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# The Ukrainian Project in the Free World: The Ukrainian Shakespeare Society

## *Abstract*

This article analyses the activities of the Ukrainian Shakespeare Society between 1957 and 1990 as a unique project of the Ukrainian diaspora. It draws attention to the organisational, scientific and publishing activities of its most prominent members, with a particular focus on Ihor Kostetskyi and Jaroslav Rudnyckyj. The materials analysed in the article provide new insights into the organisational and promotional activities of the Society (UShT). The Ukrainian Shakespeare Society was a significant cultural and scientific project. Aiming to represent the true values and traditions of Ukrainians, fundamentally different from those proclaimed by propaganda in the Soviet Union, the members of the Society contributed to the spread of Ukrainian culture beyond the borders of Soviet Ukraine. The Society's activities involved the publication of translations of Shakespeare's works and Shakespeare studies by authors banned in Soviet Ukraine for being "enemies of the nation" (such as Todos Osmachka). Founded in 1957 and active for over thirty years, the Society's primary goals were to develop and promote Ukrainian culture in the European and global context, in contrast to the presentation of the Soviet

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version of Ukrainian culture as the only “correct” one. This activity focused on two basic goals. On the one hand, it was a continuation of the Ukrainian tradition in translations and studies of Shakespeare, initiated by Osyp Fedkovych, Panteleimon Kulish, and Ivan Franko. On the other hand, the Society became a significant Ukrainian cultural institution that promoted the study and translation of Shakespeare’s works by Ukrainian authors abroad.

**Keywords:** Shakespeare, Ukrainian Shakespeare Society, Ukrainian emigration, Dmytro Chyzhevsky, Ihor Kostetskyi, Jaroslav Rudnyckyj.

Among the various activities of Ukrainian diaspora groups of the last century, the Ukrainian Shakespeare Society (1957–1990) deserves special attention. The foundation of this Society represents one of the most intriguing Ukrainian projects in exile, serving as a pivotal element within the broader cultural and artistic landscape of Ukraine. Aiming to represent the true values and traditions of Ukrainians, fundamentally different from those distorted by Bolshevik policy and proclaimed by propaganda in the Soviet Union, the members of the Society contributed to the spread of Ukrainian culture in the free world. The objective of this article is to examine the activities of the Ukrainian Shakespeare Society as a unique project of the Ukrainian diaspora and to elucidate the diverse organisational, scientific and publishing endeavours of its most active members, namely Ihor Kostetskyi and Jaroslav Rudnyckyj. The materials analysed in the article, particularly the correspondence of Ihor Kostetskyi, provide new insights into the organisational and promotional activities of the Society.

The Ukrainian Shakespeare Society was established in 1957 and continued its activities for over three decades. The first president of the Society was the renowned Slavist Dmytro Chyzhevsky (1894–1977), its vice-president, Jaroslav Rudnyckyj (1910–1995) and its secretary, writer, translator, literary scholar and poet Ihor Kostetskyi (1913–1983). Notable figures of the Society included prominent writers, translators, and scholars among Ukrainian émigrés, such as Vasyl Barka (1908–2003) and Orest Starchuk (1915–1971). Recent publications indicate a growing interest among scholars in the Society and its representatives. In this context, it is worth mentioning the publications of archival material that elucidate the history of the Society’s establishment and its principal objectives.<sup>1</sup> The recently published first volume, *Шекспір українською по той бік залізної завіси* [*Shakespeare in Ukrainian on the Other Side of the Iron Curtain*], edited by the distinguished scholar of Ukrainian culture in Canada Mark Robert Stech, is of particular note. The contents of this volume encompass a wide range of materials relating to the

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<sup>1</sup> See Валявко, Лазаренко [Valyavko, Lazarenko]; Mnich, “Ігор Костецький...” [Ihor Kostetskyi...].

UShT's<sup>2</sup> multi-faceted scholarly and publishing activities. In his introductory article, Stech highlights the achievements of the Society and Ihor Kostetskyi's role as follows:

All those admirable achievements of a small group of Ukrainian writers in exile (chiefly an intellectual author unconnected to any scientific or public institution) are truly impressive, particularly in light of the paucity of notable contributions to Ukrainian Shakespearean literature by state publishing houses and scientific institutions in the Ukrainian SSR during that period. (Стех [Stech], «Український Шекспір» [«Ukrainian» Shakespeare] 11)<sup>3</sup>

