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TWO CONFLICTING ETHICAL CODES IN SHAKESPEAREAN DRAMA

This paper mainly pinpoints the peculiarities of Elizabethan secular drama. Drama as a genre in that period fluctuates between Reformation and Catholicism. That determines the special morality and ethical code. This code includes the selection of Pagan or Christian hero based on the priority of the objective, which is reached by comparing two heroes – Shylock and Hamlet.

Key words: *the Renaissance, Elizabethan drama, revenge, tragedy, Pagan, Christian, Northern Saga, ethical code, moral code, secular approach, Reformation*

Elizabethan drama came to be a secular drama, and though England in that period was undergoing Reformation, the majority of the English were formally Puritans, but in reality they adhered to Catholicism. And Shakespearean drama also pursues the same route, as the ideology of these religious approaches leads to some misunderstandings and controversy, which can be distinguished in the conduct of the heroes.

First, this drama is definitely secular, which is quite typical for the Renaissance and the period of Humanism.

Secondly, it sways between the concepts of Christian and non-Christian values, trying to distinguish between the virtues and ethical standards. In a nutshell, this deliberation has the following wording: valor or virtue; which is the main harbinger for Shakespearean heroes, guiding and heralding them to the New Times.

Third, it can't choose between Reformation and Catholicism, as Reformation in those times was sort of imported ideology accepted with disguised hostility.

As the main trend of Shakespearean dramas is being “Human, All Too Human” /Nietzsche, 1999: 1/, his realism is more real than pathetic, more ridiculous than declarative, more ironizing than respectful. The Renaissance proclaimed that the human being is beautiful, intelligent and deserves all the best, just because he is a human being. Meanwhile Shakespeare stated that human being is imperfect, funny, full of sins and vices, but still adorable. This imperfection in Humanism encompasses the conceptual canvas in his dramas, but as religion laid all the foundation for Humanism in his plays, we had better make distinction,

because all his characters can be classified in two categories, they are either Pagan or Christian heroes, or very seldom something in-between. Thus, Othello is a warrior, proving that in prosperous Venice nobody was able to fight the external enemy, and they needed to import a hero from abroad. So he knows his dignity as a warrior and he commits all his deeds as a warrior. Hamlet is a typically Christian hero. Hegel used to say. “Some of Shakespeare’s characters are pure artists of themselves” /Hegel, 1976: 7/.

Christianity is sustainable as the language, and it gets obvious when throughout the whole play Hamlet just plays with words, as the New Testament does. Meanwhile all actions performed by Hamlet are just imitation, be it murder or pretence. With words he releases more sound and fury, than Othello with all his passions and actions.

When speaking of something in-between, one could not skip such characters, as Shylock and Macbeth, both in tragedy and comedy, drawing a parallel between a non-Christian, who is forced to behave like a Christian and a Christian, who is forced to behave like a Pagan (successively Shylock and Hamlet).

Shylock is the symbol of Venice – this light, sparkling city which made its fortune on spices and silks. This city needs fixed rules for successful trade and for good administration of its multinational and multicultural population. Shylock like Hamlet, according to Hegel’s statement, “is an artist of his own self, his own character”.

Hegel also stated that “tragedy is the fight between two goods (or two rights)” /Hegel, 1976: 30/. From this statement we can derive that comedy is the fight between good and evil, but despite the stark contrast between these two principles both genres solve the idea of hero’s conduct by exercising two different types of morality, two ethical approaches in a time.

Firstly, both these literary works promote the idea of common humanity, the idea that men are equal and rightful just because they are human. However, let us observe how Christian and non-Christian heroes, or so called Pagan, Classical heroes specify this concept of humanity.

Of course this approach is mainly based on the identification of physical and spiritual aspects of human structure: where the prevailing side generally lays out the foundation for the further development of the character.

Shylock is a reclusive Pagan hero living in the open society of Venice hence his domineering trait is physicality.

For Shylock every spiritual motion turns into bodily sensation. He cries when experiencing this sensation, he laughs when someone tickles him. He is a man of action – his body needs stimuli when it performs emotion and this is one aspect of common humanity – physical aspect. The famous monologue of the Venetian Jew proves the fact that such emotions as grievance, pain or joy are caused mainly by physical triggers.

If you prick us, do we not bleed? You tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?
/Shakespeare, 2005/

Hence, it is critical that the paragon of physical common humanity demands Antonio's flesh as mortgage. Overwhelming physicality as such is appreciated by Shylock who is the bearer and the subject of it alltogether.

The idea of revenge is of particular importance in this passage as it specifies the core divergence between Pagan and Christian types of morality.

Shylock manifests this distinction by another famous monologue where he draws the barrier between physical commonness and spiritual values, saying "I would walk with you, talk with you, trade with you, but I will never pray or love with you" /Shakespeare, 2005: 89/. He agrees to participate in the concept of common humanity only physically, while his human, especially religious values are rooted in a deeper ground and our hero, being a totally religious person, prefers to stay alone in his religious life.

In those ages as we know religious and spiritual lives were totally identical, and tradition formed the type of spiritual response to ethics and morality.

Shylock set this unbreakable bond between tradition and personality type, therefore he suffered from the fact that his own daughter does not want to continue this line and to genetically share the same tribal values that she inherited from her forebears. Hamlet, unlike Shylock, is a very different personality type, as he does not care for national or community standards, he mainly comes up with the concept of general human sins and virtues in terms of the family relationships. What unites him with Shylock is the idea of revenge, the choice and the type of response to that idea.

Hamlet also manifests the concept of common humanity, but he sees the common humanity neither in physical nor even in a legal aspect, as his basis for common humanity is both mortality and disenchantment. As a hero, Hamlet is disenchanting, as a human being he is disenchanting as well.

