Hamlet... by the book?

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UNIVERSITÉ TOULOUSE Jean Jaurès

ONLINE CONFERENCE
Laboratoire CAS

Part 1

Hamlet... by the book?

2nd December 2022

UNIVERSITÉ TOULOUSE - JEAN JAURÈS

9.00 ouverture / opening

9.15-10.30

Panel 1 "Come give us a taste of your quality: come, a passionate speech": Mythology and Performance in *Hamlet*

Chair: Christine Sukic (Université de Reims ; Société Française Shakespeare)

Estelle Rivier-Arnaud (Université Grenoble-Alpes)

« What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba' (2.2.511) ou comment 'régler le geste sur le mot'[1] »

Dans cette communication, je propose de mettre en regard deux scènes issues de *Hamlet* où la question de l'illusion et de l'interprétation théâtrale est posée. À l'Acte 2, scène 2 (507-558), Hamlet est stupéfait devant la capacité qu'ont les acteurs à feindre alors que lui-même est figé dans l'inaction quand bien même il aurait toute raison d'agir. L'interprétation de l'acteur, si criante de vérité, l'engage alors à faire jouer une pièce devant le roi Claudius par laquelle il pourra déceler sa faute car l'un des paradoxes du théâtre est de révéler la vérité du monde tangible grâce à l'illusion. À l'acte III, scène 2, nous retrouvons donc le prince danois avec une compagnie d'acteurs se préparant à interpréter *La souricière* (*The Mousetrap*, 3.2. 216). Hamlet livre alors ses conseils aux acteurs pourtant aguerris afin que la pièce qu'ils sont sur le point de jouer respecte les vertus du théâtre, « dont le but, dès l'origine et aujourd'hui, était et demeure de tendre pour ainsi dire un miroir à la nature […] » ("whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature […]", 17-19). Ces deux scènes constituent un condensé des grands principes fondateurs du théâtre moderne et seront analysées dans le contexte de la pièce, mais aussi pour l'impact qu'elles ont (eu) sur le rôle du théâtre et de l'acteur (modalités de jeu et impact sur le spectateur).

Agnès Lafont (IRCL-Université Paul Valéry Montpellier 3)

***'Hyperion's curls, the front of Jove himself" (3.4.56) : mythological portraits in* Hamlet**

In *Hamlet*, the Renaissance – the rediscovery of classical learning – is dramatised to pit an idealised past against a corrupted present. This presentation focuses on a key scene (3.4) that, for the benefit of Gertrude's eyes – and the audience's –, represents Hamlet's father, a solar king, and Hamlet's 'father's brother', a satyr, in a vivid stage image that echoes Hamlet's soliloquy: 'So excellent a king, that was to this / Hyperion a satyr' (1.2.139-40). As the change of style used for the tirade in fourteeners performed by the First player shows, mythological language in *Hamlet* stands for an Antique model of revenge. It sets a heroic, static and lost ideal to Hamlet, who is always torn between his godly apprehension and his quintessential nothingness. Yet classical mythology also provides an essential tool to decode the dynamic tensions between Hamlet, who is no Hercules, and his uncle Claudius: 'no more like my father / Than I to Hercules' (1.2.152–53), and is also useful for explaining why Hamlet, who is no Pyrrhus (Achilles' son), the slayer of Priam in the Trojan scenario of revenge (2.2.471), refuses to kill ruthlessly a kneeling Claudius (3.3.). This deliberate multiplication of portraits and anti-portraits in the play inscribes the tragic scenario in a remote time, thereby distancing spectators by the use of mythological models, even while mythology is simultaneously moving spectators with impossible onstage reenactments, articulations of faithful reflections, and the shattering of mirrors.

10.30 Coffee break

10.45-12.00

Panel 2 "In my youth, I suffered much extremity for love": Hamlet, Gender & Emotions

Chair: Jeanne Mathieu (Université Toulouse - Jean Jaurès)

Anne Sophie Refskou (Aarhus University)

"'Twas Aeneas' talk to Dido': Hamlet, Gender and Redirecting Tragic Emotion'

This paper focuses on act 2, scene 2 of *Hamlet*, specifically on the first Players' speech, introduced by Hamlet as "Aeneas' talk to Dido" (2.2.384). The speech depicts the fall of Troy, the murder of King Priam and the plight of Hecuba, "the mobled queen" (2.2.440). The Player's compassionate embodiment of Hecuba's grief famously spurs Hamlet's subsequent soliloquy, but this paper focuses on another transgender adoption of a classical figure who is central to the scene: Dido, Aeneas' compassionate listener, who Shakespeare inherited from Virgil's Aeneid and from Marlowe and *Nashe's Dido Queen of Carthage*. The paper will argue that Hamlet in this scene identifies with Dido and that, in so doing, he definitively forfeits any plausible trajectory towards revenge and patriarchal reinstatement. Hamlet's classical role model ought to be the obvious male one: Aeneas, a figure of filial piety and imperial determination. Dido, on the other hand, represents an emotional force, both in Virgil's account and in Marlowe and Nashe's play, but she is inevitably sacrificed on the altar of Aeneas' quest to found an empire. Casting Hamlet as Dido in this scene, rather than as Aeneas, signals to the audience that his fate too will be bound up with sacrifice and a failed lineage.

