

# **"Interpret in the Name of Shakespeare": National Cultures and Polish Sources of Shakespeare's Plays**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The aim of this work is to demonstrate Shakespeare's function as a world cultural icon in the context of the current debate on global and local values. Though as a universalizing phenomenon his works perform a consolidating world cultural function, yet his role has never been seen as undermining local national issues and interests. Poland serves here as a case study of these ongoing processes. By attributing to Shakespeare a knowledge of our literature and culture, there have been, through the centuries, attempts at localizing Polish literature and culture in the world's civilizational heritage in the nineteenth century. Jacob Caro (1836-1904) propagated the idea that Shakespeare used Polish sources for his *Winter's Tale*, *The Tempest* and *Love's Labour's Lost*, while in the twentieth century Witold Chwałewik (1900-1985) ascribed to Shakespeare the use of Polish legend as the inspiration for *Hamlet*. (KEYWORDS: Shakespeare's sources, national culture, global/local issues, Polish literature, Polish history).*

## **RESUMEN**

*El propósito de este trabajo es demostrar la función de Shakespeare como icono cultural mundial en el contexto del debate en curso sobre valores globales y locales. Aunque como fenómeno universalizador sus obras sirven para consolidar la cultura mundial, hasta ahora el papel de Shakespeare nunca se ha considerado como antagónico con los asuntos e intereses locales y nacionales. Polonia sirve aquí como objeto de estudio de tales procesos. Al atribuirse a Shakespeare un conocimiento de nuestra literatura y cultura, ha habido durante siglos unos intentos de localizar la literatura y cultura polacas en el marco del legado cultural mundial del siglo diecinueve. Jacob Caro (1836-1904) propagó la idea de que Shakespeare utilizó fuentes polacas para su *Winter's Tale*, *The Tempest* y *Love's Labour's Lost*, mientras que en el siglo*

*veinte Witold Chwałewik (1900-1985) atribuyó a Shakespeare el uso de las leyendas polacas como inspiración para Hamlet.* (PALABRAS CLAVE: fuentes de Shakespeare. cultura nacional. temas globales/locales. literatura polaca. historia polaca).

Though critical debates often question the artistic value and meaning of Shakespeare's works, they do not undermine Gary Taylor's opinion that "Shakespeare provides the best specimen in English, one of the best specimens in any language, for investigating the mechanisms of cultural renown" (1989: 218). Yet, Taylor's understanding of the "mechanisms of cultural renown" is limited. He examines them at the level of an individual's aspiration to achieve through Shakespeare a well-measured cultural standing in his/her society, while current developments in cultural studies have demonstrated that these mechanisms can also be traced at a global level. Many nations and ethnic groups have appropriated, taken possession of Shakespeare as an important cultural icon to generate and prove their significant impact upon the world civilization (Wells 1998).

Indeed the current abundance of studies devoted to locating the question of Shakespeare and national cultures in their global perspective has confirmed that his works have always played a part in the national self image of various nations (Hau-kes 1986, 1993; Taylor 1991; Mead and Campbell 1993; Kennedy 1993; Hattaway, Sokolova and Roper 1994; Joughin 1997). Scholarship, teaching, and theatre widely evidence that Shakespeare has been cross-pollinating the world's national and regional cultures for centuries. "Shakespeare works," as Tom Metheson says in the context of the interlocking systems of European culture, "have become both instruments and beneficiaries of a continuous process of cultural exchange: adapted and appropriated, performed, parodied, plagiarized, re-presented, re-produced, re-written, translated, transformed, transposed, and sometimes transcended" (1995: 114).

As a globalizing phenomenon, Shakespeare does perform an unprecedented function, yet his role has never undermined the allegiance of a nation to its own local issues and interests. Other global processes and products tend to blur cultural differences: the billboards of the fast-food industry look the same whether situated at the modern parking sites of American highways or in the historic centres of European cities: rap and techno music is the same whether sung in Japanese, Russian or English. Shakespeare's works, on the other hand, defy a single national or ethnic identity. Imparting its own particular historical, political and cultural agendas, each culture appropriates and subverts Shakespeare in its own image.

