Social *Hamlet*: Time and Culture in the W. Shakespeare's Tragedy

Sociocultural factors affect language lexis directly compared to its phonology and grammar structure where such influence is moot. The tragedy Hamlet by W. Shakespeare, as a specimen of discourse, reflects the various aspects of the social environment ranging from medieval cosmology to pastimes and entertainments. A detailed statistical and semantic analysis of the original Hamlet text (F1) has been done, with all items related to the cultural background have been thoroughly gleaned from the text, interpreted, and itemized. The study reveals that the most numerous semantic group under consideration refers to 'special areas of activivity' (36%), which includes such domains, as hawking, hunting, sea, military, pastime (games), theater, law, arrow shooting, and gardening. This group is followed by that of cultural references to customs, traditions, realia of that time, historical events (19.3%); then go two bunches of items that deal with superstitions and prejudices (11.4% each). The notions that refer to medieval astrology and scientific views of that time are close in numbers (10.5% each); items describing religion are less numerous (5.2%). The research shows that the lexis related to everyday life of the people (their activities, traditions, customs, superstitions, and prejudices) dominates that of abstract notions (religion, cosmology, science).

Keywords: *citation, cultural environment, medieval belief, obsolete sense, reference*

Introduction

Bringing to light the relation between language and culture (or society in terms of sociolinguistics) has always been the Holy Grail of researchers. The early sociological framing of language goes back to the beginning of the 19th c. (Coulmas 2017, p. 18). The 'strong version' of the E. Sapir and B. Whorf's theory that language determines the way people think, has not been supported by modern scholars. W. Labov, e.g., states that "*the force of social evaluation… is generally brought to bear upon… the lexicon and phonetics*" (Labov 2001, p. 28). Indeed, the ways sociocultural factors affect the rigid grammar structures are intricate, if any at all. One can legitimately ask whether there is a connection between the Norman Conquest of England and the change to verb-non-final word order in ME. Or what is the correspondence between the Kurgan burial of Proto-Indo-European, along with the domestic horse and the chariot, ethnic markers of those, on the one hand, and the system of ablaut, a characteristic feature of Indo-European – vocalic alternations accompanied by morphological changes, on the other?

Still, styding the lexicon that reflects the cultural aspects of any given period could spell out the nature of language change and the complexities of interplay between intralinguistic and extralinguistic factors. From this standpoint, *Hamlet* by W. Shakespeare is a unique specimen of discourse, an encyclopedia of his time, with a bird-eye's view of the pertaining social aspects.

Literature Review

A complete review of Shakespearean Literature would go far beyond the scope of this study. Still, there are some relevant sources, which have been tapped into. Thus, the influences of foreign languages on and difference of English in the Bard's works are elaborated on in the monograph *Interlinguicity, Internationality, and Shakespeare* (Saenger 2014). The political background of the period is considered in *Shakespeare and Renaissance Politics* (Hadfield 2004). W. Shakespeare's language has been profoundly studied in *Shakespeare and the Arts of Language* (Mc Donald 2012), a socio-linguistic study of the authorship of W. Shakespeare's plays – in the book of J. Hope (Hope 1994). Numerous dictionaries on various aspects of W. Shakespeare's language are also abundant: the informal language of the Bard is presented in the Dictionary of N. Blake (Blake 2002), the legal language – in the Dictionary of B. Sokol and M. Sokol (Sokol B, Sokol M 2004), A Glossary of the Bard's Plays and Poems – in E. Shewmaker's one (Shewmaker 2008). The playwright's philosophical ideas are described in the work of D. Bevington (Bevington 2008), W. Shakespeare Sources – in the Dictionary of S. Gillespie (Gillespie 2001). G. de Sousa studies cross-cultural encounters and environment in the Bard's works (de Sousa 2002), S. Wells – sexuality in his plays (Wells 2010), N. Blake – the grammar of W. Shakespeare's language (Blake 2002). The hidden language of W. Shakespeare encoded in symbols is revealed by C. Asquith (Asquith 2006), and J. Pearce (Pearce 2010). The works of N. Drake in 1817 (Drake 1969) and S. Johnson in 1765 (Johnson 1958), along with the commentary of Ch. Kean (Kean 1859) and Th. Decker (Decker 1843), 'old-timers', provide much valuable information on the Bard's time, regarding customs, traditions, rites, along with peculiarities of the W. Shakespeare's language.

Methodology

As it is known, there are three early editions of the text: First Quarto (Q1) in 1603, Second Quarto (Q2) in 1604-1605, and First Folio (F1 or F) in 1623 (Hattaway 1987). The problem of 'authentic' text is avoided in this study. It is established that Q2 and F1 texts are probably superior to Q1, which is shorter and designed for the stage performance. The text F1 with the original spelling has served as material for this research. The F1 text is used by the OED for its quotations, as well (Simpson, Weiner 1994). In some rare cases examples from Q2 were included in the study, they are marked as Q2. Though the original text F1 did not have 'chapter and verse' numeration (acts, scenes, lines), this paper follows the usual later practice, including that of the OED of such numeration for the sake of transparency. Meanings of the lexical items are often taken from the OED and sometimes abridged. All items related to the cultural background, in a wide sense, have been thoroughly gleaned from the text, analyzed, and semantically itemized.

