

HAMLET AND THE FAILURE OF SOVIET AUTHORITY IN LITHUANIA

PATRICK CHURA
St. Louis University

By the early 1960s, Soviet sociocultural pressure in the Baltic region had for years been oscillating between extremes. Renewed "antinationalism" campaigns took place concurrently with an amelioration of some restrictions in the form and content of "socialist realism"—contradictory processes emanating from a general uncertainty among Soviet ideologists after the 1953 death of Stalin. In the decade after the 1956 Thaw,¹ the ideological climate of Soviet Lithuania was therefore characterized by shifts and reversals, but it is generally agreed that a qualified reemergence of Baltic cultures was accomplished, resulting in what Stanley Vardys terms a "balance of forces" between Soviet authority and Lithuanian culture, "the difference between suffocation and the ability to develop within limits" (172). Aided by an unstable ideological context, the arts in Lithuania achieved a state of uneasy coexistence with orthodox Soviet policies.²

In this setting, the work of Lithuanian literary critic Dovydas Judelevičius offers a model of how a particular Shakespearean drama, given a modicum of ideological breathing room, could be used to advance cultural renewal. As a measure of the complex rules of discourse surrounding dramatic productions and the ideological functions they were made to serve within the specific power relations of Soviet Lithuania, Judelevičius's 1964 *Gyvasis Šekspyras* (*The Living Shakespeare*), a work unavailable in English,³ is an extraordinary document. In its chapter describing two Lithuanian productions of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, this book-length text, still the major critical evaluation of Shakespeare on the Lithuanian stage, demonstrates the acute difficulties of *Hamlet* domestication in the Soviet Union while suggesting the source of these difficulties in basic incompatibilities between the Shakespeare text and the text of Soviet ideology. In a broader sense, Judelevičius' treatment of the two Lithuanian *Hamlet* productions—one produced by Soviet exile Mikhail Chekhov in Kaunas in 1932 and the other by Lithuanian director Jonas Rudzinskas in Vilnius in 1950—reveals a meaningful failure of Soviet authority to fully restrain processes of culturally indigenous literary appropriation.

This article will analyze Judelevičius's criticism of the two Lithuanian *Hamlet* productions and chart the ways the critic's work participated in the gradual, limited, carefully-driven processes of cultural reassertion that characterized the post-Stalin era.

With no great difficulty it can be argued that the text of *Hamlet*, in part because of Shakespeare's inherent complexity and in part because of the particular ideology the play endorses, comprises matters more finely textured than could be readily treated within the crude structures of orthodox Soviet socialist realism. As Rowe asserted in her illuminating study, *Hamlet: A Window on Russia*, "*Hamlet* has presented a dilemma for the ideologists of the Soviet regime" (127). That there were 78 productions of *Othello* and only 14 of *Hamlet* in the Soviet Union between 1945 and 1957 testifies not simply to the amenability in a Soviet context of the former, but to the intractability of the latter.³ In the context of the Ukrainian theatre, Marta Gibinska has concluded that "*Hamlet* was an especially dangerous play to possess, asking too many questions and providing no answers, probing the nature of evil both as a political and as a metaphysical problem, examining the relationship between action and intention, word and deed, the individual and society" (qtd. in Bates 51). Undeniably, the Soviet Union had throughout its history a "Hamlet problem"⁴ best described not simply as a difficulty in determining a "correct" attitude toward the play but in finding any method of incorporating *Hamlet* into a Soviet social program that saw literature as "a form of action in ideological battle" (Šilbajoris 95) and demanded that literature "be as primitive as the ideology imposed upon it" (*ibid.* 94).

Not surprisingly, Judelevičius's *Hamlet* criticism in *Gyvasis Šekspyras* is rendered in a conflict-ridden language, only the most obvious source of which is the critic's politically divided position as a Lithuanian national under Soviet hegemony. Also cultivating discord in the Lithuanian critic's interpretive vocabulary, for example, are the ideologically objectionable messages of the particular 1959 and 1932 *Hamlet* productions he describes. Ultimately, certain features of the text of

Hamlet itself further predispose the critic to politically inconsistent expression in a Soviet context. Each of these conflicts emerges because the Lithuanian critic periodically evaluates the dramatic text by standards other than those sanctioned by Soviet socialist realism. The subversiveness of the *Hamlet* analysis in *Gyvasis Šekspyras* is then a joint function of the partially unrestrained critic's and the play's ideologies, the cooperation of which is intrinsically antithetical to Soviet authority.

Applying non-Marxist aesthetic criteria, refusing to treat the drama exclusively from the point of view of class struggle and to limit his critical approach to purely sociological terms, Judelevičius violates established standards of Soviet criticism, under which the literary critic was required to function as "the representative of the established social, not artistic norms" (Šilbajoris 100). Judelevičius's emotionally complex and penetrating description of the first Lithuanian *Hamlet* production of 1932 in Kaunas, then the capital of independent "bourgeois" Lithuania, rehabilitates Soviet dissident-exile Mikhail Chekhov⁵ while preserving an element of pre-Soviet Lithuanian "bourgeois" culture, asserting the existence of a distinct Lithuanian theatrical tradition that developed separately from the Soviet one, and sensitively interpreting the production as an anti-Soviet protest.

Of the second Lithuanian *Hamlet*, the Lithuanian critic offers a less impassioned and more text-centered interpretation. This production, which "developed on the healthy soil" (Judelevičius 73) of Soviet Lithuania in 1959, could have been expected to present an ideologically acceptable *Hamlet*. From Judelevičius's analysis, however, strong echoes of anti-Stalinist *Hamlet* productions and criticism in Moscow of the same period emerge. More intriguingly, Judelevičius places the Vilnius *Hamlet* alongside concurrent Moscow "uses" of the play in a way that not only preserves their subversive implications but also resonates specifically in a Lithuanian cultural context.⁶ The 1959 Vilnius *Hamlet*, though crafted during a period when Soviet cultural policies required the purging of "writings, art, tradition—anything related to keeping alive the collective [Lithuanian] national memory" (Vardys and Sedaitis 73) is described so as to evoke nostalgia for the pre-Soviet era of Lithuanian autonomy and subliminal, culture-specific political messages.

In the early 1960s, when Judelevičius wrote *Gyvasis Šekspyras*, Soviet critical views of Shakespeare were still officially regulated by the strain of ideology proclaimed at the First Soviet Writers' Congress of 1934 and synthesized in 1936 by A. Smirnov, whose *Shakespeare: A Marxist Interpretation* had neatly bound up the dramatist's entire oeuvre within the confines of socialist realism in a way that both limited the range of permissible readings and outlined an austere program for Soviet literary criticism in general. In a 1965 article entitled "Literature and the Arts in Captive Lithuania," Jonas Grinius outlined this "totalitarian encirclement" (201) as it affected Lithuanian writers. Foremost among the requirements of works of both academic and imaginative works produced in the Soviet era, Grinius explained, was that of historical optimism. Other prerequisites included the demand that all literary material be interpreted according to the dialectical and historical materialism preached by the Communist Party, always concerning itself with some aspect of the class struggle and depicting evil characters with the supposed traits of the bourgeoisie (Grinius 201). Rimvydas Šilbajoris has specified an even more basic limitation on the Soviet Lithuanian literary critic: he must not interpret using aesthetic criteria, but exclusively through the lens of sociology; and he must assert "the supremacy of a single ideology over the multifaceted and ideologically self-determined inner world of the artist" (78).

The result of such constraints is a predictably dogmatic and tendentious assessment of Shakespeare, but one that establishes the dominant context for Judelevičius's work. The following views of Shakespeare, for example, authored by a Lithuanian candidate for a doctorate in philology and published in the Lithuanian journal *Švyturys* in 1964, take their cues from Moscow, quote verbatim from Smirnov, interpret in strict accordance with Communist party requirements, and exemplify the proscribed role of the literary critic as sociopolitical rather than artistic/aesthetic arbiter:

Shakespeare has been relevant and accessible in various eras, but he is especially closely related to the twentieth century. If Engels termed the age of the Renaissance the greatest progressive revolution that humanity had at that time lived through, then even greater and more revolutionary changes are happening now. The fifteenth to seventeenth centuries were a transition from a feudal to a capitalist society; the twentieth is both the collapse of that same capitalist society and the birth of the new socialist, communist order. The Renaissance was the age of discovery and invention; even greater revolutions are now happening in contemporary science. Man in Shakespeare's day had conquered the terrestrial globe; now he is clearing the way to the cosmos.

Shakespeare's heroes fight and die in the battle against violence and injustice. With great emotional force they speak to the man of our times of the amount of pain and sacrifice humanity's march along the progressive way requires. In today's world a society has already been created wherein the oppression and degradation of humanity have been eliminated, and man in this society no longer needs, as Shakespeare's Lear does, to cry out to the elements of nature for help in punishing injustice and ingratitude. The old world, however, does not yet wish to give up. The autonomous and intolerant forces so masterfully embodied in Iago, Richard and other characters wish to prevent humanity from establishing a brighter future. This is why Shakespeare's allegorical struggle against evil speaks to its audience so powerfully and persuasively on the contemporary stage.

