Negyvenharmadik szokás: ha átadod a kupát,
Legtetejéhez soha ne érintsd kezed ujját,
Fél kézzel nyújtsad át, lent, a talpánál fogva azt,
Mert ki máshogyan jár el, könnyen rámondják: paraszt.

Negyvennegyedik szabály, kik hallgatják azokat,
Levesestálba, kupába ne töltsenek túl sokat,
Jó modort és mértéket tartsunk minden dologban,
És ki mint azt átlépi, udvariatlan nyomban.

Következő ekképp szól: tartsd meg a kanaladat,
Ha – új ételt adandó – elveszik a táladat,
Mert hiszen ha a kanál a tányérodban marad,
A felszolgálás menete egész biztos megakad.

Azután ez jön: hogyha te kanállal étkezel,
Nem illő, ha táladba túl sok kenyeret veszel,
Étkéből ki gyurmát gyúr, nyavalyás disznó alak,
Megundorítja bizony az asztali társakat.

Az, melyik most jön, így szól: ha barátod van nálad,
Míg az asztalnál eszik, vele ürítsd a tálat,
Mert ha te félbehagyod, mielőtt ő jóllakott,
Félő: illemből ő sem vesz majd ki több falatot.

Következő: másokkal egy lakomára gyűlve
Ügyelj rá, hogy késedet ne tedd korán hüvelybe,
Figyelj tehát, ne rakd el mások előtt tőrödet,
Hátha szükség lesz még rá, hisz még bárki megjöhet.

Következő intelmem: befejezvén lakomád
Tégy így: Jézus Krisztusnak mondj dicsőítő imát,
Mert ki jótevőjétől ilyen szolgálatot kap,
S azt még meg sem köszöni, biz hálátlan igencsak.

És végül, utolsóként, az ötvenedik így szól:
Mosd meg kezed és igyál Carrera jó borából,
Az étkezés után jól öblítsd le kezeidet,
A zsírtól és piszoktól ilyen módon tisztulj meg.

"Hamlet, Student of Wittenberg. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Luther's Theology", in, *Correspondances – Kapcsolatok. Hommage à Martonyi Éva.* Szerkesztette: Ádám Anikó, Bors Edit, Szávai Dorottya, Piliscsaba, Pázmány Péter Katolikus Egyetem, 2006, pp. 89–101.

Tibor Fabiny

Hamlet, Student of Wittenberg. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Luther's *Theology*

Hamlet, Prince of Denmark (1601), William Shakespeare's greatest tragedy has excited and stimulated human imagination for centuries. Martin Luther (1483–1546) was a German theologian who lived and worked two generations earlier than William Shakespeare. Both Luther and Shakespeare were creative geniuses who contributed to the making of Early Modern Europe. In the following essay I wish to offer an undoubtedly risky, interdisciplinary exercise in "intertextual hermeneutics". Hermeneutics is the encountering with the other; "intertextuality" is the study of how one text is linked up to, or echoed by, other texts. Postmodernity has dismissed the idea of the rigorous pure methodology in favour of creative dialogues: it is interested in interaction, interdisciplinarity and intertextuality which incessantly engender and open up new areas of meaning .

In a nutshell, this is the theoretical framework in which I wish to propose the thesis of my lecture, namely, that we can recognize parallel structures between two radical visions, namely, the artistic visiion of Shakespeare's *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* and the theological vision Martin Luther, Reformer of Wittenberg. Perhaps it is not by accident only that the Prince is so keen on returning to the University of Wittenberg, a place mentioned four times in the tragedy. English Renaissance drama has two Wittenberg scholars as protagonists: Marlowe's Doctor Faustus and Shakespeare's Hamlet.

I hope to demonstrate that the worlds of Martin Luther and Shakespeare's great tragedy are compatible with each other. What I hope to show is, that Wittenberg is not just an accidental place but it might be conceived as a thought-provoking metaphor in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. In order to do this I will have to recipulate what other scholars have already recognized but with a critical assessment of their insights I hope to strike a new and meaningul path.

1. The Dramatic Nature of Luther's Theology

It is a commonplace to suggest that Luther was far from being a traditional systematic theologian. Of his personal dramatic temperament (conversion, temptations etc.) I shall speak later. Now I would argue that there was definitely a dramatic aspect in his theology. Eric W. Gritsch has shown us that Luther's self image in his address *To the Nobility of the German Nation* was that of a "court-jester"[1] (*Hofnarr*) and as Gritsch says, Luther appears

> „to have worn his heart on his sleeve, tipping his cap to the troubled consciences of common folk, ringing his bells to warn the mighty in both church and world of God's unyielding power, and tapping his feet to the tune of the gospel's cheering and chilling news of Christ's lordship in a world nearing its end."[2]

Indeed, Luther seems to have radically appropriated and even enacted St. Paul's paradox about wisdom and foolishness especially in his *theologia crucis* to which we shall return later.

