

**Dialogism and Subversion in Margaret Atwood's "Gertrude Talks Back":
A Bakhtinian Reading of Intertextual Resistance**



Humaira Aslam

Associate Professor, Department of English and Applied Linguistics,
University of Peshawar humairaaslam300@gmail.com

Abstract: Margaret Atwood's short story "Gertrude Talks Back," which appeared in her 1992 collection *Good Bones and Simple Murders*, is a radical feminist reconstruction of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and, through intertextual resistance, essentially shatters the original text's patriarchal assumptions. This study provides a complete Bakhtinian two-way analysis of Atwood's narrative techniques demonstrating how her incorporation of King's Wife Gertrude's voice intersects with Bakhtin's concepts of dialogism and heteroglossia. In this paper, Joana has positioned Atwood's text in dialogue with Shakespeare's text to exemplify the intertwining processes of feminist literature and revisionist literature responding to dominant narratives. The analysis shows the use of irony, parody, polyphonic narration within the work to dismantle the gendered silences of *Hamlet* for the reclaiming of Gertrude's voice, and in so doing construct her as a sovereign agent not merely a shadowed side character. Within dedicated chapters of "Gertrude Talks Back", Atwood and Bakhtin: Semiotics and the Unfinalized Novel", "Unfinalized Novel' and 'Intertextual Studies': A Division of Power," and "Dislocated Feminism: Atwood and The Self-Exiled Inside", this research builds a framework around Atwood's short story exploring feminist Bakhtinian Intertextuality. It argues that a woman's story becomes her own when placed within a network of other women's stories. Close textual analysis combined with theoretical synthesis allows establishing Atwood's place within contemporary feminist discourse while advancing Bakhtinian approaches to intertextuality.

Keywords: Dialogism, Subversion, Intertextuality, Bakhtin, Atwood, Gertrude, Feminism, Carnavalesque, Heteroglossia

Introduction

Historical and Literary Context

During the last decades of the twentieth century, there was a surge in feminist revisions of literature aimed at countering the patriarchal structures which dominated and permeated the 'Western Classic' Literature. To quote as Gilbert and Gubar remarked in their work *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), women writers have been in conversation, albeit in silence and in a perverse manner, with texts written by men, either by usufruct or by dissent (73). Margaret Atwood With "Gertrude Talks Back," participates in this discourse by giving an

explicit rebuttal to *Hamlet* through the voice of the sidelined Queen Gertrude. Atwood's interpretation of Gertrude, unlike the Shakespearean version, who is rendered as a blend of torpid, shallow and morally ambiguous, gives enduring and pointed self-conscious commentary on the play's gendered myopia. This alteration is also what Linda Hutcheon calls 'historiographic metafiction' where modern authors rewrite either history or literature to unveil its hidden socio-political fabric (105).

Atwood's works display a continual engagement with feminist reinterpretations of foundational texts, ranging from *The Penelopiad*, which reframes Homer's *Odyssey*, to the dystopian

twist on Puritan tales in *The Handmaid's Tale*. Howells indicates, "Atwood's intertextual engagements are never merely playful; they are polemical interventions that unmask the power structures embedded in canonical storytelling" (Howells 92). "Gertrude Talks Back" illustrates such an approach as she shifts Gertrude's role from a silent phantom in *Hamlet* to a vociferous critic of Shakespeare's patriarchal tragedy.

Theoretical Framework: Bakhtin and Feminist Intertextuality

Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogism provides a framework for examining Atwood's narrative techniques. In *The Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin posits that every utterance has a history and anticipates a future within the framework of preceding and succeeding dialogues: "The word in language is half someone else's... it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts" (Bakhtin 293). This idea of intertextuality is strikingly illustrated in Atwood's story by Gertrude's monologue contending Hamlet's monologic construction of her persona.