Findings

In the tragedy, 114 direct mentions connected to the cultural (social) environment of the author's time and place are found. The first group to be discussed refers to medieval cosmology. It is known that the medieval views on the Universe were based on geocentric theory of the solar system by Ptolemy that tapped into Arystotle's physics. According to the geocentric theory, the Earth was fixed at the center, deferents were large circles centered on the Earth, and epicycles were small circles whose centers moved around the circumferences of the deferents, with the Sun, Moon, etc. moving around the circumferences of the deferents. The stars were fixed on their spheres and did not rotate on their own, contrary to planets (http://abyss.uoregon.edu/~js/ast123/lectures/lec02.html). This group countains 12 cases:

> "*When yond same Starre that's Westward from the Pole Had made his course t' illume that part of Heauen…*" [I.i.42-44]
> "*That as the Starre moues not but in his Sphere.*" [IV.vii.15]
> "*So many iournies may the Sunne and Moone Make vs againe count o're, ere loue be done.*" [III.ii.161-162]
> "*And thirtie dozen Moones with borrowed sheene, About the World haue times twelue thirties beene.*" [Ibid.,157-8]

Another example from the text has to do with retrograde motion of planets, when each planet "*…seems to slow down at times, then move in reverse…before resuming its course.*" (https://www.britannica.com/video/23882/Ptolemy-theory-solar-system). As from above, the planets were moving on two sets of circle (deferents and epicyles), and this retrograde motion kept the planets in their circular orbits around the Earth (Ibid.). Thus, the King implores Hamlet:

> "*For your intent In going backe to Schoole in Wittenberg, It is most retrograde to our desire:*" [I.ii.113] Here: *retrograde* is used in the obsolete sense introduced by W. Shakespeare 'contrary', derived from astronomy ('going contrary to motion of the sign: East to West').

The fixed positions of the stars in the spheres and their structure are reflected in the following quotations:

> "*Make thy two eyes like Starres, start from their Spheres.*" [I.v.22-23]
> "*Doubt thou, the Starres are fire, Doubt, that the Sunne doth moue:*" [II.ii.115]
> "*What is he, whose griefes…conjure the wandring Starres, and makes them stand…*" [V.i.258, 260]

The soul in medieval astrology, after Plato, was associated with the stars. Souls are made by Demiurge in numbers equal to the stars (Barton 2003 p. 109). Pythagorians and Platonists stressed the astral origin of the human soul (Ibid., p. 110). When Polonius says to his daughter: "*Lord Hamlet is a Prince out of thy Starre.*" [II.ii.140], he means that they both have diferrent status and he is out of her reach.

Next two cases refer to the ties between astrology and medicine, which were strong in the Middle Ages. The influence of the planets on the human body was contradictory and controversial (Barton 2003 pp. 185-192). Thus, Horatio seing *the Ghost* exclaims:

> "*But soft, behold: Loe, where it comes againe: Ile crosse it, though it blast me. Stay Illusion.*" [I.i.126-127] Here: *to blast* '(of a malign planet) to exercise its bad influence'.
> "*The nights are wholsome, then no Planets strike*." [I.i.161] Here: *to strike* '(of a malign planet) to kill (obs.)'

One more extract related to astrology is found in Q2:

> "*As stars with trains of fire and dews of blood, Disasters in the sun; and the moist star,Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands, Was sick almost to doomsday with eclipse.*" [I.i.129-132] Here: *moist star* is the Moon, which was believed to be a source of dew and whose influence on the tides was known since 2nd c. BCE (Barton 2003). Cicero stated that from the Moon come moisture and dew, useful for nourishment of living being and plants (Ibid.).

The second group under consideration relates to scientific views of that time. Evidently, in some cases it overlaps with that of astrology and erroneous beliefs, since the medieval science bore the birthmarks of both. This set counts 12 items. Firstly, the following should be encapsulated.

In ancient and medieval science the nature consisted of four elements: earth, water, air, and fire, with each having the corresponding qualities: dry, moist (or humid), cold, and hot. They were thought to match corresponding *humors* (blood – air, black choler – earth, phlegm – water and choler – fire). The earth was dry and cold, water – moist and cold, air – moist and cold, fire – dry and hot. The combination of those elements was thought to make up these four *humors* (fluids) in human's body that determined his/her character. In the healthy organism antagonizing humors were balanced, while an excess of one or more of those caused diseases (Barton 2003, pp. 911-916). Many cases in the group relate in some way to this ground principle, as:

> "*Awake the God of Day: and at his warning,Whether in Sea, or Fire, in Earth, or Ayre, Th' extrauagant, and erring Spirit, hyes.*" [I.i.153-155]

Another example: "*And since so Neighbour'd to his youth, and humour* [=state of mind], *That you vouchsafe your rest heere in our Court.*" [II.ii.11-12]

Next quotation parachutes from the medieval sense of the word *temper*, along with *temperament* and *complexion*, as 'due combination of the above-mentioned qualities':

> "*He tels me my sweet Queene, that he hath found The head and sourse of all your Sonnes distemper* [=malaise]." [II.ii.54-55]
> Again: "*The King, sir … Is in his retyrement, maruellous distemper'd.*" [III.ii.307, 309-310]

And: "*Vpon the heate and flame of thy distemper* [=state of madness]…" [II.iv.124]
Or: "*Mee thinks it is very soultry, and hot for my Complexion.*" [V.ii.98-99]

Some vital body organs were considered in the Bard's time as seats of emotions and feelings: *liver* – the hub of love and violent passions, *heart* – the center of vital functions, the seat of life, the life itself; *mind* – the center of intellectual abilities, *bowels* used to stand for 'offsprings, descendents'. In the following, *Hamlet* says:

"*But I am Pigeon-Liuer'd, and lacke Gal.l*" [II.ii.574], here *pigeon* used in the old sense 'coward'.

The next case – "*And blest are those, Whose Blood and Idgement are so well co-mingled.*" [II.ii.78-79], after S. Johnson, shows that according to the doctrine of the four humours, *desire* and *confidence* were seated in the blood, and judgment in the phlegm, and the due mixture of the humors made a perfect character (Johnson 1958).