Though at the moment Shakespeare studies are deeply interested in demonstrating the culturally conditioned responses to his works on page and stage, little if any attention has been paid to the attempts by non-English speaking countries' to reveal the value and significance of their specific national histories and literatures as the possible sources or analogues of his works. In this way the marginalized "foreign", non-Anglo-American countries propound their

heterogenous national concerns by situating themselves against the global phenomena of the hegemony of the groups of "sameness" in English-speaking parts of the world civilization. Capitalizing on the concept of Shakespeare as a constant referent, some critics have attempted over centuries to reclaim their countries' significance in world cultural legacy. In other words, they have taken advantage of the polyphonic character of Shakespeare's texts and they have treated them as inspiration to interpret their own national histories and literatures by suiting, justifying and frequently exalting their cultures in the name of Shakespeare.

Though the source studies generated in the non-English speaking countries are usually tentative, they are difficult to dismiss *en bloc*: after all, the question of Shakespeare's sources has never been satisfactorily verified. Five difficulties are usually identified in attempting to verify any definitive source claim (Anders 1904; Guttinan 1947; Whitaker 1953; Muir 1977; Bullough 1957-73).<sup>1</sup> Firstly, so many Elizabethan books have been lost, and so many of the plays, which Shakespeare may have known as actor and spectator, were never published, that one cannot always be certain of these sources. Secondly, in his lifetime, there was a great deal of common knowledge, repeated in book after book, or delivered orally, that a particular source for such information is often impossible to determine. Thirdly, Shakespeare's probable knowledge of foreign languages is still a matter of debate. He knew Latin and French. In addition, he probably knew some Italian, and he may have known a smattering of Spanish. The only evidence that he knew any Greek is Ben Jonson's remark that he had "small Latin and less Greek". It is impossible to establish for certain that his French was sufficient to read medieval chronicles, though his Italian apparently enabled him to read, for example, Ariosto and Cinthio. Fourthly, there is still controversy about the relationship of some of Shakespeare's plays to other plays of that period. Fifthly, the extent of Shakespeare's library is unknown. He mentions no books in his will.

Yet over the years Geoffrey Bullough's comprehensive work *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* (1957-1973) has been empowered with a canonical authority. Editors very seldom express any uncertainty while imprinting in the minds of their readers Bullough's selection of texts which they treat as the conclusive, definitive and authorized sources of Shakespeare's works. Needless to say they come from English language or English translations of texts in Italian, French, or Spanish. Yet, even a cursory survey of *The World Shakespeare Bibliography* proves that source studies constitute the subject of an ongoing debate, and the popularity of the Shakespeare Association of America seminar "Shakespeare's Sources" (1999) demonstrated that there is need for further studies informed by poststructural strategies. Virginia

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<sup>1</sup> There is also a great number of books and articles devoted to the possible sources of his individual plays, e.g.: D. B. Hamilton, "Kipling and *The Tempest*", *Kipling Journal* 59 (1985): 56-59; M.P. Jackson, "Titus Andronicus: Play, Ballad, and Prose History", *Notes and Queries* 36 (1989): 315-17; T. A. Perry, "The Two Gentlemen of Verona and the Spanish Diana", *Modern Philology* 87 (1989): 73-76; Richard H. Popkin, "A Jewish Merchant of Venice", *Shakespeare Quarterly* 40 (1989): 329-31

Vaughan's book "*Othello*": *Contextual History* is one of the first examples of these strategies application in the context of Shakespeare's sources. She openly distinguishes between the "narrow conception of 'source' and contexts", defined as "the sorts of things Shakespeare might have incorporated deliberately or osmotically". Further, she organizes these "more flexible discursive influence" into discursive fields: an example is Christian "civility" versus Islamic "barbarism", and employing the discourses of colonialism and orientalism (Vaughan 1994: 2, 4).

The newly-emerging spirit of indeterminacy in what for decades used to be called source study has been succinctly captured by Robert Miola. In his opinion :

We have yet come to no clear understanding, let alone agreement, concerning what constitutes a source and how one functions. Some of the critics [named above – Muir, Rooks, Bullough –] employ to good ends a familiar and time-honoured model: the source is a prior text that shapes a present one through authorial reminiscence and that manifests itself in verbal iteration. (Harold Bloom's theory of literary history as poetic and parricidal misprision, by the way, soars brilliantly from these assumptions.) The others, recognizing the limitations of a linear, author-centered, and largely verbal approach, focus not on texts but on traditions; thus they allow for a wide range of possible interactions between sources and texts. The variety of substitutes for "source" in our current critical lexicon suggests this range of possibilities: deep source, resource, influence, confluence, tradition, heritage, origin, antecedent, intertext, affinity, analogue. The word "source" can now signify a multitude of possible relations with a text, ranging from direct contact to indirect absorption. Furthermore, the inner dynamic of the source-text relationship can be variously figured today. Traditionalists still privilege the author as the central intelligence who reads and views literary sources and reshapes them anew, consciously and unconsciously. Some, however, like Gian Biagio Conte, privilege the text itself, arguing that sources are encoded forms implicit in genre and language itself.

