

# 1. SHAKESPEARE WITHOUT BORDERS

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## W. SHAKESPEARE'S *JULIUS CAESAR* AND ELIZABETHAN POWER DISCOURSE: THE SPECIFICS OF CORRELATION

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### INTRODUCTION

Tense domestic political situation in Britain at the end of the 16th century, which was to some extent conditioned by the strategic miscalculations of the late Elizabeth policy, could not but affected the general intellectual and spiritual atmosphere in society as a whole, and literature and art in particular. In its turn, the art of the word, as an influential culture-making factor, not only acted as a carrier of anti-government propaganda, but was also a kind of voice of the artists' public position. Literature and theater – not the last in importance constituents of power discourse – prepared the recipients for the perception of certain political events from a certain axiologically coloured angle.

The dialogical relations between theatrical practice and politics were realized through several special mechanisms, among which the explication of responses to current political events in dramatic works of the time is noteworthy. The influence on social moods was also due to the historical parallels with the past of Britain or the Roman Empire, which was perceived by the Renaissance people as an almost perfect political formation. In some cases, playwrights resorted to openly encouraging citizens to take decisive action. Given that the emergence of anti-government ideas in the mass consciousness was a clear threat to the state prosperity, any public criticism of the ruler's errors was punished under the requirements enshrined in statutes.

It should be noted that for the analysis of William Shakespeare's attitude to the political context of his time, scholars have mostly chosen historical chronicles, whereas Roman plays were not involved in the study of this discourse. Therefore, it is time to find political implications in this genre of the Shakespearean canon.

## **1. W. Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar" in the Context of Political Intrigues of the Elizabethan Age**

The play *Julius Caesar* by William Shakespeare first was presented to the public in 1599 on the stage of the Globe Theater when Count Essex, on behalf of the Queen and the Government, carried out a diplomatic mission in Ireland. At that time, the rivalry between the two most powerful factions in the Privy Council intensified. The fact was that until the news of the truce that the Earl had been forced to sign with the rebels of the Irish Tyrone had reached London, it was very difficult to predict the consequences of the Essex's expedition to Ireland. In the event of conflict resolution in favor of England, Essex could count on restoring the monarch's good attitude and his image of a national hero. In case of a negative resolution of the problem of the acute relations with the rebellious Irish provinces, the count was expected to fall into disgrace and fade away from public affairs and the royal court.

Therefore, it seems quite logical that Shakespeare, given the diametrically opposite expectations of the representatives of the warring camps and for own safety, outlined the ethics of his literary work in a rather ambivalent way. There is no doubt that the Bard was careful enough to handle the parallels to the present. He avoided one-sided direct assessments, expressed support for monarchical values, ancestral throne inheritance, and stability while demonstrating certain restraint toward Roman republicanism. Political censorship was rather harsh in those days and anti-monarchical views were cruelly eradicated.

Analyzing the play through the prism of popular modern methodologies, including new historicism and cultural materialism, it is possible to find out how exactly the parallels between English and Roman reality, available in "Julius Caesar", could hypothetically influence the mass consciousness of the Elizabethans.

It is worth noting that the expediency of drawing analogies between ancient Roman events and the life of the Elizabethan people is determined by the very text of this Shakespeare's play and by historical information about its scenic representations of those days. Notably, for example, such theatrical means as scenery and costumes represented not ancient Rome, but modern for the author English realities. So, the actors who played historical figures of the past, for the most part, were dressed according to the Renaissance fashion. It is symbolic, for instance, that the performer who acted as Julius Caesar was dressed in a camisole and not in a toga, as mentioned in the text of the play:

“... when he perceived the common herd was hungry he refused the crown, he plucked me ope his *doublet* and offered them his throat to cut”<sup>1</sup>.

The Roman play *Julius Caesar* is traditionally considered the most political literary work in Shakespeare’s canon, and the statements of its characters peculiarly relate to the political situation at that time. The intricate political atmosphere of the last years of Elizabeth Tudor’s reign is somewhat reflected in the Bard’s play. For a more complete understanding of the specific correlation of artistic discourse and discourse of power, let us draw a panorama of Britain’s political life in those days.

From a distant perspective, Bishop Goodman described the second half of Elizabethan “golden age”: “the general public is already tired of the rule of an elderly woman”<sup>2</sup>. The decline and stagnation of the late years of Queen’s reign are illustrated by the phrase of the modern British historian Haigh: “the Court which had been the scene of Gloriana’s splendour became a sordid and self-seeking playpen for overgrown and ill-tempered children”<sup>3</sup>.