Some obsolete now senses bear the birthspots of medieval views:

"*This is the very extasie* [=morbid state, as epilepsy, frenzy] *of Loue.*" [II.i.102]
Again: "…*blasted with extasie…*" [III.i.172]
Another example is: "…*the humourous* [=peevish] *man shall end his part in peace…*" [II.ii.334-335]

The next small passage shows play on words based on old senses of *distempered* and *choler*: "*The King…maruellous distemper'd* [=troubled, vexed]…*rather with choller* [=bile, purgation]… *for for me to put him to his Purgation, would perhaps plundge him into farre more Choller* [=anger, wrath]." [III.ii.307, 309-310, 312, 314-315]

Another case in point is *spleen* with its obsolete derivative *splenative*. When *Hamlet* comes to fight with *Laertes* at the *Ophelia*'s funeral, he exclaims: "*Sir though I am not Spleenatiue* [=of hot and hasty temper], *and rash, Yet haue I something in me dangerous, Which let thy wisenesse feare. Away thy hand.*" [V.i.265-267] According to the OED, *spleen* at that time combined both the opposite senses – 'the seat of melancholy or morose feelings' with 'the seat of laughter or mirth' (Simpson, Weiner 1994 p. 1858). Then, the derivative, now all obsolete senses, emerged: 'merriment', 'caprice, whim', 'fit of temper, passion', 'courage, hot temper', wherefrom the meaning in question developed.

The biggest theme group under consideration can roughly be defined as 'special areas', 41 items (two of them in Q2), which includes such domains, as hawking, hunting, sea, military, pastime (games), theater, law, arrow shooting, and gardening. As N. Drake puts it, hawking was"…*during the reigns of Elizabeth and James, the most prevalent and fashionable of all amusements.*" (Drake 1969, p. 255). Being at the peak of its popularity and reputation at that time, it "…*descended from the nobility to the gentry and wealthy yeomanry.*" [Ibid.]. This diversion was very costy and addicts often sacrificed their fortunes. The falconry jargon has left its traces in the tragedy. Thus, *Hamlet* after seeing *Ghost* of his

Father answers his worried friends: "*Hillo, ho, ho, boy; come bird, come!*" [I.v.118], *hillo* was a command used by a falconer to his trained bird to return.

In another example "*But there is Sir an ayrie* [=brood] *of Children, little Yases, that crye out on the top of question…*" [II.ii.339-340], *eya* is 'a little hawk for training'.

One more istance of the same ilk: "*Masters, you are all welcome: wee'l e'ne to't like French Faulconers, flie at any thing we see.*" [II.ii.422-423] Here, reference is made to the trained French falcons, which as actors like to play any script, are eager to attack any prey.

In the last citation related to hawking "*…if he be now return'd, As checking at his Voyage…*" [IV.vii.69-70], *checking* is 'stopping short the falcon's flight calling it back' (compared to Hamlet, who could break his voyage and return to Denmark).

The nature of the next diversion had drastically changed in the 16th c. "*All the sport now consists of speed…the speed of the fleed blood-horse…a racer.*" (Drake 1969 p. 274). The hunting in the enclosures, as parks or forests, had been over. At that time, this pastime became training, preparation for the fatigue of a war, since the sport required much endurance, strength, and courage, as pursuing a stag or a wild boar. The sport exhibited a '*very imposing spectacle*', with greyhounds, masters of the game, blasting horns, and other pompous and splendid rituals (Ibid.). In the tragedy, 5 examples related to hunting are found. Thus, *Polonius* comments on the *Hamlet*'s vows to *Ophelia*, as "*Springes to catch Woodcocks. I doe know.*" [I.iii.115]. Woodcocks were believed to be an easy game to catch, witless birds. Again, being mortally wounded by *Hamlet*, *Laertes* cries out in agony: "*Why as a Woodcock To mine Sprindge, Osricke, I am iustly kill'd with mine owne Treacherie.*" [V.ii.302-303]

In another episode, *Polonius* suggests to the *King* that he knows the cause of *Hamlet*'s distraction: "*And I do thinke, or else this braine of mine Hunts not the traile of Policie, so sure As I haue vs'd to do.*" [II.ii.46-48], where *trail* is 'a course of a pursuited animal by its scent'. *Rosenkrantz*, in his turn, while assuring *Hamlet* that he managed to bring actors for entertainment, says: "…*wee coated them on the way, and hither are they comming to offer you Seruice.*" [II.ii.317-318], where *coat* is an old hunting term for dog to overtake a game in hare pursuing [=we manage to catch up with the actors and bring them here].

The last instance of hunting terms usage in the tragedy is the episode when the rioters headed by *Laertes* try to break into the *King*'s palace, and *Gertrude* observes: "*How cheerefully on the false Traile they cry, Oh this is Counter you false Danish Dogges.*" [IV.v.83-84], with the idea they they are wrong assuming that *Polonius* was killed by the *King*. Here: *counter* is 'an opposite direction of the game pursuit'.

Theater is another special area, wherefrom some citations originate. Thus, in the Act II when *Hamlet* arranges a performance to help bring to light the *King*'s guilt, he gives instructions to the actors, as follows: "*O it offends mee to the Soule, to see a robustious Pery-wig-pated Fellow, teare a Passion to tatters, to verie ragges, to split the eares of the Groundlings : who (for the most part) are capeable of nothing, but inexplicable dumbe shewes…*" [II.ii.8-12] *Groundlings* are

‘common people used to watch the play as standees’, *dumb show* is ‘a pantomime light performance that preceeded the play’. In the same scene *Hamlet* requests the ‘top’ player “*And let those that play your Clownes, speake no more then is set downe for them.*” [Ibid.,37-38], alluding to the practice of free exchange of actors’ quips on the stage.

There is another episode, when *Hamlet* rebukes the *Queen* that she married his uncle comparing the latter to the *vice*: “*A vice of Kings,…A King of shreds and patches.*” [III.iv.99, 103] *Vice* was a fool of the old moralities, usually extravagantly dressed and was thought to be a predecessor of Punch.

