

KEY TOPOI OF THE UKRAINIAN SHAKESPEAREAN DISCOURSE OF THE LATE 19TH – MID 20TH CENTURY

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INTRODUCTION

The Shakespearean discourse is a field structure at the epicenter of which the figure of the English renaissance genius William Shakespeare is located. In the collective memory of the peoples the stereotypical vision of the author is formed employing certain literary conventions: metaphors, apt statements, motives, established ways of artistic representation or interpretation of a creative personality. Such conventions generate topoi. The term “topos” is used here to refer to a stock of rhetoric devices that are often repeated in a particular social context and produce ideologemes. Julia Kristeva proves that ideologemes (the units through which the social space supplies ideological values to any particular text) link the various translinguistic practices of a particular society, thus crystallizing the prevailing ideology¹.

Exactly the topoi give the figure of the author – in this case, William Shakespeare – axiologically marked characteristics that provide him with some argumentative status in the communication process.

The purpose of this research is to identify and analyze the key topoi of the Ukrainian Shakespearean discourse in the early stages of its development, which is extremely important to understand the national model of reception of the figure and works of the Bard.

The hypothesis is that the specificity of the collective ideas of the Ukrainian nation about the great English dramatist was determined by the interaction of various semiotic spaces, at the intersection of which the Bard entered the intellectual and spiritual continuum of Ukrainians. These spaces include: literary and artistic (the topos “Shakespeare as a genius of all times and nations”), sociocultural (the topos “Shakespeare as the mirror of the world” in the context of the resistance to imperial practices of cultural colonialism) as well as political and ideological (the topos

¹ Kristeva J. *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, Oxford, 1980. P. 60.

“Shakespeare as a people’s dramatist”, “Shakespeare as a realist”, “our Soviet Shakespeare”², which were consonant with communist ideology).

1. Shakespeare as “the mirror of the world”

At an early stage in the development of the Ukrainian Shakespearean discourse, the birth of which occurred much later than in Germany, France, the United States, or Poland³, in the topos paradigm the borrowed ones prevail. The key one among them was the topos of Shakespeare’s timeless genius.

This topos born in the womb of the Western European Romanticism became an epistemological derivative of reflections on nature and essence of genius, which were characteristic of the romantic artistic thinking. It programmed an orientation to the aesthetic imitation of Shakespeare and consolidated in the mass consciousness the idea that his artistic decisions should be exemplary and worth following.

The cornerstones of the topos “Shakespeare – the genius of all ages and nations” began to be laid in the playwright’s lifetime, and were subsequently metaphorically verbalized in the First Folio, a complete edition of his dramatic works, published in 1623. Shakespeare’s friend and a talented playwright Ben Johnson wrote in the Preface to the First Folio:

*Triumph, my Britain, thou hast one to show
To whom all scenes of Europe homage owe.
He was not of an age but for all time!
And all the Muses still were in their prime,
When, like Apollo, he came forth to warm
Our ears, or like a Mercury to charm!
Nature herself was proud of his designs
And joy’d to wear the dressing of his lines,
Which were so richly spun, and woven so fit,*

² This topos is explored in my article: Chernyak Y. Shakespeare as a Sovietism: the red lines on the map of the Ukrainian Shakespeareana. *Romanian Shakespeare Journal*. București, 2013. P. 12–17.

³ For an overview of the history of the Ukrainian Shakespearean discourse see my entry in *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare*: Cherniak Y. Ukraine. *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare* / Ed. by M. Dobson, S. Wells, W. Sharpe and E. Sullivan. Oxford, 2015. P. 542-543.

*As, since, she will vouchsafe no other wit.*⁴

Some metaphors used by Ben Johnson (“Soul of the age!”⁵) manifested the highest appreciation of Shakespeare by his contemporaries, and some others (“The applause, delight, the wonder of our stage!”, “star of poets”⁶) proclaimed him to be the universal genius.

Shakespeare’s poetic gift was highly appreciated by John Milton, the author of the famous epic poem “Paradise Lost”, for whom the myth of the Divine nature of word became a key point of the creativity concept. In his dedicatory poem “*On Shakespeare*” (1630) John Milton called his great predecessor “son of Memory, great heir of fame” and emphasized the powerful influence of Shakespeare’s style on the art development:

*For whilst to th’ shame of slow-endeavouring art,
Thy easy numbers flow, and that each heart
Hath from the leaves of thy unvalued book
Those Delphic lines with deep impression took*⁷.

The specific features of the national modifications of this topos have always reflected the particular historical circumstances in which the English playwright was being integrated into the intellectual and cultural continuum of other nations. The semantic potential of the topos of Shakespeare’s everlasting poetic genius was in special ways assimilated by the representatives of other cultures. “In Germany, its contents were perceived within the framework of ethnic and cultural self-identification, which caused appropriating the playwright’s figure (“our Shakespeare”) and contributed to forming the concept of the national German psyche⁸. A well-known German poet F. Freiligrath in his poem “*Deutschland ist Hamlet*” (1844) compared the emotional atmosphere of contemporary Germany with the psychological state of Shakespeare’s protagonist and proclaimed the similarity between them. “Since then metaphor Germany – Hamlet has been used to characterize the historical political state of Germany. ... The poem by Freiligrath reflects the notion of Hamlet’s

⁴ Johnson Ben. To the memory of my beloved, the author, master William Shakespeare and what he hath left us. *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* / ed. by A. H. Bullen. London, 2005. P. x.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Milton J. On Shakespeare. URL : <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46453/on-shakespeare-1630>.