E. Kuosaitė: "Šekspyras ir dabartis" ("Shakespeare and the Present") in *švyturys* (The Lighthouse), March 1964.

Reducing the Shakespearean canon to an optimistic pro-Soviet sociological tract that demonizes the bourgeoisie and ranks characters solely on the basis of their role in the class struggle, Kuosaitė's critical program conforms seamlessly to the postulates of socialist realism.

"Lost in the Vortex of History"—Mikhail Chekhov's Kaunas *Hamlet* of 1932

.... The press had often taken the view that while Chekhov was without doubt an actor of genius, he did not possess such talent as a director. Though there are those who hold this view even now, I find it impossible to agree with them" (Judelevičius 73).

Considering that the works of Kuosaitė and Judelevičius were produced concurrently in an environment governed by a single ideological doctrine, we might expect *Hamlet* to become for Judelevičius what it was for Smirnov and numerous Soviet critics: a play set during the "epoch of primary accumulation" (Smirnov 64) and depicting the "rise of the bourgeoisie" (*ibid.* 64) while predicting the "gigantic moral cataclysm of its downfall" (*ibid.* 64) as outlined in *The Communist Manifesto*, in which a humanistic Hamlet's 'worldly sorrow' stems from his disgust with the "practical philistinism of the bourgeoisie" (*ibid.* 66).

In place of this one-dimensional and superficial formula, however, Judelevičius delivers critical commentary that is surprisingly multivalent, reflecting submission to still-formidable ideological controls on public discourse, but doing so in a way that breaks with orthodox Soviet views of both social history and of Shakespeare's play. The vocabulary of Judelevičius's analysis of the "Two Lithuanian Hamlets" is therefore sporadically "Soviet," and like his contemporaries Judelevičius obediently plagiarizes several of his observations from Zhdanov, Smirnov, Morozov and other Soviet ideologues.⁷ But the Lithuanian critic also ventures to acknowledge a non-Soviet Lithuanian dramatic tradition while conceding the high quality and continuing influence of a strongly individualistic interpretation of *Hamlet* from the "bourgeois" period of Lithuanian history:

The two *Hamlet* productions (1932 Kaunas and 1959 Vilnius) are of course very different, separated not only by three decades but by a strict historical dividing line. Mikhail Chekhov's *Hamlet* was produced under conditions of the bourgeois era, Rudzinskas' in the Soviet theatre. No less important are differences in the ideological and aesthetic positions of the two artists.

Though Chekhov had very recently left the Soviet Union and had acted the role of Hamlet for the first time under Soviet conditions, his relation to revolutionary reality was somewhat confused. Inevitably, his *Hamlet* production in Kaunas reflected the protest contained within Chekhov's artistic individuality.

Similar ideological swervings did not at all hamper Rudzinskas. As an actor educated in the spirit of realism, as a director he was also an adherent to realism. At times, Rudzinskas had been even overly reliant on "everyday reality," and his Hamlet also responds to this tendency. But in its relation to the tragic mode, his work developed on healthy soil: Jonas Rudzinskas approached Shakespeare through both the pragmatic tradition of the Soviet repertory and the Lithuanian tradition of realism.

And this is why the two "Hamlets" are valued differently. Chekhov—though inconsistently and objectionably—paved the way to a more deeply philosophical and artistically distinctive understanding of Shakespeare in the Lithuanian theatre. Jonas Rudzinskas... paying great attention to the interrelation of the characters, not intending to make clearly meaningful philosophical judgments... saw Shakespeare's humanism through the eyes of the Soviet artist. Affording his Hamlet and his other actors the possibility of more clearly conveying their heroic natures, Rudzinskas more fully emphasized the social significance of the tragedy and the social (not simply the personal) meaning in the relationships of the work's characters.

... each is a noteworthy Shakespeare production, and a consideration of the two together offers valuable insight into the question of how the understanding of Shakespeare's great tragedy developed on the Lithuanian stage (Judelevičius 73-74).

In the context of 1964 Soviet ideology, this passage's seemingly pedestrian allusion to an "artistically distinctive understanding of Shakespeare in the Lithuanian theatre" actually contains a bold assertion of identity for the colonized culture⁸ and an indication of aesthetic, other-than-sociohistorical and thus heterodox critical standards. Moreover, Judelevičius's treatment here breaks new ground to the extent that he resurrects the sensitive matter of Mikhail Chekhov's alienation from Soviet society and the role that Chekhov's earlier 1924 *Hamlet* production played in that estrangement. In establishing a context for the 1932 Kaunas production, a production created by a Soviet exile in the capital of independent Lithuania, Judelevičius offers a substantial description of the controversial *Hamlet* that Chekhov had created for the Second Moscow Arts Theatre in 1924. This "first Soviet production of *Hamlet*" (Gorchakov 259), a fascinating response to Russian post-revolution reality, was deemed highly objectionable by the Bolshevik press, and it brought about a virulent propaganda campaign to discredit its creator. Chekhov was labeled a "reactionary" and was pronounced "a 'sick actor' whose best role—Hamlet—was a mystical nightmare alien to the materialistic cognition held by the toiling masses" (Gorchakov 159-60).

Chekhov's *Hamlet*, which "many spectators perceive[d] as a parable about Mikhail Chekhov himself in the world of Soviet society" (Gordon 11), has earned for Chekhov the frequent designation as "the greatest Hamlet of the Soviet era" (Rowe 128, Gorchakov 250) while producing in its immediate context the effect of destroying for the actor any possibility of life in his own country. When he learned of his imminent arrest by Soviet authorities in 1928, Chekhov fled Soviet Russia, never to return and was subsequently stricken from the record of Soviet history—except for brief, disparaging allusions in scattered journals and the notable deviation from these attacks found in Judelevičius's text—until 1969, when his official rehabilitation was enacted.

In a quirk of history, this first 1924 Soviet production of *Hamlet*, with notably few modifications, became in 1932 the first Lithuanian production of *Hamlet*; and the details of its production and reception provide grounds for the analysis of Shakespeare domestication as the play passes through the alembic of strong political ideology. After leaving Russia in 1928, Chekhov experienced a difficult and peripatetic seven years, during which he worked in Berlin, Paris, Riga and Kaunas, the capital of independent Lithuania.⁹ In addition to his *Hamlet*, Chekhov later staged *Twelfth Night* and Gogol's *Revisor* in Kaunas, both in 1933. Almost nothing of the story of Chekhov's short stay but large influence in the Lithuanian capital has been available in English.

Judelevičius avers that "Though it did not directly repeat it, the *Hamlet* in Kaunas was tied to the Moscow play born eight years earlier" (84) and that "the general conception" of the two plays "remained quite similar" (87).¹⁰ Considering that the commonalities of the Moscow and Kaunas productions stemmed exclusively from their painstaking conformity to the

artistic vision of Chekhov and that the second was constructed under "bourgeois conditions," Judelevičius could have been expected to tailor his observations to ignore or diminish their similarities, thereby muting the historical antagonism contained within the Lithuanian production. Instead, the Lithuanian critic portrays both the Kaunas *Hamlet* and the figure whose "artistic ideology completely contradicted the materialism of Bolshevism" (Gorchakov 249) in quite favorable terms:

Chekhov bequeathed to the Lithuanian theatre a fine creative tradition. He staged Shakespeare skillfully and transformed the artistic possibilities of *Hamlet* and *Twelfth Night* in an original way. But most importantly, he spoke to the audience through Shakespeare's words and images about life itself, though in a conflict-ridden language. In it the complicated and historically scattered searching of an intellectual resonated more strongly than a Renaissance faith in mankind, though Shakespeare's intolerance for evil remained of great importance to Chekhov. And that which under the conditions of bourgeois Lithuania was a great step forward has already become insufficient for Soviet Lithuanian directors as they approach Shakespeare from new positions. Chekhov's work taught real creativity and strove to give philosophical meaning to a great work of art while seeking for it an expressive theatrical form (41-42).

Though Chekhov's work "bequeathed a fine creative tradition... taught real creativity" and represented "a great step forward" it "has already become insufficient for Soviet Lithuanian directors"; the passage is intriguingly self-contradictory, and it suggests that "conflict-ridden language" was a feature of the vocabulary of both Chekhov and Judelevičius. In deference to prevailing ideology, Judelevičius, as if in an afterthought, concludes the paragraph with the suspiciously terse declaration, "However, his (Chekhov's) ideological teachings belonged only to the past" (41). The Lithuanian critic seems willing to allow Soviet ideology and the complex anti-Soviet protest embodied in Chekhov to balance each other out within his text. Judelevičius's extensive analysis of Chekhov and use of the delicate subject of the 1924 *Hamlet* as a reference point for the Lithuanian production are, however, an indication that his ultimate loyalties as a critic seem to lie outside the constraints of orthodox socialist realism. His analysis of both Chekhov and the 1932 production hinges on its relation to the twin forbidden subjects of the 1924 production and Chekhov's personal history.

