Ian McEwan’s recent novel *Nutshell* (2016), in which Hamlet is an unborn foetus, is only the latest in a line of appropriations of Shakespeare’s plays stretching back to 1600. *Hamlet* itself stretches beyond the seventeenth century, drawing on sources that date back to twelfth-century Denmark, and referring within itself to relics of older drama that Shakespeare may have seen as a boy in Stratford. *Hamlet* looks both backwards and forwards in time. The play also covers a remarkable range of emotional states, including anger, love, hatred, grief, melancholy and despair. Indeed, *Hamlet* stages a plethora of emotional practices: a funeral and a marriage, a vindictive ghost in purgatory, a young woman whose mental equilibrium has been dislodged by the murder of her father by her own erstwhile lover, an inscrutable monarch under suspicion of murder, a couple of mordantly cheerful gravediggers, and a young prince back from university and grieving for his deceased father. This conference explores new readings of the play, focusing on many aspects of its emotional life in the widest sense. Interspersed between four keynote addresses are panels addressing *Hamlet*’s sources and influences; the social milieu in which the play was composed and originally performed; cinematic and artistic adaptations of *Hamlet*; and the many spinoffs it has inspired, up to and including McEwan’s *Nutshell*. In addition to scholarly presentations on the emotional dynamics of *Hamlet*, its sources and its legacy, the event will feature two panels in which writers, directors and performers will discuss the role of emotion in their various experiences of working with *Hamlet*. 

**Keynote Speakers:**

- **Kevin Curran** *(University of Lausanne)*
  - ‘Hamlet’s Unreasonable Judgements’
- **Richard Meek** *(University of Hull)*
  - ‘For by the image of my cause, I see / The portraiture of his: *Hamlet* and the Imitation of Emotion’
- **Kathryn Prince** *(University of Ottawa)*
  - ‘Memory, Action, and Emotion in *Hamlet*’
- **Naya Tsentourou** *(University of Exeter)*
  - ‘Hamlet’s “Spendthrift Sigh”: Wasting Breath on the Renaissance Stage’
MONDAY, 10 APRIL 2017

09.00–09.30 Registration and Coffee

KEYNOTE ADDRESS. CHAIR: BOB WHITE.
09.30–10.30 Richard Meek, “For by the image of my cause, I see / The portraiture of his”: Hamlet and the Imitation of Emotion

10.30 – 11.00 MORNING TEA

PANEL: INFLUENCES, SOURCES AND ANALOGUES OF HAMLET. CHAIR: PAUL MEGNA.
11.00–12.30
- Jennifer Nicholson, ‘La Nostalgie du Prince Hamlet: French Sources for an Anglo-Danish Prince’
- Michael D. Barbezat, ‘“It is an Honest Ghost”: St Patrick’s Purgatory and a Legacy of Doubt’
- Andrew Lynch, ‘Hamlet as “Rogue”: Emotional Suffering and Right Action’

12.30 – 13.30 LUNCH

PANEL: HAMLET IN ITS TIME. CHAIR: BOB WHITE.
13.00–15.00
- Jane Rickard, ‘Hamlet, Sejanus and the Concealment of Emotion’
- Jo Merrey, ‘Love, Mourning and Frailty: Hamlet’s Problem with Gertrude’s Shoes’
- Brid Phillips, ‘“Forth at your eyes your spirits wildly peep”: Passions, Players and Early Modern Theories of Vision in Hamlet’

SHORT PANEL: PERFORMANCE I. CHAIR: BRID PHILLIPS.
15.00–16.00
- Geoffrey Borny, ‘Reason or Emotion? That is the Question: Alternative Approaches to Performing Hamlet’
- Peter Wilkins, ‘An Actor’s Search for the Inner Conflict in Shakespeare’s Characters’

16.00–16.30 AFTERNOON TEA

KEYNOTE ADDRESS. CHAIR: PAUL MEGNA.
16.30–17.30 Kathryn Prince, ‘Memory, Action and Emotion in Hamlet’

17.30 WINE AND CHEESE RECEPTION, ST CATHERINE’S COLLEGE

TUESDAY, 11 APRIL 2017

09.00–09.30 Registration and Coffee

KEYNOTE ADDRESS. CHAIR: BOB WHITE.
09.30–10.30 Naya Tsentourou, ‘Hamlet’s “Spendthrift Sigh”: Wasting Breath on the Renaissance Stage’