The concept of heteroglossia, which Bakhtin defined as the co-existence of several, frequently opposing, differing ways of speaking within a single text, sheds more light on Atwood's method. While in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* the discourse is dominated by introspective soliloquies of Hamlet, in Atwood's text, Gertrude's voice is added as the other competing ideological system. This results, as Bakhtin puts it, 'a plurality of independent and unmerged voices' which counters textual tyranny (315). Also, Bakhtin's theory of the carnivalesque explained in *Rabelais and His World* provides insight into how, in her grotesque realistic and humorous manner, Atwood temporarily tilts the power structure of *Hamlet* in her favor. The carnivalesque describes a condition in which subordinate characters may, for a time, upend orders of precedence. This is the case, for example, when Gertrude twits Hamlet, saying, "You think you're unhappy?" (Atwood 17).

Feminist scholars have successfully utilized Bakhtin's techniques to critique women's literature. As one example, Julia Kristeva's

theory of intertextuality explains how women writers participate in "a mosaic of quotations" as a means of dismantling patriarchal literary traditions (66). Also, through the use of the carnivalesque in feminist literature, Mary Russo illustrates how subordinated cultures take advantage of Bakhtinian subversion to reclaim narrative power (213). The updating of these concepts provides the angles from which I examine Atwood's work.

Research Objectives and Methodology

This study has three main goals: first, examining "Gertrude Talks Back" for its enactment of Bakhtinian dialogism in intertextual relation with *Hamlet*; second, analyzing Atwood's narrative techniques- irony, parody, and polyphony- in feminist subversive context; third, framing Atwood's story within feminist literary revisionism.

In this case, the methodology is defined as the close textual analysis of Atwood's story and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, looking for moments of dialogic overlap. Bakhtin's texts (*The Dialogic Imagination*, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, *Rabelais and His World*) are the main framework for this paper, anchored in feminist literary theory (Gilbert and Gubar, Hutcheon, Showalter) and supplemented with other feminist works. Other revisionist texts, Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* or Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*, are comparably analyzed to move Atwood's work into a broader context.

Literature Review

Dialogism and Intertextuality: Bakhtin's Legacy

The initial concepts of Bakhtin's dialogism stem from his critique of monologic discourses, which he attributes to authoritarian ideological regimes. In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin contrasts Dostoevsky's polyphonic novels—character voices bear independence from the author's dominion— with Tolstoy's monologic narratives where diverse inputs coalesce into a singular vision subordinated to one dominating voice (Bakhtin 27). This difference is vital in exploring Atwood's intervention in *Hamlet*, a text, which, despite its

psychological depth, skews towards an overwhelming intuition of Hamlet's gaze instead of Gertrude's.

In the same spirit, Julia Kristeva moves further in the discussion, developing the theory of intertextuality in *Desire in Language* which deepens Bakhtin's ideas by integrating the psychological and political aspects of dialogue between texts. For her, intertextuality is: "the transposition of one or more systems of signs into another" which changes both systems in the process (Kristeva 59).

More recent studies have successfully utilized Bakhtinian theory to revise and illuminate feminist scholarship. One such example could be Alison Case's examination of Austen's *Emma* using dialogism where she demonstrates the negotiations/struggles of female characters with the constraints of a patriarchal society's language (Case 134). Along the same lines, in her study on *H.D. And Other Women Modernist Poets*, Susan Stanford Friedman illustrates how women modernist writers partook in what she calls "palimpsestic intertextuality" as a means to overwrite the narratives of men (Friedman 89). These studies serve as models for analyzing Atwood's use of dialogism.

Feminist Intertextual Revisions: A Critical Tradition

Feminist literary revisionism is the historical rewriting of literature through the eyes of feminism, reframing history's texts that oppresses women, actively and politically transforming them. Revisionary feminism richly encompasses different interpretations of feminist discourse. Like Rich proclaimed in her essay titled "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision", the act of revision involves, 'the act of recounting, reconsidering, re-gazing while entering a text from a new critical angle...' (Rich 18). Many feminists' writers draw on this theory transforming discussions shaped through patriarchal doctrine.

