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**THE LITERARY ICONS OF ENGLISH RENAISSANCE AND  
THEIR LINGUISTIC INFLUENCE UPON LATER CULTURE:  
MARLOWE, SHAKESPEARE, MILTON**

Even though classical antiquity shines as the cultural phenomenon exerting a tremendous influence upon next centuries of art, philosophy or literature, the English Renaissance – a cultural and artistic movement dating from the late 15<sup>th</sup> to the middle 17<sup>th</sup> century – emerges as comparably influential. Among major literary figures in this period, three names appear as exceptionally prolific in swaying a lasting influence upon a literary and cultural domain. Christopher Marlowe (1564–93), William Shakespeare (1564–1616) and John Milton (1608–74) are those figures whose literary achievements have invariably been admired worldwide.

**1. Christopher Marlowe**

Variouly identified as “a spy, a double agent, a free thinker, an atheist, a homosexual” and “an enigma,” (Griffith, 2000, ix) Christopher Marlowe has been universally applauded for his tragedies *Tamburlaine the Great* (the play in two parts), *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* and *The Jew of Malta*. Those plays, intensely analysing various shades of the Machiavellian concept of power, thirst for knowledge, revenge and greed, depict villainous characters whose frantic and iniquitous endeavours are – consciously or not – pulsating in a wealth of later cultural depictions. Chronologically the first is the tragedy depicting a warlike existence of Tamburlaine, “whose hunger for,” as it is held by Sikorska, “infinite power and disregard of the canons of good and evil make him almost a superhuman creature beyond human laws” (2007, p.144). Furthermore, this Machiavellian character, committing the crime of pride, confronts both gods and people. While doing so he becomes the predecessor not only of the Shakespearean and the Miltonian evil masterminds. Tamburlaine’s fearlessness augmented by hubris functions as a power invigorating such cultural creatures as Elizabeth Báthory (e.g. in *Dracula – The Un-Dead* (2009)<sup>1</sup> written by Dacre Stoker and Ian Holt), Long John Silver from *The Treasure Island* (1883) by Robert Louis Stevenson, Ortrud from the opera *Lohengrin* (1850) by Richard Wagner or Baron Scarpia from *Tosca* (1900) by Giacomo Puccini. And even though there is not a direct reference to Marlowe’s villain hero, one cannot reject the creeping impression that this tyrant whose evil is dramatized “in shades of black so deep and so impenetrable that whiteness is entirely obliterated” (Cigman, 2004, p. 168) does stand behind all those arrogant and scheming protagonists.

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<sup>1</sup>The author of the article places – immediately after a title – the date of publication (in brackets) of films, books, operas and songs whose creation have been influenced by the poets’ works analysed in the paper.

Importantly, being associated with intricacies of the English colonialism, Tamburlaine – “a man free from all the bonds of morality and governed by his own whims and appetites” (Zgorzelski, 2008, p. 73) – functions, in Greenblatt’s words, as a “meditation on the roots of the behaviour of English merchants, entrepreneurs, and adventurers, promoters alike of trading companies and theatrical companies” (2005, p. 194). Thus, in such a context, this pioneer of colonialism can be effortlessly discerned as a protoplast of similar characters permeating the broad realm of culture. The most striking example here is undeniably Kurtz depicted both in Joseph Conrad’s novella “Heart of Darkness” (1899) and the 1979 film *Apocalypse Now* directed by Francis Ford Coppola.

One can observe a marked similarity between Tamburlaine’s declaration: “But, as I live, that town shall curse the time / That Tamburlaine set foot in Africa” (Marlowe, *The First Part of Tamburlaine the Great*, I. III.iii.59-60) and the Conradian agent’s activity in the same region of the world wherein Kurtz “collected, bartered, swindled, or stolen more ivory than all the other agents together” (Conrad, 1928, p. 113) and who, in line with the narrator Marlow, “had taken a high seat amongst the devils of the land” (p. 116) and who is notoriously famous on account of his declaration: “Exterminate all the brutes!” (p. 118). Tamburlaine, like Kurtz, “Without respect of sex, degree, or age, / [...] razeth all his foes with fire and sword” (Marlowe, *The First Part of Tamburlaine the Great*, IV.i.62-3). Indeed, one of the most notable elements of Tamburlaine’s existence is the distinct racial prejudice he persistently encounters, discrimination leading both Persians and Turks to despise and dismiss him. It is partly in response to this intolerance that he embarks on subjecting other lands to his dominion, and significantly, the same rejection seems to force Kurtz to leave for Africa in order to amass ivory, rather than the wish to complete the glorious deeds of “humanizing, improving, instructing” (Conrad, 1928, p. 91).

