

## Seminar

### **A World Without Hamlet**

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For centuries, the misogyny of the Danish court from Hamlet to Claudius and from Polonius to the Ghost, has informed the portrayal of Gertrude as lustful and self-indulgent and Ophelia as mild and ineffectual. But, what happens when actresses, directors, artists, and writers refuse to let the assessments of these male characters colour their interpretation? The result is Gertrudes in Haider (an Indian Hamlet film), The Banquet (a Chinese Hamlet film), or in Gertrude and Claudius (an American novel). These adaptations give us an insight into Gertrude as character who is politically shrewd, aware of her sexual prowess, loving, and authoritative. Similarly, the result is Ophelias like those in HamletScenen's 2017 Danish/UK theatrical adaptation of the play or in Brazilian artist Lucia Castanho's photo essay which present her as a thoughtful, clear-sighted, observant, supportive, heartbroken, and even defiant character. These Gertrudes and Ophelias are not there just to expand the world of Hamlet but rather are integral in understanding the play and its fatal ending. We are interested in these layered interpretations from different parts of the globe.

We argue that such a trans-cultural focus on the sociopolitical contexts of women both within and outside the world of the play does not run counter to the text but instead gives us a new lens to reimagine the play and re-configure its meanings. Moreover, it ensures that we broaden the scope of Shakespeare studies by adding diverse feminist voices to the performance and critical history of the play - a history that will inspire future interpretations that are much more empowering for the twenty-first century pedagogical, artistic, and research environments.

In 2007, Margreta de Grazia wrote 'Hamlet' without Hamlet thereby illuminating the value of taking an approach to Hamlet which does not start with the titular character. Whereas her stance was materialist, ours is feminist. The interpretation of women characters in Hamlet is ripe for reassessment and we want to do this by inviting papers on adaptations and extensions of Hamlet from around the world where the women characters take centre-stage.

Please email your abstracts to [worldwithouthamlet@gmail.com](mailto:worldwithouthamlet@gmail.com) by **15<sup>th</sup> December 2018**.

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