10.30 – 11.00 MORNING TEA

SHORT PANEL: PERFORMANCE II. CHAIR: PAUL MEGNA.
11.00–12.00
- Silvan Rus, ‘The Goblet Words of Hamlet: Indirect Communication in Shakespeare and Daoist Zhuangzi’
- Stephen Chinna, ‘“Speech falters speech flinches when horror lifts a fist to it”: The Hamlet of Howard Barker’s Gertrude the Cry, Among Others’

12.00 – 13.00 LUNCH

SHORT PANEL: PICTURING OPHelia. CHAIR: BOB WHITE.
13.00–14.00
- Pema Monaghan, ‘“There’s a Daisy” – Ophelia: Beautiful, Mad, Dead’
- Luisa Moore, ‘New Interdisciplinary Ways of Reading Shakespeare’s Characters: Depicting Emotion in Rossetti’s Hamlet and Ophelia’

SHORT PANEL: HAMLET SPINOFFs. CHAIR: ANDREW LYNCH.
14.00–15.00
- Paul Megna, ‘“Fear! The crack that might flood your brain with light”: Un-Existential Anxiety in Tom Stoppard’s Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead’
- Robert White, ‘Ian McEwan’s Nutshell as Avant-Garde Hamlet’

15.00–15.30 AFTERNOON TEA

SHORT PANEL: ADAPTING HAMLET. CHAIR: PAUL MEGNA.
15.30–16.30
- Marina Gerzic, ‘Staged for the Page: The Very Serious Business of Adapting Emotions in Nicki Greenberg’s Hamlet’
- Colin Yeo, ‘Six Hamlets in Search of a Ghost: Horror and Emotions in Cinematic Adaptations of the Ghost Scene’

KEYNOTE ADDRESS. CHAIR: BOB WHITE.
16.30–17.30 Kevin Curran, ‘Hamlet’s Unreasonable Judgements’
Hamlet’s Unreasonable Judgements

KEVIN CURRAN
University of Lausanne

In contexts where the notion of fact is the main criterion for judgement, being right or wrong must always depend on something more than emotion, sense or intuition. It must correspond instead to some external standard or measure. Imagine being asked how you know you’re right in a modern law court or scientific lab and replying, ‘I just have a feeling’. And yet at a number of points in Western intellectual history, feeling, rather than reason, formed the primary grounds for judgement – moral, legal, political and aesthetic. This talk looks at how Shakespeare’s Hamlet articulates an unreasonable form of judgement, one guided by emotion and sensation and generated through collective experience. Starting with the bedroom scene in Act 3.4, the talk reconstructs a genealogy of unreasonable judgement that extends from Aristotle to John Fortescue to David Hume. It concludes by reflecting on how Hamlet’s unreasonable judgement might contribute to modern critiques of liberalism by thinkers such as Hannah Arendt, John Rawls and Martha Nussbaum.

Kevin Curran is Professor of Early Modern Literature at the University of Lausanne in Switzerland and editor of the book series ‘Edinburgh Critical Studies in Shakespeare and Philosophy’. He is the author of Shakespeare’s Legal Ecologies: Law and Distributed Setthood (Northwestern University Press, 2017) and Marriage, Performance, and Politics at the Jacobean Court (Ashgate, 2009), and editor of Shakespeare and Judgment (Edinburgh University Press, 2016) and, with James Kearney, a special issue of Criticism on ‘Shakespeare and Phenomenology’. Curran is also the founder and Director of the Lausanne Shakespeare Festival.

Hamlet’s ‘Spendthrift Sigh’: Wasting Breath on the Renaissance Stage

NAYA TSENTOUROU

I am interested in exploring how breath’s intentional or spontaneous expulsion from the body prefigures waste as a category of knowledge, which, in the context of theatrical representation, troubles the boundaries between the internal and the external and between actors and audience. The immersive nature of the early modern theatre renders the transmission of breath as carrier of meaning on stage malleable and exposes the futility of breath appropriation, a practice in which both actors and characters invest in for the sake of hypocrisy (and I use the term here to refer both to duplicity, and in its original Attic usage as a technical term for playing a part on stage). As Luce Irigaray writes, ‘I can breathe in my own way, but the air will never be simply mine’. Starting with the idea prevalent in Renaissance folklore, that a sigh wastes one drop of blood, I want to examine what it means to waste one’s self in breath, or how breath consumes the body as much as it invigorates it, and the affective, as well as cognitive, value of the abject substance of breath. I read Shakespeare’s Hamlet as epitomising the slippery significations of sighing and the experience of loss inherent in all representation. Hypocritical, instrumental, communicative, self-
Reason or Emotion? That is the Question: Alternative Approaches to Performing Hamlet

GEORGE BORNY
Australian National University

Since the late nineteenth century, with the rise of Realism and the advent of the Fourth Wall Convention, there has been a strong tendency for actors to play Shakespearean roles as though they were real-life people rather than fictional characters in a play. Critics like A.C. Bradley psychoanalyse the characters in Hamlet and many modern actors, trained in some variant of Stanislavski's acting 'system', have followed this psychological approach to characterisation. The result is that most Hamlets we see today are emotionally tortured souls whose inner turmoil is foregrounded in performance. I wish to argue that this approach to the role of Hamlet, while it often produces a powerfully empathetic response from audiences, tends to lessen the importance of the play's central ideas.