In the contemporary literary discourse (and not solely within the Ukrainian context), the objects of particular interest are primarily the two figures already mentioned above who were associated with the activities of the UShT: the first president of the Society, Dmytro Chyzhevsky, and the secretary of the Society, Ihor Kostetskyi. Both are of great significance in the context of the development of Ukrainian studies, as well as of the twentieth-century European Slavic studies in general. In the case of Chyzhevsky, he also had a crucial influence on the field of American Slavic studies. It is not without reason that Chyzhevsky is regarded as the founding figure of European Slavic studies of the last century (Vincenz 83–92). His versatile activities contributed to numerous exploratory publications and the creation of a general theoretical conception of the history of Slavic literature. In addition to being a renowned researcher of Ukrainian literature, he also made significant contributions to Russian, Czech, Slovak, and Polish literary studies (Mnich, *Рецептивная эстетика* [Dmytro Chyzhevsky's]; Блашків [Blashkiv], *Чеська і словацька культура* [Czech and Slovak Culture]). Kostetskyi, in turn, became known as an outstanding translator and organiser of scientific and cultural

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2 Abbreviation used by Marko Robert Stech, the author of the entry on Ukrainian Shakespeare Society in the English-language *Internet Encyclopaedia of Ukraine*, <https://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CU%5CK%5CUkrainianShakespeareSociety.htm>. Accessed 11 August 2024.

3 If not otherwise indicated, all translations are by Ludmiła Mnich; in original: “Усі ті подивугідні здобутки маленького гурту українських літераторів в еміграції (насамперед одного письменника-інтелектуала, який притому не був пов’язаний з жодною науковою чи громадською установою) по-справжньому вражають, особливо в порівнянні з практично тотальною відсутністю значніших досягнень української Шекспіріани серед державних видавництв і наукових структур в УРСР того часу.” [Usi ti podivugidni zdobutki malen'kogo gurtu ukraïns'kih literatoriv v emigracii (nasampered odnogo pis'mennika-intelektuala, âkij pritomu ne був pov'âzaniy z žodnoï naukovou či gromads'koï ustanovou) po-spravžn'omu vražauť, osobливо v porivnânni z praktično total'noï vidsutnistï značnïših dosâgnen' ukraïns'koï Šekspiriâni sered deržavnih vidavnictv ì naukovih struktur v URSR togo času.]

life, not only in the context of the USHT but also as the founder of the publishing house 'Na Hori' ['Ha ropi'; 'Na gori'], which promoted Ukrainian culture in the West. Additionally, Kostetskyi was a renowned writer and poet.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the significance of these contributions, it can be argued that the activities of the USHT remain relatively unknown among literary scholars and historians. It is, therefore, essential to consider some of the key facts surrounding the establishment of the Ukrainian Shakespeare Society before exploring the activities of the Society as a project of Ukrainian intellectuals in the free world. It is crucial to highlight that the founding members of the Society who signed the Statute included prominent figures in Ukrainian culture who had been exiled from their homeland: Dmytro Chyzhevsky, Jaroslav Rudnyckyj, and Ihor Kostetskyi. Indeed, the Society was formed by the most outstanding intellectuals of the Ukrainian diaspora of the twentieth century.<sup>5</sup> The list of founding members of the Society, which included eminent scientists, philosophers, literary scholars, linguists, translators, representatives of the first and second waves of Ukrainian emigration, as well as letters from Western correspondents with whom Kostetskyi maintained contacts, provides evidence of the significant creative and scientific capacity of the USHT.

## The History of the Ukrainian Shakespeare Society

The idea of establishing the Ukrainian Shakespeare Society came directly from Ihor Kostetskyi, as apparent in his correspondence with Dmytro Chyzhevsky. In a letter to Chyzhevsky dated 29 March 1956, Kostetskyi wrote: "I'd really like to take the initiative to organise a Ukrainian Shakespeare Society, but who would be its members? We need at least ten members."<sup>6</sup> ("Листи Ігоря Костецького"

4 The collection of his works, *The Whole World Belongs to You*, was published by the Canadian Shevchenko Scientific Society in 2005 by the publishing house 'Krytyka' in Kyiv on the initiative of the editor of this publication and researcher of Ihor Kostetskyi's work, M. R. Stech.

5 The Ihor Kostetskyi Archive in Bremen (Forschungsstelle Osteuropa an der Universität Bremen, FSO 01-242 Kostetzky) contains a wealth of documentation pertaining to the activities of the Ukrainian Shakespeare Society, including the original version of its Statute and extensive correspondence of the Board, particularly that of the Society's Secretary Ihor Kostetskyi.