Barabas, the eponymous Jew, is likewise rejected by those with whom he lives, the Christians. Analogous to Kurtz, he is marginalised and despised by the prism of his wealth, but, unlike the Conradian evil mastermind, Barabas is affluent and greedy. As the genuine villain, he cherishes his money more than his own daughter, Abigail, whom he poisons the moment she converts to Christianity and becomes a nun. Seen from this perspective, Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta* (1590) is “a representative revenge tragedy about a Jew wronged by Christians who cunningly plots a series of crimes avenging himself on his enemies” (Zgorzelski, 2008, p. 73). Barabas delights in his cunning and iniquity: “As for myself, I walk abroad o’ nights, / And kill sick people groaning under walls: / Sometimes I go about and poison wells” (Marlowe, *The Jew of Malta*, II.175-77); he also “Under pretence of helping Charles the Fifth, / Slew friend and enemy with my stratagems” (II.189). Apart from his greediness mixed with vengeance, Barabas – whose “villainy,” as it is voiced by Cole, “is largely gratuitous and thoroughly cold-hearted despite his appeals for ‘justice’” (2002, p. 65) – is also a traitor betraying Malta to the Turks.

And as a consequence of those negative inclinations the Marlovian villain seems to permeate the realm of culture as a powerfully influential character “whose single-mindedness is a source of strength as well as evil” (Griffith, 2000, p. 275). Thus figure of Barabas seems to have influenced not only Shakespeare’s Shylock, a Jew from *The*

*Merchant of Venice* (1600, greed), *Hamlet* (1602, revenge), or Milton's Satan from epic *Paradise Lost* (1667, revenge). He is thought to have influenced Brontë's Heathcliff from *Wuthering Heights* (1847) or Dumas's Edmond Dantes from *The Count of Monte Cristo* (1844) as well. He was also admired and his role performed by Edmund Kean, one of the greatest Shakespearean actors in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Furthermore, this Jewish merchant appears as the main character in opera (2002) written by Andre Werner.

The next Marlovian villain, Faustus, is likewise inebriated with power. However, as Tamburlaine is driven by greed for dominance and Barabas for wealth and vengeance, this scholar is consumed by yearning for an ultimate knowledge. *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* (1604), the tragedy of ambition of the intellectual sort, depicts "a scientist whose drive to learn is stronger than the fear of the devil" (Sikorska, 2007, p. 145). Thanks to Mephistopheles, Lucifer's envoy, Faustus strikes a deal with the devil allowing him to have Mephistopheles as his personal servant for the period of twenty four years. However, at the end of this short time Faustus has to offer his soul to Lucifer as a payment. Significantly, despite warnings issued by Lucifer's servant – "O, Faustus, leave these frivolous demands, / Which strike a terror to my fainting soul!" (Marlowe, *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, I.iii.79-80) – the scientist enthusiastically embraces the opportunity that is offered to him. He steadfastly rejects God and morality, committing in fact an apostasy: "So Faustus hath / Already done; and holds this principle, / There is no chief but only Beelzebub / To whom Faustus doth dedicate himself" (I.iii.52-55).

His determination to acquire an unrivalled knowledge is so overwhelming that Faustus functions as a prototype, a savant without a soul, for similar figures in a wider culture. And although Marlowe did not create the figure of Faust – a medieval German scholar called George or John Faustus depicted in book entitled *Historia von D. Johann Fausten* published in 1587 – he did transport Faust to center stage in the Western culture ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doctor\\_Faustus\\_\(play\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doctor_Faustus_(play))). And as far as literature is taken into consideration, Faustus' desire for clandestine lore is replicated by such figures as Faust from Johann Goethe's play (in two parts, published in 1808 and 1831), Faustus from Thomas Mann's novel (1947) *Doctor Faustus – The Life of the German Composer Adrian Leverkühn as Told by a Friend*, Viktor Frankenstein from the novel by Mary Shelley (1818), Mr Hyde from Robert Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), Jorge from Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* (1983), Hannibal Lecter from Thomas Harris' *Silence of the Lambs* (1988) or Jean Baptiste Grenouille from Patrick Suskind's *Perfume* (1997). What is more, the scientific empiricist appears as the main character in 16 operas (e.g. by Charles Gounod (1859)), musicals (e.g. Randy Newman's *Faust* (1993)), films (e.g. Alexander Sokurov's *Faust* (2011) and even pieces of music. For instance, in a song entitled *Mephisto* from a Portuguese gothic metal band Moonspell's second album *Irreligious* (1996), a listener can encounter the eponymous Mephisto who willingly feeds any madman with "meaningless games, tricks and philosophies" for "whose answers [one] would die for / In [one's] hunger to believe". Mephisto is then presented as the one that "can teach [one] wonders if [one gives him one's] soul" (Ribeiro 1996).