Hannah C. Wojciehowski (University of Texas at Austin)

***Embodied Simulation and Emotional Engagement with Fictional Characters: Lessons from* Hamlet.**

The cognitive turn in psychology, neuroscience, linguistics, and philosophy at the end of the twentieth century, and the emerging research paradigm of embodied cognition have generated new methodologies and new concepts for understanding our responses to fictional characters. Why do we care about literary characters, as cognitive critic Blakey Vermeule asks in her 2009 book of the same title? What draws us to them so insistently—especially a protagonist like Shakespeare's Hamlet? Viewers might admire and sympathize with Hamlet's passion, intelligence, cunning and courage in facing his own death. Yet there are also less admirable qualities and actions to take into account. Hamlet might even be considered an antihero because of the complex identifications he invites, despite or because of the repellent and amoral sides of his character. Hamlet the character, as well as *Hamlet* the play, offers unique insights into the phenomena of viewer/reader identification with, sympathy for, emotional contagion by, and attachment to fictional characters—separate yet overlapping phenomena that I will explore in this talk

1. Traduction de Jean-Michel Déprats, Folio théâtre, 2002, p. 179.
2. Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*, Paris, Gallimard, 1972, p. 31.
3. Gaston Bachelard, *L'eau et les rêves. Essai sur l'imagination de la matière*, Paris, Le Livre de poche, 1942, p. 102.

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12.15 Lunch Break

13.30

Plenary Session / Conférence plénière

Chair: Gordon McMullan (King's College London)

Heather A. Hirschfeld (University of Tennessee Knoxville),

"Report me to the unsatisfied': Hamlet,* Hamlet *and textual exchange"

As the poison "o'ercrows [his] spirit," Hamlet worries about publicity. "Report me and my cause aright," he instructs Horatio, "To the unsatisfied." Hamlet fastens here on a term -- satisfaction –used on stage and in print to mediate relationships between plays, books, authors, and audiences. Such a mediating function, I explain, derives from satisfaction's long semantic history as a principle of religious, juridical, and economic atonement or restitution, shifted here to account for the practical and affective experience of narrative or textual exchange. In this paper I explore *Hamlet's* multiple scenes of reportage, testing out the possibilities they afford for satisfactory reception. These scenes culminate in Hamlet's dying concern with the unsatisfied, and I conclude by assessing the ways in which the protagonist, even with his last breath, tries to orchestrate his story "by the book" for potential audiences.

14.40 Break

14.45-16.15

Panel 3 Hamlet's "Words, words, words"

Chair: Nathalie Rivere de Carles (Université Toulouse - Jean Jaurès)

Pascale Drouet (Université de Poitiers)

Du délire d'Ophélie au récit de Gertrude : théâtralisation de la fragmentation, esthétique de la recomposition

« La folie, c'est le déjà-là de la mort »[2] : tout se passe comme si la célèbre formule de Foucault trouvait son illustration parfaite dans *Hamlet*. Mettant en regard les propos décousus d'Ophélie (Acte IV, scène 5) et le récit de sa noyade par Gertrude (Acte IV, scène 7), deux moments indissociables au point de former un diptyque, on s'interrogera sur la façon de donner à voir et à entendre la folie sur la scène élisabéthaine – selon un procédé mettant en jeu les notions de désarticulation, d'articulation, et de ré-articulation. On se demandera, dans un premier temps, en quoi le discours d'Ophélie, ses bribes de ballades et sa gestuelle tendent un miroir à son déchirement psychique et portent en germe sa mort à venir, en quoi cette scène nous offre effectivement « a document in madness » (4.5.176). Dans un deuxième temps, on verra que ses propos, en apparence incohérents, sont riches d'une symbolique signifiante (on convoquera, notamment, *The Herball* publié par John Gerard en 1597) et dégagent une force subversive permettant d'articuler une critique sociopolitique de l'autorité patriarcale. Enfin, dans un troisième temps, on analysera la façon dont le récit poétique de Gertrude recompose ce qui était épars, donne paradoxalement vie à une scène de noyade, et fait d'Ophélie ce que Bachelard a appelé « une image fondamentale de la rêverie des eaux »[3] et qui n'a cessé d'inspirer peintres et poètes.

Brian Walsh (Boston University)

***Horatio's 'Mote': Motives for Metaphor in Q2* Hamlet**

Horatio compares the Ghost to a "mote" that "trouble[s] the mind's eye" in the first scene of *Hamlet*, in a speech unique to the second quarto (1604). In this paper, I will examine this line alongside those that follow about omens in ancient Rome that presaged the death of Julius Caesar. Chief among my aims will be to examine whether the speech is internally coherent, or whether it involves a non-sequitur in the move from the "mind's eye" metaphor to the discourse on Caesar's death, and to assess what it adds to the texture of Q2's version of the opening scene. I will glance as well at Horatio's final exchanges with Hamlet and Fortinbras in Act 5 in order to consider whether any of his words there, including his claim to be an "antique Roman" at heart, resolve or rework any of his initial musings about Denmark's brewing calamities. The "mote in the mind's eye," I will propose, is an acute metaphor for understanding the peculiarly irritating power of the past within the play, as well as the longstanding power of the play itself on the imagination of audiences and readers.

Hilary Dennis (Actor, Producer) on directing *Hamlet* (La Mama Experimental Theatre Club, NY; 27-28 Aug 2022)

16.30-16.45 Conference End / Clôture

Hamlet will return on 10th February 2023 in Montpellier!