6 The original correspondence is housed at the Dmytro Chyzhevsky Archive, within the Heidelberg University Library. Rep. Heid.Hs.3881. The correspondence of Ihor Kostetskyi and Dmytro Chyzhevsky was included in: Стех, Марко Роберт [Stech, Marko Robert], ed. *Шекспір українською по той бік Залізної Завіси* [Shakespeare in Ukrainian on the Other Side of the Iron Curtain]. Vol. 1. Kyiv: Українські пропілеї [Kyiv: Ukraïns'ki propileï], 2024. 778–794; 804–807. In original: "Мені страшенно б хотілося дати ініціативу для організації Українського Шекспірівського Товариства, але хто ж у нього входить? Треба ж принаймні з десять

[Ihor Kostetskyi's letters] 805). A period of approximately one year elapsed between the initial references to the Shakespeare Society in Kostetskyi's correspondence and the meeting at which the formal establishment of the Ukrainian Shakespeare Society was announced. This indicates that Kostetskyi's proposal was the subject of discussion among Ukrainian scholars and writers who were compelled to confront challenging circumstances and were dispersed across various locations and countries during their exile. The concept was met with considerable support from the émigré community, particularly given the frequent lack of financial assistance available to Ukrainian intellectuals. From a pragmatic perspective, therefore, there was also an evident rationale for uniting around the USHT.

The Ukrainian Shakespeare Society was established on 25 August 1957 in Heidelberg, where a significant gathering of immigrant Ukrainian scholars took place on the occasion of the International Congress of Modern Languages and Literatures. The initial members of the Society were Dmytro Chyzhevsky and Jaroslav Rudnycky; the general secretary was Ihor Kostetskyi, while the other founding members were Yar Slavutych, Orest Starchuk, Constantine Bida, Valentyn Gaevsky, Vasyl Barka and Oleh Zuievsky.<sup>7</sup> The Society's founding members also included Elisabeth Kottmeier, the German writer, poet, and translator of Ukrainian literature, the wife of Kostetskyi, and co-founder of the publishing house 'Na Hori'. During the Society's formation, a number of potential avenues for its future activities were considered. These included Shakespeare conferences, as proposed by Chyzhevsky, and the establishment of a separate publishing house along the lines of the already existing 'Na Hori'. The latter would publish new translations of Shakespeare's works and Shakespearean research by Ukrainian scholars, and Kostetskyi, in particular, was a proponent of establishing such a publishing house. Ultimately, the proposal put forth by Jaroslav Rudnycky was accepted, leading to the establishment of a distinct Ukrainian Shakespeare Society as an academic entity. The most significant contributions to the establishment of the Society were made by its inaugural leadership, comprising Chyzhevsky as president, Kostetskyi as secretary, and Rudnycky as its irreplaceable vice-president.

The activity of the USHT can be divided into three stages. Each stage is connected with the figure of the respective Society's president, but also with the activities of its most prominent members.<sup>8</sup> The first stage of the development of the USHT took place between 1957 and 1964, when Dmytro Chyzhevsky was president

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членів" [Meni strašenno b hotilosâ dati iniciativu dlâ organizacii Ukraïns'kogo Šekspirivs'kogo Tovaristva, ale hto ž u n'ogo vhoditime? Treba ž prinajmni z desât' členiv.]

<sup>7</sup> The USHT Statute, The Ihor Kostetskyi Archive in Bremen (Forschungsstelle Osteuropa an der Universität Bremen, FSO 01-242 Kostetzky).

<sup>8</sup> A similar division of the USHT's history is presented by M. R. Stech, the author of the entry on *Ukrainian Shakespeare Society* in the English-language *Internet Encyclopaedia of Ukraine*.

and Ihor Kostetskyi secretary of the Society. In recognition of his authority within the academic community, Chyzhevsky was elected as the first president of the Shakespeare Society. However, as researchers have rightly observed, the true driving force behind the Society's activities, particularly during its formative years, was Kostetskyi.