I argue that a less emotionally based and more rational form of acting that allows the actor to focus on foregrounding the ideas and action of the play, rather than on the various emotional states of the character, can produce a richer and more intellectually stimulating experience for an audience than that provided by simply creating a psychological portrait that is true to life. I will conclude by performing excerpts from Hamlet's 'To be or not to be' soliloquy in both the more emotional manner advocated by Stanislavski, and the 'cooler' more rational manner advocated by acting theorists like Brecht. Hopefully, this will reveal some of the strengths and weaknesses of both approaches to performing Hamlet.

Geoffrey Borny is a member of the Emeritus Faculty at the Australian National University, having retired from the position of Reader and Head of Drama and Theatre Studies. His publications include Interpreting Chekhov (ANU Press, 2006), Classic American Drama (Sydney University Press, 1993) and a verse translation into English of Racine's comedy Les Plaideurs entitled Petty Sessions (University of New England, 1998). His research interests include the study of Shakespearean acting and staging conventions, Chekhov and the works of Tennessee Williams. Besides being an academic, he is both an actor and director and has received a number of awards for his work in these areas.

'Speech falters speech flinches when horror lifts a fist to it': The Hamlet of Howard Barker's Gertrude the Cry, Among Others

STEPHEN CHINNA
The University of Western Australia

Gertrude takes centre stage, and Hamlet is sidelined to some degree in Barker's play. He finds the 'conventions' of showing emotions difficult and is also variously described by others in the play as a bore, a prude and a prig. I will discuss this particular Hamlet along with those of Heiner Müller's Hamletmachine and my play When Salome Met Hamlet. These plays explore some of the primary themes addressed in Shakespeare's text – particularly questions of identity, presumptions of inertia and sometimes blatant misogyny. Some visual material from productions of these plays that I have directed will be incorporated into this talk.

Stephen Chinna is a Senior Honorary Research Fellow in English and Cultural Studies at The University of Western Australia. He is a literary critic, playwright and director, who has published on early modern theatre, including Gertrude the Cry. He is the author of a play titled When Salome Met Hamlet, and has directed a wide variety of early modern and modern plays.
Staged for the Page: The Very Serious Business of Adapting Emotions in Nicki Greenberg’s Hamlet

MARINA GERZIC
The University of Western Australia

The study of emotion and Shakespeare and, in particular, emotion and Hamlet is well established. Shakespeare’s work enables us to experience emotions and their transformations as we try to understand them. From the opening of the play, Hamlet’s emotions are all too clearly present; Shakespeare defines him as a passionate and emotional man plagued by melancholy. How is this human emotion interpreted and visualized by those attempting to adapt Hamlet in the twenty-first century?

This paper will examine a recent graphic novel version of Shakespeare’s Hamlet by Australian author Nicki Greenberg. Through comparisons with Shakespeare’s canonical play-text, including Shakespeare’s incorporation of humorous ideas of melancholy, this paper will analyze how this aspect of Hamlet’s emotions are visually interpreted and developed in Greenberg’s adaptation. Greenberg’s work gives a strange new emphasis to the characters, language and emotions of Shakespeare’s Hamlet. This is achieved by Greenberg through the lush visual artistry afforded by the medium of graphic novel, and her work’s irreverence and diversions from the text. Through its collaborative engagement with Shakespeare’s text and the complex emotions it conveys, Nicki Greenberg essentially repackages a canonical early modern performance text for a media-savvy, popular-culture-aware, twenty-first century audience.

Marina Gerzic is a member of the Centre for Medieval and Early Modern Studies at The University of Western Australia. Marina’s research interests include Shakespeare, film and adaptation theory, music in film, cultural studies, comics and graphic novels, and children’s literature. Recent publications include ‘When Dylan Met the Bard: Fragments of Screen (Sound) in Michael Almereyda’s Hamlet’ (Cereae); with Helen Balfour, ‘Haunting Emotions: Visualising Hamlet’s Melancholy for Students in Two Recent Graphic Novel Adaptations’ (Borrowers and Lenders); and ‘Adaptation and Interpretation: Shakespeare and Teen Film in the Classroom’ (Interpretations). Marina’s current research project examines graphic novel and television adaptations of Shakespeare’s Richard II, and analyzes how these works interpret and visually embody Richard and his disability.