In a footnote, he adds that still another model privileging the reader proposes that the reader "creates the sources", by forging the intertextual identity "between a focused text and its intertext" (1992: 7).

In the context of books and articles on particular classical, medieval or Renaissance texts and phenomena that reveal their authors' mastery over the officially recognized sources of Shakespeare's works, the writings devoted to the peripheral literatures and political issues are refreshing. Josip Torbarina, for example, argues that Illyria in *Twelfth Night* is Dubrovnik. He maintains that Marin Držić (1508-1567), a Croatian playwright, who might be regarded as a forerunner of Shakespeare, worked out in his plays some themes (money, love, avarice) that

were to be the subject of Shakespeare's comedies half a century later. In his work Tobarina convincingly demonstrates that the similarities of creative phrases in Držić and Shakespeare spring from a common pastoral tradition and a common Renaissance atmosphere (1993: 65-85).

A similar approach to Shakespeare's sources/analogues can be found in a study written by a Czech scholar. In his monograph *Shakespeare a dobrá královna Anna* [Shakespeare and Good Queen Anne], Alois Bejblík, discusses direct and indirect reflections of his country's history and personalities in Shakespeare's plays, especially *Richard II* and *Henry II*, part 1 and 7. He tells the story of Anne of Bohemia, her marriage to Richard II, and her relations to Wyclif's teaching, examining historical sources for Falstaff and Sir John Oldcastle's relations with Jan Hus, Emperor Wenceslas, and the Czech reformation movement (1989).

Considering possible sources for *The Taming of the Shrew*, Jan Harold Brunvald surveys many folk stories which he calls "the Taming of the Shrew Complex" found in the oral narratives of Greece, countries of former Yugoslavia, Russia, Estonia, Lithuania, Sweden, Finland and Ireland. Though the main plot of these stories is the same, they demonstrate variants on the process of cultural conditioning in the local husband-wife relationships, which Brunvald examines and comments (1966: 345-359).

Examples of such approaches to Shakespeare's sources are not limited to European contexts. In his intertextual study, Abbas H. Al-Jarrakh finds evidence that some stories of Shakespeare's plays could have been inspired by the *Arabian Nights*. Though the author is aware of the fact that the *Arabian Nights* was first translated into a European language in 1704, his argument that Shakespeare was familiar with some stories appears convincing. The stories could have found their way to medieval Europe via Moslem Spain, the cultural transmission of which Al-Jarrakh expounds in his work presenting his country's cultural and political history (1988: 91-95).

Wole Soyinka's claim that Shakespeare was an Arab by birth whose real name, cleansed of its Anglicized corruption, should be written and pronounced as Shayk-al-Subair is probably one of the best known examples of his appropriation by non-European cultures. Though Soyinka's argument is put in a tongue-in-cheek fashion, he does use his essay to promote the interests of Islamic civilization in the international forum. On the one hand, he acknowledges "with gratitude the subjective relation of other poets and dramatists to the phenomenon of Shakespeare, for even the most esoteric of their claims lead one, invariably, to the productive source itself, and to the gratification of celebrating dramatic anew". On the other he firmly promotes the richness of the Islamic cultural heritage which could have been the inspirational source for e.g. *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Hamlet*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *The Comedy of Errors* (1983: 10).