⁸ Черняк Ю. Національні модифікації романтичного топосу геніальності Вільяма Шекспіра. *Ренесансні студії*. Запоріжжя, 2012. Вип. 18–19. С. 195.

disease which is understood as suffering from one's doubts and passivity"⁹.

In the USA the English playwright became the embodiment of the transcendent poetic perfection, while his work was proclaimed the symbol of Poetry, the gauge to measure the achievements of one's national literature. In France where the mentioned topos became an important factor of men of letters' artistic and aesthetic self-identification, its culture-forming potential was fulfilled to the most significant extent. Shakespeare's genius here acted as a catalyst for new aesthetic views emergence, as a symbol of new aesthetics – that of Romanticism"¹⁰. Thus everywhere the topos of William Shakespeare's genius acquired a current cultural shade, a new axiological tone or even certain ideological coloring. And the Ukrainian modification of this topos is not an exception. Its specificity was determined by a colonial character of the Shakespearean discourse in Ukraine in the second half of the 19th – early 20th century.

At this time, Shakespeare was perceived by Ukrainians as an unattainable genius, and comprehension of his creative achievements was considered to require a high cultural level. Ukrainians could not borrow the concept of “our Shakespeare”, characteristic of the West European romanticism, in its full meaning. Here appeared the original cognitive metaphor of Shakespeare as “the mirror of the world”. It was introduced by Panteleimon Kulish (1819–1897), a well-known Ukrainian writer, critic, and translator. He was the first person who translated the whole text of the Bible into the modern Ukrainian language. Moreover, he had an ambitious plan to translate all of Shakespeare's plays into Ukrainian. O. Teterina argues: “The problem of translation of Shakespeare's works into Ukrainian is interpreted in connection with the question of the ways of further national literary development, specifically in the context of polemics about the boundaries of existence of the Ukrainian literary language, – from the theory of “literature for domestic use” (M. Kostomarov) to approval of translation as an important factor in the

⁹ Kolpakova S. G., Khafizova A. A. Yusupova A. Y. German Political History Through the Prism of Hamletianism (On the Novel by A. Doeblin Hamlet). *The Journal of Social Sciences Research*. 2018. Special Issue 1. P. 363-366. URL: https://arpgweb.com/journal/journal/7/special_issue DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32861/jssr.spi1363.366>.

¹⁰ Черняк Ю. Національні модифікації романтичного топосу геніальності Вільяма Шекспіра. *Ренесансні студії*. Запоріжжя, 2012. Вип. 18–19. С. 195.

progress of the native language and literature (M. Drahomanov, P. Kulish, I. Franko)”¹¹.

Kulish’s reception of Shakespeare is a problem that deserves special research. Here it is worth mentioning the powerful resonance produced by his Shakespeare-centered activity in Ukraine. Panteleimon Kulish made the translations of thirteen plays by Shakespeare. He often wrote about the Bard and his plays in the numerous letters¹² and devoted some poems to Shakespeare. The Shakespeare-related metaphors suggested by Panteleimon Kulish generated fundamental basic ideas that became very important for the early-period Ukrainian Shakespearean discourse¹³.

In Kulish’s poems *Shakespeare* (1882) and *Homer and Shakespeare* (1893), the English playwright appeared as the most prominent figure of the world poetic Olympus, whose creativity could “turn any nation on the road of culture”. Panteleimon Kulish called Shakespeare “the luminary of creativity”, “Homer of the new world”, “the greatest voivode of cultural people”, emphasizing not only the scale of his personality but also his influence on the development of other nations’ culture. He appealed to the English genius asking him “to take care of Ukrainians” and help them “get rid of their barbarism, / To get better feelings and plans”¹⁴.

Interestingly, Panteleimon Kulish addressed Shakespeare: “Our father who is a native to all nations.” And here, as we can see, the folklore mythological poetical tradition of metaphorizing the concept of the highest authority in the image of the father is combined with the emphasis on the universal significance of Shakespeare. In this accent, there was a noticeable echo of the ideas of a famous German Shakespearean Georg Gotfrid Herwinus, whose fundamental work in four volumes *William Shakespeare* (1848–1852) Panteleimon Kulish had translated into

¹¹ Тетеріна О. Шекспір у Кулішевій концепції поступу національного письменства (літературно-критичний контекст). *Ренесансні студії*. Запоріжжя, 2014. Вип. 22. С. 48.

¹² Лучук О. Шекспір у листах Пантелеймона Куліша. *О. Лучук. Діалогічна природа літератури*. Львів, 2004. С. 65–71.

¹³ For a thorough consideration of the Shakespeare-related metaphors, see Торкут Н. Шекспір як культурна метафора в контексті пошуків європейської ідентичності. *Шекспірівський дискурс*. Запоріжжя, 2010. Вип. 1. С. 188–189.

¹⁴ Куліш П. Твори : у 2 т. / упоряд. Є. К. Нахлік. Київ, 1994. Т. 1. Прозові твори. Поетичні твори. Переспіви та переклади. С. 384.

