

shakespeare politically in/correct

23/04/2023





Polish Shakespeare Society Conference in co-operation with Gdańsk Shakespeare Theatre

shakespeare politically in/correct

The aim of the conference is to discuss Shakespeare as an author who does not succumb easily to fashion or the pressure of time, i.e. universal Shakespeare, but also as an author who can engage (and possibly argue) with anyone, anywhere and at any time.

We will look with particular attention at those issues in Shakespeare's texts, their translations and adaptations, which for social or political reasons may be problematic for contemporary readers and audiences. We will be particularly interested in censorship that is sometimes politically correct but may be politically incorrect, depending on the context. In the process we will also touch upon the very notion of political correctness as a term whose meaning is vague and which refers to the sphere of individually or collectively professed values.

The thematic scope of the conference covers Shakespeare, particularly in the Polish context: in translation and in theatre, on the TV and cinema screens, in Shakespeare criticism, at festivals, etc. We will also be looking at the significance of Shakespeare in Central and Eastern Europe, and how his works resonate in recent years, especially in 2022 and 2023, at a time marked by the pandemic and the Russian war with Ukraine; by the marginalization of various social groups and individuals in the name of politics; as well as by the climate and energy crisis.

The conference is conducted in Polish and English.

Organizing committee:
Magdalena Cieślak
Jacek Fabiszak
Jan Grzanka
Anna Kowalcze-Pawlik
Anna Ratkiewicz
Anna Wołosz-Sosnowska

programme

10.00 - conference opening: Jacek Fabiszak, chairman of The Polish Shakespeare Society

Keynote speaker: 10.10-11.20 Imke Lichterfeld (University of Bonn, Germany), "Use all gently" - the fine line between casting and roles? (in English)

11.10-11.30 - coffee break

SESSION 1: 11.40-14:00 (session in English)

Ronan Paterson, (Teesside University, UK), Berlin, Moscow and Cannes: Shakespeare, Soft Power and the Iron Curtain

Maria Sawicka (University of Warsaw), I am a Jew.' אני יהודי : Identity and social exclusion in the multicultural world of William Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice

Jacek Fabiszak oraz Anna Wołosz-Sosnowska (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań), War violence – religion in theatrical stagings of Macbeth of Grzegorz Jarzyna, Agata Dudy-Gracz and Andrzej Wajda

Anna Kowalcze-Pawlik (Łódź University), Caliban. Politically Incorrect: On Disability Representations

Joanna Różańska (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań), Shakespeare in Dubai - be or how to be?

14.00-15.30 - lunch break

SESSION 2: 15.30-17.40 (session in Polish)

Jan Grzanka (The Polish Shakespeare Society), The Tragedy of Desire. Hamlet within Jacques Lacan's discourse

Barbara Świąder-Puchowska (University of Gdańsk), The Prince of Denmark in "new Poland". Hamlet in Polish theatres after 1989

Bożena Pysiewicz (The Poster Museum at Wilanów), Shakespeare on the Poster

Michał Pruszak (University of Gdańsk), Not in front of the kids! Censorship and political correctness in literary adaptations of Shakespeare's plays for young readers

17.40-18.10 - discussion and conference closing

keynote "Use all gently" - the fine line between casting and roles?

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"use all gently; [...]

Be not too tame neither, [...]

any thing so overdone is from the purpose of playing" (Hamlet 3.2)

Drama is always about impersonations: an audience looks at actors. They observe the stage, how characters move, interact, and create dynamics. The representation of the population on stage demonstrates different facets of social, cultural, and gender issues. This raises questions of agency and empowerment.

