



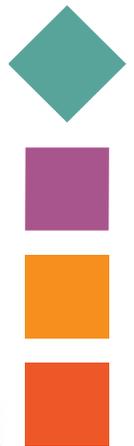
Waseda University Brussels Office
早稲田大学ブリュッセルオフィス

Shakespeare in a Polarised World

WORKSHOP
SERIES

Abstracts and Bios

Friday 6 to Sunday 8 March 2026





Shakespeare in a Polarised World

Friday 6 to Sunday 8 March 2026

Speaker



Ewan FERNIE (University of Birmingham - UK)

Bio Ewan Fernie is Chair, Professor and Fellow at the Shakespeare Institute, Stratford-upon-Avon. His books include: *Shame in Shakespeare*, *The Demonic: Literature and Experience*, *Shakespeare for Freedom*, 'Macbeth, Macbeth' (a novel cowritten with Simon Palfrey and described by philosopher Slavoj Žižek as 'a miracle, an instant classic'), *Spiritual Shakespeares*, *Redcrosse: Remaking Religious Poetry for Today's World*, *Thomas Mann and Shakespeare: Something Rich and Strange*, and *New Places: Shakespeare and Civic Creativity*. For many years, he co-edited the groundbreaking 'Shakespeare Now!' series. He has held visiting positions at Eton College, the Centre for Advanced Study at the University of Munich, the University of Malmö, the Australian Catholic University, and the University of Queensland (twice). He will take up a further fellowship at LMU, Munich in 2027. From 2019-2023, Fernie was Director of the 2-million-pound lottery-funded 'Everything to Everybody' Project, which revived the world's first great Shakespeare library with people and communities across Birmingham. In *Walking Shadow* (Bloomsbury, 2026), Gregory Doran features his campaign to celebrate Birmingham's *First Folio* as 'the People's Folio': the only *First Folio* in the world bought for the purposes of comprehensive education. The public lecture he gave on Australia's only, Birmingham-gifted *First Folio* received national attention across Australian media. He was academic anchor for the BBC's series, *Shakespeare: Rise of a Genius*, and recently appeared on *Shakespeare, My Family and Me*, with Dame Judi Dench. Fernie is currently completing a book called 'Anti-Hero: Thomas Carlyle' while beginning work on another titled *Shakescene: The Double Life of William Shakespeare.* He has a third in the pipeline, about Birmingham in the nineteenth century, provisionally entitled Shakespearean City.

Title *Unspeakable Shakespeare: Carlyle, Moldbug, and Nick Land'*

Abstract Shakespeare Studies has straightforwardly aligned itself with the liberal and progressive 'social justice' movement, but of course social justice has been and can be variously construed. Carlyle's influential essay (originally a lecture) on Shakespeare foreshadows liberal universalism at its best, and Carlyle demonstrably furthered social justice in a range of progressive causes. And yet, 'The Hero is Poet' itself is shadowed by authoritarian nationalism, if not the white supremacism which Carlyle scandalously came to embrace. The wave of theory which swept through literary criticism as an enlivening force from the 80s onwards was fundamentally (if sometimes complacently) aligned with the Left. But, in the end, the exclusion of right-wing perspectives paradoxically enabled them to flourish as a dissident phenomenon on the so-called intellectual dark web.



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Abstract The Humanities in general, and Shakespeare Studies in particular, have been slow to catch up with this. Curtis Yarvin, assuming the Carlylean soubriquet of Mencius Moldbug and adopting Carlyle as his favourite philosopher, advanced a provocatively right-wing programme which demonstrably influenced the Donald Trump White House. By 2025, he had come in from the cultural cold to the extent of being interviewed by the *New York Times*, *The Spectator* and many other mainstream outlets. Nick Land, who is central to the story of radical theory in the UK, joined Yarvin as the other face of what became known as ‘neoreaction’, complicating the narrative which would distance modern literary studies absolutely from right-wing perspectives. Yarvin is (or says he is) an Oxfordian. Land has recently started to propound the cultural creativity of the national canon, albeit in part by arguing that it provides the precondition for dissident thought as iconoclasm. Yarvin, Land and Carlyle all draw on the example of *Hamlet*. The provocations of re-reading Carlyle and of these avowedly right-wing thinkers open up occluded or off-limits issues such as sovereignty, inequality and morally compromising realpolitik that are ‘there’ in Shakespeare, and they do so in more troublingly contemporary ways than did Shakespeare criticism’s confrontation with the Shakespearean speculations of the Nazi jurist Carl Schmitt. But I will argue that Carlyle’s morally serious, ashamed and self-sacrificing plunge into worldly guilt and complicity is ultimately very different from the dissident gestures of Yarvin and Land and a productive if perilous way to face up to some of the most urgent and dangerous issues of our time and the moral complexity of Shakespeare as himself a pioneer of secular accommodations to this world.



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Speaker



Rieko ISHIBUCHI (Keio University - Japan)

Bio Rieko Ishibuchi is Assistant Professor of Keio University, Shonan Fujisawa Campus. She obtained her PhD at Tokyo Woman's Christian University in 2020. Her research interests lie in early modern literature and culture, especially Shakespeare's works and women's writing. Her publications include *The Act of Speaking in Urania and Volpone: From the Viewpoints of Cross-Cultural Awareness and Gender in The Green Fuse and the Green Garden: Festschrift in Honour of Hiroto Iwanaga* (2020) and 'The Unmarried Characters in Mary Wroth's *Love's Victory* and Shakespeare's *As You Like It*' (2013). She worked as Assistant Professor at the Tsubouchi Memorial Theatre Museum, Waseda University, and taught at Waseda University, Chuo University and Tokyo Woman's Christian University.

Title *'I am a man again': Translation, Gender and Humanity in Macbeth*

Abstract In Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, the word 'man' reflects one of the important themes of the play: the masculinity of *Macbeth*. In Act 1 Scene 7, while Macbeth and Lady Macbeth plot the murder of King Duncan, Macbeth responds to his manipulating wife, saying 'I dare do all that may become a man' (1.7.50). At the banquet scene in Act III, sc 4, Macbeth, trembling with fear as he believes he has seen a ghost of Banquo, says 'What man dare, I dare' (3.4.115). After the ghost exits, he, relieved, confesses 'I am a man again' (3.4.12). Macbeth refers to this word 'man' at these crucial moments of the play. One of the linguistic characteristics of 'man' in English is its polysemy. A man means both a human being and an adult male human being. More specifically, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, 'Man was considered until the 20th cent, to include women by implication, though referring primarily to males'. In *Macbeth*, this word also implies binary oppositions, such as human/non-human and masculinity/femininity. Therefore, in English productions of the play, it is up to audience members how to interpret 'man', depending on the dramatic contexts. On the other hand, Japanese translations of 'man' in *Macbeth* reflect each translator's interpretations. They sometimes may limit the audiences interpretive possibilities by eliminating the ambiguity of 'man' in English, while, in other Shakespeare in a Polarised World Conference at the Waseda University Brussels Office examples, the linguistic ambiguity of Japanese and a translator's interpretations expand the scope of interpretations of the play. Considering the historical and cultural contexts in which each translation has been made in Japan, this paper will explore the versatility of Japanese translations of 'man' in *Macbeth* in order to elucidate the potential of non-anglophone translations of Shakespeare as a site of linguistic and intercultural dialogue about translation, gender and human existence in the 21st century. In doing so, it also aims at discussing what we share in this current polarized world, the very humanity of ourselves.



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Speaker



Daniel GALLIMORE (University of Birmingham - UK)

Bio Daniel Gallimore received his doctorate from Oxford in 2001 for a thesis on the treatment of prosody in Japanese translations of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and has been teaching Shakespeare at universities in Japan since 2003, with a focus on the comedies. His recent publications including a monograph, *The Japanese Shakespeare: Language and Context in the Translations of Tsubouchi Shôyô* (Routledge *Advances in Translation and Interpreting Studies* (2024)), and a chapter on translation in *Contemporary Readings in Global Performances of Shakespeare* (ed. Alexa Alice Joubin, Bloomsbury Arden, 2024). Further information on his activities can be found at his homepage, www.sheikusupia.net.

