com?ID=495589>> (accessed 29/04/15).

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subjectivity does not necessarily constitute inclusive feminism, challenging homogenous perceptions of femininity.

The representational disparity between the different texts of *Hamlet* also offers nuanced understandings of Gertrude. The variance between Q1 and Q2's portrayal of motherhood in 3.4 creates a semblance of contradiction, nonetheless, both affirm the decline of maternity. In Q2, Gertrude is delimited within patriarchal subjectivity: 'You are the Queen your husband's brother's wife,/And, would it not so you are my mother' (3.4.14-15). Hamlet defines Gertrude within her political role, 'the Queen' and her social role, 'husband's brother's wife', which alludes to incest. Hamlet's resistance of Gertrude's female identity as his mother is indicative of a decisive distancing from Gertrude: 'mother' appears at the end of the sentence suggesting it is peripheral. Denying Gertrude her maternal identity is an inverted dispossession which replicates Hamlet's dispossession of the throne. Gertrude's fissured familial identity emphasises the fragility of women, particularly establishing motherhood as fragmented. Yet in Q1, the omission of the 'Have you forgot me?' adjacency pair underscores an awareness of Gertrude's maternal identity. However Gertrude's maternity is rejected by the end of the scene: 'But then he throws and tosses me about/As one forgetting that I was his mother' (Q1, 11.108-109). This indication of physical violence exclusive to Q1, though it may be an exaggeration¹⁴, accentuates Gertrude's fragility. But most significantly it delineates Hamlet's abusive behaviour towards his mother, conveying a rejection of filial affection and affirming the deterioration of mother-son relations and thereby motherhood.

This collapse of motherhood engenders the promotion of wifedom in *Hamlet*, which empowers Gertrude's agency. Shakespeare depicts flexibility in Gertrude's role as wife, enabling her to actively defy gender expectation. When Claudius exclaims, 'Let him go, Gertrude, do not fear our person...Let him go, Gertrude' (4.5.122-126), the reiteration suggests Gertrude does not obey him the first time, signifying defiance but

¹⁴ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet (The First Quarto; 1603)*, eds. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2007), 11.108-109.



also a physical strength to protect her husband from Laertes's wrath. This defiance is climaxed in Gertrude's death scene. Claudius tells Gertrude 'do not drink'; but she defies him and says 'I will, my lord. I pray you pardon me' (5.2.273-274). Gertrude is aware of her transgression, asking for forgiveness, yet still disobeying Claudius. This is an individualised choice that presents Gertrude as a 'self-sacrificing mother';¹⁵ drinking the poisoned cup, whether she is aware of it or not, sustains Hamlet's existence. The monosyllabic utterance, 'I will, my lord', parallels the stress patterning of Gertrude's final utterance in *Gertrude Talks Back*: 'It was me' (18). Gertrude's confession deviates from Q1 Gertrude's denial of guilt, overturning Q1 Gertrude's innocence. Atwood, like Shakespeare, presents the defiance of gender expectation in wifehood. Gertrude transgresses gender expectations by murdering her husband, thereby rupturing the marital union, which is more easily dissolvable than motherhood. These acts of defiance uncover Gertrude's autonomy, foregrounding her liberation from prescriptive early modern gender roles.

In contrast, Upton's Gertrude is fixed within her marital identity, though she still undermines gender ideology concerning female sexuality. Upton's Gertrude declares: '[w]ould you divide/the anatomical destinies of a twinned/heart? I have no business/that is not a functioning/mystery to you' (79). The twinned heart metaphor is a recreation of 'O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain' (3.4.154). This recreation revises Gertrude's subjectivity concerning widowhood and love, yet denies her autonomy like Ophelia in *Hamlet*. The quotation from *Hamlet* describes Gertrude's broken heart, yet Upton's twinned heart metaphor subverts the usage of 'twain', reformulating Gertrude's love for Claudius as connected by destiny, thereby delineating her within an inflexible role as wife. David Leverenz, in negation, posits that 'Gertrude's inconstancy not only

¹⁵ Kehler, p. 162.

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brings on disgust and incestuous feelings, it is also the sign of diseased doubleness'.¹⁶ Leverenz evidently assumes Hamlet's interest, as describing Gertrude's 'inconstancy' delimits her within widowhood. Upton rejects Leverenz's 'diseased doubleness' assertion, but instead reworks doubleness by framing Gertrude as being twinned to Claudius by fate, beyond her control, which authorises her sexuality but rejects her free will. Though Upton still preserves the centrality of Gertrude's body; her incessant focus on Gertrude's anatomy conveys a sustained engagement with Gertrude's sexual body but also her internal bodily structures including her emotional consciousness, which forefronts Gertrude's subjectivity. By subverting patriarchal language, Upton formulates a feminine language that illustrates Gertrude's independence, as well as her confinement.