The Society's principal aims were the publication of new Ukrainian translations of Shakespeare's works and the promotion of research in the field of Shakespeare studies. Additionally, USHT aimed to establish connections with a range of academic institutions specialising in Shakespeare studies, as well as individual scholars engaged in research in this field in the West. The Society's most significant achievements during this period included the publication of Kostetskyi's translations of *Romeo and Juliet* (1957) and his complete translation of Shakespeare's sonnets (1958), both with the 'Na Hori' publishing house. Kostetskyi's sonnets were accompanied by detailed annotations, which, according to Stech, represent perhaps the most comprehensive historiographical and literary commentary on Shakespeare's sonnets in the context of Ukrainian Shakespeare studies (Стех [Stech] "«Український» Шекспір" [«Ukrainian» Shakespeare] 8). During the same period, new translations of *Macbeth* and *Henry IV* by Todos Osmachka were published (1961). In this edition, the translations were preceded by introductory articles written by Kostetskyi, in which the researcher highlights the innovative nature of Osmachka's translations. As Stech notes, these translations have a distinct genesis, diverging from the neoclassical tradition of translating Shakespeare's plays, and therefore are of additional value for the Ukrainian Shakespeare studies:

[...] in examining the basis of Osmachka's translations within the context of Ukrainian Shakespeare studies, it can be argued that they do not originate from neoclassicism (as is often the case with the author's original poetic works). Instead, they appear to draw inspiration from the late Romantic tradition, as exemplified by Panteleimon Kulish. However, they are infused with a distinctly modern sensibility shaped by the experiences of Ukrainian literature during the 1920s, particularly the influence of expressionist aesthetics that resonate with Osmachka's style. (Стех [Stech], „«Український» Шекспір" [«Ukrainian» Shakespeare] 8)<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> "[...] якщо шукати підґрунтя Осьмаччиних перекладів в історії української Шекспіріани, то вони, напевне (як і чимало оригінальних поетичних творів самого Осьмачки), виростають не з неокласицизму, а з пізньоромантичної традиції цілісно скристалізованої Пантелеймоном Кулішем, однак сильно модернізованої досвідом української літератури 20-х рр., а особливо елементами близької Осьмачці естетики експресіонізму". [ [...] âkšo šukati pidğruntâ Os'maččinih perekladiv v istorii ukraińs'koï Ŗekspiriâni, to voni, naпевne (âk i čimalo original'nih poetičnih tvoriv samogo Os'mački), virostaût' ne z neoklasicizmu, a z pizn'oromantičnoï tradicii cilisno skristalizovanoï Pantelejmonom Kulišem, odnak sil'no

Considering the published translations of Shakespeare's plays and sonnets, as well as studies on Ukrainian Shakespeare, the initial period of the USHT was its most productive era, particularly in the area of publishing.

The second period of USHT activity commenced in 1964, following the election of Constantine Bida (1916–1979) as president, who succeeded Chyzhevsky. Rudnycky retained the role of vice president, while Kostetskyi continued as secretary. By this time, the Society's activities had relocated to Canada, where its principal focus was the study of Shakespeare's works. During Bida's tenure as president, the Society's publishing activities were nearly halted, while Kostetskyi gradually distanced himself from the USHT. The publication of *King Lear* in translation by Vasyl Barka in 1969 represents one of the most significant achievements of this period. This publication was also Kostetskyi's last contribution to the Ukrainian Shakespeare Society.

Finally, the third phase of the USHT began in 1979 after Bida's death, when Yar Slavutych (1918–2011) became the third and last president of the Society, while Jaroslav Rudnycky retained his position as vice-president. Orysia Prokopiv was appointed secretary, and Oleh Zuievsky and Kostetskyi were elected as board members. Among the active members of the society of that period were Yar Slavutych, Jaroslav Rudnycky, Wolodymyr Zyla, Oleh Zuievsky, Irena Makaryk, Valerian Revutsky, and Ostap Tarnavsky (Stech, "Ukrainian Shakespeare Society"). It is also crucial to highlight that this period of the Society is fundamentally distinct from the previous ones. The USHT operated primarily within the framework of the Canadian Slavic Association, organizing Shakespeare sessions. Six Shakespeare sessions were held between 1980 and 1987, at which members of the USHT presented papers and their translations of Shakespeare's works. The two volumes of *Ukrainian Shakespeare Studies in the West*, published by Slavutych in 1987 and 1990, can be considered a comprehensive summary of the Society's activities, which spanned over three decades.