The significance of Christopher Marlowe for the broad culture rests also on a purely linguistic fact since his oeuvre contains a few sayings or idioms – still used in Modern English language – assumed to have appeared there for the first time. One of those appears in *The Jew of Malta*, in the conversation between Barabas and his new co-partner in iniquity, Ithamore. The exchange includes the proverb uttered by the latter: “he that eats with the devil / Had need of a long spoon” (Marlowe, *The Jew of Malta*, III.iv.54-55), a maxim advocating caution while dealing with dangerous and wicked people. Interestingly, the maxim has been repeated by, among others, Shakespeare who in *The Comedy of Errors* writes “he must have a long spoon that must eat with the devil” (IV.iii.63-4) and in *The Tempest* – “Mercy, mercy! This is a devil, and no monster. I will leave him. I have no long spoon” (II.ii.96-8). The subsequent maxim still existing in the linguistic realm, pronounced by Barabas – “Confess and be hanged” (Marlowe, *The Jew of Malta*, Iv.i.145-46) means that guilt must be confessed and then the due punishment accepted for a genuine repentance. This adage has been employed by, for instance, Sheila Livingstone whose treaty upon the range of crime and criminality in Scotland from the earliest times to the present day is entitled *Confess and be hanged: Scottish Crime and Punishment Through the Ages* (2000).

Significantly, The Marlovian lesser known play entitled *The Massacre at Paris* (1593) is likewise attributed with an idiomatic expression meaning to make a great mental effort to understand and solve something. Here, the Duke of Guise, representing “the deceit specifically attributed to Catholics as well as the more general machiavellian enjoyment of plotting and dissembling” (Griffith, 2000, p. 443) is presented by his Protestant adversaries as beating “his brains to catch us in his trap” (Marlowe, *The Massacre at Paris*, I.i.53). Another saying appears in the poem *The Passionate Shepherd to his Love*, published posthumously in 1599, where the reader can find a popular phrase meaning a very pleasurable and comfortable situation – “a bed of roses” (Cheney, 2005, p. 10). This expression was literally deployed in the imagery for the 1999 film *American Beauty* directed by Sam Mendes; it is likewise the title of one of songs composed in 1992 by an American rock band Bon Jovi (the album *Keep the Faith*).

## **2. William Shakespeare**

The subsequent icon of English Renaissance literature, William Shakespeare without any doubt shines as the most fertile writer of the Elizabethan era (1558 – 1603), easily outshining his contemporaries and exerting an enormous influence upon later culture. As it is held by Wells and Taylor in their introduction to *The Oxford Shakespeare – The Complete Works*, Shakespeare’s “profound impact is due in great part to that in-built need for constant renewal and adaptation that belongs especially to those works of art that reach full realization only in performance” (1998, xv). They also accentuate the fact that the playwright’s “power over generations later than his own has been transmitted in part by artists who have drawn on, interpreted, and reconstructed his texts as others have drawn on the myths of antiquity” (ibidem). Significantly, they draw attention to the fact that it is “the texts as they were originally

performed that are the sources of his power” (ibidem). Hence, appreciating this tremendous force of a literary magnetism, one cannot help but accept the fact that themes permeating and shaping Shakespeare’s oeuvre have been appearing, on account of their universality, in an innumerable cultural productions. For example, the truth is that the Shakespearean motifs have been used in a colossal number of about 200 operas composed by such geniuses of music as Wagner, Verdi, Purcell, Mendelssohn, or Tchaikovsky; they have also been incorporated into the plot of about 300 films. And due to this innumerability it is impossible to analyse, even enumerate all possible creations of culture drawing, intentionally or not, on the Shakespearean works of fiction.

For this reason the author of the paper has chosen three plays, all tragedies, so as to portrait a never-ending mechanism of cultural exploitation of the Bard and his masterpieces, perceived as “a cultural icon” and “a product of mechanisms of cultural transmission” (2009, p. 9), as it is voiced by Mydla in his study upon appropriations of Shakespeare in the Early English Gothic. Sadly, due to space limitations, it will be only the scratching of the surface. This system of cultural adaptation will be exemplified by *The Most Excellent and Lamentable Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*, *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* and *The Tragedy of Macbeth*.

