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Britain, Shakespeare, and Ukraine
Interview with Prof. Nataliya Torkut,
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центр [Ukrainian Shakespeare Centre;
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by Dr. Olha Kvasnytsia, journalist
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Abstract

As part of this special issue, we are delighted to host a conversation by the journalist, Dr. Olha Kvasnytsia, with Prof. Nataliya Torkut, the Head of the Ukrainian Shakespeare Centre and Honorary Senior Research Fellow at the Shakespeare Institute of the University of Birmingham. The aim of this contribution is to highlight the intellectual and cultural activities of the Ukrainian Shakespeare Centre (USC), its history, conceptual foundations, and present-day mission in response to contemporary challenges and the shifting cultural and civic paradigm. The USC's objective involves selecting appropriate development strategies, particularly in areas of scholarships, translations, and public education. Its mission focuses on overcoming entrenched stereotypes about Shakespeare, de-ideologising his image, freeing it from the remnants of "vulgar sociologism" inherited from the past, and revitalising academic Shakespeare studies in Ukraine. It also seeks to expand research through interdisciplinary approaches, foster international collaboration with global Shakespearean institutions, and promote the multifaceted dissemination of the USC's achievements. This includes popularising Shakespeare's works through various forms, establishing a dedicated Shakespeare Library, founding and publishing specialised scholarly journals such as *Shakespeare Discourse* and *Renaissance Studies*, creating the *Ukrainian Shakespeare Portal* website, and organising *Shakespeare Days in Ukraine*, among other initiatives. With the onset of the Russian-Ukrainian war, the USC redefined its objectives, using public communication tools to decolonise perceptions of Ukraine and Ukrainian Shakespeare studies, particularly through the organisation of the first Ukrainian Shakespeare Festival. The activities of the USC – and Ukrainian Shakespeare scholarship as a whole, both in mainland Ukraine and in the diaspora – serve as a powerful example of cultural diplomacy, demonstrating the presence of Ukrainian culture within the global context.

Keywords: Ukrainian Shakespeare Centre, ESRA, conceptual foundations, mission, Craiova Shakespeare Festival, Russian-Ukrainian War.

O.K. [Olha Kvasnytsia]: Tell us the story behind the establishment of the USC. How did the idea come about? What is its concept?

N.T. [Nataliya Torkut]: Український Шекспірівський центр [The Ukrainian Shakespeare Centre; Ukraïns'kij Šekspirivs'kij centr] was established in the city of Zaporizhzhia at the Classical Private University in April 2009. The idea for its creation emerged from an academic discussion that unfolded in early 2009 within the Ukrainian humanities. This discussion was sparked by an article written by

Mark Sokolianskyi titled *The Crisis in Ukrainian Shakespeare Studies?* which was published on the popular website *LitAccent* of the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy.¹ As a renowned specialist in English literature, the author analysed the state of Shakespeare studies in Ukraine during the 1990s and early 2000s, reaching rather disappointing conclusions.

Firstly, according to Mark Sokolianskyi, the process of translating Shakespeare's works in Ukraine has slowed down considerably compared to previous periods. It is worth noting that the first translations of Shakespeare's works into Ukrainian appeared in the second half of the nineteenth century, despite the Valuev Circular (1863) and the Ems Ukaz (1876),² which prohibited the use of the Ukrainian language in the fields of culture, education, and religion. During the Stalinist regime in Ukraine, many translators of Shakespeare's works were killed (Hnat Khotkevych, Yakiv Savchenko, Leonid Hrebinka, Maik Yohansen, and others), repressed (Vasyl Mysyk, Hryhorii Kochur, Dmytro Palamarchuk, Mykola Lukash, Sviatoslav Karavanskyi, and others), or forced to emigrate from the Soviet Union (Yurii Klen, Todos Osmachka, Vasyl Barka, Ihor Kostetskyi, and others).³ Despite resistance from the leadership of the Communist Party of Ukraine, who considered it unnecessary to translate all of Shakespeare's works into Ukrainian since a Russian-language edition *Shakespeare William. Complete Works in 8 Volumes* had already been published and every Ukrainian was capable of reading it, the Ukrainian intellectual elite managed to realize their goal. Between 1984–1986, *William Shakespeare: Works in Six Volumes* was published in Ukrainian, accompanied by extensive Afterwords and Notes. However, in the 1990s, according to M. Sokolianskyi, an obvious decline began in the interest of translators in Shakespeare's works.

Nevertheless, during the first two decades following Ukrainian independence (1991), several Ukrainian translations of Shakespeare's *Sonnets* appeared: most notably those by Dmytro Pavlychko (1998), Iryna and Oleksandr Selezinky (2005), and Heorhiy Pylypenko (2007). In 2008, new translations of several Shakespeare plays were published, including *Hamlet* by Yurii Andrukhovych⁴ and a two-volume collection by Oleksandr Hryznov that featured *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *King Henry IV. Part I*, *King Henry IV. Part II*, and *King Lear*. In 2008, an illustrated

1 Sokolianskyi died on 5 March 2025.

2 Both of these decrees were manifestations of the imperial policy of Russification, which significantly intensified in the second half of the nineteenth century and led to a prolonged suppression of Ukrainian cultural development within the Russian Empire. Restrictions on the publication of translations and theatrical performances in Ukrainian were somewhat eased after 1905, but remained in effect until 1917. For more details, see Remy.

3 See Daria Moskvitina and Bohdan Korneliuk's article "Lost (in) Translations: How Ukrainian Shakespeareana Must Be Bigger Than We Think" in this volume.

4 In the following decade, this renowned writer would also publish translations of *Romeo and Juliet* (2016) and *King Lear* (2021).

edition of *Antony and Cleopatra* was published, translated, and annotated by the renowned Shakespeare scholar Maria Hablevych. Shortly thereafter, translations of the complete cycle of the *Sonnets*, rendered by Natalia Butuk with extensive commentary by Maria Hablevych (2011), Oleksandr Vyzhenko (2013), and others, were set to appear.

Secondly, as Sokolianskyi rightly pointed out, in Ukraine between the 1990s and early 2000s, only a few dissertations on Shakespeare were defended, and no substantial Shakespeare focused monographs were published. Indeed, academic Shakespeareana between 1990–2010, compared to previous periods, experienced a downturn. The achievements of Ukrainian Shakespeare scholars of past eras, although they bear the imprint of Soviet ideology,⁵ have not lost their value entirely. As early as the late nineteenth century, the first Ukrainian-language scholarly articles were published, authored by Ivan Franko, the founder of Ukrainian Shakespeare studies (Франко [Franko] 266–279). During the Soviet era, despite the ideological pressures, several monographs were published that proved highly valuable in terms of systematizing material on the Ukrainian reception of Shakespeare (Шаповалова Марія [Šapovalova Mariâ]) as well as theatrical productions (Ваніна [Vanina]). The extremely valuable experience of studying Shakespeare's works by representatives of the Ukrainian diaspora, in particular, Ihor Kostetskyi, Orysia Prokopiv, Iryna Makaryk and others,⁶ deserves attention. The time has come to examine Shakespeare's works through the prism of contemporary approaches.

