



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

Friday 6 to Sunday 8 March 2026

ULB, European Studies Institute, Av. F.D. Roosevelt 39 – 1050 Bruxelles
Rooms Kant, Spaak and Geremek





Shakespeare in a Polarised World

'Now is the winter of our discontent' (Richard III, Act I, Scene 1).

Shakespeare's works, with their intricate political tensions, power struggles, religious fractures, and profound ethical dilemmas, offer a timeless reflection on the nature of leadership and the vulnerabilities of societies. They resonate with unsettling clarity in our own era, marked by deepening polarization and cultural fragmentation. Far from belonging solely to the past, Shakespeare's plays continue to illuminate the challenges of the present, making them more relevant than ever.

It is in this context—at a moment when political, social, and cultural divisions are reaching unprecedented levels—that Waseda University, in collaboration with the University of Birmingham's Shakespeare Institute and the Université Libre de Bruxelles, is hosting this international conference. Our shared aim is to explore the role and *raison d'être* of literature and the arts in a world increasingly defined by division.

The conference focuses on how Shakespeare's works, along with their many interpretations and creative reimaginings, might help us understand and perhaps mitigate the political and social fractures that threaten the foundations of democratic societies and a rules-based international order.

Our point of departure is the idea that literary texts function as 'narratives which connect the present with the past, on the one hand, and with utopian futures, on the other,' thereby fostering human solidarity. Throughout these sessions, we will seek to identify the shared values and common ground embedded in Shakespeare's plays—and in the diverse interpretations they have inspired across cultures and centuries—that may offer pathways toward overcoming today's polarisation.

Over the coming days, we invite you to reflect, debate, and exchange ideas on how Shakespeare's works—through their complexity, their humanity, and their capacity to speak across time—may help us imagine more cohesive, more inclusive futures.



SCHEDULE

FRIDAY MARCH 6th

10:00 - 10:45 Registration & Welcome Coffee

WELCOME WORDS

10:45 - 11:00 Chair: **Jean-Louis Moortgat** (Waseda University Brussels Office)
Opening Remarks :
Anne Weyembergh
Vice-Rector for External Relations & Cooperation, ULB
Opening Address :
Jessica Chiba
University of Birmingham, Shakespeare Institute

PLENARY SESSION I

11:00 - 12:00 Chair: **Richard Ashby** (Author - UK)
Ewan Fernie (University of Birmingham - UK)
Unspeakable Shakespeare: Carlyle, Moldbug, and Nick Land

12:00 - 13:30 Lunch

PANEL SESSIONS 1 & 2

13:30 - 15:10

PANEL 1: TRANSLATION - NATIONAL AND RACIAL IDENTITIES

Chair: **Jessica Chiba** (University of Birmingham - UK)

TRANSLATION

Rieko Ishibuchi (Keio University - JP)
'I'am a man again': Translation, Gender and Humanity in Macbeth

Daniel Gallimore (Kwansei Gakuin University - JP)
Shôyô, Shakespeare, and the Truth of History

NATIONAL AND RACIAL IDENTITIES

Jeff Goldman (University of Birmingham - UK)
'For I was born at sea': Shakespeare's Marina as a Third Culture Kid

Caminey Kuropatwa (University of Birmingham - UK)
'Parti-coloured lambs': Constructions of Mixedness and Interracial Imaginings in The Merchant of Venice

PANEL 2: HISTORY - NEW MEDIA

Chair: **Tetsu Motoyama** (Waseda University - JP)

HISTORY

Rieko Suzuki (Waseda University - JP)
History and Historiography in Mary Shelley's The fortune of Perkin Warbeck, a romance

Sophie Chiari (Université de Clermont-Ferrand - FR)
Engaging with the Past: Conflict, Ruins, and Preservation in Shakespeare

NEW MEDIA

Kaori Ashizu (Kobe University - JP)
Bridging Polarised Cultures—Yumi Morishita's Manga Adaptation of Hamlet

Abhik Maiti (St. Joseph University - IND)
Shakespearean Video Games in the Machinery of Polarization

15:10 - 15:50 Coffe Break

PLENARY SESSION II

15:50 - 16:50 Chair: **Tetsu Motoyama** (Waseda University - JP)
Jessica Chiba (University of Birmingham - UK)
'Reason wonder may diminish:.' Shakespeare and the Freedom of Art

17:30 Networking Buffet

SATURDAY MARCH 7th

09:00 - 09:20 Registration & Welcome Coffee

PLENARY SESSION III

09:20 - 10:20 Chair: **Norimasa Morita** (Waseda University - JP)
Michael Dobson (University of Birmingham - UK)
Macbeth in a Divided World