*The Most Excellent and Lamentable Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*, published in 1596, has been universally regarded as one of the most famous tragedies of love in the world literature. “Romeo, Juliet, Mercutio and the Nurse are now part of the world’s mythology,” asserts Sampson (1965, p. 260). However, although it is at times considered as the tragedy of bad luck and destiny (on account of his participating in a fight with Tybalt, Romeo is banished from Verona and Juliet is forced to marry Paris), it is in fact a meticulous study of love being like “a smoke made with the fume of sighs” (Shakespeare, *The Most Excellent and Lamentable Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*, I.ii.187), “a fire sparking in lovers’ eyes” (I.ii.188), “a sea nourished with lovers’ tears” (I.ii.189) or even “madness most discreet” (I.ii.190); the reality assuming a variety of meanings for the protagonists. Affection can thus be a matter of passion and sexual satisfaction; a matter of good breeding and appropriate family alliance; or a matter of just being together. Thus, as the play that displays the erotic anxieties of young people (Juliet is about 14 years old) belonging to families whose relations are marred by mutual hatred and revenge, it is the work that has been successfully appealing to imagination of later generations, especially the young. The enthrallment has been partly extended by the fact that this tragedy is highly lyrical due to appearance of sonnets, the song sung by the lovers early in morning (III.v) and a lavish praise of night as the time of encounters of two lovers.

Unquestionably, like other works written by the Bard of Avon, this play whose “structural formality is offset by an astonishing fertility of linguistic invention” and “mastery over a wide range of verbal styles” combined with “psychological perceptiveness” (Wells and Taylor, 1998, p. 335), has been respected and admired by next generations of playwrights, writers and actors. Among them there are, for instance, Sir William Davenant (1606 – 68), Thomas Otway (1652 – 85) whose play *The History and Fall of Caius Marius* (1680) is regarded as one of the most extreme adaptations of the Shakespearean tragedy or David Garrick (1717 – 79, famous for his

appearance in the title role of *Richard III*). As far as English writers are taken into consideration, it is advisable to mention two names here. Charles Dickens's (1812 – 70) third novel *Nicholas Nickleby* (1839) includes the preparations for a performance of the play as one of the most important episodes. Agatha Christie (1890 – 1976) seems to have been especially mesmerized with William Shakespeare and his oeuvre. The truth is that the Bard emerges as the playwright most quoted in her stories and novels. To offer only two examples of this cultural transmission, it is of importance to indicate that the title of Christie's crime novel *By the Pricking of my Thumbs* (1968) comes from Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Macbeth*: "By the pricking of my thumbs, / Something wicked this way comes" incants the second witch (IV.i.61-2); this incantation was likewise used by English singer Bruce Dickinson (b. 1958) in his song *Book of Thel* (recorded on the 1998 album *The Chemical Wedding*). Moreover, *Romeo and Juliet* emerges as the constant theme in Christie's crime novel entitled *Five Little Pigs* (1942) ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agatha\\_Christie](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agatha_Christie)).

Significantly, apart from literary adaptations, other branches of a broad culture have been enchanted with the story of Romeo and Juliet struggling for their love. There are countless cinematographic productions and adaptations that attempt to depict their struggle for love. The most significant are as follows: the 1968 film directed by Franco Zaffirelli, Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet* (1996) with Leonardo DiCaprio as Romeo, John Madden's *Shakespeare in Love* (1998) that incorporates the scenes of Shakespeare's writing the tragedy shown against the backdrop of his own problems with love or Andrzej Bartkowiak's action film entitled *Romeo Must Die* (2000).

The tragedy has proven to be exceptionally influential upon a sphere of music as well. Almost 30 operas have been composed to present intricacies of Romeo and Juliet's affection. The best known and still acclaimed are Charles-Francois Gounod's *Romeo et Danielle* (1867) and Pyotr Tchaikovsky's symphonic poem *Romeo and Juliet* (1869). There are also ballet versions of the play, one of the best being Sergei Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* (1935) and musical theatre adaptations such as Arthur Laurents' *West Side Story* (1957).

Similarly to this experimental tragedy, *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, written between 1599 and 1602, has exerted a substantial influence upon later culture. As it is held by Sikorska, the tragedy "explores a wide range of themes, like revenge, conscience, justice, love, death, damnation and acting. It testifies to the Shakespearian obsession with mortality and mutability as the ultimate change is always death" (2007, p. 159). In addition, popularity of the play rests on the fact that the main protagonist can never be treated only as a Renaissance man; he is much more than that. Partially due to emotions shown in the abovementioned quote and partially to his feigned insanity facilitating him to comprehend an inexplicable reality and his soliloquies betraying excess of introspection, Prince Hamlet of Denmark comes ahead of his times. Accordingly, his brooding character so easily detectable in his soliloquies (e.g. "to be, or not to be; that is the question" (Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, III.i.58)) is to be treated as universal, appealing to all generations who have identified with his struggle aiming at a thorough knowledge of his reality.

