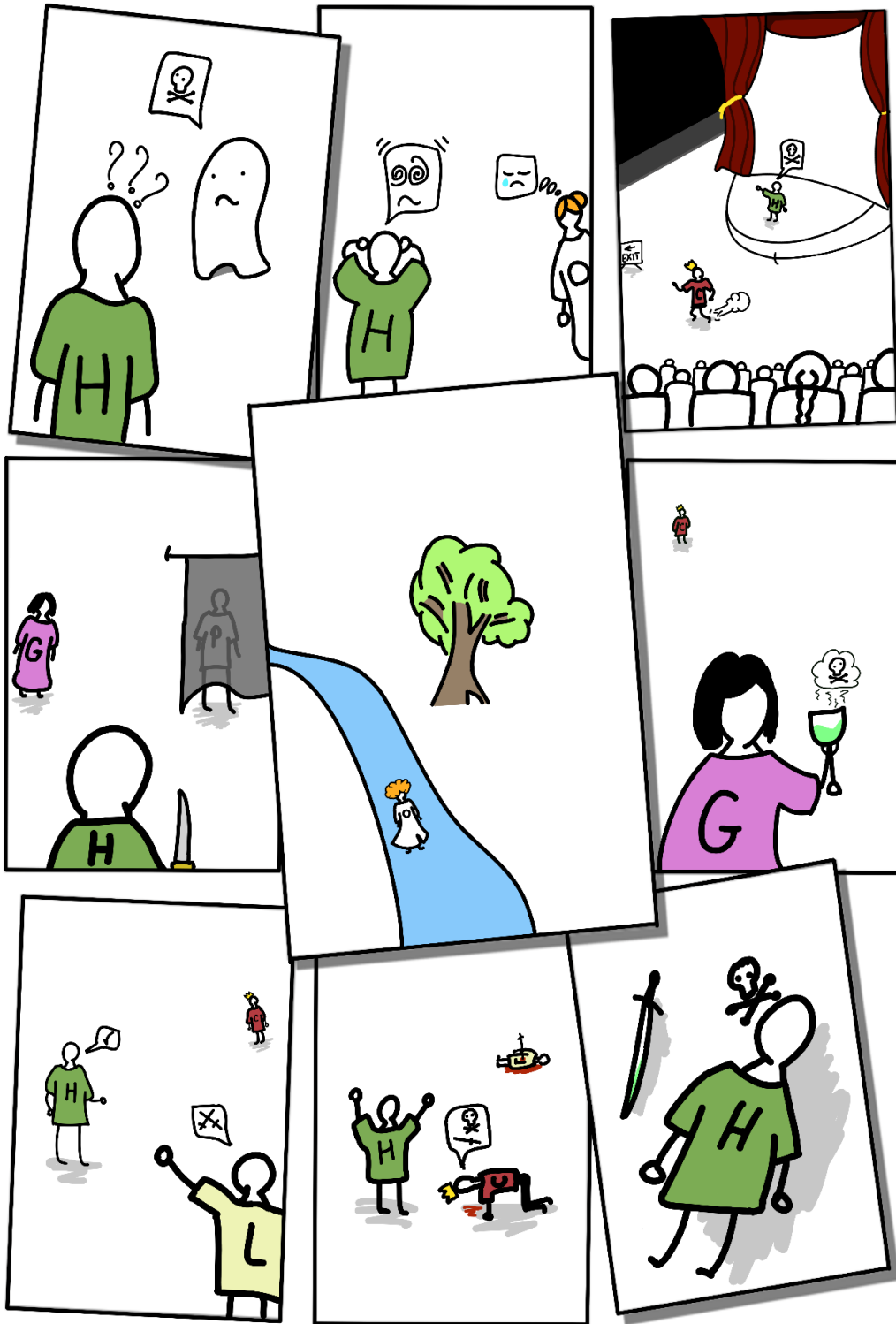