Ukrainian, hoping to preface the first of his translations of Shakespeare's plays.

For G. G. Hervinus, Shakespeare was a genius who went beyond his era and his nation, a moral teacher and a guide of humanity. Panteleimon Kulish borrowed the idea of perceiving Shakespeare as a timeless genius, popular in Europe at the time, but expressed it in the form of a metaphor familiar to Ukrainians.

In the poem *To the native people, giving them Ukrainian translation Shakespeare's Works* (1882) Panteleimon Kulish declared his vision of the cultural civilizational perspective of Ukrainians. Such vision provoked sharp criticism of a famous Ukrainian poet Ivan Franko, who is considered the Founding Father of Shakespeare studies in Ukraine¹⁵. During the Soviet period, Kulish's position in the discussions on the further development of Ukrainians was generally interpreted as an outright manifestation of so-called "bourgeois nationalism".

According to Panteleimon Kulish, the works of the English genius translated into Ukrainian should serve as the mirror which will contribute to the moral improvement of the Ukrainian people:

*Take the mirror (it is universal), and look around,
And understand, what a poor Asian you are,
Do not be proud of your widely known robbery,
Forget your path; the Cossack passage is dark,
And return to Vladimir's cultural way*¹⁶.

The concept of the mirror actualizes several important meanings here. Firstly, there is a clear allusion to Hamlet's famous instructions to the actors to "hold the mirror up to nature" (III, 2) dealing with the essence and high mission of the arts. Secondly, it is the world's mirror that will allow Ukrainians to see their cultural face by comparing the achievements of national history and culture with the best foreign models.

In this context, it becomes clear that Panteleimon Kulish was aware of the distance between the English genius whose works had been written for humanity as a whole (the thesis suggested by G. G. Hervinus), and Ukrainians who must understand their current backwardness and the need to learn from a great Englishman.

¹⁵ Франко І. Твори : в 20 т. Київ, 1955. Т. 17. Літературно-критичні статті. С. 182–183, 185, 188, 191.

¹⁶ Куліш П. До рідного народу, подаючи йому український переклад Шекспірових творів. *П. Куліш. Твори : в 2 т.* Київ, 1989. Т. 1. Поезія. С. 188–189.

And thirdly, Shakespeare as the mirror, according to Panteleimon Kulish, was to become a kind of model-guide for the Ukrainian people as a nation to find the right direction for future development. P. Kulish considered translation into his native language an important step along this path as it would make the brilliant masterpieces accessible to a wide range of Ukrainians, and the Ukrainian language would also get a chance for improvement and development.

In one of his letters to V. Shenrock, he wrote that Ukrainian had more grammatical forms than Russian and its formative potential was extremely high¹⁷. Panteleimon Kulish's translating strategy, according to L. Kolomiets, was following the romantic concept of translation principles, in which aesthetics was organically combined with ethics, and translation was an effective means of artistic re-creation the native language¹⁸.

It is quite understandable that Kulish who saw the importance of Shakespeare's figure for the further rise of his native culture and the development of the Ukrainian language compared his mission to that of the pioneer:

I'm not a poet or a historian, either!

I am a pioneer with a heavy ax:

I cut down with the laboring hand

*A barbed terrain on my native land*¹⁹.

According to Panteleimon Kulish, if Ukrainians absorbed the best achievements of world culture and looked into Shakespeare's work as "the world mirror", they would be able to overcome their cultural barbarism. So he urged his compatriots to do so. Although, on the whole, the cultural position of P. Kulish was not shared by the majority of the Ukrainian intelligentsia, his translation work was praised rather highly, and his role in promoting Shakespeare in Ukraine became widely recognized²⁰.

¹⁷ See Шаповалова М.С. Шекспір в українській літературі. Львів, 1976. С. 62.

¹⁸ See Коломієць Л. Українські перекладачі «Гамлета» В. Шекспіра: Пантелеймон Куліш, Юрій Клен, Леонід Гребінка, Михайло Рудницький, Ігор Костецький, Григорій Кочур, Юрій Андрухович. *Ренесансні студії*. Запоріжжя, 2009. Вип. 12–13. С. 164–166.

¹⁹ Куліш П. Піонер. *П. Куліш. Твори : в 2 т.* Київ, 1989. Т. 1. Поезія. С. 217.

²⁰ Лучук О. Куліш і Франко – інтерпретатори Шекспіра. *О. Лучук. Діалогічна природа літератури*. Львів, 2004. С. 80–85; Лучук О. Чого стоїть Шекспір як зеркало всесвітнє: нотатки напередодні конференції «Шекспір і Україна». *О. Лучук. Діалогічна природа літератури*. Львів, 2004. С. 60–62; Коломієць Л. Шекспірові

The concept “Shakespeare as the universal mirror of the world” displays the piety to the English genius, typical of those times, as well as understanding the importance of getting acquainted with his works to overcome the cultural backwardness of Ukrainians. For Ukrainians of the late 19th century, whose self-consciousness was shaped by colonial and cultural oppression, Shakespeare could not yet be “their own”, which Western Europeans and Americans considered him to be. The Bard was seen here as an unattainable genius, and understanding of his works served as an indicator of a high intellectual and cultural level of the ethnic group.