Judelevičius's treatment of one of the few aspects of the Kaunas *Hamlet* that differed from the Moscow production is also revealing. In Kaunas, Chekhov seems to have "used the grotesque more moderately" (Judelevičius 87) than in the Moscow production, where the corporeal nature and "spiritual hollowness" (Law 36) of Claudius, Polonius and the court had been emphasized by their exaggerated, mask-like makeup. In place of this technique, however, Chekhov and Lithuanian artistic director Dobužinskis substituted a strongly suggestive color scheme that works more emphatically than in the Moscow production. Claiming a strong significance for the production's use of color, Judelevičius states that an "especially large amount of red coloring was used in the portal that remained on stage throughout the performance" (88) and interprets the Kaunas color scheme as a cue to the historical basis underlying the play's clearly delineated and competing factions:

"The colors were very meaningfully separated. The deepest red, gold and black accompanied the King and Queen. In the dress of the courtiers,... there was mainly gray with, however, the requisite red detail here and there... And several red "accents" appeared also in the Poisoner's clothing (in the actor's pantomime).

The gray and black tones in the clothing of Hamlet and Horatio were enlivened only by blue or violet. The gravediggers also had no spot of any red on their clothing (88-89).

The distinct alteration of Chekhov's original color scheme toward an insistence on red tones as a demarcating device could perhaps justifiably be overlooked were it not also apparent in another major aspect of the play's artistic composition. An explicit allusion to Bolshevism is evident in Judelevičius's description of the crowd scene attending the rebellion of Laertes (Act IV, sc. 5). At Laertes' return to Elsinore to avenge his father's death, it had been a Russian tradition dating back to Sumerakov's *Hamlet* to include the participation of the populace.¹¹ Predictably, the official Soviet view of Laertes' rebellion, given by Smirnov, interprets the rebellion through the lens of class struggle and portrays Laertes as a representative of a militaristic feudal aristocracy. "When Laertes learns of his father's death," Smirnov argues, "he behaves like a feudal lord, bursting into the palace with armed men to demand an answer from the king" (63). In Chekhov's production, however, the scene is infused with a "bright red" that seems clearly to enhance the suggestion not of a haughty aristocracy, but of an angry proletariat revolution; and the reporting of the scene is handled by Judelevičius with a deftness necessitated by the quite apparent anti-Bolshevik implications:

Chekhov had lived through too violent a historical time to be able to flee from reality. And there were many aspects of this *Hamlet* production that once again brought the tragedy back to earth.

The crowd scenes, the likes of which had essentially never before been seen in Lithuanian drama, exemplify this tendency. Oleka-Žilinskas and Chekhov had come after all from the Vachtangov school in which crowd scenes (closely coordinated with music and movement of stage elements) had always been meaningful and of great importance...

The best example is the so-called rebellion of Laertes. Here Shakespeare's text is such that it is quite sufficient to show on stage only Laertes invading the king's castle, with the "Danes" expressing their opposition to the king and approval of Laertes from behind the scenes. Chekhov handles this differently. Laertes bursts onto the stage with a rebellious mob. The decorative choice in the scene is one dominated by red (bright red) colors. A realistic battle is fought. A red spotlight from the darkness picks out one and then another skirmishing group. The music, the colors, the light and the movements of the human figures create an impressive spectacle (95-97).

Considering the play's geographical and historical setting, the subversive connotations of the "impressive spectacle" of Chekhov's rebellion—an uprising suffused with red, described by the Lithuanian critic as "an angry mob" and staged to suggest a proletarian revolution—require acknowledgment. As Judelevičius admits, Chekhov's decision to render the rebellion as "a crowd scene" is permitted, but not required, by Shakespeare's text. Chekhov's 1932 Kaunas audience would almost certainly have responded, as would Judelevičius's 1964 Lithuanian readership, to the rather obvious

connotations of this essentially misdirected, dubious and red-infused mob action, a scene that draws attention to the futile and senseless violence of Laertes' act. Color seems therefore to have been used so as to deepen and update the historical involvement of the production, reflecting both Chekhov's personal experience with Bolshevism and engaging sentiments that would have registered strongly with his Lithuanian audience.

The matter of Chekhov's personal reception in and relation to the political environment of "bourgeois Lithuania" is also taken up by Judelevičius. Required by socialist realist dogma to attack the bourgeois press, Judelevičius berates the "nationalists, literary decadents and emigrant white guard (Mensheviks)" (77) for insinuating Chekhov's Bolshevism. But by refuting the accusations against Chekhov for his alleged "Bolshevik tendencies" (77), and by admitting that such accusations were "weakly founded" (77) and that Chekhov could under no circumstances be termed a Bolshevik, the Lithuanian critic so formulates his historical narrative that it necessarily collides with a foundational socialist realist provision.

Praise for Chekhov given while characterizing him as non-Bolshevik seriously undermines assertions of Soviet influence on the Lithuanian theatre, amounting instead to an admission that Chekhov's contributions to Lithuanian theatre stemmed from what was actually a decidedly anti-Soviet stance. Chekhov, about whom Judelevičius writes with such understanding and apparent precision, "found Bolshevism alien and frightening... He had no contact—nor could he have had any—with the world of militant materialists" (Gorchakov 249). Because Chekhov's "entire talent was turned to the spiritual, the ideal, the fantastic, and everything else lay beyond existence" (*ibid.* 249), he and his self-expressive *Hamlet* could not be accommodated within the Soviet world view in the 1920s, nor could he—at least without the serious contradictions here outlined—be accommodated in Judelevičius' text of the early 1960s.

Another seemingly orthodox but actually quite ambivalent critical maneuver is Judelevičius's use of Lithuanian writers Balys Sruoga and Vincas Krėvė as exemplars of fairness and accuracy in the treatment of Chekhov in the press of bourgeois Lithuania. As Judelevičius explains, Sruoga and Krėvė had in 1932 rightly defended Chekhov from the attacks of "nationalist" and anti-Bolshevik elements:

Quite the opposite of the official view and the nationalist press attitudes were the opinions of Sruoga and Krėvė. Sruoga several times condemned the hounding of Žilinskas and Chekhov. Reviewing the development of the Lithuanian theatre from 1918 to 1938, Sruoga gave high praise to the period during which Žilinskas and Chekhov worked in the Kaunas State theatre, singling out their *Hamlet* production for special notice as a great turning point in the development of Lithuanian theatre:

"Inviting M. Chekhov to direct theatrical productions and the studio work of our dramatic troupes was of great significance for our theatre. Chekhov is one of the most highly regarded actors and directors of our age and has even been called a genius. His *Hamlet* production was an extreme high point in the history of our theatre. Even the most unfavorable criticism found fault mainly with the shortening of the play's text...

"What Chekhov gave our actors the outside spectator who is not a specialist could not evaluate or notice but for the actors themselves, who had participated in Chekhov's studio exercises, it was like the discovery of a new treasure" (Judelevičius 79-80).

Of note here are not only the rhetorical effect of repetition of the provocative terms "Lithuanian theatre" and "our theatre" along with the assertions of Chekhov's genius and allusion to the existence of a Lithuanian dramatic tradition in the years of independence from 1818 to 1938, but also the fact that Krėvė and Sruoga are favorably identified; both are figures associated with Lithuanian independence who had been condemned for ideological reasons in the Stalin era. Krėvė, the classic Lithuanian writer and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the independent Lithuanian Republic, treated epic Lithuanian folk and cultural themes and was known as a "patriot committed to Lithuania's independent statehood" (Vardys and Sedaitis 51). In the aftermath of the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, Krėvė became the literal embodiment of Lithuania's shattered national hopes as a result of Soviet treachery.¹² Professor Balys Sruoga, whose family fled to the West in the Stalin era, is another prominent Lithuanian writer whose favorable mention by Judelevičius revives echoes and ideology from the pre-Soviet period of Lithuanian cultural autonomy. Sruoga, "a rebellious individualist" (*Encyclopedia Lituanica* IV, 271) who "in his writings fought for the nobility of man and for his own nation" (*ibid.* 272), not only collected and published Lithuanian folk songs, but wrote poetry on patriotic themes during the period of Lithuanian independence while also working closely with the State Theater in Kaunas.

