

## II. Рецепція художньої спадщини Ренесансу в культурі наступних епох

УДК: 821.111:821.161.2'42

*Torkut Nataliya, Cherniak Yurii*  
(Zaporizhzhia)

### **Ukrainian Hamlet and «hamletizing» Ukraine: «Will you play upon this pipe?»**

***Торкут Наталія, Черняк Юрій. Український Гамлет і «гамлетизуюча» Україна: «Може б, ви заграли на цю флейту?»***

*Стаття присвячена аналізу специфіки актуалізації аксіологічного потенціалу Шекспірового «Гамлета» в українській поезії 1930-х – 1970-х років. Розглядаючи Шекспіра як засновника дискурсивності, автори демонструють потужність резонансу, спричиненого образом Гамлета в соціокультурному контексті радянської України. В умовах посилення тоталітарних тенденцій проблема гамлетівських вагань стала епіцентром протиборства двох антагоністичних світоглядних моделей. Перша, представлена поемою М. Бажана «Смерть Гамлета», вибудовувалася на апологетиці комуністичної ідеології і репрезентувала Принца Датського як здеградовану особистість, заглиблену в безплідні роздуми. Приписування герою Шекспіра чужих для нього ідей і рис призводило до деконструкції смислового ядра образу та деформації ціннісної семантики великої трагедії. Друга модель, що втілювалася у поезіях М. Рильського, Є. Плужника, Л. Первомайського, С. Голованівського, З. Красівського та В. Стуса, співвідносила гамлетівську ситуацію зі станом граничного буття, кризою ідентичності, екзистенційним відчаєм. При цьому Гамлет зберігав високий моральний статус, асоціюючись з рефлексивністю як способом подолання зневіри, зі здатністю до самопожертв та спроможністю протистояти диктату влади.*

***Ключові слова:*** В. Шекспір, Гамлет, аксіологічна семантика, ідеологія, М. Рильський, М. Бажан, Є. Плужник, Л. Первомайський, С. Голованівський, З. Красівський, В. Стус.

The cultural landscape of modern civilization cannot be imagined or reconstructed without an important bunch of philosophical, aesthetic and psychological ideas, which

emerged due to our dialogue with William Shakespeare. As Harold Bloom argues “Shakespeare’s plays were financially successful and appealed to many types of people. However, on top of this enormous popular success, his work was always cerebral and reflective. Rarely do today’s movies combine mass appeal and box office success with intense meditation on the world, but this is exactly what Shakespeare was able to do. Indeed, philosophy is built into Shakespeare’s dramatic style in the way he structures the plays as debates, as conversations that have not ended 400 years after the plays were first performed”<sup>1</sup>

The waves of discussions arisen by Shakespeare’s heritage in Ukrainian intellectual space immediately after the appearance of the first translations of *Hamlet* (1860-s) haven’t been weakening for decades and their resonance is seen in different spheres of social life and existential searches of individuals. The Ukrainian nation can be easily compared to Hamlet. As a prominent poetess Lina Kostenko mentions, the Ukrainians are “a rarity, curio nation, lonely on its own lands, in its own big socium, and even more lonely in the universe of the humankind”<sup>2</sup>. The aim of this article is to elucidate the resonance produced by the greatest Shakespeare’s tragedy in the Ukrainian poetry and emphasize the actualization of axiological semantics of *Hamlet* in the national cultural context.

In Ukraine as well as in other European countries Shakespeare proves to be more than an author of one or several genius works but he is a creator of something much more influential and impressive. He has been playing the role of an intellectual inspirer in the process of cross-cultural communication, encouraging further development of mental

---

<sup>1</sup> *Gleed P.* Bloom’s how to write about William Shakespeare /Paul Gleed ; introduction by Harold Bloom. – N. Y. : Infobase Publishing, 2008. – 244 p.

<sup>2</sup> *Костенко Л.* Гуманітарна аура нації, або Дефект головного дзеркала / Ліна Костенко. – К. : Видавничий дім «KM Academia», 1999. – С. 30.