The corresponding re-accentuation within the framework of the topos borrowed from European romantics (“Shakespeare as the genius of all ages and nations”) was provided with a certain metaphorization of basic concepts. It stimulated the intensive development of those cultural practices that aimed to justify the right of Ukrainians to have their own Shakespeare – translated into their native language and staged in their theaters.

Illustrative in this sense is Mykhailo Staryts’ky’s confession in the preface to his translation of Hamlet: “I thought of translating the best Shakespeare’s works into the Ukrainian language to popularize the great playwright and psychologist, as well as to improve my mother tongue in the highest classical models... Recently P. Kulisch, the glorious warrior of our word, ... undertook to print abroad in his translation into the Ukrainian language of all Shakespeare; however, I thought it would be advisable to print my translation of Hamlet, because the more works of this kind, the more consequences this modern movement will have for the development of our language... I will be happy to find friends who want to work in one field with me; and even when my mistakes will be useful to them, I would say, with a negative example, I will be happy too”²¹.

After the abolition of restrictions on theatrical productions in the Ukrainian theaters (1905), it was finally possible to put world classics on its own stage in the Ukrainian language. Many translations of Shakespeare’s plays appeared in 1890-1940 thanks to the creative efforts of Marko Kropyvnytskiy and Panas Saksahanskiy, Panas Myrnyi,

драми в перекладах П. Куліша крізь призму романтичної перекладацької школи. *Шекспірівський дискурс*. Запоріжжя, 2010. Вип. 1. С. 103–120.

²¹ Старицький М. Передмова до перекладу трагедії «Гамлет» В. Шекспіра. *М. Старицький. Твори : в 8 т.* Київ, 1965. Т. 8. Оповідання. Статті. Листи. С. 355.

Ivan Franko, Yuriy Klen, Leonid Hrebinka. The cultural potential of the topos of Shakespeare's timeless genius began to become more conscious by the intelligentsia in Ukraine, and later by the Soviet ruling elite.

During the prohibition period²², according to Irena Makaryk, "the classics, including Shakespeare, would become associated with national and cultural revival"²³. In 1917–1919, when the Young Theater (Molodyi teatr) headed by Les' Kurbas led an active search for new purely Ukrainian forms of stage representation, "foreign Shakespeare and Western European classics were thus paradoxically regarded as tools for recovering, discovering, and forming an integral part of the national self, a more authentic and truer self than had hitherto been permitted"²⁴.

Les' Kurbas aimed to create a new theater that would be free from the melodramatic character that prevailed on the Ukrainian stage at that time, as well as to educate a new audience capable of thinking critically. In 1924, Les' Kurbas manifested his approach to Shakespeare: "The restoration of Shakespeare in the manners and customs of his time is formally impossible and in essence unnecessary. The whole value of the scenic embodiment of a classical work in our day lies namely in the ability to present a work in the refraction of the prism of the contemporary world view"²⁵. Shakespeare took priority in the creative pursuits of Les' Kurbas, and it was no accident. He had an ambitious dream to stage all plays by the English genius, and he managed to prepare only four of them (*Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *King Lear*). His four variants of *Macbeth* confirmed the ability of the Ukrainian theatre to stage classics. The most radical among these variants was *Macbeth* staged in 1924 by Berezil in Kyiv. Irene R. Makaryk in her article *Heresies of style. Some paradoxes of Soviet Ukrainian modernism* proved this production to be "almost identical to those of Edward Bond's *Lear*" for whom 'wrong'

²² In accordance with *Valuev Circular* (1863) and Ems Ukaz (1876) it was prohibited to stage plays and translate classical texts in Ukrainian. See Remy J. The Valuev Circular and Censorship of Ukrainian Publications in the Russian Empire (1863-1876): Intention and Practice. *Canadian Slavonic Papers*. 2007. Vol. 49, No. 1/2. P. 87-110. Ems Ukase. *Internet Encyclopedia of Ukraine*. URL: <http://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?link>.

²³ Makaryk I. R. Shakespeare in the Undiscovered Bourn: Les Kurbas, Ukrainian Modernism and Early Soviet Cultural Politics. Toronto, 2004, P. 14.

²⁴ *Ibid.* P. 42.

²⁵ quoted in Makaryk I. R. Heresies of style. Some paradoxes of Soviet Ukrainian modernism. *Shakespeare and Modern Theatre: The Performance of Modernity* / Ed. by M. Bristol, K. McLuskie, Ch. Holmes. London, 2001, P. 142–143.

Shakespeare is academic or ‘museum’ Shakespeare while right Shakespeare is a transformed and contemporary Shakespeare”²⁶.

As “the mirror of the world”, the English genius was called upon to help Ukrainians “overcome the double provincialism”²⁷. Thus, Kurbas’s work on Shakespeare’s plays (first at the Young Theater and later at Berezil) convincingly demonstrated that Shakespeare became a kind of field of creative experimentation for contemporary theater practitioners. In the process of theatrical explorations of the 1920s, Shakespeare gained the reputation of an author who caused high expectations for an aesthetic breakthrough.

2. Soviet modification of the topos “Our Shakespeare”

In the second half of the 1920s – early 1930s, a new interpretation of the figure and creativity of the English playwright emerged in the Soviet Shakespearean discourse under the influence of ideology, which eventually became dominant. The topos “Shakespeare’s timeless genius” also acquired new connotations.