There are some other references to amusements of that time. Thus, the ruinous practice of gambling (dicing) is shown in *Hamlet*’s words to his mother: “*Makes marriage vows as false as Dicers Oathes.*” [Ibid.,45-46]. Gambling took its hold in London in the end of the 16th c., the ‘vile houses’ were planted everywhere, and unfortunate dicers firmly believed that “*dice were first made of the bones of a witch, and cards of her skin*”, but were unable to forsake that pernicious habit (Drake 1969, p. 158).

There is little known about the sports of bowling and tennis in that time, but three next citations relate to those. When *Polonius* gives instructions to Laertes on his leave, he observes: “*But doe not dull thy palme, with entertainment Of each vnhatch't, vnfledg'd Comrade.*“ [I.iii.64-65] *Polonius* probably means *palm-play* ‘a game like tennis of that time played with palms’.

In his famous monologue *Hamlet* exclaims: “*To sleepe, perchance to Dreame; I, there's the rub.*” [III.i.65] According to the OED, *rub* as ‘an obstacle or impediment by which a bowl is hindered in, or diverted from’ was frequently used in figurative senses in 16-17th cc.’ (Simpson, Weiner 1994, p. 1623).

In another episode, when *Polonius* wants his servant *Reynold* to check his son’s behavior, he says: “*With windlesses, and with assaies of Bias, By indirections finde directions out.*” [II.i.62-63]. Here, *bias* is ‘an oblique line in which a bowl runs’ (Simpson, Weiner 1994, p. 132).

Arrow shooting took up a backseat at the time in question and was in decline: “*…the disuse of archery was so general, that the "Companies of Bowyers and Fletchers" made heavy complaints, and procured a work to be written, in order to place before "the nobility and gentlemen of England," their distress, and deprivation of subsistence, from the neglect of the bow.*” (Drake 1969, p. 180). There are three quotations in the play, which refer to the practice. When the *King* assigns *Rosencrantz* and *Giuldenstern* to spy on *Hamlet*, the latter assures him: “*And here giue vp our selues, in the full bent.*” [II.ii.30], with the sense ‘wholly, as an archer pulling back the arrow and the bowstring to the full bent of the bow’.

Equally: “*They foole me to the top of my bent.*” [III.ii.384]

The last example of the group is self-evident and needs no further elaboration: “*So that my Arrowes Too slightly timbred for so loud a Winde, Would haue reuerted to my Bow againe, And not where I had arm'd them.*” [IV.vii.23-26]

References to the military sphere comprise more four citations. Two of them are found in the First Folio. Thus, when *Hamlet* urges his friends to keep silence about the apparition of his Father *Ghost*, with the latter crying to them to swear, the *Prince* remarks: “*Well said old Mole, can'st worke i'th' ground so fast?A*

worthy Pioner, once more remoue good friends." [I.v.181-182], where *pioneer* has an old sense of 'a miner'.

In another instance, *Hamlet* accusing his mother of wrong-doing, tries to bring her to senses: "*If damned Custome haue not braz'd it so, That it is proofe and bulwarke against Sense.*" [III.iv.37-38], where *proof* is archaic meaning for 'tested armory against shots'.

Another two citations referring to the military sphere are found in the Second Quarto. Thus, sensing that *Rosencrantz* and *Guildenstern* set up a trap for him, *Hamlet* compares himself to a sapper, who would dig deeper tunnels (*mines*) to undermine enemy's constructions, making them blow with their own bomb: "*For 'tis the sport to have the enginer* [=sapper] *Hoist* [=blown] *with his own petard* [=bomb]*; and't shall go hard But I will delve one yard below their mines* [=tunnels] *And blow them at the moon. O, 'tis most sweet When in one line two crafts directly meet.*" [III.iv.206-210]

Last but not least to the topic, the *King* praises the sincerety of *Rosencrantz* and *Guildenstern* as:"*…whose whisper o'er the world's diameter As level* [=aiming good] *as the cannon to his blank* [=gun's target]." [IV.i.41-42]

Law terms, in general 13 items, are used in the extract when *Hamlet* sees a laywer's skull and ponders on the transience of a human life: "*where be his Quiddits* [arch. 'nicety in arguments'] *now? his Quillets* [=verval nicety]*? his Cases? his Tenures* [English Law: 'possessions'], *and his Tricks? This fellow might be in's time a great buyer of Land, with his Statutes* [obs. 'a bond by which the creditor had the power of holding the debtor's lands in case of default'], *his Recognizances* [=a bond or obligation to pay a debt], *his Fines* [=the compromise of a fictiotious or collusive suit for the possession of land], *his double Vouchers* [=when a vouchee vouches over], *his Recoueries* [=the fact or procedure of gaining possession of some property by a verdict of a court]*: Is this the fine of his Fines, and the recouery of his Recoueries, to haue his fine Pate full of fine Dirt? will his Vouchers vouch* [obs. 'to guarantee the title to or legal possession of'] *him no more of his Purchases, and double ones too, then the length and breadth of a paire of Indentures* [=a sealed agreement,contract between parties]*? the very Conueyances* [=a written document by which the transference of property is effected] *of his Lands will hardly lye in this Boxe; and must the Inheritor himselfe haue no more?*" [V.i.99-112] "*Is not Parchment* [=legal document] *made of Sheep-skinnes?*" [Ibid.,114].

Two citations related to the seafaring are found in the play. They are self-explanatory. When *Polonius* urges his son to board a ship he says: "*The winde sits in the shoulder of your saile.*" [I.iii.56]

In another place, *Hamlet* asks *Rosencrantz* and *Guildenstern*, using the sea term: "*Let me see, to withdraw with you, why do you go about to recouer the winde of mee* [=take advantage], *as if you would driue me into a toyle?* [=trap]." [III.ii.313-314]

The next extensive group of cultural references relates to customs, traditions, realia of that time, historical events, etc. This is the umbrella term for quite a diverse of citations, which have to do with an everyday life of the people in the

England of W. Shakespeare, the way they perceive the world and their cognitive response. Altogether, the group contains about 22 items.