The third point Sokolianskyi's article makes, and all the participants of the 2009 discussion agreed on, was that Ukrainian Shakespeare studies are not represented internationally, as there are no academic publications by Ukrainian scholars in journals outside the country, and no Ukrainian representatives attended international Shakespeare conferences and congresses. So Sokolianskyi's assessment concluded with a very appropriate emphasis:

Треба, нарешті, серйозніше замислитися над сучасним станом, а ще більше – над майбутнім українського шекспірознавства. Згадую при тому вислів одного

5 In this context, it is worth mentioning the collective scholarly monograph Вільям Шекспір [William Shakespeare; Viliam Shekspir; Vil'âm Šekspir]. Збірка статей [A Collection of Articles; Zbirka statei; Zbirka statej]. К.: Мистецтво [K.: Mistectvo], 1939, as well as Natalia Modestova's preface to the three-volume edition of Shakespeare's works: Н. Модестова [N. Modestova]. "Уільям Шекспір" [William Shakespeare; Uiliam Shekspir; Uil'âm Šekspir]. *Вибрані твори: У 3-х томах* [Vibrani tvori: U 3-h tomah]. Київ [Kiïv] 1 (1964): 5–45.

6 For more details, see Марко Роберт Стех [Marko Robert Steh]. *Шекспір українською по той бік Залізної Завіси*. [Shakespeare in Ukrainian Beyond the Iron Curtain; Shekspir ukrains'kou po toi bik Zaliznoi Zavisy; Šekspir ukrains'kou po toj bik Zaliznoi Zavisy]. Київ: Українські пропілеї [Kiïv: Ukraïns'ki propileï] 1 (2024): 5–14.

солідного (на жаль, уже покійного) заокеанського історика і теоретика літератури ХТО?: «Стан шекспірознавства визначає культурний рівень літературної науки у кожній країні». Хтось сприйме цей вислів як перебільшення. Але, гадаю, варто поставитися до цих слів досвідченого вченого не просто як до цікавого парадокса. (Соколянський)⁷

[Treba, narešti, serjozniše zamislitišá nad sučasnim stanom, a še bil'se – nad majbutnim ukrains'kogo šekspiroznavstva. Zgaduú pri tomu visliv odnogo solidnogo (na žal', uže pokijnogo) zaokeans'kogo istorika i teoretika literaturi HTO?: «Stan šekspiroznavstva viznačáe kul'turnij riven' literaturnoi nauki u kožnij kraíni». Htos' sprijme cej visliv ák perebil'senná. Ale, gadaú, varto postavitišá do cih sliv dosvidčenogo včenogo ne prosto ák do cikavogo paradoksa. (Sokoláns'kij)]

The critical remarks Sokolianskyi made, albeit from Germany where he lived at that time but maintaining academic contact with Ukraine as the Ukrainian correspondent of the *Shakespeare World Bibliography*, and the author of several scholarly articles on Ukrainian Shakespeareana,⁸ not only became the subject of serious discussion in academic circles (Наливайко [Nalivajko]; Топкут [Torkut]) but also gave a powerful impetus to the development of Shakespeare studies in Ukraine.

The first step was the organization of the International Conference *The Poetic Universe of Shakespeare's Sonnets: Reception, Scholarly Interpretations, Translation*, which took place between 23–24 April 2009, in Zaporizhzhia. This academic forum was aimed not only at celebrating the 400th anniversary of the first publication of Shakespeare's *Sonnets* but also at bringing together Ukrainian philologists, translators, and theatre scholars interested in Shakespeare. The event was organized by the T. H. Shevchenko Institute of Literature of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine and Classic Private University. Among the distinguished guests of the conference were Mark Sokolianskyi (Lübeck), Balz Engler (Basel), and Paul Franssen (Utrecht). The conference gathered over 60 participants from 12 Ukrainian universities, who discussed the then-current state of Shakespeare

7 “We must finally start thinking seriously about the current state, and even more so about the future of Ukrainian Shakespeare studies. I recall a statement by a prominent (unfortunately, deceased) overseas historian and literary theorist: ‘The state of Shakespeare studies determines the cultural level of literary science in every country.’ Someone might take this statement as a hyperbole. But I think we should treat these words of an experienced scholar not just as an interesting paradox.”

8 See: *Бібліографічний покажчик опублікованих праць Марка Георгійовича Соколянського* [Bibliographic Index of Published Works by Mark Heorhiiiovych Sokolianskyi; Bibliografichnyi pokazhchik opublikovanykh prats Marka Heorhiiiovycha Sokolianskoho; Bibliografichnij pokazčik opublikovanih prac' Marka Georgijoviča Sokoláns'kogo]. Харків [Harkiv], 2024. <https://library.khpg.org/index.php?id=1738165092>. Accessed 6 February 2026.

studies in Ukraine and concluded that it was necessary to join forces to intensify Shakespeare studies in the country. Two alternative strategies were debated: the creation of a national association of Shakespeare scholars or the establishment of a Shakespeare studies centre. The latter strategy prevailed, and the rest is history.

O.K.: Why did you choose to create a centre rather than an association, since many countries have Shakespeare associations that are working successfully?

N.T.: There are, indeed, a large number of national and international associations related to the works of William Shakespeare. The oldest is the German Shakespeare Society [Deutsche Shakespeare Gesellschaft], founded in 1864, to mark the 300th anniversary of the Bard. This year [2025], the French Association of Shakespeare Scholars [Société Française Shakespeare] celebrates its 50th anniversary. However, societies and associations are usually created when there is already a large group of people working on a common cause and sharing scholarly interests. In our case, it was necessary to create and strengthen such a community first, to unite people: the first conference had gathered scholars whose work related to Shakespeare (comparative studies, translation studies, Renaissance studies), but most of them would not have considered themselves Shakespeare scholars. The generation of scholars who had defended their dissertations on Shakespeare in Ukraine had already passed away by that time. As Mark Sokolianskyi rightly emphasized, the tradition of scholarly study of Shakespeare had been interrupted (Соколянський [Sokolianskyi]) and needed to be revived.

