

Alexander SHURBANOV**St Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia, Bulgaria**

Hamlet: A Study of Idealism in Action

Abstract

As a true idealist, the protagonist of Shakespeare's tragedy *Hamlet* is capable of admiration and exaltation as well as of scorn, intolerance and anger, but not of sympathy and pardon. As a believer in man's potential for greatness, he feels that his mission is to cleanse the world of the inexcusable weakness that reduces human beings to unthinking and insensate instruments of evil masterminds. The striking irony of the play is that its hero, this passionate fighter against the reduction of human beings to mere tools, finds himself in a similar position pregnant with greater dangers for everybody around him and to his own person. While celebrating the heroic nature of idealism, this celebrated tragedy also reveals its destructive potential. A final section of the essay touches briefly on the question of Hamlet's place among the other climactic works of Shakespeare's career as a dramatist and in the history of English Renaissance drama in general as far as it is concerned with the themes of idealism and human instrumentalization.

Keywords: Shakespeare, drama, *Hamlet*, humanism, idealism, instrumentalization

This essay is provoked by an unforgettable scene right in the middle of Grigory Kozintsev's 1964 filmic reproduction of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Directly after the perturbed ending of the theatrical performance at Claudius's court, the Prince is accosted by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who come to inform him that the King is "marvelously distempered" by the spectacle and that the Queen, "in most great affliction of spirit" desires to speak with her son.¹ The two quondam schoolfellows of the hero, now, as he has assured himself beyond the shadow of a doubt, employed as royal spies sent to sniff out his secret intentions against the crown, continue to question him without much success. Meanwhile, as a few players of the itinerant troop pass by with their recorders (flutes), Hamlet picks up one of these instruments and asks Guildenstern to play upon it. After the latter pleads absolutely incapable to do that, Smoktunovsky's Hamlet stares at him and says bitterly:

Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you make of me. You would play upon me, you would seem to know my stops, you would pluck out the heart of

¹ All quotations from *Hamlet* in this essay are from The Arden Shakespeare edition of the play by Harold Jenkins (London and New York: Methuen, 1982).

my mystery, you would sound me from my lowest note to the top of my compass, and there is much music, excellent voice, in this little organ, yet cannot you make it speak. 'Sblood, do you think I am easier to be played on than a pipe? Call me what instrument you will, though you fret me, you cannot play upon me.² (III.ii.354–363)

The last words are uttered as the Prince, with a *noli-me-tangere* look, turns away from his interlocutors to walk towards, and then past, the camera. His sense of personal dignity and the refusal to compromise it are impressed upon us. What follows immediately are Hamlet's important encounters with the King at prayer and the Queen in her chamber, both of whom fear his revenge for their undivulged crimes but are left unscathed, though badly shaken. A smaller man though, the King's councillor Polonius, unexpectedly meets his death at the Prince's hands – apparently by mistake, and yet not quite, as we are going to see.

Ten years after the appearance of Kozintsev's film, whether prompted or not by its highlighting of this episode, Rosalie L. Colie points to its crucial importance in Shakespeare's conception of his tragedy:

Hamlet's recorder speech, at first hearing so casual, so chancy, so whirling, focuses to comment on the human instrumentalism and manipulation that is a particular theme as well as a major plot-element of this play. (1974: 24)

And indeed, if we take a closer look at what happens in Hamlet's Elsinore, we cannot help noticing the long series of incidents in which human beings are repeatedly used as instruments for the accomplishment of various secret designs by their superiors in the mutually merged hierarchies of family and state. On his arrival in the palace Hamlet at once is confronted with this rank debasement of human nature, which infuriates him.

Before everything else, in I.v.42 ff, his father's ghost consternates the Prince by letting him know that his mother has been seduced by the usurper Claudius and her will was subjected to the latter's heinous schemes. A couple of scenes earlier, in I.iii.115–135, we have heard Polonius's instructions to his daughter to sever her amorous relations with Hamlet because they are detrimental to her honour. Ophelia meekly agrees: "I shall obey, my lord" (l. 136), and, as we learn from her in the opening scene of the next act (II.i.108–110), in compliance with her father's express command, she has repelled the Prince's letters and "denied his access" to her person. These unexpected developments, the subjection of both his mother and his beloved to hostile authorities estranging them from him have, no wonder, shattered Hamlet's frame of mind, and Ophelia needn't be so surprised when he next appears before her in utter derangement, struggling to make sense of what is happening to his so far