## II. Рецепція художньої спадщини Ренесансу в культурі наступних епох

activity and creative searches, so that he can be considered a founder of discursivity (the term by M. Foucault). He acts as a “provocateur” whose intellectual and spiritual activities stimulate the unfolding of thought-evolving process, resulting in the appearance of other new texts (thoughts, ideas, conceptions), polemic re-works, innovatory interpretations etc. M. Foucault underlines that “the founders of discursivity” appear to be in the so-called “transdiscursive position”, which means that they create the possibility and rules of forming other texts, setting the infinite opportunity of discourses. They enable not only a certain number of analogies, but also a certain number of differences. They discover the space for something which differs from what they are, yet, nevertheless, belongs to what they founded.<sup>3</sup>

The appropriation of Shakespeare by different nations as well as the discussions about his works in different cultural contexts leads to the emergence of new texts, new ideas and concepts. Thus, Shakespeare causes unlimited hypothetic possibility for the appearance of new cultural practices and intellectual constructions. In Ukraine the so called Shakespearean discourse is a kind of postcolonial phenomenon the core element of which is the reconstruction of *Hamlet*. As Irena Makaryk points out: «In the conditions of colonialism and post-colonialism *Hamlet* is an extremely dangerous play that rises too many questions without giving any answers, studies the essence of evil as a political and metaphysical problem, and discovers the correlation between

---

<sup>3</sup> Фуко М. Что такое автор? // Воля к истине: по ту сторону знания, власти и сексуальности. Работы разных лет / М. Фуко ; [пер. с фр. С. Табачникова]. – М. : Касталь, 1996. – С. 31-32.

the action and intention, the word and the deed, the personality and society»<sup>4</sup>.

As the totalitarian tendencies grew stronger, the authorities managed to take the verbal communicative processes under complete control, and literature became one of the instruments of sanctifying the political metanarrative «the Country of the Soviets as the realization of the age-old dream of the masses about the social justice», Shakespeare's tragedy *Hamlet* took up the central position in the conflict of interpretations. *Hamlet's* status as a universally recognized and generally acknowledged masterpiece made it impossible either to ignore this work of literature or to transform its semantics *in corpore*. So, the totalitarian discourse scrutinized the wide spectrum of its semantic valencies trying to single out those of them which could be used for reaching relevant ideological or aesthetic objectives. The poem *The death of Hamlet* (1932) by Mykola Bazhan which provoked heated controversy around the axiologically marked core of the image can be given as a demonstrative example in this respect.

Bazhan's poem depicts Hamlet as a degraded personality, lost in the futile reflections and unable to act decisively:

*I know you, Hamlet, a double-faced snob,  
I know your usual, exhausted make-up,  
Your tragical passion: to mow and mop,  
Your daily routine, which is always non-stop.*<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, some of the traits imputed to Hamlet are absolutely not characteristic of him, among them – hypocrisy and meanness. His doubts are interpreted as certain moral duality in the crucial moment of the great social battle when absence of a direct position is equal to betrayal:

<sup>4</sup> Макарик І. «Гамлет» і проблема зволікання: Шекспір на Україні / І. Макарик // Світовид. Літературно-мистецький журнал. – Київ; Нью-Йорк, 1995. – № IV(21). – С. 75-89.

<sup>5</sup> Бажан М.П. Смерть Гамлета // Бажан М.П. Твори в 4-х т. / Передм. Л. Новиченка. – К.: Дніпро, 1984. –Т. 1. : Поезії та поеми 1923-1983. – С. 116.

