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Shakespearean Themes in the Plays of Marin Držić

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Any comparison between Držić and Shakespeare may seem pretentious, for Držić is not so well known outside his own country as one would like him to be, or as he deserves to be, or as sometimes we in Yugoslavia deceive ourselves that he is. Things are slowly improving; witness also this Symposium on «Marin Držić and Renaissance Comedy», the first, national or international, gathering of its kind to be entirely and exclusively dedicated to Marin Držić. Until very recently Držić and his work were practically *terra incognita* to all except to his fellow-countrymen. An exception to this rule, to some extent, was Italy where some Slavists have often and erroneously liked to look upon the old Croatian literature of Dubrovnik and Dalmatia as upon an extension of their own literature. Another and still greater exception to the rule is in Germany where scholarship has always been, perhaps notoriously, thorough. On the other hand, this ignorance concerning Držić has certainly been most complete in English speaking countries.

One would look in vain for the name of Marin Držić in popular English and American handbooks on the theatre or histories of drama. In Allardyce Nicoll's *World Drama from Aeschylus to Anouilh* there is a very short note on Držić where, unfortunately, his first name is changed into Martin.¹ There is an equally brief entry on him in *Cassel's Encyclopaedia of Literature* where Držić appears as a nondescript »Dalmatian« poet and playwright, where the date of his birth is incorrectly given from obsolete sources and where his birth-place is called Ragusa although Držić himself in his plays frequently and exclusively calls it Dubrovnik.² The more recent *Penguin Companion to Literature*³ dedicates twelve lines to Držić in the entry »Dalmatian and Dubrovnik Literature« (!) where again the date of his birth is wrongly adduced as 1520; this date can still be found in some antiquated textbooks but it has long since been corrected to 1508. And, as far as I know, that is all. The popular *Oxford Companion to the Theatre* (1951) does not give a word about Držić or, for that matter, about any other Southern Slav dramatist, old or new.

The first serious English contribution to scholarship on Držić was Vera Javarek's well-informed article *Marin Držić, a Ragusan Playwright*, written to commemorate the 450th anniversary of the poet's birth.⁴ I may mention in passing that it is wrong to call Držić a »Ragusan« or a »Dalmatian« play-

1 Allardyce Nicoll, *World Drama from Aeschylus to Anouilh*, London 1949.

2 *Cassel's Encyclopaedia of Literature*. London, s. a. Quoted from latest edition.

3 *The Penguin Companion to Literature*. 2. European. Harmondsworth, 1969, p. 212. There are other slips in this short article. So, e. g., we find that Mikša Pelegrinović's *Jedupka* »is generally attributed to Ante Čubranović! Hardly anybody today attributes *Jedupka* to Čubranović whose first name is Andrija. The author of the article (E. D. Goy), in the quoted literature not without bias abridges the name of the collection of critical old Croatian literary texts published for over a hundred years by the Yugoslav Academy of Zagreb under the title of »Stari pisci hrvatski« (Old Croatian Authors) into »Stari pisci« (Old Authors) and in brackets he explains that it is »a series of definitive editions of Dalmatian literature«!

4 V. Javarek. *Marin Držić, a Ragusan Playwright*. »The Slavonic and East European Review«, vol. 37, No. 88, London 1958.

wright, as the above mentioned and some other English and American scholars do. That gives Držić's name some little tang of provincialism which he does not deserve. It would be just as wrong, speaking of nationality, to call Shakespeare a Stratford or a Warwickshire poet. He is that too, but he is also much more. And so is Držić; he is the greatest playwright in the old Croatian Renaissance theatre, the best that any of the nations of present-day Yugoslavia has ever produced and a significant dramatist by international standards. But even in his own country Držić has not always been the living presence that he is today. Until fairly recently he used to be offered only lip-service, being discretely read in schools and worshipped as a dead classic. It was only the late thirties of this century, in 1938 to be exact, that *Dundo Maroje* (*Uncle M.*), thanks almost entirely to the brilliant adaptation of Marko Fotez, started from Zagreb on its triumphant progress through the whole of Yugoslavia and beyond its frontiers.

Coming to the main subject of this paper I must mention at the outset that Shakespeare was three years old when Držić died, so that there could not have possibly been any influence of Shakespeare on Držić, for it is not at all likely that Shakespeare ever saw *Uncle Maroje* performed and, as far as we know, he could not have read it in the original tongue! In English, on the other hand, he could not have read it for, if we leave out of account the polygraphed version of Marko Fotez' adaptation, translated by Margaret Flower and Oton Grozdić, which was used for his production of the play at Coventry (Belgrade Theatre, 1958), the first English translation of the play, executed by Sonia Bičanić, was published by the Dubrovnik Festival to serve as an aid to English speaking playgoers only in the Summer of 1967.