Casting choices are vital in the creation of a performance: imagination, innovation, and colour-, gender-, age-, or disability-conscious casting can alter an audience's perception of Shakespeare's plays and allow for empowering visual perspectives. This concerns all aspects of marginalisation. The transformation of a character that occurs when it is played by different actors with diverse backgrounds and different physical bodies—due to their (trans-)gender, race, age, class, or disability—allows to explore plays in more depth, changes perspective, and add a different kind of richness. Such an awareness guides 'the appeal of adaptations for audiences [which] lies in their mixture of repetition and difference, of familiarity and novelty' (Hutcheon). Familiarity and novelty are what stage adaptations are all about. Casting processes open opportunities and can be inclusive. Yet, there is a fine line between actors and roles, a sometimes small but essential difference between the professional and the character. Acting is a profession. How do directors, actors, and other theatre professionals engage with inclusive casting in productions of Shakespeare? These choices are sometimes considered socially and politically problematic and even risky. This paper would like to address some of these risky and even scorned choices in recent performances and question political in/correctness.

Dr. Imke Lichterfeld teaches English Literature at Bonn University in Germany, where she currently holds a position as Studies Coordinator at the Department of English, American and Celtic Studies. She has contributed to publications on the English Renaissance, Modernism, and contemporary literature. Her research predominantly focuses on early modern drama, Shakespeare, and his contemporaries.

abstracts

SESSION 1

Berlin, Moscow and Cannes: Shakespeare, Soft Power and the Iron Curtain

Ronan Paterson, Teesside University, UK X9022548@tees.ac.uk ronanpaterson@googlemail.com

Following the defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945 the victorious powers, the USSR, USA, Britain and France, occupied the defeated Germany. But it was soon apparent that the erstwhile allies had radically different plans for the future shape of Europe. Determined to avoid open conflict, East and West sublimated their opposition into a cultural contest, to win the hearts and minds of the German population. Although unacknowledged, this battle was keenly fought. Initially the conflict was played out in Berlin, the only city occupied by all four powers.

The first battleground was the concert hall, but this soon spread to the radios and then the streets of the city, where this'e political dimensions soon become apparent. William Shakespeare was deployed as a weapon at the centre of this cultural war.

With the German film industry destroyed the conquerors filled German cinemas with movies highlighting their own values. One of the first British films shown in Germany was Olivier's Henry V. When the Red Army Choir gave concerts in Berlin the British opposed them with Cambridge University's Marlowe Society performing plays by Webster and Shakespeare. Arguably the students succeeded. Gradually the conflict expanded. The DDR made a Shakespeare film, influenced by Henry V. Then two years running the Russian entries at Cannes were Shakespeare films, and Yutkevich's Otello was shown in 70 countries around the world. But the Soviets' Shakespeare offensive could not camouflage their tanks rolling into Budapest.

Ronan Paterson began acting professionally as a teenager in Dublin. After winning a national award he joined The Abbey, Ireland's national theatre. He subsequently moved to the UK, and worked there as both actor and director in theatre, television, film and radio, serving over the years as artistic director of several companies. He began teaching alongside his practice, initially in the training of actors and directors, then transitioned into the University sector, as Head of Theatre Arts at Newcastle College, Head of Drama at the University of Winchester, Head of Drama Theatre Arts at Queen Margaret's University, Edinburgh, and eventually Head of Performing Arts at Teesside University.

His theatre work has been seen in nine European countries, and he has taught, led workshops and masterclasses and lectured in Universities in countries all over the world, and for groups ranging from young offenders in prison to producers and directors at China Central Television. He has served as quality assurance External Examiner for many Universities, and the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire and the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. A frequent speaker at international conferences, he has published widely in Europe, Asia, Africa and America. His research covers Shakespeare in Performance, Shakespeare in Film (particularly Soviet film) Shakespeare in Illustration and a number of other subjects from film and theatre history.

"I am a Jew." Identity and social exclusion in the multicultural world of William Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice

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William Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice has been initially classified as a comedy in the First Folio, which is perceived by the modern audience as a proof of the contemporaneous insensitivity, considering the gravity of the themes presented in the play—antisemitism, cultural exclusion, religious persecution. "One would have to be blind, deaf and dumb not to recognise that Shakespeare's grand, equivocal comedy The Merchant of Venice is nevertheless a profoundly antisemitic work," Harold Bloom boldly states in Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human (171). How is it thus possible that the play continues to be staged and adapted for other modes of art in a world of hyper political correctness?