By positioning such ideologically unsound writers as Chekhov's defenders and thus as adherents to the correct evaluation of both historical events and the artistic merit of Chekhov's play, Judelevičius violates the established norms of "political evaluation" in favor of artistic criteria. By interpreting the central concerns of the productions and indeed of Chekhov's preoccupation with *Hamlet* as a concomitant of the role he was forced into by exile, Judelevičius uses Chekhov in the way Chekhov used *Hamlet*, as a metaphor for the suffering of both the artist and the masses in a setting rife with historical meaning that supports an equally clear questioning of the effects of the Revolution in terms of human and spiritual values. Clearly, the sympathetically presented spectacle of the Chekhov saga evinces ruptures in Soviet ideology at the level of the particular 1924 and 1932 productions of *Hamlet*. An appreciation of the strategies used by Judelevičius to present and finesse these ideological distinctions requires the translation of another large section of the work:

... *Hamlet* was especially dear to Chekhov. In fact, he himself had acknowledged that the role of *Hamlet* he had created in 1924 had not been perfectly successful. In 1927 in his work, *The Way of the Actor*, he wrote: "In my intellect I had created a view of *Hamlet*, and I had seen the canvas of his outer and inner life, but I had not the strength to recreate it because my attention was diverted to more mundane matters."

... But into the tragedy of the Danish prince he had put much of himself—his complicated spiritual experience, accumulated in the intersection of two historical epochs. Chekhov, having earlier simply depicted suffering heroes, in Shakespeare's tragedy found for the first time a clearer way to protest

and action. At the same time, he took that path in a way that was very difficult, painful and Hamlet-like. Evil, which he had always felt in the spirit of Dostoevsky, still very much weighed heavily upon him. Chekhov-Hamlet raised his voice against what Blok had described as "the horror of the world," in which the most fragile heroes were suffocated. But he still only somewhat vaguely imagined that new world in the name of which it was possible to act and to fight. This is why Chekhov looked for the motive of Hamlet's action in the purely inner life, in the realm of the spiritual...

It was as if this role brought together the strongest and weakest sides of Chekhov: his tremendous sensitivity to injustice and his protest against evil, but together with it the futility of that protest, the extravagant and wasteful loss of one's self in historical changes... (81-83)

This excerpt is striking for both its lyrical subtlety and for the permission it grants Chekhov—the first since his expatriation—to justify his *Hamlet* conception in his own words and on Soviet soil. Essentially, the Lithuanian critic here demonstrates what Stephen Greenblatt terms a "failure to consign to nonexistence those elements that appear to threaten or subvert the dominant order" (42). The result is a passionate insistence on the efficacy of Chekhov's artistic vision, a historically responsive vision that, however compelling and credible in terms of *Hamlet*, was deemed incompatible with a Soviet world-view.

Because Chekhov's production, as Judelevičius acknowledges, was deeply historically concerned in a way that did not flatter revolutionary ideals, the Bolshevik and later Soviet Lithuanian press had resorted to vague assertions that the play had nothing to do with Russian history or Soviet life. One brief allusion to Chekhov in the Lithuanian press from 1959 presents a typically unsympathetic assessment of the 1932 production, conceding only that as an actor "Chekhov's skill was exceptional" but denigrating his *Hamlet* as "conveying only hopelessness and the philosophy of disillusionment... pressing social questions were not addressed... even historical truth was broken with... Shakespeare should be staged only when the director is able to discern the deep social conflicts of the age..." and concluding that "from the old bourgeois theatre the artistic masters of Soviet Lithuania in fact inherited no tradition at all of assimilation of the great Shakespearean legacy" (Šykcinas). Even as late as 1964, the Soviet critic Bojadziev (who had briefly treated Chekhov in an article concerning the history of Soviet domestication of Shakespeare) ignores the 1924 Moscow production's artistic values and focuses obsessively on an alleged historically regressive nature of Chekhov's *Hamlet*. Though Bojadziev does concede that the production contained a form of protest, he copes with the production by prefacing his treatment with the critical maneuver of labeling Chekhov a social and spiritual anachronism. After confusingly referring to Chekhov's 1924 *Hamlet* as "a lonely nomad from the past" who "cursed and could not tolerate this world of the past" (quoted in Judelevičius 82), Bojadziev finally concedes a kind of historical relevance that Judelevičius exploits in an extended quotation translated into Lithuanian in *Gyvasis Šekspyras*: "Behind Chekhov's Hamlet stood the personality of his time with all of its complex spiritual life, internal discord and truth, but it was not the man who enacted the Revolution; rather, it was he who had defended himself from the revolution, he who, though he may have wanted to understand the new age, did not understand it and met with it in a fateful conflict" (Bojadziev, quoted in Judelevičius 83).

What Chekhov seems to have presented for both his Moscow and Kaunas audiences then, is the profoundly subversive spectacle of a Hamlet who could not conform to the Bolshevik revolution. As the rehearsal transcript for the 1924 production indicates, the sociological theme of "man between two worlds" was transformed into the theme of "man surviving cataclysm" (quoted in Ivanov 149), producing a Hamlet "struggling to preserve his individual humanity in a world where life has lost its value" (Ivanov 149). Chekhov's Hamlet "spoke directly to an audience that had, like Chekhov, lived through revolution and civil war" (Law 34), and it is this progressive and engaged Hamlet that is explicitly endorsed by the Lithuanian critic. For Judelevičius, Chekhov's Hamlet represented a "sincere protest... the first attempt to render the new historical reality" (100), and it is "of interest not only for its original artistic expression, but for its passionate condemnation of evil" (101).

"The oppressor's wrong / The proud man's contumely"—Jonas Rudzinskas' Vilnius *Hamlet* of 1959

"Only by understanding Hamlet's experience as a tragedy born of society is it possible to tightly and seamlessly weave together Hamlet's fate and the fate of all other characters in the tragedy" (Judelevičius 112).

Another kind of *Hamlet* and another kind of difficulty for the Lithuanian critic are presented in the 1959 production of Lithuanian director Jonas Rudzinskas for the Academic Drama Theatre in Vilnius. Though Rudzinskas' production was created under Soviet conditions and saw *Hamlet*, as Judelevičius notes, "through the eyes of the Soviet artist" (73), influential Soviet theatre and film directors were by this time using the play to test the boundaries of internal subversion made possible by the Thaw and the general reassessment of the Stalin era it permitted.¹³ Echoes of these anti-Stalin *Hamlet* productions appear in the work of both Rudzinskas and Judelevičius.

Among several clearly "connected" elements of the Russian and Lithuanian criticism of *Hamlet* productions of the late 1950s is an emphasis on the figure of Claudius as the embodiment of earthly evil. Arthur Mendel has described a form of criticism from this era that does not directly contradict Soviet ideology, but instead subverts the proscribed socialist realist paradigms by ignoring them in favor of more urgent and timely issues: "What is rotten in Elsinore, in the opinion of Soviet critics, is the deep and pervasive moral corruption of its people, and the cause of this corruption they find not in class relations, in feudal or capitalist exploitation, or in the nature of private property, but in the tyranny of its criminal ruler" (734). Accordingly, Judelevičius describes the central spirit of the Vilnius *Hamlet* as "a protest against society's evil, against its social and moral scourges" (117). The Lithuanian critic cites lines with obvious political significance as the "apex" (117) of Hamlet's protest, quoting the following excerpt from the "to be, or not to be" soliloquy: "For who would bear the whips and scorns of time, / The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely, / The pangs of dispriz'd love, the law's delay, / The

insolence of office, and the spurns / That patient merit of the unworthy takes... ?" (III i 70-75). These lines, Judelevičius explains, convey Hamlet's "titanic intellectual conflict, his effort to find the way for his life and his struggle" (117).

Because, as Arthur Mendel explains, "Stalin liquidated *Hamlet*. There was no place in the closed society for one who questioned and vacillated" (734), the play became immensely popular immediately after Stalin's death, when as Chushkin asserts, Soviet theatre was "seized by a feverish Hamletism" (quoted in Mendel 135). From analysis of production details contained in several critical works, it seems indisputable that in the context of Stalin's demise, *Hamlet* became for Soviet society "a tool for exploring the experiences of the immediate past" (Rowe 134). By the mid 1950s, Mendel avers, the Danish prince had become for Russian critics and producers a "brother in arms... in the arduous and tortuous efforts of Soviet society to liquidate Stalinism" (Mendel 734).

Judelevičius's attention to the "Claudius as Stalin" analogy in *Gyvasis Šekspyras* is equally conspicuous. Initially referring to the play itself as "a tragedy born of society" (112) presenting "evil hidden in the entire system" (113), Judelevičius concludes that "In the clearest way possible, Claudius embodies the evil against which Hamlet fights" (123). The Claudius played by Jonas Kavaliauskas on the Vilnius stage is appropriately "cunning, versatile, shrewd" (123). In a way that recalls Jan Kott's description of the dissident 1956 Cracow *Hamlet* as "only a drama of political crime" (61), Judelevičius terms Claudius "a cunning and insidious politician" (123). Violating the socialist realist directive that evil characters must appear with the supposed traits of the bourgeoisie, Judelevičius, while still insisting on Hamlet's "intolerance for evil" (139), fails to describe Claudius using the traditional epithets and nowhere reverts to the traditional formulae of Marxist dialectical materialism. "In Rudzinskas' production," Judelevičius explains, "evil is everywhere concrete, and Hamlet's struggle is therefore against specific enemies" (137).