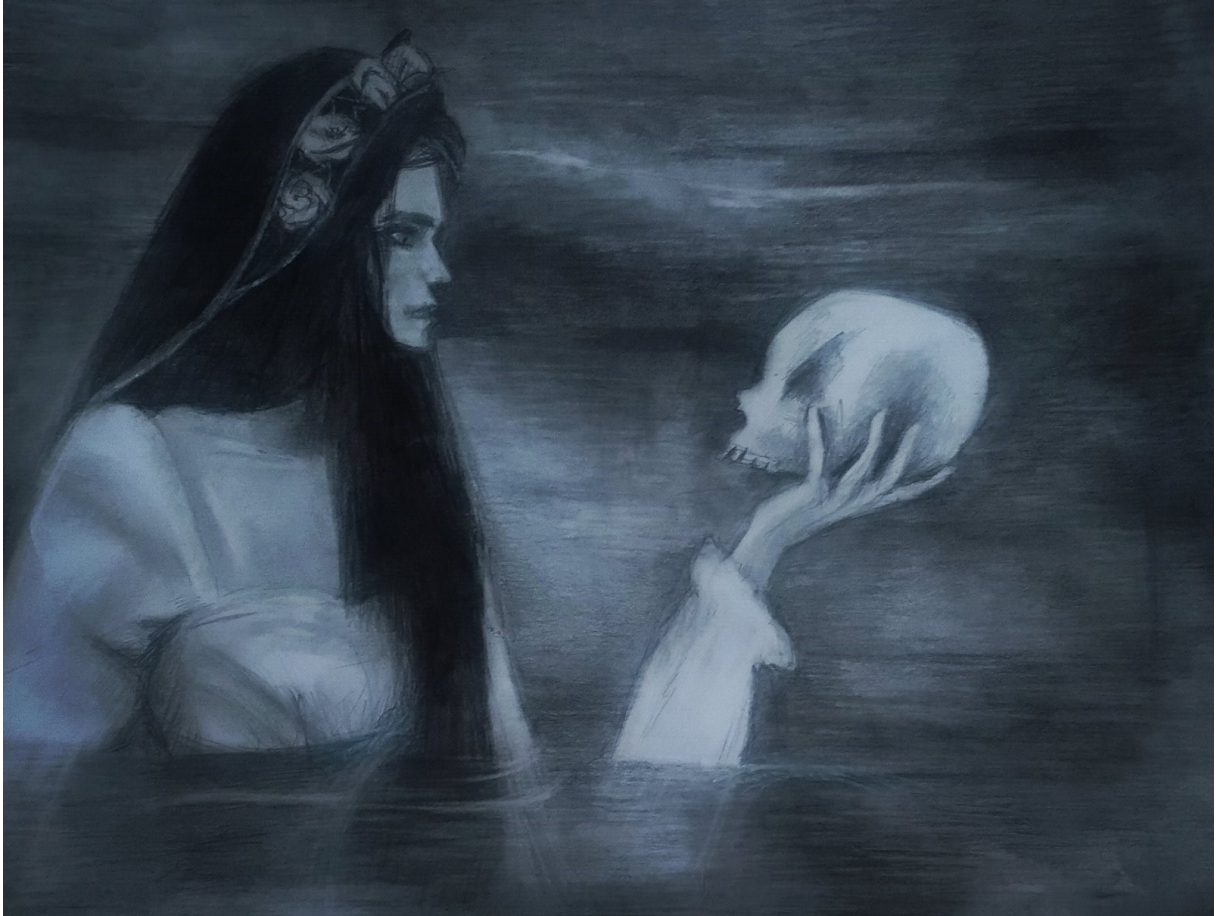


