

**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE AND SLOVENE DRAMATISTS (III):
(1930 – 2010)**

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Abstract

In the final part of my study I shall present Shakespeare's influence on Slovene dramatists from the 1930s to the present time. In this period an almost unbelievable growth in Slovene cultural activities took place. This is also reflected in a very large number of new Slovene playwrights who have written in this time, in their international orientation in dramatic art as well as in the constantly growing number of permanent (and *ad hoc*) theatre companies. Communication regarding new theatrical tendencies not only in Europe but also in the United States of America and – during the past decades – also in its global dimension has become much easier than in previous periods and this resulted also in the application of new dramatic visions in playwriting and in theatrical productions in Slovenia. These new movements include new techniques in writing, such as symbolism, futurism, expressionism, constructivism, surrealism, political drama, the theatre of the absurd and postmodernism, which have become apparent both in new literary techniques and in new forms of production.

In this period Classical drama still preserved an important role in major Slovene theatres. Plays written by Greek playwrights, as well as plays written by Shakespeare, Molière, Schiller etc. still constitute a very relevant part of the repertoire in Slovene theatres. Besides, Slovene theatres have also performed many plays written by modern playwrights, as for example by Oscar Wilde, L. N. Tolstoy, I. S. Turgenev, Henrik Ibsen, August Strindberg, G. Hauptmann, G. Büchner, G. B. Shaw, A. P. Chekhov, John Galsworthy, Luigi Pirandello, Eugene O'Neill and many other contemporary playwrights. In the period after the Second World War the influence of American dramatists has been constantly growing. This variety also resulted in the fact that direct influence of Shakespeare and his plays upon Slovene dramatists became less frequent and less noticeable than it had been before. Plays written by Slovene dramatists are rarely inspired by whole scenes or passages from Shakespeare's plays, although there are also some exceptions from this rule. It is rather surprising how quickly Slovene theatres produced works written by important foreign dramatists already in the period following the First World War not to mention how quickly plays written by the best European and American playwrights have appeared on Slovene stages during the past fifty years.

The connection between Shakespeare's plays and plays written by Slovene playwrights became more subtle, more sophisticated, they are often based on implied symbolic references, which have become a starting point for a new interpretation of the world, particularly if compared with the Renaissance humanistic values. The sheer number of plays written by Slovene dramatists in this period makes it difficult to ascertain that all influences from Shakespeare's plays have been noticed, although it is hoped that all major borrowings and allusion are included. Slovene dramatists and theatre directors have provided numerous adaptations of Shakespeare's plays, which sometimes present a new version of an old motif so that it may hardly be linked with Shakespeare. Slovene artists, playwrights and

also theatre directors, have »rewritten«, »reset« the original text and given it a new meaning and/or a new form, and in a combination of motifs and structure they have thus created a »new play«, even stand-up comedies in which the actor depends on a scenario based on Shakespeare's play(s) but every performance represents a new improvisation. Such productions are naturally closer to the *commedia dell'arte* type of play than to a play written by Shakespeare. I briefly mention such experimental productions in the introductory part of my study. The central part of my research deals with authors in whose works traces of Shakespeare's influence are clearly noticeable. These playwrights are: Matej Bor, Jože Javoršek, Ivan Mrak, Dominik Smole, Mirko Zupančič, Gregor Strniša, Venko Taufer, Dušan Jovanović, Vinko Möderndorfer and Evald Flisar.

Key words: W. Shakespeare, his influence on Slovene dramatists (1930–2010)

1.0. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

During the period after the Second World War theatre activities have become much more vivid than in the previous times. The number of professional theatres as well as professional actors has very much grown; likewise, the number of *ad hoc* theatre groups and experimental theatres has increased from one year to another. Plays written by foreign playwrights on themes taken from Shakespeare are produced in Slovenia almost immediately after they have been performed abroad. Among such authors are, for example, Nicolaj Aldo, Jess Borgeson (together with Adam Long and Daniel Singer), Ivo Brešan, Janusz Glowacki, Eugène Ionesco, Heiner Müller, Luigi Pirandello, Peter Ustinov (if I mention only the ones who are better known). This article does not, however, include any references to the work of these playwrights.

Since the early 1950s Slovene professional theatres produce annually three to five plays written by Shakespeare. This means that during the past sixty year our audiences have been able to see several hundred plays written by Shakespeare in Slovene theatres and at various theatre festivals. These productions are listed in the *Repertoar slovenskih gledališč, 1867-1967* (A Repertoire of Slovenian Theatres, 1867-1967) edited by Dušan Moravec and published by the Slovenski gledališki muzej in Ljubljana, 1967. Subsequent bibliographical compilations were published at first every five years and since 1993 they have been published annually. The sheer number of Slovene production of Shakespeare's plays in Slovene theatres is really astonishing, especially if we take into account the fact that there are only about two million people living in Slovenia. Besides, after the publication of the complete list of Shakespeare's plays in Slovene (edited by Matej Bor) in 1974 those interested in the theatre and in Shakespeare in particular, have had ample opportunity to become acquainted with his plays also in printed versions, not to speak about production of many foreign film versions and TV productions which have been shown in cinemas and on the television.*

* Once again I wish to express my gratitude for their help to the librarians of the Slavic Department and to the librarians of the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana; to the staff of the Slovene Theatre Museum, Ljubljana, and to my colleague Dr. Jason Blake.

1.1. EXPERIMENTAL PRODUCTIONS OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS IN SLOVENE THEATRES

William Shakespeare inspired several Slovene theatre directors and actors to prepare a variety of adaptations for Slovene theatres on the basis of themes and plots taken from Shakespeare's plays (I include the name of the director / or actor who prepared the adaptation, the name of the theatre where the production took place and the date of the first night). This topic has not yet been dealt with specifically, yet it also shows Shakespeare's influence on our playwrights, on our translators and also on our theatre directors. Unless stated otherwise the première of these productions first took place in Ljubljana.