Title *Shôyô, Shakespeare, and the Truth of History*

Abstract In his polemic on historical drama of the 1890s, the Shakespeare translator Tsubouchi Shôyô adopts a maverick stance that in opposition to the Aristotelian argument that 'poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular', what is in fact most significant about drama is its relation to historical truth rather than the poetics and dramaturgy that may support that truth. Shôyô's context is the reform of kabuki history plays (jidaimono) about which he writes in his landmark essay *Waga kuni no shigeki* (Historical Drama in Japan, 1893-4) that 'because these plays ignore the historical aspects, even characters, in favour of the depiction of human feelings, all they are doing is borrowing the names, times and places of the past'. Moreover, while Shôyô admires Shakespearean drama for achieving a balance of historical and poetic truth that he hoped his native playwrights might emulate, even Shakespeare according to Shôyô's polemic must be judged on his historicity. Whatever one may think of his theory, the Aristotelian distinction between history and poetry remains relevant to our information-obsessed age, with its divisive potential for abuse of knowledge and frequent denials of history, and there also seems to me to be a parallel between Shôyô's rather anxious grasping after truth in an era of radical disjuncture following the Meiji Restoration of 1868 and our own era of heightened uncertainty. My presentation will focus mainly on the Shakespearean references in *Waga kuni no shigeki*, but I am also interested in Shôyô's strategies for making myth out of history (as it were) with his pioneering translation of the '*Complete Works*' (1909-28). Translation is meant to overcome, but can also enunciate differences, in Shôyô's case between the ideals of Meiji enlightenment and the aesthetics of his feudal past that in other respects are crucial to how he reads Shakespeare.



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Speaker



Jeff GOLDMAN (University of Birmingham - UK)

Bio Jeff Goldman is a PhD student in Shakespeare Studies at the University of Birmingham's Shakespeare Institute. His research focuses on examining the unique experiences of 'third culture kids' in early modern London and the way those experiences are reflected in Shakespeare's plays. Jeff recently received an MA in Shakespeare and Theatre from the Shakespeare Institute, for which he was awarded the Tom Mathe-son Prize for outstanding work in Theatre and Creativity.

Title *'For I was born at sea': Shakespeare's Marina as a Third Culture Kid*

Abstract In today's polarized world, cultural identity and one's right to belong are points of fierce contention and division, particularly for those brought up between different cultures and caught between contrasting cultural and national identities. In the U.S., questioning the allegiance and identity of such people, termed 'third culture kids' by sociologist Ruth Hill Useem, has become not only a common method of political attack but a genuine threat in an era of aggressive deportation. More broadly, third culture kids face a range of psychological challenges, including rootlessness and a weakened sense of identity. Still, as David C. Pollock notes, third culture kids 'are not new, and they are not few. They have been a part of the earth's population from the earliest migrations.' These people caught on the threshold between cultural identities were a key part of the fast-growing population of early modern London, and their experiences are reflected with clarity and compassion by several of Shakespeare's characters. This paper will argue that by viewing one such character, Jessica in *The Merchant of Venice*, through the lens of the third culture kid, we can gain fresh insight into her predicament through the course of the play, better appreciate the obstacles faced by the third culture kids of early modern London, and develop a deeper understanding of the challenges such people face today. In exploring Jessica's unique position in Merchant, the paper will consider current research on the experiences of third culture kids as well as the circumstances in early modern London that created significant challenges for such people. Looking at Jessica and other Shakespearean characters through this lens can present these characters in a new light while highlighting the ways in which Shakespeare's understanding of their plight continues to speak to the challenges faced by third culture kids today.



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Speaker



Caminey KUROPATWA (University of Birmingham - UK)

Bio Caminey Kuropatwa is a doctoral researcher at the Shakespeare Institute, and a Wolfson Postgraduate Scholar in the Humanities. Her PhD interrogates constructions of interracialism and mixedness in early modern drama, situating Shakespeare within broader questions of race and identity. She completed her MA in Shakespeare Studies with Distinction, winning the Sir Stanley Wells Prize for her dissertation, part of which will appear in a forthcoming Routledge collection. Her research explores how early modern texts engage with the complexities of racial difference and can continue to inform contemporary debates around inclusion and representation.

Title *'Parti-coloured lambs': Constructions of Mixedness and Interracial Imaginings in The Merchant of Venice*

Abstract Recent years have seen heightened racial tensions in the public arena, from hate speech and anti-immigration riots in England to the debates around Kamala Harris's ethnicity during the US presidential campaign. At the same time, census data indicates a rise in individuals identifying as mixed-race or interracial. Yet the binary identity politics that dominate contemporary discourse often obscure the complexities of interracialism. Such binarism, this paper suggests, mirrors early modern thinking, and at a time where it appears that social division is deepening, it is vital to scrutinise interracialism and mixedness in order to understand both the long history of integration and mixing in England and its place in the historical manufacturing of race.

This paper examines the construction and representation of mixed identities in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. Drawing on Premodern Critical Race Studies, it interrogates depictions of racial, religious, and cultural mixing within the play, suggesting that these representations reveal anxieties surrounding mixedness in early modern England and reflect a national consciousness grappling with the formation of a cohesive identity during a dramatic period of change and transition. By bringing this history into dialogue with present debates on identity and belonging, the paper highlights how Shakespeare's drama can help us think through contemporary polarisation, advocating for models of race and identity beyond binary frameworks.



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Speaker



Rieko SUZUKI (Waseda University - Japan)

Bio Rieko spent her graduate years in England where she obtained her MA at the University of York and PhD at the University of Manchester. Her research focused on the Romantic and Victorian writers, such as Percy Bysshe Shelley, Mary Shelley, Robert Browning, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Her second book monograph entitled *The Shelleys and the Brownings: Textual Re-Imagining and the Question of Influence* was published in 2022 by Liverpool University Press. Since then, her interest has included Irish literature, namely the works of the Anglo-Irish writer Maria Edgeworth. Her next research project focuses on republicanism as expressed in the writings of Mary Shelley, Robert Browning, and Edgeworth. Since completing her PhD in England, she has returned to Japan and has been teaching at Waseda University since 2011. Her main responsibility has been to teach English and English literature to law students at the Faculty of Law where she is based.

Title *History and Historiography in Mary Shelley's The Fortune of Perkin Warbeck, a Romance*

Abstract Mary Shelley, now a well-recognized canonical writer of the Romantic period, is mostly known for her widely acclaimed *Frankenstein* (1818). Her literary heritage of having Mary Wollstonecraft, the pioneering feminist, as the mother, and the philosopher William Godwin with republican and radical sympathies as the father, not to mention the radical Romantic poet, Percy Bysshe Shelley as the husband has provided her with rich material for her novels and essays as she writes in the introduction to the revised 1831 edition of *Frankenstein*. Nonetheless, as *Frankenstein* attests, her creative output is also one of her own that singles her out as a unique and unrivaled novelist. One of her central interests throughout her literary career was the relationship between fiction and history. As a second attempt to engage in the subject matter after *Valperga* (1823), Mary Shelley took on English history by focusing on the controversial figure, Perkin Warbeck, as a way of probing into history and historiography. Her historical research was thorough as had been the case with *Valperga*, thereby familiarizing herself with the documents available up until her time. This paper examines her second historical fiction by focusing on the historical material which she is known to have used and Shakespeare's historical plays.



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Sophie CHIARI (Université de Clermont-Ferrand - France)

Bio Sophie Chiari is Professor of early modern English literature at Université Clermont Auvergne, France and the Director of Maison des Sciences Humaines. Her current research deals with environmental issues in Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Her latest publications include *Shakespeare's Ecology of Natural Resources* (Bloomsbury, forthcoming), and *Shakespeare and the Environment. A Dictionary* (Bloomsbury, 2022). She has edited or coedited numerous volumes on Shakespeare, such as *Shakespeare and the Poetics and Politics of Relevance*, with Dympna Callaghan (Palgrave Macmillan, 2024), and *The Ecology of Dress in Shakespeare and his Contemporaries*, with Anne-Marie Miller Blaise (Edinburgh University Press, 2024).