In my research, I will, firstly, identify the themes relating to characters' identities present in the play, and, subsequently, I shall analyse them as the underpinnings of the fictional Venetian society distinguishing itself with its cultural pluralism. I will focus on the attitudes of Antonio, Bassanio, Shylock, Tubal, and Portia, and the way each of them responds to one another. Finally, I will present an interpretation of the whole play, bearing in mind the significance of these relations on the motivations of the characters in question, at the same time, showing how this drama could be seen as centred around cultural identity, the perception of self, and one's place in the structure of the modern society.

Maria Sawicka, a graduate student in the Institute of English Studies at the University of Warsaw. Her major is British Literature and Culture, with a particular interest in Elizabethan England. Apart from studying Elizabethan fashion and family life, her area of expertise lies in Shakespeare's plays and their adaptations. She obtained Bachelor's degree in British Literature and Culture, also in the Institute of English Studies, the University of Warsaw with BA thesis "Gertrude as a Leading Character in Shakespeare's Hamlet and Its Film Adaptations" in which she conducted a feminist analysis of the character of Queen Gertrude—her personal traits and her importance in the play based on the play-text itself and two film adaptations: Kenneth Branagh's Hamlet (1996) and Gregory Doran's Hamlet (2009). Currently, she is preparing for the defence of her Master's degree at the same institution, focusing on the analysis of Shakespeare's Othello—the identity of the eponymous character and the tragic nature of the play—based on the play-text and its theatrical adaptations.

War - violence - religion in theatrical stagings of Macbeth of Grzegorz Jarzyna, Agata Dudy-Gracz and Andrzej Wajda

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There are not many theatrical plays which are as topical and up-to-date in the 21st century as at the time when they were written, and Shakespeare's Macbeth is one of such examples. Power struggle, ambition and violence, all of which can be found in the play, are issues which inspired and drew attention of film and theatrical directors alike. Three adaptations: Grzegorz Jarzyna's 2007: Macbeth (2005), Andrzej Wajda's Macbeth (2010) and Agata Duda-Gracz's Macbeth (2017) depict political and cultural situation in Poland and in Europe in a unique way. Although the performances were made over the course of 15 years and vary both artistically and aesthetically, they still express anxieties and fears of Western societies in the 21st century, i.e. conflict and violence (its sources and forms it can take), the role and function of religion and the church, as well as the position of women in the man dominated world. The performances trace the changes in the perception of evil in early 21st century Poland.

All three productions focus on the war, the archetype of conflict, and ask the everlasting question not only about its sense, but also its sources: Jarzyna focuses on the war on terror, Wajda focuses more on a post-apocalyptic conflict, whereas Duda-Gracz on the conflict between paganism and Christianity in the 11th century Scotland. The directors ponder over the source of evil and its 'banality', which has nothing of its banality in the adaptations, becoming both ethical and eschatological necessity; within this context the role and condition of religion become apparent. As a result, we will try to shed some light on how the chosen productions use religion(s) to address the problem of evil in Macbeth.

Jacek Fabiszak teaches cultural history, theory, theatre history and Shakespeare at the Faculty of English, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland. His research interests include English Renaissance theatre and drama and their stage, televisual and filmic transpositions. He has published and given papers at conferences on Shakespeare's plays – one of his major publications in this area is Polish Televised Shakespeares (2005). He also applied linguistic and sociological tools in the analysis of drama, which resulted in the publication of Shakespeare's Drama of Social Roles (2001), a book that attempts to interpret Shakespeare's last plays in light of the theory of social roles and speech act theory. He co-authored Szekspir. Leksykon [Shakespeare. A lexicon. 2003], co-edited Czytanie Szekspira [Reading Shakespeare] and wrote on Christopher Marlowe, both on his plays (focusing on imagery) and their screen versions (especially Edward II). He is head of the Department of Studies in Culture at the Faculty of English, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań.