² This passage is rendered very faithfully in Boris Pasternak's Russian translation, on which the film is based.

rationally ordered world. His nearest and dearest people seem to have been demonically transfigured, and he strives to probe through their appearances into the truth of their souls. As Ophelia tells her father:

He took me by the wrist and held me hard.
Then goes he to the length of all his arm,
And with his other hand thus o'er his brow
He falls to such perusal of my face
As he would draw it. Long stay'd he so,
And last, a little shaking of mine arm,
And thrice his head thus waving up and down,
He rais'd a sigh so piteous and profound
As it did seem to shatter all his bulk
And end his being. That done, he lets me go,
And with his head over his shoulder turn'd
He seem'd to find his way without his eyes,
For out o' doors he went without their helps,
And to the last bended their light on me. (II.i.87–100)

In an analogous way, a little later, the hero tries to probe into the hidden recesses of his mother's self – only this time, for her rather than for his own enlightenment – at their meeting in the Queen's chamber, when he frightens her out of her wits with the ambiguous words:

Come, come, and sit you down, you shall not budge.
You go not till I set you up a glass
Where you may see the inmost part of you. (III.iv.17–19)

The next blow to Hamlet comes with the discovery that his old schoolfellows and friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, are now employed by the murderous King as his trusted servants and sent to spy on him. We have witnessed the assignment of this task to them in the opening section of the second act, where the King declares:

Welcome, dear Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.
Moreover that we much did long to see you,
The need we have to use you did provoke
Our hasty sending. (II.ii.1–4)

This abrupt transition from courtesy to business and the unceremonious choice of the blunt verb “use” place the two depersonalised officers in the role that

will mould their career to its bitter end. They are summoned by the King in order to be *used* as his stooges prying into their friend's secrets and reporting to their employer about their findings. Just as Ophelia has responded to her father's command, so these two readily accept the King's behest with spineless docility:

... we both obey,
And here give up ourselves in the full bent
To lay our service freely at your feet
To be commanded. (II.ii.29–32)

Further on in the same scene, Polonius reads out to the royal couple a love letter sent by Hamlet to Ophelia and passed on to the old man by his obedient daughter. Thus, through a network of informants the most intimate motions of the Prince's soul are closely observed and investigated. The agents used for this purpose are human tools employed by a higher authority, who sometimes, as in the case of Polonius, resort in turn to tools of their own. In this case the instrumentalization of human beings extends from Claudius through Polonius to Ophelia with a focus on Hamlet. In such a world, in which individuality is debased to a functional employment irrespective of conviction or moral, there cannot be any respect of personal dignity, for the very essence of personality itself is reified.

A little later, Polonius, whose entire life seems to be devoted to the engineering of spying and eavesdropping on other people's secrets, suggests to the King that the two of them hide behind an arras and observe Hamlet's behaviour vis-à-vis Ophelia, so that it can be established whether the Prince is in love with her or not. In order to do that, Polonius says, at a time when the Prince, as usual, walks in the lobby, "... I'll loose my daughter to him" (II.ii.162).

Here is another tell-tale word, *loose*, no less disrespectful and offensive to the very notion of human dignity than the previous *use*, indicative of manipulation rather than communication as the norm of interpersonal relationship.

At the very beginning of the third act (i.1–21), we return to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern again with their punctual report to the King about Hamlet's "crafty madness". The account the two give of their interview with the Prince is replete with denunciation of their one-time friend and a fervent desire to please their royal master by concealing nothing from him. And then, back to Polonius and Ophelia. The King and his faithful councillor have arranged for Ophelia to be "loosed" to Hamlet, so that they, like two "lawful espials", may observe the Prince's behaviour from their hiding place and decide upon the cause of his distemper. It is made quite clear that both eavesdroppers are aware of the ignominy of their action but nonetheless continue with their plan. When they issue from behind the arras after Hamlet's withdrawal, Polonius does not evince any embarrassment or compunction; on the contrary, in a matter-of-fact curt manner he dismisses his daughter:

You need not tell us what Lord Hamlet said,
We heard it all. (III.i.181–182)

And then, no longer taking notice of her, he turns abruptly to the King to impart to him his next stratagem of eavesdropping, this time on a meeting between the Queen and her princely son, to be arranged by the King for this specific purpose. Now Polonius is ready to do the spying on his own by placing himself “in the ear/ Of all their conference” (III.i.186–187). The old man seems to be possessed by a prurient desire to spy on other people in order to please his employer, a weakness that he is soon going to pay for with his own life.