Since the most obvious influence is of the literary sort, it can be detected in a wealth of narratives. And since due to its pervasive sway it is impossible to enumerate

all books where motifs from this play appear, it is essential to include here at least three of them. Johann Goethe's second novel *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795) depicts a production of *Hamlet*; it also shows striking similarities between Shakespeare's Ghost and Wilhelm Meister's dead father. A lot of elements permeating the world of young prince likewise are to be found in Charles Dickens' novel *Great Expectations* (1861), especially in its action inflamed by revenge, spectral characters (Miss Havisham and Abel Magwitch) and the protagonist's overwhelming guilt, presented at the end of the book. The last of those is James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), where the ninth chapter is entirely devoted to Stephen Daedalus's discourse on Shakespeare, focusing on Hamlet.

As far as music is concerned, almost 30 operas or instrumental pieces of music based on Shakespeare's play have been composed, including such masterpieces as those written by Ambroise Thomas (1868), Sandor Szokolay (1968) or Hector Berlioz in his *Funeral March for Hamlet* (1852). Analogous to operas, there are at least 30 films that deploy elements from this play. Among them there is, for example, the 1980 American film *The Empire Strikes Back*, the fifth episode of the Star Wars saga, where Chewbacca tries to reassemble the droid's body while imprisoned in Cloud City. At one point, Chewbacca holds the droid's head in much the same way that Hamlet is traditionally depicted as holding Yorick's skull. The second film is Ingmar Bergman's *Fanny and Alexander* (1982) where the children's father is rehearsing the part of the Ghost for a production of the play when he dies; he then appears to Alexander later in the film as an actual ghost. The play's plot is also referenced in other ways, including Alexander's hesitation for confrontation with his new stepfather. The protagonist even tells Alexander that he is not Hamlet. Apart from those branches of broad culture motifs from Hamlet likewise appear in comic strips and computer games ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural\\_references\\_to\\_Hamlet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_references_to_Hamlet)).

The last masterpiece of the Shakespearean oeuvre analysed in this paper is *The Tragedy of Macbeth* (1606) revealing the frightening world that betrays "the fundamental conflict of Macbeth with the moral order of the universe" (Zgorzelski, 2008, p.85), the world permeated with, as it is asserted by Wells and Taylor, "witchcraft, murder, and retribution that can also be seen as a study in the philosophy and psychology of evil" (1998, p. 975). This clash, like in for instance the Miltonian Satan's case, is triggered by the defiance of the natural order and the proper place in the matrix of relations governing his world. The revolt, provoked not only by his wife but also by three witches, assumes the form of an atrocious crime inflicted upon his superior, the king. In consequence of the regicide he is plunged into a vicious circle of self-delusion, successive forms of criminality, cunning, hatred towards himself and iniquity: "Not in the legions / Of horrid hell can come a devil more damned / In evils to top Macbeth" (Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Macbeth*, IV.iii.57-59), shouts Macduff.

Accordingly, this play – considered as one of the darkest and most powerful tragedies – has been performed a lot of times and the performances have been applauded by Richard Burbage, Samuel Pepys, David Garrick, Edwin Forrest, or Berry Jackson, to name only a few. However, a wide impact of Macbeth is not only limited to performances on stage. There are about 20 films and adaptations depicting

intricacies of the Scottish play. The first one is the 1905 American short film *Death Scene from Macbeth* and one of the latest is the 2015 French/English/American adaptation *Macbeth* directed by Justin Kurzel (it stars an Irish actor Michael Fassbender in the title role). Apart from those there are such masterpieces of cinematography as *Throne of Blood* (1957) directed by Akira Kurosawa, *Macbeth* (1971) directed by Roman Polański, his film after the brutal murder of his wife, Sharon Tate or William Reilly's 1991 *Men of Respect*, setting the *Macbeth* story among gangsters, praised for its accuracy in depicting mafia rituals.

The Shakespearean play has also been the basis for literary adaptations such as Nikolay Leskov's novel *Lady Macbeth of Minsk* (1865) or Marvin Kaye's *Bullets for Macbeth* (1976). It is likewise the fundament for a few plays dealing with the political and cultural concerns of many nations such as Dev Virahsawmy's *Zeneral Macbeff*, performed in 1982, adapting the story to the local Creole and to the Mauritian political situation or Mukbutu, performed in 2000 by Chuck Mike as a direct commentary on the fragile nature of Nigerian democracy at the time. Apart from this, motifs from *Macbeth* have been used by composers and musicians. One of those is a symphonic poem *Macbeth* (1890) composed by Richard Strauss, Giuseppe Verdi's opera in four acts (1847) or *Thane to the Throne* (2000) a concept album of American power metal band Jag Panzer. Furthermore, it is important to add that the play has inspired painters such as William Blake (*Pity* depicted like a naked new-born babe, striding the blast, 1795), James Caldwell or Joshua Reynolds who depicted Sarah Siddons as *The Muse of Tragedy*, largely due to her triumph in the role of Lady Macbeth (1783).