Already in the 1950s Andrej Hieng prepared and directed **the adaptation** of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* for the Slovene Popular Theatre Celje (the première was on Jan. 17, 1957). It was subtitled as »a tragic ballad«. One of the Slovene critics (Tit Vidmar) ironically reacted to this (**shortened**) **version** of *Macbeth* by giving his theatre review of this performance such a shortened title, »Mcbth in Clj«. Hieng preserved the main plot of the play but he shortened poetic speeches in the play so that it was reduced to »a criminal story«. Since the 1990s adaptations of Shakespeare's plays have been very popular. So, for example Tomaž Štrucl took passages from several Shakespeare's texts and directed them under the title *Hamlet n'roses* (The Experimental Theatre Glej, May 22, 1993). **Passages from three plays** by Shakespeare (*King Richard II*, *King Henry V*, *King Richard III*) **were combined into a new play** under the title *Glas* (The Voice). This production was directed by Matjaž Berger (the dramaturge was Tomaž Toporišič), and it was based on the Slovene translation of these plays by Matej Bor; some passages were also given in Latin (tr. Matjaž Babič) and in the Japanese (tr. Moritoki Hagira). The play was first performed by the Slovene Youth Theatre (SMG) on March 3, 1999. An adapted, shortened, version of *Antony and Cleopatra* was prepared by Tomaž Štrucl, who also directed the play. This adaptation was produced by the Experimental Theatre Glej on December 12, 1994. Several Shakespeare's plays were adapted by the actor (and translator) Andrej Rozman Roza; for example, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was performed at the Slovensko mladinsko gledališče (Slovene Youth Theatre - SMG) in Ljubljana on June 2, 1999. Rozman also newly translated (and adapted) *Hamlet* for the production at the same theatre. The play was directed by Dario Varga and the première was held on February 18, 2001. A special feature of this production was the use of »humanoids« (the idea was provided by Tomaž Lavrič and it was carried out by Bojan Mavsar). *The Tragedy of King Richard the Second*, which was translated by Matej Bor, was adapted by Dejan Sarič and Primož Vitez for the E.P.I. Centre and theatre Glej (first production took place at »Glej« on 30 Dec. 2005). *Hamlet (in 60 minutes)* was prepared and directed by Nana Milčinski at the »Anton Podbevšek Theatre« at Novo Mesto (10 April 2008). As a co-production of three Slovene theatres (SNG Maribor, Slovene Theatre in Trst / Trieste – Italy, SMG Ljubljana) and cultural Centre »Cankarjev dom« in Ljubljana, Shakespeare's *The Tempest* was newly translated by Andrej Rozman – Roza and directed by Vito Taufer. The première took place in Maribor (on 19 Sept. 2008) and the play was shown at cultural centres which co-operated in preparing this performance.

A combination of Shakespeare's texts has also been used several times for **theatre recitals**. So, for example, Mirko Zupančič used Shakespeare's text and passages from

Slovene plays in his production entitled *Iz take smo snovi kot kranjski komedijanti*. The title is a combination of a line from Prospero's monologue in *The Tempest* (»We are such stuff / As dreams are made on..« 4.1.156-157) and it is combined with the title of Bratko Kreft's play *Kranjski komedijanti* (The Comedians from Carniola). The play was directed by Mile Korun. and the première was on Sept. 29, 1977 at the Mestno gledališče (Ljubljana City Theatre). On 19 March 1992 the Slovene Permanent Theatre Company (SSG) in Trst / Trieste, in Italy, produced a recital of poetry written by Shakespeare and translated into Slovene by Oton Župančič, Matej Bor and Janez Menart. The recital was performed under the title *Ves ta svet je oder* (»All the world's a stage«, *As You Like It* 2.7.139). Texts were selected by Jože Javoršek

Barbara Kapelj and other actors of the semi-professional Šentjakobsko gledališče (St. Jacob's Theatre) in Ljubljana prepared **the show** based on motifs from Shakespeare's plays titled *Iz take smo snovi kot sanje* (»We are such stuff / As dreams are made on«, *The Tempest*, 4.1.156-157). The production was directed by Barbara Kapelj, the dramaturge was Amelia Kraigher (the première took place on 27 Oct. 2005).

Shakespeare's plays were also prepared for **the puppet theatre** (Lutkovno gledališče) in Ljubljana. Director Miran Herzog produced the play *Kresna noč* (The Midsummer Night, on 23 Nov. 1991). – The director Vito Taufer used Oton Župančič's translation of *Hamlet* for his adaptation of this drama as a puppet play (LG Ljubljana, 19 March 2006).

Romeo and Juliet was shown as **the ballet version** by The Cankarjev dom Stage Production (the choreographer was Matjaž Farič, and the première took place at Murska Sobota on 22 Sept. 1995). – The choreography of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* for a female dancer (Mojca Turk) was prepared by Aleksander Jurc (see Jurak, *Acta Neophilologica* 38 (2005): 30).

Tadej Toš first performed *Hamlet* as **a stand up comedy** at the Mestno gledališče in Ptuj (The Ptuj City Theatre) in 2007¹ and he has shown his production in several other cities in Slovenia.