If we could assume as an impossible hypothesis that Shakespeare was an expert in Croatian, we might write a learned Ph. D. thesis about Držić's influence on him. We could say, for instance, that Shakespeare, when he wrote in *Macbeth* »To be thus is nothing; But to be safely thus« (III, 48-49), was copying Držić whose *Miser*, or *Skup*, trembling for his treasure, for his »tezoro«, says: »Not to have gold is bad! To have it thus is bad and worse!« (*Ne imat zlato — zlo! Imat ga na*

ovi način — zlo i gore! »Skup«, I, 5). Or when Macbeth says: »That which should accompany old age, As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends, I must not look to have« (V, 3. 24–26), we might suppose that he was echoing Držić's Nurse (Baba) in *Uncle Maroje* who, speaking of the reckless young men of her days, says: »Poor you, in your old age you pay for your sins, when it were time for you to have honour and peace and recompense for your good deeds« (*Avi, brižni, u staros grijeha vaše plaćate, kad bi brijeme od dobrijuh djela da platu, čas i pokoj imate.* »Dundo Maroje«, III, 6).

Or again, when Timon of Athens in his well-known soliloquy speaks of »yellow, glittering, precious gold« which »will make black white, foul fair, Wrong right, base noble, old young, coward valiant« (*Timon of Athens*, IV, 3. 26–29), we might say that Shakespeare was inspired to write this passage after reading Držić's *Miser* (»Skup«) where we read: »In the company of gold goodness is lost, gold corrupts people, opportunity makes thieves and gold is a magnet. Love is not love, gold is love; gold captures old and young, fair and foul, saints and sinners, profane and sacred« (*Pri zlatu se gubi dobrotā, zlato šteti ljudi, a komoditā lupeža čini, a zlato je kalāmīta. Amor nije amor, zlato je amor; zlato stare — mlade, lijepe — grube, svete — grijehne, svjetovne — crkovne pridobiva.* »Skup«, I, 5).

The expression of Troilus' desperate love for Cressida, in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, we may say, is reminiscent of young Kamilo's wailing for his Andrijana at the very beginning of Act V in Držić's *Miser* where, in the same context, Kamilo mentions even the rape of Helen and the War of Troy: »I know that in old days for such a thing Troy was captured. And was not Helen ravished by Paris?« (*Znam er se je za ovaku stvar u staro brijeme i Troja uzela. Paris ne ugrabi li Elenu?*). And, finally, when the King in *Hamlet* asks: »How fares our cousin Hamlet?« and Hamlet replies: »Excellent, i' faith; of the chameleon's dish: I eat the air, promise-crammed« (III, 2. 98–99), we are reminded that fifty years before, in Držić's play *Dundo Maroje*, Maroje's servant Bokčilo, who was being starved by his master, had spoken of

»chameleons... that feed on air« (*kamilionti... koji se jajerom hrane.* I, 1). Etc., etc.

Of course, the thesis trying to prove that Shakespeare was influenced by Držić would be ludicrous. All the quoted parallels could easily be traced to a common source because the various literatures of Europe had much more in common then than they have now. They all drew from a joint stock of literary themes. But there are more interesting and more significant similarities between Držić and Shakespeare where Držić seems almost to have anticipated some Shakespearean themes.

As far as we know, Držić wrote twelve dramas of which five are pastoral plays (*Venere, Novela od Stanca, Tirena, Grižula, Džuho Krpeta*), six are comedies proper (*Mande, Skup, Pomet, Dundo Maroje, Arkulin, Pjerin*) and *Hekuba*, of course, is a tragedy. Of all these dramas, three pastoral plays in verse which were printed during Držić's life-time (*Venere, Novela od Stanca, Tirena*) are preserved in their entirety; of *Grižula*, written mostly in prose, the very end is missing while of *Džuho Krpeta*, also in prose, only a few disconnected scraps remain. Of the comedies proper, *Skup* and *Dundo Maroje* are preserved practically complete (only a few final scenes of both are lacking), of *Mande* and *Arkulin* no beginnings remain, of *Pjerin* survive only fragments and *Pomet* is lost. The tragedy *Hekuba* is preserved whole.

If one does not take into consideration this last play, which is actually a very free version of Lodovico Dolce's adaptation of Euripides' *Hecuba*, we see that Držić as a playwright is almost exclusively a writer of comedies (his pastoral plays too are partly that), so that his work may be compared only with Shakespeare's comedies and, to a certain extent, with his last plays or romances. In this field there are some striking similarities between the works of the two playwrights. There are analogies between Držić's pastoral plays and Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; the characters of the *Miser* and of *Uncle Maroje* correspond to Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*; *Pjerin*, like *The Comedy of Errors*, is partly based on the *Menaechmi* of Plautus, and in one of his

pastoral plays (*Venere*), like Shakespeare in his narrative poem, Držić deals with the story of Venus and Adonis. It is also interesting to note that Držić took the trouble of having only his lyrical poems and his plays in rhymed verse (with a dedication »To his Friends«) printed just as Shakespeare himself published during his life-time only his two narrative poems (with dedications to the Earl of Southampton). Both playwrights, for not very different reasons, neglected to see their best plays through the press.