Moreover, Luther very frequently used such dramatic terms in his theology as "game", "laughter", "theater", "mask", "disguise" and "hiding". In 1532 he lectured on the "laughter of God" in Psalm 2 suggesting that God's laughter was a way of hiding his wrath from the stupidities of mankind. This should teach us to laugh at our enemies in times of storm: "Then it will come about that we shall laugh at the fury of the Turk, the popes, tyrants, sects, heretics, and all the adversaries of Christ's kingdom, as a comical spectacle".[3]

Luther also spoke about creation and history as the "face or mask of God" (*larva dei*), a *Mummenschanz*, a masquerade and while a "masked God may frighten others, Christian know that behind every divine mask there is a gracious God."[4]

In Luther's non-dogmatic dramatic theology comedy and tragedy, laughter and weeping, concealment and revelation, hiddennes and recognition are in a complementary relationship with each other. He knew what Reinhold Niebuhr said in the 20th century: "Humour is, in fact, a prelude to faith; and laughter is the beginning of prayer."[5]

[1] Eric W. GRITSCH, *Martin – God's Court Jester. Luther in Retrospect*, Ramsey, NJ, Sigler Press, 1991, 33.
[2] *ibid.* viii.
[3] Quoted by Eric W. GRITSCH, *Luther's Humor as a Tool for Interpreting Scripture* = Mark S. BURROWS and Paul ROREM (eds.) *Biblical Hermeneutics in Historical Perspective Studies in Honor of Karlfried Froehlich on His Sixtieth Birthday* Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans, 1991, 188.
[4] GRITSCH, *Court Jester,* 191. and 258., cf. LW 26,95.
[5] Quoted by GRITSCH, *Luther's Humor as a Tool for Interpreting Scripture,* 187.

2. Theological Potential in Shakespeare's Dramatic Art

In Shakespeare's dramatic art, in his *theatrum mundi*, there is nothing but laughter and weeping, comedy and tragedy. In his comedies he also laughs at the incongruities in human life, ridicules human folly, celebrates the fullness of life and the healing power of love in the reconciliation of human conflicts. In his great tragedies he recognizes evil within and beyond human nature: the *hybris* (pride), *hamartia* (tragic flaw, error of judgement), the role of fate and necessity in the fall of the hero. Yet, in Shakespeare, as I have shown elsewhere, tragedy and comedy are complementary genres[6]: the beginning of comedy is usually tragic and vice versa. Moreover, within tragedy there is always comic relief as the porter-scene in *Macbeth* or, the grave-digger scene in *Hamlet.* Shakespeare's great tragedies are, however, not only about individuals but the crisis of the hero is linked up with that of the nation like Denmark, pre-Christian Britain or, Scotland. This crisis, however, eventually transcends place and time and the "time' s out of joint" experience encompasses human existence, the ultimate question whether "to be or not to be".

Though philosophers and scholars have sometimes said that the so-called optimism of Christian faith is incompatible with the tragic vision, I believe, however, that in the bottom of religion and tragedy there is much in common. Though the elusive nature of Shakespearean tragedy indeed resists dogmatic interpretations, nevertheless there is much theological potential in Shakespeare's dramatic art. Theologically sensitive interpretations can recreate the kerygmatic potential of these tragedies, for example the pauline paradox of wisdom and foolishness in *King Lear.*[7] Shakespeare's concern for Providence, it has been pointed out, echoed and dramatized both Senecan stoicism and modern Calvinism.[8]

The motives which most resonate to Luther and Wittenberg theology are as follows: "the world turned upside down" by wrong perception (blindness); the discrepancy of appearance and reality; the role of disguise; the *deus absconditus* (the hidden god), hiding under the mask of the opposite; the paradox of wisdom and foolishness; suffering as a means of self-knowledge etc.

3. Resonances to Luther in Hamlet

The Hamlet-myth has its origins in the 9th century Scandinavian saga, the Edda, but the story was recorded by the Danish historian Saxo Grammaticus in the early 13th

[6] Tibor FABINY, *A shakespeare-i tragédia és komédia komplementaritása* = *Látó,* 1994/3, 97–105.
[7] Clifford DAVIDSON, *The Iconography of Wisdom and Folly in King Lear* = Tibor FABINY (ed.), *Shakespeare and the Emblem,* Szeged, 1984, 189–214.
[8] Cf. Alan SINFIELD, *Hamlet's Special Providence* = *Shakespeare Survey* 33, (1980), 89–97.

century. It is not exceptional that Shakespeare picks up a legendary story and anachronistically associates it with recent historical events such as the activity of the contemporary modern university of Wittenberg. Denmark by the end of the 16th century was entirely Lutheran and many Danish students attended Wittenberg University. Scholars have noted that between 1586 and 1595 Wittenberg had two students named Rosenkrantz and Gyldenstjerne and that it was the favourite university for the Danes to study abroad.[9] It has also been speculated that Shakespeare might have been informed by Henry Bennet's English translation of Melanchthon's biography of Luther published in England in 1561 which was adopted by John Foxe in his *Actes and Monuments*.[10] Topical allusions of philological curiosity have been pointed out but they have remained on the margin of Shakespeare scholarship.