This was precisely Rhys's aim in the novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and contemporized reclaiming the story of Bertha Mason, the 'mad wife of the attic' of *Jane Eyre*. In this way, Antoinette (Bertha) gets the chance to narrate her side

describing the Victorian gendered and colonial violence historically silenced by Bronte. Spivak, in her reading of Rhys claims, 'Rhys rescues Bertha from being a mere Jane's dark double by making her the protagonist of her own tragedy' (Spivak 249). Such forms of narrative reclamation is what Atwood does in 'Gertrude Talks Back' reclaiming by giving a voice to Shakespeare's voiceless queens thus turning them from objects of discourse into the subjects.

Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* employs revisionist techniques in the same way to challenge and twist traditional fairy tales. As Sarah Gamble comments, "Carter's retellings...unsettle the patriarchal assumptions of the originals through exaggeration, irony, and grotesque realism" (Gamble 112). When we consider the collection's title story, it reconstructs the archetypal Bluebeard's bride as a woman who, like Atwood's Gertrude, defies the imposed victimization of her character and instead reclaims her agency. These intertextual patterns reflect the outcome of feminist writers from varying periods collaborating and building upon one another in order to confront canonical constructions of women.

Such theories have been developed within the framework of feminist literary theory, and these conjectures remain largely untouched. With *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar defined "the critical language for contemporary engagement with the literary tradition provided by the men" (Gilbert and Gubar 49). They focused on women writers and their complex relationship with the male literary canon and examined dominant concepts stemming from what they termed as "anxiety of authorship" (49). Within this monograph, Gubar and Gilbert explore how women writers faced tension due to societal norms separating them from the authoritative figure in a patriarchal regime. A. Atwood engages with this anxiety actively through her work, such as *The Penelopiad*, where she interjects feminine views into the traditionally masculine frameworks.

Linda Hutcheon's description of parody as "repetition with critical difference" offers yet another vital insight for considering feminist revisions (32). Unlike traditional parody which

only serves to mock its subject, Hutcheon's formulation focuses on the feminist writer's use of intertextual repetition to reveal and critique an ideology underpinning source texts. This difference is noteworthy in regard to "Gertrude Talks Back," where Atwood's use of Shakespearean material does not aim to ridicule *Hamlet*, but rather expose its pseudo-gendered shortcomings. As Hutcheon remarks, "Parody becomes a way of coming to terms with the past while simultaneously distancing oneself from it" (37). This dynamic is clearly relevant to what Atwood does to Shakespeare's tragedy.

Atwood's Subversive Narratives: A Continuum of Resistance

Margaret Atwood, throughout her life, has been focused on changing dominant narratives using feminist revisionism. She has been engaged in what could be named 'counter-discursive storytelling' through her poems, novels, and other forms of literature. This form of storytelling encompasses the intentional rewriting of cultural myths and literary traditions which have been set aside. Atwood's most famous works which exemplify this form of storytelling include *The Penelopiad* and *Hag-Seed*. While the former is a retelling of Homer's *Odyssey* from Penelope's perspective, the latter is a contemporary retelling of *The Tempest* which critiques the Shakespearean view on power and colonialism.

Erasing the boundaries of genre, Atwood shifts from poems, statuary, plays to movie scripts. She has also written songs, but primarily she focuses on novels and prose, with 1985's *The Handmaid's Tale* gaining the most popularity. It is widely suggested that *The Handmaid's Tale* stems from intertextual ideas. Amin Malak describes Atwood's work as, "Atwood's dystopia constructs a palimpsest of biblical, Puritan, and contemporary political discourses that collectively expose the patriarchal logic underlying all of them..." (9).