One of the plays in which several characters are modelled on Shakespeare's contemporaries appear in Iztok Lovrić's play *Za prgišče Šekspirja* (A Handful of »Šekspir«)², which was produced by the Slovensko mladinsko gledališče (Slovene Youth Theatre) in Ljubljana (the première took place on April 5, 2009). It is **a parody in the form of a musical** of some contemporary leading European and American politicians, combined with characters of actors and dramatists of the Elizabethan era. The play is divided into thirteen scenes and the plot consists of three levels. Several contemporary celebrities find themselves after a plane crash in a city of ghosts, which is located somewhere in the United States. Its »inhabitants« are named after famous Elizabethan authors and actors and they come into contact with these V.I.P's. Among these V.I.P's are Nicolas Sarkozy and his wife Carla Bruni, Vladimir Putin, Hilary Clinton, Dalai Lama, and the journalist Christiane Amanpour. Lovrić builds his characters on moral weaknesses of these

¹ I was unable to obtain either the text of this production or of the following production mentioned here. In a telephone conversation with Tadej Toš (18 May 2007) regarding his performance he told me that he adapted the text according to the theatre audience where he performed so that his performance was more in *commedia dell'arte* genre than as a traditional, Aristotelian type of a play.

² Iztok Lovrić is a musician, an actor and a playwright.

characters, e.g. Sarkozy is vain, arrogant and lascivious; Putin behaves like an American macho, he acts as a gunman; Hilary Clinton is represented as a naive person, constantly worrying after her husband's fidelity; Christianne Amanpour is shown as a somewhat hysterical journalist, whereas Carla Bruni, a composer of ballads and a singer, and Dalai Lama, as a new spiritual leader, are presented with a certain amount of sympathy.

The second level in the play consists of the citizens of the ghost city. They are: »the sheriff Richard Burbage«, modelled after the younger son of James Burbage, the first builder of 'Playhouses' in Elizabethan England and one of the twenty-six principal actors in Shakespeare's plays; »the undertaker Thomas Pope«, a comedian in Shakespeare's plays; »Joanna Sinclair, the owner of brothels« (in the Elizabethan times when female roles were played by young men, the real name of the actor was John Sincler); »a rich widow Augustina Phillips« and »the bank manager John Hemmings« are Augustine Phillips and John Heminge, who were also among the 'Principall Actor's' in Shakespeare's plays. After their revelries in the ghost city the V.I.P.'s realize that they will not be saved and that they have themselves become dead souls in a cemetery. They join the citizens of this ghost city and they all accept their »common values«, which are greed for money and greed for power. Their »morality« is based on lies, on murder and on stealing.

The author includes in this short play (»dramolet«) also four episodes in which he introduces as »characters in four narratives« a number of Elizabethan players and playwrights. Among them are also John Burbage, Christopher Marlowe, George Peele, Ben Jonson, John Fletcher, as well as some other Elizabethan actors and playwrights. Lovrić puts them in different roles in themes known from Shakespeare's plays (*Romeo and Juliet*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Othello* and *Hamlet*). The events in these short episodes take place in America and the characters are shown from a comic or even grotesque perspective although they are sketched on some of the main features of characters of Shakespeare's contemporaries. The dramatist obviously had too much staff for his parody so that his characters remind us of the *grande guignol*. The play ends with a unanimous agreement on life delivered by the V.I.P.'s and the citizens of the ghost city telling the audience that they believe in their »values«. The Policeman sings a song about the individual endeavours of each of them to become »a stardust« but they finish their lives as »ashes«. Lovrić includes in their song the well-known image from *The Tempest* (»We are such staff / As dreams are made of.« 4.1.156-57). In spite of some shortcomings this musical comedy is a relatively successful attempt in which the author compares the values of the past and the present and entertains young audiences with songs and with humorous treatment of serious questions.

Tomi Janežič and Male Kline prepared **the unconventional performance** for the audience of 24 viewers and of their meeting with 12 performers. The production *Romeo in publika* (Romeo and the Audience) was first staged in February 2009 by the experimental theatre group »En-knap« and directed by Tomi Janežič.

These brief details about various experimental performances based on Shakespeare's texts undoubtedly show that besides many original productions of Shakespeare's plays in Slovene there is also a rich production of experimental performances and adaptations, also including various theatrical forms. Even though some of these productions may not have a very high artistic value they are definitely a sign that Slovene writers and actors are still interested in new, original interpretations of Shakespeare's art.

2.0. SHAKESPEARE'S INFLUENCE ON SLOVENE DRAMATISTS

In the period after the First World War Ivan Cankar's plays were frequently performed in Slovene theatres and they often influenced Slovene dramatists either directly or by different allusions or references. Shakespeare's influence is quite noticeable in several of his plays as I have shown in my previous study (*Acta Neophilologica* 43. 1-2, 2010: 16-30). Therefore it is not surprising that Shakespeare's influence upon Slovene playwrights was also indirectly introduced through Cankar's plays. In a recently published study *Tokovi slovenske dramatike I, II* (Trends in Slovene Drama. Ljubljana: Slovenski gledališki muzej, 2010) Malina Schmidt Snoj offers a broad and penetrating insight into the thematic, artistic and dramaturgic development of all major trends in Slovene drama from its beginnings to the present time. In her analyses she also mentions Shakespeare's influence on five Slovene dramatists whose works have appeared during the decades discussed in my study. I shall include in my research also some younger Slovene playwrights in whose works we can find references or allusions to Shakespeare's plays. These parallels have not been discussed yet, so that they will hopefully supplement the picture regarding Shakespeare's influence on Slovene dramatists. A number of parallels between Shakespeare's plays and the works of these playwrights are rather indirect. Some of them represent a complete disagreement with Shakespeare's views on the world, with his humanistic ideas, and with ethical principles underlying the meaning of his plays. It seems that in some cases Slovene dramatists have simply tried to capture Shakespeare's mastery in creating complex human characters, using the structure of his plays as their model, they tried to bring the rhythmical pattern of Shakespeare's blank verse into the rhythm of Slovene, they also included rich poetic imagery into Slovene plays. Although Shakespeare's influence on Slovene dramatists diminished in the second half of the twentieth century his work still represents a source of inspiration for Slovene dramatists.