Having familiarized ourselves with the foundational texts written by the founders of the German Shakespeare Society,⁹ including Franz Dingelstedt's preface to his

⁹ This experience became the subject of analytical reflection in one of the chapters of the dissertation by my post-graduate student, Tetiana Brants. See also Т.В. Хитрова [T. Khytrova; T.V. Hitrova]. *Шекспірознавчий дискурс Німеччини XIX століття: механізми інституалізації* [Shakespearean Discourse in 19th Century Germany: Mechanisms of Institutionalization; Shekspiroznavchyi diskurs Nimechchyny XIX stolittia: mekhanizmy instytualizatsii; Šekspiroznavčij diskurs Nimeččini XIX stolittâ: mehanizm iïnstiutalizacii]. Запоріжжя [Zaporizhâ] 2008. Particularly valuable to us were the works of German scholars, such as Martin Lehnert, who, by examining the protocols of the first meetings, traces the peculiarities of the formation and development of the Shakespeare Society over a century, see: M. Lehnert. "Hundert Jahre Deutsche Shakespeare-Gesellschaft". *Jahrbuch der deutschen Shakespeare-Gesellschaft*. Weimar, 1964. 9–54; Robert Fricker analyses the political nature of the journal's publications. See: Fricker R. "Hundert Jahre Shakespeare-Jahrbuch". *Jahrbuch der deutschen Shakespeare-Gesellschaft [West]*. Bochum, 1964. 33–67; Walter Thomas demonstrates how deeply German Shakespeare studies understood the practical essence of the idea of creating a Shakespeare Society. See: W. Thomas. *Wilhelm Oechelhaeuser-Begründer der Deutschen Shakespeare-Gesellschaft*. Siegen, 1964.

work *Studien und Copien nach Shakespeare* [Studying and Imitating Shakespeare, 1858] and Wilhelm Öchelhäuser's manuscript *Ideen zur Gründung der Deutschen Shakespeare Gesellschaft* [Ideas for the Creation of a Shakespeare Society, 1863], we decided that the priorities outlined in these texts – namely, the popularization and research of Shakespeare's works, the creation of a Shakespeare library, and the establishment of a Shakespeare journal – were important and urgent for Ukrainians at the beginning of the twenty-first century. To some extent, the idea voiced in 1864 by the first president of the German Shakespeare Society, Hermann Ulrich, still holds relevance for the Ukrainian Shakespeare Centre: "The great dramatist should be freed from the captivity of his era, language, and nationality" (Ulrich).

O.K.: Did you face any specific challenges in setting up the Ukrainian Centre?

N.T.: Undoubtedly, every experience of creating a new project, while relying on certain previous models, has its own, unique specificity. It is determined by its prehistory, the characteristics of ethno-cultural mentality, as well as the immediate demands of the time. Among the tasks we faced, one of the priorities was overcoming the entrenched stereotypes in society and, to some extent, even in educational circles regarding the perception of Shakespeare as a rigid, monumentalized classic – one whom the Soviet authorities placed on a literary pedestal of iconostatic value alongside Pushkin and Shevchenko.¹⁰ Numerous cultural initiatives organized

¹⁰ The specific practice of 'canonizing authors' in the Soviet Union and the countries of the so-called socialist bloc, along with its origins, mechanisms, and consequences, has been thoroughly studied by Marko Pavlyshyn. In one of his works, he emphasizes: "У Східній Європі об'єктом пошани в літературі часто був не так текст, як особа, чи, точніше, сукупність біографії письменника, його творів та історичної ролі. Існують культу письменників – Пушкіна, Толстого й Достоевського в Росії, Шевченка, Лесі Українки і Франка на Україні, Купали і Коласа в Білорусі – які своєю спроможністю викликати пієтизм і ритуал не мають еквіваленту на Заході. Літературна канонізація в Радянському Союзі набирає форм, які в дечому нагадують канонізацію церковного святого. Письменник (особотекст!) посідає місце в серії собі подібних особотекстів, яку більш корисно розглядати не як канон, а як іконостас." [In Eastern Europe, literary reverence often focused not so much on the text itself as on the person – or, more precisely, on the combination of the writer's biography, works, and historical role. There exist writer cults – Pushkin, Tolstoy, and Dostoevsky in Russia; Shevchenko, Lesia Ukrainka, and Franko in Ukraine; Kupala and Kolas in Belarus – which, in their capacity to inspire piety and ritual, have no equivalent in the West. Literary canonization in the Soviet Union took forms that, in some ways, resembled the canonization of a saint. The writer (a persona-text!) occupied a place within a series of similar persona-texts, which is better understood not as a canon, but as an iconostasis; U Shidnij Evropi ob'ëktom pošani v literaturi často buv ne tak tekst, âk osoba, či, točniše, sukupnist' biografiï pis'mennika, jogo tvoriv ta istoričnoi roli. Īsnuût' ku'ti pis'mennikiv – Puškina, Tolstogo j Dostoëvs'kogo v Rosiï, Ševčenko, Lesi Ukraïnki i Franka na Ukraïni, Kupali i Kolasa v Bilorusi – âki svoëu spromozništû

by Soviet authorities, such as Shakespeare Jubilees (1939, 1964, 1966) and various commemorative events held at universities, schools, theatres, city art centres, and village clubs across the USSR, were designed to glorify and celebrate Shakespeare as a ‘socialist realist’ and a ‘people’s dramatist’ whose sympathies ostensibly aligned with the working masses.

Thus, a crucial task was the de-ideologization of Shakespeare’s reception:¹¹ to liberate him from the remnants of the “vulgar sociology”¹² of the 1930s and 1960s, which continued to resurface in the media, finding its way into school textbooks and the academic discourse. And although the situation in Ukrainian literary studies remained highly challenging until the final decades of the Soviet regime, with its censorship and strict ideological control, the Shakespearean scholarship of Ukrainian researchers such as Dmytro Zatonskyi, Dmytro Nalyvaiko, Olena Alekseenko, Natalia Zhluktenko, and others challenged successfully the ideological constraints of previous decades and laid a solid foundation for the research to come.

viklikati piëtizm i ritual ne maût' ekvivalentu na Zahodi. Literaturna kanonizaciâ v Radâns'komu Soûzi nabiraê form, âki v deçomu nagaduût' kanonizaciû cerkovnogo svâtogo. Pis'mennik (osobotekst!) posidaê misce v serii sobi podobnih osobotekstiv, âku bil'sh korisno rozglâdati ne âk kanon, a âk ikonostas] (Павлишин [Pavlyshyn] 191).