In the context of the deliberate cultural policy of the Soviet regime, which proclaimed the country of Soviets the most progressive and humanistic community in the history of mankind, the world classics were subjected to a rigid ideological revision. The literary canon formation was carried out in the light of political expediency. Only those artists whose creativity could be put to the service of the ideas of the proletarian revolution and building a socialist state were included for the Soviet iconostasis.

The desire of the Soviet power to use the authority, name, and works of Shakespeare in the ideological project of building a new socialist country and creating a new man generated the strategy of attributing to Shakespeare those characteristic features that corresponded to the demands of the political situation. According to the cultural policy of the government, which proclaimed the proletariat dictatorship its ruling principle, the literature was to be an element of the propaganda of the class ideology. As Vladimir Lenin insisted in his famous article *Party Organization and Party Literature* (1905): “It is not simply that, for the socialist proletariat, literature cannot be a means of enriching individuals or groups: it cannot, in fact, be an individual undertaking, independent of

²⁶ Ibid. P. 142.

²⁷ Курбас Л. Філософія театру / упоряд. М. Г. Лабінський. Київ, 2001. С. 668.

the common cause of the proletariat. Down with non-partisan writers! Down with literary supermen! Literature must become *part* of the common cause of the proletariat, “a cog and a screw” of one single great Social-Democratic mechanism set in motion by the entire politically-conscious vanguard of the entire working class. Literature must become a component of organized, planned and integrated Social-Democratic Party work”²⁸.

Following the October Revolution of 1917, through which the Bolsheviks established a new political regime, the directions outlined by Lenin in this article became mandatory instructions to be followed. Thus, Shakespeare “was turned into an iconic figure, which occupied the central place in the newly-built Soviet literary iconostasis”²⁹.

In 1924–1930 Shakespeare appeared to be at the epicenter of aesthetic confrontation, which unfolds mainly in the realm of theatrical practices. The cultural position of Ukraine in both the former Russian Empire and the USSR remained colonial, thus the domestication of the English genius, which was in line with the national policy of the Soviet power, was firmly entrenched on the Ukrainian stage. The domestication strategy represented Shakespeare as a playwright whose plays are close to the hearts of working people as he was a “realist” and a “people’s dramatist”.

In 1926, P. Saksahansky staged his melodramatic version of *Othello*, which pleased the public, broadly responding to the party prescriptions of “authentic Shakespeare realism” and organically fitting into the ethnographic aesthetics of the theater of luminaries (the Coryphée’s Theater), which condemned Les’ Kurbas’s aspirations to modernize classics. As I. Makaryk argues: “The process by which Shakespeare became domesticated and allied with popularly, nationally, and ethnographically. Shakespeare in the Undiscovered Bourn based notions of theatre in the second half of the 1920s and early 1930s was a complex and deeply ironic process that will require some unpacking. It came about not only because of the gradual imposition of a Stalinist view of art from above – an interpretation generally found in theatre histories which cover this time – but also because of pressures from below, in the

²⁸ Lenin V. I. Party Organization and Party Literature. URL: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1905/nov/13.htm>.

²⁹ Chernyak Y. Shakespeare as a Sovietism: the red lines on the map of the Ukrainian Shakespeareana. *Romanian Shakespeare Journal*. București, 2013. P. 14.

form of the entrenched, perceived or imagined demands of the spectator. In other words, the revolution, at least in the theatre, was, as we shall see, vanquished to some degree by what, in the West, was called the box office and by its rallying call for a 'realistic' theatre and an 'authentic' Shakespeare. In the Ukrainian context, it meant the victory of narodnytstvo or populism over modernism and the avant-garde"³⁰.

In the course of the literary debates of 1934, socialist realism was proclaimed to be the official and the only correct artistic method, and the tradition of Shakespeare representation introduced by the theater of luminaries began to dominate. Kurbas's plays disappeared from the repertoire; he was stripped of the title of People's Artist of Ukraine and soon repressed and killed.

The director of Ivan Franco theater in Kyiv Hnat Yura, whose first performances, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1927) in particular, were marked by a significant influence of the aesthetics of modernism, abandoned the formalist experiments and declared that he would continue to focus on the traditions of the Russian realistic theater and put the plays in a romantic-heroic-realistic manner.

When the totalitarian regime strengthened its position Shakespeare became the object of purposeful ideological mythologization in literary criticism. The thesis of the only correctness of the Soviet understanding of the Bard's works became commonplace in the Shakespearean discourse of the late 1920s – 1940s. The idea of Shakespeare coherence with the values of the new social formation – the world's first country of socialism – was actively introduced into the mass consciousness.

At that time, Soviet modification of the concept of "our Shakespeare" was structured. It differed significantly from the Western European romantic analogues in both axiological nature and cultural productivity. Shakespeare's appropriation in the Soviet Union as a whole, and Ukraine in particular, was carried out as an integral part of cultural policy under Stalin's regime. It was accompanied by a widespread involvement of ideologized discursive strategies in the process of interpreting his literary heritage, as well as in the creation of the Soviet myth of Shakespeare. The Bard was proclaimed a 'realist' and a 'people's dramatist', whose sympathies were always on the side of the working masses. Of course, only Soviet literary criticism, armed with the only

³⁰ Makaryk I. R. *Shakespeare in the Undiscovered Bourn: Les Kurbas, Ukrainian Modernism and Early Soviet Cultural Politics*. Toronto, 2004. P. 113–114.

correct methodology of Marxist-Leninist analysis, could grasp the depth of his creative ideas.