In a number of Slovene plays written in this period allusions, quotations and other references to Shakespeare's plays cannot be easily specified either because other dramatic elements are much more influential or simply because direct echoes from Shakespeare's plays would be hard to prove. Let me mention only some major Slovene authors in whose plays we may find some echoes or parallels related to Shakespeare's plays (including themes, images, symbols, the structure of the play, character portrayal, dramatic irony, the subtext etc.). One of the older representatives among Slovene playwrights, whose works are based on motifs from Slovene history and daily life, Ivan Potrč (1913-1983), clearly admits his debt to Shakespeare in an interview with Branko Hofman. He says that he was inspired by Shakespeare in various ways, e.g. »How to write a sentence, to create the atmosphere and to form the thought ... to create the expectation, the intense resonance, the tension, the fatality, dramatic conflicts, poetic maze, how to form a parallel between man's feeling and completeness of the total composition«. (Hofman 1978: 379) Such general observations regarding the artistic value of dramatic works could undoubtedly be noticed also in the works of some of the best Slovene dramatists, although we may not find in them obvious parallels, influences or allusions to Shakespeare's plays. Still, an indirect influence of Shakespeare can no doubt be noticed also in plays written by some of the best Slovene playwrights, as for example, plays written by Mira Mihelič, Igor Torkar, Primož Kozak, Andrej Hieng, Janez Žmavc, Smiljan Rozman, Marjan Rožanc,

Peter Božič, Dane Zajc, Rudi Šeligo, Dimitrij Rupel, Drago Jančar, Ivo Svetina, Tone Partljič, Milan Jesih. However, my research has been limited to playwrights in whose works Shakespeare's influence can be definitely proved.

2.1. MATEJ BOR

It was undoubtedly a most fortunate coincidence that after 1949, when Oton Župančič died, his work as the most important translator of Shakespeare's plays into Slovene in the first half of the twentieth century, was continued by another poet, Matej Bor (1913-1993; Bor is the pen-name of Vladimir Pavšič). Although Slovene literary historians and critics certainly esteem Župančič as a poet much higher than Bor, the latter had in addition to his poetic talent also a fine ear for everyday spoken Slovene language. This makes his translations easier to speak on the stage than poetic language which was used by Župančič. On the other hand as far as the aesthetic beauty of their translations Župančič is still respected as the best Slovene translator of Shakespeare's plays although his translations are also less accurate as regards the meaning of the text than Bor's. In his study of Shakespeare and the Slovenes Dušan Moravec also stresses that Bor's poetic translations of Shakespeare's plays into Slovene are »simple, clear, they almost sound as if they had been written in our native language«, although »nobody could assert that any new translations either in our time or in the future would reach a higher value than poetic translations prepared by Oton Župančič in his time« (Moravec 1974: 480). Among Slovene theatre critics Lojze Filipič wrote one of the first detailed studies on Bor's plays, which is published as an Introduction to Bor's selected works (1973: 5-25). He analytically reviewed Bor's plays and his characters and also pointed out to Bor's allusions to contemporary Slovene society.

Malina Schmidt Snoj mentions in her study that Bor's tendency to create powerful (Renaissance) negative characters is apparent in all of his plays, from his earliest plays to his last play. She persuasively proves this statement by referring to several Bor's protagonists.³ Further on she concludes that in Bor's dramaturgic concept, in his use of metrics, in the inclusion of the intrigue and love affairs, in his comic features, the imitation of Shakespeare's drama is present. Among other examples she mentions also the importance of fate in man's life, a large number of coincidences, happy ending (the three couples in Bor's poetic play *Bele vode* (White Water, w. in 1948/49 are happily reunited). These elements remind the critic of Shakespeare's comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (416). In Bor's portrayal of a »cool«, nihilistic intellectual thinker Van Velden (in *Ples smeti*, The Dance of Dust; w. in 1968, perf. in 1970 by the Municipal Theatre in Ljubljana), she sees a similarity with Shakespeare's treatment of his historical, morally questionable characters as well as the formal, linguistic influence of Shakespeare's comedies. She agrees with Moravec's conclusion about Bor's use of rhythmic prose and poetry, as well

³ Among such characters in Bor's plays Malina Schmidt Snoj mentions Match in Bor's play *Težka ura* (The Crucial Hour), Ferlež in *Raztrganci* ('The Tattered' Soldiers), Mokorel in *Zvezde so večne* (The Stars Are Eternal), Koritnik in *Kolesa teme* (The Wheels of Darkness), the families of Lorenzi and Visconti in *Ples smeti* (The Dance of Dust), Ahriman in *Šola noči* (The School of the Night) and Ignac in *Popoldanski počitek* (The Siesta).

as about Bor's dualistic, Manichean distinction between good and evil, which is linked in Bor's plays with the belief that good finally wins in life. The plot of Bor's play *The Dance od Death* is situated in the 15th century Siena (in Italy). Bor characterizes his characters as people who cheat and betray their compatriots, who are always suspicious, who spy on their fellow-men, but who are also intelligent and witty.