- 11 For a more detailed examination of Shakespeare’s reception in Soviet Ukraine, its representation in scholarly and journalistic texts, and its artistic resonance in the works of Ukrainian poets from the 1920s to the 1980s, see: Yurii Cherniak. “Shakespeare as a Sovietism: The Red Lines on the Map of the Ukrainian Shakespeareana.” *Romanian Shakespeare Journal* 1 (2013): 12–17; Yurii Cherniak. “Key Topoi of the Ukrainian Shakespearean Discourse of the Late 19th – Mid 20th Century.” *A Sea-Change into Something Rich and Strange: Shakespeare Studies in Contemporary Ukraine*. Lviv-Toruń, 2020. 61–82; Nataliya Torkut and Yurii Cherniak. “Ukrainian Hamlet and ‘Hamletizing’ Ukraine: «Will you play upon this pipe?».” *Renesansni Studii* 22 (2014): 98–115.
- 12 Vulgar sociology is a method in Soviet literary studies that involves a simplistic ideological interpretation of literature through the lens of class struggle and socio-economic factors. It ignores the aesthetic, genre, and individual characteristics of a literary work, reducing its content and value to its conformity with Marxist-Leninist ideological principles. A literary work is evaluated primarily based on its alignment with the official Soviet doctrine and is not viewed as an aesthetic phenomenon but as a product of social conditions. The author is attributed exclusively with class intentions, and their works are interpreted as reflections of the interests of a particular social class. During Soviet times, the classics of world literature, including Shakespeare, Cervantes, and Balzac, were portrayed as ‘supporters of the working people’, regardless of the actual content of their works. For instance, in the USSR, Shakespeare was interpreted as a democrat and a realist, with the complexity of his worldview deliberately obscured. The personal lives and backgrounds of writers were regarded as key determinants of their creative output. For example, the emphasis on Shakespeare being the son of a craftsman was used to present him as a “representative of the working masses,” even though this fact did not define the content of his plays.

O.K.: What exactly was the reception or interpretative tendency that needed to be stopped, and how did it manifest itself?

N.T.: In Soviet Ukraine, as in the USSR as a whole, the assumption that the socialist-realist Soviet interpretation of Shakespeare's work was *the* only correct one dominated for a long time. Soviet Shakespeare scholars were compelled to engage continuously with global Shakespearean scholarship to assert and defend this Soviet perspective.¹³ The ideologues of the communist regime regarded literature and literary studies as crucial components of the so-called 'common' cause:¹⁴ the ideological struggle against the culture and scholarship of the oppositional 'capitalist world'. The desire to enlist Shakespeare in the service of the authorities – using his prestige and works to disseminate ideological messages – was not unique to the Soviet reception of Shakespeare. Similar trends were evident across the 'socialist camp', particularly in Bulgaria, where, according to Shurbanov and Sokolova, the process of appropriation resulted in *Painting Shakespeare Red*, and in Romania, where, as Cinpoes emphasizes, even in the 1970s, the principle of "either red or dead" (19) dictated theatre policy.

A peculiar derivative of the deliberate socialist mythologization of William Shakespeare was the Soviet assertion of a supposedly natural connection between his artistic method and realism, regarded as the highest stage of literary development. The classification of Shakespeare as a realist writer – akin to Balzac or Dickens – persisted in school textbooks and academic studies for secondary school teachers. This not only narrowed and distorted Ukrainian audiences' perception of Shakespeare's work but also led to conceptual confusion regarding literary categories including the Renaissance and Realism. This must be regarded as a potential threat, as reception stereotypes ingrained in mass consciousness tend to be highly persistent. Moreover, 'the iconised classic' appeared rather unappealing to both readers and audiences in the twenty-first century.¹⁵

¹³ Irena R. Makaryk argues: "In criticism, Marx's and Engels's love of Shakespeare is cited in all preliminary remarks. Western views of *Hamlet* are labelled 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" (Makaryk 89–290).

¹⁴ According to Lenin's statement, which during 70 years of Soviet rule served as a guideline for action, "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 organised, planned and integrated Social-Democratic Party work" (Lenin 25–26).

¹⁵ For an exploration of how Shakespeare was represented in the pages of Ukrainian newspapers and magazines, and the peculiarities of the perception of his figure and works by the Ukrainian mass reader/theatre audience in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, see:

O.K.: What approaches did you envision for overcoming entrenched stereotypes, and were you able to implement them successfully?

N.T.: The process of reception is not linear; it is discursive and influenced by numerous factors. In the case of Shakespeare, he is present in the contemporary world in various forms: texts, their translations and interpretations, theatrical performances, intertextuality, intermedial projections, digital representations – including websites, computer games, memes, etc. For example, the publication of the new translations of three Shakespeare tragedies by one of the most prominent contemporary writers, Yurii Andrukhovych, has sparked a Shakespearean boom. Illustrated by the reputed artist Vladyslav Yerko, these books (published by A-BA-BA-HA-LA-MA-HA) became bestsellers from the outset, and theatrical productions based on these translations have been sell-outs for several years now.¹⁶ It is quite evident that Yurii Andrukhovych's postmodern translations help bring the text closer to the audience and significantly increase the number of Shakespeare admirers.

Defining a strategy to overcome the stereotypes formed in previous times, we primarily saw this as demonstrating the unique semantic and aesthetic potential of Shakespeare's works in Ukraine. On the one hand, this involves various forms of popularising Shakespeare in Ukraine¹⁷ (such as organising Shakespeare-centric educational events, radio and television broadcasts, competitions for schoolchildren and students,¹⁸ etc.); on the other hand, it encompasses conducting

Ольга Квасниця [Olha Kvasnytsia; Ol'ga Kvasnică]. "Шекспір у сучасному медіа дискурсі: присутність чи вигнання" [Shakespeare in Contemporary Media Discourse: Presence or Exile; Shekspir u suchasnomu media dyskursi: prysutnist chy vyhnannia; Šekspir u suchasnomu media diskursi: prisutnist' či vignannâ]. *Ренесансні студії* [Renesansni studii] 29–30 (2018): 118–153.

¹⁶ The success of the production of *Hamlet* in Andrukhovych's translation is mentioned in the article: "Шекспір як дзеркало епохи. Інтерв'ю Ольги Квасниці з професором Маклом Добсоном" [Shakespeare as a Mirror of the Age. Interview by Olha Kvasnytsia with Professor Macle Dobson; Shekspir yak dzerkalo epokhy. Interv'iu Olhy Kvasnytsi z profesorom Maklom Dobsonom; Šekspir âk dzerkalo epohi. Īnterv'û Ol'gi Kvasnici z profesorom Maklom Dobsonom]. *Ренесансні студії* [Renesansni studii] 29–30 (2021): 288–300. See also the article "«Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind»: Reading Vladyslav Yerko's Illustrations to Shakespeare in Ukrainian" by Darya Lazarenko and Yurii Cherniak in this volume.

¹⁷ See: N. Torkut. "Shakespeare Scholarship in Modern Ukraine: Activity Directions, Challenges and Achievements" *Держава та регіони. Серія: Гуманітарні науки* [Deržava ta regioni. Seriâ: Gumanitarni nauki] 1 (2015): 52–54.