Under the influence of certain socio-political factors, the politics of collegiality gave way to a politics of competition<sup>4</sup>. According to historians of the epoch, political life of Elizabethan Britain was based on the constant struggle between rival factions<sup>5</sup>. The expert on the history of the Elizabethan era J. Neal wrote, “The place of party was taken by faction, and the rivalry of the factions was centred on what mattered supremely to everybody: influence over the Queen, and, through that influence, control of patronage with its accompanying benefits”<sup>6</sup>. The court observer Sir

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<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare W. *Julius Caesar*. *The Cambridge Dover Wilson Shakespeare*. Cambridge, 2009. P. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Hurstfield J. *Freedom, Corruption and Government in Elizabethan England*. London, 1973. P. 105.

<sup>3</sup> Morris T. A. *Tudor Government*. London, 1999. P. 28.

<sup>4</sup> *The Reign of Elizabeth I. Court and Culture in the Last Decade*. Cambridge, 1999. P. 45.

<sup>5</sup> Read C. Walsingham and Burghley in Queen Elizabeth’s Privy Council. *English Historical Review*. 28. 1913. P. 34–58; MacCaffrey W. T. Place and Patronage in Elizabethan Politics. *Elizabethan Government and Society: Essays Presented to Sir John Neale*. London. P. 95–126; Shapiro J. *A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare*. 1599. London, 2005. 414 p.

<sup>6</sup> Neale J. E. *The Elizabethan Political Scene. Essays in Elizabethan History*. London, 1958. P. 70.

Robert Naunton called the two ideologically opposing factions the swordsmen and the bureaucrats<sup>7</sup>.

Supporters of a pro-government faction led by father and son Cecils held the opinion that, as in ancient Rome, serving a ruler who embodies the principle of Caesarism, i.e. unity, is the highest goal of any decent citizen. For example, Robert Cecil said: “Herein I am most blessed that I am a Vassal to her Celestial Creature ... I have no other purpose of lyving but to witness what I would performe if I had power ... if I could doe as much as all the world it were neither praise nor thanks worthy in respect of the duty I owe and the princesse whom I serve”<sup>8</sup>.

In his turn, the elder Cecil, Baron Burghley, in one of his last letters to his son, urged him to serve exclusively the king because to serve others means to serve the devil<sup>9</sup>. In Tudor times the monarch was the viceroy of God on Earth, so he was not to obey and be responsible to no one.

The opposition faction consisted of aristocrats who were not satisfied with the Queen’s politics and who considered themselves deprived of her attention. Supporters of the rebellion leader Count Essex concluded that the queen’s capriciousness, her unreasonably volatile attitude toward the favorites, were indicative of tyranny<sup>10</sup>. It is not surprising, therefore, that since 1595 an open rivalry prevailed in the court – a confrontation between Robert Cecil and Count Essex<sup>11</sup>.

The motive system in *Julius Caesar*, its leading conflict and some collisions contain numerous implicit references to the historical context in which this play was written and its first productions were performed. Among the motives of the literary work are those in which one can notice allusions to modern for Shakespeare events. So let’s take a look at them, revealing the author’s position in interpreting conflicts or ambiguous situations.

One of the starting points of the conflict in *Julius Caesar* is the confrontation between a tyrannically inclined monarch and his opponents,

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<sup>7</sup> Shapiro J. A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare. P. 44.

<sup>8</sup> The Reign of Elizabeth I. Court and Culture in the Last Decade. P. 50.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. P. 78.

<sup>10</sup> Salmon J. H. M. Renaissance and Revolt. Cambridge, 1987. 306 p.; Salmon J. H. M. Seneca and Tacitus in Jacobean England. *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*. Cambridge, 1991. P. 169–188; Levy F. Hayward Daniel and the Beginnings of Politic History in England. *Huntington Library Quarterly*. 50. 1987. P. 1–34.

<sup>11</sup> A Companion to Tudor Britain. Ed. by R. Tittler and N. Jones. Oxford, 2004. P. 54.

who prefer the republican form of government. The very idea of the existence of opposition-oriented political forces, of course, proved to be acute for the Elizabethans. Present in Shakespeare's play division into two warring camps to a certain extent resembles a shaky balance of power at the court of Queen Elizabeth I.