In his essay on *The Dance of Dust* (which bears the subtitle »divertimento in blank verse according to old models«) Bor explains why he used blank verse in his plays. He says that although Shakespeare's blank verse is very close to prose »it has something which is not inherent in common speech, the hypnotic power of rhythm«, which »brings thoughts and images into deeper layers of man's consciousness«. (Bor 1977: 413) In this essay Bor also admits the similarity between Shakespeare's and his own works. He is enthusiastic about Shakespeare's practice which does not limit the spirit of his plays regardless of the fact if they take place in Denmark, in ancient Greece or in the Renaissance Italy, in the Arden forest or in Illyria. Shakespeare knew how to encompass in his plays all the human race, showing in them its beauties and its weaknesses, presenting in them general human values and their timelessness. The achievements of his own age represented to Shakespeare only the building blocks for his own art, and on man's dreams, which are an essential part of human life, giving him the reason for his existence even by showing human weaknesses. Bor believes that modern drama lacks the richness of human spirit, the potentiality of human passion and the magic of dramatic art. His meditation on Shakespeare's art and his high evaluation of it prove that Slovene critics have justly interpreted not only his translations of Shakespeare's plays but also the form and the »message« of Bor's plays. He tried to present in his characters both positive and negative traits and therefore his play *Vrnitev Blažonovih* (The Return of the Blažon Family, w. in 1946), which was first produced by the Slovene National Theatre in Ljubljana in 1948, only had five performances (compared with other plays which had in the same year – like Shakespeare's *Hamlet* – on average 27 performances). In this play Bor presents two brothers, Andrej and Miha, who were both partisans and who have returned to their native village after the war. But neither of them is just a positive figure.⁴ Such characterization according to which the members of the new political and social power are not only morally positive heroes was not approved of in the arts by the Communist Party which could not »tolerate« such characters to be shown on the stage (although Bor was an active member of the »partisan« resistance movement in Slovenia during the Second World War). The authorities also could not accept Bor's occasional irony and humour, with which he wished to make the presentation of life more realistic, more complex. Janko Kos believes that Bor wished to link his plays indirectly through Shakespeare to poetic drama and in a smaller degree to the examples offered by T. S. Eliot (Kos 2001: 363). In spite of the above mentioned »incident« with Slovene political authorities Bor continued for some time to write plays in which some basic features of Shakespeare's plays are also visible, as e.g. strong individual characterization in *Kolesa teme*, the use of poetry (blank verse) in *Vesolje v akvariju*, comic scenes in *Zvezde so večne*, etc. These features were also mentioned in Jože Koruza's study of Slovene drama (Koruza 1967: 41-42). But, as we have seen, even more noticeable references to Shake-

⁴ See also Schmidt Snoj 2010: 213-215.

spere's plays may be found in Bor's »historical comedy« *Ples smeti* (The Dance of Dust, 1968). In this play Bor introduced in addition to corrupt leaders (noblemen) also witty servants, and the dialogues spoken by Cipelj and Capelj (Bor 1975: 233) remind us of the grave-diggers rhetoric in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* or of servants, in his comedies; but they behave also like Didi and Gogo in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (Bor makes fun of the importance of Lorenzo's boots). Eaves-dropping is a popular »sport« in this society (Cipelj, Capelj, Gato, Van Velden etc.) and it reminds us of eaves-dropping by Polonius in *Hamlet* (and of course also about the practice of the secret police in Slovenia between 1945 and 1990). Before his final defeat Lorenzo is left powerless to his enemies (»Kje je moj meč? Dajte mi meč!«; Where is my sword? Give me my sword, *ibid.* 284) Lorenzo is just as vulnerable as Richard III without the horse. There are also several implied references to contemporary Slovene society, particularly of the leading class, who wishes to gain more power and to rule the mob, Van Valden remarks that if they wished to bring peace and order to the people they should first of all find peace in themselves (*ibid.* 289). Visconti's remark about Lorenzo's business with fish brings to our mind Hamlet's teasing of Polonius and Hamlet's witticisms. Visconti's monologues are filled with paradoxical statements just like Hamlet's monologues. Visconti's plan of Lorenzo's murder echoes similar scenes in *Julius Caesar*, but in Bor's play it turns out to be a parody of a similar scene in Shakespeare's play. Although several of Bor's characters appear in scenes in which the meaning is diametrically opposed to scenes in Shakespeare's plays, the original source of Bor's inspiration is still noticeable. In his view history repeats itself, but this time it is repeated in an ironic version declared by the playwright (it is almost like Prufrock's conclusion, »For I have known them all already, known them all—» in Eliot's poem »The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock«). Jože Koruza mentions in his survey of Slovene drama (1967: 41, 42) that Shakespeare's influence upon Matej Bor can be seen in some other works, e.g. in *Vesolje v akvariju* (The Universe in Aquarium, 1955) and *Zvezde so večne* (The Stars Are Eternal, 1959), mainly in Bor's mixing of serious and comic scenes and in his use of blank verse. If we examine all of Bor's plays with regard to Shakespeare's influence the most noticeable case can undoubtedly be seen in his play *Ples smeti*.

Since the late 1940s Bor's main preoccupation was to prepare a complete translation of Shakespeare's plays into Slovene. When Bor addressed members of the PEN Conference at lake Bled in 1964 he stressed that although Slovene is not spoken by many people it is just as noble and firm as a pine-tree, which is used for a string instrument, and which gives special resonance and beauty to works written by Dante, Shakespeare, Molière, Pushkin (Bor 3, 1975: 296). Bor's main contribution to Slovene drama and theatre is undoubtedly in his effort to bring Shakespeare's dramatic legacy into artfully valuable translation of Shakespeare's plays. He thereby successfully completed the process which had been so well begun by Oton Župančič.

2.2. JOŽE JAVORŠEK

Among Slovene dramatists who were open to new ideas regarding dramatic art and the art of the theatre Jože Javoršek (1920-1990) seemed quite a promising figure

although the expectations of some Slovene critics and the public regarding his future achievements seem to have been somewhat exaggerated. He introduced in his plays some novelties which turned them away from traditional psychological drama to the world of phantasy, to surrealist visions of life. His ideas were based primarily on theoretical treatises as presented by Antonin Artaud, Adolphe Appia and Edward Gordon Craig (Schmidt Snoj 2010: 442). The language of his plays is often symbolic, his characters express the repressed, unconscious side of their minds in which the nature of man's cruelty becomes particularly apparent in critical situations emerging both in closed, family circles as well as in society at large. A minor reference to Shakespeare's characters can be seen in his »morality-play« *Konec hrepenenja* (The End of Yearning, perf. in 1971, publ. in 1975) in which he compares the ideal love of Shakespeare's heroes (Caesar, Cleopatra, Mark Antony, Romeo) with the sensual love of his hero Čedo, without high ideals and platonic vision.