Hamlet as ‘Rogue’: Emotional Suffering and Right Action

ANDREW LYNCH
The University of Western Australia

As I wrote in the Introduction (co-authored with Stephanie Downes and Katrina O’Loughlin) to Emotions and War: Medieval to Romantic Literature, Shakespeare’s Hamlet shows he has thoroughly internalised the normative relation of noble emotion to action when he states he must be “a rogue and peasant slave”, lacking both pity and courage, because he has not yet taken revenge on Claudius. Highly conscious of his status as a gentleman, Hamlet is emotionally inhibited from understanding in any more positive way why he is hesitating. The supposedly natural and spontaneous quality of emotions empowers their operation as a coercive ideological force, and denies legitimacy to contrary impulses. Using this observation as a starting point, my paper looks at the relation between ‘gentle’ masculinity, pity and ideas of right action in Hamlet’s outlook and behaviour. It treats his case as readable within chivalric and Aristotelian traditions that link grief and pity to revenge, but also, more obscurely, within a Christian and clerical tradition of ‘suffering’ as patient endurance.

Andrew Lynch is the Director of the ARC Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions and Professor of English and Cultural Studies at The University of Western Australia. He has published extensively on medieval English literature, as well as medievalism, especially on themes of war and peace. With Susan Broomhall and Jane Davidson, he is the general editor of the forthcoming, six-volume Bloomsbury Cultural History of Emotions. His recent publications include three book collections: he is the editor, with Stephanie Downes and Katrina O’Loughlin, of Emotions and War: Medieval to Romantic Literature (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); with Michael Champion, of Understanding Emotions in Early Europe (Brepols, 2015); and, with Louise D’Arcens, of International Medievalism and Popular Culture (Cambria Press, 2014).

‘Fear! The crack that might flood your brain with light’: Un-Existential Anxiety in Tom Stoppard’s Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead

PAUL MEGNA
The University of Western Australia

Despite Tom Stoppard’s insistence that he did not know the term ‘existential’ when penning Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead (hereafter RaGAD), critics have long branded his famous play a work of existentialist theatre. Even if Stoppard did not consciously inject Camus’ notions of absurdity or Jean-Paul Sartre’s ideas about existential anguish into his Beckettian account of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern’s obscene (read: off-stage) existence, the themes of anxiety, meaninglessness and, above all, death loom large in both RaGAD and the tradition of existential philosophy. However, unlike the bulk of existential literature and philosophy, Stoppard’s play does not deal with the anxiety that arises when one recognises absolute freedom to act in a meaningless and random world. Instead, RaGAD explores the horror that arises from an opposite epiphany: that perhaps we are completely devoid of freedom, leading entirely pre-scripted lives in a drama of someone else’s composition. Instead of trying to reconcile RaGAD to the tenets of existentialism, this paper explores the patently un-existential anxiety pervading Stoppard’s play, ultimately arguing that neither RaGAD nor Hamlet belong in the existentialist tradition.

Paul Megna is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow with the ARC Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions, based at The University of Western Australia. His work focuses on medieval literature’s fixation on negative emotion and he is especially interested in the pre-modern roots of existentialist philosophies of anxiety, shame, despair and love. He has published in journals including PMLA, Exemplaria, postmedieval and The Yearbook of Langland Studies. He is currently developing a monograph titled Existential Emotion in Middle English Literature. He is also working on a research project that takes an interdisciplinary approach to the study of medieval and contemporary passion plays.

Love, Mourning and Frailty: Hamlet’s Problem with Gertrude’s Shoes

JO MERREY
The University of Western Australia

In Hamlet’s catalogue of untimely transitions, Gertrude’s shoes take her from funeral to wedding in ‘A little month, or ere those shoes were old’ (1.2.147). The use of the shoes as
markers of Gertrude's performance of emotion, inappropriately in Hamlet's estimation, gives rise to questions about the signification of individual agency and emotion through dress. In this paper, I explore ideas of appropriate performance of emotion through dress that recur throughout the play.

Jo Merrey is a PhD candidate in English and Cultural Studies at The University of Western Australia. Her current work focuses on representations of clothing and women's agency in medieval English texts.