The famous lines, when the *King* asks *Hamlet*: "*How is it that the Clouds still hang on you?*", the latter replies: "*Not so my Lord, I am too much i'th' Sun.*" [I.ii.66-67] arouses controversy. The researchers differ between wordplay on *son* and *sun* (=you call me hypocritically *son* too often!) and an allusion to a proverbial saying *out of heaven's blessing into a warm* sun, as S. Johnson did: "…*applied to those who are turned out of house and home to the open weather. It was perhaps first used of men dismissed from an hospital, or house of charity, such as was erected formerly in many places for travellers.*" (Johnson 1959), i.e., Hamlet is deprived of the throne and cut off with a shilling.

Equally, when a distracted *Ophelia* exclaims: "*Well, God dil'd you. They say the Owle was a Bakers daughter. Lord, wee know what we are, but know not what we may be.*" [IV.v.21-23], one cannot get the citation properly without knowing a common legend in Gloucestershire of that time, related by N. Drake: *"Our Saviour went into a baker's shop where they were baking, and asked for some bread to eat. The mistress of the shop immediately put a piece of dough into the oven to bake for him; but was reprimanded by her daughter, who insisting that the piece of dough was too large, reduced it to a very small size. The dough, however, immediately afterwards began to swell, and presently became of a most enormous size. Whereupon the baker's daughter cried out 'Heugh, heugh, heugh,' which owl-like noise, probably induced our Saviour for her wickedness to transform her into that bird."* (Drake 1969, p. 394).

A different case, referring to politics, is presented by the following two quotations. When *Rosencrantz* assures *Hamlet* that the *King* is disposed towards him, as: "*How can that be, when you haue the voyce of the King himselfe, for your Succession in Denmarke?*" [III.ii.369-370], one should bear in mind that the crown used to be elective, with regard paid to the recommendation of the predecessor, and preference given to royal blood, which, by degrees, formed hereditary succession.

Another instance of the same kind is when Hamlet asked, where he had put the Polonius' slain body, he answers enigmatically that the latter is at supper: "*Not where he eats, but where he is eaten, a certaine conuocation of wormes are e'ne at him.*" [IV.iii.22-24] Here, a political reference is mixed with a pun: *worm* 'insect' versus Worm (city), and *diet* versus 'assembly' (in German). "*The Diet of Worms of 1521 (German: Reichstag zu Worms) was an imperial diet (a formal deliberative assembly) of the Holy Roman Empire called by Emperor Charles V and conducted in the Imperial Free City of Worms. Martin Luther was summoned to the Diet in order to renounce or reaffirm his views in response to a Papal bull of Pope Leo X.*" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diet_of_Worms).

One more citation of the same group is revealed in the last duel between *Hamlet* and *Laertes*, when the *King* pretends to drop in his drink a large pearl of good quality, *union* (in fact some poison): "*The King shal drinke to Hamlets better breath, And in the Cup an vnion shal he throw Richer then that, which foure successiue Kings In Denmarkes Crowne haue worne.*" [V.ii.290-293] According to the OED, that sense was frequent in the 17th c., echoing the story about

Cleopatra told by *Pliny* (Simpson, Weiner 1994, p. 2173). The custom of dropping and swallowing a pearl in a drink was common in the court as a compliment to a high guest, since pearls were believed to possess an exhilarating quality.

Next quotations are self-evident and need only brief comment. When *Hamlet* instructs the *actors* before the performance, he says: *"Speake the Speech I pray you, as I pronounc'd it to you trippingly on the Tongue: But if you mouth it, as many of your Players do, I had as lieu the Town-Cryer had spoke my Lines.*" [III.ii.1-4]. Here is an allusion to town-criers, who used to be the chief means of communication between the ruling classes and common people with their stentorious voices.

When *Polonius* instructs *Ophelia* not to take Hamlet's courting [=*tenders*] too seriously, he makes a pun: *"Tender* [=behave] *your selfe more dearly; Or not to crack the winde of the poore Phrase* [=to use he phrase too often], *Roaming it thus, you'l tender* [=make] *me a foole.*" [I.iii.116-118] Here, the idiom *to crack a wind* 'to overwork a horse so it became winded' refers to everyday life.

In another episode, when *Hamlet* pretends to be mad and *Ophelia* tries to appeal to his senses, he exclaims: *"Get thee to a Nunnerie. Why would'st thou be a breeder of Sinners? I am my selfe indifferent honest, but yet I could accuse me of such things.*" [III.i.131-132]. In the end of the 16th c., *nunnery* acquired a bad sense 'a house of ill fame, a bawdy house'. In the same piece, Hamlet mock Ophelia saying: "*I haue heard of your painting too wel enough. God has giuen you one pace, and you make your selfe another: you gidge you amble and you lispe.*" [III.i.153-155] Evidently, here is a satyre on affected manners of that time (*paint* 'use much makeup', and *lisp*).

In the next passage, a mad Ophelia raves: "*How should I your true loue know from another one? By his Cockle hat and staffe, and his Sandal shoone.*" [IV.v.23-26] Here, c*ockle hat* 'a hat with a scallop shell stuck in, worn by pilgrims as a sigh of their wandering to St. James shrine in Spain' (Simpson, Weiner, p. 280). This is an historical realia of that time.