The conscious and constant accentuation on the benefits of the Soviet literary studies over the Western bourgeois Shakespeare scholarship became an indispensable component of research articles and newspaper publications of that time. Recurrences of such methodological confrontation can be found even in the works of the 1960s. Thus, in the preface to the three-volume edition of Shakespeare in 1964 we read: “It should be noted that in Ukraine, the struggle for Shakespeare from the very beginning was part of the struggle of revolutionary-democratic literary studies with bourgeois nationalism and decadence of all kinds ... and the struggle of the best representatives of the Ukrainian Soviet criticism and theater for realism and humanism in the arts ... Vulgar sociologists at all costs wanted to make him either a “representative of the bourgeoisie” or a “herald of the aristocracy”. But this impulse, based on methodological immaturity, ignorance, or a misconception of innovation, plunged into oblivion, overcome by a faithful, based on Marx-Leninist methodology approach to the evaluation of Shakespeare’s work”³¹.

In the works of the Ukrainian Shakespeare scholars of the time, there were often polemical passages aimed at interpreting the value semantics of Shakespeare’s works solely from the standpoint of class, populism or so-called “narodnist”, and realism. Some scholars even denied the involvement of Shakespeare in the creation of basic ideological humanistic ideas, and his humanism itself was interpreted as “far from ‘the spiritual aristocracy’ of Petrarch or other Italian humanists of the XV – XVII centuries” because the sources of Shakespeare humanism were deeply rooted in the people’s soul³².

The concept of Shakespeare’s realism was based on the repercussions of Friedrich Engels’ famous controversy with Ferdinand Lassalle, in which Shakespeare as a realist opposed Friedrich Schiller, whose characters appear as mere mouthpieces of the spirit of the times³³.

³¹ Модестова Н. Уільям Шекспір. *Шекспір У. Твори : в 3 т.* Київ, 1964. Т. 1. С. 42–43.

³² Родзевич С. І. Вільям Шекспір. *Вільям Шекспір. Збірка статей.* Київ, 1939. С. 27, 22.

³³ For the controversy, see Burns E. *Character, Acting and Being on the Pre-modern Stage.* London, 1990. P. 216.

Such Ukrainian Soviet scholars as Olexander Biletsky³⁴, Serhiy Rodzevich³⁵, Olexander Borschagovsky³⁶ referred to the concept of realism suggested by classics of Marxism-Leninism and treated Shakespeare's method as renaissance realism. They proclaimed such writers as Honoré de Balzac, Alexander Pushkin, Taras Shevchenko as Shakespeare's followers in the aspect of the method. Irene R. Makaryk correctly pinpoints: "In criticism, Marx's and Engels's love of Shakespeare is cited in all preliminary remarks. Western views of *Hamlet* are labeled as Freudian, Protestant, melancholic, romantic or aesthetic – that is, as simplifications; and "shallow psychological interpretations" are vigorously attacked, while Soviet views are lauded for stressing the plebeian origins of Shakespeare, emphasizing the "realism" of his work, the use he made of folk elements (songs, superstitions, rites, and fables), and the class struggle of the Renaissance"³⁷.

It is noteworthy that despite frequent references to the authority of Ivan Franko, who wrote much about Shakespeare's works, his position regarding the artistic method of the English playwright was almost completely ignored by the Soviet literary critics. It should be reminded that Ivan Franko avoided the term "realism" towards the Bard.

Even today, it is difficult to say unequivocally the extent to which the concept of Shakespeare's realism in the writings of the Soviet scholars of the 1930s – 1940s was the result of political pressure, and to what extent it reflected the real views of these scholars. It should not be forgotten that for many scholars of the time the commitment to Marxist methodology, which was interpreted as a modification of the sociological method, was a conscious and sincere worldview. At the same time, it can be assumed that the presence of these clichés in a Shakespearean discourse made possible and somewhat "legitimized" the very reflections on Shakespeare's work. The presentation of new literary observations and their public manifestation were justifiable only when they fitted into the

³⁴ Білецький О. І. Передмова. *Вільям Шекспір. Збірка статей*. Київ, 1939. С. 7–11.

³⁵ Родзевич С. І. Вільям Шекспір. *Вільям Шекспір. Збірка статей*. Київ, 1939. С. 13–63.

³⁶ Борщаговський О. М. Шекспір і національний театр. *Вільям Шекспір. Збірка статей*. Київ, 1939. С. 127–176.