On account of the fact that William Shakespeare's works have been constantly admired throughout the world, it is important to add here that since 2016 marks the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Bard's death, there have been a plethora of initiatives celebrating this event. One of the most noteworthy seems to be the Hogarth Shakespeare Project whose mission is to have the Bard's plays retold by bestselling novelists. The following writers of fiction have so far been invited to pen new versions of Shakespeare's masterpieces: Jeanette Winterson (*The Winter's Tale*), Howard Jacobson (*The Merchant of Venice*), Anne Tyler (*The Taming of the Shrew*), Margaret Atwood (*The Tempest*), Jo Nesbø (*Macbeth*), Tracy Chevalier (*Othello*), Edward St. Aubyn (*King Lear*), Gillian Flynn (*Hamlet*) ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hogarth\\_Shakespeare](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hogarth_Shakespeare)).

However, apart from the themes which have gained popularity on account of being employed in the Shakespearean oeuvre, England's poet from Stratford-upon-Avon is distinguished for his superfluous eloquence. This deluge of words and expressions that are used in everyday speech of the modern English language has been praised by, among others, Adeline Virginia Woolf who in her diary entry dated 13<sup>th</sup> April, 1930 noticeably asserts that she "never knew how amazing his stretch and speed and word coining power" (Woolf, 1978, p. 197) was. The writer, one of pioneers of modernist writing famous for her use of stream of consciousness technique, then adds that she extols Shakespeare for creating "things [she] could not in [her] wildest tumult and utmost press of mind imagine" (197). She subsequently affirms that even "the less known plays are written at a speed that is quicker than anybody else's quickest; and the words drop so fast one can't pick them up" (197). To support her extolment it is of



significance to claim that *The Oxford English Dictionary* credits Shakespeare with the introduction of about 3000 words; some scholars even maintain that the playwright could have in fact coined about 6700 words. As an ingenious creator whose pliancy of “mind was so complete that he could furbish out any train of thought” (197), he is thought to be the author of such words as abode, abstemious, assassination, weather-bitten, wind-shaken, zany, uncomfortable, unaware, bandit, bedroom, champion, charmingly, gloomy, gossip, luggage, monumental, torture, plausible, prolixious or deceptious. At times he created new words just for sport: “exsufflicate” meaning empty or frivolous appearing in *The Tragedy of Othello the Moor of Venice* (III.iii.186) or “Anthropophaginian” meaning a cannibal in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (IV.v.8).

What is more, Shakespeare eagerly created expressions and idioms that are now firmly grounded in everyday speech and culture. Some of them are as follows: “we have seen better days” (*As You Like It*), “it was Greek to me” (*Julius Caesar*), “fair play, foregone conclusion” (*Othello*), “into thin air” (*Othello*), “to be or not to be; that is the questions” (*Hamlet*), “the course of true love never did run smooth” (*A Midsummer Night Dream*), “what’s in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet” (*Romeo and Juliet*), “what’s done is done” (*Macbeth*), “jealousy is the green-eyed monster which doth mock” (*Othello*), “all’s well that ends well”, “brave new world” (*The Tempest*; it is likewise the title of the novel written in 1931 by Aldous Huxley and the title of the 12<sup>th</sup> studio album by English heavy metal band Iron Maiden released in 2000), “break the ice” (*The Taming of the Shrew*), “devil incarnate” (*Titus Andronicus*), “for goodness’ sake” (*Henry VIII*), “the game is up” (*Cymbeline*), “Tis high time” (*The Comedy of Errors*), “naked truth” (*Love’s Labours Lost*), “star-crossed lovers” (*Romeo and Juliet*), “what the dickens” (*The Merry Wives of Windsor*), or “the evil that men do lives after them; / The good is oft interred with their bones” (*Julius Caesar*; it is also the title of the song from their 7<sup>th</sup> studio album entitled *Seventh Son of the Seventh Son* (1988) recorded by Iron Maiden) (<https://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/phrases-sayings-shakespeare.html>).

Unquestionably, being endowed with such prolifically linguistic an imagination, William Shakespeare emerges as an outstanding ambassador of English language and culture, the one who “surpasses literature altogether,” as it is neatly summed up by Virginia Woolf in her diary (1978, p. 197).

