

Shakespeare and the Mind



Miranda Anderson
University of Edinburgh

The Globe Theatre



Hence! home, you idle creatures, get you home!
Is this a holiday?

Julius Caesar, 1.1.1-2

Overview

- How can research in cognitive science and philosophy of mind contribute to understanding what happens in our mind when we read or see Shakespeare performed?
- What parallels are there with notions of the mind as embodied and extended in Renaissance and particularly Shakespeare's works?
- How do these parallels and differences contribute to our current understanding of the mind?
- How does narrative transform perception and how is this revealed and exploited imaginatively in Shakespeare's work?

...it is a melancholy of mine own,
compounded of many simples,
extracted from many objects, and,
indeed, the sundry contemplation of
my travels, which, by often
rumination, wraps me in a most
humorous sadness.

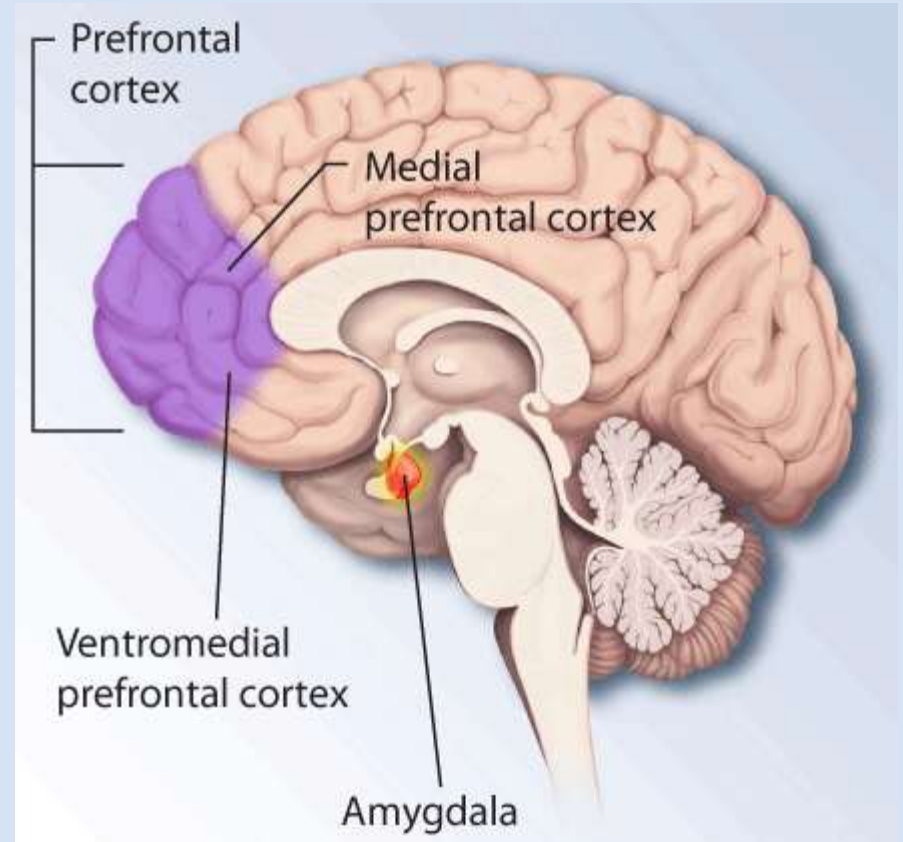
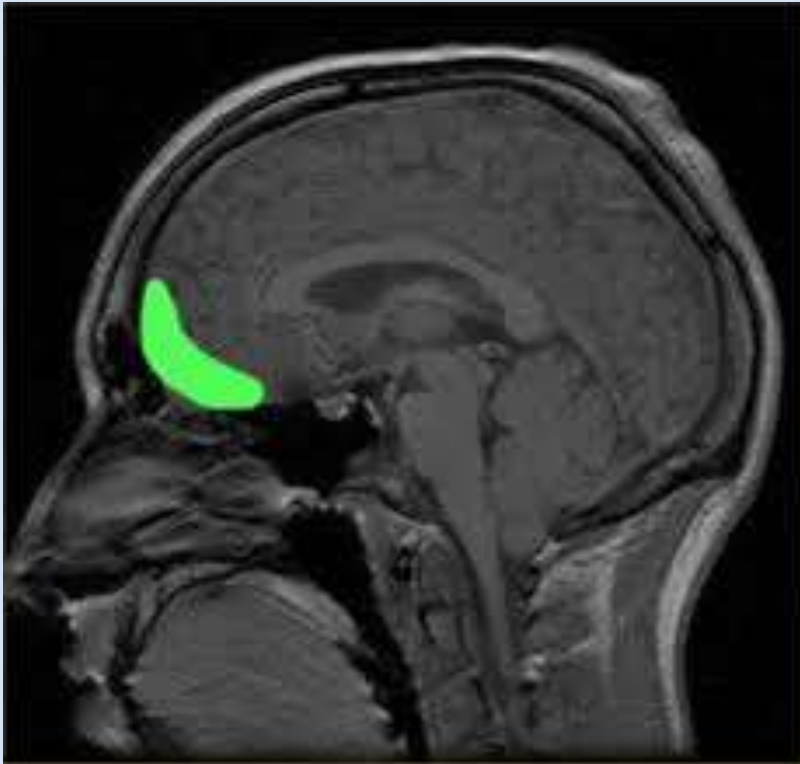
Jaques, *As You Like It*