Responding to another cue from anti-Stalinist Russian' productions of the era, the Vilnius *Hamlet* emphasizes the "Denmark is a prison" theme.¹⁴ In 1954 Nikolai Okhlopov had staged the play with this "dominant theme, effectively emphasized by a front drop—a massive iron grill" that "served alternately as palace gates and palace walls and suggested, continually, prison bars" (Rowe 135, 137). The producer's exposition for the 1954 production at the Mayakovsky Theatre, for example, refers repeatedly to a "Hamlet that seeks to free himself from the cold embraces of the prison" (Okhlopov 182). For whom "the world is a prison" (182). Ophelia and Horatio are also "captives of this same prison" (182) struggling against "cunning Claudius" (185) and the "predatory masters of the 'prison world'" (184). Seemingly acknowledging Okhlopov, Judelevičius in his opening summary of the Vilnius *Hamlet* speaks of the Danish prince who "in his suffering seeks answers to the questions posed by his uncle's crime; he sensitively reacts to each wrong he suffers 'in the prison world'" (47).

Photographs of the 1959 Vilnius production indicate a feature quite similar to Okhlopov's iron grill. A heavy and ornate iron gate with sharpened iron ends jutting upward from it and downward from the arch above it divides the stage into inside and outside areas and presents a continual image of confinement while also suggesting large iron jaws. A visual effect localizing the prison theme is created by a surrounding stage design, which presents a medieval setting resembling an architectural style emblematic to the city of Vilnius. The distinctive brickwork gothic arches of the Church of St. Anne, a familiar icon of Vilnius's old town, are closely replicated in the on-stage depiction of Elsinore Castle. Judelevičius refers to these "somber gothic arches" that "frame [Hamlet] in every scene without exception" (106) as "partially of our reality, partially appropriate to the action" (106). The stage design therefore permits, if not compels, the profound acknowledgment that if Elsinore is a prison, so, of course, is Vilnius—a theme seemingly not lost on Judelevičius, whose description of Hamlet in this production refers meaningfully to his "prison world" and describes a sensitive, "youthful and attractive" (47) prince who "becomes a resolute soldier... when there is no other way out" (47).

Though the 1959 Vilnius *Hamlet* clearly echoed anti-Stalinist subversion emanating from Moscow and Leningrad, it seems also to exemplify that this "permission to protest Stalinism through *Hamlet*" could be used as a pretense to cultivate—again through both staging and literary criticism—a more general protest informed by Lithuanian experience. Throughout his analysis, Judelevičius pays great attention to the inherent appeal and profound cultural significance of the charismatic portrayal of the Danish prince by the youthful Lithuanian actor Henrikas Kurauskas. In addition, Judelevičius develops an extended analogy between the Hamlet of Henrikas Kurauskas and a role Kurauskas had recently played on the Vilnius stage, that of the Lithuanian "proletarian poet" Julius Janonis. Between Hamlet and Janonis, Judelevičius alleges not only an "emotional kinship" (112), but also a "great intellectual kinship" (122) that are worth looking at in more detail. The poet Janonis, born in 1896 into an extreme poverty that "nourished an ardent antagonism to social inequality" (*Encyclopedia Lituanica*), wrote for socialist periodicals in Lithuania and Russia, joined the Social Democratic Party in Petrograd, and became an active revolutionary known for passionate verse devoted to the realization of his ideal, "humanistic socialism" (*ibid.*). In 1917, having apparently contracted tuberculosis in a Petrograd prison, he committed suicide by throwing himself under an express train "in a gesture of despair" (*ibid.*).

Ostensibly, Janonis is a convenient tool for the propagation of orthodox Soviet ideology. As a young Lithuanian idealist-poet who essentially sacrificed his life for socialism, the presentation of Janonis to a Vilnius audience would presumably have suggested the universality of the socialist ideal and its roots in Lithuania. School textbooks in Soviet Lithuania, for example, depicted the poet as the personification of a deep commonality and socialist temperament shared between the Russian and Lithuanian cultures and justified by historical experience.¹⁵ Under the terms established in Judelevičius's text, however, "Hamlet as Janonis" seems actually to permit a much larger array of meanings.

"I would think, " writes Judelevičius, "that the ever more clearly apparent efforts of Kurauskas to convey the richness and depth of Hamlet's emotions are closely related to characteristics of Janonis that the actor had felt also in the role of the Danish prince" (122). Judelevičius quotes the actor from an interview on the night of the premier of *Hamlet*: "Recently I acted the role of Janonis, and now it so happens that I appear as Hamlet. These models are dear to me. Both the ardent, beautiful proletarian verses of Janonis and the thoughts of the great humanist Shakespeare impress upon me the depth of the problems of common humanity. Hamlet, like Janonis, feels not only his own pain, but the sufferings of all the people" (122).

As here reported by the Lithuanian critic in the context of the several anti-Stalin Hamlet productions of the era, Kurauskas' allusions to the "problems" and "sufferings" of "all the people" comprise palpably subversive implications. Furthering dissonance in the presentation of Kurauskas' thoughts, for example, is the recognition that the Janonis-Hamlet tie is advanced by historical factors producing an image of Janonis within Lithuanian culture significantly more complex than the official Soviet view. Editions of Janonis's collected writings were published in 1917 and 1921 and were popular in Lithuania long before Soviet authority arrived, indicating their value as an element of the culture of independent Lithuania. Aside from any connection to canonical Leninism, which the *Encyclopedia Lituanica* argues Janonis did not espouse, his Utopian ideas achieved mass appeal in an independent Lithuania where their political meaning and the meaning of the Revolution itself were interpreted differently from the way they were in Soviet Russia.

During the early period of Lithuanian statehood in the years 1919-1922, for example, the Russian Revolution for which Janonis worked was actually a stimulus to both liberal democracy and Lithuanian independence. "In part, " Vardys argues, the "sweeping democratic faith" in the Lithuania of this period "was rooted in the peasant origins of the new leaders; it also reflected the theoretical views of the largely Russian educated Lithuanian intelligentsia... To a certain extent, this democratic conviction was merely a symbol of the nationalist passion for Lithuanian self-government; largely, it was sustained and kindled by the radicalism of the Russian Revolutions of 1917" (Vardys 30). As a Russian-educated figure of the Revolution, of peasant origin, who was popular in Lithuania during the early phase of "democratic radicalism" (Vardys 30), Janonis sheds his proto-Leninist denotation and is instead linked to the ideals of a period of strong Lithuanian nationalism, during which "everyone saw salvation in democracy" (*ibid.* 141).

In whatever way or ways a Lithuanian theatre audience or Judelevičius's readership would have understood the connection, it seems certain that in the context of the Thaw, during which the attempt to eradicate the experience of Stalinism clearly shaped Soviet *Hamlet* productions, the suggestion of Janonis-Hamlet would certainly have helped to create nostalgia for a pre-Stalinist era, when the Utopian humanistic socialist ideals of a romantic Lithuanian poet existed without the painful connotations that they later acquired during the "forceful implementation" of communism, which for Lithuania took place under Stalin. In independent Lithuania, where Janonis's works were published and made popular, Utopian socialism was for a time a viable ideal, as exemplified in the significant number of socialists in the first Lithuanian governments.¹⁶ Once this is understood, Janonis-Hamlet becomes readable as a feature of a general cultural protest that throws into relief the discrepancies between the original "humanist" and more recent "inhuman" faces of socialism. Kurauskas's quoted allusions to the "problems of common humanity" and the "sufferings of all the people" inhering to the roles of both Hamlet and Janonis acquire their fullest meaning in a context which acknowledges that the actual Janonis, like the fictional Hamlet, predated Soviet attempts to graft a particular meaning onto him, attempts which complicated but could not eradicate existing consensus.¹⁷ Of the bipartite kinship that he makes explicit between the Hamlet and Janonis roles, Judelevičius distinguishes between the emotional and the intellectual and notes that Kurauskas had "as yet discovered only the rudiments of this kinship" (122). The closer analysis of the Hamlet-Janonis tie directly called for by the Lithuanian critic restores a more multivalent historical relevance to Janonis and, at the very least, exposes the artificiality of the simplistic alignment of Janonis with conventional Soviet ideology. In closing his analysis of the entire 1959 production in *Gyvasis Šekspyras*, Judelevičius cites the "manly simplicity" and "human appeal" of Kurauskas-Hamlet, not his socialist outlook, as the features which "relate the role so closely to Kurauskas-Janonis" (138-9).