Atwood's short stories, found in the collections *Dancing Girls* and *Murder in the Dark*, frequently use metafiction to highlight narrative techniques. As Reingard Nischik comments in her book on Atwood, "Atwood's short stories

often breach the fourth wall and self-mock, foregrounding the artifice while countering normative reader response" (89). This form of storytelling builds up to a self-solving puzzle in "Gertrude Talks Back," where the character Gertrude's, "Don't believe everything you hear" is a direct address and has iterative implications both reprimanding Shakespeare's portrayal and providing an independent commentary on the literary interpretation of his work (Atwood 15).

The critical reception of Atwood's revisionist works is arguably the most fluid over time. Earlier reviewers branded her feminist revisionist works as polemics, but more recently that scholarship has recognized them as a more thoughtful engagement with the tradition. As noted by Howells in her monograph 'Margaret Atwood', and I quote, "What was once read as simple ideological critique is now understood as complex dialogic artistry that transforms rather than rejects its source materials" (Howells 112). This marks a change in critical perspective but still draws distinction in how literary studies approach intertextuality and canon revision.

Gertrude in Hamlet Scholarship: An Evolving Critical Conversation

Interpretations of the character of Gertrude in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* range from sympathetic to critical, all of which have sparked substantial debates. Much of Western Shakespearean criticism, notably A.C. Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1904), ignored Gertrude's character and only considered her in connection with Hamlet's psychological journey. Bradley's famous dismissal, "The Queen was not a bad-hearted woman, but rather weak than wicked" (167), captures the overly simplistic interpretation that feminist scholars would later challenge.

These arguments were built on psychoanalytical perspectives, A. C. Bradley calling *Hamlet* "An indifferent approach to liberty, feminine beauty, nurture and the Oedipal compulsion" focusing on the divided self within the play. Earlier in the book, Jones says: "Hamlet's disgust for his mother's sensuality is merely a reflection of deeply buried incestuous desires triggered by an Oedipal push (Jones 98). This argument gave

attention to the figure of the mother, shifting focus on her identity to her relationship with Hamlet and all the roles he assigned to her within his shadowed psyche. This argument, though seminal, rendered Gertrude's character mute by stripping her of agency and reducing her to a mere unconscious manifestation of Hamlet's tortured mind.

Beginning in the 1970s, feminist critics commenced an aggressive reevaluation of Gertrude's character. Carolyn Heilbrun's pioneering essay, "The Character of Hamlet's Mother" (1957), suggested that Shakespeare provides no grounds for accusing Gertrude of King Hamlet's murder, and that "foucaultian readings" reflect cultural sexism instead of literary analysis (Heilbrun 201). Elaine Showalter built on this perspective in her essay "Representing Ophelia" in which she addressed how both Ophelia and Gertrude have been 'constructed by centuries of male interpreters' (Showalter 80).

More recent scholarship has used performance theory to study Gertrude's changing portrayals. In *Women in Shakespeare*, Alison Findlay states that "the space between Shakespeare's text and contemporary performances reveals how societal views of maternal sexuality still influence interpretation of Gertrude" (132). This form of performance criticism is especially relevant to Atwood's rewriting, which can be interpreted as a form of performative text that challenges 'stage' portrayals of the character.

The history of Gertrude criticism illustrates the ways in which literary scholarship shifts with time. As Janet Adelman points out in *Suffocating Mothers*, "Each generation reinvents Gertrude according to its own anxieties about female power and sexuality" (Adelman 15). Atwood's participation in this reinterpretation strikes me as radical in that she bestows on Gertrude narrative control.

Analysis

Dialogic Resistance in "Gertrude Talks Back"

Atwood's strategic appropriation of Shakespeare's Gertrude is most evident in the

story's opening lines where the queen, with full self-possession, proclaims: "I always thought it was a mistake, calling you Hamlet. I mean, what kind of name is that for a young boy?" (Atwood 15). The narrative's sudden imbalance, favouring Gertrude's critique of Hamlet, sets the core dialogic interplay of the story. As Bakhtin says in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, "The word wants to be heard, understood, responded to, and again to respond to the response," (Bakhtin 127) which Atwood makes possible by having Gertrude speak not only to Hamlet, but to the reader as well.