Albrecht Dürer, *Melencolia I*, 1514

Ventromedial Prefrontal Cortex

Somatic Markers



Hippocampus

Episodic Memory



Thy glasse will shew thee how thy beauties were,
 Thy dyall how thy pretious mynuits waste,
 The vacant leaues thy mindes imprint will beare,
 And of this booke, this learning maist thou taste.
 The wrinckles which thy glasse will truly show,
 Of mouthed graues will giue thee memorie,
 Thou by thy dyals shady stealth maist know,
 Times theeuish progresse to eternitie.
 Looke what thy memorie cannot containe,
 Commit to these waste blacks, and thou shalt finde
 Those children nurst, deliuerd from thy braine,
 To take a new acquaintance of thy minde.
 These offices, so oft as thou wilt looke,
 Shall profit thee and much enrich thy booke.

Since I left you, mine eye is in my mind;
And that which governs me to go about
Doth part his function and is partly blind;
Seems seeing, but effectually is out:
For it no form delivers to the heart
Of bird, of flower, or shape which it doth latch:
Of his quick objects hath the mind no part,
Nor his own vision holds what it doth catch;
**For if it see the rud'st or gentlest sight,
The most sweet-favoured or deformed'st creature,
The mountain or the sea, the day or night,
The crow, or dove, it shapes them to your feature.
Incapable of more, replete with you,
My most true mind thus maketh mine eye untrue.**

That no man is the lord of anything,
Though in him there be much consisting,
Till he communicate his parts to others
Nor doth he of himself know them for aught
Till he behold them formed in th' applause
Where they're extended – who, like an arch reverb'rate
The voice again; or like a gate of steel
Fronting the sun, receives and renders back
His figure and his heat.