**New Interdisciplinary Ways of Reading Shakespeare's Characters: Depicting Emotion in Rossetti's Hamlet and Ophelia**

**LUISA MOORE**

Australian National University

Nineteenth-century visual representations of Shakespeare's characters offer modern scholars a fascinating window into the nuances of the Victorian reception of his plays, and much valuable work has been done to contextualise these images in terms of such issues as Victorian bardolatry, cultural assumptions about gender, class and race, and contemporary theatrical practices. Scholars have shown somewhat less interest, however, in the interdisciplinary project of exploring the artists' own readings of the characters' implied psychology and their exploration of the emotional dynamics of the drama. Taking as a case study Dante Gabriel Rossetti's 1859 pen-and-ink drawing, Hamlet and Ophelia, which portrays the opening of the 'nunnery' scene, this paper seeks to explore what this re-imagined moment of emotional intensity and complexity can tell us about the ambivalent attitudes held by Victorian society and the artist himself towards these two characters and their relationship.

Luisa Moore completed Honours in English at Monash University. She holds a Diploma in Visual Arts from The University of Melbourne, and is currently in her second year of postgraduate study at the Australian National University. Her research focuses on the interdisciplinary topic of Hamlet, psychology and visual art, which she is completing under the supervision of Kate Flaherty, Alexander (Sasha) Grishin and Peter Groves.

---

**‘There’s a Daisy’ – Ophelia: Beautiful, Mad, Dead**

**PEMA MONAGHAN**

The University of Western Australia

My paper examines the meanings of ‘madness’ as an emotional state in Shakespeare’s Hamlet, focusing on Ophelia. The textual focal point of my analysis is the song that Ophelia sings in Act 4.5, shortly before her off-stage death. The rambling and confused nature of her singing, as it is perceived by her fellows, is presented within the dialogue as a straightforward ‘document in madness’ [4.5.173]. In Hamlet, madness is a state that arises out of emotional experiences. Hamlet and Ophelia are both ‘mad’ largely for external reasons that impact on their interiority; reasons that Hamlet’s characters believe can be understood. While feminist literary criticism attempts to refocus research on characters from marginalised groups, analyses of Ophelia have often taken her alleged insanity for granted. Ophelia has often been fetishised as having a compulsively ‘female’ madness. Laertes says of his sister, ‘is’t possible a young maid’s wits? Should be as mortal as an old man’s life’ [4.5.159–60]. Her death is depicted as beautiful and poetic in a sense, and has given rise to romanticised cultural renderings, such as in John Millais’ Ophelia (1851–1852), a painting depicting the dead Ophelia surrounded by flowers in the pool in which she drowned herself. This paper will interrogate Ophelia as the quintessential sad, mad girl. I intend to read closely Ophelia’s song as a poem, interrogating its meanings and implications within the broader context of the play. I will build an argument around the meaning of ‘madness’ in the text, resisting categorisation or diagnosis, and query the fastness of that label for Ophelia.

Pema Monaghan is a PhD candidate at The University of Western Australia. Her research focuses on representations of the department store in novels, and analyses a range of issues such as glamour, women’s identity making and colonial labour forces through a number of texts. Her work is interdisciplinary in its approach, incorporating literary criticism, fashion history and social history.

---

**La Nostalgie du Prince Hamlet: French Sources for an Anglo-Danish Prince**

**JENNIFER NICHOLSON**

The University of Sydney

Regardless of our experience with Shakespeare’s plays, and Hamlet in particular, the tendency to treat his works as texts that sprung fully formed from his quill remains. This stems from a kind of nostalgia about Shakespeare’s literary pedestal in English literature. But this narrative of ‘Englishness’ is somewhat disrupted when we consider that Hamlet derives from a Danish oral narrative transcribed in Latin by Saxo Grammaticus and then later translated into French: a tale of Prince Amleth within François de Belleforest’s Les Histories Tragiques.

Within the text, Hamlet yearns for revenge, nostalgic for when his father was alive and Denmark did not seem like a prison. And yet Shakespeare’s text exists in three versions, in all of which the prince acts unlike Belleforest’s Amleth, delaying his revenge and denouncing action until the last possible moment. Shakespeare’s representations of Hamlet’s delay produces what Margrethe Jolly calls ‘Amleth’ with his hands tied. The playwright’s text is inextricably linked with not only the main events of Belleforest’s account, but also his language. In this paper I will propose ways in which nostalgia figures within Hamlet. I will also consider how the nostalgia of Shakespearean literary study risks obscuring the multilingual aspects of the play, which are all the more important in our globalised twenty-first century.

Jennifer Nicholson is a PhD candidate at The University of Sydney. Her thesis proposes that Shakespeare had at least a working knowledge of the French language, and that this knowledge influenced the language in all three texts of Hamlet: both quartos and the Folio.