Anna Wołosz-Sosnowska is a PhD student at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan. Her schoalrly interests encompass Shakespeare in comic book adaptations, Shakespeare in popular culture, theatrical adaptations of Shakespeare's plays.

Caliban. Politically Incorrect: On Disability Representations

Anna Kowalcze-Pawlik Łódź University anna.kowalcze@uni.lodz.pl

The presentation describes the political potential hidden in the figure of Caliban and its stage representations from the perspective of Cantal Mouffe's discussion of the political. On the example of selected performances from Poland and abroad, I will show the ways of dealing with conflict through Mouffe's understanding of antagonism and agonism: after all, the ways of reading and presenting the conflict between Prospero, Miranda and Caliban and its resolution affect the reception of both the drama and its stage adaptations. I will pay particular attention to those performances that use disability as one of Caliban's characteristics and the related dynamics of the stage representation of disability visible e.g. in Gdańsk Shakespeare Theatre's 2021 The Tempest by Szymon Kaczmarek and 2023 Royal Shakespeare Company's The Tempest by Elizabeth Freestone.

Anna Kowalcze-Pawlik teaches literary and culture studies at the University of Lodz. Vice-president of the Polish Shakespeare Society, in her current research she focuses on the reception history of The Tempest in translation and performance. Her research interests include cultural history of emotions, history of translation, Shakespeare in translation and performance and early modern writing by women.

Shakespeare in Dubai - be or how to be?

The Polish Shakespeare Society Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań Dubai, the United Arab Emirates joanna.rozanska7@gmail.com

The aim of the presentation is to present the specificity of staging the adaptations of Shakespeare's plays in Dubai within the context of socio-cultural censorship as well as the need for diversified theatrical audience. Legal restrictions (Public Display of Affection), including ban on nudity, broadly understood promiscuity or acts of physical intimacy (sexuality, kissing) in public, also in theatres, impact the way Shakespeare's plays are adapted. The mentioned moral restrictions may affect the work of local artists and the means of expression commonly used by the creators of Western theaters (Klata, Purcarete and others) effectively exclude many Shakespearean productions from theatres in the Emirates. The second aspect of the peculiar situation with Shakespearean adaptations in Dubai is the selection of only mainstream plays to meet the needs of a multinational community that does not share the homogenous views on education and culture. The needs of such varied community (202 nationalities) divert from the expectations of the European audience. Hence, it can be assumed that artistic directors of local theatres conduct a sort of 'self-censorship' and propose such titles which are recognized by the audience and is ready for their reception. Despite the moral regulations and unique audience Dubai is open to Shakespeare and Shakespeare is welcome here.

Joanna Rozanska has been a Senior Lecturer of English Literature, Culture, Multicultural Communication and Academic English for last 23 years. Since 2013 she has lived and taught at universities in United Arab Emirates.

Her major research is concentrated on English Renaissance drama (staging and audience), Elizabethan and modern drama, theatrical and filmic conventions as well as Shakespeare on screen and stage in our times. After her arrival to the United Arab Emirates, she has expanded her area of research and has been conducting pioneering study on a specific role and function of Shakespeare's drama in the Middle East.

In 2021 she was granted the prestigious Golden Visa (category researcher) by Dubai Culture & Arts Authority for, among others, her research on Shakespeare drama relocation to Dubai. She is engaged in several new projects: establishing the International Shakespeare Association in cooperation with The Junction Theatre in Dubai and opening the first Shakespeare festival in United Arab Emirates. Recently she cooperates with Czech theatre Divaldo Radost to organize staging award winning performance Hamlet on the Road at the Dubai theatres in 2024. Her life passion is to inspire multicultural, multinational dialog and cultural exchange between Europe and the Middle East.