## II. Рецепція художньої спадщини Ренесансу в культурі наступних епох

*And Hamlet comes to his senses and tries –  
promptly and with animation –  
to respond to the both.  
He says: «Look here, here is my right face,  
and there is my left one».<sup>6</sup>*

The genetic consanguinity of the protagonist of Bazhan's poem with Shakespeare's character is completely ruined when the author identifies Hamlet with twofaced Janus and proclaims him to be the «*Prince of cowardice*». In the process of metaphorization, which fills the image with negative connotation and evaluation, total deconstruction of the initial semantics of Shakespeare's tragedy takes place: the problem of existential responsibility is substituted with pro-communist criticism of dissent; the conflict between the internal freedom and the external absence of freedom is interpreted as banal fearfulness; and the Danish state, where «*something is rotten*», turns into a certain «*Elsinore Land*», where there is no more place for the «*pale petty hamlets*», but instead there are «*ranks, where each worker, / each miner, tanned in the fights / will teach you to look in the enemy's eyes, / and to blow out your enemy's brains*»<sup>7</sup>.

The conclusion, the researcher from the Ukrainian Diaspora B. Schneider comes to, seems quite legitimate. The scholar emphasizes the destructive modality of this interpretation of the traditional image: «Bazhan's poem put the end to the natural life of the capacious and rich Shakespeare's images and initiated the speculative usage of them for the essentially ideological goals that have nothing in common with these images. In all respects this work of literature is non-Shakespearean, or, if you want, anti-Shakespearean, and the presence of the great name of Hamlet here may at least surprise»<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>6</sup>Бажан М.П. Цит. вид – С. 117.

<sup>7</sup>Бажан М.П. Цит. вид – С. 120.

<sup>8</sup>Шнайдер Б. То не Шекспір! («Смерть Гамлета» Миколи Бажана) // Українська шекспіріана на Заході. – Вип. 2. – Торонто, 1990. – С. 41.

The important role in forming the semiotic space of Bazhan's poem is played by the allusions to the reality of the day in the circles of writers and wider – among the intelligentsia. In the discourse of literature and literary criticism, shaped by the directions of the Communist party, the poet was sanctified as a herald of the unequivocal «right» truths, advocate of the revolutionary ideals, or apostle of the new socialist order. However, not all the men of letters could fit into the social environment where the creative search was regulated by the authorities. Thus, the reiteration of the leitmotif of Hamlet's doubts in the lyric poetry of Maksym Rylsky, Volodymyr Sosiura, Pavlo Tychyna and Mykola Bazhan (*The dialogue of the hearts*, *The trilogy of the passion*) was not accidental. Due to the harsh totalitarian pressure immediate dependence of the poet's existence on the choice of his creative orientation became more and more obvious. The fear of the regime, caused by the situation in the country, led to the appearance of the pronounced warlike, sometimes even militaristic voicing of the zone of the conflict.

Aggressive colouring of metaphors is characteristic of the poetry of that time. Bazhan's poem includes a number of them, for example «*the black cross of the plane in the sky*», «*they are filtering their thin and watery soul through the filters of respirator masks*», «*the black guard*», «*the Prince of Soldafonia (the Kingdom of the Martinets)*», «*black snipers*». It testifies the subconscious yearning of the creative personality to overcome inner panic by voicing those meanings which structure the concept of «power». This pumping of verbal aggression, which is sometimes unconscious, ritual repetition of the sanctified by the unquestionable authority of the Communist party topoi and idioms are essentially a form of the sublimation of the psychic energy of the creative consciousness in the hysterical state.

The actualization of *Hamlet's* axiological semantics has quite different nature in the poetry of those authors, who, like

## II. Рецепція художньої спадщини Ренесансу в культурі наступних епох

young Maksym Rylsky, Yevhen Pluzhnyk, Leonid Pervomaiskyi, correlated situation of «limit existence» in *Hamlet* with their own psychological state.

Vivid Shakespearian allusions were used in the two poems by the famous Ukrainian author Maksym Rylsky.<sup>9</sup> One of them was called *Like Hamlet, I am looking at the clouds* (1919). In it the poet reflects upon the two alternative ways the artist could choose between: the first one was to be the herald of the political “truths” and the second one (obviously chosen by the author) was to serve the truth of the poetry staying away from the flattery of the “court poets” of the time.