## OPHELIA AND HAMLET VARIATIONS: INTERTEXTUALITY AND ADAPTATION PROJECTS BY NCU STUDENTS

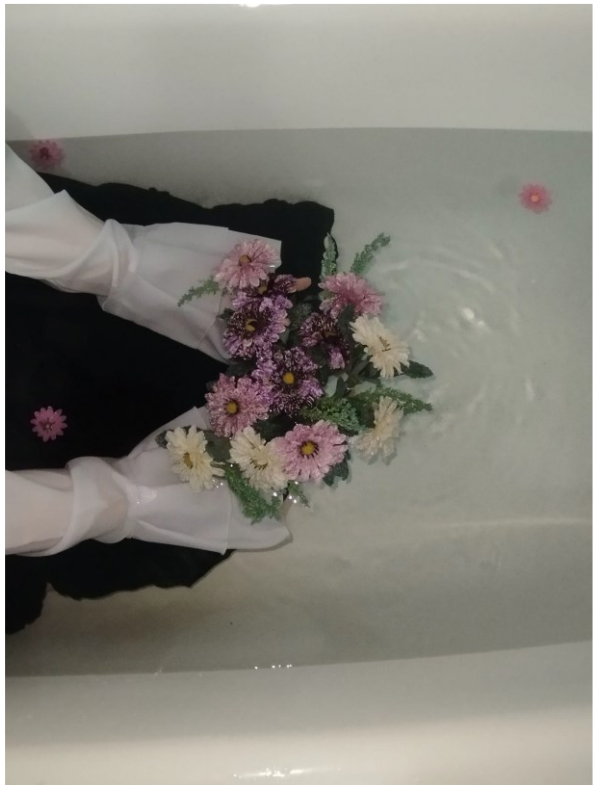
The course in “Intertextuality and Adaptation” (English Studies, BA programme, 2<sup>nd</sup> year) examines the theory and practice of re-writing, using William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* as an example. The seminar culminates in the presentation of the projects devised by the course participants. Referring to one or more intertextual practices examined in the course, the students explore the potential of Shakespeare’s tragedy to entertain, surprise, communicate and inspire. The projects devised for the 2023/2024 course use different media and forms to demonstrate a range of attitudes to the original play, from parodic *subtraction* to playful *permutation* to nuanced *additions* and medial *substitutions*. Featuring a comic strip, photo portfolios, collages, tarot cards, a drawing, a poem and a short story, this collection testifies to the continuing liveliness of Shakespeare’s drama and the creativity of its readers. We hope that you will find as much pleasure, when viewing and reading this project, as its creators had when working on it.

Edyta Lorek-Jezińska  
(the course teacher at Nicolaus Copernicus University)

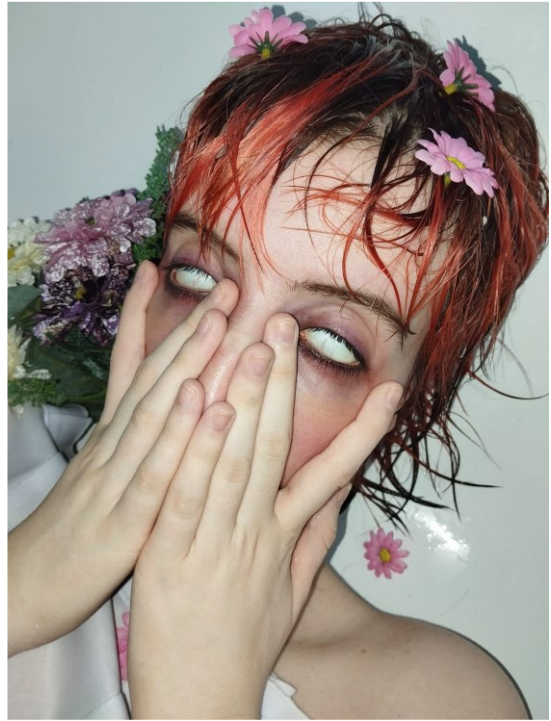




Darja Stryho







Lidia Czarnecka & Milena Maćkiewicz

**Love or regret?**

Hamlet! Oh  
My dearest! Dearest?  
Dearest you were to me  
Once upon a time,  
Share My secrets  
With you  
I did,  
Once upon a time.  
Give My heart to you,  
I did.  
Once upon a time.

Once upon a time  
Figure out you're cruel,  
I did.  
Once upon a time  
Got used by you,  
I did.  
Once upon a time.  
Told My father about it,  
I did.  
Once upon a time.  
Got ridiculously frustrated about it,  
He did.  
Now he will haunt you forever,  
My dearest! Dearest?

Roksana Różycka & Wiktoria Umiejewska





Natalia Humienna



## Destiny Carved in a Black Diamond

People always say one's eyes are the reflections of one's soul. I've always found it poetic, but never actually understood the concept. How could one look into someone else's eyes and see everything they've been through, all the thoughts and emotions going through their heads.