Title *Engaging with the Past: Conflict, Ruins, and Preservation in Shakespeare*

Abstract *'Issues of [...] political polarization challenge Shakespeare's characters just as they continue to test us today'*, Charles McNulty wrote ten years ago in the Los Angeles Times. I would like to address one of the environmental consequences of this polarization, materialized by ruins scattered across the landscape. Through the violence of the Reformation, Shakespeare's contemporaries had indeed a special experience of ruins. Everyone has in mind the *'bare ruin'd choirs'* of Sonnet 73 which refer to the dissolution of the monasteries back in the 1530s. Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* significantly takes up a similar imagery, but the playwright twists it by applying it to Buckingham, a *'noble ruined man'* (2.1.54) who blames the king for his downfall and praises his predecessor who, by contrast, had restored his dignity *'out of ruins'* (2.1.114). The word *'ruins'* also appears in other plays and poems, where it also signals political dissensions. In *The Rape of Lucrece*, the *'wreck'* of Collatine's honour (l. 841) symbolizes the end of the monarchy in Rome and the advent of a republic. In *Julius Caesar*, Antony acknowledges that the late Caesar should now be seen as *'The ruins of the noblest man / That ever lived in the tide of times'* (3.1.256-57). These examples suggest that ruins served to designate both defaced monuments and human beings trapped by an excessively polarized society. I will thus reflect on ways of addressing the political and religious processes in Shakespeare's works that (literally) saturate the subsoil of people's lives and that persist over time. I will first associate the early modern English aesthetics of ruins with political upheaval and dislocation before examining if and how the playwright differentiates (partial) destruction from (total) obliteration. This focus on ruins, rubble and debris, be they actual or hypothetical, shall enable me to unpack the significance of cultural heritage in early modern England. Beyond the dramatic universe of the playwright, how were the metonyms of violence and destruction look upon in Shakespeare's time? Ultimately, with these observations in mind, I hope to contribute to the much-polarized, current debate on the reconstruction of ruins, a debate which is all the more significant as it highlights conflicting viewpoints on history, and national history in particular.



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Speaker



Kaori ASHIZU (Kobe University - Japan)

Bio Kaori Ashizu, Ph.D., is a Professor of English in the Graduate School of Humanities at Kobe University. She studied at the University of Kyoto, the Shakespeare Institute at the University of Birmingham, and the University of Oxford. Her research interests primarily focus on the reception and adaptation of Shakespeare in Japan. Her representative publications include the Japanese monograph *Matagura Karamiru Hamuretto: Sheikusupia to Nihonjin (Hamlet Through Your Legs: Shakespeare and the Japanese)*, Kyoto University Press, 2020), and English articles such as “‘Macbeth and the Theme of Evil in Akira Kurosawa’s *Throne of Blood* and *The Bad Sleep Well*,” *Global Macbeth* (2026 forthcoming), “‘Hamlet through Your Legs’: Radical Rewritings of Shakespeare’s Tragedy in Japan,” *Critical Survey*, 33.1 (2020); “*Zen Hamlet* - Kuniyoshi Munakata’s Noh Adaptation of Shakespeare’s Tragedy,” *Shakespeare Studies*, 56 (2018); and “Grave Relations: *Hamlet*, Jyuran Hisao’s ‘Hamuretto,’ the Emperor, and the War,” *Cahiers Élisabéthains*, 87 (2015).

Title *Bridging Polarised Cultures—Yumi Morishita’s Manga Adaptation of Hamlet*

Abstract This paper examines Yumi Morishita’s Manga adaptation of *Hamlet*, *Hamlet in Osaka* (2005), to illustrate how Shakespeare adaptations can bridge the cultural divide between elite and popular culture. Set in downtown Kishiwada, a ‘rough’ area of Osaka, Japan, the adaptation translates Shakespearean iambic pentameter into the blunt dialect of Kishiwada. The characters are not royals but ordinary people: the meditative prince becomes a juvenile delinquent, Gertrude a sturdy mother, and Claudius a good-natured househusband. Gertrude and Claudius are not married here, and the story culminates in the joyous birth of a baby. Nicknamed ‘Hamlet,’ the hero struggles to read a Japanese version of Shakespeare’s tragedy, constantly criticizing the ‘wimpy’ protagonist and his irreverent attitudes towards his parents. The manga Hamlet’s words and deeds, taken together, provide critical perspectives on the Shakespearean tragedy and hero.

In general, adapting Shakespeare into the forms of manga is an attempt to bridge cultural gaps by hybridizing media and widening its readership. However, this adaptation goes further, as the contrast and tension between cultural extremes incorporated into its plot supplies its creative drive. While benefiting from the cultural capital associated with Shakespeare, thus elevating the manga’s cultural status, the work ultimately sides with the popular Osaka culture, praising its positive worldview in contrast to that embodied by the pessimistic prince of Denmark. Conversely, the adaptation helps consolidate the ‘elite’ status of Shakespeare’s tragedy by provoking further thinking about the play. The manga ultimately fosters understanding and appreciation between different cultural spheres by making ‘elite’ culture readily accessible to pop culture. The work thus showcases the way Shakespearean adaptations have the potential to build bridges across cultural divides.



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Speaker



Abhik MAITI (St. Joseph University - India)

Bio Dr. Abhik Maiti is an Assistant Professor of English at St. Joseph's University. He holds a PhD from the University of Exeter, United Kingdom. His research focuses on video games as narrative and adaptive forms, with particular emphasis on how interactive media rework and reinterpret Shakespearean drama. His academic interests include Shakespeare studies, game studies, adaptation theory, postcolonial visual culture, digital humanities, and narrative theory.

Title *Shakespearean Video Games in the Machinery of Polarization*

Abstract Building upon Foucault's conception of discourse as constitutive of power relations, contemporary Shakespearean video games function as critical media archaeologies, leveraging Shakespeare's enduring conflicts to dissect the procedural logics underpinning 21st-century ideological polarization. Shakespearean video games - including *Elsinore*, *Play the Knave*, *To Be or Not To Be*, Infocom's *Hamlet*, and SuchArt's DLC - transcend adaptation to become critical interrogations of contemporary polarization, utilizing procedural rhetoric (Bogost) to transform dramatic conflict into operationalized systems. These games operate as countergaming experiments (Galloway), decentralizing authorial control (Barthes) and compelling players to confront their complicity within divisive ideological machinery. This research is structured by four critical questions: First, how do these games model polarization as an inescapable structural deadlock (evident in *Elsinore*'s fatalistic time loop and Infocom's parser-enforced determinism), thereby naturalizing systemic constraints in ways that risk resigning players to complicit navigation rather than liberation (critiquing Galloway's inherent ambivalence)? Second, in what ways do they leverage performativity (Butler) to expose identity construction as a contested battleground-rendered grotesquely visible in *Play the Knave*'s mocap interpretations or bounded within Such Art's curated 'echo chamber' studio yet potentially trivializing the material violence of real-world identity politics? Third, how do their interactive mechanics expose illusory agency within algorithmic choice architectures (Aarseth), satirizing the myth of neutral expression through 'To Be or Not To Be's' predetermined CYOA absurdities, thereby replicating the very algorithmic determinism they critique? Finally, to what extent do these systems function as Žižekian 'parallax gaps,' forcing an embodied confrontation with the player's role as both subject and sustainer of polarization? Collectively, these questions reveal how the games expose polarization's triple bind - structural, performative, and algorithmic - yet their critical power lies not in resolution but in Lacanian mirroring: the controller becomes an interface revealing the player's inescapable imbrication within the ideological systems simulated. Ultimately, this paper explores how, through their denial of catharsis and exposure of systemic paralysis, these Shakespearean video games enact Althusserian interpellation, transforming gameplay into a ludic diagnostic where the pixelated reflection compels players to recognize their agency as perpetually negotiated within - and constitutive of - the polarized machinery they seek to navigate.



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Seminar
Organizer



Jessica CHIBA (University of Birmingham - UK)

Bio Dr. Jessica Chiba is an Assistant Professor at the Shakespeare Institute of the University of Birmingham. Her research focuses on the intersection between Shakespeare and Philosophy, especially where questions about language and poetry intersect with issues surrounding human existence and knowledge. Her further research looks beyond English to consider how the translation of Shakespeare plays a part in intercultural communication in our world today.

Title *'Reason wonder may diminish': Shakespeare and the Freedom of Art*

Abstract Through Shakespeare, and particularly through a consideration of *The Winter's Tale*, this talk will explore the role that the infinite interpretability of art can play in human self-understanding and communication insofar as it presents an alternative to a normative, scientifically rationalizable view of the world. I propose that art and aesthetics, especially artworks that are cherished by so many, may form an alternative arena for communication and ethical relations between humans.