After the interrupted performance of the mousetrap play, the flustered King puts his human tools to work in quick succession to avert the danger on his life. In III.iii he orders Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to prepare themselves to whisk Hamlet off to England and then sends Polonius to form an opinion about the Prince’s state of mind from his *tête-à-tête* with his mother. The encounter in the Queen’s chamber is full of tension and revelations, especially about Gertrude’s role in the shady dealings in Elsinore. Hamlet makes no bones about her being manipulated by Claudius for the sake of his criminal designs and warns her that her complicity in them may cost her dearly. In view of what has just happened to another tool of the King, Polonius, she would do well to be more circumspect. But it may be a little late for such caveats.

And now comes the time for the recruitment of the ultimate royal instrument for the destruction of Hamlet. Laertes is back from his sojourn in France to avenge his father’s death. Claudius averts the young man’s attack against his royal person and directs it deftly to his own arch-enemy, the Prince. It is not very difficult for him to accomplish this task, for Laertes is short-tempered, uncritical and credulous. Besides, Laertes feels secure when he is guided by someone who stands higher than himself in the established hierarchy of this world. Here is his pledge of allegiance:

King. ... Will you be rul’d by me?

Lae. Ay, my lord,

So you will not o’erule me to a peace.

.....

Laer. ... My lord, I will be rul’d,

The rather if you could devise it so

That I might be the organ. (IV.vii.58–69)

“The organ” is, of course, another word for *instrument* or *tool*. Laertes has no will of his own; he is content to be “*rul’d*”. His response to Hamlet’s apology and offer of reconciliation before their fencing match is indicative:

... I am satisfied in nature,
Whose motive in this case should stir me most
To my revenge; but in my terms of honour
I stand aloof, and will no reconciliation
Till by some elder masters of known honour
I have a voice and precedent of peace
To keep my name ungor'd. (V.ii.240–246)

It is curious how the two related notions of honour and dignity become antithetical as they are represented respectively by Laertes and Hamlet, the two adversaries in the final combat. In an unfree society, it turns out, a human tool can continue to hold on to the notion of honour, but true dignity is unattainable to such creatures of the day.

* * * * *

In the inception of the play, Hamlet returns to Elsinore from the University of Wittenberg. He is not so much a prince and heir apparent to the Danish throne as a scholar steeped in the ideal of Renaissance humanism. This mental make-up is clearly expressed in the protagonist's Picoesque praise of man's endowments:

What piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculty, in form and moving how express and admirable, in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god: the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals... (II.ii.303–307)

It is true that this paean is directly subverted by the resurgence of the hero's characteristic scepticism, but the enthusiastic words have been uttered, and they, too, spring from the heart. Later on, we are made witness to Hamlet's declaration of friendship and admiration for Horatio, suggestive again of his high expectations of human nature:

Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice,
And could of men distinguish her election,
Sh'ath seal'd thee for herself; for thou hast been
As one, in suff'ring all, that suffers nothing,
A man that Fortune's buffets and rewards
Hast ta'en with equal thanks; and blest are those
Whose blood and judgment are so well commeddled
That they are not a pipe for Fortune's finger
To sound what stop she please. Give me that man
That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him
In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of hearts,
As I do thee. (III.ii.63–74)

Side by side with the fine balance between the emotional and the rational self, recommended by Renaissance thinkers as the foundation of true distinction, Hamlet states that the perfect human being is recognized by his insusceptibility to manipulation. And, interestingly enough, it is at this point that the hero introduces briefly the striking analogy between human and musical instruments that, towards the end of the same scene, will be developed to its full potential in the thematically crucial recorder episode, which this essay opened with.