Looking into the eyes of my friends all I saw were the twinkling stars of joy and happiness, their current emotions of distress or relief. Maybe I've never looked deeper, but maybe I didn't even want to. Maybe I wanted to feel special, the only person the world was against. Someone who had everything and shouldn't feel the way they felt because other people had it worse. Maybe I wanted to be misunderstood.

My mom always told me I was special, that I had my own story to write and a destiny to choose. She was a fan of William Shakespeare's plays so much that she named me Ophelia. *You are exceptional*, she reminded me whenever she could, *Your future is in your hands*.

Maybe my future was really what I was afraid of. She spoke about it too much; I felt a pressure building in my chest. Some sort of expectation I knew I could never meet.

Frankly, she didn't call me Ophelia just because she liked *Hamlet*. No. My mom never did anything without a reason, she always sought an ulterior motive for everything. She wanted to give the character a new story, create a new fate. Give her a second life.

What would she think if she saw me now? Standing so close to the edge, looking down at the liters of turbulent, cold water, falling off the edge of some Colorado's waterfall I didn't even bother remembering the name of.

A couple of my friends and I decided to go for a camping trip in Colorado in order to celebrate our graduation from high school. I wasn't very excited about it, to be honest. I much rather would have spent this week and all the following ones, sitting alone in my bed, running away from everything, especially from myself.

So I ended up here, standing one step away from the freedom I've been seeking. A single decision and I could finally be free of the heaviness resting on my shoulders, pulling me to the ground. No more expectations, no more thinking of the shadowy future ahead of me. The feeling in my chest would subside, thoughts in my head would finally stop spinning in circles like an overcrowded, never-ending carousel.

And yet, I just stood here. Stood and watched, too afraid to make a move. Was this really what I wanted? What if...

Drowning in the water; I thought it was a poetic way to die. Both Ophelias conquered by the same, unforgiving force of nature. Both driven to the edge of their endurance.

I wondered if my life was doomed from the moment my name was chosen. Maybe the decision I was about to make was not truly my own. Perhaps it was just fate pulling the strings, orchestrating the course of my existence. But I figured it didn't really matter. All that mattered to me was the freedom I was about to find.

But was I capable of taking that step?

I looked down at the yet undisturbed surface of water, paying close attention to the reflection that appeared in it.

They say eyes are mirrors of the soul.

Chestnut brown orbs shone back at me, staring without mercy, judging. Looking into them, I saw a stranger. They didn't show what was behind the scenes. Nor what I was about to do.

"Ilia!"

The sudden shout of alarm startled me. I panicked, trying to get as far from the water as possible, feeling like it burnt me. She couldn't know what was going on in my head, not before I made the decision.

But it seemed that the power to decide was already taken away from me.

I forgot how close to the edge I was. When I moved backwards, my foot lost the connection with the ground.

"Ilia!"

Somehow I found myself hanging from the ledge. My hand clamped tightly around a branch. The rustle of water echoing in my head, mixing with the loud thumping of my heart.

I could feel the strain on my arm, it hurt. I knew it was only due to the adrenaline pumping in my veins that I was still holding on. Out of control, my eyes roamed downwards, staring down at the chasm below me. Liters of water swirled miles underneath my feet. Waterfall swooshed right next to me. I swallowed a lump in my throat.

I could hear voices somewhere above me, as if they were trying to break an invisible veil surrounding me, they were calling my name, saying to hold on.

If I had to compare this experience to anything, I would say it reminded me of sleepwalking. No idea how I knew that because it had never happened to me before, but it felt right. I looked up like in trance, following some unspoken command, and met the eyes of my best friend.

She was lying on the ground, one hand holding on tightly onto something I couldn't see, the other stretched in front of her, reaching out for me to grab. Too far away. Someone ran up behind her but I couldn't make out the features. Her mouth moved rapidly but I couldn't hear a word. I think someone screamed something at one point. I didn't care. I was staring into her eyes hypnotized.

They say eyes are the windows of the soul.

It was now that I finally understood, looking into those sky blue eyes of my best friend, what they meant. They were full of unshed tears, radiating with fear and concern. Yet it was not what I was mystified about.