One curious and puzzling textual allusion, has long been noticed and deserves our attention. It is in one of Hamlet's usual puns in Act 4 Scene 3 where we have an indirect, playful allusion to Luther. Hamlet is responding to the question where he put the dead body of the murdered Polonius:

> "Not where he eats, but where a is eaten;
> a certain *convocation of politic worms* are e'en at
> him. Your *worm* is your only *emperor* for *diet*: we
> fat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves
> for maggots; your fat king and your lean beggar is but variable
> service, to dishes, but to one table – that's the end." (4, 3, 19–25)

Critical editors of the drama since the 19th century have not only conjectured but recognized in the "emperor" a direct allusion to the Emperor Charles V., and in the "politic worms" and the "diet" a reference to the Diet of Worms. Harold Jenkins, the editor of the Arden *Hamlet* says in a footnote: "There is a play on *diet*, council, with reference to the Diet at the German city of Worms, presided over by the *emperor*. In 1521 it pronounced its ban on Luther after his famous refusal to recant."[11] Though the allusion, or, reference seems to be obvious , it would be a futile attempt to attribute any sense to the probably senseless pun.

[9] Harold JENKINS (ed.), *Hamlet, The Arden Shakespeare* London, New York, Methuen, 1984, 436., Cay DOLLERUP, *Denmark, 'Hamlet', and Shakespeare. A Study of Englishmen's Knowledge of Denmark...with Special Reference to Hamlet*, Salzburg, *Studies in English Literature*, 1975, 128.; See also: Gunnar SJOGREN, *The Danish Background of Hamlet, Shakespeare Survey*, 4, (1968), 221–230.

[10] Henry BENNET, *A Famous and Godly History etc.* London, John Awdeley, 1561, Cf. Steve SOHMER, *Certain Speculations on Hamlet, the Calendar, and Martin Luther, Early Modern Literary Studies* 2.1 (1996): 5, 1–51; http://purl.oclc.org/emls/02-1/sohmshak.html, http://www.shu.ac.uk/emls/02-1/sohmshak.html

[11] JENKINS, *op. cit.*, 340.

4. Melancholy and Anfechtungen

One can make a step further and recognize some parallels between Luther's and Hamlet's personalities. Recently two scholars have taken up the "Lutheran thread" in the play's texture. Raymond B. Waddington published an article "Lutheran Hamlet"[12] in 1989 and Richard Marius likewise an essay "Fate and Providence. Hamlet's Take on Martin Luther"[13], in 1997.

Waddington proposed a speculative possibility that "Shakespeare used Martin Luther as a prototype in constructing the character of the prince."[14] His insights can be summarized with some of my comments as follows:

- Allusion to "lord" (4, 3, 15) and to Polonius being at "supper" (4, 3, 18) and the "body" (4, 2, 25) and the king (4, 2, 25 – 26) is a grotesque literalistic hint at the Lord's Supper with the subtext of Luther's doctrine of the real presence.
- Because of his stubbornnes Luther was seen as mad at the Diet of Worms just as Hamlet was seen mad. Both were declared to be dangerous infections to their homelands and measures taken to cut out this infection: the Emperor's Edict of Worms condemned Luther and Claudius sent Hamlet to England to be executed.
- Hamlet escaped by the intervention of the pirates on the sea as narrated in 4, 4, 15 – 21. After Worms Luther escaped by being "kidnapped" by the men of his protector Frederick the Wise.
- Hamlet's disguise is parallel to Luther's disguise as Friar George in the Castle of Wartburg.

However, the most striking parallel is the impact of melancholy on Luther and Hamlet. Luther's melancholy what he called *Anfechtung* (spiritual temptation, assault by the devil, insomnia, depression) as it became known from Eric Erikson's psychobiography[15] strikingly corresponds to Hamlet's frequently discussed melancholy, the Elisabethan malady. Luther said of himself. "Sadness (*tristitia*) causes disease. For when the heart is ill, the body becomes weak. The true diseases are those of the heart, such as sadness, grief and temptation. I am true Lazarus who is quite tempted by diseases"[16].

Shakespeare uses the expression: "spleeny Lutheran" in *Henry VIII* (3, 2, 98.9). In *Hamlet*, the King says to the Prince.

[12] Raymond B. WADDINGTON, *Lutheran Hamlet = English Language Notes*, December 1989, 27–42.

[13] Richard MARIUS, *Fate and Providence: Hamlet's take on Martin Luther* = WICK *The Harvard Divinity School Student Journal of Literature and Religion*, Vol.1./1.1997, 37. 50.

[14] WADDINGTON, 32.

[15] Eric ERIKSON, *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalyis and History*, New York, 1958.