My knowledge of Croatian, Czech and Arabian historical and current situations is too superficial to venture into any profound and complex analysis of the examples given, though the understanding of the cultural context of any literature or literary criticism, whether of the past or of the present, is crucial for unlocking meanings from any texts. Such an approach is particularly required for the exploration of the culturally conditioned value of Shakespeare's source or

analogue studies. Arnold Kettle's opinion that "it is impossible to evaluate literature in the abstract: a book is neither produced nor read in vacuum" is valid also in the context of critical studies, since the very word "value" immediately involves criteria which are not just "literary" (1983: 35). Any test is a part of life and can be judged only in its relevance to life: life is not static but moving and changing. To ignore the cultural climate surrounding a test is to ignore history and neglect the forces that influenced its creation and culture in general. As Raymond Williams argues, our cultural practices need to be recorded and analyzed as if they were in the process of production: only then will a fuller picture of any historical or current moment become available (1982: 52). His effective argument stands valid in the face of any metacritical studies. Since the recognition that cultural practices are interwoven at all levels, the organization of our "whole life" should be examined if we are to discover what really constitutes culture as Williams defines it.<sup>7</sup>

Though I am the product of Polish culture, I am aware that my place and time limits my access to the organization of my nation's "whole life" in any moment under discussion. My response to the Polish critical work that have attempted to pronounce Polish cultural and literary heritage as the "true and undiscovered" source/analogue of Shakespeare's play is that it will never be complete and final. In the nineteenth century Jacob Caro" (1836-1904) ascribed to Shakespeare the use of Polish sources for his *Winter's Tale*, *The Tempest* and *Love's Labour's Lost*, while in the twentieth century Witold Chwalewik (1900-1985) propounded that Shakespeare based his *Hamlet* on a Polish legend. Jakob Caro's *Geschichte Polens* [Polish History], volume 3, in which he declared that Polish historical events constituted the plot for *Winter's Tale*, *The Tempest* and *Love's Labour's Lost* was published in 1863,<sup>8</sup> a particularly difficult time for Poland as a nation. The country had not existed as an independent state for almost one hundred years: it had been divided among Russian, Prussian, and Austro-Hungary Empires in three successive partitions (1773, 1793, 1795).<sup>9</sup> Because of struggles for

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Williams argues for a searching analysis of culture at all levels: "A key-word, in such analysis, is pattern: it is with the discovery of patterns of a characteristic kind that any useful cultural analysis begins, and it is with the relationships between these patterns, which sometimes reveal unexpected identities and correspondences in hitherto separately considered activities, sometimes again reveal discontinuities of an unexpected kind, that general cultural analysis is concerned." (1982: 63)

His name was also spelt in Polish as Jakob Karo.

<sup>7</sup> He published his German four-volume work *Geschichte Polens* over the span of almost 30 years: 1863-1888. Vol. 1 (1300-1386) was published in 1863; vol. 2 (1386-1430) was published in 1869; vol. 3 (1430-1455) was published in 1875, and vol. 4 divided into two parts: part 1 (1455-1480) was published in 1886 and part 3 (1481-1506) was published in 1888. The full edition of his work in Polish: Jakob Karo, *Historija Polski*, translated by Stanislaw Mieczynski appeared in print in 1900 (Warsaw).

<sup>8</sup> The Congress of Vienna (1815), which put an end to the Napoleonic epoch and to the heritage of the French Revolution, resulted in a new, fourth partition of Poland. True, it set two little marionette lands, the tiny Cracow

liberalization and open revolt against the occupiers (the Kosciuszko Uprising, 1794; the November Uprising, 1831 and the January Uprising, 1863). Poland had been subjected to discriminatory “Germanizing”, “Austrianizing”, and “Russifying” policies. Those policies ranged from suppression of the native language, culture, and institutions to imprisonment, massacres, and outright deportations to Siberia of the participants in any patriotic gestures and rebellions.

Though Shakespeare had been known in Poland since the early seventeenth century when a strolling troupe of players under the direction of John Greene performed at the court of King Sigismundus III in respectively 1616, 1617 and 1619 (Limon 1985), the general Polish public’s knowledge of Shakespeare was limited. Access to Shakespeare’s works was through a culturally alien prism of foreign languages, foreign interpretations and adaptations (French and German), and they very usually met with determined opposition from the pseudo-classicist group. Opposition against Shakespeare was also very strong in the chief Polish learned institute: The Association of the Friends of Learning. When in 1811, Franciszek Wezyk rejected the anti-Shakespeare line of reasoning presented by Voltaire and embraced the pro-Shakespeare arguments of August Wilhelm Schlegel, he suffered a crushing defeat before the high court of the Warsaw pseudo-classicist (Helsztynski 1965: 16).