Ever since Wilhelm Creizenach in his *History of Modern Drama*, at the very beginning of this century drew a comparison, flattering for Držić, between his *Grižula* and Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*,⁵ people have often tried to see affinities between the two plays. Many years ago (1951-1953) Držić's play was performed with great success at the Dubrovnik Festival, adapted and directed by Marko Fotez under the title of *Plakir*, after the name of one of the main characters, a kind of Ragusan Puck; and since then dates the popularity of the play. Perhaps that in some details Fotez was inspired, in his adaptation and production, by Shakespeare's play, so that the spectators were inclined to attribute to Držić what was actually Shakespeare's and to see in *Plakir* or *Grižula* more »Shakespearean elements« than in the remaining four pastoral plays of Marin Držić.

But these Shakespearean elements do exist in *Grižula*, and the latest scholar to deal with them, in passing, was Professor Albert Bates Lord of Harvard in his interesting paper on »The marriage of words and meaning in *Plakir*«, read at the Symposium.⁶ After stating that the plot of Držić's *Plakir* »was apparently a variant of materials available throughout Renaissance Europe«, A. B. Lord says: »As has been noted often, there is a surprising similarity between Marin Držić's *Plakir* and William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's*

⁵ W. Creizenach, *Geschichte des neueren Dramas*. Three volumes. Halle 1894-1903. Vol. II, 1901, p. 521.

⁶ A. B. Lord, *The Marriage of Words and Meaning in »Plakir«*. A Croat translation of this essay was published in *Forum XIV*, No 9-10, Zagreb 1967, pp. 591-598.

Dream. Now you will remember that Shakespeare was three years old when Marin Držić died. Pavle Popović, rather unnecessarily I think, remarked that Držić did not know *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and I might observe, equally unnecessarily I hope, that Shakespeare did not know *Plakir*. Ergo, the 'stuff' of these plays must have been current in both the north and the south, ready at hand to be made into the 'dreams' of gifted playwrights such as Držić and Shakespeare.«

Then A. B. Lord draws a parallel between the characters of *Plakir* and *Grižula* in Držić's pastoral plays on the one hand, and Puck and Bottom in Shakespeare's comedy on the other. »Shakespeare's Puck«, he says, »like the household spirits of folklore with whom he has affinities, such as Robin Goodfellow, is capricious if not exactly malevolent or malicious. Držić's *Plakir* setting his trap for the Vila reminds us indeed of Puck and his tricks. They belong in the same category, just as *Grižula* is well paralleled by Bottom; for if the latter gains a donkey's head in transformation, the former has a sack put on his by the Vila Nymph.« And then A. B. Lord adds: »A close translation of *Plakir* should be available for Shakespeare students who know no Serbo-Croatian to aid in their research into the sources of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. There is more here than I have seen, at least, noted in the scholarship on Držić.« I may mention that, while A. B. Lord was writing this (1967), a good English version of *Grižula*, translated by Ljerka Djanješić and revised by Kathleen Herbert, was published by the Dubrovnik Festival.

Then A. B. Lord proceeds, and here I find it more difficult to follow him, to discover similarities between Držić's *Grižula* and Shakespeare's comedy *As You Like It*. »I might add in passing«, he says, »that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is not the only play of Shakespeare's with elements similar to those in Držić's *Plakir*. I believe that the roles of *Grižula* and *Omakala* bear some likeness to those of the Duke and Rosalind in *As You Like It*, and *Grižula* might also have an affinity with Jacques in that same play.«

If, as A. B. Lord remarks, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is not the only play of Shakespeare's with elements similar to those

in Držić's *Grižula*, I might add that *Grižula* is not the only play of Držić's with elements similar to those in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; and this, as far as I know, has not been noticed before. If we read carefully all Držić's pastoral plays, we shall see that, next to *Grižula*, there is a kind of Midsummer madness atmosphere in the remaining four pastoral plays as well, especially in the *Novela od Stanca* and in *Tirena*.

It is interesting to note that in the first of these two plays *Dživo*, a young Ragusan nobleman, one of three who play a practical joke on the peasant Stanac, begins telling his tall story by saying that he arrived once in Dubrovnik on Midsummer Day:

U ovi grad jednome ja dodoh na Ivanjdan.