Two more customs are reflected in the tragedy: St. Valentine Day and burial. Thus, the distracted *Ophelis* sings: "*To morrow is Saint Valentines day, all in the morning betime, And I a Maid at your Window, to be your Valentine. Then vp he rose, & don'd his clothes, & dupt the chamber dore, Let in the Maid, that out a Maid, neuer departed more.*" [IV.v.47-54].There were two ways of securing the proper Valentine in the next year at that time: *"…either in drawing lots on Valentine-eve, or in considering the first person whom you met early on the following morning, as the destined object… in the second there was usually some little contrivance adopted, in order that the favoured object, when such existed, might be the first seen."* (Drake 1969, p. 326).

Funeral rites and burial were, as ever, very important at that superstitious time. Thus, the graves of deceased were decorated with garlands and greens, and strewn with flowers. It was the sign of soul's immortality and resurrection of the body. The herbs should be cut down (not plucked up), to revive again at the next season, like the body at the resurrection (Drake 1969, p. 240). Again, mad Ophelia while singings refers to those rites: "*White his Shrow'd as the Mountaine Snow…*

He is dead and gone Lady, he is dead and gone, At his head a grasse-greene Turfe, at his heeles a stone." [IV.v.29-32]; "*…Larded* [obs. 'strewn'] *with sweet Flowers: Which bewept to the graue did not go, With true-loue showres.*" [Ibid.,37-39]; "*…They bore him bare fac'd on the Beer, Hey non nony, nony, hey nony: And on his graue raines many a teare, Fare you well my Doue*" [Ibid.,174-177]. N. Drake observes on the burial rites: *"…virginity was held in great estimation; insomuch that those which died in that state were rewarded, at their deaths, with a garland or crown on their heads, denoting their triumphant victory over the lusts of the flesh.*" (Drake 1969, p. 240). At the *Ophelia*'s burial, the *Priest* says: "*Shardes, Flints, and Peebles, should be throwne on her: Yet heere she is allowed her Virgin Rites* [=crants, German word for 'garlands'], *Her Maiden strewments, and the bringing home Of Bell and Buriall.*" [V.i.229-232] *Stremments* here is 'scattering flowers over the graves'.

Flower symbolism is reflected in the *Ophelia*'s song [IV.v.184-185, 187-191]: "*There's Rosemary, that's for Remembraunce. Pray loue remember: and there is Paconcies* [pansies], *that's for Thoughts… There's Fennell for you, and Columbines: ther's Rew for you, and heere's some for me. Wee may call it Herbe-Grace a Sundaies: Oh you must weare your Rew with a difference. There's a Daysie, I would giue you some Violets, but they wither'd all when my Father dyed.*" Rosemary was believed to boost the memory and was carried both at weddings and funerals. "*It was also considered the emblem of fidelity in lovers; and at weddings it was usual to dip the rosemary in the cup, and drink to the health of the new married couple.*" (Kean 1958, p. 211). *Fennel* was a symbol of flattery, *columbine*, 'a thankless flower' stood for forsaken lovers, *a daisy* was a warning to maids not to trust their lovers, *violets* meant faithfulness, and *rue* is propable *ruth* 'sorrow' (Ibid.). In another place, *Hamlet* quotes a piece of *Claudius*' letter,who conjures the English to put *Hamlet* to death, if those value the good relations with him: "*As loue betweene them, as the Palme should flourish, As Peace should still her wheaten Garland weare, And stand a Comma* [=break, pause] *'tweene their amities.*" [V.ii.43-45] Here: *Palm* is a symbol of understanding, and *Garland* is a symbol of prosperity and a mark of distinction.

This group also contains two old songs, apparently used by the Bard in his tragedy. When a mad *Ophelia* bewails her imaginary lover, she uses the part of old song, as Ch. Kean puts it (Kean 1958): "*And will he not come againe, And will he not come againe: No, no, he is dead, go to thy Death-bed, He neuer wil come againe. His Beard as white as Snow, All Flaxen was his Pole: He is gone, he is gone, and we cast away mone Gramercy on his Soule.*" [IV.v.210-219]. In another place, when two *Clowns* are digging a grave for *Ophelia*, one of them sings: "*In youth when I did loue, did loue, me thought it was very sweete: To contract O the time for a my behoue, O me thought there was nothing meete… But Age with his stealing steps hath caught me in his clutch: And hath shipped me intill the Land, as if I had neuer beene such… A Pickhaxe and a Spade, a Spade, for and a shrowding-Sheete: O a Pit of Clay for to be made, for such a Guest is meete.*" [V.i.62-65, 71-74, 93-96]. Ch. Kean states that "*The three stanzas sung here by the Grave-Digger, are extracted, with a slight variation, from a little poem called The Aged Lover renounceth Love, written by Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, who was*

beheaded in 1547. The song is to be found in Dr. Percy's Reliques of Ancient English Poetry." (Kean 1958).

Religious issues take backseat in the tragedy, only 6 items have been found. Perhaps, it is due to sensitivity of the subject in the time when the English Reformation had been forcefully imposed on the country by Henry VIII and the Roman Catholic Church was outlawed. C. Asquith, for example, argues that W. Shakespeare was a secret Catholic and empathized with Catholicism (Asquith 2006). J. Pearce carries the idea to extremes, claiming that the whole *Hamlet* is a hidden protest against suppression of the good old religion (Pearce 2010). In our study, only direct religious references are accounted for. The first case is when *Hamlet* pretending to be mad and *Polonius* wanting to size him up, he asks the *Prince*, who he is, and *Hamlet* replies: "*Excellent, excellent well: y'are a Fishmonger.*" [II.ii.189] Ch. Kean explains here that this phrase was well understood in Shakespeare's time and enjoyed by the audience. It was "*…applicable to the Papists, who in Queen Elizabeth's time were esteemed enemies to the Government. Hence the proverbial phrase of* 'He's an honest man and eats no fish'*; to signify he's a friend to the Government and a Protestant.*" (Kean 1958).