Note that there are words in the play that almost directly sent to Essex-led conspiracy:

*... for Romans now*

*Have thews and limbs like to their ancestors,*

*But – woe the while! – our fathers' minds are dead,*

*And we are governed with our mothers' spirits.*

*Our yoke and sufferance show us womanish*<sup>12</sup>.

It is obvious that the Elizabethan public easily captured in this passage allusions to contemporary reality. Here, on the one hand, the masculinity of the Roman world in *Julius Caesar* is emphasized, and on the other hand, the woman's power is criticized, her right to influence and authority in society is questioned. In support of this assumption, it is advisable to quote the words of Andre Hurault, the French ambassador at the court of Elizabeth: "Her government ... is little pleasing to the great men and the nobles; and if by chance she should die, it is certain that the English would never again submit to the rule of a woman"<sup>13</sup>.

Throughout this Shakespeare's play, as well as through many historical chronicles, goes the motive of tyranny. However, in *Julius Caesar* the personification of the idea of tyranny is thought to have a definite anti-Elizabethan sound. The following lines in the play have clear parallels between the aging Caesar and Queen Elizabeth, who did not want to carry out military campaigns and thus did not allow the aristocrats to demonstrate their skills and satisfy their ambitions:

*... Ye gods! It doth amaze me*

*A man of such a feeble temper should*

*So get the start of the majestic world*

*And bear the palm alone*<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> Shakespeare W. *Julius Caesar*. *The Cambridge Dover Wilson Shakespeare*. Cambridge, 2009. P. 20.

<sup>13</sup> Hurault A. *De Maisse: a journal of all that was accomplished by Monsieur de Maisse, ambassador in England from King Henri IV to Queen Elizabeth, anno Domini 1597*. Bloomsbury, 1931. P. 11–12.

<sup>14</sup> Shakespeare W. *Julius Caesar*. P. 12.

The only method of restoring masculine prowess is proclaiming the elimination of the cause of its mutilation (accordingly, the deprival of aging Caesar of the power). So Brutus urges the conspirators to get rid of Caesar:

*But if these [motives] –  
As I am sure they do – bear fire enough  
To kindle cowards, and to steel with valour  
The melting spirits of women, then, countrymen,  
What need we any spur but our own cause  
To prick us to redress?*<sup>15</sup>.

The lack of masculinity in Elizabeth's political decisions at a later stage in her reign raised many complaints. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the circles of conspirators preparing for the Essex-led uprising, the determination to fight Elizabeth's tyranny was proclaimed one of the must-have knightly virtues of a true courtier – the patriot of his country. Interestingly, one of Elizabeth's favorites, Walter Raleigh, apparently aware of such sentiments, expressed concern about too many aristocrats in the state, especially warlike towards the ruler<sup>16</sup>.

Another motive of the play, in which the echo of modern for Shakespeare reality is heard, is the motive to fight tyranny. According to a Soviet Shakespeare scholar A. Anikst, "the conflict is played out here under the banner of openly declared political principles ... If for Caesar he is the beginning and the end of everything, then the ideal of the republic is the basis of Brutus"<sup>17</sup>. The researcher does not agree with the validity of seeing in the tragedy of Brutus a personal tragedy (torment of conscience due to the murder of Caesar, to which he was much obliged)<sup>18</sup>.

Instead, many Shakespeare scholars often interpret Julius Caesar's political conflict in relation to the inner world of the characters, with an allusive but obvious connection to the sentiment that led to Essex's rebellion. Like Cassius and Brutus, Essex had his personal image of a monarch. The Earl did not want to obey the woman's orders, to recognize her authority, so he headed a group of like-minded people to remove the Queen from the reign and carry out political reform. This is evidenced in

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid. P. 27.

<sup>16</sup> Raleigh W. Maxims of State. *The Works of Sir Walter Raleigh; Together with his Letters and Poems*. London, 1751. P. 9.

<sup>17</sup> Аникст А. Юлий Цезарь. *У. Шекспир. Полное собрание сочинений: в 8 т.* Москва, 1958. Т. 5. С. 610-611.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. С. 616.

his own words: “When nobility is suppressed, all government is subverted”<sup>19</sup>.