»Ivanjdan« is an exact equivalent of the English word »Midsummer« from the title of Shakespeare's comedy. Both Držić and Shakespeare, half a century later, knew what they were doing when they connected the time of action of their plays with Midsummer, the day of S. John the Baptist, June 24, the longest day in the year, when in the shortest night mischievous spirits, imps and goblins, walk abroad; when »fairies take« (which exactly corresponds to Držić's expression »vile uzimlju ljude« in *Grižula*) and witches have power to charm. These are traits common to the folklore of all European nations. In passing I may say that most translators of Shakespeare's play miss this point when they call it *A Summer Night's Dream* (*Le Sogno d'une Nuit d'Été*, *Sogno d'una notte d'estate*, *Ein Sommernachtstraum*, *San ljetne noći*, etc.). This is no ordinary summer night; had Shakespeare wished it to be, he would have called it that.

Later in the play, Stanac, like Shakespeare's Bottom after him, is transformed (or at least in danger of being transformed) into an ass; and here Stanac is much more closely paralleled by Bottom than *Grižula* is in Držić's homonymous play when, as A. B. Lord points out, he only »has a sack put on his head by the Vila Nymph«. In passing I venture to suggest that to both Držić and Shakespeare the common source for this »metamorphosis« was very likely *The Golden*

Ass of Apuleius in which the main hero, the Greek narrator Lucius, at one point is »translated« into an ass. In the same work of Apuleius A. B. Lord finds the origin of Držić's character of Plakir.⁷

In the *Novela od Stanca* the leading Vila or Fairy or Nymph (and it makes no difference, in fact it gives the whole procedure a more »Shakespearean« flavour, if »she« is a young man in disguise) calls her companions to go with her to gather magic herbs through the power of which they will turn Stanac into a donkey:

Nemojmo krsmati, sestrice gzdave,
neg pod'mo iskati kripodne sve trave
kijem ćemo ovoga u osla satvorit.

There is, however, a difference between the same animal in Držić and in Shakespeare. Držić's ass is no meek, kindly creature seen perhaps by Shakespeare at English fairs; he is no romantic Bottom the Weaver with whom Titania falls in love and crowns his asinine ears with flowers. To Držić the donkey (for whom he has three synonyms: magare, osao, tovar) is a reality, a coarse and hearty Balkan beast of burden; Držić must have often seen masses of them waiting outside the Gate of Ploče for their masters to finish selling in the City the goods that they had brought on their backs from the surrounding country.

In *Tirena*, his most ambitious pastoral play, Držić in two places takes the sated ass as a symbol of vulgar and idle young patricians. The peasant Radat says that youths have grown saucy »like sated donkeys« (ll. 685–690):

Mlados je objesna kakono sit tovar,

and a little before (ll. 623–629) this same Radat complained that an infernal fury had taken hold of people who, like sated

⁷ Against this hypothesis argues the fact that in *The Golden Ass* Voluptas (Pleasure), whom A. B. Lord identifies with Plakir is the daughter of Cupid and Psyche while Držić's Plakir is a boy. To avoid this difficulty, in his English translation A. B. Lord had to change Apuleius' word »daughter« (*filia* in the Latin original) into a neutral »child«.

asses that on S. George's Day make rude noises (Držić uses the »improper« verb), care not for honour or decency:

Njeka je vražja bijes u ljudi udrila,

.....
i, kako magare sito na Đurdevdan
prdeći, ne mare ni za čas ni za stan.

S. George »that swinged the dragon« (King John, II, 1. 288) is another link, however slight, with Shakespeare who was somehow dedicated to S. George, the patron saint of England. After all he was probably born on S. George's Day and he certainly died on that day which he mentions several times in his plays. From our present point of view the most significant is his allusion to »Saint George's feast« in *The First Part of King Henry VI* where in the very first scene of the play (ll. 153-154) the Duke of Bedford says:

Bonfires in France forthwith I am to make
To keep our great Saint George's feast withal.

Next to Midsummer Day, June 24, this feast, accompanied by ceremonies and banqueting, was regularly held on 23 April in Shakespeare's time both in England and in Držić's home country. The two festivals commemorated the death and rebirth of the spirit of vegetation. S. George's Day was essentially a pre-Christian celebration of the spring, marked by magical ceremonies for the revival of nature, meant to fertilize women, crops and cattle (»Green George«!). In connexion with this day in Southern Slav countries still survive customs associated with sorcery, sooth-saying, rites before sunrise by the river culminating in the sacramental sacrifice of a lamb (Sir James Frazer).

In Držić's *Tirena*, Cupid (Kupido) plays the same role as Puck does in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and here again the parallel between Puck and Držić's Cupid is closer than that between Puck and Plakir in *Grižula*. Just as Puck by squeezing the juice of his »little western flower« on the eyes of his sleeping victims makes them fall in love with the first person they see when they awake, so Radat »hit with Cupid's archery« wakes from sleep and, seeing the fairy

Tirena, falls in love with her (III, 6). Just like Shakespeare's Bottom, Radat knows that he is »translated«. »My brethren«, he says, »your Radat is not what he was« (III, 7):

Mo'a bratjo, vaš Radat nije oni ki je bio!