SESSION 2

The Tragedy of Desire. Hamlet within Jacques Lacan's discourse

Jan Grzanka the Polish Shakespeare Society jangrzanka@onet.pl

In the academic year of 1958-59 Jacques Lacan devoted one of his seminars to provide an original interpretation of Hamlet. The aim of the paper is to comprehend the tragedy of desire, which according to Lacan appears in Hamlet. The desires are with Hamlet during the entire plot of the play and constitute a concept helping to understand his personal tragedy, says Lacan. The desire in reference to his mother, is confronted with the desire, on the one hand an idealized object, i.e. his father, and on the other hand other desires for the vile and sinister object, i.e. Claudius. And finally, the desire which provokes Hamlet's incorrect decisions stemming from the conflict between power and religion. The French philosopher analyses Hamlet's desire, his eagerness to take action which he desires so much and which becomes his remorse due to the inadequacy of his own will.

Jan Grzanka is a graduate of Gdańsk University of Technology, University of Gdańsk, and Collegium Civitas. He obtained his doctorate at Faculty of Philosophy of The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin. He is a member of Pomeranian Philosophical-Theological Association and Polish Philosophical Association, vice-chairman of Polish Shakespeare Society and editor in chief of Universitas Gedanensis. He has published two books Między fizyką a filozofią. Filozofia przyrody i filozofia fizyki w pismach Mariana Smoluchowskiego and Zapomniany geniusz fizyki. Rzecz o Marianie Smoluchowskim.

The Prince of Denmark in "the new Poland". Hamlet in Polish theatres after 1989

Barbara Świąder-Puchowska Uniwersytet Gdański barbara.swiader@ug.edu.pl

The presentation will focus on chosen theatrical performances of William Shakespeare's Hamlet on Polish stages over the course of 25 years since the end of communism in 1989 (over 40 adaptations of the play). All the discussed performances are indicative of political changes that were taking place at the time. Two significant performances will function as a framework for the time; the first, Hamlet (IV) by Andrzej Wajda (1989) premiered shortly after the transformation on the one hand, Hamlet by Krzysztof Garbaczewski (2015) on the other hand. Juxtaposing these two productions perfectly illustrates the changes that took place in the Polish modern theatre, both in terms of the selection and the manner of presenting themes as well as the form. Among the theatrical professionals who reached for Hamlet, apart from Wajda and Garbaczewski, were: Krzysztof Nazar (1996), Krzysztof Warlikowski (1999), Jan Klata (2004 and 2014), Monika Pęcikiewicz (2008), Radosław Rychcik (2011). I shall attempt to answer the question of how the socio-political changes of 1989 influenced the scenic interpretations of Hamlet – what questions the play has started to give answers to in "the new Poland"? Has it lost its political edge due to the transformation, or has it transformed into something completely different?

Dr Barbara Świąder-Puchowska

is a theatrologist and a lecturer at Gdańsk University, adjuct at Cultural Sudies Division in the Institude of Cultural Studies. She organises cultural events, directs short films, music videos, photo shoots and theatrical performances. Her main interest is Polish modern theatre, inluding independent theatres in Gdańsk, and animation of culture in a practical aspect. She is the author of many reviews and critical texts on the theatre, she has published in "Teatr", among othes.. An author of books: W metafizycznej dziurze. Teatr Witkacego w Zakopanem, Myślenie obrazem. Gdańskie teatry plastyków w latach 50. i 60. XX wieku i Dosięgnąć nieba. Teatr Snów. She co-edited Na szlakach kultury. Sztuka – antropologia – teoria and Teatr Wybrzeże w latach 1996-2016. Zjawiska – ludzie – przedstawienia. She has cooperated with Gdańsk Shakespeare Theatre and "Żak" Club in Gdańsk (PC Drama). She is a member of the Culture Council in Gdańsk and was a member of the jury during Gdańsk Shakespeare Festival. She worked as a journalist, editor, and head of culture section of "Gazety Wyborczej. Trójmiasto", she cooperated with the literary department of Teatr Wybrzeże and was the director of the Theatrical Stage of "Żak" Club in Gdańsk. She ran her own theatre Złe Siostry in Tczew. Laureate of the City of Gdańsk's Award for Young Artists in the Field of Culture and Yach award at Yach Film Festival of Polish Music Videos. She was nominated to Splendor Gedanensis award (2018). She received a distinction at Kashubian and Pomeranian Literature Competition (2021)

