

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR *LAW AND EMOTIONS IN WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS*, SZCZECIN, 18–19 JUNE 2024

Law and emotions are closely intertwined. Emotions are inherent in many areas of the law. They affect the legal decision-making process, are the root cause of crimes involving passion and premeditation, and last but not least reflect upon social attitudes toward justice. The study of law and emotions has flourished since the publications by lawyers and psychologists that trod new research paths in this area, such as *The Passions of Law* (edited by Susan Bandes 1999), amongst others. The interdisciplinary research into affect and law has sparked scholarly interest, ignited an ongoing debate among experts from different fields, and offered new methods of scrutinising the correlations between law and emotions. As literature serves as a window into human thoughts and emotions, there is no better way to probe the intersections between law and emotions than by examining literary works. William Shakespeare's literary endowment offers a wealth of analysis. His plays and sonnets feature a wide range of human feelings, including love, hatred, grief, revenge, and jealousy, to name a few. Simply put, Shakespeare utilised the law to depict and comment on human emotions.

Drawing from multidisciplinary perspectives of law, psychology, history, philosophy, and literature, the international seminar *Law and Emotions in William Shakespeare's Plays* held on 18 and 19 June 2024 at the University of Szczecin provided a forum to address the role of emotions in William Shakespeare's works and their affinities with the law. The seminar, organised by Dr Hab. Katarzyna Jaworska (University of Szczecin) and Prof. Maciej Jońca, welcomed research on various aspects of the law, emotions and affect in Shakespeare's literature. The submissions raised a vast array of issues, among other things: intersections between emotions, crime and punishment, emotions as dynamic forces of legal actions, and dramatis persona's decisions; legal and criminological narratives of emotions; emotions as reflections of social fears and phobias; translating and performing emotions; and reimagining and rediscovering emotions in contemporary adaptations of Shakespeare's works. The seminar was a venue to discuss Shakespeare with scholars from various fields of studies and research centres based in Poland and abroad. The participants came from Poland, the USA, the UK, China, and India.

The seminar was divided into thematic panels. The first panel was entirely devoted to one of the mostly discussed by lawyers Shakespeare's plays *The Merchant of Venice*. Katarzyna Jaworska-Biskup (University of Szczecin) gave a speech entitled "In defence of Shylock. Zygmunt Librowicz's *Shylock. Studium w listach Żyda do Chrześcijanki* (1876)", in which she introduced the figure of Zygmunt Librowicz and his commentary on Shylock's trial. Librowicz was one of the nineteenth-century writers who raised his voice in the debate about Shylock's legal pursuit of the unfulfilled contract. Maciej Jońca continued the topic of emotions in *The Merchant of Venice* based on Francesco

Forlani's views in his paper entitled "*Sentimento giuridico* as the key to understanding *The Merchant of Venice*" (Francesco Forlani's vision). Both papers shed new light on how the play was read in various periods and from different cultural settings. Both contributors concluded that each culture and historical epoch created their Shylocks. The second panel gyrated around law and legal themes in *Hamlet*. In his "Exploring Gender, Religion and Emotion: Shakespeare's Idea of Law and Justice in *Hamlet*" Shibangi Ghose (Jadavpur University) explored the affinities between law, justice, gender and religion in *Hamlet*. This was followed by "Exploring Legal Issues and Legal Awareness in Shakespeare's Play *Hamlet*" (Xu Yiming, Shandong University of Arts China). As the paper argued, law is a key to understanding the tragedy. The evening session opened with a panel about a historical chronicle *Richard III*. Cameron Barrows in his "Let Hell make crook'd my mind". "Theodicy, Kingship, and Revenge in *Richard III*" analysed the representation of such emotions as revenge, jealousy, and mourning as well as the relation between divine law and theodicy. The first day of the seminar ended with two papers on Shakespeare's legal play *Measure for Measure*. David A.J. Richards (New York University) delivered a paper entitled "Retributivism Gone Mad: Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*. Terry Reilly (University of Alaska) talked about 'The sense of death is most in apprehension'. Performing Law and Death in *Measure for Measure*".

The second day commenced with two papers: "The Emotional Escalation and Decision Making: Tracing the Path to Tragedy in *Romeo and Juliet*" (Ding Duczek, University of Szczecin) and "The ambiguity of milk: the perception of lactation and maternal body in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*" (Hanna Gęba, University of Warsaw). The first paper presented how the main characters' decisions influenced by emotions affect their choices and the plot of the play. The second reflected on the meaning of breastfeeding and motherhood in Shakespeare's play *Macbeth*. The relation between justice and mercy was a topic raised by Mateusz Godlewski (University of Warsaw) in his: "'Fie upon your law': a Thomistic Perspective on Justice and Mercy in *Merchant of Venice*". Adrianna Juszczuk in her "Revenge and law in Margaret Atwood's *Hag-Seed* (2016), an adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*" addressed the topic of adapting Shakespeare's plays based on Canadian author's rendition. The problems and challenges of adapting Shakespeare are widely discussed in the research. The next panel consisted of two papers: "Spite, Crime, and the Reclamation of a Kingdom in *Cymbeline*" (Michael Cornelius, Wilson College) and "*The Rape of Lucrece* and the History of Shame" (Anna Czarnowus, University of Silesia). Anna Czarnowus offered a new perspective of reading shame in *The Rape of Lucrece* from St Augustine's views. The panel was followed by Mahitosh Mandal's (Indian Institute of Technology Dharwad) presentation "His canon 'gainst self-slaughter: Suicide and Anxiety in *Hamlet*" which focused on Ophelia's suicide and Hamlet's anxiety. The last paper Cyrus Mallison's "The Merchant and the Friar" analysed references of *The Merchant of Venice* to St. Anthony of Padua.

All papers sparked discussion, which confirmed how relevant the topic of law and emotions is in today's academic discourse. The seminar also proved that the paths of law, emotions and Shakespeare converge and offer new insights into the Bard's literature. The organisers believe that the seminar has initiated further research on the topic and contributed to Shakespeare's studies.

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