What is more, he hopes that his transformation is a dream, in fact a Midsummer night's dream! »Am I dreaming?« he says. »If this is a dream, my god, make this pain disappear with the dream!« (III, 6):

Ali ja snim ovoj? Ako 'e san, učini
ovi trud, bože moj, da se s snom raščini!

Of course, all these parallels and similarities are more than accidental for they spring from a common pastoral tradition. But what is more striking than single coincidental analogies is the skillful way in which Držić in his pastoral plays interweaves the three worlds: that of the fairies, of the Ragusan citizens and of the peasants from the neighbourhood of Dubrovnik, just as half a century later Shakespeare will ingeniously intertwine the world of the fairies with the court of Athens and with the irresistible »mechanicals« in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Speaking of *Grižula*, A. B. Lord also praises the art with which Držić brings together the world of the fairies and that of men. »The second prologue«, he says, »spoken by a Vila (Nymph), emphasizes also the disparity between the world of the Nymphs and that of men, but it also brings them together for the moment at the wedding of Vlaho Sorkočević.« But the skill with which Držić in *Tirena* blends into one harmonious whole the imaginary realm of the fairies and the real world of ordinary mortals, peasants and nobles, is still more perfect, I think, more complete and more consistent than in *Grižula*.

Next to the pastoral tradition, a common source from which both Držić and Shakespeare drew was the Latine Plautine comedy. We know that Plautus was one of the Latin authors that were taught at the Stratford Grammar School and that Shakespeare there must have read at least some of his comedies. We also know that the immediate fruit of this reading was Shakespeare's early *Comedy of Errors* in which

he combined features from two plays by Plautus, the *Menaechmi* and the *Amphitruo*. Now at the Dubrovnik school Plautus was also studied. The Satyr in the Prologue to Držić's *Skup* (or *Miser*) says about this comedy that it was »stolen from a book older than eld, — from Plautus«, and then he adds: »They read him to the children at school« (*sva je ukradena iz nekoga libra starijeg neg je staros, — iz Plauta; djeci ga na skuli legaju*).

Skup was »stolen« from the *Aulularia* of Plautus, but Držić was well acquainted also with his two plays which provided Shakespeare with the plot for *The Comedy of Errors*. We know that Držić's *Pjerin* is partly based on the *Menaechmi* while for his *Arkulin* he made use also of the *Amphitruo*. It would be impossible to study the different ways in which Shakespeare and Držić respectively developed elements taken from the same comedies of Plautus, because of *Pjerin*, as I mentioned before, only fragments survive and *Amphitruo* is only one of the secondary sources for *Arkulin*.

It seems to be much more rewarding to compare the character of the miser as it was independently treated by Držić and by Shakespeare. Držić seems to have been especially attracted by the character of the miser in general because, apart from writing *Skup*, the play based on *Aulularia*, he put in the centre of his best and best known comedy another miser, Uncle Maroje, from whom the play takes its name. Shakespeare in his turn wrote his own variation on the theme of miserliness in *The Merchant of Venice* and the character of Shylock is undoubtedly one of his triumphs.

No one, as far as I know, mentions Plautus' miserly curmudgeon Euclio from *Aulularia* as one of the possible sources on which Shakespeare's Shylock might have been modelled. But scholars do occasionally mention that Plautus' play, which is an account of how young Lyconides elopes with Euclio's daughter Phaedria, recalls the Lorenzo-Jessica subplot of *The Merchant of Venice*. I would suggest that Shakespeare must have known *Aulularia* better than that. It is more than likely that he read it while he frequented the Stratford grammar school and, apart from that, the play was

very popular in England at the time. I may mention in passing that it was performed at Cambridge before Queen Elizabeth I in 1584, the year of Shakespeare's birth. It is therefore possible that Shakespeare had also Plautus' miser Euclio in mind when he was creating the character of Shylock. However this be, in both Držić's misers there are analogies with Shakespeare's miser.

Like Shylock, *Skup* has an only daughter and »he would rather not allow her to marry than give her the smallest part of his treasure as dowry« (*prije hoće kćer ne udat nego joj od tezora dat išto za prćiju*. Prologue); and when he thinks that Kamilo has abducted his daughter and stolen his ducats, he exclaims: »My daughter, ah my daughter! I will now show my daughter what it is to conspire with thieves and steal my treasure« (*Kći, ah, moja kći! Ja ću kćeri sad ukazat što se je dogovarat s ribaodi i meni tezoro ukrasti*. V, 3) which reminds us of Shylocks »My daughter! O my ducats! O my daughter!« (II, 8. 15) when he learns that Jessica has eloped with Lorenzo and taken with her some of his treasure. In *Uncle Maroje* it is the spendthrift son that squanders his mean father's money, and when Maroje learns this, he bewails: »Woe is me, five thousand ducats!« (*Jaohi, pet tisuć dukata!* I, 1), and when later in the street he meets his son, he cries: »My ducats, you thief, give me back my ducats!« (*Dukate mi moje, dukate, ribaode jedan!* II, 2).