As it turned out at the trial, the plot of conspiracy against the queen, which was finally unmasked in 1601, arose just before the performance of *Julius Caesar* in 1598. Shakespeare allegedly sympathized with the conspirators, but, drawing on Plutarch’s source of the plot, sketched the outcome of the play in the negative key for Republicans. He outlined the shortcomings of the rebels’ plan and thus drew the attention of Essex supporters. Cassius is allusively connected with the Earl of Southampton, to whom the Bard allegedly advises to influence the plot leader more strongly.

According to O. Alekseenko, in those times “the problems highlighted in the tragedy – the personality of the ruler, the nature of the government, the right to overthrow the tyrant, the role of the people in the life of the state – could not but excited the keen curiosity of the audience”<sup>20</sup>. A similar opinion is given by the Russian scholar D. Nikolaev, who proclaims the anti-tyrannical mood of the play to be dominant<sup>21</sup>.

A certain correlation with the Elizabethan context is visible in the system of images in *Julius Caesar*. A curious coincidence is quite interesting: in the play, Julius Caesar appears in public in a nightgown, which in itself is quite strange for a respected military leader. It is no coincidence that in the very year when the play was most likely to be written, an event took place that shook the court life of the Elizabethan people – Count Essex, trying to justify himself before the Queen for the defeat in Ireland, hurriedly entered Her Majesty’s room when she was not yet dressed to receive visitors, and saw Elizabeth in a nightgown and with no makeup. The indignant queen deprived the disgraced favorite of some privileges that she once gave him<sup>22</sup>. So it can be assumed that in this way Shakespeare hinted at the events that stirred the English court and gave rise to many rumors.

Some parallels can be drawn not only between the aforementioned Cassius and Southampton, Caesar and Elizabeth but also between the fates of Brutus and Essex. It is known from the play’s text that Brutus

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<sup>19</sup> Shapiro J. A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare. 1599. P. 256.

<sup>20</sup> Алексеев О. Юлий Цезарь. Пислямова. *Шекспір В. Твори: в 6 т.* Київ, 1986. Т. 4. С. 644.

<sup>21</sup> Юлий Цезарь. *Шекспир. Энциклопедия.* Москва, 2007. С. 420.

<sup>22</sup> Tudor Queenship. The Reigns of Mary and Elizabeth. New York, 2010. P. 90.

concluded that Caesar should be eliminated for the sake of public good only through the intrigues of Cassius and his associates:

*Into what dangers would you lead me, Cassius,  
That you would have me seek into myself  
For that which is not in me?*<sup>23</sup>.

From the work of Jacobin historian John Speed, we learn that Essex was also pushed to the antimonarchy revolt by like-minded people: “Neither were these his grievances lessened by his military followers, who daily watered these ill-set plants with their exasperated complaints till they were sprung to some height”<sup>24</sup>.

It is known that the aristocrat Essex publicly boasted of his noble origin, especially emphasizing the fact that his ancestor was King Edward III, thereby indicating his rights to the throne<sup>25</sup>. Shakespeare’s play repeatedly mentions the origin of Brutus, whose family roots go back to Junius Brutus, who expelled the despot Tarquinius from Rome:

*My ancestors did from the streets of Rome  
The Tarquin drive, when he was called a king*<sup>26</sup>.

It is possible to draw parallels between the text and non-textual reality and in terms of the popularity of Essex in Britain and Brutus in Rome. According to Francis Bacon, Essex was dangerously known in popular circles. The philosopher even urged the Earl “to take all occasions to speak against popularity and popular causes vehemently”<sup>27</sup>. In the play, we have a favorable attitude of the people towards Brutus. Cassius even uses people’s love as a stimulus to awaken the conscience of Brutus, whose glory ancestors prompt decisive action:

*O, he sits high in all the people’s hearts;  
And which would appear offense in us,  
His countenance, like richest alchemy,  
Will change to virtue and to worthiness*<sup>28</sup>.

Despite such obvious mass affection towards both public figures, fate still appeared very capricious and played with them an evil joke. Just as Brutus was betrayed by ancient Romans (“*We’ll burn the house of*

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<sup>23</sup> Shakespeare W. Julius Caesar. P. 9–10.

<sup>24</sup> Speed J. From the History of Great Britain. *Baker H. The Later Renaissance in England. Nondramatic Verse and Prose, 1600–1660*. Boston, 1975. P. 844.

<sup>25</sup> Shapiro J. A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare. P. 90.

<sup>26</sup> Shakespeare W. Julius Caesar. P. 25.