Poles had to wait till 1875 for their complete translation of all Shakespeare’s plays, poems and sonnets.<sup>6</sup> The great Polish writers: Adam Mickiewicz (1798-1855), Juliusz Slowacki (1809-1849), Zygmunt Krasinski (1813-1859), and Cyprian Kamil Norwid (1831-1883) did start their appropriation of Shakespeare’s plays as the model to follow while expressing the Romantic theory of cognition and practices. They translated parts of his works, and used them for their own poetic and dramatic activities. Yet Shakespeare’s plays seldom frequented theatres, also because the occupational powers regarded them as politically dangerous (e.g., *Macbeth*, *King Lear*). Shakespeare entered the Polish theatres repertoire around 1869: Ira Aldridge’s visits in Poland (1853, 1854, 1862, 1864, 1867) greatly contributed to the radical increase of Shakespeare’s popularity (Kujawinska Courtney 1998: 145-164). Earlier there were sporadic

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Republica and the larger Kingdom of Poland, known as the Congress Kingdom, but none of these freakish creations had any chance of surviving. The former vanished in 1848, being incorporated into Austria, the latter ceased to exist even earlier, after the failure of the November Uprising in 1831, when it lost its constitutional independence for Russia (though it had only been on paper).

<sup>6</sup> After the November Uprising (1831), Jozef Ignacy Kraszewski (1812-1887), a famous Polish novelist, working first in the Eastern Borderland and later in exile in Dresden, voiced the appeal of Polish literature to possess the whole Shakespeare in translation. His repeated appeals succeeded in 1837, when a Kiev Canon (later Archbishop of Mohylow) Ignacy Holowinski, a priest called Placyt Jankowski, and the novelist Jozef Korzeniowski translated some of Shakespeare’s works into Polish. Later, three Polish translators: Stanislaw Egbert Kozmian and Leon Ulrich, both in exile, and Jozef Paszkowski in Warsaw produced translations, the best in intrinsic value and artistic expression at that time. Their work constituted the basis of the first edition of the complete works of Shakespeare, edited in 1875 by Kraszewski (Trepinski 1965: 55-67).

stagings of Shakespeare's original plays, and of Francois Ducis's adaptations in translation (Hahn, 1958: xiv).

Though Jacob Caro published his work in German, his *Geschichte Polens* evoked an unprecedented interest among Polish intellectuals. On the one hand, Polish historians responded to his methodological strategies and factual interpretation: many reviews appeared in renowned periodicals.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Polish literary critics became profoundly interested in his presentation of various Polish historical events as a possible source/analogue for three of Shakespeare's plays, especially his *Winter's Tale* (Ehrenberg 1870/71; Stadnicki 1873; Dobrowolski 1875; Kozmian 1876; 1881).

The space of this work does not allow for narrating the historical events that Caro so meticulously examined in his work. Since he could not find any external evidence that Shakespeare had indeed known these historical facts, he carefully explained the basis of his assumption. In the case of *The Winter's Tale* he makes his claim about the possible way of the story's implantation on English soil under the section for the year "1392". He says that the significance of the events must have been known to the Knights of the Teutonic Order, and through the English knights, among them John Gaunt's son, Henry Bolingbroke, the future Henry IV, who in 1390-1391 took part in the Order's attack on Vilnius, and through the English Knights they must have become part of a popular European narrative, also known in England (Caro 1863: 45).

As a historian, Caro displays an unprecedented knowledge of Shakespeare and his times. He obviously studied his plays very thoroughly; he was, for example, aware of the fact that Robert Greene's *Pandosto* was generally accepted as the immediate source of *The Winter's Tale*. "It is known," he said, "that Shakespeare studied in detail the history of those times", and he put forward a bold assumption: "maybe both Shakespeare and Greene (the author of the novel *Doratus and Faunia*) had the ballad on the Prussian expeditions by King Henry before their eyes" (Caro 1863: 35).<sup>2</sup> This assumption was accepted by Polish literary critics; Kazimierz Stadnicki stated for example that "the novelist [Greene] and Shakespeare conflated the story of the Duke of Masovia with the story of the King of Poland, into a whole, though there had been no connection between them [the stories]" (1873: 79).