Finally, it is worth noting that here and elsewhere in the tug-of-war of meaning surrounding the *Hamlet* productions, heterodoxy is a joint product, located at the intersection of the core ideology of Shakespeare's text, the expressed values of the particular Lithuanian production, and historical truth. Even Kurauskas's brief but sentimentally expressed formulation of the play's meaning—thoughts sensitively responsive to *Hamlet*, but at least potentially antagonistic to Soviet ideology—contains fissures that widen under the pressure of analysis and undermine the task of simplifying the play to conform to Soviet norms. Furthermore, Judelevičius's analysis produces a strong sense of mutual Soviet and Lithuanian cultural ownership of *Hamlet*, a coparceny producing a "hybridity" that is in itself a radically subversive condition in a Soviet context.

In Rudzinskas' production, for example, Ophelia's descent into madness is not the direct result of Polonius's death or Hamlet's verbal maltreatment, but of the influence and mastery over her of the atmosphere of Elsinore. "In other words, " Judelevičius asserts, "the palace environment acts on her" (134). Rudzinskas's Ophelia, as interpreted by Judelevičius in accordance with the general concept of a societal evil centralized in Claudius, suffers not from Hamlet or Hamlet's actions, but instead suffers with Hamlet. "In the tragedy", as Judelevičius explains, "a very few characters— among whom Ophelia is especially noteworthy—represent the world at large that suffers from Claudius and villains like him. " (134).

The claim that Ophelia's madness results from the evil of Claudius—a critical move justified by Laertes' pronouncement, exculpatory of Hamlet, that "mine and my father's death come not upon thee" (V II 331)—actually adumbrates, an outcome

familiar in the context of totalitarian Soviet power in occupied Lithuania, where authoritarian evil could become the actual cause of a form of dementia—as in Ophelia—and where nonconformity often provoked insidious charges of madness—as in the case of Hamlet. Considering the very high number of allusions to and accusations of "madness" in the play, it is worth noting that official Soviet policy treated political individualism as mental illness or madness. During and after the Stalin era, the mental hospital was often the repository of the political dissident and the social iconoclast.¹⁸ Judelevičius's reminder that Hamlet and Ophelia are under surveillance (Act III, sc. i) and that Hamlet "does not forget that his enemies' ears hear everything" (121) presents another textual feature analogous to Stalin-era Lithuanian reality. Such awareness of the experience of the Lithuanian nation under Soviet control sanctions an understanding of both Hamlet and Ophelia as representatives of "the world at large" (134), casualties of the specific consequences of non-compliance with authority—consequences that would have been sufficiently germane to Judelevičius's readership to have furthered mass identification with their plight.

Where complexity is apparent, as in the case of Chekhov's production, Judelevičius amplifies its effects and stresses its origins in Shakespeare's ideology and the core ideology of *Hamlet*. Where Shakespeare's values are oversimplified, as in certain features of Rudzinskas's 1959 *Hamlet*, Judelevičius reintroduces complexity, in both processes using the adapted dramatic texts and Shakespeare's text as his foundation. The Lithuanian critic deplores, for example, Rudzinskas's excision of "Hamlet's famous words to Horatio about the mysteries of heaven and earth" (104), arguing that these "are not actually a debate over supernatural phenomena, but humanistic thoughts about the complexity of life" (104).

And the Lithuanian critic is compelled to restore and analyze one excised passage that he considers indispensable. Judelevičius asserts that "Hamlet's instructions to the actors should not have been cut. Even if one shortens the play greatly, at least the essence of these instructions are well worth retaining as Shakespeare's (not simply his hero's) artistic creed" (104). Using the Soviet era Lithuanian translation of A. Churginas, Judelevičius then inserts into his analysis the text of Hamlet's instructions to the itinerant actors (Act III, sc. 2), lines which contain implications repugnant to Soviet social theory. The disparaging reference to the "groundlings" which becomes in the Lithuanian language the word "prasčiokai" meaning simply "common men," suggests a contempt for the masses in Shakespeare's hero, a feature of Shakespeare's ideology that Marxist critics still find problematic. A. Smirnov, for example, whose 1936 work, *Shakespeare: A Marxist Interpretation* set the enduring standard for socialist realist criticism, had somewhat defensively claimed that Shakespeare "loved the people, loved them without sentimentality... with a vital and healthy love. Nowhere in his plays can one find any prejudices against the people, any preconceived contempt, any ridicule or slander" (59-60). In this context, the restored passage perceptibly shifts emphasis toward an aspect of Shakespearean ideology that orthodox Soviet critics found particularly troublesome and which is readily understandable as an irritant to Soviet social theory.

A second restored passage (III, 2 ln. 19-24) is rendered in Lithuanian with a radically reconfigured word order and diction that again somewhat alters the emphasis. More than the original English, the Lithuanian translation conveys more directly (if more prosaically) the theme of the play itself as a "mirror" of contemporary reality. "In the production..." Judelevičius notes, "this conversation with the actors is excised, but the spirit of Hamlet's instructions to the actors permeates the majority of scenes" (110). Arguing openly for a reading of the play as a mirror, the Vilnius critic by implication argues for a view of the play as a precise mimetic reflection of Lithuanian society.

In the hands of an engaged Lithuanian critic, Rudzinskas' 1959 *Hamlet* retains a multiplicity of unresolved subversive implications that seem to emerge naturally from Judelevičius' "reading" of this ostensibly ideologically orthodox play. The restoration to the play of textual material provides a clear indication of a point at which the critic's values diverge from those of the production, justifying the conclusion that, though he takes directives from Moscow, Judelevičius also develops the contradictory ideological cues of his own culture. "Hence," as Greenblatt explains, "the identification of the orthodox ideology that informs a particular text by no means obviates the possible presence of genuinely subversive elements—that is, elements that can be understood as subversive either by ourselves or by a reader who lived surrounded by the institutional expressions of that ideology" (42).

Predictably, Judelevičius's *Gyvasis Šekspyras* was not embraced by the Soviet intelligentsia and did not receive critical attention commensurate to its status as the only detailed treatment of Shakespeare on the Lithuanian stage. As Judelevičius has recently indicated, some of the critical commentary that immediately followed the work noticed and derided the favorable treatment of Chekhov's *Hamlet*, sarcastically questioning the author's decision to praise a production he had not seen (Interview). Later evaluations of Shakespeare in Lithuania ignored the work, as does Kuosaitė's major article in January of 1967, "Shakespeare in Lithuanian," which acknowledges Judelevičius's contribution of explanatory notes to Shakespeare's complete works, but does not refer to or cite *The Living Shakespeare*. Perhaps the most telling Soviet-era review of Judelevičius' work, however, came in a 1972 scholarly article in the journal *Metmenys*, in which a Lithuanian Shakespeare scholar describes her frustration with the scarcity of ideologically correct research: "I had intended simply to rummage through Lithuanian literature and criticism concerning Shakespeare, hoping to find there something similar to Jan Kott's *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* written in Lithuania. Unfortunately, I found nothing more than professor Judelevičius's *Gyvasis Šekspyras*, which approaches Shakespeare in a rather traditional manner—in a word, it is neither innovative, nor of the Revolution" (Valiukėnaitė 18). As I have argued, *Gyvasis Šekspyras* is decidedly not "of the Revolution," and its "traditional" treatment of *Hamlet* ensures an ideological estrangement of Soviet socialist realism, an estrangement—with *Hamlet* at its core—that under Soviet norms was necessarily viewed as historically regressive.

Gyvasis Šekspyras also prompts interesting questions about the political uses and viability of literary criticism. That the Aesopian language of literary criticism is particularly predisposed to subversion is not a new idea, but the dynamics of the process in Judelevičius's case are perhaps unique. As Rowe argues, referring to the subversion practiced by Russian critics in the Soviet era, "Since direct expression was impossible, Russian political and social realities and problems have traditionally been expressed through the media of literature and literary criticism" (viii). In Šilbajoris's analysis, however, we are reminded that "supposed literary method and theory is actually a tool of government control, as indispensable as all others used by the regime" (105). Somewhere between the contradictory assertions of Rowe and Šilbajoris, it would seem, Judelevičius operates. Throughout the chapter entitled "Two Hamlets" a strategy of gropingly exploring possibilities for self expression while engaging *Hamlet* more directly than was licensed within socialist realism is clearly discernible. In such a process, *Hamlet* becomes the active agency in a literary version of the "balancing of forces" specified as a feature of the post-Thaw political climate. The "conflict-ridden language" of Judelevičius' treatment of *Hamlet* is subversive to the extent that it expresses not direct political refutation of Sovietism, but introduces a literary complexity equally antithetical to it. In essence, Judelevičius's critical method demonstrates what Martin Orkin terms, "returning the gaze," by which we gain "symmetrical knowledge" (186) or what Zoltan Markus terms a "double perspective" (185)¹⁹ that does not simply encourage the reproduction of the dominant culture's epistemology.