## The Impact of the Ukrainian Shakespeare Society and Its Members

The Shakespeare Society project did not emerge among Ukrainian emigrants spontaneously. At the time of the formation of the USHT, Ukrainian emigration in the free world (mainly in Europe, particularly Germany, but also in Canada) was engaged in active scholarly and educational endeavours, which were primarily oriented towards the advancement and dissemination of Ukrainian culture within the European and global context. This was in opposition to the presentation of

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modernizovanoï dosvidom ukraïns'koï literaturi 20-h rr., a osoblyvo elementami bliz'koï Os'mačci estetiki ekspresionizmu.]

the 'only correct' Soviet interpretation of Ukrainian culture. In this context, the tasks of the USHT, as set out in the Society's Statute, were defined. These tasks included researching the history of the relationship between Ukrainian culture and Shakespeare, as well as translating and popularising the new Ukrainian translations of Shakespeare's works, and the preparation of the theatrical productions of his plays in Ukrainian in the West. In the inaugural meeting of the Shakespeare Society, Rudnyckyj articulated two principal objectives for the society:

It (USHT – L.M.) should foster an organised, systematic approach to the documentation of Ukrainian Shakespearean studies in the two principal centres of Shakespearean literature so far: Birmingham and Washington, as well as of the creation of a centre for Ukrainian Shakespearean studies. [...]

In addition to the documentation, a crucial task is to develop a Ukrainian-Shakespearean bibliography in Ukrainian periodicals in the free world. Without this basic step, in the absence of a comprehensive bibliographical review of works, articles, reviews, and discussions pertaining to Shakespearean studies in Ukrainian periodicals in the diaspora, it is not possible to draw any meaningful conclusions regarding this aspect of Ukrainian culture.<sup>10</sup>

The founders of the USHT, in particular Kostetskyi and Rudnyckyj, sought to ensure that information about the Society was disseminated in the European press and was also accessible in the Ukrainian language to Ukrainians in exile. Brief references to the recently constituted Society appeared in Ukrainian émigré

<sup>10</sup> The Ihor Kostetskyi Archive in Bremen contains a typescript of Rudnyckyj's paper delivered at the Statutory Meeting of the Society (Forschungsstelle Osteuropa an der Universität Bremen, FSO 01-242 Kostetzky).

“Воно повинно організованим, систематичним способом подбати про належну документацію української Шекспіряни в дотеперішніх двох основних центрах шекспірівської літератури: в Бірмінгемі й Вашингтоні, – а також і про створення осередку української шекспіряни. [...] Крім документації важливою справою є опрацювання українсько-шекспірівської бібліографії в українській періодиці вільного світу. Без цього основного кроку, без бібліографічного огляду праць, статей, рецензій, відгуків з Шекспіряни в українській періодичній літературі в діяспорі годі й думати про роблення яких небудь підсумків у цій ділянці української культури”. [Vono povinno organizovanim, sistematičnim sposobom podbati pro naležnu dokumentaciū ukraïns'koï Ŗekspiriāni v doteperišnih dvoh osnovnih centrach Ŗekspiriv's'koï literaturi: v Birmingemi j Vašingtoni, – a takož i pro stvorennâ oseredku ukraïns'koï Ŗekspiriāni. [...]

Krīm dokumentacii važlivoū spravou ē opracūvannâ ukraïns'ko-Ŗekspiriv's'koï bibliografii v ukraïns'kij periodici vil'nogo svitu. Bez c'ogo osnovnogo kroku, bez bibliografičnogo oglâdu prac', statej, recenzij, vidgukiv z Ŗekspiriāni v ukraïns'kij periodičnij literaturi v diâspori godi j dumati pro roblennâ âkih nebud' pidsumkiv u cij dilânci ukraïns'koï kul'turi.]

newspapers in 1957: *Ukrainski visti* (Українські вісті), *Ukrainska literaturna gazeta* (Українська літературна газета), and *Ukrainske slovo* (Українське слово). A noteworthy article on this distinctive occurrence within the context of Ukrainian emigration was published in Toronto by Rudnyckyj; it addresses not only the establishment of the Society but also the circumstances surrounding its creation and its principal objectives. Rudnyckyj highlights that the tradition of “Ukrainian Shakespeare” originated in the 19th century, as evidenced in the works of prominent Ukrainian literary figures, such as Osyp Fedkovych, Panteleimon Kulish, and Ivan Franko. Rudnyckyj emphasises that the Bolsheviks in Ukraine interrupted the Shakespearean activities of Ukrainian poets, scholars and the Ukrainian theatre, so it was for this reason that the USHT set itself the goal of restoring the interrupted tradition in exile, collecting information on Ukrainian Shakespeare studies scattered in Western book collections and archives, and initiating Shakespeare studies and new translations of Shakespeare’s works into Ukrainian. Rudnyckyj also discusses Ukraine’s relationship with European culture, noting that the concept of the USHT represents a continuation of a process that “has an almost century-old tradition, and its origins go back to the depths of the Ukrainian soul which was oriented towards the West and went hand in hand with its culture” (Рудницький [Rudnyckyj], “Українське Шекспірівське Товариство” [The Ukrainian Shakespeare Society] 31).<sup>11</sup>