Shakespeare in a Polarised World

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Speaker



Michael DOBSON (University of Birmingham - UK)

Bio Michael Dobson is Director of the Shakespeare Institute, Stratford-upon-Avon, and Professor of Shakespeare Studies at the University of Birmingham: he is also a trustee of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, an honorary governor of the Royal Shakespeare Company, and secretary of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Shakespeare. He has taught at universities including Oxford, Harvard, London, the University of Illinois, and Peking University, and holds honorary degrees from Craiova (Romania) and Lund (Sweden). He has lectured on Shakespeare in more than thirty countries, and is co-director of the Shakespeare Centre, China, a board member of the Asian Shakespeare Intercultural Archive, and an honorary member of the Ukrainian National Academy. His books include *The Making of the National Poet* (1992), *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare* (with Stanley Wells, 2001), *England's Elizabeth* (with Nicola Watson, 2002), and *Shakespeare and Amateur Performance* (2011).

Title *Macbeth in a Divided World*

Abstract *Macbeth* remains one of Shakespeare's most popular and perennially topical plays on European stages, and since the 1990s it has been adapted repeatedly into Chinese operatic forms. Looking in particular at Contemporary Legends' classic Taiwanese version Kingdom of Desire, this paper will consider how Western and Eastern representations of political oppression have diverged and converged in the 21st century.



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Speaker



Janna van LEEUWEN (University of Birmingham, MA
Student - The Netherlands)

Bio Janna van Leeuwen is a Dutch scholar, writer, and performer. She has received a Bachelor's Degree in Media and Culture at the University of Amsterdam, with a minor in Creative Writing at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. She has recently completed a Master's Degree in Shakespeare and Creativity at the Shakespeare Institute, University of Birmingham. She is an active theatre practitioner, with experience in the works Shakespeare and Commedia Dell'Arte. Her current studies focus on the practical application of the Early Modern Fool in solo performances and full-length plays. In her spare time, she can be found fencing or juggling.

Title *Fools in a Polarised World: Ethic Fooling in modern performances.*

Abstract Today's comedy discourse is fraught with questions on sincerity and satire, if society should make light of heavy matters, and how to engage with an increasingly polarised audience. Comedy has the power to divide even further by making fun of the 'opposite' party. This deepens the polarisation and leaves people open for an abuse of power. A proposal to close this gap is an appeal to leave satire behind and to put the focus on sincerity. However, this would take away a fundamental aspect that makes comedy what it is. Instead, I propose that we look at the early modern clown/fool to answer some of the questions posed. In my research, I seek to answer how the practice of the early modern fool can offer comedians tools to give commentary in the current socio-political landscape of polarisation and growing censorship. Specifically, I have been in-depth researching how William Shakespeare's second principal comedian, Robert Armin, would have used in his acts. Through the mixture of Bakhtin's ideas of the carnivalesque and Levinas' ontological understanding of the Other as applied to Shakespeare's fools by Mehrdad Bidgoli, this essay aims to build a practical theory of how we can use the templates of the early modern fool in our current comedy writing. Practices such as the invited interaction of the audience, bringing a collective feeling through music and song, and a focus on a philosophical underlining message. This paper continues previous work presented at the Shakespeare Institutes into a how-to guide for practitioners who wish to use the early modern fool to create connections whilst critiquing the societal norms we often take for granted.



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Speaker



Chi-i LIN (National Sun Yat-sen University - Taiwan)

Bio Chi-I Lin is a Professor at the Center for General Education at National Sun Yat-sen University in Taiwan. She holds an MPhil degree from the Shakespeare Institute at the University of Birmingham and a PhD in English Literature from the University of Edinburgh. She has served as an Associate Editor for the *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education* (1 February 2021 to date). Her recent publications include *Empowering Undergraduate Students to Take Action: An Empathetic Mindset Towards Education for Sustainable Development* (2024, IJSHE) and *Intercultural Competence and Global Citizenship for Sustainability in the Digital Era* (forthcoming, Springer Nature). Her research interests investigate interdisciplinary learning, education for sustainable development, science culture and public engagement.

Title *'Strang shapes' of Changing Perceptions: A Case Study of Socio-Political Factors in University Students' Acting Practice with the Illusion of the Banquet in The Tempest*

Abstract This study investigates the acting experience of university students in their interpretations of the vanishing banquet scene in Shakespeare's play *The Tempest* (Act III, sc 3). It examines how the illusory elements of strange shapes, odd music, the banquet itself, the harpy, and magic, invite critical viewpoints that reflect the conflicts and values of a broader socio-cultural context. The objective of this research is to analyze the socio-political factors that shape the students' responses to the transformation depicted in the scene. Key dimensions of focus are motivation, knowledge, strategy, and action. These factors help detect the students' awareness of diverse perspectives and the contentious issues that have been drawn upon to reveal the meanings of the scene. The primary research question is: how are the concepts and meanings of diversity, freedom, and worldviews within the play perceived and acted upon? The research will analyze the students' acting works of the scene and conduct focus group interviews to observe students' changing perceptions of their interpretations of the scene. This study will also seek to carry out a cross-national comparative study to identify how the perceptions of this rich allegorical scene are informed by local socio-political references. The discussions of the findings, based on the results of analyzing the four dimensions, will explore how the scene (and a literary text in general) engages us in navigating socio-global challenges and impacts on our evolving perceptions and actions. The conclusion will examine the potential educational implications of performing the scene in fostering critical awareness of the current socio-political divisions. This awareness serves as the first step toward channeling diverse perspectives, supporting broader social transformation in the context of this study.



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Speaker



Nikolaos NIKOLAIDIS (University of Birmingham - UK)

Bio Nikolaos Nikolaidis is an emerging scholar of early modern English literature, specialising in Shakespeare studies, gender theory, and performativity. He holds a BA in English Language and Literature (summa cum laude) from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and an MA in Shakespeare Studies from the University of Birmingham, where he was awarded the University of Birmingham Masters Scholarship. He is also a recipient of the State Scholarships Foundation (IKY) Award for Academic Excellence. His research explores feminist and queer readings of Shakespeare, focusing on identity, embodiment, and power. He explores how literature engages critical theory and contemporary cultural discourse.

Title *Of Monsters and Men: Dissecting the Chimeric Bodies of Richard III and Macbeth*

Abstract This inquiry examines the monstrous constructions of Richard III and Macbeth, focusing on how Shakespeare stages the politically volatile body as a site of cultural and moral anxiety. Drawing on early modern theories of physiognomy and monstrosity, as well as contemporary work in disability studies, narrative prosthesis, and masculinity theory, the analysis explores how these figures are produced as hybrid, chimeric entities, as part man and part symbol. The central argument contends that the monstrous body in these tragedies functions as a dramatic metaphor for political rupture and societal fear, embodying a composite of internalised disorder and projected social threat.

The analysis sheds light on how Shakespeare constructs Richard's deformity as both cause and consequence of his villainy, transforming him into a body politic in crisis. Macbeth, meanwhile, becomes monstrous through his performative masculinity and descent into unnatural ambition, destabilising normative gender boundaries and moral hierarchies. In comparing and contrasting, particular attention is given to how Richard's monstrosity is constructed as congenital and visibly inscribed, whereas Macbeth's is acquired and psychically internalised, revealing distinct dramaturgical strategies on the politics of fear. From a methodological perspective, this study blends textual analysis with insights from cultural materialism and queer theory to interrogate how monstrous embodiment is used to stage ideological anxieties. The plays are read as reflecting and challenging early modern understandings of the body as both natural and political, individual and communal.

By re-evaluating these figures through a critical lens on bodies marked by difference, the argument lies in the idea that Shakespeare's tragedies model the kind of complex, multivoiced discourse the conference seeks to highlight. The monstrous body, far from being a marginal curiosity, becomes a central means through which Shakespeare interrogates political and moral polarisation, offering a reflection of fragmentation but also a site for potential.



Shakespeare in a Polarised World

Friday 6 to Sunday 8 March 2026

Speaker



Franca BELLARSI (Université Libre de Bruxelles - Belgium)

Bio Franca Bellarsi is associate professor at the Université libre de Bruxelles (Belgium). Her research and publications are equally divided between the Beat Generation, ecocriticism and eco-poetics, and English Romanticism. Concerning Ginsberg and other Beat authors, she has especially been interested in their syncretic mysticism and ecospirituality, as well as in the ecological and countercultural resurgences of Romanticism in them. For the next five years, she will also be steering the Shakespeare class at MA level in ULB's Anglophone Literatures programme.