The author depicts the existential collisions of his own life using the allusions to the great tragedy:

*Like Hamlet, I scrutinize the clouds,  
And my pencil, my treacherous Polonius,  
Pours into the word a strange magic,  
The red gleams of the holy sun.  
Don't listen, prince, to the unnecessary words  
Of the fawning-lying nobles,  
Why would the clouds need this noisy song?*<sup>10</sup>

The other poem by M. Rylsky that is called *The Prince of Denmark* (1929) with the subtitle “*In the wave of disbelief*”. Here the author’s poetic language becomes much harder, harsher and sharper. At the time of the “red terror” directed against each manifestation of the national self-awareness most of the Ukrainian intellectuals had to go through the terrible ideological “meat-chopper” as a result of which they either chose the way of spiritual isolation and were infringed,

<sup>9</sup> For the detailed analysis of the poems see: Черняк Ю.І. Специфіка актуалізації ціннісної семантики «Гамлета» В. Шекспіра в українському шекспірівському дискурсі / Ю. І. Черняк. – Автореф. дис. на здобуття наук. ступ. канд. філол. наук за спец. 10.01.05 – порівняльне літературознавство. – Інститут літератури ім. Т.Г. Шевченка НАН України. – Київ, 2011.

<sup>10</sup> Рильський М.Т. Лірика / М. Т. Рильський ; упоряд. Л. В. Таран.. – К. : Дніпро, 1995. – С. 97.

deported, exiled, imprisoned, or conformed to the strict standards of the power and consented to be turned into a weapon in the hands of the authorities. In his poem Rylsky depicted the existential despair of the poet being persecuted and harassed by the critics who, following the directions of the power, arranged the mass hunting of the ideologically independent writers.

*Let's say it's really thus. These are nerves, perhaps spleen...  
Escape to the Crimea! No think, eat and sleep!  
But remember: Where is Polonius, o Prince?  
He's at dinner.  
He's eating?  
He's being eaten.<sup>11</sup>*

Hamlet maintained his high moral status in the poems *He is Wandering... And still Wandering... Unconscious. Forgotten* (1933) by Ye. Pluzhnyk, *Hamlet* (1966) by L. Pervomaiskyi and *Hamlet* (1967) by S. Holovanivskyi. Each of these authors gives his own peculiar answer to M. Bazhan.

Hamlet is an eternal image for Ye. Pluzhnyk that symbolizes reflective comprehension of the tragic human existence. His short pieces of poetry, built as a dialogue between the author and the Shakespearean hero, represent two key imperatives. The first is the intention to restore the initial axiological meaning and high status of the image of Hamlet, which was destroyed by Bazhan's vulgarization:

*God! Oh, my God! What the century is?  
Believe me, my Prince, it doesn't matter!  
They say you're a fascist against the peace.  
Bazhan depicted it better.<sup>12</sup>*

The second one is the declaration of the conformity of Hamlet's and his own situations:

---

<sup>11</sup> Там само. – С. 259.

<sup>12</sup> Плужник Є. Ходить... Все ходить... Забувшись. Забутий // Поезії / Є. Плужник. – К. : Радянський письменник, 1988. – С. 316.



## II. Рецепція художньої спадщини Ренесансу в культурі наступних епох

*God! Oh, my God! I still can't understand, –  
To be or not to be?*<sup>13</sup>

Unlike M. Bazhan, who urges the readers to hyperactivity and condemns any hesitation, Ye. Pluzhnyk finds reflection to be the only way to overcome the conflict between the «self» and the surrounding environment, which imposes predetermined models and behaviour patterns on the person. The poet's appeal to Hamlet («*My Prince! Get yourself together! Come! / Quicker continue the monologue you've forgotten!*»<sup>14</sup>) rehabilitates reflectivity as an immanent essence of a thinking person («*cogito ergo sum*») and at the same time it outlines a certain semantic perspective. Ye. Pluzhnyk associates the renewal of the forgotten meanings, the return to reflection with the overcome of existential despair, which is felt both in the specific rhythmometry of the poem (that resembles the prisoner's steps in the cell) and in the double appeal to the transcendental origin («*...God! Oh, my God!*»). Thus the triple use of the lexemes, connected with oblivion, is not accidental («*He is Wandering... And still Wandering... Unconscious. Forgotten*», «*Quicker continue the monologue you've forgotten!*»), and the syntax of the text is full of interrogation and exclamation marks.