<sup>27</sup> Shapiro J. A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare. P. 128.

<sup>28</sup> Shakespeare W. Julius Caesar. P. 23.



*Brutus*. / *Away, then! Come, seek the conspirators*"<sup>29</sup>), the Earl of Essex was misled by the Londoners, who supposedly supported the nobleman, but on the day of the rebellion (8 February 1601) feared punishment for supporting the disgraced Earl and the revolt failed.

The American Shakespeare scholar W. Rehorn calls the Elizabethan nobleman an example of "suicidal flamboyance"<sup>30</sup>. The Earl of Essex, like the leaders of the anti-Caesarian revolt Brutus and Cassius, placed first honor and dignity among all the virtues. Here is an example from the play: Cassius constantly draws Brutus' attention to his honor and noble origin, so later Brutus himself takes decisive action to achieve and maintain the appropriate status in the eyes of the Roman society.

If the dignity of the country as a whole and of its citizens in particular was endangered, it had to be protected, without neglecting even violent means. Essex's supporters admired his courage and daring, his unwillingness to yield to his principles, even for the sake of the ruler. Such an absolutization of virtues, a kind of moral idealism, has long since aroused respect and admiration in society. For example, the English poet Gervase Markham in the work "Honor in his Perfection" (1624), illustrating the thesis of the exceptional status of nobles, which for many centuries has been arousing admiration, wrote: "What is the most memorablest and most glorious Sun which ever gave light or shine to Nobility? ... never let their feet slip from the path of nobility, never knew a true eclipse of glory, never found declination from virtue, never forsook their country being wounded, or their lawful King distressed, never were attainted, never blemished, but in the purity of their first garments and with that excellent white and un-spotted innocency wherewith it pleased the first Majesty to invest them, they lived, governed, and died, leaving the memory thereof on their monuments, and in the people's hearts"<sup>31</sup>.

Researcher M. E. James called the Essex rebellion "the last honour revolt" and its head – the embodiment of aristocratic virtues<sup>32</sup>. In evaluating Essex's actions and strategy, it is difficult to determine whether he was guided more by altruism or vice versa. In his own words,

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid. P. 60.

<sup>30</sup> Rehorn W. A. The Crisis of the Aristocracy in Julius Caesar. *Renaissance Quarterly*. 43.1. 1990. P. 101.

<sup>31</sup> Gervase Markham: Honour in his Perfection. URL : <http://www.anonymous-shakespeare.com/cms/index.327.0.1.html>.

<sup>32</sup> James M. E. Society, Politics and Culture: Studies in Early Modern England. Cambridge, 1988. P. 416.

the only catalyst for any of his actions has always been the effort to benefit the society, which should become the aristocrat's foremost motivation<sup>33</sup>.

In fact, Essex is the most illustrative example of the victim of socio-political conditions in the Elizabethan England. He never managed to get his place in this system, and constant failed attempts to do so eventually propelled him into a corner. In one of his letters, a contemporary of these events, John Donne, described Essex as a person who did not understand his time<sup>34</sup>.

It seems right to characterize Shakespeare's Brutus in the same way. The play's protagonist replaces his essence, playing a public role that is entrusted to him by others and to which, unfortunately, he has no grip. Self-deception forces Brutus to change his character from a common man to a politician, to kill Caesar according to his reasoning, to pose as a leader without the proper qualities of character, to persuade the crowd without understanding the needs of the people, to use the means he despises. According to S. Burkhardt's apt remark, Brutus's fault is not that he chose the wrong philosophy, but that he failed to keep up with the times<sup>35</sup>. His noble ideals find no justification in reality. Death frees him from these moral bonds, this double life.

Essex's death is the death of a true nobleman as well. John Chamberlain thus depicted the last moments of the rebellious count's life: "I never saw any go through with such boldness, and show of resolution, and contempt of death"<sup>36</sup>. It is possible to draw parallels with Shakespeare's Brutus, who, having renounced the Stoics' beliefs, chooses suicide rather than captivity:

*For Brutus only overcame himself,  
And no man else hath honor by his death*<sup>37</sup>.

The parallels between ancient Rome and Elizabethan England are felt not only at the level of motives and images but also in some episodes of the play. It should be noted that Shakespeare scholars find in *Julius Caesar* allusions to the religious status of the English society in those

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<sup>33</sup> The Reign of Elizabeth I. Court and Culture in the Last Decade. P. 85

<sup>34</sup> Shapiro J. A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare. 1599. P. 333.