10:20 - 10:35 Coffee Break

PANEL SESSIONS 3 & 4

10:35 - 11:55 **PANEL 3: PERFORMANCE THEORY AND PRACTICES**
Chair: **Michael Dobson** (University of Birmingham - UK)
Laura Rose (Independent Scholar - UK)
What Classical Rhetorical Praxis Can Reveal in Shakespeare Performance
Janna van Leeuwen (University of Birmingham, MA Student - NL)
Dialogue: a Monologue; A foolish exploration into how an understanding of the early modern fool can contribute to the commentary of comedians in today's socio-political context.
Chi-i Lin (National Sun Yat-sen University - TW)
'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

PANEL 4: PHYSIOGNOMY AND NATURE
Chair: **Richard Ashby** (Author - UK)
Nikolaos Nikolaidis (University of Birmingham - UK)
Of Monsters and Men: Dissecting the Chimeric Bodies of Richard III and Macbeth
Franca Bellarsi (Université Libre de Bruxelles - BE)
'Down in Arden I will die': the Beat Generation's Shakespeare
Shaul Bassi (Ca'Foscari University IT)
Miranda, Ophelia and the Drowned Partisan: Shakespeare at the Water's Edge

11:55 - 13:30 Lunch

PANEL SESSIONS 5 & 6

13:30 - 15:10	PANEL 5: STAGE ADAPTATIONS AND POLARIZATION IN SOCIETY 1 & 2 Chair: Shaul Bassi (Ca'Foscari University IT) STAGE ADAPTATIONS AND POLARIZATION IN SOCIETY 1 Lekan Balogun (University of Leeds - UK) <i>'Give me liberty or give me death!': Othello/Otaelo and the Igbo Question in the Nigerian Political Space</i> Zehra Haliloglus (Humboldt University of Berlin - DE) <i>Safe Text, Dangerous Questions: Avoiding Censorship with Hamlet in Contemporary Turkey</i> STAGE ADAPTATIONS AND POLARIZATION IN SOCIETY 2 Tetsu Motoyama (Waseda University - JP) and Fumiaki Konno (Meiji University - JP) <i>The Liminality of the Shakespeare Company Japan's The Winter's Tale</i> Roweena Yip (National University of Singapore - SG) <i>Singaporean Midsummer Night's Dream</i> PANEL 6 : POPULISM AND PATRIARCHY AND POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS DIVISIONS Chair: Ewan Fernie (University of Birmingham - UK) Valentina-Ioana Cadar (Humboldt University of Berlin - DE) <i>Contemporary Adaptations of Shakespeare's Richard III: Between a Patriarchal View on the World and a Feminist Interpretation</i> Ved Dutt Arya (Ashoka University - IND) <i>Rehearsing Resistance: Issues of Caste, Class, and Religion in Adapting Shakespeare's The Comedy of Errors as 'Kumbh Ka Mela'</i> Nagihan Haliloglu (Bogaziçi University - TR) <i>Staging Palestine in Isabella Hammad's Enter Ghost</i>
15:10 - 15:50	Coffee Break

PLENARY SESSION IV

15:50 - 16:50	Chair: Shaul Bassi (Ca'Foscari University - IT) Norimasa Morita (Waseda University - JP) <i>The Fate of the Republic: Shakespeare's Roman Plays on Film</i>
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SUNDAY MARCH 8th

08:45 - 09:00	Registration & Welcome Coffee
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PLENARY SESSION V

09:00 - 10:00	Chair: Jessica Chiba (University of Birmingham - UK) Richard Ashby (Author - UK) <i>Shakespeare and the Holocaust: Helene Beer and 'Shakespearean Impartiality'</i>
10:00 - 10:15	Coffee Break

10:15 - 11:55

PANEL 7: POLITICAL DIALOGUE AND LEADERSHIP

Chair: **Norimasa Morita** (Waseda University - JP)

John Joughin (Independent Scholar - UK)

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

Ellen Dengel-Janic (University of Tübingen - DE)

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

Matthew C. Stephenson (Harvard Law School - USA)

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

11:55 - 13:30

Lunch

PLENARY SESSION VI

13:30 - 14:30

Chair: **Michael Dobson** (University of Birmingham - UK)

Nataliya Torkut (Zaporizhzhia National University - UKR) and **Michael Dobson** (University of Birmingham - UK)

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

CONCLUDING WORDS

14:30 - 14:40

Chair: **Jean-Louis Moortgat** (Waseda University Brussels Office)

Norimasa Morita (Waseda University - JP)



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