There are some allusions to Soviet totalitarian reality in L. Pervomaiskyi' poem *Hamlet* dedicated to M. Bazhan.

*All men know everything, but the brand of flam and villainy  
Keeps a lock upon their lips», «Everything is rotten.  
Spoilt spirit of morass  
Is ripping breast. The world is swung on the edge.  
Even gilding won't ever hide, alas,  
Blood rust that covers the rug fringe.*<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup>Там само.

<sup>14</sup>Там само.

<sup>15</sup> *Первомайський Л. Гамлет // Твори : в 7 т. / Л. С. Первомайський / [упоряд. С. Пархомовського; передм. А. Новиченка]. – К. : Дніпро, 1985. – Т. 1. : Поезії. – С. 289.*

It is safer to be «*a quiet insane*» there, who «*is allowed to speak*». Unlike M. Bazhan, he connects the image of Shakespearean hero not with inactivity or mental split, but with inner integrity and ability to sacrifice oneself:

*Fearing neither sword nor poison, he,  
Being a sacrifice and faithfulness,  
To his own words to be or not to be?  
Just answers with his death.<sup>16</sup>*

Reading Pervomaiskyi's poem, one can feel the author's profound knowledge and comprehension of Shakespeare's text, that are revealed both on the level of intertextuality (allusions to some episodes from the tragedy, reminiscences and paraphrases of the quotations) and on the level of interdiscursivity. The text of the poem dialogically interweaves with the other literary text (M. Bazhan's poem) and extraliterary reality (ideological regulations, reality and its apologetic self-representation in the socialist-realistic culture). The paraphrase of the play's episode dealing with the pipe plays an important role in the complex of the poem's ideas:

*Here's the pipe, oh Guildenstern! And now  
Breathe in – and then the songs will start to sound  
What! Haven't you learned to play a pipe?  
Or is it better just to play the heart of mine?<sup>17</sup>*

It testifies the conformity of the poet's and Hamlet's unwillingness to be a toy in someone else's hands.

The conflict between the politically engaged art and the ideologically independent art is metaphorically portrayed with the help of Shakespeare's image of the pipe in the poem *Hamlet* by Sava Holovanivskyi. The author warns the young writers against being too unsuspecting and credulous when dealing with the critics as they are friends quite similar to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. The flute here seems to symbolize the art used by the authorities for converting the

---

<sup>16</sup>Там само.

<sup>17</sup>Там само.

## II. Рецепція художньої спадщини Ренесансу в культурі наступних епох

recipient into the new “political faith”. On the other semantic level a slight parallel could be perceived where the author hints at the history of exploiting Hamlet as a weapon of ideological struggle:

*One hundred kings have changed, but the music is the same,  
The same blood is at the background of the centuries,  
The pipe is thin, it is hiding the scale  
Ready to tremble at anyone’s touch...»<sup>18</sup>.*

Through metaphorization of the Hamlet’s image of pipe, Holovanivskyi actualizes the idea that every poet is in danger to lose his creative independence if he agrees to be an instrument used by the totalitarian machine.<sup>19</sup>

The art which could not «bring to knees the meanness embodied in the flesh» eventually loses its spiritual freedom and like a «tender and weak-willed tree» turns into «an instrument for mediocrity», into a thin pipe «hiding a gamma able to tremble from any touch». Serving the authorities, the art gets into a limit situation which threatens to destroy the ontological basis of its existence and loses the sacral senses. Understanding this, the poet asks:

*How to save her talent from the passing,  
How to convince a person of the fact  
That for performance pipe is real blessing?  
But not the slave of a perfidious act.<sup>20</sup>*

On the implicit level Holovanivskyi’s *Hamlet* polemizes with Bazhan’s poem which adds certain ideological marking to its leading motive («the poet and the power») as well as some other literary images. One can feel a hint to the literary reality of the day, in particular to the specific character of the Soviet literary criticism, the unfair judgment of which ruined a good few of writers’ lives:

<sup>18</sup> Голованівський С. Гамлет // Голованівський С. Поезії / С. Голованівський. – К.: Дніпро, 1990. – С. 115.

