

Book Reviews

Kujawińska Courtney, Krystyna, ed. *Polska Bibliografia Szekspirowska 1980-2000* [Polish Bibliography of Shakespeare 1980–2000]. Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 2007. Pp xxxv + 274.

Reviewed by Magdalena Mróz

Almost four centuries have passed since the death of William Shakespeare, a personage enjoying the reputation of one of the most outstanding and influential figures in dramatic art. His work resulted in literally thousands of various publications and countless theatrical productions. A large number of bibliographies have been published (including one of the most renowned World Shakespeare Bibliography published regularly since 1950 as a separate volume of prestigious *The Shakespeare Quarterly*), each of them aiming at portraying possibly the most comprehensive record of information on Shakespeare and Shakespeare-related publications and productions. In Poland, the most recent title is *Polska Bibliografia Szekspirowska 1980–2000* (2007) edited by Krystyna Kujawińska Courtney. Prior to its publication only one similar project of this kind was completed, namely Wiktor Hahn's *Shakespeare w Polsce* [Shakespeare in Poland] (1956). Hahn's bibliography was the result of scrupulous academic study, yet it covered the period only until 1955 (Hahn 2). As no other scholarly work collecting similar information was later written, the need to create "its successor" was great (especially as the number of Shakespeare-related publication in Poland was gradually increasing).

A new bibliography is the result of academic work undertaken by Interdisciplinary Research Team "Shakespeare in Polish Culture" at the Department of British and Commonwealth Studies at the University of Łódź. The aim of the publication is "recording, ordering and making the information on Shakespeare's culture-forming function available to Polish readers" (viii) and presenting it in the light of political, social and cultural transformation in the country before and after 1989. The selected period between 1980 and 2000 gives the reader the unique opportunity to analyse and compare the reception of Shakespeare in Poland during the final years of communist system when his works were still used as a source of allusion and political metaphor, and the first

decade after its collapse when new interpretations were made along with creation of new national and cultural identity.

The completion of data took the team three years of arduous work during which they cooperated with many Polish libraries, theatres, cultural and educational institutions. The book is provided with a very useful introduction including a short biography of Shakespeare as well as the overview of his works' reception in Poland during the discussed period of twenty years when the substantial political and cultural changes occurred. In this part, a reader is acquainted with some background information about the most important Polish monographs, critical studies and theatrical productions devoted to Shakespeare as well as the most important Polish authors translating and writing about the great dramatist.

The main part, an annotated bibliography, provides a highly detailed study of Shakespeare presence in Polish culture and scholarship between 1980 and 2000. The authors themselves mention that not all have been included, yet with over 250 pages abounding in Shakespeare-related information, the bibliography appears impressive. Entries in individual parts are thematically organized and arranged in chronological order which provides a very lucid and reader-friendly structure of the text. In addition, each recorded item (except for the first part including translations) is annotated giving the reader a general idea of the character and purpose of the publication they refer to.

The first part of bibliography includes the record of Polish translations of Shakespeare; plays (collections and single editions), poetry (poems and sonnets) and apocryphal works are presented separately. It also contains fragments of translations printed in periodicals and English editions of Shakespeare which were published in Poland.

The following part is the most extensive one. It details over a thousand of various publications about Shakespeare and his writings. Material presented in this section includes texts released in the manner of monographs, joint publications, interviews, essays and articles published in periodicals and daily press as well as the reviews of theatrical production. Additionally, if publication is only partly devoted to Shakespeare (mainly the joint publications) the reader is provided with the list of pages where the passages can be found.

A separate part of bibliography covers publications for which Shakespeare was a source of inspiration. A reader will find here thematically diversified entries informing, for example, about poster exhibition inspired by Shakespeare's works, a short science-fiction stories based on Hamlet or the collection of sonnets dedicated to the great dramatist.

The last section presents theatrical and television productions of Shakespeare. Here, each entry is followed by the list of reviews published in periodicals and daily press. Each production is also provided with the most

important information about particular play (director, cast, the date of opening night etc.) or a show. This part also accurately portrays the presence of Shakespeare's plays on Polish stage between 1980 and 2000. A reader can easily compare the number of productions of each play and learn which of them were the most popular (*A Midsummer Night's Dream* with 38 productions recorded) and which were of little interest to Polish stage at that time (*Anthony and Cleopatra* and *Titus Andronicus*, each with only one production recorded).