For almost everybody at Claudius's court strict feudal hierarchy is more real than human nature and imposes its absolute control over it. In I.iii, Laertes and Polonius instruct Ophelia to reject Hamlet's love, because their social ranks are incompatible and, as her father puts it, "Lord Hamlet is a prince out of thy star" (II.ii.141). In III.iii.1–26, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern adumbrate the theory of the exceptional place of a king in the human race. Hamlet, on the contrary, has little respect for hierarchy and prefers normal human relations to the rules of social subordination. When, in I.i.160–162, at their first encounter in Elsinore, Horatio addresses his prince as "your Lordship", Hamlet corrects him: "Sir, my good friend. I'll change that name with you." When, a little later, he takes his leave from the guards and they courteously say to him: "Our duty to your honour", the Prince replies: "Your loves, as mine to you. Farewell." This elevating of genuine personal relations above impersonal political order is, in fact, a constant theme in Shakespeare's writings, sounded most directly in his Sonnets, e.g. 91 ("Some glory in their birth, some in their skill"), where the Poet avows: "Thy love is better than high birth to me, / Richer than wealth, prouder than garments' cost..." In contradistinction to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's eulogy of the monarch's exceptionality, when Horatio says to Hamlet that his father "was a good king", the Prince responds: "A was a man, take him for all in all: / I shall not look upon his like again." This is another kind of exceptionality, one not of rank but of personal worth and, therefore, more actual.

This belief in the inherent nobility of human nature makes Hamlet violently intolerant of its prostitution to the arrogance of power. When, on his arrival in Elsinore, he is confronted again and again with the willing submission of men and women to manipulation, due to meekness or self-interest and moral corruption, the hero of the tragedy, who is by his inner constitution disposed to consider carefully every action, loses his temper and strikes at the perpetrators of this offence against human dignity, the most unpardonable crime of all in the eyes of a Renaissance idealist.

Granville-Barker observes that Hamlet can be cruel with "the cruelty of a sensitive mind, ever tempted to shirk its battle against the strong in order to triumph over the weak."³ I find this interpretation a little unfair, for it suggests pusillanimity, which is hardly a feature of the protagonist's character. Hamlet is cruel indeed, but

³ Harley Granville-Barker, *Preface* (1937), quoted in Leech 8 and indirectly reaffirmed by Mincoff (Минков 145).

he does not prefer the weak to the strong for the aim of his blows out of caution. The weak cross his way, as they are sent by the stronger to perform their tasks and then, as he explains to Laertes, it is not Hamlet who strikes at them but his madness. This is what he calls his explosive anger, his intolerance of the debasement of human will to a despicable instrument in the hands of an arch-villain. These outbursts are unplanned, but they are all motivated by the same inner compulsion. Whether they are symptomatic, as many commentators of the play believe, of a psychological disorder called *melancholy*,⁴ which attracted a lot of specialized and popular attention in Shakespeare's time,⁵ is immaterial. The first victim of this uncontrollable passion happens to be Ophelia, when Hamlet suspects that she has let her father estrange her from him and use her as a decoy in the nunnery scene (III.i.90–151). This leads to his treating her disparagingly as a mere sex object in public during the mouse-trap performance (III.ii.110–119, 240–246). Then comes his callous reaction to the discovery that he has inadvertently killed Polonius (III.iv.31–33, 215–218). Further on, we discover from his admission to Horatio that he has sent Rosencrantz and Guildenstern cold-bloodedly to their death in England and has no bad conscience whatever about that (V.ii.29–62). In the final episode of the plot, Hamlet does offer something like an apology to Laertes about his assault on him in Ophelia's grave, but although he has told Horatio that he regrets this violent act (V.ii.75–80), the apology strikes an insincere, ironical note and does not sound like genuine compunction (V.ii.222–240). Finally, his farewell words over the body of his dead mother are as cold as ice and full of accusation rather than filial sentiment: "Wretched Queen, adieu" (V.ii.338).

As a true idealist, Hamlet is capable of admiration and exaltation, of scorn, intolerance and anger, but not of sympathy and pardon. As a believer in man's potential for greatness, he feels his mission is to cleanse the world of the inexcusable weakness that reduces human beings to unthinking and insensate instruments of evil masterminds. These people have agreed to be demoted to mechanical extensions of others, and as such, they can, of course, have no feelings, so they can be treated like all inanimate things, unfeelingly. Michael Hattaway expresses a widespread critical consternation at "the number of deaths caused by Hamlet directly or indirectly as he sought to scour the court of what he took to be its unclean elements" (1987: 25). Yet there can be no doubt that Hamlet's hardheartedness is the product not of an evil

⁴ See A.C. Bradley's comments on "[Hamlet's] callousness, his insensibility to the fates of those whom he despises, and to the feelings even of those whom he loves". "These, the critic concludes, are frequent symptoms of such melancholy and they sometimes alternate, as they do in Hamlet, with bursts of transitory, almost hysterical, and quite fruitless emotion" (Bradley 107). Melancholy is twice mentioned in the play as Hamlet's specific problem, once by the protagonist himself (II.ii.597) and a second time by the King (III.i. 167).

