

## SHAKESPEARE IN UKRAINIAN

THERE is no doubt that translations of Shakespeare's plays could be considered not only as a standard of the literary taste of a given community, but also as a proof of a sufficient development of the literary language into which these works are translated. From this point of view it is interesting to follow up the history of the Ukrainian translations of Shakespeare.

These appear rather late, as late as the last part of the 19th century. That, of course, does not mean that the Ukrainians were not interested in Shakespeare's works. It will be sufficient to mention that one of the most popular early translators of Shakespeare into Russian, in the thirties of the 19th century, was an Ukrainian author, Ivan Roskovšenko (1809-1889).

But among the Ukrainians themselves there used to be an opinion that the Ukrainian literature, being, before all things, a national literature, ought to take its subjects from the national life of the country or from its historical events. That is why there are only very few early translations from foreign literatures into Ukrainian with the exception of translations of Byron's works by Kostomarov in the thirties of the 19th century.

The first place among the translators of Shakespeare into Ukrainian belongs without a doubt to Panteleimon Kuliš (1819-1897), a well-known Ukrainian author. From his biography we know that he was, from his earliest years, an enthusiastic admirer of the great Englishman and that, at the end of the fifties of the 19th century, he had elaborated a plan of translations of Shakespeare into Ukrainian,<sup>1</sup> but he only carried it out considerably later.

The honour of the first printed Ukrainian translation of a Shakespearean play belongs not to Kuliš, but to Pavlin Svencicki, a modest writer, who published part of an Ukrainian translation of *Hamlet* in a Lemberg review, *Nyva*, in 1865, and signed his translation with a pseudonym, "Pavlo Svij." The translation was heavy and awkward, and that explains why it made no impression and found no echo in contemporary Ukrainian literature.

At the beginning of the seventies a talented Ukrainian poet from Bukovina, Juriј Fedkovič, undertook a translation of Shakespeare's plays, but he lacked a wide culture and was ignorant of English, making use of a German translation. He translated *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. These translations had no literary value, though they cost their author immense labour; of the *Macbeth* translation alone there came down three different versions quite complete. Fedkovič made wide use of the local

<sup>1</sup> *Kievskaya Starina*, 1889, v. 66, p. 349.

Ukrainian dialects (especially the Hucul); Ivan Franko says that in his Shakespeare translations Fedkovič "emptied the treasury of the Hucul dialect to the bottom." But both translations remained in manuscript for twenty years and were quite unknown until published simply as a literary document by the learned Ševčenko Society in Lemberg, in 1902, in the collected works of Fedkovič.<sup>2</sup> Had they appeared when they were made, they certainly would have been an interesting literary event.

In 1882 there appeared in Kiev a *Hamlet* translation by a well-known Ukrainian poet and playwright, Mykailo Staryckyj: *Hamlet, prync Danskyj*. Tragedia v 5 dijach V. Šekspyra. Pereklav na ukrainsku movu M. Staryckyj. Z prylohoju muzyky M. Lyssenska. Kyjiv, 1882, st. 204 + xii, 8°. Staryckyj had already made several translations from Byron (*Mazeppa* and part of *Childe Harold*), Heine, Mickiewicz and others. His verse translation of *Hamlet* must be considered as a very good one, though unfortunately he changed the metre of the original and adopted instead a very unsuitable one, that of the Serbian epic songs (shortly before, he had published an Ukrainian translation of Serbian epic and lyrical songs).

Staryckyj's translation of *Hamlet* gave rise to a sharp division of opinion. Some were fundamentally against the translation on the ground that Ukrainian literature ought not to exceed the limits of homely original works or books adapted for the people. Among these was the best known Ukrainian historical writer Kostomarov, who from opportunist motives, in order not to run the risk of Ukrainian literature being accused of political separatism, maintained that it must remain within the limits of original productions in prose and verse and popular books for home use only. Others reproached Staryckyj for his coining of new words. Only a few noticed the high literary value of the translation. It was not till much later that Staryckyj's translation found recognition and appreciation. In our time, in Soviet Ukraine there has been issued a new edition. (*Hamlet*. Pereklad M. Staryckoho. Statja S. Rodseviča. Redakcyja, statja i prymitky A. Nikovskoho. Kiev, 1928, st. xxxvi + 192 + xxxii, 8°).