The very shape of the story is defiant in relation to Shakespeare's dramaturgy. While Gertrude is reduced by Hamlet to scant and fragmented utterances, most of which come during speeches she is interrupted within (her longest being 25 lines describing Ophelia's death in the fourth act), Atwood bestows upon her a monologue that is uninterrupted and therefore whole. This shift in form fulfills what feminist narratologist Susan Lanser termed "the authority of female voice," in which "narrative structure becomes political strategy" (18). The difference strikes more forcefully when one considers Shakespeare's Gertrude, who is most famously quoted as saying the passive, "The lady doth protest too much, methinks" (3.2.230), and Atwood's sardonically wise narrator, "Don't believe everything you hear. Especially if it comes from men" (Atwood 16).

Atwood uses the allusions to Shakespeare not as a token of reverence, but rather, a point of disagreement. Gertrude's claim of "Witting! What a word. As if I were some kind of meal, a pudding" (Atwood 17) both mocks and references the Ghost's accusation "O wicked wit and gifts that have the power/So to seduce! Won to his shameful lust/The will of my most seeming-virtuous queen" (1.5.44-46). This form of breach dialogue demonstrates Kristeva's notion of the text as "a permutation of texts, an intertextuality, where in the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another" (Kristeva 36). Through ironic repetition, Atwood's Gertrude literally silences Shakespeare's interpretation of her character.

Heteroglossia and Narrative Polyphony in Atwood's *Revision*

Heteroglossia, defined as “the social multi-dimensionality of types of speech” (Bakhtin 263), is illustrated in Atwood's story with the clash of different discursive registers. The text illustrates the following:

1. Shakespearean words and phrases (“witting,” “wherefore”)
2. Contemporary slang (“give me a break”)
3. Feminist discourse (“that's what they always say about women, isn't it?”)
4. Maternal speak (“I changed your diapers”)

Through this layering of language, Bakhtin describes the phenomenon “intentional hybrid” where “two individual consciousnesses, two voices, two accents...come together and consciously clash it out” (Bakhtin 358). This has the effect of undermining the authority of Shakespeare's original text by revealing its historic and ideological partiality.

The story's complex, interwoven construction is best described through the lens of Gertrude's shifting narrative perspectives. She speaks as, a mother, “You were such a difficult baby.”

A queen, “They expect majesty, so I give them majesty.” A sexual subject, “He was good in bed, your father,” and a literary critic, “All that ranting and stabbing.”

The establishment of this phenomena Bakhtin describes as “a plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses” which defy monologic unity, or, a singular narrative. Where Gertrude in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is restrained as a symptom within the protagonist's psychological turmoil, Atwood endows her protagonist with that theatrical exuberance through discourse.

Carnavalesque Subversion of Tragic Form

Atwood has radically shifted from Shakespeare in how she transforms tragedy into grotesque comedy. Rosen and Samuel talk about the

carnival version of comedy tragedy as ‘the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions’ (10), which Gertrude does to Hamlet's solemnity while describing King Hamlet's ghost. “Appearing in his nightgown, all pale and solemn . . . really, you'd think he'd have had the decency to get dressed” (Atwood, 18) is striking the flesh within the frame of spirit humor.

The story's superficial level depicts domestic details which, as Bakhtin describes, form ‘the material bodily lower stratum’ (Bakhtin, 21). In recalling, Gertrude renders this poetic timeless figure of a tragic hero into a petulant child. Now everyone who had devoted their art and scholarship of five centuries is suddenly Atwood, ‘stamp, stamp, stamp’ (19). Feminist carnival theory which Russo reflects as, “the female body in carnival becomes a site of resistance precisely through its exaggeration of cultural stereotypes” (62) also helps extend to something Russo frames as grotesque.