[16] Quoted by GRITSCH, *Court Jester*, 147.

"There's something in his soul
O'er which his melancholy sits on brood,
And I do doubt the hatch and the disclose
Will be some danger" (3, 1, 167–169).

This is later confirmed by the Prince himself:

"I am not splenative and rash
Yet have I in me something dangerous" (5, 255–256)

Queen (in the Folio the King) says:

"This is madness,
And this awhile the fit will work on him.
Anon, as patient as the female dove
When that her golden couplets are disclos' d,
His silence will sit drooping." (5, 1, 279–283)

Luther's conversion from his *Anfechtungen* and Hamlet's conversion from his melancholy has been compared by Steve Sohmer: "Young Martin Luther suffered a long period of guilt and depression *(anfechtung)*, and eventually found conversion through humble surrender to God and his preordained providence. Hamlet undergoes a similar course of spiritual development, from lamenting his 'too sullied flesh' to believing there's a 'special providence in the fall of a sparrow'".[17]

Unbalanced personalities usually need some balanced personalities to rely on in their immediate environements. Melanchthon was such a figure to Luther in Wittenberg and in the tragedy Horatio, the balanced Scholar is to Hamlet what the Scholar Melanchthon could have meant for Luther. Hamlet appreciates this friendship and values in Horatio what is just missing from his own character:

"Horatio, thou art e'en as just a man
As e'er my conversation cop'd withal..
.......blest are those
Whose blood and judgement are so well comeddled

[17] See Sohmer's "Certain Speculations..." point 21: "After returning to Denmark, Hamlet declares he was led by a 'divinity that shapes our ends' to discover the perfidious commision of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Hamlet writes to Claudius that he has returned to Denmark 'naked' (4.7. 50). In this word which so puzzles the king and Laertes, Lutherans of the Elizabethan era and our own recognize an allusion to the keyword Luther employs to describe his conversion through humble surrender to God: *nackld*".

That they are not a pipe for Fortune's finger
To sound what stop she please. Give me that man
That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him
In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart
As I do thee." (3,2,54–55 and 68–75)

Both Luther and Hamlet are associated with Hercules, who is also an emblem of heroic melancholy after the pseudo-Aristotelean *Problemata*. Luther was depicted in a cartoon attributed to Holbein as "Hercules Germanicus". Herder said of Luther: "Like a true Hercules, he attacked the spiritual despotism which undermines or dissolves all free wholesome thinking."[18] Hamlet's burden to carry out the revenge is as heavy as Hercules' "load" and in recognizing his fate he has to fight with Nemeon's lion's nerve (1, 5, 83) as Hercules (5, 1, 286) thus he being both the fighter and the victim.[19]

Both Luther and Hamlet use indecorous, bawdy language: Luther uses scatological images. When he was getting old he said of himself: "I am like a ripe stool, and the world's like a gigantic anus, and so we're about to let go of each other"[20]. Hamlet's vulgarity takes the form of sexual abuse with Ophelia.

However, parallel can also be established not only concerning common features of personalitiy but also concerning philosophy and doctrine. Hamlet's self-undestanding as being being both "scourge and minister" (3, 4, 175) evokes Luther's belief in the Christian being *simul peccator et iustus* (sinful and just at the same time). As it is known Luther rejected the "whore reason", "*hure Vernuft*. The Ghost also speaks about Claudius' "wicked wit" (1, 5, 44). Luther despised Aristotelean philosophy especially in approaching God (*coram deo*). Hamlet encountering the Supernatural gives the same "Lutheran" "anti-Aristotelean" lesson to Horatio:

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy" (1, 5, 174–75

Luther epecially warned against applying reason to heavenly matters and thereby confusing the two realms.

Luther stood for the idea of the priesthood of all believers. In *Hamlet* the "closet-scene" in Act III Scene IV seems to be a fine illustration of this principle. Here Hamlet the tries to make her mother repent and thus behaves as a priest int

[18] GRITSCH, *Court Jester*, 207.
[19] Cf. Zsolt ALMÁSI, *Hercules alakváltozásai. Hecules-utalások Shakespeare Hamletjében* [*Transformations of Hercules. Allusions to Hercules in Shakespeare's* Hamlet] Manuscript.
[20] GRITSCH, *Court Jester*, 84.

he biblical and Protestant sense of the word.[21] My point is that Hamlet is not cruel but rather generous to his mother when he passionately upholds her a looking-glass and tries to make confess her sins. Roland Mushat Frye in an article "Hamlet and the Protestant Confessional"[22] says: "Within the Protestant frames of reference of the sixteenth century in England, Hamlet's reproaches of his mother are skillfully designed to express the ultimate kindness, even through a seeming cruelty, or as he put it' I must be cruel only to be kind' (3, 4, 179 ... Shakespeare's dramatization of Hamlet's private consultation with his mother, in addition to its poetic qualities, provides a fine example of how the 'priesthood of all believers' was expected to operate at the end of the first Protestant century."[23]