Hamlet's abhorrence does not resemble Shylock's disenchantment in posterity and society. It can be classified as "existential disenchantment" in humanity and human being. Hamlet seeks and finds solution in transitory nature of life and in the mandatory mortality of a human being. And this is the place where physical body ends. This is the end of Shylock's physicality and the beginning of existential spirituality which encompasses both religious and philosophical aspects. In Hamlet's monologues this idea appears in different forms and manifestations, as Hamlet deploras human glory, luxury, love and existence gradually aggravating the tension and the sense of guilt in himself and in others.

*“Assume a virtue, if you have it not.
That monster custom, who all sense doth eat,
Of habits devil, is angel yet in this,
That to the use of actions fair and good
He likewise gives a frock or livery
That aptly is put on. Refrain tonight,
And that shall lend a kind of easiness
To the next abstinence; the next more easy;
For use almost can change the stamp of nature,
And either curb the devil, or throw him out
With wondrous potency. Once more, good night,
And when you are desirous to be blest.
/http://hamlet-shakespeare.com/monologues/hamlet_monologue/.*

From this point of view, we can discuss the aspect of vengeance, as to Pagan and Catholic codes. In the Bible God said. “I am your vengeance”, thus condemning and degrading the act of vengeance exercised by people. While in Pagan world, revenge is an ethical norm and should be immediately implemented by the quickest action. Heroic world can never be the world of words - it is the world of actions. And we see how Hamlet fluctuates between Christian and Pagan ethics. The Pagan code demands more action, while the Christian code throws the hero into reflection.

This fluctuation between different codes and their adoption is derived from the demand of the era, as the Renaissance, though pretending to be multicultural and all-embracing still demanded a unified and comprehensive approach.

The upbringing of a new personality is based upon Hegel’s principle. “The aim of the education is to make a person ethical” /Hegel, 1976: 67/, and the search of this ethical code started in the times of the Renaissance.

Shylock, unlike Hamlet, needs no reflection or deliberation to perform his act of vengeance, but he is confined to inaction by the rules of the society. At the same time he bears the same ambiguities as Hamlet. Both of them are stuck among two different codes. While Hamlet is unwilling to be Pagan, as prompted by the laws of Northern Saga, Shylock is unwilling to behave like a Christian and to act by the laws of Christian community.

Hamlet’s motives were internal, as Hamlet puts limits to his actions himself, Shylock’s limitations are external as he is deterred by the court and the constitution of Venice. These two characters share the same deliberation for two entirely different reasons.

The social background for these two heroes is also very different, because Shylock lives in Venice, the city which made its fortune on silk and spices. The multicultural community, where the only way to co-exist peacefully, is to subdue your personal and ethical code to something that is more important. In

Venice the concept of law is the foundation of new civic ethical code. Making Portia a female judge, Shakespeare proclaims the new era of new ethical values, where law is the priority, whereas religion, morality and ethics move to the backstage.

In ‘Hamlet’, moral code comes not from the internal community, but from the outside. If one is unable to exercise law on his own, someone will definitely intrude. Fortinbras is the vivid illustration of this peaceful intrusion, which is specified in Horatio’s words:

HORATIO

*Now, sir, young Fortinbras,
Of unimprovèd mettle hot and full,
Hath in the skirts of Norway here and there
Shark'd up a list of lawless resolute
For food and diet to some enterprise
That hath a stomach in 't; which is no other
(As it doth well appear unto our state)
But to recover of us, by strong hand
And terms compulsory, those foresaid lands
So by his father lost.*

[/http://www.hamlet-shakspeare.com/monologues/hamlet_monologue/](http://www.hamlet-shakspeare.com/monologues/hamlet_monologue/)

Law and education step into peoples’ lives from a more developed and civilized community as a manifestation of the new domineering civilization.

Shylock and Hamlet are both unwilling to play by the rules of the new game – civic tolerance, acceptance, assessment and reflection. Eventually, both of them were granted the sympathy of the audience owing to their tragic nature and tragic destiny. Comedy and tragedy in the retrospective aspect swap the criteria: comical irony resonating in the tragedy and tragic laughter reflected in the comedy.

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Ա. ՍԵԴՐԱԿՅԱՆ – Էթիկական և բարոյական երկու տարբեր սկզբունքների բախումը Շեքսպիրյան դրամայում. – Հոդվածը նվիրված է եղիսաբեթյան դրամայի աշխարհիկացման գործընթացին: Այդ համատեքստում անվերջ բախվում են առաքինության և մեղքի հեթանոսական ու քրիստոնեական արժեքները: Այս բախումը ներկայացված է երկու շեքսպիրյան տարբեր հերոսների՝ Շայլոկի և Համլետի օրինակով: Այդ հերոսների ընտրությունը պայմանավորված է երկու երկերում վրեժի թեմայի առկայությամբ և վրեժի սկզբունքի հանդեպ բևեռային մոտեցումների գնահատմամբ:

Բանալի բառեր. Վերածնունդ, եղիսաբեթյան դրամա, վրեժ, ողբերգություն, հեթանոսական, քրիստոնեական, Հյուսիսային Սազա, էթիկական կող, բարոյական կող, աշխարհիկ մոտեցում, Ռեֆորմացիա

А. СЕДРАКЯН – Столкновение этических и моральных принципов в шекспировской драме. – Статья раскрывает языческие и христианские морально-этические принципы, играющие определяющую роль в диверсификации действий и типа главного героя. Диверсификация представлена на примере сравнительного анализа двух шекспировских героев – Гамлета и Шейлока.

Ключевые слова: Возрождение, елизаветинская драма, месть, трагедия, язычество, христианство, Северная Сага, этический принцип, светское восприятие, Реформация