In his trilogy *Manevri* (Maneuvers, perf. in 1960, print. in 1967), *Dežela gasilcev* (The Country of Firemen, publ. 1975, perf. in 1985) and *Improvizacija v Ljubljani* (The Improvisation in Ljubljana, print. in 1977) Javoršek makes a number of references to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as well as to some contemporary plays (e.g. to Brendan Behan's play *The Hostage*). These plays deal with the contemporary art and political problems in Slovenia. Javoršek treats these problems as »the reflection of real life«: in *Dežela gasilcev* as a »clownish play in two parts with an epilogue« and in the improvisations as a dialogue among actors; it is more like a critical piece than like a play and in form it is quite similar to an essay.

Slovene critics generally assert that Javoršek was inspired to write *Improvizacija v Ljubljani* by similar improvisations written by playwrights like Molière, Jacques Copeau, Jean Giroudoux, but as mentioned similarities may also be found between his play and John Dryden's *Essay of Dramatic Poesie*, written in 1668. Javoršek's play is also more like a critical dialogue than like a play with live characters that are profoundly psychological in their portrayals. In this »treatise« several actors belonging to the Slovene National Theatre in Ljubljana discuss the critical situation in their theatre and generally the state of modern European theatre (e.g. they evaluate plays written by Samuel Beckett, Peter Handke and a number of other modern and classical authors). Some of them defend the traditional, the classical type of a play, and others modern improvisations, which do not stick to classical rules of the theatre. The only prop on the stage is a coffin and throughout the play actors try to guess who/what might be hidden in it. One of the actors suggests that in the modern theatre the actors' hearts have turned into stones and therefore we cannot expect an actor to »cry for Hecuba« (cf. the speech of the First Player in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (2.2.503-524). In Javoršek's play there are also several other references, for instance to *Hamlet* (e.g. allusions to Ophelia's distracted mind and her offering of flowers to people at the court signifying the nature of their character, »There's rosemary, that's for remembrance«, etc. 4.5.174-185). In the dream-like scene in *Improvizacija v Ljubljani* the Clown mocks the Players that »they have such long ears«, just like Bottom in Shakespeare's comedy *A Midnight's Dream* (3.1.), who has long ears and an ass's head. Shakespeare's humorous attacks are generalized whereas Javoršek's »actors« use the real names of actors performing in the Slovene National Theatre in Ljubljana, and therefore the dramatist's attack is much more personal. The secret about the

contents of the coffin is also finally discovered: it holds the actors' dreams, their feelings. Javoršek suggests that plays are now produced in such a way that players do not show their emotions, they are not like real people, their feelings have turned into stones, and this is why they cannot cry for Hecuba. In the final two scenes two groups of actors both wish »to possess« Hecuba, and the playwright's message is that they should all »love Hecuba« even if they cannot love each other, for this is the only way which will help the theatre to remain alive, to show »a mirror to life«, although in real life each of them is his own personality and not »Hamlet, Gertrude or Romeo«. (1.1.14) A young actress praises Shakespeare's fine use of language, whereas, on the other hand, she often finds language which is used in modern plays »vulgar, blasphemous«, which modern Slovene playwrights »turn into manure«. (1.3; 29) The actors hope that the »play« which they have produced will give them a cleansing effect, catharsis. They return into »the real world« but at the same time accept the theatrical world as a part of the universal world and they quote Jacques in Shakespeare's comedy *As You Like It*, namely, that »All the world 's a stage, / And all the men and women merely players« (2.7.139-140), and that thus life is both humorous and melancholy.

In his »tomfoolery in two acts with an epilogue« *The Country of Firemen*, which is printed in this trilogy under the title *Krute igre* (Cruel Plays), Javoršek uses poetry and prose and he wishes the play to be a kind of modern morality play. The world of light and the world of darkness are intertwined and therefore – as the Choir points out – »The time is out of joint« (Javoršek 1977: 122; cf. *Hamlet*, 1.5.188). But Javoršek's firemen do not wish to see the reality, they just like »to eat and to drink«. They play with fire, which can bring people either redemption or destruction, it can bring them freedom, but it can also turn them primarily to sensuality. This point is enacted in *The Country of Firemen* as a play within a play, it is a parody of the well known scene in Ivan Cankar's play *Pohujšanje v dolini Šentflorjanski* (Scandal in the Valley of St. Florian) in which the central scene is a love scene between the artist, Peter, and his beloved, Jacinta, who is the symbol of beauty (see Jurak 2010: 22-24). The actors perform this scene as a dumb-show, but they play in a double game and make fun of Peter and Jacinta. One of the female characters, a fire-raiser dislikes the scene and refers to it as a »mousetrap scene« (*Hamlet* 3.2.236) and as in *Hamlet* also in Javoršek's »morality« the nature of different characters is subsequently revealed. But the fire brigade decides that the fire which could also bring light to people should be extinguished and the leader of the fire brigade commands: »Extinguish all the light! All the candles! All the lights!« (Javoršek 1975: 149). This means that unlike in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* the truth about the lives of characters shown in Javoršek's play would never be revealed. Such a negative view is also accepted by the ordinary people, represented by the Chorus, which laments that the world is speeding »into the night, into nothingness, that it is overcome by the darkness of the universe, so that a star can hardly be seen« (Javoršek 1975: 122). But after the »Winter season«, after the Deluge, the Choir remembers that a long time ago people stole fire, which brought to them the Spring season, the birth of the world, and the birth of Love (*ibid.* 163-170). With this poetic imagery Javoršek concludes the play with an optimistic ending in which he indicates that fire-raisers will be overcome by people who do not use fire as a means of destruction but as the instigation of light and love.