---

**‘Forth at your eyes your spirits wildly peep’: Passions, Players and Early Modern Theories of Vision in Hamlet**

**BRID PHILLIPS**

The University of Western Australia

With these words Gertrude alludes to the early modern belief, written about by Helkiah Crooke, that the eye is the chief seat of the soul, which provides a window into the passions of the mind. Gertrude feels that she can see Hamlet’s complexion, his humour and his very temperament simply by looking into his eyes. In this period, theories of vision in literature were driven by the work of Galen and mediated through the writings of thinkers such as Thomas Wright, Anthony Munday and George Hakewill. Despite differing opinions on the intricacies of vision as part of the senses, it was widely held that the passions were involved. Recent scholarship on the history of emotions, which privileges the embodied nature of emotions within a habitus relying on social and cultural structures as well as
Hamlet, Sejanus and the Concealment of Emotion

JANE RICKARD
University of Leeds

One of the copies of Ben Jonson’s folio Workes (1616) held at the Huntington Library has a striking marginal reference to Shakespeare, added by an unidentified early (the hand appears to be eighteenth-century) reader. The note appears in the early Jacobean Roman tragedy Sejanus, against a speech discussing how the clients of the evil favourite ‘smile and betray’, and it reads ‘A Man may smile, and smile and be a Villain’. Elsewhere in this copy marginalia identify Jonson’s classical sources. Here the reader seems to be proposing Hamlet as a source. Taking this early perception as its starting point, my paper examines the concern of both plays with how emotion as well as intention may be hidden. Jonson, often characterised as a Stoic more interested in the intellect than the life of the emotions, has featured little in the turn towards the emotions in early modern studies in which Shakespeare has, of course, been prominent. The longstanding (and not unrelated) critical tradition of opposing Shakespeare and Jonson, which has almost always worked to Jonson’s disadvantage, has been largely discredited as Jonson scholars have argued persuasively for their man’s distinctive achievements. Yet, this paper argues, Hamlet and Sejanus have a shared concern with the concealment of emotion and its political consequences. What underlies that concern in the latter play is Jonson’s reading of Seneca, particularly the tragedy Medea. Bringing Hamlet into this intertextual nexus draws our attention to a subtle, integrated strand of Senecan thought in Shakespeare’s tragedy. The paper thus reconfigures the usual opposition of Shakespeare and Jonson, arguing that Shakespeare’s classicism may be more pervasive and Jonson’s interest in the emotions more profound than comparisons between the two writers have tended to recognise.

The Goblet Words of Hamlet: Indirect Communication in Shakespeare and Daoist Zhuangzi

SILVAN RUS
Queensland Shakespeare Ensemble

Navigating the philosophical realms of aesthetics and language, this paper will demonstrate the parallels between Shakespeare’s Hamlet and Daoist philosophy – particularly from the Zhuangzi. The paper will argue for the use of indirect communication in what seems to be a neglected mode of sharing ideas in Western philosophical discourse within the context of an ever-changing world. The perspective of the actor in performance will also be adopted in this paper. Zhuangzi calls words that last through changes ‘goblet words’, they are words that are adaptive, and are likened to a goblet that tips itself once full and stands for filling when empty. The paper will illustrate the political, familial and psycho-emotional changes throughout the life of Hamlet and the ‘goblet words’ that Shakespeare wields in the play in response to those changes.

Alluding to Friedrich Schiller’s warring faculties of ‘form’ and ‘sense’ mediated by the ‘play’ drive, the paper then formulates the ‘infinite in faculty’ that Hamlet refers to in his ‘what a piece of work is a man’ speech according to Chapter 42 of Laozi’s Dao De Jing. Travelling etymologically by translating the drives of Schiller into Chinese (Mandarin), the human faculties will be explored through an ekphrastic analysis of the Chinese characters. This will further expand into Daoist ideas of creativity, inner-alchemy, wówéi (no-effort) and wúxin (no-mind/heart). The performance of Hamlet and its socio-political importance will also be stressed by drawing parallels to the play and the contemporary world. The paper then refers to the performance practice and philosophy of the Queensland Shakespeare Ensemble under the Artistic Direction of Rob Pensalfini.

By linking several of Shakespeare’s plays, the paper points out that prisons are a recurring motif throughout his works and argues that Hamlet is not a prisoner behind bars but of binaries. The paper highlights the consolation of the text and the value of live performance as a means of indirect communication, emulating the soteriological effect of the Zhuangzi and Laozi’s Dao De Jing that frees one from stasis in a world of binaries.