Richard Marius the distinguished Thomas More scholar[24] who has completed a book also on Martin Luther[25] argues in an article "Hamlet's take on Martin Luther" that the whole play reflects the English understanding of Luther as conveyed through the writings of Thomas More. The play, according to Marius is "a mirror held up to religious confusion" especially with the idea of Purgatory, a doctrine deliberately rejected by Luther and the English Protestants William Tyndale or John Frith. Stephen Greenblatt in his most recent book *Hamlet in Purgatory* has also pointed out that Reformation theologians regarded ghosts and supernatural visitations as diabolical.[26] Luther even avoided talking about hell and he saw death (just as Tyndale did) as sleep until the day of doom.[27]

Marius is right in emphasizing that Hamlet never repents, never feels Protestant guilt; before his death he is only concerned with his reputation and therefore he asks Horatio: "Report me my cause" (5, 2, 344) and "tell my story" (5, 2, 354). The play reflects faith and doubt just as the Elisabethan audience also usually believed in contrary things.

Marius' main point is that instead of a pure Protestant faith from Luther's Wittenberg Shakespeare took the idea of predestination and equated it with Greek

[21] See my article: *'The Eye' as a Metaphor in Shakesperean Tragedy: Hamlet, Cordelia and Edgar: Blinded Parents' Seeing Children = Celebrating Comparativism Essays In Honour of György Mihály Vajda* eds. Katalin KÜRTÖSI and József PÁL, Szeged, 1994, 461–478.

[22] Roland Mushat FRYE, *Prince Hamlet and the Protestant Confessional, Theology Today*, Vol. 39, 1982, 27–38. Further sudies on Hamlet and Protestantism (especially Lutheranism): Raymond B. WADDINGTON, *Lutheran Hamlet, English Language Notes*, December, 1989, pp. 27-42. and Richard MARIUS, *Fate and Providence: Hamlet's Take on Martin Luther*, WICK, *The Harvard Divinity School Student Journal of Lietarture and Religion*, Vol. 1/1. 1997, 37–50.

[23] R. M. FRYE, *op. cit.*, 30. and 32.

[24] Richard MARIUS, *Thomas More: A Biography*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1985.

[25] Richard MARIUS, *Martin Luther. The Christian Between God and Death*, Cambridge, Mass. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999.

[26] Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2001.

[27] Cf. Gordon ISAAC, *Some Reflections on Luther's View of Death*, Manuscript. See esp. LW 25, 310.

fate.[28] Thomas More interpreted Luther's *De servo arbitrio* as being fatalist: whether our actions are good or bad, our destiny is ordered by God. Marius's suspicion is that Luther's name became associated with fatalism in Tudor England.

Luther in his polemics against Erasmus claims that fate is more than the endeavours of men as "no man's plans have ever been straightforwardly realized, but for everyone things have turned out differently from what they thought they would"[29] Marius emphatically says: "*Hamlet* seems to build on this Lutheran insight."[30] and goes on to demonstrate that the play is nothing but a series of failed projects. Contrary to many interpretors the play, according to Marius, is not about Providence but about "fate in the Greek classical sense"[31] and at the end "he understands to the full that the world is an unintelligible plaything of fate where human beings are incapable of effecting their will."[32] Even in the celebrated lines. "There's a divinity that shapes our ends, / rough-hew them how we will." (5, 2, 11–12) there is no triumph, no confession of guilt. This "divinity" is not the Christian God but Senecan Fate.[33] Marius remembers Tyndale's remark that "man in the hand of God has no more control over his fate than the axe in the hand of the woodcutter" or Luther's notion that "if God wills it, we should be resigned for damnation". The celebrated allusion to the "special providence in the fall of a sparrow" and "readiness" is Hamlet's acceptance of his inner freedom: "the freedom to accept fate and to will what fate requires".[34]

5. A New Path for Parallel: Luther's Theology of the Cross and Hamlet

Now, let us recapitulate Marius' thesis: it is not directly Luther but the English reputation of Luther as channelled by Thomas Mores' interpretation, is what constitutes the world of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: Senecan fate was understood as Protestant providence in Elisabethan England. This statement might be right, or, wrong, therefore, it is not my intention to either prove or confute it. In the final section of my lecture I only wish to show that an important aspect of Luther's theology, without being misread by More, is still compatible with Shakespeare's tragedy. This aspect is the idea of the theology of the cross.

What is then, the subject matter of the theology of the cross? Against many misunderstandings and misconceptions Gerhard O. Forde says that "It is a particular

[28] Cf. Iván NYUSZTAY, *Myth, Telos and Identity. The Tragic Schema in Greek and Shakespearean Drama*, Amsterdam-New York, Rodopi, 2002, pp. 63–70.

[29] Luther's *De servo arbitrio*, quoted by Marius, 46.

[30] Richard MARIUS, *op. cit.*, 46.