2.3. IVAN MRAK

Among Slovene artists of the twentieth century Ivan Mrak (1906-1986) holds a somewhat unique position: he saw himself as a kind of a prophet for younger artists, who did not wish to belong to any particular group, and who wished to be financially independent from middle-class or bourgeois supporters. In his adolescence he had a homosexual experience, he left school, ran away from home and attempted to commit suicide. At the age of nineteen he met Karla Bulovec, a painter, who was eleven years older than Ivan and who became his wife. His father, a publican, turned against his son although he allowed his son and Karla to live in his house. Their life was not easy because they depended on uncertain income from writing and painting. Mrak openly admitted his homosexual propensities at the time when homosexuality was still prohibited by law, which contributed to his fame of an eccentric person. He established a coterie of friends to whom he read (and performed) his plays, which were very rarely acted. But his friends were occasionally so thrilled by his plays that they even flattered him how he surpassed Shakespeare's art with his writing.⁵ Such flattery did not contribute to his critical self-awareness and therefore his works show his artistic weaknesses he otherwise might have avoided or overcome. A large number of his plays have remained in a manuscript form and have not been either published or performed.

Besides plays Ivan Mrak also wrote short stories, essays, poems, which were published in various magazines. In his plays he very often treated lives of great historical personages, and they are often referred to as »hymnical tragedies«. Because Mrak left school as a teenager, he had to supplement his lack of knowledge by reading various classical and philosophical works. The editor of Mrak's work, Goran Schmidt,⁶ also included in his selected edition of Mrak's work parts of Mrak's diaries which shed light on his work and his ideas. Schmidt defines the themes of Mrak's hymnical tragedies as the dramatist's erotic laudation of death in which the opposition Eros – Thanatos becomes the prime mover of his plays. Mrak wrote a number of heroic tragedies on well known historical figures (e.g. on Marat, Mirabeau, Robespierre, Herod etc.). However, it is hard to say whether Mrak may have known various works in which the same theme was treated by foreign authors as he dealt with them in his hymnical tragedies. Such authors are, for example, Algernon Charles Swinburne, with his play *Mary Stuart* (1881); John Drinkwater (e.g. *Abraham Lincoln*, 1918, *Mary Stuart*, 1921, *Robert E. Lee*, 1923); Alfred Tennyson and his historical plays (*Queen Mary*, 1875, *Becket*, 1884). Such choice of themes, which were also treated by Mrak, may only be incidental, however, Mrak's portrayal of Abraham Lincoln as a statesman of vision and high ideals resembles in a number of ways Drinkwater's presentation.

Mrak meditates in his diary about several characters from Shakespeare's plays (e.g. *Hamlet*, *Timon of Athens*, *Macbeth* etc.). It is very likely that as a regular theatre-goer he also saw a number of Shakespeare's plays which were produced by the Slovene National Theatre (Drama) in Ljubljana, either before or after the Second World War.⁷ Besides,

⁵ *Ivan Mrak. Izbrano delo*, 1998: 212.

⁶ See: *Ivan Mrak. Izbrano delo: Proza, drame dnevnik*. Ed. Goran Schmidt. Kondor 283. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1998.

⁷ See: *Repertoar slovenskih gledališč*, 1967.

Schiller's tragedy *Mary Stuart* was also produced by Drama in 1922, and Ferdinand Bruckner's *Elisabeth von England* (w. in 1930) was performed in Ljubljana in 1955. These plays may have had some influence on Mrak's dramatic creativity: on his choice of themes, on his pregnant poetic language, and on his monologues.

One of his best-known plays is the tragedy *Abraham Lincoln*, which he wrote between 1933-36 (it was first performed in 1937 by the then amateur group of actors known as Šentjakobsko theatre in Ljubljana; the play was also published in 1991, after Mrak's death). In his play Mrak concentrates on Lincoln's final years of life, on his decision to run for the presidency of the United States against the wish of his wife, on Lincoln's struggle to abolish racial inequality in America, and on some minor events accompanying Lincoln's assassination. Mrak did not stick to some of the historical facts (e.g. his opponent, senator Stephen A. Douglas, was no longer alive at the time of Lincoln's death). As Malina Schmidt Snoj asserts the play during which Lincoln was shot was not Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* but a farcical comedy *Our American Cousin* (Schmidt Snoj 2010: 464). With such changes Mrak obviously wished to intensify the action of his play. Further, Mrak's characters do not have the psychological complexity of Shakespeare's heroes, but they are rather linear. Mrak is primarily interested in their ethical dilemmas, in the essence of their lives, as he had himself declared a number of times.

Mrak partly modelled his play *Abraham Lincoln* on the first three acts of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. So, for example, Lincoln's wife Mary tries to persuade her husband not to go to the Senate, because she has had bad dreams; this is just like Caesar's wife Calphurnia, who had also had bad dreams and begs Caesar to stay at home (2.2.3). The scene in which Mark Antony praises Caesar, who brought »many captives home to Rome, / Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill« (3.2.89-90), may have influenced Mrak's presentation of his hero when Lincoln tells General Grant that he intends to give to the losing side four hundred million dollars. Mrak points out the difference between acting and reality in various statements made by the actor John Booth, who killed Lincoln. Booth wishes »to become active in life«, to perform his »call«, and with his attitude to acting he resembles Shakespeare's Hamlet. In Mrak's play the role of John Booth can also be compared with the role of Brutus in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. Booth sees Lincoln as a tyrant and he believes that he is going to perform (the role) of a new Brutus (»Odigral bom novega Bruta.«, 115). In the final scene of Mrak's tragedy the relationship between Senator Douglas and his wife can be linked with Shakespeare's presentation of the relationship between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, with the scene in which Macbeth sees the ghost of the dead Banquo and cannot act soundly (3.4). Mrak's Senator Douglas says that he cannot accept the president's function but his wife Mary tries to excuse her husband's unusual behaviour before their guests with her explanation that Lincoln's death had shocked him (126). At the very end of Mrak's play Lincoln's wife Mary falls into a kind of grotesque-tragic state, which reminds us of some of Shakespeare's heroes (e.g. King Lear, Othello) who cannot accept the truth that their beloved are dead. Mary says: »Dead? Who is dead? Ha...ha..Be quiet, he is asleep ... he is only asleep. Be careful not to wake him up .. he is so tired ...Oh, Lincoln, do you see our little house, our garden, the fields ...Our children and the two of us ...Oh, how happy I am.« (Mrak 2000: 126). Such examples prove that Shakespeare's influence on Mrak's development of action and characters in his play was relevant although still limited to minor elements.