From its inception, the USHT, under the guiding hand of Kostetskyi, engaged in a multitude of international endeavours, primarily centred around the establishment of connections with the foremost European institutions specialising in Shakespeare studies and prominent European scholars, philologists and translators from Germany, Austria, Britain, France, and Poland. Kostetskyi could count on substantial assistance from Rudnyckyj in this matter in Canada. A review of the documents in the Kostetskyi Archive in Bremen reveals that Kostetskyi engaged in active organisational and information-sharing endeavours with Shakespearean institutions in Europe, as evidenced by his correspondence with them. For example, Kostetskyi forwarded Osmachka’s translations of *Henry IV* and *Macbeth* to the library of the Shakespeare Centre in Stratford-upon-Avon, his translation of *Romeo and Juliet* to the Shakespeare Memorial Library, and translations of sonnets to the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre. Extensive material confirming the involvement

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11 “Українське Шекспірівське Товариство – це не якась нова ефемеріда-дальщина, а послідовне завершення того процесу, що в головах у себе має близько столітню традицію й початками сягає в глиб української душі, що завжди була зорієнтована на Захід і йшла в парі з його культурою.” [Ukrains’ke Šekspirivs’ke Tovaristvo – ce ne âkas’ nova efemerida-dal’shina, a poslidovne zaveršennâ togo procesu, šo v golovah u sebe mâe bliz’ko stolitnû tradiciû j počatkami sâgaê v glib ukrains’koï duši, šo zavždi bula zoriêntovana na Zahid i jšla v pari z jogo kul’turoû.]

of both Kostetskyi and Rudnyckyj in the promotion of USHT activities in Europe and America can be found in the correspondence of the secretary and vice-president of the Society. In total, this correspondence includes 30 letters between 1956 and 1964.<sup>12</sup>

Another significant contribution of Kostetskyi to the dissemination of Ukrainian translations and Shakespeare studies worldwide was establishing a connection with the oldest Shakespeare society in Europe, the German Shakespeare Society (Deutsche Shakespeare-Gesellschaft); founded in the third centenary year (1864), it remains one of the largest Shakespeare societies in the world, with over 2,000 members. Kostetskyi published articles in German in the yearbooks of the Deutsche Shakespeare-Gesellschaft, further confirming the significant impact of these contacts. These publications included material on Slavic (mainly Ukrainian) translations of Shakespeare and issues surrounding the reception of his works in Slavic countries (Kostetzky, “Shakespeares Werk” 216–224).

In the context of USHT’s cooperation with scholars in the West, it is also worth noting Kostetskyi’s contacts and correspondence with Polish intellectuals. First of all, his contacts with the Polish Shakespeare scholar Jan Kott (1914–2001) should be mentioned. In 1977, Kott came to Europe from the USA to attend the congress of the German Shakespeare Society. Kostetskyi took the opportunity to write to him and send him some of his publications. By this time, Jan Kott was already a well-known Shakespeare critic and an academic at American universities. From Kostetskyi’s letter to Kott (dated 14 April 1977), we learn that Kostetskyi sent the Polish scholar a new edition of *King Lear* translated into Ukrainian by Vasyl Barka. This edition also included an abridged version of Kott’s essay *King Lear, or Endgame* translated into Ukrainian. Kostetskyi also added his German article on translations of Shakespeare into Slavic languages, *Shakespeares Werk in der Ukraine* and a collection of Kostetskyi’s sonnets translated into Polish by Jerzy Niemojowski, *Raw Sonnets (Surowe sonety)*.<sup>13</sup> The author and the addressee had no prior personal acquaintance, as is evident from the letter. However, they shared numerous interests, and a particular affinity for Shakespeare. Kostetskyi was interested in Kott’s publications and translated his essay on *King Lear*. Kostetskyi also tried to introduce the Polish scholar to Ukrainian translations of Shakespeare and his own literary and scholarly works. It is noteworthy that Kostetskyi wrote his letter in Polish as a gesture of respect towards Kott. In his response (20 April 1977), Kott expressed gratitude to Kostetskyi for the books he had sent him and for translating his essay on *King Lear* into Ukrainian, stating, “I never thought I would

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<sup>12</sup> These have already been published with a foreword by O. Lazarenko and M. R. Stech (Лазаренко, Стех [Lazarenko and Stech] 813–850).