Atwood's conclusion differs drastically from classical narrative endings, which often resort to a singular death, emerging as the pinnacle of carnivalesque inversion. Gertrude's death is marked by a mute, sorrowful sip of poison. In the case of Atwood's protagonist, she departs with fierce and empowered self-assertion: ‘And don't think I didn't know about that poisoned cup. I may have been witting, but I wasn't stupid’ (Atwood 22). This exemplifies what Barbara Babcock describes as ‘symbolic inversion’ where ‘what is marginal becomes central’ (17).

Dialogic Subversion in Narrative Practice

Structural Reconfiguration of Shakespearean Tragedy

In Atwood's “Gertrude Talks Back,” formal innovations apply hypertextual transposition as defined by Genette. The “transposition” from dramatic verse to prose monologue subverts the structure of *Hamlet* in three ways, The temporal reorganization, when Atwood says, “I remember when you were three...then at university...now this ridiculous playacting with Yorick's skull” exemplifies her narrative's nonlinearity. It shatters the rigid five-act structure of Shakespeare's play, prioritizing maternal

reminiscence over tragic determinism. In the change of view, the first-person narration Gertrude uses, creates what narratologist James Phelan calls “dual focalization” wherein the character recounts and comments on the events simultaneously (45). Then there is generic hybridity: “It was just a phase—all black clothes and bad poetry.” Gertrude’s assessment of Hamlet’s existential crisis reduces it to adolescent moodiness. This tragic allusion blends domestic comedy with humor (Atwood 19). The combination of these alterations evokes Bakhtin’s “genre memory,” whereby new texts bear the imprint of their generic antecedents while shifting their ideological underpinning.

Linguistic Subversions and Intertextual Dissonance

Atwood's strategies weave friction with Shakespeare’s work through, Lexical Counterpointing, Shakespeare’s Gertrude: “The lady doth protest too much” (3.2.230). Atwood’s Gertrude, “That poor play-actor queen protesting not enough, too much - what did it matter?” (Atwood 20). Syntactic Disruption, Atwood’s “And the ghost. Really. As if I didn’t know my own husband’s sleeping habits” (Atwood 18), employs broken speech to mimic the flow of conversation, in contrast to the rigid predictability of iambic pentameter which Atwood fragments. Register Collision, the putting together of “pernicious woman” with “that creepy Claudius,” delivers intertextual irony that Hutcheon labels “parodic juxtaposition” (57).

Feminist Reclamation of Narrative Space

Elbowing Her Way Through Domestic Space, Feminist Interpretation of Shakespeare’s Staging Atwood’s recovering domestic space. Atwood's vivid portrayal of Elsinore’s ‘private rooms’ such as “the winter bedroom with its tapestries...the nursery with its wooden blocks” critique Shakespeare’s focus on the public areas – for example the ‘ramparts’ and ‘the throne room’. Claiming spatial bodily schema

Shakespeare’s Gertrude never speaks about her figure, while Atwood's character touches on carrying a child, eroticism, aging: ‘this body

bore you...frailty’ (Atwood 21). In textual spatial occupation monologues are shaped as blocked texts encompassing entire pages, a stark contrast to Shakespeare’s portrayal of Gertrude’s speeches as footnotes to his prose, which form less than four percent of Hamlet’s lines (Thompson and Taylor 512).

Metatextual Commentary as Resistance

Atwood embeds sophisticated critique of the reception history of Hamlet, in performative criticism, “All those sighing, swooning Gertrude’s - do they think queens have nothing better to do than faint?” (Atwood 20), critiques the perpetuation of the character's fainting excesses unforgivable over-sentimentalization in performances of Hamlet. Accomplishing a pastiche of academic discourse, “Let’s analyze this, shall we?” (Atwood 19) uttered by Gertrude mock analyzes psychoanalytic interpretation while simultaneously subverting it. The readers Collusion and direct address construction, “You believed him, didn’t you?” burden the audiences with maintaining Shakespeare’s narrative while supplanting Shakespeare (Atwood 16). This frame narrative stratum exemplifies what Patricia Waugh calls “feminist metafiction” which ‘exposes the made-ness of gender roles through self-conscious writing’” (Waugh 32).