Thompson notes the transposition from patriarchal subjectivity to tolerant attitudes towards femininity during the early modern period: 'instead of seeing the female body as a lesser (inverted) version of the male body, people began to see it as its incommensurable opposite',¹⁷ highlighting the shift from an inferior female body to an incomparable antithesis of the male body. Shakespeare shows an awareness of this cultural reorientation through his representation of female sexuality. Ophelia embodies the litany of female silence and lack; her sexuality is heteronomous, as it is manipulated by Polonius and Hamlet. Polonius states, 'I'll loose my daughter to [Hamlet]'(2.2.159), removing Ophelia's agency and transferring the control of his daughter's sexual body to himself. Polonius's capability to 'loose' Ophelia conveys his paternal authority regarding Ophelia's sexuality, establishing gender hierarchy. Furthermore, Hamlet tells Ophelia: 'If thou dost marry, I'll give thee this plague for/thy downry: be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow...Get thee to a nunnery...To a nunnery go, quickly too (3.1.134-139). Hamlet endeavours to regulate Ophelia's sexuality and as well as her reproductivity by

¹⁶ David Leverenz, 'The Woman in Hamlet: An Interpersonal View', *Signs* 4:2 (1978), 291-308 (p. 293) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3173027> Accessed (accessed 20/04/15).

¹⁷ Ann Thompson 'Shakespeare and sexuality' in *Shakespeare and Sexuality*, eds. Catherine M. S. Alexander and Stanley Wells (Cambridge: CUP, 2001), 1-13, (p.2).



insistently instructing her to get to a nunnery where she can remain chaste, reinforcing early modern gender order. The imposition of celibacy denies Ophelia's sexuality and exclusively promotes virginal womanhood. Although John Dover Wilson observes '[t]he repeated injunction "to a nunnery go" is significant in this connection, since "nunnery" was in common Elizabethan use a cant term for a house of ill-fame.'¹⁸ If Hamlet implies the vulgar usage of 'nunnery', he exploits ambiguity and irony to emphasise his construction of womanhood as lusty and inconstant, asserting patriarchal gender ideology.

While Ophelia symbolises the 'lesser' female body, Gertrude represents the 'incommensurable opposite' of the male body through the power of her sexual body. Hamlet describes Gertrude as a 'most pernicious woman' (1.5.105); the denotation of 'pernicious' is '[o]f a disease: extremely severe or harmful, life-threatening, fatal',¹⁹ connoting Gertrude is diseased by her dangerous and evil behaviour. Though Gertrude's remarriage encapsulates her within patriarchal lexicon, she demonstrates an agency that dispossesses Hamlet and a sexuality that occupies and transcends the lusty widow stereotype. Considering the gender role of widows, Dorothea Kehler notes, '[r]eal-life widows were largely an economic category, their actions more apt to be determined by materialist than theological considerations.'²⁰ Kehler illuminates the actuality of Gertrude's situation wherein widowhood does not only constitute a new gender or social role, but also poses an economic vantage that trumps religious conflicts. Gertrude exhibits independence by controlling her economic and political position. Hastily marrying Claudius allows Gertrude to satisfy her sexual appetite whilst maintaining the

¹⁸ Dover Wilson, p.134.

¹⁹ "pernicious, adj.1." OED Online. Oxford UP, March 2015.
 <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/141266?rsk=DLEhNw&result=1>> (accessed 24/04/15).

²⁰ Dorothea Kehler, *Shakespeare's Widow* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p.10.

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monarchy. Gertrude embodies a somewhat liberated heroine empowered through her body, disrupting early modern gender ideology despite being limited within her roles.

Likewise, *Gertrude Talks Back* expresses an overt engagement with the liberation of the female body by accentuating Gertrude's sexuality. Atwood's Gertrude disrupts sexual hierarchy by displacing traditional gender order to liberate female sexuality: 'And let me tell you, everyone sweats at a time like that, as you'd find out if you ever gave it a try. A real girlfriend would do you a heap of good...Have a nice roll in the hay' (17). Gertrude's encouragement of Hamlet's sexual activity, 'Have a nice roll in the hay' subverts conducts of propriety and diminishes the sanctity of marital sex, undermining conventional gender expectation. This indecent speech reveals Gertrude's sexual activity, but most importantly exposes Hamlet's sexual abstention, 'you'd find out if you ever gave it a try', destabilising gender ideology of female chastity and male promiscuity. Gertrude rejects the idealism of martial sexuality, which characterised the seventeenth century²¹. Instead, she promotes premarital sexuality and extra-marital sexuality, developing *Hamlet's* 'most pernicious woman' reference into a concretised display of bold female sexuality that is in opposition to Hamlet's lesser sexual body. Therefore, Atwood's inversion of sexual hierarchy deprioritises the regulation of the female body, eluding gender order to empower Gertrude's sexuality.