<sup>35</sup> Holmes C. Time for the Plebs in "Julius Caesar". *Early Modern Literary Studies*. 7.2. September, 2001. P. 5.

<sup>36</sup> Letters Written by John Chamberlain during the Reign of Queen Elizabeth. Westminster, 1861. Letter XXXVIII. P. 105.

<sup>37</sup> Shakespeare W. *Julius Caesar*. P. 91.

days. Already at the beginning of the play, the intersection of Anglo-Roman time-spatial planes is captured. Researcher J. Shapiro analyzes the episode when the tribunes Marullus and Flavius remove decorations from Caesar statues across the city, condemning the crowd celebrating Caesar's triumph over Pompey, whose triumphs they had no less cheered only a few years ago:

*Wherefore rejoice? What conquest brings he home?  
What tributaries follow him to Rome  
To grace in captive bonds his chariot wheels?  
You blocks, you stones, you worse than senseless things,  
O you hard hearts, you cruel men of Rome,  
Knew you not Pompey? Many a time and oft  
Have you climbed up to walls and battlements,  
To towers and windows, yea, to chimney tops,  
Your infants in your arms, and there have sat  
The livelong day with patient expectation  
To see great Pompey pass the streets of Rome*<sup>38</sup>.

In this passage, the scholar finds parallels with the Elizabethan Puritans, who were very negative about any festive activities and ceremonies. Radically-minded Catholics often defamed symbolic things with the Queen's image. For example, in 1591, religious extremist Hacket stabbed Elizabeth's portrait with a knife<sup>39</sup>.

At first glance, this episode is not very important in the unfolding of the ideological-thematic plan, but it gains weight if we remember close attention of the rulers of any country and epoch to their image, which is described in numerous historical writings of the Tudor period<sup>40</sup>. For example, it is known from reliable sources that Elizabeth always took care of what others perceived of her. As a rule, court painters were engaged in the creation of the image, so they were ordered to depict her as a young and attractive woman. Once, I. Oliver realistically portrayed the Queen, that is, as an elderly woman. Immediately by order of the Privy Council, all such portraits were removed and destroyed, and what happened to their authors can only be assumed<sup>41</sup>. Shakespeare scholars also make their

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid. P. 6.

<sup>39</sup> Shapiro J. A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare. 1599. P. 156.

<sup>40</sup> Торкут Н. М. Школа політики і школа моралі: епістемологічні засади англійської ренесансної історіографії. *Ренесансні студії*. Запоріжжя, 2013. Вип. 20–21. С. 225–250.

<sup>41</sup> Shapiro J. A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare. 1599. P. 157.

assumptions on what is meant by the phrase “put to silence”<sup>42</sup> about the Roman tribunes that impeded the national celebration of Caesar’s return.

Besides, the historical parallel to this statement is found in the work of the Elizabethan R. White wrote that many priests who publicly prayed for Essex in their churches were commended to silence because of dubious speeches with anti-government appeals<sup>43</sup>.

Another religious allusion is found by a contemporary British scholar C. Esquith, who notes that storms in Shakespeare’s works are usually a symbolic embodiment of the Reformation and its related debates. In *Julius Caesar*, this is exactly the scene where Cassius and Casca argue about the significance of the storm on the night before Caesar’s assassination<sup>44</sup>. The literary critic sees Protestants in conspirators and compares their mistakes with those of the English Reformers. Like the Roman aristocrats, who preferred to overthrow the dictator and ultimately only contributed to the collapse of the republican system, so did the Protestants, by destroying the medieval church, they further corrupted it<sup>45</sup>. According to the concept of the scholar, Julius Caesar resembles an immovable medieval Catholic church<sup>46</sup>.

## **2. Verbal and conceptual allusions in W. Shakespeare’s “Julius Caesar”**

It should be noted that allusions are constructed not only at the level of plot and characters, but also at the level of language: the epithets “heroic”, “virtuous”, “noble”, “honourable”, “well-given”, “worthy”) at that time were associated with aggressive Protestant-oriented groups.

In Shakespeare’s play, Cassius pushes Brutus to dare to commit a revolt against Caesar, saying:

*And it is very much lamented, Brutus,  
That you have no such mirrors as will turn  
Your hidden worthiness into your eye...<sup>47</sup>*

In another episode, Antony describes Cassius as a “noble Roman, and well given”<sup>48</sup>.