In the same year as Staryckyj's *Hamlet*, there appeared in Lemberg v. I Kuliš's translation of Shakespeare's plays. It is assumed that Kuliš began the systematical translation of the most important of Shakespeare's plays at the end of 1870. In 1882, he came to Lemberg bringing with him the sum of 6,000 roubles given by an unknown Ukrainian Mæcenas for the purpose of publishing Shakespeare's plays.<sup>3</sup> Kuliš had the intention of himself seeing his translations through the press. There were nine volumes containing 27 plays. But Kuliš succeeded in publishing only one volume comprising *Othello*, *Troilus and Cressida* and

<sup>2</sup> *Ukrainska biblioteka*. Tom IV. Dramatyčni tvory Jurija Fedkovyča. U Lvovi, 1902, st. xiii + 532, 8°.

<sup>3</sup> *Ivan Franko*: Shakespeare bei den Ruthenen, *Die Zeit*, Wien, 1903, N. 446, 5.33.

*The Comedy of Errors* (Šekspyrovy tvory s movy brytanskoj movoju ukrainskoju poperekladav P. A. Kuliš. Tom pervyj. U Lvovi, 1882, st. 418, 8°).

Kuliš was not able to complete his plan; he did not publish any more of Shakespeare's plays, and used the funds for some other publishing purpose. In 1889, he had finished in manuscript, besides the three already published, the twelve following plays: *King Lear*, *Coriolanus*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Julius Cæsar*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Measure for Measure*, *Hamlet*, *Cymbeline*, and *The Merchant of Venice*. He did all he possibly could to obtain the permission of the Russian Imperial Censor to publish his translations, but it was of no avail.<sup>4</sup> Ukrainian literature in Russia was, under the ukase of 1876, limited to the publication of original poetry and fiction, the period from 1882–1883 being a liberal interval that accounts, for instance, for the publishing of Staryckyj's translation of *Hamlet*. Thus Kuliš died in 1897 without having seen any other of his Shakespeare translations in print, nor Byron's *Childe Harold*, while only parts of his translation of *Don Juan* appeared in the Lemberg monthly review *Pravda*, 1894.

But soon after Kuliš's death the publishing of his Shakespeare translations could be realised in Lemberg. Again a Mæcenas from the Ukraine (also unknown) gave funds (4,000 gulden) for the purpose. Kuliš's manuscripts were given to the well-known Ukrainian poet and savant, Ivan Franko, for revision. The choice of the editor was a most happy one. Himself a great master of the Ukrainian language and well versed in the knowledge of Shakespeare, Franko made a success of his task. He corrected all the errors of translation, and changed awkward and unhappy expressions to such a point that the translation, having passed through the crucible of these two great Ukrainian poets, is indeed a beautiful one. During the period from 1889 to 1902, Franko published in separate volumes the nine following plays (given in the order of their publication): *Hamlet* (1899), *The Taming of the Shrew* (1900), *Macbeth* (1900), *Coriolanus* (1900), *Julius Cæsar* (1900), *Antony and Cleopatra* (1901), *Much Ado about Nothing* (1901), *King Lear* (1902), and *Measure for Measure* (1902). Each play is preceded by a special study and explanatory notes based on wide sources. Unfortunately the MSS. of two plays in Kuliš's translation (*Cymbeline* and *The Merchant of Venice*) were lost, and did not appear in Franko's edition.

The Ukrainians can be justly proud of Kuliš's translation as revised by Franko. In a special monograph on Kuliš's translations of Shakespeare's plays<sup>5</sup> J. Hordynski made a careful analysis of the work of the translator and the editor, verifying word by word with the original as well as with Franko's revision work. This monograph amply corroborates our high appreciation of Kuliš's translation as edited by Franko.

<sup>4</sup> W. Šenrok, P. A. Kuliš, *Kievskaya starina*, 1901, tom 75, s. 24–25.

<sup>5</sup> *Zapysky Naukovoho Tovarystva imeny Ševčenka u Lvovi*, tom 148, Lviv, 1928, st. 55–164.



According to Hordynski Franko brought Kuliš's translation nearer to the text of Shakespeare, and that not only without losing the literary and artistic value of Kuliš's work, but coming nearer to the true spirit of the original. Franko smoothed Kuliš's tendency to coin neologisms and his excessive use of the Church-Slavonic; with great tact he simplified Kuliš's language without effacing the individual characteristics of Kuliš's vocabulary and of his poetical style.

Besides Kuliš another well-known Ukrainian author, Panas Myrnyj, attempted the translation of Shakespearian plays. His version of *King Lear* is unfortunately not yet published and it is hoped that it will now appear in the posthumous edition of Panas Myrnyj's works to be issued by the Ukrainian State Publishing Office in Kharkov.