The inconstancy associated with Gertrude's sexual body is inextricably linked to the maternal body. According to Ben Michaelis, '[t]he paternal identity, without maternal body, is meaningless as it is limited to the corporeal durability of the father'.²² Michaelis explicates the connectivity between the paternal identity and maternal body: the paternal identity is dependent on the maternal body to meaningfully exist. When Gertrude tells Hamlet to '[s]eek for thy noble father in the dust' (1.2.79), she disembodies Old Hamlet, highlighting his mortality and rejecting his corporeal durability

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ben Michaelis, 'Gertrude in the Garden: Gender and Memory in *Hamlet*' (2013), p.5 <http://www.academia.edu/295895/Gertrude_in_the_Garden_Gender_and_Memory_in_Hamlet> (accessed 27/04/15)



within her. However, Upton reworks this disembodiment to emphasise Gertrude's subjectivity: 'Dust, ash, or nothingness, /what tears in/bursting waves, ill-tempered stresses.' The metre is punctured by caesuras which create pauses to stress Old Hamlet's incorporeal descent. The enjambment syntactically demonstrates fluidity and figuratively mimics Gertrude's overflowing tears. Upton explores Gertrude's emotive sensations, which memorialises Old Hamlet in her tears, rather than limiting him within his own corporeal durability like Shakespeare's Gertrude. Thus, to negate Gertrude from destroying the paternal identity, the Ghost in Q1 exhibits a preoccupation with Gertrude's sexual body: '*Enter the GHOST in his night gown*' (Q1, 11). The sartorial choice is suggestive of the Ghost trying to reclaim the maternal body and assert sexual potency. The night gown functions as a visual and spatial signifier, representing the Ghost's preparations to sleep in Gertrude's bed to regulate her body. Kehler argues for 'Hamlet and the Ghost, Gertrude never becomes Claudius's wife but instead remains a shameful remarried widow'.²³ This is evocative of 'husband's brother's wife' which underscores incest and ascribes Gertrude's maternal body to widowhood, inhibiting Gertrude's gender role as Claudius's wife.

Gertrude is the '[t]h'imperial jointress' (1.2.9), possessing political and familial power that constitutes her agency. Yet Gertrude's political role as Queen is overshadowed by the salience of familial power in the maternal body. Michaelis's claims Hamlet's 'true goal seems to be to re-establish the legitimacy of his own paternity that has been challenged by his mother's remarriage'.²⁴ Consequently, Hamlet's identification of Claudius as his 'mother' complicates the significance of the maternal body in re-establishing his paternity. In Q2, Hamlet asserts, 'My mother. Father and mother is man and wife./Man and wife is one flesh. So – my mother'(4.3.49-50), utilising elusive

²³ Kehler, p.5.

²⁴ Michaelis, p. 1.

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taxonomy to detach Claudius from Gertrude's maternal body. Hamlet's declaration that 'Father and mother is man and wife' does not necessarily refer to Claudius as father, but rather Old Hamlet, his biological father. Old Hamlet and Gertrude being one flesh enables Hamlet to reclaim his paternity, displacing Claudius's role as father. However Q1 exploits pronouns which explicitly indicate Claudius's attachment to Gertrude's maternal body: 'My mother, I say. You married my mother,/My mother is your wife, man and wife is one flesh/- And so, my mother!' (Q1 11.156-158). The use of personal pronouns, 'you' and 'my', unequivocally link Claudius's marriage to Gertrude as a union in which being of one flesh constitutes being of one identity. Therefore, Q1 Gertrude's maternal body is fused with Claudius's identity to redefine the capacity of the maternal figure.

Upton's poem develops Q1's representation of the maternal form. Gertrude's body allows her to establish selfhood:

Say what you please I am
up to my hands
in a split creature.

Which makes my body my own.
I live in it,
I gather my own into it.

Otherwise, who would you be,
Beginning to be?
You wander my throne like measles (79)

In the first stanza, Gertrude challenges Hamlet's construction of her by displaying indifference; Gertrude's fragmented speech reaffirms her twinned heart that creates 'a split creature', fissuring her maternal body and identity. The second stanza enables Gertrude to claim ownership over her body and 'gather [her] own into it', which can be interpreted as referring to both Claudius and Hamlet. Gertrude, thus, implies she is able to encompass both Claudius and Hamlet within her maternal body, subverting the capacity of the maternal receptacle. In the last stanza Gertrude undermines Hamlet's identity, acknowledging without her he could not exist. The maternal body, despite its biological ties can somewhat assert itself independent of its gender role, severing the rigidity of early modern maternity that enables Gertrude's autonomy to thrive.



The incongruities between the different representations of Gertrude's subjectivity develop a nuanced literary archaeology of her character. By destabilising early modern gender expectations, both Atwood and Upton reconstruct the fluidity between Gertrude's identities, empowering Gertrude's subjectivity. Yet Gertrude, like Ophelia, is not emancipated from all the limitations of her gender roles. Instead, both texts enact subversion in Gertrude's limitations to show the complexity of female subjectivity. Atwood reworks Gertrude's agency, portraying an autonomous and witty character who subverts gender ideology. The emphasis on Gertrude's emotional and anatomical awareness in Upton's poem underscores Gertrude's perceptions. Reforming Gertrude's subjectivity enables both writers to transform literary fragments into narratives of literary exploration. Gertrude's opposing gender identities facilitate the creative exploration of her character, wherein Atwood and Upton rework and accentuate *Hamlet's* concern with women's nature to present a subversive reinscription of female autonomy.

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