³⁷ Makaryk I. R. Periphery Against Centre: *Hamlet* in Early Soviet Ukrainian Poetry. *Living Record. Essays of Memory Constantine Bida* / ed. by Irena R. Makaryk. Ottawa, 1991. P. 289–290.

general conceptual sphere of the authorities' perceptions of the so-called literary cause. Reading the works of the Ukrainian scholars included in the first-anniversary collection *William Shakespeare* (Kyiv, 1939), we cannot but admit that in a careful selection of facts, information completeness, depth and originality of some interpretations of Shakespeare's texts, they are not inferior to the works by their foreign contemporaries. However, the polemical component of these articles turned out to be extremely ideologically involved: everything that did not fit into the procrustean bed of the main interpretive line (Shakespeare – 'people's playwright', 'realist', 'humanist', and 'historical optimist') was cut off, subjected to annihilation. Literary analytics, if it contradicted the Communist party directives in the sphere of literature and criticism, was dangerous. So it often gave way to pathos and language rhetoric.

Thus, the scholarly value of the Shakespearean discourse of the 1930s and 1940s was mainly shaped by an interpretive component that focused attention on texts, not Shakespeare's method or personality. The analytical and ideological components were undoubtedly interconnected; quotes from Shakespeare's plays often acted not only as objects of literary interpretation but also as illustrative passages designed to prove the correctness of a particular ideologue. In this context, it is appropriate to cite the considerations of a theatrical expert Alexey Bartoshevich as for the nature of the correlation of aesthetic and ideological components in Shakespeare's productions of the Stalin's period. He argues: "The directors were staging, the actors were playing Shakespeare, enjoying the opportunity to touch the great drama. When they tried to define the social meaning of their work in words, they immediately switched to the official language of official ideology. But the living matter of their art could not be completely dissolved in the schemes of totalitarian mythology. The essence of art 'precipitated', existed outside of ideological schemes and thus aided the spiritual survival of the nation"³⁸.

The further development of the Ukrainian Shakespearean analytics turned in the direction of widening the thematic range, more tolerant reception of achievements of foreign colleagues and overcoming the vulgar-sociological simplicity of proletcult slogans and clichés. But even in the 1950s and 1960s, these clichés were still widespread in the media

³⁸ Бартошевич А. В. «Арденский лес» в сталинской России: комедии Шекспира в советском театре тридцатых годов. *Шекспировские чтения. 2004* / отв. ред. И. С. Приходько. Москва, 2006. С. 30.

discourse where ideological accents prevailed. William Shakespeare was featured on the pages of newspapers and magazines as a ‘people’s playwright’, close and understandable to every Soviet person. In the course of public communication, there was frequent repetition and constant reproduction of evaluative metaphors and ideologically colored attributes about Shakespeare, such as the ‘human rights wrestler’, ‘the foremost artist of humanity’, ‘the true son of the English people’, ‘mighty realist’, ‘heroic entourage’. In a jubilee newspaper article (“Literaturna Ukraijina”, April 24, 1964) O. Levada wrote: “Shakespeare is not a foreigner for us. Even in the West, no one denies it. And recognizing that our great country has become the second homeland for Shakespeare, the West must analyze why the greatest titans of the human spirit find their second homeland precisely in a socialist society”³⁹.

In Ukraine as well as in other republics of the Soviet Union there were a lot of various popularization practices aimed at approving in the mass consciousness the definite stereotypes as for particular authors. As M. Pavlyshyn emphasizes: “In Eastern Europe, the object of worship in literature has often been not the text but a person, or, more precisely, the totality of a writer’s biography, his writings, and historical role. There are cults of writers – Pushkin, Tolstoy, and Dostoevsky in Russia, Shevchenko, Lesya Ukrainka, and Franko in Ukraine, Kupala, and Kolas in Belarus – who, by their ability to evoke pietism and ritual, have no equivalent in the West. Literary canonization in the Soviet Union takes on forms that in some ways resemble the canonization of a church saint. The writer (the personotext!) takes place in a series of similar ‘personotexts’, which is more useful to consider not as a canon, but as an iconostasis”⁴⁰.

Throughout the Soviet Union, Shakespeare Jubilees were solemnly celebrated in 1939 (375 years since Shakespeare was born), 1964 and 1966 (350 years after Shakespeare’s death). Commemorative events, memorable celebrations, and diverse parties dedicated to Shakespeare were regularly held in large cities and small villages, at universities and secondary schools, at theatres and country clubs confirming Bard’s special closeness with the Soviet people. The concept of “our Shakespeare” gradually began to take on the signs of topos.

³⁹ Левада О. Рагоборець гуманізму. *Літературна Україна*. 1964. 24 квітня. С. 4.

⁴⁰ Павлишин М. Канон та іконостас. URL: <https://vpered.wordpress.com/2015/12/21/pavlyshyn-canon/>.

It is present not only in public discourse of the time but also in literary works of the Ukrainian writers. Very indicative in this sense is Mykola Bazhan's poem *In Stratford-upon-Avon* (1948), the plot of which was structured as an artistic representation of "our Soviet Shakespeare" topos. Written after visiting Bard's homeland, this poem combines descriptiveness with strong and vivid ideological accents.

Per Mykola Bazhan, Shakespeare – a poet from the people and for the people – found his second homeland in the multinational country of Soviets, where his work is highly appreciated by the Tajik who descended from the mountains to listen to Hamlet's monologue, and by the "shepherd from the Sakartvel valleys", deeply concerned by Shakespeare's tragedy, and by the "weavers and blacksmiths" who came to "listen to the old pity"⁴¹.