Just now there is a revival of interest in Shakespeare's plays in Soviet Ukraine; there have appeared series of new translations, reprints of old ones, and several adaptations. During the last few years there have been published the following translations: (1) *Othello*, Translation from the English by Johansen and V. Šerbanjuk. Kharkov, 1927, st. 268, 8°; (2) *The Taming of the Shrew* (Pryborkannja Norovystoj), a comedy by W. Shakespeare. Kharkov, 1928, st. 68, 8° (a prose translation of an unknown translator); (3) *Macbeth*, a tragedy from the English, by T. Osmačka. Kharkov-Kiev, 1930, st. 150, 12°.

Besides these new translations some of the older ones have been reprinted: *Hamlet*, translated by Staryckyj, with a preface by S. Rodzevič and revised by A. Nikovski (Kiev, 1928, st. xxxyi + 192 + xxxii, 8°; and *Romeo and Juliet*, translated by Kuliš, but revised and edited by M. Vorony (Kharkov, 1928, st. 162, 8°).

We have not been able to see these new translations, but judging from the fact that they are done by young and talented Ukrainian poets (M. Johansen and T. Osmačka) and revised by well-known authors of the previous generation (A. Nikovski and M. Vorony) it is to be supposed that they do not discredit Ukrainian literature. The fact that there should be this interest in Shakespearian plays in Soviet Ukraine, where the tone is given by the "proletarian" poets who officially dominate literature and where the classics are neglected, is in itself distinctly curious.

Quite lately there appeared in Lemberg a verse translation of the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, by J. Hordynski (in the monthly review, *Literaturno-Naukovyj Vistnyk*, in Lemberg, 1927, and also separately). The translation is very close to the original, but somewhat heavy and abounding in provincialisms of the Galician dialect.

Besides the translations there are in Ukrainian several adaptations of some of the Shakespeare's plays. These are the result of the desire to popularise Shakespeare, to bring him nearer to the understanding of the people and to render the plays accessible to popular theatres. The opinion has long existed among Ukrainian authors that Shakespeare's plays, through their wide human interest, can be perfectly understood by the average Ukrainian reader of the people, and that their great

human and ethical value makes them especially valuable to popular libraries and popular theatres. This view was expressed by Kuliš as early as the fifties of the last century, and later the well-known Ukrainian author and educationalist, B. Hrinčenko, supported this view (especially in his book, *Before the Wide World*, Kiev, 1907). But the difficulties of some of the passages in Shakespeare which, to be understood, require a thorough knowledge of contemporary history and life in foreign countries, gave to some Ukrainians the idea of adapting the Shakespearian plays, bringing them nearer to the understanding of the Ukrainian popular reader or theatre-goer. The first attempt at such an adaptation is due to the pen of the above-mentioned translator of Shakespeare, Jurij Fedkovič, who published in the Lemberg review, *Pravda*, 1872, his adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew* under the title "Jak purjavych uhovkujut."

Quite lately there appeared an adaptation of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Susidočky iz Windzoru Komedia na 4 dii, pererobyv i dla narodnjoho teatru prystosuvav Hnat Chotkevyc. Teatralna biblioteka N 36, Kharkov, 1928) st. 77, 8°.

As in other literatures there exist also in Ukrainian adaptations of Shakespearian plays into tales for young people. Two such publications should be mentioned here: (1) *Shakespeare for Young People and Elder*, adapted by Andrij Veretelnyk. (Lemberg, 1901, p. 47, 16°, containing *King Lear*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *Macbeth*); (2) *Charles and Mary Lamb: Tales from Shakespeare* (*The Tempest*, *Macbeth*, and *The Comedy of Errors*). From the English by H. Čikalenko (Kiev, Leipzig, 1922, p. 40, 8°).

As is to be seen from this short survey, not all of Shakespeare's plays have been translated into Ukrainian and the editions are far from numerous. The reason lies chiefly in the abnormal conditions of the development of Ukrainian literature in the 19th century. The translators had no hope of seeing their work in print; or if printed outside Russia, these books were considered as prohibited literature. We ought to admire the idealism of those men who in these circumstances still went on working, in the desire to give to their people in its own language the works of the "divine Shakespeare," as he was called by our greatest national poet, Ševčenko.

However since the Ukrainian translations of Shakespeare include that of Kuliš and Franko, they are far from being the least important in the series of Shakespeare translations into Slavonic languages.

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