<sup>13</sup> The Kostetsky Archive in Bremen holds one copy of Kostetskyi’s letter to Kott and three letters from Kott to Kostetskyi from 1977.

live to see this.”<sup>14</sup> The subsequent two letters from Kott to Kostetskyi, dated 25 May 1977 and 12 August 1977, demonstrate that the correspondence between the two scholars continued for some time.

Kostetskyi also corresponded with Maria Podraza-Kwiatkowska; however, the content of these letters primarily concerns the problems of translating European modernist works. Given that Kostetskyi himself was both a translator and an advocate of a novel modernist approach to translating classical literature, further scholarly study of Kostetskyi’s correspondence with Podraza-Kwiatkowska would be greatly beneficial. It is beyond question that Kostetskyi’s organisational and popularising role in disseminating and promoting Ukrainian culture among the émigrés is of the utmost significance. This encompasses not only the aforementioned contacts with significant Shakespearean institutions in Europe, e.g. Kostetskyi’s active involvement in the German Shakespeare Society, but also his notable publishing endeavours and the dissemination of Ukrainian literature on a global scale. This includes poetry collections, scholarly works, translations of Shakespeare’s works and other world classics. During his life in exile, Kostetskyi disseminated information about the USHT in many ways and documented the lively scientific and educational pursuits of the Society’s members. In his article, “На закінчення Шекспірівського року” (At the end of the Shakespearean year), Kostetskyi devoted particular attention to the ‘Ukrainian exegesis’ of Shakespeare studies. He referenced papers presented at scientific meetings by Professor Constantine Bida and his own research on translating Shakespeare into Slavic languages. Furthermore, Kostetskyi discusses the involvement of USHT members in various publication projects, including translations of Shakespeare’s works. He highlights the contributions of Yar Slavutych, Oleh Zuievsky, and Vasyl Barka. Additionally, he draws attention to scientific and popular articles, and reviews authored by Ukrainian intellectuals in exile, such as Jaroslav Rudnyckyj, Orest Starchuk, or Yar Slavutych. Kostetskyi’s report is of great significance for comprehending the society’s activities and the author’s involvement therein. He highlights the principal theatrical and literary events associated with Shakespeare, predominantly new theatrical productions and new translations. The author compares new translations of Shakespeare into Ukrainian by Vasyl Barka and Yurii Klen that emerged in the West, as well as by Maksym Rylsky and Mykola Bazhan that were published in Soviet Ukraine. In the report, Kostetskyi outlines the prospects for further Ukrainian Shakespeare studies and comes to the following conclusions:

Ukrainian Shakespeare studies today, therefore, is not just a statement: here is a new translation in our language, but a promising indication: there are two, three, and so

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<sup>14</sup> In original: „Nigdy nie myślałem, że się tego doczekam”. The Ihor Kostetsky Archive in Bremen (Forschungsstelle Osteuropa an der Universität Bremen, FSO 01-242 Kostetzky).

on new translations, made in different vocabularies of the same language, made in such a way that their mutual contradiction further confirms the great fact of language, the fact of its all-embracing unity. (Костецький [Kostetskyi], “На закінчення Шекспірівського року” [At the end of the Shakespearean year] 37–38)<sup>15</sup>

The activities of the Shakespearean Society were globally oriented with the principal objective of promoting the development of the Ukrainian language and culture. Consequently, Kostetskyi’s interpretation of the intended audience for Shakespeare’s translations into Ukrainian is both compelling and pertinent:

[...] it should be understood that Shakespeare is translated into Ukrainian not only for those who do not know English but also for those who know English very well. Only the one who, living in a foreign language environment, daily, from the cultural works, is convinced that the language of his parents can cover the world of the most complex spiritual phenomena in full force of expression [...] He has every opportunity to be a Ukrainian calmly, confidently, self-evidently. (Костецький [Kostetskyi] “На закінчення шекспірівського року” [At the end of the Shakespearean year] 39)<sup>16</sup>

In examining the history of the Ukrainian Shakespeare Society, it is necessary to consider the numerous conflicts that arose within the Ukrainian émigré community. The causes of these conflicts can be attributed to differences in the assessment of Ukraine’s historical past, divergent visions for its future, and attitudes towards Soviet Ukraine. It is evident that the conflicts and confrontations

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15 “Українське шекспірознавство сьогодні, отже, це не просто констатування, ось, мовляв, з’явився новий переклад нашою мовою, а перспективна вказівка: з’явилася два, три і так далі нових переклади, витворені у відмінних словорядках тієї самої мови, витворені так, що їхня взаємна суперечність дедалі стверджує великий факт мови, факт її всеосяжної єдності”. [Ukraïns’ke šekspiroznavstvo s’ogodni, otže, ce ne prosto konstatuvannâ, os’, movlâv, z’âvîvsâ novij pereklad našoû movoû, a perspektivna vkazîvka: z’âvilosâ dva, tri i tak dali novih perekladi, vitvorenî u vidminnih slovorâdah tiêi samoï movi, vitvorenî tak, šo îhnâ vzaêmna superečnist’ dedalî stverdžuê velikij fakt movi, fakt îi vseosâžnoï êdnosti.]