[31] *Ibid.* 47.

[32] *Ibid.*

[33] *Ibid.*

[34] *Ibid.*

perception of the world and our destiny, what Luther came to call looking at all things through suffering and the cross."[35] He says that "it is so radical and deep for its time that it is still vital for our time"[36], this is a story that "claims us"[37] and wants us to become theologians of the cross[38], it teaches us "to say what the thing is", "to call a spade a spade"[39].

Luther first formulated his theology of the cross in the 1518 *Heidelberg Disputation.* He called his theses "theological paradoxes" which was the reformers' new way of forming argument against the traditional syllogism of scholastic theologians.

The central notion, the great divide between the way of glory and the way of the cross is described in theses 19–21 of the *Heidelberg Disputation.*

> 19 The man who looks upon the invisible things of God as they are perceived in created things does not deserve to be theologian. (*Non ille dignus theologus dicitur, qui invisibilia Dei per ea, quae facta sunt, intellecta conscipit.*)
> 20 The man who perceives the visible rearward parts of God as seen is suffering and the cross does, however, deserve to be called a theologian. (*Sed qui visibilia et posteriora Dei per passiones et crucem conspecta intelligit.*)
> 21 The theologian of glory calls evil good and good evil. The theologian of the cross says what a thing is.[40]

The theology of glory wishes, with human achievement and free will, "to see through" the cross in order to find, by speculation, a "transcendant meaning" (virtue, wisdom, goodness etc) and contemplate the invisible greatness of God. But Luther believes that "peering into 'invisible things of God' only 'puffs up, blinds and hardens'"[41] But the cross teaches us to see differently: the cross is not transparent, we cannot look behind it; it is a mirror and we have to look at it. We cannot explain the cross but we have to preach the cross. The theology of the cross reveals that things are not what they seem; it makes us recognize that there is a crucial discrepancy between appearance and reality. This is indeed the very problem of *Hamlet* and some of the great tragedies including *King Lear* and *Macbeth.* According to the theology of the cross it is the cross that reverses our way of seeing. Only by faith is it revealed that

[35] Gerhard O. FORDE *On Being a Theologian of the Cross. Reflections on Luther's Heidelberg Disputation, 1518.* Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans, 1997, xii.
[36] *Ibid.*
[37] *Ibid.* 9.
[38] *Ibid.* 4.
[39] *Ibid.* 13.
[40] The English translation of theses 19–20 is given on the basis of MCGRATH, *Luther's Theology of the Cross,* Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1985, 148. and the thesis 21 on the basis of Forde's *On Being a Theologian of the Cross,* 71. The translation of "posteriora" has caused the same conflict in the English translation as in the Hungarian one (*Magyar Luther Füzetek* 8. 28.).
[41] FORDE, *op. cit.*, 77.

God concealed himself in the form of its opposite: in the shame of the cross. The cross cuts down the wisdom of the wise, the vision of the theologian of the glory. It is only through suffering and the cross that we can come to know God. Only through this suffering can we learn what things really are, that the spade is spade.

The idea is that "God's revelation can take place in the form of opposites, *sub contrario.* God does his alien and wrathful work before he does his proper and loving work; he makes alive by killing, brings to heaven by going through hell, brings forth mercy out of wrath."[42] The alien work is the *opus alienum* and the loving work is the *opus proprium.* In Isaiah 28, 21 it is called "the strange work" and "the strange act" of God. It is God who assaults and inflicts us, he causes the terrors of temptation, the *Anfechtungen.* In Forde's words: "Knowledge of God comes when God happens to us".[43] Luther even goes so far as to suggest that God, in his alien work, becomes devil for us before becoming God for us: "God cannot be God unless He first becomes a devil. All that God speaks and does the devil has to speak and do first."[44]

Alister MacGrath mentions five marks[45] of the theology of the cross: 1) *theologia crucis* a theology of revelation rather than a theology of speculation; 2) This revelation must be regarded as indirect and concealed; 3) This revelation is to be recognized in the sufferings of the cross of Christ; 4) This knowledge of God who is hidden in his revelation is a matter of faith; 5) God is particularly known through sufferings, he makes himself known through sufferings: God is the source of *Anfechtung,* he assaults man in order to break him down and thus to save him. It is significant that God is hidden and the *Deus absconditus* hides his mercy under his wrath.

Returning to Hamlet we should remember that Hamlet also rejected traditional speculation in favour of a new type of revelation: "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, / Than are dreamt in your philosophy" (1, 5, 174–75). This is undoubtedly the voice of a Wittenberg man. For Luther God conceals himself in the form of its opposites in order to reveal himself, Hamlet also "plays God": he acts in a similar manner: he puts on an "antic disposition" and plays the role of the madman, uses indirect means, such as the mousetrap scene, to find truth out:

> "The play's the thing
> Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King." (2, 2, 600–601).