¹⁸ Ю.І. Черняк [Ū.Ī. Černâk]. "Всеукраїнський шекспірівський конкурс імені Віталія Кейса: історія, сучасність і перспективи [The All-Ukrainian Shakespeare Competition Named after Vitaliy Keis: History, Present, and Prospects; Vseukrainskyi shekspirivskyi konkurs imeni Vitaliia Keisa: istoriia, suchasnist i perspektyvy; Vseukrains'kij šekspirivs'kij konkurs imeni Vitaliâ Kejsa: istoriâ, sučasnist' i perspektivi]. *Ренесансні студії* [Renesansni studii] 37–38 (2023): 178–194.

scientific research (dissertations, master and diploma theses, articles) and the multi-directional dissemination of their results (by organising scientific conferences,¹⁹ publishing articles, presenting materials at academic fora). In 2010, the USC launched a specialised scientific journal: *Shakespearean Discourse*. However, we managed to publish only three issues, and after 2013, due to lack of funding, the journal ceased to exist. Today, Shakespeare studies articles in Ukraine are published in the professional journal *Ренесансні студії* [Renaissance Studies; Renesansni studii].²⁰

The Centre's work is presented on the website 'Ukrainian Shakespeare Portal' (<https://shakespeare.znu.edu.ua/>), which currently serves organisational, informational, and resource functions. The site provides all of Shakespeare's texts in Ukrainian translations (some works are presented in multiple translations), highlights key milestones in recent Ukrainian Shakespeare studies, and features recent publications. It also showcases events and activities initiated and organised by the Centre.

O.K.: What are the main areas of the Centre's work: research, translation, education?

N.T.: The areas were initially defined when the USC was established. Primarily, they involve coordinating the Shakespeare-related activities of Ukrainian scholars,

¹⁹ About International conferences held by the Ukrainian Shakespeare Centre, see: Н. М. Торкут [N. M. Torkut]. "Міжнародна шекспірознавча конференція в Класичному приватному університеті" [International Shakespeare Studies Conference at the Classical Private University; Mizhnarodna shekspiroznavcha konferentsiia v Klasychnomu pryvatnomu universyteti; Mizhnarodna šekspiroznavča konferenciâ v Klasičnomu privatnomu universiteti]. *Держава та регіони*. Серія: Гуманітарні науки [Deržava ta regioni. Seriâ: Gumanitarni nauki] 1–2 (2009): 199–202; Н. Жлуктенко [N. Žluktenko] "Інтер/національний Шекспір" [Inter/national Shakespeare; Inter/natsionalnyi Shekspir; Ĭnter/nacional'nij Šekspir]. *Ренесансні студії* [Renesansni studii] 14–15 (2010): 297–300; Н. Торкут [N. Torkut]. "Український шекспірівський центр: між викликом і покликом" [Ukrainian Shakespeare Center: Between a Challenge and a Calling; Ukrainskyi shekspirivskyi tsentr: mizh vyklykom i poklykom; Ukraïns'kij šekspirivs'kij centr: miž viklikom i poklikom]. *Всесвіт* [Vsesvit] 3–4 (2016): 164–168; Н. Торкут [N. Torkut]. "«Звihnувся час...», або чи допоможе нам Шекспір не заснути під час Армагеддону: філософські розмисли стосовно тематики сучасних шекспірівських конференцій" [The Time is out of Joint..., or Will Shakespeare Help Us Stay Awake during Armageddon: Philosophical Reflections on the Themes of Contemporary Shakespearean Conferences; Zvykhnuvsia čas..., або chy dopomozhe nam Shekspir ne zasnuty pid čas Armaheddonu: filosofski rozmysly stosovno tematyky suchasnykh shekspirivskykh konferentsii; Zvihnusâ čas..., або či dopomože nam Šekspir ne zasnuti pidčas Armageddonu: filosof's'ki rozmysli stosovno tematiki sučasnih šekspirivs'kih konferencij]. *Ренесансні студії* [Renesansni studii] 33–34 (2021): 165–187.

²⁰ See the archive of the journal on its cite: <http://rs-journal.kpu.zp.ua/>. Accessed 18 December 2024.

which include disseminating information about new publications and organising events (conferences, public lectures, discussions, workshops, competitions, theatre festivals, etc.). Its success is evident: today we have a vibrant and effective Ukrainian Shakespearean community, bringing together representatives from various professions (literary critics, translators, theatre scholars, critics and practitioners, philosophers, school teachers, and journalists) from different regions of Ukraine, all united by a shared interest in Shakespeare. Another key area of the Centre's work is research. Under the Centre's auspices, dissertations, master's theses, and diploma theses are supported; its meetings provide a platform for testing new ideas, exchanging views, discussing recent publications by Shakespeare scholars, and reviewing the results of Ukrainian participation in international Shakespeare conferences, congresses, and more. Since its establishment, USC members have defended nine dissertations in Shakespeare studies, and more than ten Ukrainian dissertations now feature chapters on Shakespeare research.

The USC has established partnerships with many international Shakespeare institutions and associations, including the European Shakespeare Research Association (ESRA), the Shakespeare Institute of the University of Birmingham in the UK, the Folger Library (Washington D.C., USA), the Romanian International Shakespeare Centre (Timișoara, Romania), the German Shakespeare Society, the French Shakespeare Association, the Shakespeare Centre of Tbilisi University, the Armenian Association of Shakespeare Studies, and others. These partnerships have become particularly significant during the full-scale war of Russia against Ukraine, as the global Shakespearean community actively supports the Ukrainian people in their just struggle against the aggressor. Many international Shakespeare scholars have joined the volunteer group 'Shakespeare,' which we established at the end of 2022. With donations from the Shakespearean community, we have purchased a vehicle, drones, night vision cameras, thermal imagers, power banks, military-use radios, army boots for intelligence specialists, and medicines for the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The drone, which we purchased thanks to the director of the Shakespeare Institute, Michael Dobson, who donated his award from the Craiova International Shakespeare Festival in the summer of 2022 to the needs of the Ukrainian army, was named 'William Shakespeare' by the scouts. Thus, we have every reason to say that Shakespeare is fighting on the side of Ukraine.

The educational, or more precisely, wide disseminating area of the Centre is achieved through various initiatives for the general public, including TV and radio programmes, intellectual competitions for schoolchildren, and contests for students. Recently, Centre members Daria Moskvitina and Bohdan Korneliuk launched the Telegram channel Шекспір сказав [Shakespeare Said; Šekspir skazav], which shares engaging insights into Shakespeare's life and works, as well as updates on contemporary theatre and cultural events related to Shakespeare. As

part of these efforts, Serhii Vynnychenko, a marketer and founder of the blogging platform Театральна риболовля [Theatrical Fishing; Teatral'na ribolovlâ],²¹ has collaborated with the USC to launch a factual study on Ukrainian theatre's engagements with Shakespeare during the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian War.²²

The USC does not translate Shakespeare's works itself, but its members remain actively involved in the field of translation. They organise presentations of new translations, host meetings with authors, write scholarly articles on translations, and systematise information about the history of Ukrainian translations of Shakespeare.

O.K.: What is the format of representing the history of translated Shakespeareana? Some of the translations, such as *Hamlet* by Mykhailo Rudnytskyi which was created in Nazi-occupied Lviv, or translations by emigrants such as Todos Osmachka, Vasyl Barka, Sviatoslav Karavanskyi, and others, were largely unknown in Ukraine for a long time. Do you create a repository of texts or develop reference books?