Thus, as we can see, Mykola Bazhan quite frankly articulated claims for the appropriation of the Bard, which had been formed by the Soviet modification of the "our Shakespeare" topos. This modification emphasized two important points. The first is the coincidence of Shakespeare's ideas and the ideals of the socialist society. The second is the claim of communist propaganda that only Soviet people are capable of the correct understanding of the works of the Bard.

CONCLUSION

Shakespeare's discourse in Ukraine, which originated much later than in Western Europe, the United States or Russia, has its specificity, which was determined primarily by political circumstances. In the Western world of the early 19th century, the concept "our Shakespeare" became particularly popular. In Germany, it accentuated the unity of the German spirit and the closeness of the German mentality to Hamlet. American poet and philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson proclaimed the English Renaissance genius as "the father of the man in America". For Ukrainians, at this time he remained a "great stranger" whose works were available to them only in German, Polish and/or Russian translations.

During the 18th and the first half of the 19th century, Ukraine, torn between two empires, had no national theater, and the use of the Ukrainian language in the sphere of culture, including translations of world classics, was strictly forbidden under Valuev Circular and Ems

⁴¹ Бажан М. П. У Стратфордї на Ейвонї. *Бажан М. П. Твори в 4-х т.* Київ, 1984. Т. 1.: Поезії та поеми 1923–1983. С. 324.

Ukaz. In the context of total political and cultural colonialism, Shakespeare's appropriation by Ukrainians was impossible: he was perceived here as an unattainable genius, and understanding of his works served as an indicator of the recipient's intellectual capacity. That is why the topos of Shakespeare's timeless genius, initiated by his younger contemporaries, in Ukraine correlated with the struggle for national identity, acquiring specific conceptual color and acute relevance. The Ukrainian elite understood the urgent need for Shakespeare and verbalized his possible impact on the cultural and even political life of Ukrainians in numerous public disputes over the further directions of the nation's development.

In the course of discussions about the expediency of Shakespeare's translations into Ukrainian in the presence of Russian translations, the concept of "Shakespeare as the mirror of the world" emerged, and during the 1880–1900 it acquired the characteristics of the cultural topos. Panteleimon Kulish, the creator of this metaphor, considered that the nation should follow the Western countries with their highly developed culture appreciating Shakespeare as its common-shared value. In his opinion, acquaintance with the translations of the Bard's works would fulfill a civilizing function, promote the development of the Ukrainian language and culture as a whole.

Shakespeare's ability to stimulate a radical renewal of the national theatrical tradition was well understood by the charismatic director Les' Kurbas, whose "Macbeth" became one of the most original modernist productions. Les' Kurbas appreciated Shakespeare as a consummate artist who can sound contemporary and relevant, and thus nurture a new theatrical audience. In this way, the western romantic topos of a timeless genius organically merged with the purely Ukrainian topos "the mirror of the world".

In 1930–1950, in Soviet Ukraine, Shakespeare occupied one of the most honorable places in the cultural iconostasis, whose construction was carried out under the clear guidance of the Communist Party and controlled by the repressive organs of the state. Due to the performances of the Bard's plays on the Ukrainian stages, which aspired to domestication and melodrama, the reception of the author as a people's dramatist was fixed in the collective consciousness of the viewers. Soviet literary criticism of the time always drew attention to the fact that Shakespeare was not an aristocrat but a glover's son who clearly articulated his sympathy for the working masses. His method was defined

as realism. These ideas were actively promoted through newspaper publications, school programs, numerous celebrations of Shakespeare's anniversaries, etc. In the end, the topos "our Shakespeare" was formed. It became widespread throughout the Soviet Union, including Ukraine. The idea of the only rightness of the Soviet understanding of Shakespeare caused by vulgar sociologism in the Soviet literary studies of that time was crystallized in controversy with so-called bourgeois Shakespeareans. This idea found an effective poetic representation in Mykola Bazhan's poem "In Stratford-upon-Avon". Thus, in the Soviet topos "our Shakespeare", the idea of the class and spiritual affinity of the English genius with the working people was combined with a claim to the only correct Soviet understanding of the Bard's work.

SUMMARY

The article deals with the peculiarities of the reception of William Shakespeare on the Ukrainian lands, which for more than two centuries had been torn between Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires and then for some decades till 1991 were a part of the Soviet Union preserving its colonial status. The author identifies and analyzes the key topoi of the Ukrainian Shakespearean discourse in the early stages of its development, which is extremely important to understand the national model of reception of the figure and works of the Bard.

The scholar proves the hypothesis that the specificity of the collective ideas of the Ukrainian nation about the great English dramatist was determined by the interaction of various semiotic spaces. As a result of the influence of some ideological, political and sociocultural factors the Bard entered the intellectual continuum of Ukrainians as "the mirror of the world". The appearance of his works in the Ukrainian translation and on the Ukrainian stages was appreciated as a form of resistance to imperial practices of cultural colonialism.

In 1930th – 1960th the topos "our Shakespeare" was structured and actively promoted through newspaper publications, school programs, numerous celebrations of Shakespeare's anniversaries, etc. This topos included the idea of the class and spiritual affinity of the English genius with the working people and an ideological claim to the only correct Soviet understanding of the Bard's work.

Keywords: William Shakespeare, topos, the Ukrainian Shakespearean discourse the value semantics, reception, ideologue.

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