Altogether, *Polish Bibliography* consists of as many as 1,500 entries additionally provided with two very useful indexes of names and Shakespeare's works. The division of material and the arrangement of data allows to find easily all necessary information. As it was mentioned earlier, the authors of *Polish Bibliography* did not include some information abandoning "an ambitious plan of recording everything about Shakespeare" (ix). That does not seem surprising given the enormous number of Shakespeare-related scholarship and theatrical productions which appeared in Poland within the discussed period of twenty years. Bibliography does not include information from web pages, short press notes and announcements of theatrical performances. Still, its authors managed to collect information which had never been published before. Despite the presence of various bibliographies recording Polish writing, the majority of data collected in *Polish Bibliography* had never appeared in any of them.

Therefore, *Polish Bibliography* is one of the most comprehensive and reliable bibliographical title published in Poland since Hahn's work and the only one synthesizing all the information on Shakespeare-related scholarship and theatrical productions into a unified piece of work. In fact, *Polish Bibliography* offers a potential reader a unique opportunity to dig up to almost everything about Shakespeare previously hidden, buried or sunken into oblivion. As mentioned in the book's preface, some of the materials later included into record, were almost impossible to obtain (especially those dating from the early nineties) because they were published in small circulation and often absent in libraries' collections. All the more, the remarkable effort of its authors deserves recognition. Apart from presenting all translations and the most important monographs related to Shakespeare which were written in Poland during the representative period of political, social and cultural transformations, it also informs about a vast amount of essays and articles published in Polish periodicals. This impressive collection records texts analysing probably all possible contexts and aspects in which Shakespeare and his works were examined in Poland. It is a thorough analysis of the dramatist's presence on Polish stage as well as in other media including radio and television. It is a source of information for those all who expressed the need for such publication for years; scholars as well as experts in the field of theatre, art and culture.

As a study of unquestionable academic value this bibliography is a significant part of Shakespeare-related scholarship in Poland. It becomes a major source of information for all engaged in research on Shakespeare's works and it

also helps to realize how much in fact was written in Poland about the “Bard of Avon” within the space of those two decades. Despite rather humble beginnings (under the Communist regime Shakespeare was a subject of few scholarly works), the number of publications increased gradually (which is particularly noticeable in the last three sections of the book when a number of entries before and after 1990 are compared). *Polish Bibliography* is therefore not only a formal record of Shakespeare-related scholarship, it also becomes the evidence of his constantly growing presence in academic institutions as well as in Polish culture. Although it is mainly addressed to Shakespeare scholars and experts, it seems that the publication will be of use to everybody showing interest in life and works of one of the greatest poets and dramatists ever.

Works Cited

Hahn, Wiktor. *Shakespeare w Polsce: Bibliografia*. Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1958.

“Shakespeare’s Works.” *Folger Shakespeare Library* 4 March 2005. 5 March 2009. <<http://www.folger.edu/template.cfm?cid=873>>.

Newstok, Scott. L., ed. *Kenneth Burke on Shakespeare*. West Lafayette (Indiana): Parlor Press, 2007. Pp lv + 308.

Reviewed by Sharmistha Chatterjee Sriwastav

Kenneth Burke is a well known name in the field of Shakespeare criticism – popularly recognized for his essay on *Othello* in 1951. However, not many readers know that this is but the tip an iceberg, that consists of many such illuminating contributions to Shakespeare criticism. Newstok has rendered an invaluable service by anthologizing in this edition, most of the rare and scarcely available essays written by Burke during his lifetime. In the editor’s “Introduction” which follows an elaborate acknowledgement, Scott makes his intentions clear. In it he states that the volume gathers and annotates all the published and unpublished Shakespeare criticism by the American scholar Kenneth Burke (1897-1993). The editor seeks to trace the qualities of Burkean dramaturgical investigation which had not only stirred the intellectuals but allured many persons outside academics basically by arousing the curiosity regarding “what makes a play *function*” (xvii). The “Introduction” is thus “less a