In addition, inspired by Caro's work, Polish critics proposed further connections between Polish historical events as the possible sources/analogues for Shakespeare's plays. In the case of *The Winter's Tale*, Stanislaw Kozmian, for example, conducted a linguistic study on the text

<sup>1</sup>Cf. reviews: F. Zielinski (1867:4-5); S. T. Waruka (1869:7); R. Liske (1873: 4); A. Prochaska (1874:75: 203-204); J. M. Lewestan (1876: 235-236); H. Longinus (1886: 19); F. Bostel (1886: 52); T. Papee (1889: 10); D. Gott (1889: 105-112). Later even full-fledged monographs on his life and work appeared: e.g., Adam Przyborowski's *Dr. Jakob Karo i jego Historyja Polska* [Dr. Jakob Karo and his History of Poland] (1875) and Alexander Kraushar's *Jakob Karo jako historyk dziejow Polski* [Jakob Caro as the historian of Poland] (1918).

<sup>2</sup>If not stated otherwise, all the translations are mine.



of the play and the royal speeches registered in Polish sixteenth century state papers, and maintained that the argument and wording used by Florizel to defend his love for Perdita (4.4.477-482; 489-493) echoes the argument and wording used by king Sigismundus Augustus (1520-1572) in 1548 to defend his love for Barbara Radziwillowna (1520-1551) in the Polish parliament (Koziniak 1881: 61-62). The king married her despite a strong opposition of his family, the aristocracy and nobility: he was submitted to a detailed interrogation, and was told to arrange a divorce. His reply was widely circulated in Europe at that time.

Indeed in the nineteenth century Caro's work was praised and at the same time severely criticized. The Polish historians emphasized the value of his primary source research: he travelled widely, studying manuscripts and documents in Warsaw, Cracow, Posen, Kornik, Wrocław and also in Berlin (Konopczynski 1937: 11). It was said that his "synthetic picture of Polish history reveals a command over a vast subject and penetration of its entirety: it testifies well to the virtues of a broader mind" (*ibid.*: 12). Yet, Caro was not Polish, and he never considered himself as one, though he was born in Gniezno (Cieszyn), the town regarded as the cradle of the Polish national state. His father, Józef Chaim was a local rabbi, who sent him to study politics and history at the Universities of Berlin and Leipzig, where he received his Ph.D. in 1860. Six years later the Prussian Minister of Foreign Affairs recommended him for the Breslau University professorship, where Richard Roepell (1809-1893), the famous history specialist, his mentor and friend, urged him to continue his work. "Politically motivated Polish historians really had a problem in establishing a clear-cut consensus in their response to his work (Konopczynski 1937: 305): sensitive to their Polish concerns some of them called him a Polish renegade, criticized his lack of Polish language, his detached academic strategies, and his voice free of any national judgements (*ibid.*: 706).

Yet, his *Geschichte Polens* was widely read in the Prussian and Austro-Hungarian Empires. Caro wrote it for the prestigious "Geschichte der europäischen Staaten" series edited by F. Perthes in Germany. At the time when it was not in the interest of the occupying powers to cultivate the value of Polishness, he displayed an unusual devotion to promoting the significance of Poland in the international arena. It is true that he never engaged in any social or political activities: Roepell officially supported the Polish rights to freedom after the January Uprising (1863) (Pater 1997: 146, 148), but Caro also expressed his respect for Poland. His work situated the Polish historical and political legacy in the centre of world's interest through its connection with Shakespeare's status. He also published articles on that subject in *Englische Studien* (1878), the publication widely read by the international community of English studies specialists. In other words, Caro approached his German culture not, like Roepell, as an official rebel, but rather as a dutiful servant, content to improvise a part of his own response within the official political orthodoxy. I am far from arguing that Caro's relation to his culture can be

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Roepell was German, who worked as History Professor at the University of Breslau. His first volume of *Geschichte Polens* was published in 1840.

defined as a conscious subversion: his work offers no single timeless affirmation or denial of its legitimate political authority. The historical facts and their interpretations presented, are caught up, like the medium of his work, in unsettling repetitions, committed to shifting voices, with their shifting aesthetic assumptions and imperatives, that were typical of the historical narrative of his times.