⁵ The most outstanding Renaissance publications on this subject in England are Timothy Bright's, *A Treatise of Melancholy* (1586) and Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1628).

mind but of a yearning for a better world, purged of its subhuman scum. This formidable eschatological drive is the ultimate glory and the blight of idealism.

The striking irony of Shakespeare's Danish tragedy is that its hero, this passionate fighter against the reduction of human beings to unthinking tools, discovers that he himself is in a similar position. As Dr. Johnson observes, "Hamlet is, through the whole play, rather an instrument than an agent" (1960: 112). The difference, however, is important, for his master is not another human being, but a mystical power that governs the world and imposes its supreme justice over all. When, during his visit to his mother's chamber, the protagonist happens to stab the sneaking Polonius to death and becomes aware of what he has unwittingly done, we hear him exclaim:

... heaven hath pleas'd it so,
To punish me with this, and this with me;
That I must be their scourge and minister. (III.iv.175–177)

Fredson Bowers says that these lines "contain perhaps the clearest analysis Hamlet makes of his predicament" (1955: 740) and devotes a scrupulous study to the meaning of the ambiguous phrase *scourge and minister*. He argues that in the closing part of the play the hero's "lack of plan and his insistence on providence arises from his confidence in Heaven... Hamlet's assured feeling that he is only an instrument in the hands of God sustains him against the ominous portent of disaster that seizes on his heart. For he has learned his lesson from the results of killing Polonius" (Bowers 1955: 748–749).

But there is a further, more damaging twist of dramatic irony: in his drifting through the murky story of the play, Hamlet has been subjected again and again to the manipulation of the vicious King and at least one of his instruments, Polonius. In spite of his almost supernatural perspicacity and ability to see through the stratagems of his enemies, the Prince is led into the traps set for him by his encounter with Ophelia in the nunnery scene, the visit to his mother in her chamber, and the fencing match with Laertes, all fatal schemes against his life, adversely affecting those around him. Even for a very astute and brave person, life at Claudius's court, where there is always someone or other hiding behind the arras, offers no opportunity for complete independence and uninvolved involvement in the machinations of the evil. Hamlet's saving grace is that, to the best of his ability, he strives to withstand and confound those machinations. And at long last, he does manage to become an active part in the final twist of tragic irony, when the plot turns against its mastermind and the opportune moment comes for the Prince with his last breath to strike the decisive blow against the fountainhead of all corruption in the world of Elsinore, the unconscionable usurper Claudius.

* * * * *

The question to be asked at the end of the present essay is: does the hero of this tragedy achieve his task? As a revenger punishing the murderer of his father, he obviously does. As the scourge and minister of heaven punishing evil-doers, he does too. As an idealist cleansing the world of people who have agreed to be manipulated by evil authority and have thus derogated the dignity of humanity by turning themselves into mere instruments, he cannot be so happy with the result of his actions, for most of his strikes have been haphazard, instinctive rather than rational, and not absolutely justified. Moreover, it can hardly be concluded that Hamlet's militant intransigence has managed to reform the admittedly corrupt world around him. Some of the human scum on which corruption flowered has been removed with the elimination of Polonius, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. But surely others will rise to fill their places; we have met at least one of the likely candidates, the "water-fly" Osric. The arch-villain Claudius has also been liquidated; but can his successor Fortinbras, who is ready to expose "what is mortal and unsure/ To all that fortune, death and danger dare, / Even for an eggshell" (IV.v.51–53), even though he has Hamlet's "dying voice" on his side (V.ii.361), fill us with hopes for a reformed, more humane and healthy state of Denmark? The play ends on a question mark.

