

Shakespeare and the Object: the Case of *Hamlet*

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Abstract

Hamlet is a tragedy that keeps blurring the borderline between acts and words as the two keep changing places. As will be demonstrated in this study, this set of substitutions even affects some characters. They undergo a petrifying process that causes them to appear as ephemeral statues on the stage, and the language they use is endowed with the solidity of objects. These phenomena enable a new transformation to take place: the characters are talked into becoming imaginary objects. This dehumanising process is finally unknotted by a sudden break that interrupts the hitherto walled-in progress of the tragic hero. His departure to England actually corresponds to a new birth and to the fusion of words and objects: once he has "made a prologue to (his) brains," (5.2.31) the tragic hero can reinvent himself and become a foil, the object he needs in order to carry out his father's revenge project.

Keywords: Hamlet; reification; petrification; naturalism; nominalism.