Witold Chwalewik's narrative also is more of a historical, or more precisely legal, rather than literary character. Born at the beginning of the twentieth century, he spent his childhood and adolescence under the Russian partition. Though he was a lawyer by education, he never practised his profession, since very early in his life his fascination with English culture and language brought him to Britain where he worked as an assistant in the Department of Polish Language and Literature of the London School of Slavonic Studies (1928-1931), and translated Polish academic works for the *Slavonic Review*.<sup>10</sup> After World War II Chwalewik worked as an academic teacher at the universities of Warsaw, Torun, and Lublin, giving lectures and seminars on English literature. His critical acumen is reflected in many articles, translations, and monographs where he wrote with equal ease and understanding about Joseph Conrad, H.G. Wells, T.S. Eliot and Geoffrey Chaucer (1969).<sup>11</sup> Yet, Chwalewik's greatest professional passion was Shakespeare. His best known monograph is probably *Szkice szekspirowskie* [Essays on Shakespeare] published in 1983, which is still quoted in theatre programmes. His cooperation with eminent Polish theatre directors contributed to many stagings of Shakespeare's plays. He worked, for example, with Leon Schiller on his production of *The Tempest* (1945), which is still regarded as one of the most significant achievements of the Polish post-war theatre. He translated and edited Shakespeare's plays (*King Lear*, *Measure for Measure* and *Hamlet*) and as the representative of Poland Chwalewik attended the International Shakespeare Conferences (1948-1973) organized in Stratford-upon-Avon by the Shakespeare Institute.

At the peak of Stalinism in Poland, he wrote his controversial monograph: *Polska w "Hamlecie"* [Poland in *Hamlet*] where he revealed his life conviction that "the golden age [Renaissance] of Polish civilisation had been appropriated by the English earlier than the Elizabethan literature by the Poles" (1956: 7). The book represents a profound textual analysis of the Polish Renaissance echoes apparently present in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Later Chwalewik pushed his idea further stating in a long article that *Hamlet* was, in fact, based on the fusion of two sources: the Danish (*The First Nine Books on the Danish History of Saxo-Grammaticus*) and the Polish (semi-legendary story on King Popiel eaten by mice which Polish and many other popular European chronicles reprinted in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries) (1965: 99-126). There

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Because of his efforts the Anglo-Polish Student Society, currently called the Anglo-Polish Society, was founded; J.B. Priestly acted as one of its first chairs in the pre-war period.

Very active in his profession of choice, Chwalewik never cared about academic degrees. He received them just before his retirement, and, as he explained, only for financial reasons: the degrees allowed him to have a higher old-age pension.

is no doubt that much of the evidence that Chwalewik presents in his article "The Legend of the King Popiel: A Possible Polish Source of *Hamlet*" and Iiis monograph *Polska w "Hamlecie"* is tendentious. In fact, he was aware that it "surely is a wild fancy" (*ibid.*: 115), but he carried out Iiis comparative study with a clinching determination and argumentative strategies of a lawyer firmly set on winning his case.

Both Caro's and Chwalewik's assumptions will probably never be recognized by clear-headed academics, yet their assumptions attracted international interest. Calling Caro "an eminent historian", Horace H. Furness presented his ideas in *The New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare's Winter's Tale. The Tempest and Love's Labour's Lost* (1898: vol. IX; vol. XII, 1899; and vol. XIV, 1904: quot.: 345),<sup>12</sup> and Stanislaw Kozmian published his response to Caro's work in *Jarhbuch der Shakespearegesellschaft* (1876). Though Chwalewik did not have Iiis works published or referred to in international publications, he has not been the only one who has been fascinated with Shakespeare's references to Poland in *Hamlet*.<sup>13</sup> Recent works and debates at the *ShakespeareList.Serve* also testify to the ongoing interest in this aspect of Shakespeare studies. It can then be argued that Caro's and Chwalewik's ideas have performed their cultural function: they attempted, even if unconsciously, to release Polish nineteenth century culture from the complex political and social suppressions and denunciations which became reflected in the reclamation of the glorious Polish past from the annals of forgetfulness.<sup>14</sup>

In Caro's case, his historical analysis assisted with opening up of Polish culture to the world's literary legacy. Because of the plays' supposed connection with Polish history, *The Winter's Tale* was for the first time ever translated into Polish. In the "Preface" to Iiis work, Gustaw Ehrenberg (1818-1895), the play's translator, openly stated that "the stimulus for translating *The Winter's Tale* into Polish was the conceivable connection of the contents of this play with the incidents relating to our [Polish] history" (1870/71: 22-82, 147-202: quot.: 32). His translation (in prose) was used for the first two Polish theatrical stagings of the play in 1877 (Hahn 1958: 164).