This corresponds to McGrath's words, that God's "revelation must be regarded as indirect and concealed".[46] At this point we cannot but recall a parodical mirror of

[42] *Ibid.* 31.
[43] FORDE, *op. cit.*, 90.
[44] *Ibid,* 90. cf. LW 14, 31.
[45] Alister MCGRATH, *Luther's Theology of the Cross,* Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1985. 149–151.
[46] *Ibid.*

Hamlet's indirect revelation in Polonius' advise to Reynaldo when he commissions to spy on his son Laertes:

> "Your bait of falsehood takes this carp of truth;
> And does do we of wisdom and of reach,
> With windlasses and and with assays of bias,
> *By indirections find directions out.*" (2, 1, 63–66)

I would like to emphasize that this idea of an "indirect" finding out of directions is strikingly similar in Shakespeare and Luther. In a much debated "bitter comedy" *Measure for Measure* written three years after *Hamlet,* Shakespeare invented the figure of the Duke who disguised himself as a Friar to create order out of disorder, to test or even to torture his people so that they should gain a new understanding of themselves. By means of human standards his game was hazardous and even inhuman as he "by direction" was finding "directions out". When, as the outcome of his game he reveals the wickedness of the human heart the Duke is seen "like power divine" (5, 1, 367). Now, this image of God does indeed conform to the God of Luther's *theologia crucis* who also puts on "an antic disposition", wears a mask and plays with human beings by afflicting and torturing them with *Anfechtungen* but under his *opus alienum* he is hiding his *opus proprium.*

We are coming to recognize what is indeed common between the radical theological vision of Luther and the radical artistic "vision" (1, 5, 143) of Hamlet. Both of them are radically committed to searching and seeing reality as it is, "things as they really are", without seam, pomp and circumstances. Hamlet's encounter with the Ghost is an initiation into another, a rather naked and chilling reality. Hamlet is passionately dragged and drawn towards the revelation of this reality. In order to gain new knowledge he is even willing to go to hell just as Luther knew that God was taking him to hell:

> "Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damn'd,
> Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell...
> ...I will speak to thee." (1, 4, 39–40, 43)

As we have seen above Hamlet has been assaulted by melancholy just as Luther or the theologian of the cross is attacked by the *Anfechtungen*. In the theology of the cross, the cross is meant to reverse our way of seeing. Hamlet recognizes his assigned Herculean task to set time right:

> "The time is out of joint. O cursed spite,
> That ever I was born to set it right." (1, 5, 196–198)

6. Conclusion

William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is not a Christian play as we hear nothing about Christ or the necessity of the cross in it. Marius is entirely right that Hamlet never repents. Yet, I think, we can find more in it than Senecan fate as suggested by Marius. Patterns of the theology of the cross: knowledge by revelation rather than speculation; the dialectics of concealment and revelation; the paradoxical way of thinking, indirect revelation; suffering (melancholy or *Anfechtungen*); reversal of seeing and so on. *Hamlet* is probably an unconscious, literary echoing of some of the schemes of Luther's theology of the cross – without the cross. Only in retrospect, after understanding the theology of the cross, can we understand that some of its motifs are concealed in *Hamlet. Hamlet* does not take us to the cross but it takes us towards the cross by twisting us out of our wrong orientations, by changing the direction of our gaze, by reversing our seeing. Within the play a radical reversal was taking place but not after the encounter with the one "who had no form or comeliness... no beauty that we should desire him" (Is 53, 2) or from whom we "hid our faces" but only from a Ghost who revealed the truth but called for revenge. Hamlet has only confronted the *opus alienum* of God, never the *opus proprium.*

My purpose was only, as I said, to demonstrate the parallel structures of a radical theological thought and of a radical artistic vision. I did not wish not to suggest that either world infered from the other but the point was that even beyond some astonishing resemblances one can bring some of Luther's thoughts into dialogue with *Hamlet* as these two seemingly distant worlds are in many aspects, compatible with each other. Intertextual readings can open up new, unexpected layers for interpretation.

Let me end a with a typical provocative and radical insight of Luther. Concerning the identity of the theologian he said: "living, or rather dying and being damned make a theologian, not understanding, reading or speculating" *(vivendo immo moriendo et damnando fit theologus, non intelligendo, legendo aut speculando).*[47]

With Shakespeare's tragedy and Luther's theology of the cross on our minds we may continue our meditations upon the Prince of Denmark and Student of Wittenberg who lived, died and – was probably damned. While he lived God did "happen to" him as he did experience the "strange acts" of God, his "rearward part". But by his dramatic life, death and damnation, he was twisting our gaze towards reality. In the light of Luther's above quoted observation, we may say that the message the dying Prince has passed on to us, the "yet unknowing world" (5, 2, 383), is, perhaps, the readiness, to become food, also, for theologians?

[47] Quoted in McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross,* 152.