16 “треба зрозуміти, що Шекспір перекладається українською мовою не тільки для тих, хто не знають англійської, а й для тих, хто англійську знають дуже добре. Лише той, хто, живши в іншомовному оточенні, щодня, з творених фактів культури, переконується, що й мовою його батьків на повну силу виразності можна охопити світ найскладніших духових явищ, [...] Той-бо має всю можливість бути українцем спокійно, впевнено, самозрозуміло”. [treba zrozumiti, šo Šekspir perekladaêt’sâ ukraïns’koû movoû ne til’ki dlâ tih, hto ne znaût’ anglijs’koï, a j dlâ tih, hto anglijs’ku znaût’ duže dobre. Liše toj, hto, živši v îšomovnomu otočenni, šodnâ, z tvorenih faktiv kul’turi, perekonuêt’sâ, šo j movoû jogo bat’kiv na povnu silu viraznosti možna ohopiti svit najskladniših duhovih âviš, [...] Toj-bo maê vsûmožlivîst’ buti ukraïncem spokijno, vpevneno, samozrozumilo.]

between the various groups of Ukrainian émigrés can today be evaluated and interpreted from a different perspective. In Kostetskyi's case, these conflicts were related to his publishing activities and also to his literary contacts, correspondence and friendships with various groups, including those of the Ukrainian, Polish and Russian emigrations.

## The State of the Ukrainian Shakespeare Society

In conclusion, it should be noted that the project of the Ukrainian Shakespeare Society had a significant impact on the development of Ukrainian culture in exile, as well as on the progress of Shakespearean studies and translation in Soviet Ukraine. According to Stech, there is reason to believe that the factor of 'cultural pressure' exerted by the activities of the Ukrainian diaspora had a significant impact on publishing policy in the Ukrainian SSR. It can be assumed that the publication of new Ukrainian translations in the West by Todos Osmachka, Vasyl Barka, Yurii Klen, Ihor Kostetskyi, and other representatives of the USHT had an impact on the decision of the Soviet authorities in Ukraine to 'restore' the publication of Shakespeare in Ukrainian. For instance, a complete translation of Shakespeare's sonnets was published in Ukraine as early as 1966 though it was in 1958 that Kostetskyi's translation of the sonnets was published in the West. In 1964, a collection of Shakespeare's works in three volumes was published in Kyiv after new translations of Shakespeare into Ukrainian had been published in the West. The translation of Shakespeare was of such significance to the Soviet authorities that even former Gulag prisoners, Hryhorii Kochur, Borys Ten, and Dmytro Palamarchuk, were involved in the translation.

The USHT's endeavours were directed towards two principal aims. On the one hand, it constituted a continuation of the Ukrainian tradition in translation and Shakespeare studies, initiated by Panteleimon Kulish and Ivan Franko. USHT members asserted that this tradition should have been continued through a dialogue with European experts on Shakespeare's works and representatives of Shakespearean centres in the West. On the other hand, the Society became a significant Ukrainian cultural institution, with its publishing and translation activities encouraging new authors to translate and study Shakespeare's works. Marko Stech, in his preface to the new edition of Shakespeare's translations (2024), rightly remarked that "the founders of the USHT were themselves aware of the imbalance between their capabilities and the scale of the tasks they were undertaking" (Стех [Stech] «Український» Шекспір [«Ukrainian» Shakespeare] 6).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> "Самі засновники УШТ усвідомлювали диспропорцію між їхніми можливостями й масштабом завдань, які вони брали на себе".

For this reason, the evaluation of the scientific and research activities of the USHT and the assessment of the activities of its members from today's perspective should not be unduly critical. In the current context, the Ukrainian Shakespeare Society represents a potential model for the advancement of Ukrainian culture in dialogue with European culture. The activities and achievements of the Society can serve as a source of inspiration for numerous Ukrainian scholars and artists based in various academic and cultural institutions in Ukraine and abroad.

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