The careers and writing of Chwalewik and his more flamboyant contemporary Jan Kott have inuch uncommon.<sup>15</sup> Kott openly subverted the repressive Communist system by Iiis

<sup>12</sup> In tracing sources and analogues for this play Caro also refers to Russian history.

One of the latest examples of this fascination is an article on ihr possible connection between Polonius's name and Poland, see V.N. Alexander, "Polonius and Poland, a Coincidence", *English Language Notes* (1996):8-13.

<sup>13</sup> In the sixteenth century, also called "Golden Age", Poland played a significant role in ihr international arena. Because of its political, social, economic and cultural prosperity Polish-English relations were close, which is evidenced in *The Elizabethan State Papers*, Cf. H. Zins (1974: 92-95).

Both were Shakespeare scholars though not through any institutionalized education. Both spent their early professional life abroad, and after World War II they lived and worked under a communist regime, where their interests centered around Shakespeare studies on page and stage.

theatrical endeavours and academic writing, which consequently brought him and Poland in the centre of international attention. Chwalewik never overstepped the boundaries of the Communist regime's dicta, yet he also attempted to resolve the strictures of the institutional bonds by readjusting them to his own will, and thus achieving a sort of independence within the system's structures. At the time of heavy censorship, and social-realism he promoted the history of the Polish "Golden Age", and in this way he made his readers look with nostalgia upon the times of Polish independence and greatness in the international political, artistic and literary spheres. It is indeed a paradox that his works on Polish Renaissance texts is held with esteem by historians, while he is usually slighted by literary critics.<sup>16</sup>

The history of Polish response to Caro's and Chwalewik's sources/analogues studies testify, I believe, to the significance of the replacement of the text as the centre of critical attention by the reader's cognitive activity. Stanley Fish's methodological dictum that

if meaning is no longer a property of the text but a product of the reader's activity the question to answer is not "what do poems mean?" or even "what do poems do?" but "how do readers make meaning?" (1980: 165-166)

is one theory that may explain the current lack of interest in Caro's and Chwalewik's work on the part of Polish Shakespeare critics and scholars. In Caro's case after the Versailles Conference (1918), the date of Polish liberation, the interpretative strategies of the nineteenth century were no longer appropriate for Poland, sure of its independent political and cultural prerogatives in the world forum. Chwalewik stood out like a sore thumb in the community of Polish Shakespeare scholars, also because of his non-academic background.<sup>17</sup> Neither Caro's nor Chwalewik's assumptions that Polish historical and literary facts could form the bases for Shakespeare's plays have been mentioned for decades, even if only as a curiosity of particular historic value. Locked materially in a cultural and political homeland, their texts have lost their life-force even before it became generally recognized as a cultural product of the nation.

I will end my work with a modest proposal to the Shakespeare scholars and critic, which concerns my argument on the culturally charged responses to the sources and analogues of Shakespeare's plays. The texts and documents we refer to in the source/anologue studies are not just innocent repositories of information and facts, but culturally conditioned, impermanent reactions and attitudes Shakespeare over the 400-year period of his presence in Europe, which has always been seen as a conglomeration of nations, regions, and ethnic groups. It is for this reason that I believe that a publication of works devoted to our European analogues and sources

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<sup>16</sup> This attitude to Chwalewik is recorded with regret in the tribute after his death: Andrzej Biernacki, "Witold Chwalewik (1900-1985)", *Literatura na świecie* 3 (1987): 370-372.

<sup>17</sup> Like Jan Kott, he has never been treated with respect by his university peers, particularly those who have worked in the English Studies Departments, though his works are still in print for general readership.

of Shakespeare's plays, which have been marginalised by official academic study, will be a worthy endeavour. It will draw attention to the function of Shakespeare as a means through which our respective countries have been attempting to reclaim their significance in the world cultural legacy. It will, I trust, enrich the dimension of the ongoing study and exploration of Shakespeare as one of the most excellent terrains to map the interactions of the global with the local: We, the local, have been for centuries interpreting our histories, literatures, politics, ourselves, in the name of Shakespeare, the transcendent, the universal, the global.

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