Title *'Down in Arden I will die': the Beat Generation's Shakespeare*

Abstract In the Cold War era, the Beat Generation writers shared a feeling of inescapable 'otherness' and alienation within their own country, the United States. This sense of inevitable marginality led them to defy the war-waging mentality that, in their eyes, pervaded the entire political, economic, ecological and literary culture of a society thriving on dualities between the 'acceptable' and the 'reprehensible': 'American' versus 'un-American' values; reason versus madness; mind/intellect versus body; the ordered versus the organic; the human self versus the animal one; theism versus non-theistic spiritualities; heterosexual identities versus queer ones; and, not least, traditional, 'good taste' poetics versus iconoclastic, 'bad taste' experimentalism. In challenging what they perceived as an imprisoning society always 'at war' against some part of human experience, the Beats created their own alternative literary pantheon, one extending from Blake to the *Heart Sutra* and from Shakespeare to Dogen. Though Shakespeare and the Beats might appear as strange bedfellows to some, an attentive scrutiny of Beat writings reveals a different story: be it in their creative or non-fiction works, allusions to Shakespeare recur. One cannot fail to be surprised at the repeated mentions of him in Jack Kerouac's letters or Allen Ginsberg's interviews or experimental poetry classes. These references, moreover, reveal considerable familiarity with a range of plays from *Henry V* to *The Tempest*. My paper reflects on what Shakespeare meant to Kerouac and Ginsberg especially. Through their personal (re-)interpretation of him, the Bard proved one of the empowering forces in their development of an organic, free-flowing style, a poetics that, in turn, would also help them explore a non-dualistic understanding of consciousness and 'Nature.' My paper explores how instrumental their reading of Shakespeare was in helping the Beats break out of the alienating polarities of their time in relation to aesthetics, spirituality and ecology.



Shakespeare in a Polarised World

Friday 6 to Sunday 8 March 2026

Speaker



Shaul BASSI (Ca' Foscari University - Italy)

Bio Shaul Bassi is Professor of English and Environmental Humanities at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. His research interests include Shakespeare, postcolonial studies, environmental humanities, and Jewish studies. His publications include *Visions of Venice in Shakespeare* (co-edited with Laura Tosi, Ashgate, 2011); *Shakespeare's Italy and Italy's Shakespeare: Place, 'Race,' and Politics* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); *The Merchant in Venice: Shakespeare in the Ghetto* (co-edited with Carol Chillington Rutter, Edizioni Ca' Foscari, 2021); *Venice and the Anthropocene: An Ecocritical Guide* (co-edited, Wetlands, 2023); and *African Venice* (with Paul Kaplan, Wetlands, 2024). Other works include *Turbo Road: Il Kenya, i suoi scrittori, un bambino* (Meltemi, 2022); *Shakespeare: Guida al Mercante di Venezia* (Carocci, 2023); *Pianeta Ofelia: Fare Shakespeare nell'Antropocene* (Bollati Boringhieri, 2024); and a new Italian translation of *Il Mercante di Venezia* (Rizzoli, 2025). In 2016, he spearheaded the first performance of *The Merchant of Venice* in the Venetian Ghetto, collaborating with the New York - based Compagnia de' Colombari. He is currently editing *The Merchant of Venice* for the *Arden Shakespeare Fourth Series*.

Title *Miranda, Ophelia and the Drowned Partisan: Shakespeare at the Water's Edge*

Abstract This paper examines how teaching Shakespeare can become a pedagogical strategy for bridging political, cultural, and social divides, particularly in a moment of rising authoritarianism and ecological crisis. Developed within Italy's first MA in Environmental Humanities at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, the paper presents an ecofeminist classroom approach to *The Tempest* and *Hamlet* that links literary analysis to place-based inquiry and creative practice. Visual encounters with John Everett Millais's *Ophelia* (1851–52), John William Waterhouse's *Miranda – The Tempest* (1916), and Augusto Murer's tidal monument *La Partigiana* (1969) are used to prompt discussion of gendered vulnerability, political violence, and environmental precarity. Drawing on blue humanities and hydrofeminism, students are invited to read Shakespeare from Venice, a city marked by sea-level rise, contested memory, and global tourism. Their responses, translated into performance and visual-art projects, demonstrate how Shakespeare can function as a shared yet unstable cultural framework that enables critical dialogue across ideological difference. Rather than transmitting consensus, this pedagogy uses Shakespeare to cultivate political literacy, ethical attention, and collective responsibility in divided classrooms.



Shakespeare in a Polarised World

Friday 6 to Sunday 8 March 2026

Speaker



Lekan BALOGUN (University of Leeds - UK)

Bio Lekan Balogun is a lecturer in New Writing and Intercultural Performance at the School of Performance and Cultural Industries (PCI), University of Leeds, UK. Balogun has held fellowships at the National University of Ireland, Galway (Visiting Fellow); University of Cape Town (Andrew W. Mellon); University of Bayreuth (Experienced Researcher); and Universität zu Köln (Georg Forster Researcher/Alexander von Humboldt). He has worked as a playwright, director, and scholar for nearly three decades with organisations such as the Royal Court Theatre, London; British Council; Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC), Flinn Theater, Germany, and the National Troupe of Nigeria. He is a leading figure in the burgeoning scholarship on Shakespeare in the Nigerian context.

Title *'Give me liberty or give me death!': Othello/Otaelo and the Igbo Question in the Nigerian Political Space*

Abstract Studies have shown that postcolonial adapters often look beyond the colonial hierarchy that Shakespeare privileges and reworking the canon to address their own societies' concerns taking advantage of not only their inherent alien potentialities but also investing them with local relevance (Gilbert and Tompkins 1996; Loomba and Orkin 1998; Cartelli 1999). In this presentation I will discuss Ahmed Yerima's *Otaelo*, an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Othello* which fits this categorisation in the way it dramatizes the violence associated with the Osu caste system, a cultural practice of ostracism among the Igbo people of Nigeria, which invites us to reconsider the political and cultural divisions associated with the Igbo people and the implications of their polarisation in the Nigerian state. Projected within the context of moral and ethical values that govern relationships, the work dramatizes the intersection of fiction and reality as a language to articulate (racial) difference and the limits of common humanity that the Osu represents. In my discussion I will attempt three things: show how Yerima's *Otaelo* places the Osu practice at the forefront of a discussion about racism, discrimination and social construction of identity in Nigeria, secondly, how it mirrors the polarisation of the Igbo people in the Nigerian political space locating its roots in their failed attempt to secede from Nigeria as an independent nation with the name "Biafra" (recall the Nigeria Civil War 1967-1970), and, lastly, highlight how Yerima has also drawn inspiration from *Titus Andronicus* and *The Merchant of Venice* for his play in order to dramatize the Igbo people's agonizing grapple with the violence of polarisation.



Shakespeare in a Polarised World

Friday 6 to Sunday 8 March 2026

Speaker



Zehra HALILOGLUS (Humboldt University of Berlin - Germany)

Bio Zehra Haliloglu is a PhD candidate in English Literature at Humboldt University of Berlin, where she is completing a dissertation on Turkish Shakespeare. She holds a BA in English Literature from Bogaziçi University, an MA in Civilization Studies from Ibn Haldun University, and an MA in Intercultural Communication from Shanghai Theatre Academy. Her MA research focused on Mediterranean multiculturalism in Shakespeare and on Turkish Shadow Theatre. Zehra's research interests include global Shakespeares, early modern drama, multiculturalism, and theatre criticism. She has taught courses in these areas at higher education institutions in Turkey. In addition to Turkish and English, she works with German, Chinese, Arabic and French.