Anyway, the hero is dead. He has no way of remaining alive for at least two reasons. First, as a revenger, a traditional theatrical figure in the Renaissance genre of the revenge tragedy, his death is mandatory, for he has taken upon himself a task which God reserved to Himself,⁶ and so has to be destroyed. Second, as the scourge of heaven, his very election for this role dooms him to death, for God's rod must at the end be thrown into the fire.⁷ On both counts, the revenger/ scourge is doomed. At the end of Beaumont and Fletcher's *Maid's Tragedy*, we hear the verdict weighing over such trespassers of divine commands:

[O]n lustful kings
Unlook'd for sudden deaths from God are sent;
But curs'd is he that is their instrument.

And what about the idealist who has come to reform the world, to make it better, but has ended up with so much blood on his hands? Are we expected to bewail his loss or to feel relieved that a whirlwind fury has lastly come to rest? The question mark again persists.

* * * * *

Post Scriptum

At the turn of the century Shakespeare became, for some reason, keenly interested in the phenomenon of humanistic idealism in the context of an imperfect society. This

⁶ Romans 12:19.

⁷ See, for instance, *The Works of the Rev. William Bridge* 448.

is arguably the central theme of his two remarkable tragedies written in 1600–1601, *Julius Caesar* and *Hamlet*, featuring the eponymous hero of the latter, who has been discussed above, and the character of Brutus, an honorary man turned murderer in the name of justice, at the heart of the former. It is perhaps not by chance that the dramas produced by this author in the next two or three years, known as the “problem plays”, are concerned with a similar theme, that of moral absolutism in the midst of compromise and corruption, especially prominent in the figure of Isabella in *Measure for Measure*.

While human instrumentalism (the reduction of personality to a mere tool in the schemes of those in power) is almost solely a concern of *Hamlet*, psychological manipulation continues to be a central interest for Shakespeare in his mature tragedies in the middle of the first decade of the new century with Lady Macbeth questioning her husband’s chief virtue, manliness, in order to push him into the snare of treason and murder; with “honest Iago’s” perfidious camaraderie bewitching Othello; with Edmund’s instigation of Gloucester to turn against his true son – all three interventions leading to the moral destruction of good characters and, ultimately, to their deaths.

Before *Hamlet*, the scourge-of-heaven theme was famously tackled by Marlowe in his first, extremely popular play *Tamburlaine the Great*.⁸ The hero’s last words after a life full of military exploits and the chastisement of a long line of enemies are:

For Tamburlaine, the scourge of God, must die.

It is in this play again that weaklings like the King of Persia Mycetes and Tamburlaine’s own son Calyphas, who have no personal dignity and prowess, are treated with scorn and even physically destroyed, a prefiguration of Hamlet’s ruthless execution of human tools.

Works Cited

Battenhouse 1941: Battenhouse, Roy. *Marlowe’s “Tamburlaine.”* Vanderbilt University Press.

Bowers 1955: Bowers, Fredson. Hamlet as Minister and Scourge. – In: *PMLA*/ vol. 70, no. 4.

Bradley 1904: Bradley, A.C. *Shakespearean Tragedy*. Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett.

Bright 1586: Bright, Timothy. *A Treatise of Melancholy*. London.

Burton 1628: Burton, Robert. *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. London.

Colie 1974: Colie, Rosalie L. *Shakespeare’s Living Art*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

⁸ See Battenhouse 13–15, 108–113.

Granville-Barker 1937: Granville-Barker, Harley. *Prefaces to Shakespeare: se. Hamlet*. London: Sidgwick & Jackson.

Hattaway 1987: Hattaway, Michael. *Hamlet*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and London: Macmillan.

Jenkins 1982: Harold Jenkins (ed.). *Hamlet*. – In: *The Arden Shakespeare*. London and New York: Methuen.

Johnson 1960: Johnson, Samuel. *Samuel Johnson on Shakespeare*, ed. W. K. Wimsatt. New York: Hill & Wang.

Leech 1979: Leech, Clifford. *Studies in Hamlet, 1901–1955*. – In: Muir, Kenneth and Stanley Wells (eds.). *Aspects of Hamlet*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bridge 1845: *The Works of the Rev. William Bridge, M.A.* London: Thomas Tegg.

Минков 1946: Минков, Марко. *Шекспир*. София: Държавно издателство на Министерството на народното просвещение.

Шекспир 1941: Шекспир. *Гамлет, принц датский*. Москва: Госдетиздат.