The paper will conclude with remarks on the ‘goblet words’ of Hamlet that make Shakespeare’s words the best for adaptation in any context no matter how adverse, even 400 years after the playwright’s death.

Ian McEwan’s Nutshell as Avant-Garde Hamlet

ROBERT S. WHITE
The University of Western Australia

Nutshell (2016) is an experimental novel which undoubtedly will also find an enduring literary status into the future. It is a creative revision of Hamlet, which is copiously referenced in the novel and provides its title, from the passage which is the epigram, ‘Oh, God, I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space – were it not that I have bad dreams’. Whereas
Hamlet begins with the improbable report of a ghost come from Purgatory to report a murder, the novel takes as its basic conceit the no less unlikely stream of consciousness of the foetus of Hamlet in the days before he is born, overhearing the whole plot and execution of the murder of his poet-father (John Cairncross) whose sonnets are curiously reminiscent of Shakespeare’s, by his duplicitous mother [Trudy–Gertrude] and immensely crass uncle [Claude–Claudius]. The adulterers, Trudy and Claude, are overheard by the baby plotting and carrying out the murder of John in order to get his rambling house in St John’s Wood, London, valued at 7 million pounds. From this premise unweaves a cleverly controlled murder story with an obscured but menacing ending. The unborn baby vows revenge. The novel is a brilliantly conceived and controlled tour de force and draws on the deep strain of black wit in Hamlet itself, as well as on the play’s substructure as a murder mystery. What interests me is that Nutshell perfectly exemplifies my prior argument that Hamlet itself is an inherently avant-garde work, which helps to explain why it has fuelled so many revolutionary works and concepts over centuries. If it had been published before my book, Avant-Garde Hamlet (2015), I would have used it as a consummation of my argument, and in fact in a curious way even the central phrase which I use in my book to describe avant-garde movements (’ever new, ever now’) occurs in modified form in McEwan’s book as ‘But here’s what Shakespeare’s characters, with a particular emphasis on the character of Hamlet.

Peter Wilkins previously taught theatre arts at Narrabundah College in Canberra. Before returning to teaching, Peter worked as an actor and writer with Adelaide Festival Theatre’s TIE Team, Theatre ‘62 TIE, as director of Troika TIE’s Secondary Unit and as Artistic Director of Jigsaw Theatre Company. Peter is also a former deputy chief examiner of the International Baccalaureate Theatre Arts curriculum and an Executive Council member of the International Schools Theatre Association. Peter is a theatre writer and reviewer for The Canberra Times and the Canberra Critics Circle, and is the founding tutor of ‘Acting for the Fun of It’ professional development courses for teachers and actors. In 2010, Peter established the annual Come Alive Festival of Museum Theatre and has created museum theatre pieces ‘Stranded’, ‘Exile’ and ‘Miss Australia’ for performance at the National Museum and IMTAL and IMTAP conferences. He has published articles on museum theatre, presented workshops and seminars at museum theatre conferences and has conducted museum theatre workshops for teachers and local actors. Peter is a member of Museums Australia and the International Council of Museums (ICOM).

Robert White is Winthrop Professor in English and Cultural Studies at The University of Western Australia and a Chief Investigator in the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions [Europe, 1100–1800]. He has held an Australian Research Council Professorial Fellowship. His publications are mainly in the field of early modern literature, especially Shakespeare, and Romantic literature. They include John Keats: A Literary Life (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010; revised and corrected, paperback 2012); Pacifism in English Literature: Minstrels of Peace (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Natural Rights and the Birth of Romanticism in the 1790s (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); and Natural Law in English Renaissance Literature (Cambridge University Press, 1996), as well as articles on peace and literature. Most recently he has published Avant-Garde Hamlet (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2015) and Shakespeare’s Cinema of Love (Manchester University Press, 2016).

This presentation will take a practical workshop approach to exploring the inner conflict that exists in Shakespeare’s characters, with a particular emphasis on the character of Hamlet.

Peter Wilkins previously taught theatre arts at Narrabundah College in Canberra. Before returning to teaching, Peter worked as an actor and writer with Adelaide Festival Theatre’s TIE Team, Theatre ’62 TIE, as director of Troika TIE’s Secondary Unit and as Artistic Director of Jigsaw Theatre Company. Peter is also a former deputy chief examiner of the International Baccalaureate Theatre Arts curriculum and an Executive Council member of the International Schools Theatre Association. Peter is a theatre writer and reviewer for The Canberra Times and the Canberra Critics Circle, and is the founding tutor of ‘Acting for the Fun of It’ professional development courses for teachers and actors. In 2010, Peter established the annual Come Alive Festival of Museum Theatre and has created museum theatre pieces ‘Stranded’, ‘Exile’ and ‘Miss Australia’ for performance at the National Museum and IMTAL and IMTAP conferences. He has published articles on museum theatre, presented workshops and seminars at museum theatre conferences and has conducted museum theatre workshops for teachers and local actors. Peter is a member of Museums Australia and the International Council of Museums (ICOM).