Title *Safe Text, Dangerous Questions: Avoiding Censorship with Hamlet in contemporary Turkey*

Abstract This paper argues that *Hamlet* has become a uniquely resonant text in modern Turkey, appropriated by diverse constituencies to articulate existential crises within the nation-state. Directors and translators, drawing on Shakespeare's authority as both a canonical Western playwright and a universally recognized literary genius, strategically employed Hamlet as a 'safe text' through which to stage the struggles of women, leftist activists, and Kurds while evading censorship. Building on existing scholarship on abundance of Turkish *Hamlets*, the paper contends that the play has assumed the role of a 'national play' for the Republic of Turkey, precisely because of its liminalities between modernity and tradition, East and West, centre and periphery, and imperial past and nation-state present, reflective of *Hamlet's* dilemmas and dualities. This argument is developed through an analysis of recent Kurdish adaptations of *Hamlet*, which negotiate the social and political tensions surrounding the Kurdish question. Taking Cemil Toksöz's 2012 production as a case study, the paper demonstrates how *Hamlet* has been reimaged to expose fractures in national identity and to address the decades-long "blood revenge" between the Turkish state and Kurdish militia. Close-readings of indigenization of language, costumes and characters will reveal how these adaptations bridged modern Turkish and Kurdish audiences with the global network of Hamlets in the contemporary world. In conclusion, the paper suggests that *Hamlet's* canonical authority and universal prestige made it an especially effective vehicle for groups in Turkey to voice dissenting perspectives under the guise of engaging with a safe, globally recognized classic.



Shakespeare in a Polarised World

Friday 6 to Sunday 8 March 2026

Seminar
Organizer



Tetsuhito MOTOYAMA (Waseda University - Japan)

Bio Tetsuhito Motoyama is Professor and Associate Dean of International Affairs at Waseda University. He works on the reception of Shakespeare and in recent years, has particularly been interested in Shakespeare's reception in Japan. Publications include *Re-Imagining Shakespeare in Contemporary Japan: A Selection of Japanese Theatrical Adaptations of Shakespeare* (co-edited with Rosalyn Fielding and Fumiaki Konno, *The Arden Shakespeare*, 2021) and *The Shakespeare Company Japan and Regional Self-Fashioning* (co-authored with Fumiaki Konno) in *William Shakespeare and 21st-Century Culture, Politics, and Leadership: Bard Bites* (Edward Edgar, 2021).

Title *The Liminality of the Shakespeare Company Japan's **The Winter's Tale***

Abstract The Shakespeare Company Japan (SCJ), a theater troupe based in Tohoku, the northeastern region of mainland Japan, has been adapting and performing Shakespeare's plays in the local dialect for over three decades. In 2024, the SCJ staged *The Winter's Tale* in Tagajô, formerly the northeastern colonial capital that represented state authority and was located on a frontier beyond which lived the Emishi, a group of people who refused to be ruled by the state. It is also believed that in Tagajjô there was an international presence that extended from the Silk Road. As in Tagajô, these different political and geographical elements, likewise, come together in SCJ's *Winter's Tale*. The adaptation begins with the appearance of poet Matsuo Basho who is known to have read, on visiting this region, a poem about transcending time; his presence connects distant historical periods and calls to mind the power inherent in art. This is the power, which can be seen in SCJ's adaptation, to utilize, in the words of José Esteban Muñoz in *Cruising Utopia*, 'the past and future as armaments to combat the devastating logic of the world of the here and now,' and the power, according to Richard Rorty in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, to become a 'redescription of what we ourselves are like.'

With Prof. **Fumiaki KONNO** (Waseda University - JP)



Shakespeare in a Polarised World

Friday 6 to Sunday 8 March 2026

Speaker



Roweena YIP (National University of Singapore - Singapore)

Bio Roweena Yip is a Lecturer of Theatre, Performance and the Humanities at the National University of Singapore (NUS), where she also completed her PhD. Her research focuses on the performativity of gender in stagings of Shakespeare's plays by Asian theatre practitioners, particularly the ways in which gender is a central modality through which these practitioners engage in intercultural negotiations with Shakespeare and his legacy. Her first monograph, the first (and so far, only) full-length study of gender performance in East and Southeast Asian, is titled *Towards Intercultural Feminism: Gender in Asian Shakespeare* (2025). More broadly, she is interested in theatre and performance studies, the political economy of heritage, and trauma theory. Her work has been published in *Asian Theatre Journal*, *The Palgrave Handbook of Shakespeare Biofiction* and *The Routledge Companion to Theatre-Fiction*.

Title *Singaporean Midsummer Night's Dream*

Abstract Having commemorated 60 years of statehood in 1965, Singapore offers a fascinating case study of the tension that emerges in how this former British colony negotiates with its postcolonial condition: Philip Holden notes the 'contradictory place of colonial history' in the Southeast Asian city-state, in which 'implicitly anti-colonial narratives of the self-determination of a people intersect ambivalently with those that celebrate modernist (and thus colonial) development.' Shakespeare's enduring significance in Singapore's theatre and education curriculum exemplifies this paradox: while his plays were first performed and taught as part of the British colonial enterprise, contemporary Singaporean directors adapt these plays in ways that foreground their distinctive approaches and awareness of their audiences, who are heterogeneous in terms of socio-economic backgrounds and ethnic identities. In what ways might theatrical adaptations of Shakespeare in multicultural, cosmopolitan Singapore enact sometimes polarising responses to the country's postcolonial condition, and how might the interculturality of these performances produce new terms for thinking about the legacy and aftermath of the postcolonial in this context? I compare two recent Singaporean productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: the first by the Singapore Repertory Theatre (SRT), a theatre company that stages productions in English — the dominant language in Singapore — to primarily cater for expatriate and Anglophone resident audiences, and the other titled *Bangsawan Gemala Malam*, performed in Malay—the official language of the country that is nevertheless spoken only by a minority of its population—by Teater Ekamatra. By focusing on the politics of language and the contexts within which the productions were staged, I propose that the fantasy world of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* offers different—perhaps even contrasting—imaginative possibilities for negotiating the legacy of British colonisation in the city-state of Singapore.



Shakespeare in a Polarised World

Friday 6 to Sunday 8 March 2026

Speaker



Valentina-Ioana CADAR (West University of Timisoara - Romania)

Bio Valentina-Ioana Cadar is a Ph.D. candidate at the West University of Timisoara, Romania, pursuing a doctoral degree in Philology at The Doctoral School of Humanities, since 2023. Her Ph.D. thesis focuses on British literature and media, analysing the representations of three English kings in Shakespeare's chronicle plays, as well as in contemporary adaptations, both in literature and film. One of them is King Richard III of England, whose representations will be touched upon in the current paper as well, while the other two monarchs are King Henry VIII and King Henry V. She also teaches English language seminars to non-philology students of the West University of Timisoara and has a Master's Degree in American Studies awarded by the same institution.

Title *Contemporary Adaptations of Shakespeare's Richard III: Between a Patriarchal View on the World and a Feminist Interpretation*

Abstract The divide between conservative and progressive world views concerning the direction of the contemporary society has ignited ongoing debates on polarising topics such as traditionalism and patriarchy versus feminism and women's rights. Albeit an older issue, dating back to the 19th and 20th centuries, the rift between the patriarchal perspective on the world and the feminist one has become relevant once again in the 21st century, with the relatively recent rise of the right-wing political ideologies all across the globe.

Shakespeare's 16th century history play *Richard III* does capture to a certain extent this polarising issue regarding the patriarchal view on women versus a more progressive stance on this topic, through the depiction of two opposing categories of female characters, the meek, submissive, and voiceless one, represented by *Richard III's* wife, Anne Neville, here referred to just as Lady Anne, but also the strong, opinionated, and assertive type, which is embodied by characters such as Queen Elizabeth Woodville, Margaret of Anjou, or Cecily, the Duchess of York. Nevertheless, this divide between the two conflicting perspectives on women's roles and place in society is even better encapsulated in contemporary adaptations of the Shakespearean work aforementioned, such as Philippa Gregory's 2012 historical novel, *The Kingmaker's Daughter*, which positions Anne Neville at the heart of the story, or its small screen adaptation, the 2013 TV series *The White Queen*. Here, the polarisation lies in the marked contrast between the obvious patriarchal mentality of the era in which they were living and the women's assertive nature and perhaps sometimes anachronistic progressive views on life.

This paper will seek to explore how this polarisation as it is depicted in the two 21st century adaptations might be interpreted as a social commentary on the contemporary cultural landscape through defamiliarization, by employing the methodological tools of feminist studies and contemporary cultural criticism.



Shakespeare in a Polarised World

Friday 6 to Sunday 8 March 2026

Speaker



Nagihan HALILOGLU (Bogaziçi University - Turkey)

Bio Nagihan Haliloglu studied English at Middlebury College, and Oriental Studies at the University of Oxford. She completed her doctoral studies at the University of Heidelberg, where she wrote a thesis on Jean Rhys and narrative. She is currently an Associate Professor at the Western Languages and Literatures Department of Bogaziçi University. She has published articles and taught courses on Shakespeare, world literature, contemporary Turkish fiction, orientalism, modernism, posthumanism. She also regularly writes film and book reviews, and has made a 13-episode TV programme on books adapted to the screen 'Satır Arası Filmler'.