Troilus and Cressida, 3.3.110-118

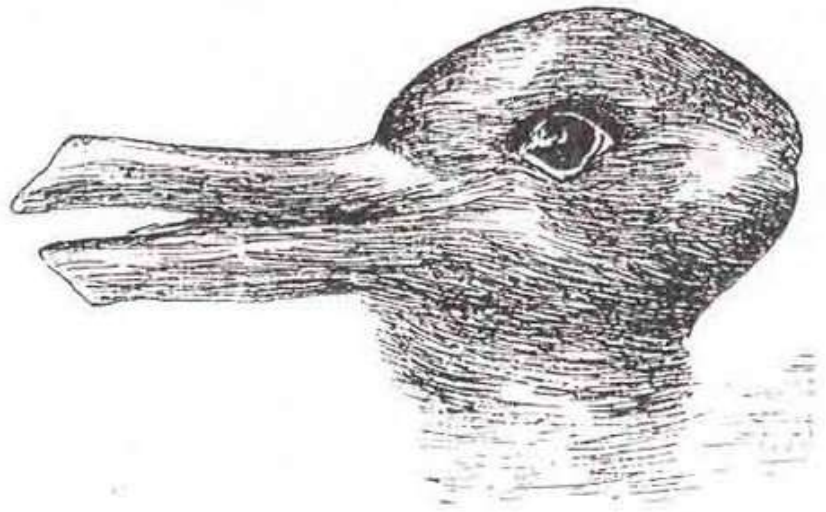
Mirror Neuron System

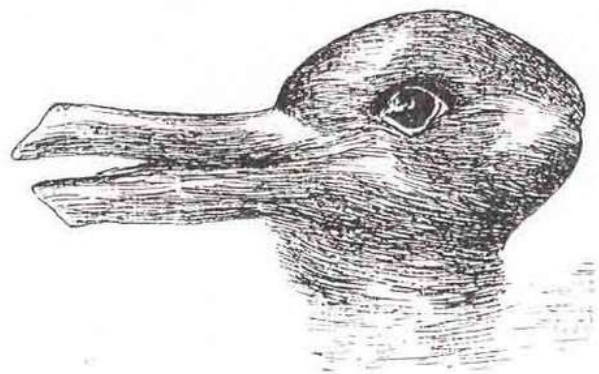
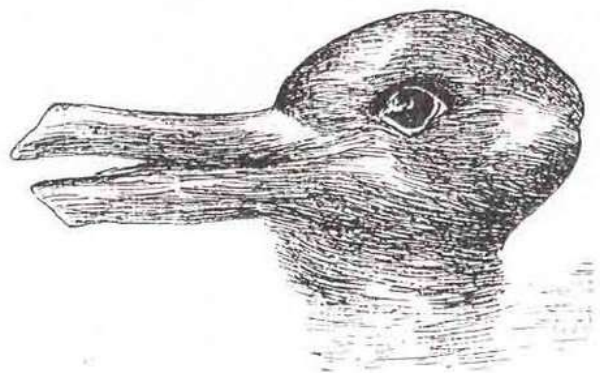


Our ability to empathise with the experiences of others through mirroring is the cognitive hook that impels the spectator's interest in the activities of actor-characters and engages us in the unfolding narrative of a play...Embodying others' emotions produces emotions in us, even if the situation is an imagined or fictitious one...

Bruce McConachie, *Engaging Audiences*







CASSIUS

How many ages hence
Shall this our lofty scene be acted over
In states unborn and accents yet unknown!

BRUTUS

How many times shall Caesar bleed in sport,
That now on Pompey's basis lies along
No worthier than the dust!

CASSIUS

So oft as that shall be,
So often shall the knot of us be called
The men that gave their country liberty.

Julius Caesar, 3.1.111-18

O, pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth,
That I am meek and gentle with these butchers.
...Over thy wounds now do I prophesy,
(Which like dumb mouths, do ope their ruby lips,
To beg the voice and utterance of my tongue)
A curse shall light upon the limbs of men:
Domestic fury and fierce civil strife
Shall cumber all the parts of Italy . . .

Julius Caesar, 3.1.254-264

...not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more. Had you rather Caesar were living and die all slaves, than that Caesar were dead, to live all free men?Who is here so base, that would be a bondman? If any, speak, for him have I offended. Who is here so rude that would not be a Roman? If any, speak, for him have I offended.

Julius Caesar, 3.2.21-32

All	Live, Brutus, live, live.
First Citizen	Bring him with triumph home unto his house.
Second Citizen	Give him a statue with his ancestors.
Third Citizen	Let him be Caesar.
Fourth Citizen	Caesar's better parts Shall be crowned in Brutus.

Julius Caesar, 3.2.48-52

If you have tears, prepare to shed them now.
You all do know this mantle: I remember
The first time ever Caesar put it on;
'Twas on a summer's evening, in his tent,
That day he overcame the Nervii:
Look, in this place ran Cassius' dagger through:
See what a rent the envious Casca made:
Through this the well-beloved Brutus stabb'd;
...For when the noble Caesar saw him stab,
Ingratitude, more strong than traitors' arms,
Quite vanquished him: then burst his mighty heart;
And in his mantle muffling up his face,
Even at the base of Pompey's statua,
Which all the while ran blood, great Caesar fell.
O, what a fall was there, my countrymen!
Then I, and you, and all of us fell down,
Whilst bloody treason flourished over us.

Julius Caesar, 3.2.167-90