N.T.: One of the Centre's successful projects is the creation of a Shakespearean Library, unique in Ukraine, with over 4,000 publications on Shakespeare and Renaissance studies. The majority of these were generously donated by our international colleagues, in particular by Helmut Bonheim, Adolf Pasche, Edward Doerksen, Mary Smith, Vitalii Keis, Michael Dobson and others. Thanks to the efforts of Ukrainian diaspora scholars, particularly Irena Rima Makaryk and Marko Robert Stech, our library collections include translations and academic works by diaspora Shakespeare scholars. We are planning to digitise the library's collections, focusing primarily on lesser-known translations of Shakespeare's works.

An engaging and highly productive way of presenting information about *Hamlet* translations and its first production on the Ukrainian professional stage has been the virtual bilingual museum *#Hamlet-UA: Act 1, Scene 1943*.²³ We hope to

²¹ This online platform has expanded into a full-fledged knowledge base on contemporary theatre, including a catalogue of premieres by year, reviews, and analytical explorations of theatre seasons. Significant attention is given to Shakespearean productions by Ukrainian theatres, as evidenced by Serhii Vynnychenko's collection of original works on Shakespearean themes (<http://www.t-fishing.co.ua/product/william-shakespeare>) and research on the history of productions of individual plays. As of 2024, materials have been gathered on stage interpretations of *Hamlet* (<http://www.t-fishing.co.ua/product/hamlet>) and *Macbeth* (<http://www.t-fishing.co.ua/product/macbeth>). Accessed 18 January 2025.

²² <http://www.t-fishing.co.ua/product/shakespeare-in-war>. Accessed 18 January 2025.

²³ Created to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the first Ukrainian production of *Hamlet* from 1943, this exhibition provides details about the production, its creators, and their subsequent fate but also features aspects on the history of Ukrainian translations from Pavlo Svetsitsky's 1865 version to Mykhailo Rudnytsky's 1943 rendition. Please see the article "Virtual Museum

continue working with the virtual museum format in the future, as our experience shows that it attracts both experts and general Shakespeare enthusiasts, while also being actively used in school and university curricula. Additionally, the bilingual presentation of exhibit information makes the museum accessible to international visitors, contributing to the decolonisation of knowledge about Ukraine.

O.K.: You have been organising the project *Shakespeare Days in Ukraine* for many years. Have you managed to reach a wider public audience than the academic community?

N.T.: This annual project, launched in 2018, has significantly expanded the USC's reach: several events were held as part of these *Shakespeare Days in Ukraine*, tailored for diverse audiences. Scholars and students can attend public online lectures by renowned Shakespeare experts, schoolchildren engage in competitions and quests, while specialists in translation, theatre studies, and literary studies participate in masterclasses and panel discussions. The USC's public engagement has also grown through another key initiative – the 'All-Ukrainian Vitalii Keys Contest for Student Research and Creative Shakespeare Projects'²⁴, which has been held annually since 2010. Over the years, more than a thousand students have participated; for some, this contest became the starting point of their journey in Shakespeare studies. Notably, past winners such as Bohdan Korneliuk, Viktoriia Marinesko, Ksenia Boryskina (Skakun), and Natalia Gutaruk later defended their doctoral theses on Shakespeare.

O.K.: During the Russian-Ukrainian war, which questions are the Centre's main focus?

N.T.: Since the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian War in February 2014, the Centre's priorities have shifted to some extent. Established tasks remain ongoing, however, our international engagement has become increasingly vital. Prior to Russia's full-scale invasion, global interest in the geopolitical threats posed by Putin's actions – such as the annexation of Crimea and the occupation of

«#HAMLET_UA: ACT 1, SCENE 1943» in the Context of Decolonizing Knowledge about Ukraine” by Svitlana Deineka, Nataliya Torkut, and Roman Lavrentii in this volume.

²⁴ See: Юрій Черняк [Yurii Chernyak; Ūrij Černâk]. “Всеукраїнський шекспірівський конкурс імені Віталія Кейса: історія, сучасність і перспективи” [All-Ukrainian Shakespeare Competition Named after Vitalii Keis: History, Present and Prospect; Vseukrainskyi shekspirivskyi konkurs imeni Vitaliia Keisa: istoriia, suchasnist i perspektyvy; Vseukraïns'kij šekspirivs'kij konkurs imeni Vitaliâ Kejsa: istoriâ, sučasnist' i perspektivi]. *Ренесансні студії* [Renesansni studii] 37–38 (2023): 178–194.

southeastern Ukraine – was limited. Recognising the urgency of the situation, we redirected our contributions at international Shakespearean fora to draw attention to the unfolding tragedy in Ukraine. In the current context of the full-scale war since 2022, we see our mission as leveraging every opportunity for public discourse to foster support for Ukraine within the Shakespeare community. By examining Shakespeare's reception in Ukraine, we aim not only to highlight its unique characteristics but also to explore its intersection with broader socio-historical processes, including war and contemporary societal challenges. Ukrainian Shakespeareana, encompassing theatre productions, translations, scholarly research, and educational initiatives, serves as both a reflection of and a response to political realities. We firmly believe that Shakespeare remains a shared cultural value and that public diplomacy is a powerful tool for shaping public opinion and influencing foreign policy decisions. Moreover, during the war, an extremely important task for the USC has been to disseminate truthful knowledge about the history and achievements of Ukrainian Shakespeare studies within the global sphere of Shakespeare scholarship. This is one of the key components of the process of decolonising knowledge about Ukraine in the world, a need that has long been overdue.

O.K.: The decolonisation of Ukraine's reputation²⁵ around the world is a task of geopolitical significance, especially in the context of the current Russian-Ukrainian war. Has something similar occurred within Ukrainian Shakespeare studies in the broader context of global Shakespeare scholarship?