Shakespeare on the Poster

Bożena Pysiewicz The Poster Museum at Wilanów bpysiewicz@mnw.art.pl

The collection of the Poster Museum in Wilanow possess a rich collection of posters for Shakespeare's plays. The works were created over 60 years and represent various artistic styles and completely different manners of interpreting the plays. The metaphor, the symbol, pictorial joke (cartoon) or a surprising juxtapositions are the elements of transposing the language of a theatrical play onto the language of graphics. Within the area of posters there are typographic, pictorial (painting) projects which adopt graphic signs, photomontage and self-portrait. Some of them attempt to tell a story about the plot or the mood of the play, other focus on the most significant interpretative element of the play, and many other simply reinterpret the play in reference to contemporary issues.

An interesting collection of posters are works which were submitted to the competition organized by AMS Poster Gallery "Szekspir " in 2016. The posters which could be found bus stops in Polish cities were to show Shakespeare universality by means of contemporary language. The works of the artists from The Polish School of Posters, and their students, which will be discussed aim to depict the interdependency and mutual influences of literature, performance and poster interpretation as well as the possibility to use posters at schools while analysing Shakespeare's plays.

Bozena Pysiewicz

Art historian, lecturer, curator of the Poster Museum in Wilanów, part of the National Museum in Warsaw. Over 20 years she works in museum sector and is connected with promoting museum education, she created educational programs for various museum visitors and volunteers. She was a coordinator for volunteers, deputy manager and acting head of the Education Department at the National Museum in Warsaw and co-creator of the Museum School Education Center, which closely cooperates with teachers and students. Winner of numerous awards in the field of museology and education: the Wierzba Mazowiecki Museum Event, awards of the Warsaw Cultural Education Program and Sybilla, including the Grand Prix of this competition for her work on the exhibition Everything is allowed in the Museum.

Not in front of the kids! Censorship and political correctness in literary adaptations of Shakespeare's plays for young readers

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The textual transformations of Shakespeare's plays during the adaptation process, ones indented for the young reader not only simplify the plot, the language and the characters' psychological traits but also adapt them to children's sensitivity and current didactic requirements.

One of the first examples of such adaptations are attempts made by Thomas and Henrietta Bowdler in *The Family Shakespeare* in 1807. Their editorial work led to coining the term 'bowdlerism', which is equivalent to censorship or expurgation, a concept with strong pejorative meaning.

In 1807, a collection of short stories written by Charles and Mary Lamb Tales from Shakespeare was published. The authors wanted the stories to resonate with young readers, particularly girls, which was to strengthen their virtue, whereas the book itself was to become an effective educational tool.

A significant issue of Shakespearean adaptations for the young reader is the attitude towards female characters. An interesting example of the changes in the perception of women are the adaptations of Taming of the Shrew and the attitude of authors, both male and female ones, towards Kate's transformation into an obedient wife in the final scene of the play. The adaptive decisions made over the last 200 years reveal various cultural contexts, new perspectives, often dependent on current social gender roles.

The issue of political correctness is easily explored in the adaptors' attitude to Shylock from The Merchant of Venice. I will examine how Edith Nesbit in The Children's Shakespeare (1897) and Twenty Beautiful Stories from Shakespeare (1907) depicted this character, including short story collections which were translated into Polish.

dr Michał Pruszak

Received a doctorate in literature studies, the title of the dissertation "William Shakespeare's plays in literary adaptations for young readers". A philologist, a film expert, a lecturer. He publishes articles on the subject of film, children's literature and intersemiotic translations of texts of culture (literature-theatre-film), as well as articles on Polish glottodidactics. He works at the Academic Centre of the Polish Language and Culture for Foreigners, and teaches Polish as a foreign language. He is a certified examiner for certificates for Polish as foreign language. Co-author of Polish for Sustainability? Kultura polska a wyzwania globalne (2022). A benefactor of Cultural Scholarship of the City of Gdańsk. He cooperates with New Horizons of Film Education Foundation and Gdańsk Shakespeare Theatre.

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