Conclusion

Toward a Theory of Feminist Dialogics

Through the following concepts, i.e., reciprocal dialogism, which means not simply responding to Hamlet but demanding an answer. Embodied heteroglossia i.e., earthed linguistic pluralism in womanhood, and Carnavalesque Temporality, which renders subversion perpetual instead of fleeting. Atwood’s story asserts bold innovations for intertextuality and showcases the impact of feminist reinterpretations on transforming theoretical frameworks alongside shifting literary preserves.

The Unfinalizability of Feminist Revision

Atwood's “Gertrude Talks Back” illustrates the powerful possibilities of dialogic intertextuality. Employing Bakhtin’s ideas of polyphony, heteroglossia, and carnival subversion, the story goes beyond critiquing *Hamlet*—it reimagines

everything. As Bakhtin notes, "There is neither a first nor a last word and there are no limits to the dialogic context" (Bakhtin 170). Atwood's revision affirms this principle emphatically.

The story advances feminist literary history by showing how canonized works are not finished; they are always alive for reinterpretation and fresh alterations. "There's always another side to the story. Always," (Atwood 22) proclaims Gertrude. It is Atwood's power to have ensured that "that other side" was gifted the means of unqualified voice, enduring strength, sharp wit, and authoritative dynamism.

In the end, Atwood's Gertrude does what Shakespeare's could not: she bestows the final word, or rather words that are never truly final. "There's always another side" (Atwood 22). She embodies Bakhtin's unfinalizability, demanding now feminist fusion of authoritative and reclaimed space across the canon.

Works Cited

- Adelman, Janet. *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays*. Routledge, 1992.
- Atwood, Margaret. "Gertrude Talks Back." *Good Bones and Simple Murders*. Doubleday, 1992, pp. 15-22.
- Babcock, Barbara. *The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society*. Cornell UP, 1978.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Edited and translated by Caryl Emerson, U of Minnesota P, 1984.
- . *Rabelais and His World*. Translated by Hélène Iswolsky, Indiana UP, 1984.
- . *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Edited by Michael Holquist, U of Texas P, 1981.
- Findlay, Alison. *Women in Shakespeare: A Dictionary*. Continuum, 2010.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. Columbia UP, 1980.
- Lanser, Susan. *Fictions of Authority: Women Writers and Narrative Voice*. Cornell UP, 1992.
- Russo, Mary. *The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess, and Modernity*. Routledge, 1995.
- Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*. Edited by Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, Arden Shakespeare, 2006.
- Showalter, Elaine. "Representing Ophelia: Women, Madness, and the Responsibilities of Feminist Criticism." *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, edited by Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman, Methuen, 1985, pp. 77-94.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism." *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1985, pp. 243-261.
- Rich, Adrienne. "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision." *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence: Selected Prose 1966-1978*, W.W. Norton, 1979, pp. 33-49.
- Gamble, Sarah. *Angela Carter: Writing from the Front Line*. Edinburgh UP, 1997.
- Malak, Amin. "Margaret Atwood's 'The Handmaid's Tale' and the Dystopian Tradition." *Canadian Literature*, vol. 112, 1987, pp. 9-16.
- Nischik, Reingard. *The Canadian Short Story: Interpretations*. Camden House, 2007.
- Heilbrun, Carolyn. "The Character of Hamlet's Mother." *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 8, no. 2, 1957, pp. 201-206.
- Jones, Ernest. *Hamlet and Oedipus*. W.W. Norton, 1949.
- Bradley, A.C. *Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth*. Macmillan, 1904.
- Hutcheon, Linda. *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms*. Methuen, 1985.
- Gilbert, Sandra and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. Yale UP, 1979.
- Howells, Coral Ann. *Margaret Atwood*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.