N.T.: Undoubtedly, we are fully aware of the importance, scale, and complexity of this task. For a long time, global Shakespeare studies did not perceive Ukrainian Shakespeareana as an independent and, therefore, distinctive phenomenon, but

²⁵ About the essence and the necessity of decolonization of the knowledge about Ukraine see: Оксана Пахльовська [Oksana Pakhlovska; Oksana Pahl'ovs'ka]. *Ave, Europa!* Kyiv, 2008; Lyuty, Taras. "Scribes of Kyiv Conquer Muscovy". *Ukraine! Unmuted. Essays*. Lviv, 2022. 149–157; Riabchuk, Mykola. "Mapping a «Nowhere Nation»." *Ukraine! Unmuted. Essays*. Lviv, 2022. 109–115. Ольга Гомілко [Olga Gomilko; Ol'ga Gomilko]. "Деколонізація української культури: політика воук чи національне пробудження?" [Decolonization of Ukrainian Culture: Vouk Policy or National Awakening; Dekolonizatsiia ukrainskoï kulturi: polityka vouk chy natsionalne probudzhennia?; Dekolonizaciâ ukrains'koï kul'turi: polityka vouk či nacional'ne probudžennâ?]. *Філософська думка* [Filosofs'ka dumka] 3 (2023): 49–58; Ольга Квасниця [Olga Kvasnytsia; Ol'ga Kvasnicâ]. "Детокс, або Короткий курс для Кремля" [Detox, or a Short Course for the Kremlin; Detoks, abo Korotkyi kurs dlia Kremlia; Detoks, abo Korotkij kurs dlâ Kremlâ]. *День* [Den'], 22 July 2021. <https://m.day.kyiv.ua/uk/article/den-ukrayiny/detoks-abo-korotkyy-kurs-dlya-remlya?fbclid=IwAR1avaFiZogqkBsZTOzAmlHbFaH3dN7WX53W0aRKjTMOiPbjePMhKCi-ADo>. Accessed 18 January 2025.

rather as a part of the ‘great Russian culture’. The creative pursuits of Ukrainian translators and directors of Shakespeare were largely unknown to the global audience. As explained above, they were viewed through the narrow lens of Russian propaganda – imperial at first, later communist. Here, I must once again express my gratitude to Mark Sokolianskyi, who clearly articulated this serious issue in 2008.

Changing the perspective requires serious theoretical reflection, while forming a new, corrected vision demands systematic work, time, and intellectual effort. We have already begun this work, and one of the important steps on this challenging path was the organisation of the first Ukrainian Shakespeare Festival, held between 17–23 June 2024 in Ivano-Frankivsk.²⁶

O.K.: How did the idea of the Ukrainian Shakespeare Festival come about?

N.T.: The idea of founding a Ukrainian Shakespeare Festival in Ukraine first emerged at the USC in 2010, when our representatives, Darya Lazarenko and Viktoriia Marinesko, attended the Craiova Shakespeare Festival in Romania for the first time, at the invitation of Nicoleta Cinpoeș, who was organising a seminar series entitled *Worldwide Hamlet in Performance and Translation*.²⁷ The 2010 one-off seminar has since become the permanent ESRA Shakespeare in Performance series at the Festival and the largest platform for performance critical practices and groundbreaking Shakespeare research. Other Ukrainian Shakespeare scholars visited the Craiova Shakespeare Festival in the following edition (2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2024)²⁸ and, spurred on by the influence of these unforgettable experiences, the dream of establishing our own Ukrainian Shakespeare festival was born and grew stronger. We spoke about this aspiration at international Shakespeare conferences, both in Ukraine and across Europe. We carefully studied other Shakespeare festivals,²⁹ involved like-minded people, realising that a large-scale event could only be organised by theatre practitioners. Maiia Harbuziuk’s visit to

²⁶ Rostyslav Derzhypilskyi, People’s Artist of Ukraine and General Director of the Ivan Franko National Academic Drama Theatre acted as the festival’s director.

²⁷ See: Д. Лазаренко [D. Lazarenko; D. Lazarenko]. “Шекспірів *Гамлет*: Нис et ubique” [Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*: Нис et ubique; Shekspiriv *Hamlet*: Нис et ubique; Šekspiriv *Gamlet*: Нис et ubique]. *Ренесансні студії* [Renesansni studii] 14–15 (2010): 306–314.

²⁸ See: Д. Москвітїна, Б. Корнелюк [D. Moskvitina, B. Kornelyuk; D. Moskvitina, B. Kornelûk]. “Urbi et orbi: 9-й Міжнародний шекспірівський театральний фестиваль у м. Крайова” [Urbi et Orbi: The 9th International Shakespeare Festival in Craiova; Urbi et orbi: 9-y Mizhnarodnyj shekspirivskyi teatralnyi festyval u m. Kraiova; Urbi et orbi: 9-j Mizhnarodnij šekspirivs’kij teatral’nij festival’ u m. Kraiova]. *Ренесансні студії* [Renesansni studii] 23–24 (2015): 297–305.

²⁹ See: Н. Торкут [N. Torkut; N. Torkut]. “Шекспірівські театральні фестивалі в Європі: історія і сучасність” [Shakespearean Theater Festivals in Europe: History and Modernity;

the Craiova Shakespeare Festival in 2018 became the starting point of our plans for a Ukrainian Shakespeare Festival implementation. As a theatre historian, Maiia Harbuziuk (1964–2023)³⁰ was well aware of the social significance of a Shakespeare festival for Ukraine and, as a theatre critic, viewed it as a catalyst for invigorating the country's theatrical life. In her opinion, this ambitious dream could only be realised by Rostyslav Derzhypilskyi, the General and Artistic Director of the Ivan Franko National Academic Drama Theatre in Ivano-Frankivsk, a man of incredible creativity, charisma, energy, and experience in organising such large-scale events. Derzhypilskyi, winner of the Taras Shevchenko National Award of Ukraine, a talented director whose unique artistic method is increasingly being discussed at international theatre festivals, took on the challenge of transforming the abstract concept into a successful and tangible project.

A distinctive feature of the festival, marked by its evocative logo 'IF Shakespeare UA',³¹ was the harmonious combination of artistic and scholarly-educational elements. The artistic programme included ten Shakespeare productions and an exhibition of illustrations by Vladyslav Yerko for three Shakespeare tragedies translated by Yurii Andrukhovych. The concept of the scholarly-educational component³² was built on the productive interdisciplinary alliance between literary studies and theatre, as well as on the willingness of international Shakespeare scholars who actively support Ukraine in its struggle against the Russian aggression – to participate in academic and educational events. They help share the story of Ukrainian theatrical Shakespearean studies globally, showcasing the vital potential of culture and strengthening the nation's resilience in the face of war.

O.K.: Regarding resilience, art and theatre, in particular, take on several functions during wartime that are atypical in times of peace. Beyond classical catharsis, theatre fulfils an existential mission, acting as a form of psychotherapy that

Shekspirivski teatralni festyvali v Yevropi: istoriia i suchasnist; Šekspirivs'ki teatral'ni festyvali v Ėvropi: istoriâ i sučasnis'. *Прощеніум* [Proscenium] 1–3 (44–46) (2016): 80–85.

³⁰ About Maiia Harbuziuk's contribution to Ukrainian Shakespeareana see: N. Torkut. "Maiia Harbuziuk in Memoriam (1965–2023)." *Pamiętnik Teatralny* 72, 4 (2023): 13–23.

³¹ This logo encodes both the name of the city where the project is being implemented (Ivano-Frankivsk) and, at the same time, sparks interest in the festival by hinting at the uniqueness of Ukrainian Shakespeare – "if Shakespeare were in Ukraine / what Shakespeare might have been if he were in Ukraine."