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<sup>42</sup> Shakespeare W. *Julius Caesar*. P. 16.

<sup>43</sup> Shapiro J. *A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare*. 1599. P. 122.

<sup>44</sup> Asquith C. *Shadowplay. The Hidden Beliefs and Coded Politics of William Shakespeare*. New York, 2005. P. 35.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* P. 130.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* P. 132.

<sup>47</sup> Shakespeare W. *Julius Caesar*. P. 9.

In contrast, the semantic groups associated with sleep, fascination, idleness, referred to exhibited national security and stability, which are quite conventional. For example, Shakespeare's Caesar, while expressing great political insight, states:

*Let me have men about me that are fat,  
Sleek-headed men, and such as sleep a-nights*<sup>49</sup>.

In the same scene, a rebel Cassius says of Casca that he only "puts on this *tardy* form"<sup>50</sup>. Subsequently, these words are prophetic when Casca becomes one of the rebels. The conspirators toss Brutus a letter, which eventually becomes one of the key impulses that prompt the previously indecisive Brutus to lead an anti-Caesarean rebellion:

*Brutus, thou sleep'st; awake, and see thyself.  
Shall Rome, &c. Speak, strike, redress.  
Brutus, thou sleep'st; awake*<sup>51</sup>

As we can see, a dream for Republicans signifies an imaginary reality that overshadows real being, depresses human nature. In the text of the play, we come across a vivid metaphor of "murderous *slumber*"<sup>52</sup>, which signals the danger posed by the seeming tranquility.

In addition to linguistic allusions, several concepts related to political discourse play an important role in the structure of this literary work. Among them are the concepts of power, monarchy, tyranny, republic, betrayal. Let's take a closer look at each of them.

The concept of "power" is implemented in the text through metaphorical images. For example, at the beginning of the play the tribune Flavius warns that Caesar seeks power that will enable him to rise above the rest of the Romans:

*These growing feathers plucked from Caesar's wing  
Will make him fly an ordinary pitch,  
Who else would soar above the view of men  
And keep us all in servile fearfulness*<sup>53</sup>.

Power as a staircase, which is climbed by a person, is also perceived by Brutus who is the main opponent of the undivided rule:

*But 'tis a common proof*

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid. P. 14.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. P. 17.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. P. 25.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. P. 76.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. P. 7.

*That lowliness is young ambition's ladder,  
Whereto the climber upward turns his face.  
But when he once attains the upmost round,  
He then unto the ladder turns his back,  
Looks in the clouds, scorning the base degrees  
By which he did ascend. So Caesar may<sup>54</sup>.*

It is power that gives a person an advantage over others, elevates him to the highest degree, pushes to be guided solely by his instincts, disregarding advice or any external factors. For example, Caesar repeatedly notes that he has so much power that he can fear nothing:

*Danger knows full well  
That Caesar is more dangerous than he.  
We are two lions littered in one day,  
And I the elder and more terrible.  
And Caesar shall go forth<sup>55</sup>.*

If in such a social system as a republic power is distributed among several persons, then the monarchy implies granting one person broad, sometimes even unlimited, power. The concept of "monarchy" in the text of Shakespeare's play includes such constituents as "the Crown" ("*Crown him that, / And then I grant we put a sting in him / That at his will he may do danger with*"<sup>56</sup>), greatness ("*Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world / Like a Colossus, and we petty men / Walk under his huge legs and peep about / To find ourselves dishonorable graves*"<sup>57</sup>) and superficiality ("*I could be well moved if I were as you. / If I could pray to move, prayers would move me. / But I am constant as the northern star, / Of whose true-fixed and resting quality / There is no fellow in the firmament*"<sup>58</sup>).

It is noteworthy that during Caesar's life, when the republican system was established, the monarchy was identified with tyranny:

*So let high-sighted tyranny range on  
Till each man drop by lottery<sup>59</sup>*

In turn, the antithetical to monarchy concept – the concept of republic – is represented in the text through such constituents as freedom ("*I was born free as Caesar. So were you. / We both have fed as well, and*

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid. P. 24.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. P. 36.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. P. 24.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. P. 12.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. P. 44.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. P. 27.