Title *Staging Palestine in Isabella Hammad's Enter Ghost*

Abstract Theatre is a space where experience becomes collectively visible and is thus linked to the act of witnessing, an experience that takes several shapes in Palestinian lives. This paper aims to map out how Isabella Hammad's novel *Enter Ghost* (2023) proposes Palestine as a stage for Shakespeare, chronicling the production and rehearsing of *Hamlet*, as the cast and the audience bear witness to the Israeli occupation. Sonia, a British-Palestinian actor who's come to Haifa to disentangle her family's history of dispossession, struggles to perform Hamlet in classical Arabic, revealing tensions of language, identity, and authority. Her casting as Gertrude in Palestine - when denied such opportunities in the UK - reveals the politics of access to canonical roles. A satirical exchange indicting Shakespeare and Britain for *Othello's* fate dramatizes the extent to which the canon itself is implicated in imperial histories, even as it provides a medium for their critique. The rehearsal process in Ramallah and Bethlehem is shaped by Israeli closures and contested funding, and produces varying discussions of *Hamlet*, including *Hamlet* as martyr/witness which are rendered in play format in the novel.

Further casting of the production is testimony to the 'Israeli-Arab' director Mariam's efforts to bring Palestinians with different passports and documents together, to create a united Palestine on a single stage. The actors collectively speak the Ghost's lines and Shakespeare becomes a shared language of haunting that transforms fragmentation into unity. However, the 'theatre' itself becomes a moveable feast where the company have to improvise the location where this Shakespearean witnessing is to take place, as the Israeli military chase them. This necessity prompts the company to mark further spaces as locations of Palestinian unification. In Hammad's novel, the production of *Hamlet*, then, becomes a witnessing of a utopian Palestinian future.



Shakespeare in a Polarised World

Friday 6 to Sunday 8 March 2026

Speaker



Norimasa MORITA (Waseda University - Japan)

Bio Norimasa Morita earned his BA and MA degrees in English literature from the Faculty of Letters, Arts, and Sciences at Waseda University. He later obtained a second MA and a Ph.D., both in English literature, from the University of Kent in 1990. His research interests encompass world literature and world cinema.

Morita began his academic career at Waseda University in 1986 and was appointed Professor of English in 1997. Since 2004, he has been teaching at the School of International Liberal Studies (SILS) and, since 2013, at the Graduate School of International Culture and Communication Studies (GSICCS). He served as Dean of the Faculty of International Research and Education from 2010 to 2014 and as Vice President for International Affairs from 2014 to 2018.

At SILS and GSICCS, he teaches film studies, while at the Graduate School of Letters, Arts, and Sciences, he lectures on literary theory. His publications include monographs such as 'Marginalia: Hiding Literature and Hidden Literature and World Literature/Japanese Literature'. He has also co-edited anthologies with Marcos Centeno Martin, including *Japan Beyond Its Borders and Japanese Transnational Cinema*.

In addition to his academic work, Morita has translated seminal texts by leading scholars, including Terry Eagleton's *The Illusion of Postmodernism and Sweet Violence*, Zygmunt Bauman's *Liquid Modernity and Modernity and the Holocaust*, and Richard Sennett's *The Culture of New Capitalism*. He is also actively engaged in collaborative research on the international adaptation of Shakespeare, working with colleagues at Waseda University in partnership with the Shakespeare Institute at the University of Birmingham.

Title *From Hero to Tyrant: Staging Coriolanus in a Polarised Political Imagination*

Abstract Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* dramatizes legendary events during the Conflict of the Orders, a period that threatened to destabilize the fragile republican balance of power maintained by the consuls, the senate, the tribunes, and the people of Rome. The play is densely inflected with republican motifs: the organization of the urbs, the rights of citizens, equality before the law, and participatory government. Yet Shakespeare portrays Roman citizens as dangerously eager to exercise their newly acquired political agency, repeatedly representing them as erratic, volatile, and potentially violent—a "mutable," even "bloodthirsty," mob. By contrast, Caius Martius Coriolanus appears as an anachronistically authoritarian figure, defined by his uncompromising hostility toward the plebeians and their representatives. Citizens and tribunes, on the one hand, and Coriolanus, on the other, thus confront one another in an irreconcilable struggle over the principles by which Rome should be governed. The Roman Republic of *Coriolanus* is therefore marked by a striking political duality: popular sovereignty risks degenerating into mob rule, while aristocratic and military virtue shades into tyranny. This structural ambivalence has produced sharply divergent interpretations in the play's performance history. In this plenary, I examine the polarised political imagination of major stagings of *Coriolanus*, from Philip Kemble and William Charles Macready to Bertolt Brecht and Yukio Ninagawa. I argue that, depending on directors' political convictions and historical contexts, *Coriolanus* may be presented either as a great tragic hero embodying aristocratic and military virtue or as an anti-republican tyrant fundamentally opposed to participatory politics.



Shakespeare in a Polarised World

Friday 6 to Sunday 8 March 2026

Speaker



Richard ASHBY (Author - UK)

Bio Dr Richard Ashby is an Honorary Research Associate at Royal Holloway, University of London. He is the author of *King Lear 'After' Auschwitz: Shakespeare, Appropriation and Theatres of Catastrophe in Post-War British Drama*, which was published by Edinburgh University Press in 2021. He is also the author of various articles on Shakespeare and his afterlives, and recently finished his new book, *Shakespeare and Holocaust Writing: Testimony, Literature, Philosophy*, for Oxford University Press. Recent publications include a chapter on exile in Primo Levi and King Lear and an article on Jean Améry for a special issue of The Shakespearean International Yearbook. He is currently organising a conference, along with an Arden Bloomsbury edited collection, on the theme of Shakespeare and the Holocaust, as well as public engagement activities on Shakespeare and Holocaust memory with the Australian performance maker Deborah Leiser-Moore and the British artist Tom de Freston. His new project is on the afterlives of the old mole, from Hegel to Moten.

Title *Shakespeare and the Holocaust: Helene Berr and 'Shakespearean Impartiality'*

Abstract This paper considers Shakespeare in the Holocaust diary of French Jewish writer, Hélène Berr. Berr kept a diary over the period 1942-1944, recording her life in Paris under the Occupation, before she was sent to Auschwitz and finally Bergen-Belsen, where she was murdered. Her diary was published in 2008, under the title *Journal*, and instantly drew plaudits for its insights into the Occupation and its interrogation of Nazi ideology. I begin with an analysis of the allusions Berr makes to *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth*. I show that Berr uses Shakespeare for the purposes of testimony, because his plays enable a discourse that pays witness to the complete breakdown of language under the strain of 'monstrous' events, which defy representation. I go on to consider the way Berr develops her concept of, as she calls it, 'Shakespearean impartiality'. This takes place in her important entry for 27 October 1943, when Berr creates a remarkable inter-authorial dialogue between Shakespeare, the Romantic poet John Keats, and the French novelist, Roger Martin Du Gard. I make the case that the concept of impartiality is implicitly informed by Keats and his notion of 'negative capability'. This names an ability to live with doubts and contradictions, which are not 'positively' resolved – a capacity that Keats identifies above all with Shakespeare. I contend that Berr introduces 'Shakespearean impartiality' as a bulwark against the rise of dogmatic, modern ideologies, which do not allow for uncertainty, ambiguity, or self-reflexivity. I will also show that Shakespearean impartiality can be understood as a form of ethics – an ethics that is responsible to the 'infinite' alterity of the other.



Shakespeare in a Polarised World

Friday 6 to Sunday 8 March 2026

Speaker



John JOUGHIN (Independent Scholar - UK)

Bio John J. Joughin is an independent scholar. He is editor of *Shakespeare and National Culture* (1997); a co-editor with Scott Brewster, David Owen and Richard Walker of *Inhuman Reflections: Thinking the Limits of the Human* (2000), as well as editor of *Philosophical Shakespeares* (2000) and joint editor with Simon Malpas of *The New Aestheticism* (2003). He is also an Honorary Fellow of the British Shakespeare Association.