³² For more details, see: Н. Торкут, С. Дейнека [N. Torkut, S. Deineka; N. Torkut, S. Dejneka]. "Перший Український шекспірівський фестиваль і його академічна продуктивність" [The First Ukrainian Shakespeare Festival and Its Academic Productivity; Pershyi Ukrainskyi shekspirivskyi festyval i yoho akademična produktyvnist; Peršij Ukraïns'kij šekspirivs'kij festival' i jogo akademična produktyvnist']. *Слово і час* [Slovo i čas] 6 (2024): 117–118.

addresses trauma and fear on a collective level.³³ It fosters post-traumatic growth for both individuals and the nation, helping to bring audiences back to life.

Returning to the festival: as far as the international Shakespeare scholarly community is concerned, who joined the Ukrainian Shakespeare Festival, and in what capacity?

N.T.: First of all, it is worth mentioning the extensive preparatory work carried out by our international colleagues. In particular, Nicoleta Cinpoeș, who visited Ukraine in May 2023 at the invitation of the USC to give public lectures on the global tradition of Shakespeare festivals, became one of the key promoters of the idea of a festival in Ivano-Frankivsk.³⁴ Deeply impressed by *Romeo and Juliet* directed by R. Derzhypil'skyi, she believed that the dream of the festival could be realised and took an active role in developing its concept. She also helped establish international contacts, notably introducing the Ukrainian director and members of his company to the European Shakespeare Festivals Network and its chair, Philip Parr, who later provided significant support. In the early winter of 2024, at the initiative of a 'Shakespeare Shelter' event at the ESRA conference in Budapest in July 2023 organised by Nicoleta Cinpoeș and Imke Lichterfeld, representatives of the European Shakespeare Research Association, co-ordinated by Francesca Rayner, and the USC launched a large-scale project titled 'Reviewing Shakespeare on Stage.' As part of this initiative, leading Shakespeare scholars and theatre critics from around the world³⁵ conducted a series of masterclasses on writing theatre reviews. One of the key outcomes of this successful project was a collection of reviews of Ukrainian Shakespeare productions published in such prestigious journal as *Shakespeare Bulletin* 42.4 (2025: 525–563) and *Shakespeare en devenir* 18 (2024: 3111–3139). The present volume is the culmination of this 'shelter' work over the past three years.

³³ See: Sofiya Rosa Lavrentiy's article "Shakespeare, Trauma, and Social Change: Inclusive Ukrainian Theatre Projects (2019–2023)" in this volume.

³⁴ See: Ольга Квасниця, Ніколета Чинпоеш [Olga Kvasnytsia, Nicoleta Cinpoeș; Ol'ga Kvasnicâ, Nikoleta Činpoeș]. "Shakespeare as Resistance in 21st Century Ukraine." *Вісник Київського національного університету імені Тараса Шевченка. Іноземна філологія* [Visnik Kiiivs'kogo nacional'nogo universitetu imeni Tarasa Ševčenko. Īnozemna filologiâ] 54. 1–2 (2023). <https://visnyk.if.knu.ua/article/view/2690>. Accessed 20 December 2024.

³⁵ The masterclasses were conducted by Nicoleta Cinpoeș, Michael Dobson, Boika Sokolova, and Christie Carson (United Kingdom); Francesca Rayner (Portugal); Isabelle Schwartz-Gastine and Janice Valls-Russell (France); Jennifer Low (USA); Veronika Schandl and Natália Pikli (Hungary); Anna Kowalcze-Pawlik (Poland); Imke Lichterfeld (Germany).

During the festival, Shakespeare scholars from around the world contributed to its educational and scholarly programme.³⁶ Several of our international colleagues came to Ukraine despite the serious risks associated with the war and actively participated in the festival. For instance, during the presentation of the Ukrainian Shakespeare Festival, Philip Parr introduced the Ukrainian festival team to the directors of various European Shakespeare Festivals in the Network. International Shakespeare scholars delivered public lectures “Who needs Shakespeare festival?” (Nicoleta Cinpoes) and “Shakespeare and art” (Michael Dobson), held a workshop “Subtitling Shakespeare translation” (Sorin Cazacu), and a roundtable “European experience of Shakespeare theatrical translations” (Anna Kowalcze-Pawlik, Ema Vyroubalova).

O.K.: What performances did international theatres present?

N.T.: The Moldovan ‘Teatrul fără nume’ [Theatre Without a Name] presented a dynamic and emotionally charged contemporary interpretation of *Macbeth* directed by Mihai Țărnă. This production combined elements from both Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* and Eugène Ionesco’s *Macbett*, offering a unique reimagining of the classic tragedy. In this performance, Lady Macbeth desperately tries to wash the bloodstains from her blood-soaked shirts, while a criminal dictator hides behind the walls of the Kremlin-like-Dunsinane. The mummified hands of silent victims rise toward the sky, pleading for justice. The production is rich with allusions to the tragedies caused by the Russian-Ukrainian war, creating a powerful and haunting commentary on modern tyranny and suffering.

The Italian theatre troupe ‘La Ribalta Teatro’ and ‘The English Theatre Company’ presented *Hamlet. Double Bill* – an original reinterpretation of Shakespeare’s most famous tragedy. The first part of the performance, infused with sparkling humour and playful comic twists on well-known lines, cleverly exposed them as stereotypes and clichés, eliciting waves of laughter and enthusiastic applause from the audience. By contrast, the second part, featuring the same three actors in entirely different roles, captured a profound philosophical depth of the renowned graveyard scene, offering a striking reflection on mortality and existential despair.

The Aleksander Zelwerowicz Theatre Academy in Warsaw also participated in the Ukrainian Festival with a student production, the multimedia play *Matulka*, which reimagined the central conflict of *Romeo and Juliet* in modern-day Warsaw. This innovative Polish adaptation explored intergenerational relationships and the

³⁶ These include Boika Sokolova (United Kingdom), Georgi Niagolov, Darya Lazarenko, and Javor Gardev (Bulgaria). Lada Kolomiyets (USA), Sabina Laskowska-Hinz (Poland), Kelly Hunter (United Kingdom), and Marko Robert Stech (Canada) joined online.

tragic consequences of overbearing maternal care. By integrating video, animation, and music, the performance vividly brought these timeless issues to life.

The support of the international community – and the active participation of international theatres and scholars in the Ukrainian Shakespeare Festival – cannot be overestimated. Their contributions not only enriched the festival but also reaffirmed global solidarity with Ukraine’s cultural and artistic resilience.

O.K.: Shakespeare is always searching for answers to complex existential questions. The Ukrainian declaration of “To be!” in times of war is the key marker of the nation’s proactive stance in the struggle for the universal ideals of freedom and independence – a fight for life itself. The work of the Ukrainian Shakespeare Centre, as well as that of both mainland and diaspora Ukrainian Shakespeare scholarship, serves as an example of cultural diplomacy and stands as evidence of the organic presence of Ukrainian culture within the global context.

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