Another telling example is when Rosencrantz asks Hamlet: "*My Lord, you once did loue me.*" [III.ii.329], the latter replies: "*So I do still, by these pickers and stealers* [=hands]." [Ibid., 330] *Hamlet* here mocks the Church catechism: "*My duty towards my Neighbour, is… To keep my hands from picking and stealing.*" (http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/Catechism.htm).

Three more quotations indirectly related to religion include the words *libertine, liberal, liberty* of quite an opprobrious connotation. It is due to the fact that *libertine* was 'the name given to certain antinomian sects of the early sixteenth century', with the derivative idea 'unrestrained, abandoned to dissolute, licentious behavior' (Simpson, Weiner 1994, p. 967). Thus, *Ophelia* urges his brother *Laertes* to behave properly in France: "*Shew me the steepe and thorny way to Heauen; Whilst like a puft and recklesse Libertine Himselfe, the Primrose path of dalliance reads, And reaks* [reck 'consider'] *not his owne reade* [rede 'counsel']." [I.iii.50-53]

In another place, when *Polonius* orders his servant *Reynaldo* to spy on his son in France to assess his behavior, he says: "*But Sir, such wanton, wild, and vsuall slips, As are Companions noted and most knowne To youth and liberty.*" [II.i.23-25] Lastly, the *Queen* announces *Ophelia*'s death by sayning: "*There with fantasticke Garlands did she come,Of Crow-flowers, Nettles, Daysies, and long Purples, That liberall Shepheards giue a grosser name; But our cold Maids doe Dead Mens Fingers call them.*" [VI.ii.193-196]

The final citation of this group refers to the episode, when *Hamlet* mocks his *Mother* for forgetting his *Father* so quickly after his death: "*Nay then let the Diuel weare blacke, for Ile haue a suite of Sables. Oh Heauens! dye two moneths ago, and not forgotten yet? Then there's hope, a great mans Memorie, may out-liue his life halfe a yeare: But byrlady he must builde Churches then:*" [III.ii.127-131] Ch. Kane explains here: "*A suit trimmed with sables was in our author's own time the richest dress worn by men in England. By the Statute of Apparel, 24 Henry VIII. ,*

it is ordained, that none under the degree of an Earl may use sables" and later that benefactors of society, people who built churches should be "*recorded by means of the feast day on which the patron saints and founders of churches were commemorated in every parish.*" (Kean 1958).

The next cultural group to be examined refers to superstitions, as an umbrella term, and contains 13 items. As N. Drake puts it "*The popular creed, during the age of Shakspeare, was perhaps more extended and systematised than in any preceding or subsequent period of our history. For this effect we are indebted, in a great measure, to the credulity and superstition of James the First, the publication of whose Demonology rendered a profession in the belief of sorcery and witchcraft a matter of fashion and even of interest.*" (Drake 1969, p. 314). Many various credulities of the time wrapped in the name of the 'science' reigned every aspect of everyday life. Superstitious rites, traditions, and beliefs; apparition of ghosts, goblins, fairies, etc.; the observace of spells and charms; queer customs, ceremonies, creeds, and faith in omens, the false doctrine of sympathetic indications and cures ar but an incomplete inventory of the popular delusions in that time (Ibid., pp. 314-400).

Examples of those kinds are abundant in the play. Ghosts and other fancied evil creatures were supposed to walk at night and at dawn to leave the mortal world, as the *Ghost* of the *Hamlet*' father: "*It lifted vp it head, and did addresse It selfe to motion, like as it would speake: But euen then, the Morning Cocke crew lowd; And at the sound it shrunke in hast away, And vanisht from our sight.*" [I.ii.228-232]

Among other similar cases are: "*It was about to speake, when the Cocke crew.*" [I.i.162] "*The Cocke that is the Trumpet to the day,… Awake the God of Day: and at his warning, Whether in Sea, or Fire, in Earth, or Ayre, Th' extrauagant, and erring Spirit, hyes To his Confine.*" [Ibid.,165, 167-170]

"*The Bird of Dawning singeth all night long: And then (they say) no Spirit can walke abroad,… No Faiery talkes, nor Witch hath power to Charme.*" [Ibid.,175-176, 178].

Another common Elizaabethian belief was that only a scholar with the knowledge of Latin could exorcise a spirit, as in the following, when Marcellus urges Horatio: "*Thou art a Scholler; speake to it Horatio.*" [Ibid.,53]. The following example also needs clarification: "*Or, if thou hast vp-hoorded in thy life Extorted Treasure in the wombe of Earth,(For which, they say, you Spirits oft walke in death).*" [I.i.148-150] According to the Th. Decker's explanation in *Knight's Conjuring*: "*…if any of them* [=rich people, knights] *had (in th' daies of his abomination and idolatry to money) bound the spirit of gold by any charmes in caues* [=caves], *or in iron fetters vnder the ground, they should for their soules quiet, (which questionlesse would whine vp and down) if not for the good of their children, release it to set vp their decay'd estates.*" (Decker 1843, p. 33).

Some examples within this group refer to medieval beliefs about animals. The following quotations clearly reveal those false associations:

"*And each particular haire to stand an end Like Quilles vpon the fretfull Porpentine.*" [I.v.25-26] Porcupines were formely believed to dart or shoot their spines at enemy (a symbol of irascibility). In another place, answering to the

King's *"How fares our Cosin Hamlet*?", *Hamlet* says: "*Excellent Ifaith, of the Camelions dish: I eate the Ayre promise-cramm'd, you cannot feed Capons so.*" [III.ii.93-95] Chameleons at that time were thought to eat on air.

When *Osric* hurries to the King to tell him that Hamlet will take the wager, Horatio observes: "*This Lapwing runs away with the shell on his head.*" [V.ii.185-186], after the belief that a newly hatched lapwing runs with a shell on his head.