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TARTALOM

Danielle Fournier: *Les mots ourlés dans la bouche (poème)* 9
Alexa Károly: *Portré a félmúltból* 11
Anikó Ádám: *Maeterlinck symboliste, Maeterlinck mystique* 15
Mihály Bácskai: *Tentative d'une double lecture active et analytique des récits courts chez István Örkény* 22
Bors Edit: *Nyelv és zene határán: zenei stílusjegyek az irodalmi műben* 27
Botos Máté: *Duchêne apó a Legfőbb Lény előtt. Adalék a forradalom ateizmus-vitáihoz* 36
Cseppentő István: *„Angol történetek" a XVIII. századi francia regényben* . . . 46
Csuday Csaba: *Öt pont a magyar Quijote történetéhez* 56
Domokos György: *Bonvesin dra Riva asztali illemkódexe a XIV. századból* 76
Tibor Fabiny: *Hamlet, Student of Wittenberg. Shakespeare's* Hamlet *and Luther's* Theology 89
Fried István: *A kelet-közép-európai parasztregény* 102
Fröhlich Ida: *Regény és közönsége az ókori Keleten* 110
Gorilovics Tivadar: *Victor Hugo, 1952, Magyarország* 124
Alexandra Grzybowska: *Les porteuses d'aromates. L'évolution des personnages féminins dans les romans de Julien Green* 139
Gizella Gutbrod: *Théorie de rythme chez Simone Weil* 153
Katalin Halácsy Scholz: *Word for Word, or Sense for Sense. A Case Study about the Hungarian Translation of the Anglo-Saxon Poem* Beowulf 164
Erzsébet Hanus: *Les débuts d'*Hamlet *en France* 172
Ferenc Hardi: *L'image de la femme dans les premiers romans algériens de langue française* 182
Miléna Horváth: *A la croisée des interprétations : lecture et réception de l'œuvre d'Assia Djebar* 188

Hoffmann Rózsa: *Az oktatásügy válsága. A liberális közoktatás-politika kritikája* 197
Horváth Csaba: *La vraie vie est ailleurs* 214
Jany János: *Az igazságosság szerepe a perzsa irodalmi hagyományban* 230
Krzysztof Jarosz: *Pour saluer Melville de Jean Giono : une poétique de tournant* 244
Kaló Krisztina: *A levélforma Henry de Montherlant* A lányok *című regényciklusában* 259
Käfer István: *Egy szlovák író Párizs-élménye az I. világháború után* 268
Fritz Peter Kirsch: *Pour une historiographie littéraire logée à l'enseigne de l'interculturel* 282
Kürtösi Katalin: *Michel Tremblay színháza* 292
Petr Kyloušek: *Le mythe contre le roman. Un aperçu de la réflexion théorique de la période 1960–1980 en France* 300
Lackfi O. János: *A kapatos ladik* 308
Tímea László, Dominique Chappaz, Anne-Laure Girot: *La Simulation Globale : un outil motivant pour l'enseignement / apprentissage du français* 315
Lőrinszky Ildikó: *Antik és modern Flaubert levelezésében* 326
Jerzy Lis: *Enjeux de l'autobiographie contemporaine : autofiction, roman autobiographique, autobiographie fictive* 333
Imre Gábor Majorossy: *La mystique du frug : Peire Cardenal* 350
Györgyi Maté: *Paroles malgré elles* 362
Márton Náray-Szabó: *Variance dans les phrasèmes : le cas des expressions à sujet figé* 372
Palágyi Tivadar: *Együttélő nyelvek: példák Moldovából, Bulgáriából és Görögországból* 386
Pálfalvi Lajos: A Madame *avagy egy lengyel regény francia hősnője* 395
Pálfy Miklós: *Mélylélektani struktúrák és női szereplők Chrétien de Troyes* Lancelot-*jában* 400
Penke Olga: *A történeti téma Prévost* Mémoires et aventures d'un homme de qualité *című regényében* 406
Ratzky Rita: *A márciusi fiatalok csoportidentitásáról* 418
Saly Noémi: *A reverendás írónő* 426
Zsuzsa Simonffy: *De la fonction symbolique au dialogue* 441
Franciska Skutta: *Influences étrangères et structure narrative : un roman d'Antal Szerb* 449
Szabó Anna: *Magyarország francia szemmel a romantika korában. Auguste de Gerando* 456
Szávai Dorottya: *A bűntelen bűnös panasza. A Pilinszky-Camus párbeszéd jóbi szólamáról* 469
Szávai János: *A Mandarin-metafora* 488
Szepesi Veronika: Mindenmindegy Jakab *meg a mindenható író* 496
Tegyey Gabriella: *Mitsou esete a Kék Hadnaggyal: a műfajok váltakozása Colette* Mitsou *című elbeszélésében* 506
Éva Wenner, József Pál: *La notion de la réalité dans la littérature italienne au début du XXᵉ siècle* 517
Antonín Vašek: *On the Notion of "Linguistic Union"* 527

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Összeállította: Dudás Anikó 543