<sup>19</sup> Here we see a kind of reechoes of Rytsky’s metaphor «my pencil, my treacherous Polonius».

<sup>20</sup> Голованівський С. Цит. вид. – С. 115.

*I know Guildenstern's old dear habit –  
He is a fair friend, but not in war.  
Devotion both to power and to friendship  
Are whimsically jointed in his soul.  
He'll sing a eulogy to friendship you all day  
And then obediently like a guiltless lamb  
He'll take deceitful verdict on your fate  
From the malicious king's all spotted hands.<sup>21</sup>*

An interesting actualization of Shakespeare's tragedy value semantics is represented in Zynovii Krasivskyi's *Hamlet*.<sup>22</sup> This verse has a subtitle "according to Boris Pasternak", which creates an association with Pasternak's idea of Hamlet's messianism. This work is a kind of reply in the 20<sup>th</sup> century dialogue with Bard. The motifs of self-sacrifice, moral duty, suffering as a way to spiritual purification are recurrent in this dialogue.

The poet underlines the connection of his own work of art with that of Shakespeare's by starting and finishing it with a renowned Hamlet's question. Cognitive metaphors "as a toothache" ("як біль зубів"), "as permanent as migraine" ("постійне як мігрень") define the character of existential formula "to be or not to be" in the ontological life framework of the poet-dissident who had to cope with such trying times as imprisonment, forced medical treatment in the mental hospital and exile. Hamlet's question never dissipates behind the intellectual horizon: it confuses our imagination like a mirage, gradually moving away, but not dissolving completely.

Like Shakespeare's Hamlet, Zynovii Krasivskyi's hero confronts the outer world, realizing its injustice and meanness, he feels anxiety, emptiness and fear of the future.

---

<sup>21</sup> Там само. – С. 114.

<sup>22</sup> *Красівський З. Гамлет // Красівський З. Невольницькі плачі /З. Красівський ; [передмова Ю. Зайцева]. – Львів : Інститут українознавства НАН України, 1995. – С. 43.*

## II. Рецепція художньої спадщини Ренесансу в культурі наступних епох

He tries to free his thoughts from monotony bondage, but he can't fully get rid of spiritual paralysis:

*I'm not able to put on my shoulders  
the burden of unbearable tiredness,  
I'm not able either to get up or walk,  
I'm boring while being boiled in a bitter feeling,  
With the vanity's finger thrust into my heart.*<sup>23</sup>

In these lines the author actualizes Boris Pasternak's idea of the living cross, sacrifice, patience and Christian forgiveness, but his lyrical hero appears spiritually weaker than Pasternak's Hamlet. He is mostly submerged in everyday life and does not actually have any choice, because in most cases he only observes, interprets and states. Z. Krasivskyi's hero ends his reflections with an emotional exclamation "Cursed world!", which is in tune with Hamlet's «Cursed spite!»<sup>24</sup> But even then he doesn't dare to make the final choice, he cannot overcome the mental confusion:

*I'm feeling as if I were a wedge  
Between "I must" and "I don't believe"  
And I'm whispering: "To be or not to be".*<sup>25</sup>

Some pessimistic notes and internal tension felt in Z. Krasivskyi's poem could be caused by the context in which it was created. While in exile, away from Ukraine, the poet, naturally, felt a longing for his native land, clearly aware that his poetic muse is constrained in her movements, and he cannot "straighten his back" in the fight against the totalitarian regime.

Hamlet intertextuality plays crucial role in the poem "This play started long ago" (1970) by Vasyl Stus. The author employs allusions to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in order to describe the reality of the life in the Soviet state and the destiny of the artist in the conditions of the ideological

---

<sup>23</sup>Там само.

<sup>24</sup>Там само.

<sup>25</sup>Там само.

dictatorship where everyone plays the role predefined for him by the government.