Laertes opening his arms for the *King* as an ally exclaims: "*And like the kinde Life-rend'ring Politician, Repast them with my blood.*" [VI.v.147-148] after the false belief that the pelican should feed its young with its heart's blood.

The next example shows another superstition that the tears of the wounded stag are so precious that they should be used for medical purposes: "*Why let the strucken Deere go weepe.*" [III.ii.280], when the *King* left the play *Hamlet* staged to check his guilt. In another play *As You Like It* W. Shakespeare speaks of "*big round tears cours'd one another down his innocent nose in piteous chase.*" [II.i.38]. As many researchers mentioned, the similar image is found in the 13th Song of M. Dryton's *Polyolbion* (Kean 1958).

Sorcery and witchcraft takes a back seat in *Hamlet* comparing with *Macbeth* where its hallmarks are abundant. Still, when *Hamlet* sets up a play to trap the *King*, one of the *Actors* says: "*Thou mixture ranke, of Midnight Weeds collected, With Hecats Ban, thrice blasted, thrice infected.*" [III.ii.266-267], with *Hecate*,Greek goddess of underworld, and the weeds collected at midnight are belieled to have her strongest curse [=ban]. The next lines show the opposite: "*…no Cataplasme so rare, Collected from all Simples that haue Vnder the Moone, can saue the thing from death.*" [IV.vii.142-144] Here: medical herbs ['simples'] have the best curing effect when collected at night under the Moon.

One more important group of items is comparatively underrepresented in *Hamlet*, compared to other W. Shakespeare's work. It deals with prejudices of every kind, especially those of gender and race, 13 items. In the middle-age Christian male-dominated world, language reflected bias against women. Thus, when *Rosencrantz* and *Guildenstern* are trying to find out *Hamlet*'s intentions, the following talks ensures: "*Guild. Happy, in that we are not ouer-happy: on Fortunes Cap, we are not the very Button Ham. Nor the Soales of her Shoo? Rosin. Neither my Lord. Ham. Then you liue about her waste, or in the middle of her fauour? Guil. Faith, her priuates, we private Ham. In the secret parts of Fortune? Oh, most true: she is a Strumpet.*" [II.ii.243-251] In addition that Fortune is *She* and *Strumpet*, this passage abounds in double entendres: not to live high [on Fortunes Cap], but somewhere in the middle, around her waist, in the secret parts of Fortune; *privates* as 'parts' and *private* as 'favorite' [nonce usage of the Bard, now obsolete]. Again, further: *"Out, out, thou strumpet, Fortune!*" [Ibid.,502], and: "*That they are not a Pipe for Fortunes finger. To sound what stop she please.*" [III.ii.71-72]

In another place, *Hamlet* deliberately mocks *Ophelia* by saying: "*I could interpret betweene you and your loue: if I could see the Puppets dallying.*" [III.ii.246-247] This complex metaphor needs explanation. First, *Hamlet* refers to the puppet show, where the master [=interpreter] speaks the dialog *dallying* [=flirting, making fun], implicating that she is a doll [another sense of the word

puppet] in other hands. Then, he insinuates that *Ophelia* has a lover with whom she is having an affair. Last but not least, as Ch. Kean puts it "*The puppets dallying are here made to signify to the agitations of Ophelia's bosom*." (Kean 1958).

In addition, there is an episode, when *Hamlet* accuses *Queen Gertrude*, his mother, of betraying the memory of his father by hastily marrying his uncle: "*Such an Act That blurres the grace and blush of Modestie, Cals Vertue Hypocrite, takes off the Rose From the faire forehead of an innocent loue, And makes a blister there.*" [III.iv.47-51] The allusion here is made to prostitutes, who at that time were branded with hot iron.

One more female gender denigration is as follows: "*If thou canst mutine* [=to rebel] *in a Matrons bones, To flaming youth, let Vertue be as waxe. And melt in her owne fire.*" [III.iv.91-93] Here, *Vertue* is a female, and as soft as wax.

There is an instance of race prejudices in the tragedy. *Hamlet* considers joining the actors' troupe, "*if the rest of my Fortunes turne Turke with me*…" [III.ii.272-273] The denigrating association of Turkish people as savage, barbarian, cruel is found here. Another prejudice in the language of that time, which still hold good nowadays, as well, is against people of the countryside. It may be considered as one of the language universals since there is an analogical semantic development in a series of words from 'rustic, country dweller' to that of 'term of abuse, low fellow, rascal'. When *Hamlet* says: "*Now I am alone.Oh what a Rogue and Pesant slaue am I?*" [II.ii.558-559], he reproaches himself for being undecided.

A series of words shows analogical semantic development from the meaning 'rustic, country dweller' to that of 'bumpkin, general term of opprobrium': *chuff* 'rustic' & 'rude, coarse, churlish fellow', *boor* 'farmer, countryman' & 'rude, ill-bred fellow', *villain* 'villager, a peasant' & 'criminal, trouble-shooter, term of opprobrium', *clown* 'countryman, rustic, peasant' & 'ill-bred man, fool', *churl* 'tenant in pure villeinage, serf' & 'rude, low-bred fellow', *carl* 'husbandman, countryman' & 'term of opprobrium', *rustic* 'countryman, peasant' & 'boorish person'. *Farmer* as well has derivative meaning 'an ignorant rustic; a stupid or gauche person' (Simpson, Weiner 1994, p. 569).

Conclusion

Thus, summing up the study results, the most prolific sociocultural semantic group in *Hamlet* relates to various human activities (41 items), followed by those referred to customs, traditions, realia, historical references (22), scientific views of that time (12), and medieval cosmology (12). Groups, which describe religion, superstitions, and prejudices, are underrepresented in tte tragedy – correspondingly 6, 13, and 8 items.

The research shows that the lexis related to everyday life of the people (their activities, traditions, customs, superstitions, and prejudices) dominates that of abstract notions (religion, cosmology, science).

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