### 3. John Milton

The last icon of English Renaissance literature analysed in the paper is John Milton, the poet of a luminous creativity who has been glorified as the successor of Spenser and acclaimed – as it is maintained by William Hayley in his biography of Milton – as the greatest English author. This “rigid, puritanical, misogynistic, vindictive, [...] verbose without being witty, self-righteous yet torn by conflict” (Broadbent, 1968, p.101) Puritan belonging to two epochs – the Renaissance and the Restoration – is celebrated for such works as poems *L’Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, a masque *Comus*, an elegy *Lycidas*, *Paradise Regained*, a tragedy in blank verse *Samson Agonistes* and pamphlets on the subjects of divorce, education, church discipline or

ensorship. However, he is chiefly applauded for his epic *Paradise Lost* whose publication in 1667 reopened the partly forsaken box with archetypes such as evil, darkness, rebellion, fall or temptation, all of them focused in an overwhelming figure of the arch-rebel, Satan assuming “the likeness of a defiant radical voicing the rousing language of freedom and spurning the politics of submission to Heaven’s kingly power and rituals” (Loewenstein, 2004, p. 203).

The truth is that Milton’s magnum opus has exerted a lasting influence upon diverse branches of culture. It has been applauded and imitated not only by writers, but also by musicians, artists and filmmakers. As far as literary influence is taken into consideration, it is important to invoke such writers of fiction as William Blake (1757 – 1827), Mary Shelley (1797 – 1851), her husband Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792 – 1822), Sir Ahmed Salman Rushdie (b. 1947) or Philip Pullman (b.1946), to name only the most significant ones. William Blake’s mystic poetry bears a resemblance to *Paradise Lost* especially in its evocation of Lucifer “depicted as the ancient hero that has just rebelled against alleged tyrant and is, indirectly, compared to Prometheus [...] endowed with super attributes such as power, fearlessness, cleverness and resolve” (Giza, 2009, p. 176 – 77). His poem *Vala, or The Four Zoas* (1807) is celebrated for its portrayal of Urizen shown as an authoritarian replica of Milton’s God. Marry Shelly in *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818) presents the monster reading the epic that undeniably stimulates his psychological development. Percy Shelley in his lyrical drama entitled *Prometheus Unbound* (1820) creates his main protagonist – as he notes in the preface to his work – as a revision or reconstruction of Milton’s Arch-rebel. Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* (1988), his fourth novel inspired by the life of Muhammad, incorporates the motif of fall and Pullman’s epic trilogy of fantasy novels entitled *His Dark Materials* (1995, 1998, 2000) was deeply inspired by Milton’s epic (the trilogy takes its title from line 916 of the Book II of the epic – “His dark materials to create more worlds” (Milton, 1996)).

Significantly, the ingenious imagery of the epic – functioning in fact as “a literary Bible,” as it is asserted by Smith, and “a map of literary history and a guide to literary values in a way that no work in English had quite been” (2008, p. 167) – is also detectable in other sectors of popular culture: music and film. On account of its apparent references to iniquitous powers embodied in Satan regarded as “the sole instigator of evil extending its disruptive influence as a pestilence” (Giza, 2014, p. 47), the Miltonian magnum opus has been particularly popular with heavy metal bands whose lyrics, as it is asserted by Heilman, “are modelled upon (or draw directly from) the poetry of Shakespeare, Milton, Poe, Baudelaire, the British Romantics, and others, and are clearly indebted to Romantic, Victorian, and Gothic literary traditions” (2018, pp. 215-16). There are in truth a plethora of heavy metal bands that has been drawing on satanic motifs and elements that permeate the universe of the epic. Some of them, such as English gothic metal band Paradise Lost, take the name directly from the title of the epic. Whereas, the others deploy the concepts analysed in the epic and develop them both musically and lyrically. For instance, English extreme metal group Cradle of Filth composed the 2003 studio album *Damnation and a Day* that incorporates the section (four songs) entitled “Paradise Lost”. Norwegian symphonic black metal band Dimmu Borgir quotes Milton’s epic (“Where wounds of deadly hate have pierced so

deep” (IV.99)) in the song entitled “Architecture of a Genocidal Nature” taken from the 2001 studio album *Puritanical Euphoric Misanthropy*. German power metal Blind Guardian composed the song “Control the Divine” (taken from the 2010 studio album *At the Edge of Time*) focusing upon Lucifer’s rebellion and fall, transformation into a serpent and temptation of the first parents. One of the exceptions to this metal-like susceptibility to Milton’s epic is the opera in two acts composed by Krzysztof Penderecki on commission for the 1976 US bicentennial celebrations. Divided into 42 scenes, it is set in heaven, hell and the earth at the dawn of creation.