But Shylock is not only a miserly usurer; he is also a Jew, and his Judaism complicates matters. Neither *Skup* nor uncle Maroje are Jews, but in Držić's play of *Dundo Maroje* we have Sadi, the Jewish jeweller and money-lender. Of course, Sadi plays only an incidental role in Držić's comedy; he is not such a rounded character as Shylock is. Despite the title of Shakespeare's play, the merchant Antonio is only a subsidiary character, while Shylock stands in the centre of it as the villain of the piece. Apart from this, unlike Shylock, Sadi has no tragic traits in his character. However, if we compare these two Jewish usurers we can realize the great difference that existed between the attitude towards Jews in Shakespeare's London and in 16th century Dubrovnik.

Elizabethan England was less hospitable to Jews than the little Republic of Dubrovnik at the same time. »There were however Jews in Elizabeth's London,« says Peter Alexander in his introduction to *The Merchant of Venice*, »and the Queen had for a time a Jewish physician, Roderigo Lopez. This unfortunate man was executed in June 1594 on being found guilty, with what justice it seems impossible to say, of attempting to poison the Queen. Whether this event suggested to Shakespeare that a play with a Jewish character would be topical we cannot say; what is clear however is that the medieval type of story in which a Jew might figure as the villain would not have seemed in any way unnatural to Shakespeare's audience.«⁸ It is necessary to point out that for a long time some scholars were inclined to suppose that the mentioned Roderigo Lopez, a Portuguese of Jewish origin, was the prototype of Shakespeare's Shylock. This conjecture was corroborated in 1926 by J. Dover Wilson who drew readers' attention to the pun Wolf-Lupus-Lopez in one of Gratiano's railing speeches in the trial scene (IV, 1. 128-138) where, addressing Shylock, Gratiano says:

thy currish spirit

Governed a Wolf, who hanged for human slaughter —
Even from the gallows did his fell soul fleet,
And whilst thou layest in thy unhallowed dam,
Infused itself in thee.⁹

Držić' Sadi is certainly not an attractive character, but we cannot say that he is the villain of the piece. Shylock on the other hand, although not such a monster as, for example Marlowe's Barabas in *The Jew of Malta*, is not meant to be a good man either. To quote Peter Alexander once again, Shylock »is at the end an obstacle in the way of happiness and peace and has to be removed. But as a man who takes up a challenge flung at him by those who treat him as an enemy and has to play a lone hand he naturally holds our

⁸ P. Alexander, *Introductions to Shakespeare*. London and Glasgow, 1964, p. 69.

⁹ See The New Shakespeare edition of *The Merchant of Venice*, Cambridge 1926, p. 117.

attention and makes us feel his passion... Shylock as an observer of the law feels entitled to all the law allows; his Judaism is uncompromising; and, although despised by the gentiles round him, he feels himself one of a peculiar people.«¹⁰ He therefore feels impelled to make an apology for Judaism. »I am a Jew,« he says in his famous speech. »Hath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is? — if you prick us do we not bleed? if you tickle us do we not laugh? if you poison us do we not die? and if you wrong us shall we not revenge?« (III, 1. 52-60).

Sadi does not feel the necessity to make a defence of Judaism; he does not feel himself one of a peculiar people for he is not treated as such. He plies his trade just as his Christian colleagues do, and in his love of money he is neither more nor less odious than either Skup or Uncle Maroje. This is because, as far as Jews are concerned the little Republic of Dubrovnik was the most tolerant country in the world. There was no sentimentality about this, for the practical Ragusans knew how much they could profit from Jews. We know that in the 16th century many Jews expelled from Spain and Portugal, found a most hospitable home at Dubrovnik. Some were distinguished scholars and scientists, such as Didacu Pyrrhus (Jacobus Flavius Eborensis) and the physician Amatus Lusitanus (*recte* Juan Rodriguez), to mention only two.

I think, however, that on the whole it little profits to compare Držić with writers who came after him, with Molière, which has often been done before, or with Shakespeare, which I am trying to do here more thoroughly. If Držić is to be likened with anybody, he ought to be compared with the Italian writers of comedies contemporary with him: with Pietro Aretino, Ruzzante (Angelo Beolco), Andrea Calmo and the somewhat older Niccolò Machiavelli, Bibbiena (cardinal

¹⁰ P. Alexander, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

Bernardo Dovizi) and Ludovico Ariosto. And with all of them he compares well. As far as Shakespeare is concerned, we may say that there is one point of contact between him and Držić where the latter compares favourably. Unfortunately we cannot draw a parallel between the two plays of Shakespeare and Držić respectively which were both inspired by the *Menaechmi* of Plautus for, as I mentioned before, Držić's *Pjerin* is preserved only in fragments. But I venture to say that, as a Plautine play, Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors*, based on the *Menaechmi* and the *Amphitruo* of Plautus, is inferior to Držić's *Skup*, based on his *Aulularia*. Of course, *The Comedy of Errors* is an early and minor work of Shakespeare's while *Skup* is one of Držić's two masterpieces.