Though the Soviet Union had bent over backwards to make *Hamlet* a good Marxist play, it could hope to do so only by eliminating the historical accident of readers like Judelevičius, whose work represents what Orkin describes as an "attempt by the colonized subject to represent himself in ways that engage with the colonizer's own terms and that involve only partial collaboration with and appropriation of the idioms of the conqueror" (201). Judelevičius's critical method, as we have seen, involved the restoration of expurgated passages from Shakespeare's text, the resurrection of taboo productions, attention to specific production features, and a plausible reading of the play's central themes, and so it is not simply the Lithuanian critic's but Shakespeare's ideology in *Hamlet* that asserts itself in *Gyvasis Šekspyras*. Moreover, it is no accident that fissures in socialist realist ideology are especially visible in Judelevičius's analysis not of, for example, *Othello*, a play which was embraced by Soviet theatre, but of the two major Lithuanian *Hamlet* productions, and there is no greater evidence that the Soviet "Hamlet problem" dwelled at least partially in the play's ideology itself. But the argument here is not at all that certain Shakespeare texts lend themselves to subversion more than others, (for in different circumstances the uses of *Othello* and *Hamlet* could certainly be reversed) but that in the specific historical situation of an Eastern European culture colonized by the particular form of colonial ideology represented by the Soviet Union, *Hamlet* attained special authority. Intractable to the politically dominant discourse and inherently responsive to the subjugated, *Hamlet* diagnoses a political atmosphere wherein there could scarcely have existed a tragic figure who did not take on tacit associations of a particularly Lithuanian and thus subversive coloring, and where the kind of engaged *Hamlet* criticism practiced by Judelevičius could not but reveal the irresolvable nonconvergence of Soviet and non-Soviet ideologies. Such ineluctable ambivalence and multivalence, as Ania Loomba has argued, "indicates a failure of authority to impose itself upon those it seeks to govern" (145). Loomba's recognition that "colonial identities are always hybrid and oscillating, never perfectly achieved, and colonial authority is rendered ambivalent in the very process of being reinforced" (144) applies as well to the context of Lithuania, a culture in which the resistance to Soviet ideology often required an outward acceptance of its reinforcement enacted within the vocabulary offered by the oppressor. The failure of a single and simplified ideology to control or subsume the Shakespearean text suggests an inability of authority to reconstitute itself or to "contain the radical doubts it continually produces" (Greenblatt 57)—a seminal and fundamental, politically ruinous failure adumbrated in Judelevičius's text and ultimately borne out by twentieth century history.

* All translations from Lithuanian-language texts are by the author.

¹ The "Thaw" in 1955-56 was marked by a noticeable loosening of ideological restrictions in Soviet intellectual and cultural life due in part to an "inability of the cultural authorities to agree consistently on what was permissible" (Vardys 170) in both the satellite republics and within Russia. The Thaw ended with Soviet reprisals after the Hungarian uprising in 1956, which had awakened nationalist feeling in Lithuania and several colonized republics of the Soviet Union.

² For more detailed analysis, see Vardys, *Lithuania Under the Soviets*.

³ „From 1945 until 1957, *Othello* was staged seventy-eight times in the Soviet Union, Romeo and Juliet—fifty times. During the same period, *King Lear* was premiered sixteen times and *Hamlet* fourteen" (Judelevičius 140). In 1947, Mikhail Morozov had acknowledged that "Hamlet is performed on the Soviet stage comparatively seldom... Whereas... *Othello* has had over one hundred and fifty productions" (Morozov 44).

⁴ Though he did not ban *Hamlet*, as several historians have claimed, Stalin disapproved of the play, considering the images of vacillation and complex, antisocial individuality it presented ideologically unsuitable. "An offhand remark by Stalin in the spring of 1941,... put an end to *Hamlet* rehearsals" (Rowe 135). As late as 1966, Soviet critic R. Samarin acknowledged that "*Hamlet* is one of the most urgent problems confronting our Soviet theatre" (Samarin 13). Integrating *Hamlet* within the strictures of Soviet ideology and socialist realist criticism seems to have been difficult for reasons not solely attributable to the disfavor in which it was held by Stalin.

⁵ In the English-language biography of Chekhov, Lendley C. Black asserts that "Chekhov was 'restored' to a position of respect by the Soviet Government" in 1969. A July 9, 1969 article in *Variety* reports that "Mikhail Chekhov... has been rehabilitated in Russia as a theatrical talent." Mikhail Morozov's 1947 *Shakespeare on the Soviet Stage*, a major history of the theater in Soviet Lithuania, does not mention Mikhail Chekhov or his 1924 *Hamlet* production. Samarin's 1966 *Shakespeare in the Soviet Union*, though it includes two photographs of Chekhov, makes no textual mention of him. A very few articles in Lithuanian language journals after the Thaw period briefly and sporadically mention Chekhov, and always in a negative context (see Šykcinas). In the Russian language, Bojadziev briefly describes Chekhov's *Hamlet* through the lens of socialist realism in 1964 (see Bojadziev). The Lithuanian scholar Kuosaitė, who wrote a synopsis of Shakespeare plays on the Lithuanian stage in 1967 (three years after Judelevičius's treatment of Chekhov), cautiously fails to acknowledge the existence of Chekhov and reiterates classic socialist realist critical approaches to Shakespeare. (*Tiesa*, 21 Jan. 1967). Though Chekhov had begun to be discussed in the years following the thaw, *Gyvasis Šekspyras* was the first text to portray Chekhov's philosophy and the 1932 Kaunas *Hamlet* favorably and in detail. Again, Judelevičius's work predated Chekhov's official rehabilitation by five years. The

process is all the more interesting in Judelevičius's work because, as Zoltan Markus has asserted in an illuminating study of Shakespearean critical practice in Hungary, criticism of dramatic productions has been identified as the stage of Shakespeare appropriation apparently most conducive to the process of rendering the text submissive to Soviet ideology. In his 1996 analysis of Hungarian criticism of a 1952 production of *Hamlet*, Markus noted that [the level of ideological appropriation of the play seems to be higher in the written texts evoked by this production than in the production itself] (Markus 191). Whether or not this is always the case, it was almost certainly true that the critical shaping of public reaction to a dramatic production, much like the obsessive Soviet shaping of the interpretation of history, was at least as crucial and as meticulously controlled as the production itself.

⁷ For example, Judelevičius's assertion that "Soviet directors and actors have opened up a new Shakespeare. From the heights of socialist realism the contemporary relevance of Shakespeare's philosophical wisdom has been proclaimed. Shakespeare's philosophy has been rid of the thick layers of ideological dust of the nineteenth century" (43-44) is a near verbatim recapitulation of socialist realist doctrine found in numerous Soviet texts of the Stalin era.

⁸ Although [the hopes for creative freedom had risen among Lithuanian intellectuals, writers, and artists during the 1955-57 period (the thaw)... the Communists began to retaliate after the suppression of the Hungarian uprising" (Grinius 206). In the aftermath of the Hungarian revolution of 1956, the Krushchev regime had carried out particularly harsh reprisals against assertions of national and cultural identity in the Baltic states (Grinius). Retroactive punishment for ideological liberties taken during the Thaw, perhaps because it was directed against a perceived strain of nationalism in Soviet satellite cultures, took place with particular severity in Lithuania, where "a series of dismissals of cultural functionaries can be said to have amounted to a purge in 1957-58" (Vardys 149). In 1959, the Rector of Vilnius University, along with "a score of other top educators and professors" (Remeikis 140) was dismissed from his post. In 1961, Krushchev had exhibited a low tolerance for Lithuanian national culture by strongly disapproving of the restoration underway of the 14th century castle at the ancient Lithuanian capital of Trakai (Vardys and Sedaitis 95). In 1965, Remeikis had attempted to define the cultural state of affairs: "The recent purges in the Latvian regime and the Lithuanian intelligentsia make it clear the Kremlin is not willing to tolerate nationalist deviations, even in the interpretation of the national heritage, and takes ruthless measures to stamp out all autonomous tendencies" (140). At the Tenth Congress of the Lithuanian Communist Party, February 15, 1958, Lithuanian Communist Party head A. Sniečkus had stated: "Anyone who would like to tear the Lithuanian people away from the Russian people, would be digging a grave for the Lithuanian nation" (quoted in Vardys and Sedaitis 73). Grinius quotes Soviet Communist Party official L. Ilychev, speaking in 1962 to Lithuanian writers and artists: "Without any equivocation, let the following be stated: There never was and there never can be peaceful coexistence of socialist and bourgeois ideologies (*Literatūra ir menas*, December 29, 1962 quoted in Grinius 210).