Filmmakers have also been enchanted with satanic powerfulness and resolve of Lucifer. They have been especially enthralled with the thought-provoking statement issued by furious yet resolute Satan after being hurled into Hell: “Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven” (Milton, 1996, I. 263) that appears in at least two films. The first is the 1997 American supernatural horror film directed by Taylor Hackford, *The Devil’s Advocate*, where the main protagonist, Kevin Lomax makes this quotation. The latter is the 2000 crime film, *Animal Factory* (directed by Steve Buscemi) where Earl (played by William Defoe) quotes the fallen Lucifer – “This is my prison, after all”. The end of the film is marked with the abovementioned assumption about reigning and servitude. Significantly, this quotation has also been used in at least three computer games *Deus Ex*, *Sam and Max Hit the Road*, and *Darksiders*.

It is important to add here that Milton, noticeably to a much lesser degree than Shakespeare and Marlowe, is credited with coining phrases that are still in use in the modern English language. The first of those is “silver lining” (meaning that every bad situation has some good aspect to it) that appears in his *Comus: A Mask* (“Turn forth her silver lining on the night?” (Milton, 1994, 222, 224)). The second is “all Hell broke loose” (meaning a growing confusion and chaos) that appears in the archangel Gabriel’s slander directed to Satan:

But wherefore thou alone? Wherefore with thee  
Came not all Hell broke loose? Is pain to them  
Less pain, less to be fled? or thou than they  
Less hardy to endure? Courageous chief  
(Milton, 1996, IV.917 – 20)

#### 4. Conclusions

Concluding, the objective of the present research was to point to the fact that the writers of English Renaissance, although focusing their literary attention upon serious and solemn notions (evil, tragedy, hatred, crime or fall) were and have been indeed able to strike up the flame of interest and subsequent influence upon the generations of writers and readers to come. On account of plethora of those who have admired the literary output of Renaissance poets and playwrights analysed in the article it is apparently impossible to even enumerate them all. That is why, it is of importance to accentuate the fact that this paper is offered only as a preliminary study of intertextual influences within the realm of a broad culture exerted by Marlowe, Shakespeare and Milton. The author believes that his study might encourage other

researches to examine other elements of culture that draw – intentionally or not – on the immense oeuvre of those icons of Renaissance literature. The truth is that only those influences that the author deems most significant and conspicuous have been appointed for this study.

## **Summary**

Even if classical antiquity has been exerting a remarkable sway upon subsequent centuries of art, philosophy or literature, but the English Renaissance seems to be emerging as comparably influential. At that time three names appear as the most prolific in exerting a permanent influence upon literature and culture of next generations. Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare and John Milton are those whose literary achievements have invariably been admired worldwide. In truth, a reader would regard literature without Marlowe's *Dr Faustus* and his demonic thirst for power and knowledge, Shakespeare's icons of evil, and Milton's vision of Satan in Hell – the literary phenomenon constantly imitated and reshaped by an army of later creators of culture – as utterly impoverished. The three poets, especially Shakespeare, are also applauded for coining words and phrases that exist in the modern English language. The author of the article focuses his attention upon a cultural phenomenon of an intertextual influence and lasting impression exerted by three poets of English Renaissance upon later literature and art.

**Key words:** influence, intertextuality, evil, crime, hatred, idiomatic expressions.

## **Streszczenie**

Niezaprzeczalnym jest fakt, iż starożytność wywarła niezwykle wpływ na kolejne stulecia sztuki, filozofii oraz literatury. Jednakże angielski renesans wydaje się wyłaniać jako porównywalnie wpływowy. W tym czasie trzy nazwiska można uznać za szczególnie płodne i mające wpływ na literaturę i kulturę następnych pokoleń. Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare i John Milton to ci, których dorobek literacki jest niezmiennie podziwiany na całym świecie. Prawdą jest, że literatura światowa bez *Dr. Faustusa* autorstwa Marlowe'a, jego demonicznego pragnienia władzy i wiedzy, ikon zła autorstwa Szekspira oraz wizji Szatana w piekle zarysowanym przez Milтона byłaby całkowicie zubożała. Ci trzej poeci, szczególnie Szekspir, są również sławni z tworzenia słów i zwrotów, które nadal istnieją we współczesnym języku angielskim. Autor artykułu skupia swoją uwagę na zjawiskach kulturowych oraz intertekstualnych wpływach wywieranych przez trzech poetów angielskiego renesansu na późniejszą literaturę i sztukę.

**Słowa kluczowe:** wpływ, intertekstualność, zło, zbrodnia, nienawiść, wyrażenia idiomatyczne.

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