The accidental similarities between the two playwrights spring mainly from a common Renaissance atmosphere which was practically the same in Držić's Dubrovnik as, on a much larger scale, in Shakespeare's London half a century later. In Držić's native city there was music, there was painting, there were theatrical performances, there were strolling players and jesters, there was especially literature. All along the coast of Croatia people made noble efforts, often against great odds, to cultivate the fine arts and letters; these flourished particularly at Dubrovnik where conditions were much more favourable for the development of arts than elsewhere.

Even stage conditions were similar in both places. At Dubrovnik the plays were performed in the open air, most often before the Rector's Palace, or indoors in the Council Chamber of the Republic, and many were especially written for weddings celebrated in rich citizen's homes or in their gardens just as those of Shakespeare and his contemporaries were acted in public theatres open to the sky, in the refectory of the dissolved Blackfriars' monastery, at White Hall and Windsor Castle, in Inns of Court as well as in noblemen's mansions, and some at least were specially written for weddings (apparently *A Midsummer Night's Dream*). Another common feature to both London and Dubrovnik was the negative attitude to actors as a profession. In London they were considered the scum of the earth, and in the first Prologue of Držić's *Uncle Maroje* the Necromancer Longnose

speaks of »actors, the dregs of human kind« (*glumci, feća od ljudskoga naroda*), which was probably not Držić's opinion.

There was particularly one theatrical convention of the time which we find both in Držić and in Shakespeare: the custom of girls dressing up as boys. In *Uncle Maroje* Pera, dressed up as a man (»na mušku obučena«) travels from Dubrovnik to Rome in search of her unfaithful fiancé Maro, just as Julia in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, in male disguise, follows her inconstant Proteus, and as so many other Shakesperian heroines in like circumstances do. »The girl disguised as a page in the service of the man she loves«, says Peter Alexander, »and carrying his messages to the lady he is for the time enamoured of was made an international figure by an Italian play that was performed at the Carnival of 1531 in Siena. This was the famous *Gl'Ingannati* which was written for and staged by members of the Academy of the Intronati. Many versions and imitations of this device were acted or printed, the most famous of all being Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*; Shakespeare's first sketch however for this masterpiece is found in *The two Gentleman*.«¹¹ Here we can definitely trace the source which was common to both Držić and Shakespeare, for it was precisely at Siena, where between 1538 and 1545 he spent several years as a student, that Držić seems to have learnt his trade as a playwright.

We know that the roles of women in the Elizabethan theatre were acted by boys or young men, naturally also those were »girls« appear on the stage dressed up as boys (e. g. Julia in *The Two Gentleman of Verona*, Viola in *Twelfth Night*, Rosalind in *As You Like It*, etc.). And here is yet another link with the theatre of Marin Držić, for not only that in his *Novela od Stanca* male maskers appear disguised as fairies (»Ovdi dohode maskari obučeni kako vile«), but we have good reason to believe that also female characters proper, such as Petrunjela and Laura in *Uncle Maroje*, were acted by boys or young men; because the first real women actresses are mentioned at Dubrovnik only early in the 18th century.

¹¹ P. Alexander, Introduction to this last comedy. O. c., p. 55-56.

Obviously, it must have been difficult to find young men who could impersonate female characters convincingly. This probably accounts for the relatively small number of female parts in most of Držić's plays, just as it very likely explains why there are so few women in the plays of Shakespeare. The *Novela od Stanca* has an all-male cast, *Venere* and *Tirena* have two female characters each, in *Arkulin* there are three female parts against nine male ones and the two major comedies, *Skup* and *Uncle Maroje*, have four women each, the first of them having ten male characters and the second twenty-two. An exception to this rule are partly *Mande* and *Grizula* where women are more numerous and their number is fairly well balanced with that of the men.

Finally we find also some stylistic features common to both Držić and Shakespeare. This has been noticed first by A. B. Lord and this is actually the main theme of his above mentioned paper. After pointing out the similarity between the »stuff« of Držić's plays and some Shakesperian themes, he remarks: »But that is not my main theme, fascinating as it would be to pursue it more closely. I wish rather to turn to a characteristic of Renaissance style, an element of the pyrotechnic of rhetoric, in which both Shakespeare and Držić were extremely adept.« And then he continues: »Word play is of great importance in *Plakir*. Particularly effective is that form of it that is called antithesis and which itself, as you know, has a number of manifestation, including oxymoron at one end of the spectrum and the general presence of antithetical ideas in a passage, or in an entire production, at the other end.« After giving a detailed analysis of *Grizula* from this point of view and after calling attention to the fact that in this pastoral play of Držić's »chaste Diana and amorous Cupid on the supernatural level represent the bride and bridegroom« so that we have in the central idea of the play itself and antithesis, A. B. Lord concludes that »Držić's skill in this word play and in the juxtaposition of characters cannot but call forth our admiration«.

