Variations on a Queen
Encoding Speech Prefixes in 1604/1605 Hamlet

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**Speaker Tags in Hamlet**
When transcribing the second quarto of Hamlet (1604/5) for LEMDO, I observed a striking variation in The Queen’s speech prefixes. She is Que., Queene, and Ger. While speaker names in early modern drama are inconsistently spelled and abbreviated, variability between role and name is less common. Only Gertrude has both a name and a role. Other characters in Q2 have either a name or a role, and in the 1603 Q1, Gertrude is simply “Queen” (see Charts One and Two to the right).

Why are these variations present? Do they reflect intention (i.e., authorial or scribal), or did they arise from the process of typographical composition? Are researchers interested in this feature of playbooks? If yes, how can these variations be encoded effectively to facilitate their research questions?

**Early Modern Printed Books and Speech Prefixes**
Other characters in Shakespeare plays with interesting variations in speech prefixes include but are not limited to:
- **Romeo and Juliet, Lady Capulet** (Bowers):
  - She is called Wife, Old La., Capt. W., La. and Mo. in Q2
- **All’s Well That Ends Well, Bertram and the Countess** (Bowers):
  - Bertram is called Rar., Ber., and Re.; the Countess is called Mother, Mo., Caun., Lou., Old. Lou., Old. Lady, Lou. and Count in F
- **A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Bottom** (Drakakis):
  - He is called Bot, Botomme, Bottom, Pir, Clow, Clowne, Clo, Clown, Pyra, Pyr in F
- **Merchant of Venice, Shylock** (Drakakis 107):
  - Shylock is called Shy, Shylocke, Iew., Jew., Shyl., Je., Ie., Iewe. and Jewe. in Q1

A significant article written by R. B. McKerrow in 1935 (Wilder) suggests that the variability of speech prefixes could derive from the function of each character in various scenes, or that various scenes were written at different times (Bowers 66-67). A quarto with highly variable speech prefixes could derive from “foul papers” - an autograph manuscript written by Shakespeare, according to Fredson Bowers. If a quarto originated in foul papers, we might be able to see authorial logic in the differing speech prefixes (Bowers). Lisa Perkins Wilder critiques how modern editors rarely indicate that they have normalised speech prefixes, either giving a generic statement or none. A statement could indicate where and for whom speech prefixes have been normalised (Wilder).

**Applications in XML**
Marking up a file using XML is valuable because metadata can be added to parts of the text to enrich the research process. The act of marking up a text makes the text computer readable and human readable. Scholars can manipulate a computer-readable text to better answer their research questions.

| Figure One: Sample speech prefixes of Que. in Hamlet Q2 | Figure Two: Sample of speech prefixes Ger. in Hamlet Q2 |

**Potential Research Using Speech Prefixes**
Variations in speech prefixes have helped in facilitating the following research:
- Textual critics can evaluate the variable speech prefixes to determine if they are substantive or accidental (Wildier).
- Literary critics can analyse whether certain variations have cultural value (ex. Jew/Shylock may be a fluctuation between a stereotype and character) or psycho-social value (ex. “Bottom’s appealing ‘character’ ... is both threatened and constituted by its embeddedness in social and dramatic relationships” [Drakakis 106-112]).
- Bibliographer can determine the “origin” of a text — or speculate on the agents (author, playhouse, scribe, compositor) that left this variability behind (Drakakis 106-107).

| Chart One: Number of Each Prefix in Hamlet Q2 | Chart Two: Number of Each Prefix in Hamlet Q1 |

**Work Cited**

**Assessing LEMDO’s Practice**
LEMDO’s goal is to encode old-spelling texts truthfully.
- LEMDO removed pre-existing @norm attributes in the previous BSE Markup Language on <speaker> because those attributes reflected premature critical decisions that ought to be left to modern editors and editions.
- Currently, there is no efficient way to filter speech prefixes by character. If there were, users could create a character scroll to view character’s speeches. Additionally, there is no reference to the old-spelling speech prefixes from modernised editions, something Wilder suggests.
- A feature should be added to acknowledge old-spelling prefixes, and one to help filter speech prefixes.

**Recommendations for LEMDO**
I recommend that LEMDO implements one of the following practices to capture the unique variations in speech prefixes that may prove useful to researchers:
- Create an interface like the Outline function in Oxygen (application to edit XML) to filter the text data by element — in this case, <speaker> elements to find speech prefixes.
- Enables searches for other elements.
- Requires some knowledge of XML.
- Since all speeches have a unique xml:id, use @corresp attributes or @pointer elements to link modernised versions of the play to old-spelling so that users can see the original speech prefixes.
- Allows for linking between a modernised text and the old-spelling text on which it is based.
- Assumes that the modernised text did not conflate copytexts (e.g., quarto and folio).
- Bring back the @norm or @who attributes to filter speeches by speaker, including a disclaimer explaining the old-spelling texts imports a decision made by modern editors.
- Allows for generation of cue scripts.
- Goes against LEMDO’s policy of truthful encoding in this feature.

**Linked Early Modern Drama Online**

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