There, in her eyes, I saw her past, how much she hurt even after all those years that her mother chose alcohol instead of her. Hurt by her father who remarried a crazy woman and didn't care about her. I saw all the strength she had inside that kept her going and would still do so even years later. The stubbornness to create her own life and family.

Family that I was supposed to be a part of.

I remembered the day she told me about it. Told me about her past and asked me to stay. To never leave. It was rainy outside, she appeared at my doorsteps, all drenched and distressed. Her black velvety hair, damped and clinging to her dark face that was completely wet with both tears and rain. After I helped her dry up and gave her some of my clothes, we sat on my bed, a warm tea in her hand. We talked all night. I remember the promise I gave her in the heat of the moment, wanting to cheer her up.

*I'll never leave you.*

Those few words rang loudly in my head.

And then it hit me like a speeding train. The realization of what I was contemplating just mere seconds ago. What I was about to do to her, to my friends, to my mom. To my family. And most importantly, to myself.

A spark of hope bloomed inside me. I didn't want to die. Not like that. There was a future I could build and I knew she would help me. They all would.

I felt my hand slip slightly. *No no no!* I screamed in my head. Not now. I had to hold on. I had to.

I sent her a look, hoping it would convey the message. *I don't want to die*, my eyes screamed desperately. She was reaching out her hand closer towards me. Still too far away. I clenched my teeth, using all the strength I still had left inside me to pull myself further. Just a few inches. I could see she did the same. Our fingers brushed. Almost there.

At that moment, the sound of a branch snapping caught my attention.

“No!” I screamed desperately, while trying to stretch my hand further than it was physically possible. And then, miraculously, she clutched my hand, saving me.

A wave of relief swept through me. Everything was going to be okay now. My future didn't seem so scary if I had her and all my friends by my side. In a minute, she would pull me up and we could still be happy together. Or at least that's what I thought in that fleeting second. But then the branch snapped completely and my hand slipped out of hers.

Everything happened so fast. First, I noticed my friend's horrified expression. She started getting further and further away from me. I was falling, which caused my dress to billow, making me feel as if I was flying.

Next, piercing pain went through my body and I felt an uncomfortable sensation of water flowing into my eyes and ears. I heard faint sounds of people panicking and screaming somewhere high above me.

That's when the panic really set in. I was drowning. I kicked my legs, desperately reaching for the surface. I couldn't see anything clearly. As my struggles intensified, the weight of my soaked white dress dragged me deeper. The surface remained agonizingly out of reach.

Eventually, I found myself unable to reach the surface at all. I wondered if maybe Hamlet's Ophelia did not choose death either. Perhaps it was fate who dictated that our lives had to end.

My mind kept replaying the brief minute, in which I found hope. Hope that was snatched away. I just wished my friends wouldn't be too devastated and that my mom wouldn't grieve over me for long.

As the cold darkness surrounded me, I couldn't help but wonder if Hamlet's Ophelia had felt this same chilling embrace. My consciousness was slipping away. The pain, the panic and the regrets merged into a numbing surrender. I had no energy left to fight.

My last thought was my mother. Would she feel guilt for naming me Ophelia? Perhaps that's what started it all, what set in motion the events that led me to this moment.

And then everything went silent.

Aleksandra Ronatowska & Zuzanna J. A. Kalembe



Katarzyna Przygońska, Zuzanna Sanecka

breaking news

# MUDDY DEATH!



## ONE SADNESS COMES AFTER ANOTHER

After one of the most mysterious murders in the town's history, the ghost killer strikes again! Only a few months after the tragedy, Major Claudius will be forced to attend one more funeral! This morning, during her jogging sessions, Gertrude Q. found the body of a young woman floating in the lake. So far, her identity remains unconfirmed, however, the sources close to the case inform us that it was Ophelia who happened to be a victim of this awful crime.

## MYSTERIOUS BODY FOUND IN A LAKE!



**POLICE EXPLAIN:**  
There were signs!  
Mysterious flowers?  
Was she alone?  
Why the lake?  
No witnesses  
and one body.

**HAMLET P. AMONG THE SUSPECTS!**  
TOWN'S PERFECT PRINCE MAY FACE SERIOUS CHARGES!



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Katarzyna Przygońska, Zuzanna Sanecka