Title *'The posts come tiring on': Shakespeare, Political Polarization and the Rumorization of the Social'*

Abstract During the Prologue to *Henry IV, Part 2*, Shakespeare offers a shrewd diagnostic of the potential weaponization of rumour, as the personification of Rumour enters 'painted full of tongues' confirming its own duplicity and generating political polarization in 'speak(ing) of peace while covert(ing) enmity'. As the Slovene philosopher and cultural theorist Mladen Dolar reminds us '[I]f rumors have no author, it doesn't follow that they have no authority; quite the opposite. By being impersonal and anonymous, with no origin, they carry all the more an unfathomable, inscrutable, intractable authority' (*Rumors*, 2025). In contemporary society rumour blends seamlessly with the consolidation of ungrounded conspiracy theories online. Digital platforms are now entrenched as part of the mainstream where online activity can trigger political violence, offering ever new ways to tear ourselves apart. In *Tyrant: Shakespeare On Power* (2018), Stephen Greenblatt asks why 'people submit to the sheer effrontery of the tyrant, his sense that he can get away with saying and doing anything he likes, his spectacular indecency?' Today, in a world where the very notion of the public funding of Shakespeare's plays is often placed in question, amidst the ubiquitous Trump/Caesar parallel and the emergence of the 'No Kings Movement' I want to return to the staging of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* – a play of foundational violence and political polarization. In exploring the question of the rise of a new authoritarianism and an anti-establishment alt-right where the obscene generality of power operates as the shadow 'big Other' of official history in celebrating its naked ability to say, or post, the unsayable, I argue that it is less about unmasking power, more a question of recognizing the centrality that rumour occupies in defining what's left of our political dialogue.



Shakespeare in a Polarised World

Friday 6 to Sunday 8 March 2026

Speaker



Ellen DENGEL-JANIC (University of Tübingen - Germany)

Bio Ellen Dengel-Janic received her Ph.D. from the University of Tübingen, Germany. She taught English literature at the University of Stuttgart and is now a lecturer in English literature and cultural studies at the University of Tübingen. Her major interests are in the field of British drama, gender and performance studies, postcolonial theory, Indian-English literature and British film and television studies. In her current research, she works on eighteenth-century British drama, humour and affect theory.

Title *Dark Humour and the Paradox of Autocracy in Shakespeare's Measure for Measure*

Abstract Often read as a 'problem play' or dark comedy, *Measure for Measure* (1604) by William Shakespeare explores the consequences of authoritarian rule and the polarization of society it creates. Considering theories of comedy and humour as well as performance studies, this paper examines how Shakespeare employs the potential of comedy to expose the arbitrariness of tyrannical authority. Drawing on Bergson's and Zupancic's understanding of the comic as a tension between the mechanical and the living - a dynamic that, as Berlant and Ngai argue, creates 'an uncanny scene of aesthetic, moral, and political judgment' - I argue that *Measure for Measure* constructs just such an uncanny world. The Duke appoints the seemingly virtuous Angelo to enforce rigid sexual laws. Yet Angelo's moral corruption is revealed when he attempts to coerce the chaste Isabella, highlighting the hypocrisy of those who claim to uphold moral norms. Thus, Shakespeare's use of dark humour and satire reveals a troubling paradox: those entrusted to protect civil order are often the very ones who undermine it. In my paper, I will examine how the audience's comic pleasure is tempered by a darker truth - the erosion of civil rights and personal liberty. This danger remains urgent today, as Barack Obama warned in his 2025 Hartford address that democracy itself is imperiled by such erosions. Shakespeare dramatizes how swiftly this erosion can occur when authority is transferred and law enforcement becomes a matter of personal zeal: Claudio, guilty only of impregnating his fiancée before marriage, faces a death sentence until the play's final act, solely because the newly empowered Angelo fixates on enforcing sexual morality. By staging such absurd extremes, *Measure for Measure* demonstrates that arbitrary rule flourishes in a polarized society willing to accept the harsh enforcement of new laws. Ultimately, Shakespeare's dark comedy uses humour as corrective, enabling audiences to recognize and resist the dangers of autocracy.



Shakespeare in a Polarised World

Friday 6 to Sunday 8 March 2026

Speaker



Matthew C. STEPHENSON (Harvard Law School - USA)

Bio Matthew C. Stephenson is the Henry L. Shattuck Professor of Law at Harvard Law School, where he researches and teaches on public law, legal theory, and Shakespeare and Law.

Title *'The Law, Not I': Judgment, Responsibility, and the Personification of Law in Measure for Measure*

Abstract In a society beset by deep political and social divisions, the law - and the ideal of the rule of law - are often thought to be essential for managing difference and maintaining order and fairness. But the ideal of legal neutrality, and judicial impartiality, has always existed in tension with the individual moral responsibility of human legal actors, especially judges and prosecutors. There is a danger that appeals abstract notions of legal neutrality and formalism can serve as a means for deflecting or avoiding moral responsibility and accountability. This paper will explore these themes in the context of *Measure for Measure*, focusing in particular on the recurring motif of law as an autonomous, external decision-maker that acts through human agents, and the contrast between this representation and other characterizations of the relationship between the law and legal decision-makers. This aspect of the text of *Measure for Measure* will be set in dialog with modern legal theorists who have explored the connection between legal and moral responsibility in divided societies, including Professor Robert Cover and Judge John Noonan.



Shakespeare in a Polarised World

Friday 6 to Sunday 8 March 2026

Speaker



Nataliya TORKUT (Zaporizhzhia National University - Ukraine)

Bio Nataliya Torkut is D. Philol. Sci., Prof., the Head of the Ukrainian Shakespeare Centre, Leading Research Fellow of Shevchenko Institute of Literature of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Professor of Zaporizhzhia National University, an Honorary Senior Research Fellow of the Shakespeare Institute (since April 21, 2023), a Visiting Scholar at King's College of London (01.10.2025-31.09.2028).

She defended her post-doctoral thesis on 'The genesis, poetics and genre system of the English prose of late Renaissance' in 2000 at Shevchenko Institute of Literature of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. She has been combining her teaching at the University with research activity at the aforementioned Institute. She supervised 19 PhD theses. She delivers lectures and seminars in World Literature, Theory of Literature, Shakespeare Studies, Contemporary Methods of Literary Analysis, History and Theory of Literary Criticism and others. She is editor-in-chief of the journal 'Renesansni Studiji' (since 1998 - 40 issues published). She is an author of over 180 papers on Renaissance Literature and Culture. She is a member of the European Shakespeare Research Association, the vice-president of the Ukrainian Association of the World Literature Lecturers and a member of the Board of The International Shakespeare Association. Since the beginning of full-scale aggression of Russia in February 2022, she organized volunteer group 'Shakespeare' which is successfully working for the Armed Forces of Ukraine and civilians.

Title *'To take arms against a sea of troubles': Shakespeare and the Strengthening of Ukrainians' Resilience during Wartime*

Abstract In the history of shaping the identity of Ukrainians as a European nation that shares the values of Western civilisation and now defends them with arms in the war against Putin's barbaric horde, William Shakespeare has always played an exceptionally important role. By the late nineteenth century, under the colonial oppression of the Russian Empire, the Ukrainian intellectual elite regarded the translations and performances of Shakespeare's works as a powerful resource for building national identity and developing the language and theatre. During the Stalinist repressions against the Ukrainian intelligentsia (1920s – 1950s), Shakespeare's plays became a language of resistance and inspired conscious moral choice. Today, as the Kremlin's neo-imperial ambitions have led to a genocidal war, art has not been put on pause; rather, it has become an instrument for strengthening Ukrainians' resilience. Shakespeare occupies a prominent place in Ukrainian theatre repertoires. Since the war began in 2014, over 110 Shakespearean premieres have been staged. Each performance allows practitioners to express creativity, engage audiences on urgent issues, and provide the public with emotional, aesthetic, and art-therapeutic support - a chance to 'hear answers to what hurts.'

The Ukrainian Shakespeare Centre runs annual projects involving Shakespeareans from around the world, demonstrating collective solidarity and the power of community. Scholars, theatre practitioners, and students participate in panel discussions, workshops, public lectures, and competitions—even during blackouts and air raids, often while in shelters. The establishment of International Shakespeare Festivals during the full-scale war (June 2024, Ivano-Frankivsk Theatre) has shown that, in times of global challenges, Shakespeare's works can serve as a vital source of a nation's energy, creativity, and moral strength.



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