⁹ In October 1932, Chekhov was simultaneously involved in two productions of *Hamlet*, playing the lead role (and speaking the Russian language while the other actors spoke Latvian) and directing the play with the Latvian State Theatre in a production that opened in Riga on October 21, while directing the Lithuanian National Theatre production in Kaunas, which opened on October 11. It may be assumed that Chekhov did not play the lead role in the Lithuanian production only because he did not speak Lithuanian. Performing in Russian would not have been an option for a Kaunas audience which, unlike that of the largely Russian-speaking city of Riga, would have comprised a high percentage of ethnic Lithuanians who did not speak Russian.

¹⁰ Judelevičius also notes that two actors in the Kaunas production had also worked in the Moscow production—Vera Soloviev portrayed Gertrude in both productions while Chekhov colleague A. Oleka-Žilinskas, who had played the First Artist in 1924, was cast as Hamlet in Kaunas.

¹¹ As Rowe notes, Alexander Petrovich Sumarakov (1718-77) brought Shakespeare's works and a version of *Hamlet* to the Russian stage in 1748.

¹² Krėvė had held, in the immediate aftermath of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact of 1939, the dual titles of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Lithuanian Republic. When he found out that the Communist puppet Dekanazov was actually ruling the country instead of the legitimate Lithuanian authority, he complained to the Kremlin. During his meeting with Molotov, the Soviet Commissar informed Krėvė that Lithuania has ceased to exist and would be forced to "join the glorious family of the Soviet Union" (Vardys 264). Krėvė returned to Kaunas, resigned his post, and soon left for the United States, where he died in 1954, having become "the most illustrious example of the deceived intellectual" (Vardys 53). He was excised from Soviet history from 1940 until his rehabilitation in 1956.

¹³ Before the crackdowns that followed the Hungarian Uprising of October 1956, the "Thaw" itself had been advanced by cues from Krushchev, including the February 1956 "secret speech" in which the Stalinist era was opened to question and reevaluation.

¹⁴ A recent article about the life of Russian actor Vladimir Vysotsky, known for his legendary portrayal of Hamlet in the 1960s, provides this analysis: "Russia seems to be a unique country in this respect: With millions of innocent people doing time in labor camps under Stalin, and the rest more or less sympathizing with them, prison folklore had an immense impact" (Roy 20). Though this observation wrongly asserts the uniqueness of Russian culture in this respect, the implication within all Soviet cultures of an analogy between the "prison" and Hamlet's world of Elsinore is accurate.

¹⁵ V. Galinis and K. Umbrazas. *Lietuvių literatūros vadovėlis (10 kl.)* (*Lithuanian Literature (Tenth Grade)*). Kaunas: Šviesa, 1982, 108-138.

¹⁶ The first Minister of the Interior of independent Lithuania was a Marxist Social Democrat, as was the first Minister of Education. In the extremely diverse Lithuanian Constituent Assembly or *Seimas*, Marxist Social Democrats won the third highest total of seats.

¹⁷ In accordance with this rereading of Hamlet-Janonis, Judelevičius has recently related his impression that a Lithuanian audience of 1959 would have identified Janonis primarily as a "fragile lyricist," a "romantic and attractive figure of Lithuania—trapped in a tragic world" (Interview).

¹⁸ As Vardys and Sedaitis have noted, noncompliance with social norms in the Stalin era in Lithuania risked "sanctions that ranged from job demotion or expulsion from school to incarceration in the local psychiatric hospital" (72). If, as already noted, prison folklore had signified strongly in Lithuanian culture, so did the lore of the mental institution. The astonishing popularity of the Lithuanian translation of Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* in Soviet Lithuania, for example, would seem also to reflect the significance of the dehumanizing psychiatric hospital in Soviet Lithuanian culture.

¹⁹ In his study of *Hamlet* on the Hungarian stage, Zoltan Markus has identified strategies for evaluating politically appropriated Shakespeare productions and the often "Janus-faced discourses" (185) of Shakespearean criticism. Markus notes that in the Hungarian theater of the 1950s, itself subject to the ideological control of the Communist Party of Moscow, "the guidelines determined by Soviet Shakespeare criticism also became the main tenets of the communist Hungarian Shakespeare reception" (172) and therefore, like Lithuanian criticism, reproduced the "compulsory elements" (174) of the critical program outlined by "Soviet Shakespeare scholars, such as A. Smirnov, M. Morozov, and A. Anikst" (172). In Hungarian criticism, Markus identifies distinct elements of what he terms 'rupture' and 'continuity' by which both artistic and critical works achieve a 'double perspective' that allows the presenter of the discourse to reconfirm authority while revealing its insecurities (185). This "double perspective" is analogous to the "conflict ridden language" of *Gyvasis Šekspyras*, and it is evident in Judelevičius's presentation of both Lithuanian *Hamlet* productions.

WORKS CITED

- Black, Lendley C. *Mikhail Chekhov as Actor, Director, and Teacher*. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1987.
 Bojadziev, G. "Approaching Five Centuries." *Teatr* 1964, no. 4. 39-40.
 Dollimore, Jonathan. "Shakespeare and Theory." *Post-Colonial Shakespeares*. ed. Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin. London and New York: Routledge, 1998, 259-276.
 Gorchakov, Nikolai A. *Theatre of Soviet Russia*. Trans. Edgar Lehrman. New York: Columbia University Press, 1957.
 Gordon, Mel. "Mikhail Chekhov's Life and Work: A Descriptive Chronology," *The Drama Review*, 27 (Fall 1983) 9-19.
 Greenblatt, Stephen J. "Invisible Bullets: Renaissance Authority and its Subversion" *Glyph* 8(1981), 40-61.
 Grinius, Jonas. "Literature and the Arts in Captive Lithuania." *Lithuania Under the Soviets*. Ed. V. Stanley Vardys. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965.
 Ivanov, Vladislav. "Mikhail Chekhov and Russian Existentialism." *Wandering Stars: Russian Emigré Theatre 1905-1940*. Ed. Lawrence Sendick. Iowa

City: University of Iowa Press, 1992.

"Janonis, Julius" (Vaidilos Ainis) *Encyclopedia Lituanica*. 1967 ed.

Judelevičius, Dovydas. *Gyvasis Šekspyras* (The Living Shakespeare). Vilnius: Vaga, 1964.

----- . Personal interview with the author. 10/22/99/.

Kott, Jan. *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1964.

Kuosaitė, E. "Šekspyras ir Dabartis (Shakespeare and the Present)" *Švyturys (The Lighthouse)* (March 1964) 20-21.

----- . "Šekspyras Lietuviškai. " (Shakespeare in Lithuanian) *Tiesa (The Truth)*, (26 January 1967).

Law, Alma H. "Chekhov's Russian Hamlet (1924)" *The Drama Review*, 27 (Fall 1983) 34-45.

Loomba, Ania and Orkin, Martin. Introduction. *Post-Colonial Shakespeares*. ed. Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin. London and New York: Routledge, 1998.

Markov, P. A. *The Soviet Theatre*. New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1935.

Marcus, Zoltan. " 'Loyalty to Shakespeare': The Cultural Context of the 1952 Hamlet-Production of the Hungarian National Theater" *Shakespeare and Hungary*. New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1996.

Mendel, Arthur P. "Hamlet and Soviet Humanism. " *Slavic Review*. (December 1971) 733-47.

Okhlapov, Nikolai. "From the Producer's Exposition of Hamlet." *Shakespeare in the Soviet Union*. Trans. Avril Pyman. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1966.

Orkin, Martin. "Possessing the Book and Peopling the Text. " *Post Colonial Shakespeares*. Ed. Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin. London and New York: Routledge, 1998, 186-204.

Remeikis, Thomas. "The Administration of Power: The Communist Party and the Soviet government. " *Lithuania Under the Soviets*. Ed. Stanley Vardys. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965, 111-140.

Rowe, Eleanor. *Hamlet: A Window on Russia*. New York: New York University Press, 1976.

Samarin, R. Preface. *Shakespeare in the Soviet Union*. Trans. Avril Pyman. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1966.

Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*. Ed. David Bevington.

Šilbajoris, Rimvydas. "Socialist Realism and the Politics of Literature. " *Mind Against the Wall: Essays on Lithuanian Culture Under Soviet Occupation*. Ed. Rimvydas Šilbajoris. Chicago: Institute of Lithuanian Studies Press, 1983.

Smirnov, A. A. *Shakespeare: A Marxist Interpretation*. Trans. Sonia Volochova. New York: The Critic's Group, 1936.

Škycinas, N. "Žiūrovas laukia Šekspyro. " (The Spectator Awaits Shakespeare) *Literatūra ir menas (Literature and Art)*, (28 January 1950).

Valiukėnaitė, Delija. "Šekspyras lietuviškuose vertimuose ir jų panaudojimas Šekspyro analizei (Shakespeare in Lithuanian Translations and Their Use in Shakespeare Studies)" *Metmenys* 23(1972), 18-39.

Vardys, Stanley and Sedaitis, Judith B. *Lithuania: The Rebel Nation*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997.

Vardys, Stanley, ed. *Lithuania Under the Soviets*. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965.