EMOTIONS MAKE HISTORY

Six Hamlets in Search of a Ghost: Horror and Emotions in Cinematic Adaptations of the Ghost Scene

COLIN YEO

The University of Western Australia

Act 1, scene 5 of Hamlet is arguably one of the play’s most emotionally charged scenes. Given its supernatural subject matter, it is unsurprising to note that filmic adaptations of this scene utilise conventions that are associated with horror films. This paper analyses the various conventions that are used across several big and small screen adaptations of the ‘Ghost Scene’. Lawrence Olivier’s 1948 adaptation, Zeffirilli’s 1990 adaptation, Branagh’s 1996 adaptation, Almereyda’s 2000 adaptation and the BBC’s TV adaptations in 1980 and 2009. In varying degrees across these six filmic adaptations of the scene, techniques such as chiaroscuro, framing and non-diegetic sound are used to generate responses from audiences in a manner that is similar to the genre of horror film. A comparison of these techniques as they are utilised in iconic scenes from Murnau’s Nosferatu (1922), Hitchcock’s Psycho (1960) and Craven’s A Nightmare on Elm Street (1984) reveals an engagement with the conventions of the genre of horror in on-screen adaptations of Hamlet.

In light of this, Horatio’s fears about Hamlet being ‘tempted toward the flood’ by a ghost that ‘assumes a terrible form’ is one that warrants rethinking. In the genre of horror, these techniques are almost exclusively used in the characterisation of these texts’ central ‘villains’: Count Orlock, Norman Bates and Freddy Krueger. A reading of these conventions, as used across both textual genres, raises the possibility of reading Hamlet Senior as a horror film villain not unlike Orlock, Bates and Krueger.

Colin Yeo is a PhD candidate in English and Cultural Studies at The University of Western Australia. His research interests are in early modern literature, the literary Gothic and horror film. His doctoral research focuses on ideas of the Gothic in the poetry of the English Renaissance. Colin’s latest publication was a piece on Shakespearean supernaturalism for The Conversation commemorating the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare’s death.

An Actor’s Search for the Inner Conflict in Shakespeare’s Characters

PETER WILKINS

Independent Scholar

Robert White is Winthrop Professor in English and Cultural Studies at The University of Western Australia and a Chief Investigator in the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions [Europe, 1100–1800]. He has held an Australian Research Council Professorial Fellowship. His publications are mainly in the field of early modern literature, especially Shakespeare, and Romantic literature. They include John Keats: A Literary Life (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010; revised and corrected, paperback 2012); Pacifism in English Literature: Minstrels of Peace (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Natural Rights and the Birth of Romanticism in the 1790s (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); and Natural Law in English Renaissance Literature (Cambridge University Press, 1996), as well as articles on peace and literature. Most recently he has published Avant-Garde Hamlet (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2015) and Shakespeare’s Cinema of Love (Manchester University Press, 2016).

This presentation will take a practical workshop approach to exploring the inner conflict that exists in Shakespeare’s characters, with a particular emphasis on the character of Hamlet.

Peter Wilkins previously taught theatre arts at Narrabundah College in Canberra. Before returning to teaching, Peter worked as an actor and writer with Adelaide Festival Theatre’s TIE Team, Theatre ’62 TIE, as director of Troika TIE’s Secondary Unit and as Artistic Director of Jigsaw Theatre Company. Peter is also a former deputy chief examiner of the International Baccalaureate Theatre Arts curriculum and an Executive Council member of the International Schools Theatre Association. Peter is a theatre writer and reviewer for The Canberra Times and the Canberra Critics Circle, and is the founding tutor of ‘Acting for the Fun of It’ professional development courses for teachers and actors. In 2010, Peter established the annual Come Alive Festival of Museum Theatre and has created museum theatre pieces ‘Stranded’, ‘Exile’ and ‘Miss Australia’ for performance at the National Museum and IMTAL and IMTAP conferences. He has published articles on museum theatre, presented workshops and seminars at museum theatre conferences and has conducted museum theatre workshops for teachers and local actors. Peter is a member of Museums Australia and the International Council of Museums (ICOM).