The main storyline builds on the leitmotif of *Hamlet*, which is associated with the vital search of sense in a situation of existential despair. Like the protagonist of the tragedy, the Vasyl Stus' hero, who feels as if he were an actor in the absurd play of Soviet concentration camps, tries to find a way out of the crisis of the loss of epistemological certainty.

V. Stus' poem is a very fertile ground for the birth of new meanings, which occurs as a result of continuous crossing of various semantic fields – the Soviet ideology with which the author was quite familiar and the text of Shakespeare's tragedy. The first of them is the main text, while the other serves as a mechanism for explanation, commentary and critical thinking. The theatre is a space in which the collision of differently charged semiotic currents occurs. The concept of the theater helps the poet, on the one hand, to reflect the complexity and confusion of the Soviet ideological machine, which made social life a solid theatrical performance, and on the other hand, to make the most of *Hamlet* cognitive resources through enlivening allusions borrowed from the tragedy in the text that is semiotically related to the source.

Axiological semantics of Shakespeare's text is evident in the poem on many levels with varying degrees of explicitness, which complicates the semantic structure of the text and gives it that special multidimensionality of the inherent texts created "on the verge" of literary traditions, styles and genres. Such texts in their immanent artistic nature carry a certain conflict on their structural and compositional levels. Structural allusion to the monologue "*To be or not to be*" (iambic pentameter, repetitive rhetorical questions, structure of sentences) and clear text analogy initially prepare the reader for serious reflection and comparing the text of the poem (and also the recipient of the modern socio-cultural context) with existential conflicts of Shakespeare's protagonist:

## II. Рецепція художньої спадщини Ренесансу в культурі наступних епох

*This play started long ago,  
But only now I realized: this is the play,  
In which everybody having lost own essence,  
Both watches and plays. Doesn't live.<sup>26</sup>*

Although the key text formula "to be or not to be" never sounds in Stus' poem, the naming of the performance played by actors in the poem with the definition of the "monologue" clearly emphasizes the spiritual and intellectual tension that falls on the destiny of the person who does not lose the capacity for reflection even in the face of total fictitiousness of choice created by the authorities.

Vasyl Stus' poem is full of allusions to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. A few lines after the above mentioned passage, the reader is again returned to *Hamlet*, namely to the beginning of the play, the second scene of the first act, when Claudius delivers a speech about forced hurry with the wedding (less than two months after the funeral of King Hamlet) and mixed feelings of joy and sorrow experienced by him, the queen and the entire Danish court<sup>27</sup>. Just as in Elsinore everyone has to play sadness or joy as directed by the government in accordance with the requirements of the political situation, in

<sup>26</sup> Стус В. Поезії. Стихи / В. Стус / [пер. російською О. Купрейченка]. – Харків : Права людини, 2009. – С. 48.

<sup>27</sup> *Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death  
The memory be green, and that it us befitted  
To bear our hearts in grief and our whole kingdom  
To be contracted in one brow of woe,  
Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature  
That we with wisest sorrow think on him,  
Together with remembrance of ourselves.  
Therefore our sometime sister, now our queen,  
The imperial jointress to this warlike state,  
Have we, as 'twere with a defeated joy, –  
With an auspicious and a dropping eye,  
With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,  
In equal scale weighing delight and dole, –  
Taken to wife: nor have we herein barr'd  
Your better wisdoms, which have freely gone  
With this affair along. [I, 2].*

the poem by V. Stus natural expression of feelings is unacceptable, and the private sphere of emotions becomes a public space to fight ideological opponents:

*I start to play the role at once  
by playing just the contrary. When I would like to laugh  
I start to cry. And in a fit of anger*

...  
*I rejoice. The hearse has moved –  
I feel consoled. Having mounted it,  
I rage: may life be glorified.  
The rapturous breather is astonished,  
and he keeps cheering me up: Bravo.<sup>28</sup>*

Using symbolic language, Stus paints the picture of complete hopelessness where all the days are the same chained together into an endless line, everyone is absolutely faceless and featureless just like Yorick's skull and there is no difference between the artist and the recipient as both of them are forced to play the same part of the enthusiastic admirer of the power and the dominating ideology.