*we can both / Endure the winter's cold as well as he*"<sup>60</sup>), nobility ("Rome, thou hast lost the breed of noble bloods!"<sup>61</sup>) and patriotism ("Who is here so base that would be a bondman? If any, speak – for him have I offended. Who is here so rude that would not be a Roman? If any, speak – for him have I offended. Who is here so vile that will not love his country? If any, speak – for him have I offended. I pause for a reply"<sup>62</sup>).

Although Republicans at first glance appear to be noble avengers, the path they take to eliminate the potentially threatening Caesar is morally unjustified. The concept of "conspiracy" repeatedly comes to the fore in the play's text. For example, Cassius urges Brutus to lead the plot and repeat the feat of his ancestor, who once drove the tyrant from Rome:

*Well, Brutus, thou art noble. Yet I see  
Thy honorable mettle may be wrought  
From that it is disposed. Therefore it is meet  
That noble minds keep ever with their likes,  
For who so firm that cannot be seduced?*<sup>63</sup>

However, the conspirators interpret its nature differently. This is an "enterprise of honorable-dangerous consequence" for Casca<sup>64</sup>, whereas Brutus initially considers it an unworthy act for a noble person:

*O conspiracy,  
Shamest thou to show thy dangerous brow by night  
When evils are most free? O, then by day  
Where wilt thou find a cavern dark enough  
To mask thy monstrous visage? Seek none, conspiracy.  
Hide it in smiles and affability*<sup>65</sup>

The concept of "conspiracy" is superimposed on the concept of "republicanism", coloring the latter with negative axiology. Mark Anthony is openly mocking the conspirators, reiterating that they are noble people, but their actions deny all their nobility. After all, even the ordinary inhabitants of Rome capture the essence of irony:

*They were traitors! "Honorable men"!"*<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid. P. 11.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. P. 12.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. P. 53.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. P. 17.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. P. 22.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. P. 26.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. P. 58.

This shift of accent on the concept can be explained by the reluctance of the author to represent one of the warring factions in an exceptionally positive way. As it was already noted, the praiseworthy representation of the persons who deprived the life of the ruler could lead to the playwright's punishment.

## CONCLUSIONS

The political implications of the play *Julius Caesar* are realized through four textual strategies. First, it is the author's introduction of several motives (opposition between supporters and opponents of the monarchy, resistance to tyranny, the overthrow of a weak monarch). Second, the creation of images that evoke certain associations with the real figures of the Elizabethan imperious Olympus (Brutus – Essex, Caesar – Elizabeth, Cassius – Southampton). Third, there are some episodes in the play with obvious religious allusions. Fourth, the presence and development of the concepts of the power discourse (power, monarchy, republic, conspiracy) in the textual space of the play.

The study of the correlation of *Julius Caesar* with the political realities of the Elizabethan England and the hermeneutical analysis of the power discourse in the play allowed for a partial reconstruction of the dramatist's worldviews. At the same time, the position of the author's neutrality, established in Soviet Shakespeare studies, was to some extent updated due to the correlation of ideas embedded in the literary work with the sociocultural context, which has been thoroughly studied by historians and culture researches. Thus, the place of action of the play can be regarded as a socio-symbolic space, which draws a kind of boundary between the "norm" and deviations from it, that is, draws vectors that go beyond the specific work of art. The playwright appears as a person whose political sympathies are on the side of the republic. However, since the outspoken explication of anti-monarchical sentiment during the late Elizabethan reign was extremely dangerous, he refrained from declaring his position, giving preference to allusions, hints, historical analogies. The potential of the political narrative of *Julius Caesar* can be illustrated with the words of Roland Barthes: "the book creates meaning, the meaning creates life"<sup>67</sup>.

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<sup>67</sup> Barthes R. *The Pleasure of the Text*. New York, 1975. P. 36.



## SUMMARY

The article deals with revealing the nature of the interaction of Shakespeare's play *Julius Caesar* with the political situation of those times (in particular, with Count Essex's uprising) and finding out the specifics of correlation of Shakespeare's motives, images, concepts (power, betrayal, monarchy, republic) with the power discourse. The political atmosphere in England 1590–1603 is outlined. The main mechanisms for the implementation of dialogical relations between the theatrical practice of that time and politics are analyzed through the prism of political implications in *Julius Caesar*. Special attention is given to the verbalization of politically coloured concepts in the text of *Julius Caesar* that enable tracing the correlation of the playwright's position with social moods.

*Keywords:* Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, Essex, Elizabeth, power discourse, politics.

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