In his essay A. B. Lord restricts himself to examining only one of Držić's plays. »Word play«, he says, »is of great importance in *Plakir*.« But it is also of great importance in Držić's other

plays. It is of great importance in Shakespeare's plays too, particularly that form of it which is called punning. Now, instances of punning may be found, for example, in Držić's *Mande* (II, 4) where the dense Nadihna, servant to the pedant schoolmaster Krisa, when asked by his learned employer: »Quae tibi videtur de meo ingenio?«, replies: »He who knows what he knows, knows not what you know; and you know what you know, and know also what everyone knows« (*Tko umije što umije ne umije što ti umiješ; a ti umiješ što umiješ, i umiješ što svak umije*). But we can find better examples of almost true »Shakespearean« punning in some other of Držić's plays. I will limit myself to quoting one from *Skup* which to me seems to have a real Shakespearean ring and to be worthy of Polonius.

In scene 5 of Act IV young Kamilo's uncle Niko and Niko's friend Dživo speak about the engagement of Kamilo to the Miser's daughter Andrijana whom her father wishes to marry Kamilo's maternal uncle Zlatikum who is rich and old. Dživo asks: »Have you heard that Kamilo is engaged to be married?« (*Kamilo nam se vjeri; jes' li čuo?*) and Niko replies: »Bad news come though uninvited; heard and not heard; I hear in order not to hear if even I hear what is better not heard« (*Zli glasi i nezvani dohode; čuo i ne čuo; i čujem da ne čujem ako i čujem što nije za čut*). To this Dživo retorts: »What is better not heard? One hears of greater things than these, it seems to me. It is worse to hear that Zlatikum is engaged as an old man than Kamilo in his youth« (*Što nije za čut? Čuju se i veće stvari neg su ove, meri parā. Grubše je čut da se je Zlatikum star vjerio neg Kamilo mlad*).

Here we might be listening to Polonius addressing the Queen in *Hamlet* (II, 2. 92-103):

I will be brief — your noble son is mad:
Mad call I it, for to define true madness,
What is't but to be nothing else but mad?

And when the Queen asks him to use »More matter, with less art«, he replies:

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Madam, I swear I use no art at all.
That he is mad 'tis true; 'tis true, 'tis pity,
And pity 'tis 'tis true — a foolish figure,
But farewell it, for I will use no art.
Mad let us grant him then, and now remains
That we find out the cause of this effect,
Or rather say, the cause of this defect,
For this effect defective comes by cause.

The technique of Držić's punning in the above quoted dialogue from *Skup*, on a much higher and more serious level, reminds us also of Hamlet's »If it be now, 'tis not to come — if it be not to come, it will be now — if it be not now, yet it will come — the readiness is all« (V, 2. 218–220). Here not also both Držić and Shakespeare after him were following the same fashion which was common to all Renaissance literatures of Western Europe.

And, in conclusion, a word about the setting of Držić's plays. The action of *Uncle Maroje* is nominally set in Rome but practically all the characters of the play are natives of Dubrovnik, and the reader or spectator feels that he is continually in Dubrovnik just as he does in Držić's other plays. In the same way in Shakespeare's plays, no matter what the nominal indication is, the place of action, even in his Roman tragedies, is always England; just as his characters, whatever their avowed nationality is, are always English. All the same, it is significant that it is precisely in the Republic of Dubrovnik, in Držić's native city, the scene of practically all his plays, that Shakespeare chose to locate the loveliest of all his comedies; for it is justifiable to conjecture that the »City in Illyria« of *Twelfth Night* is more than likely Dubrovnik about which Shakespeare seems to have known much more than is generally supposed.

Pomet's Machiavellism From Artistic Vision to Conspiratory Reality

Frano Čale

Translated by Vera Andrassy

1 Pomet, king of men, doctor and philosopher, the real man, abbot, count, cavalier, the liveliest character of our most beautiful comedy, after more than four centuries seems to be more present in the experience of the theatre spectator than on the pages of literary criticism. To be sure, it has paid him greater attention than to other Držić's heroes, but has not as yet definitely determined the meaning of his function in the story nor has it formed a unified and definite opinion of him. Each new insight will bring us closer not only to Pomet but to the play as a whole and to its author. By adopting a different approach to Držić's hero and by tracing his origin to some Renaissance sources which literary criticism has so far overlooked, we do not intend to negate wholly the existing

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