Powerful potential is vested in those fragments of the poem, in which Shakespeare metaphors are used:

*Here the time has stopped. And years aren't passing".  
Because the end of life is here torn,  
As in a play. There is a start  
But no finish.<sup>29</sup>*

The metaphor «*the time is out of joint*» is actualized in this passage. However, its semantic content is significantly reinvented through acquiring new connotations: the time in Stus' poem cannot "get out of joint" because it does not move at all, because there is no natural development for society, there is no room for declared dialectic, for truth, which is born in the dispute; there is only artificial maintaining the state of social existence that is the most convenient for

<sup>28</sup> Стус В. Цит. вид. – С. 48.

<sup>29</sup> Там само. – С. 50.



## II. Реценція художньої спадщини Ренесансу в культурі наступних епох

political manipulation of mass consciousness. Uniformity, commonality of being, isolation in the circle of identical for everyone rules and regulations rank among the highest virtues: «*You should play someone's boring life which is prompted in a whisper – just only repetitions*». <sup>30</sup>

An extremely strong emotional impact on the reader who is prepared to accept intertextual allusions is produced by the passage that is a rather unexpected combination of two bright images simultaneously functioning in different semiotic spaces:

*Let's say, they called us 'builders'  
What 'builders' means – you shouldn't ask  
– Are you building anything?  
– What does it mean "to build"?*<sup>31</sup>

This passage evokes the reader's association with the well-known rhetorical clichés of Soviet power, but on a closer reading another allusion becomes evident – this time it is an allusion to *Hamlet*, to grave-diggers' cemetery talk, in which the second grave-digger tries to guess who builds stronger than everyone<sup>32</sup>. This implicit allusion reveals the terrible truth about what is really happening in the country: the construction of the "bright future" in the totalitarian society turns into the construction of camps and prisons, the

---

<sup>30</sup>Там само. – С. 52.

<sup>31</sup>Там само.

<sup>32</sup>«First Clown  
*What is he that builds stronger than either the  
mason, the shipwright, or the carpenter?*  
Second Clown  
*The gallows-maker; for that frame outlives a  
thousand tenants.*  
...  
First Clown  
*Cudgel thy brains no more about it, for your dull  
ass will not mend his pace with beating; and, when  
you are asked this question next, say "a grave-maker":  
the house that he makes last till doomsday...» [V, 1].*

destruction of everybody who is able to think in a free, independent and unbiased mode.

Shakespeare's intertext in Stus' poem (topos "world – theater", a structural allusion to the monologue "*To be or not to be*", the concept of an identity crisis, the concept of cognitive consciousness split, Yorick's image) highlights the existential drama of a personality – the tragedy of not finding oneself. For Shakespeare's Hamlet conscious freedom of choice is a source of existential fear that is being overcome through reflection, but the situation for Stus' hero is even more tragic. The ontological impossibility of freedom turns fear into existential despair. Hamlet's identity crisis is transformed here in the forced abdication of identity, which threatens the total destruction of the epistemological paradigm. Multidimensional intertextuality contributes to the exposure of the post-genocidal consciousness, and the text of the poem contains the potency of decoding the complete loss of anthropocapacity caused by totalitarianism.

So, as we can see, in the Ukrainian Shakespeare's poetic discourse the actualization of *Hamlet's* value semantics is always ideologically determined. Most poets, like early Rylsky, relate Hamlet's situation of "marginal existence" to their own psychological state or private existential conflicts. In their axiological paradigm, Hamlet maintains high moral status and is associated with the traditional humanity, and not with the one determined by class (Ye. Pluzhnyk), with reflexivity as a way to overcome discouragement (S. Holovanivskyi, Z. Krasivskyi), or even with a heroic mode (L. Pervomaiskyi). Remarkably, Hamletian intertextuality offers vectors for understanding the problems associated with art (artist and authorities, function of poetry, freedom of creativity).