In Mrak's play *Marija Tudor* (Mary Tudor) the author deals with the final attempt of his heroine to change the reforming enthusiasm of her predecessors for the Church of England and by bringing the country back to Roman Catholicism. Mrak's belief in Christianity is not based on his belief in the official Church, although he did believe in virtues preached by Christianity. Such a view is also represented by Walter Harrison, the leader of the English expedition to the South Pole, who is the hero of Mrak's play *Heroji Južnega tečaja* (The Heroes of the Southern Pole; Mrak 2000:43). Unlike English playwrights who deal with a number of events from her life Mrak concentrates on Mary's last day of life during which a number of incidents happen which contribute to the change of the heroine's vision of her past life. As Mrak reports in his diary, he was acquainted with some other versions of Mary's life,⁸ although such references seem to be rather questionable.

Mrak completed his text about Mary Tudor in 1949, but the play was only performed by the Slovene National Theatre in Ljubljana in 1966. Mrak mentions in his diary that Mary's misanthropic feelings can be compared with those of Shakespeare's hero in *Timon of Athens* and he believes that such, morally negative characters, full of outbursts showing their hatred of mankind (although they are also enriched with »Shakespeare's divine impetus of his pathos«), also show the person's lack a positive relationship with the universe, their lack of harmony with the universe (e.g. Hamlet is, according to Mrak, faced with eternal nothingness because the material world and his societal position do not satisfy him). It is only after Mary's self-recognition of her faults, just before her confrontation with death, that she can accept some universal power as the cause of man's existence which gives meaning to man's life, and that she can accept death as a part of man's life. It is only after the death of the archbishop, Thomas Cranmer, when she realizes that he was led to accept his death because he had a firm belief in the rightness of his decision. This is the moment when she experiences the catharsis and when she finds the peace of her mind. Mary resembles some of Shakespeare's greatest tragic figures who see their mistakes after it is too late for them to correct them. Josip Vidmar, the most important Slovene theatre critic at the time when Mrak's play was produced, justly noticed that Mrak did not create in this play a relevant antagonist to the heroine (Mrak 1998: 270), what cannot be said about Shakespeare's greatest tragic heroes. Because Mrak decided only to present in his play(s) man's essential features, his heroes are also rather flat if compared with Shakespeare's personages; their language is not diversified and Mrak's plots are rather thin. Therefore we can see that those of Mrak's friends who compared the artistic value of this play with Shakespeare's work, did please him but they did not contribute to his critical self-evaluation.

⁸ Mrak mentions in the diary that in January 1949 he read Henderson's (?) *Mary Tudor* and that he was most interested in the schism between Catholicism and Protestantism (Mrak 1998: 198). –It is possible that the acceptance of Mrak's hymnic tragedy for production at the SNG Drama was also influenced by John Osborne's play *Luther*, which was also staged by the same company in 1964 (four years after its original production in London, in 1961). It is generally believed though that Josip Vidmar had an important role in the above mentioned decision.

3.1. DOMINIK SMOLE

Shakespeare's metaphoric language and his treatment of ethical problems also influenced Dominik Smole (1929-1992). In the thirteen plays written by Smole, one of the greatest post-Second-World-War Slovene dramatists, there are only a few elements that link his plays with Shakespeare's works. In one of his early plays *Krst pri Savici* (Baptism at the Savica River, printed and performed in 1969) there may be some resemblances between the main hero, Črtomir, and some of Shakespeare's characters. Črtomir, who is a pagan, has many doubts about his decision to accept the Christian religion and about his relation with his beloved, Bogomila. Smole used partly for the plot of this play a well-known Slovene myth which had been used by the greatest Slovene poet, France Prešeren in his epic poem of the same title, but he expounded on it by adding problems related to national and religious themes.

Some minor parallels can also be observed in one of Smole's best plays, *Antigona* (Antigone, writ. in 1959, perform. in 1960 and print. in 1961), for which Smole used as the source the classical version written by Sophocles (he also knew Jean Anouilh's version). When the play was first performed on April 8, 1960, by an ad hoc theatre company called Oder 57 (The Stage 1957), this was not only an important theatrical achievement because of fine acting and excellent direction of the play by Franci Križaj, but also because the audience was aware of the hidden meaning of Smole's play. With its political implication the plot of the play reminded the audience of the murder of more than ten thousand of Slovene White guard soldiers and their families and their tragic destiny: they had fled to Austria because many of them were afraid of the possible Communist regime, but they were returned by the British authorities to Yugoslavia after the end of the War. In May and in June 1945 most of these refugees were massacred by the Yugoslav army, thrown in caves, in abandoned coal shafts, or buried in trenches all over Slovenia. The excavation of their bones was only allowed by the new political regime after 1990, whereas until the 1980s this was a taboo topic not mentioned or spoken about in Slovenia, or in Yugoslavia.⁹ These victims were not allowed to have a publicly known grave.

The parallel between the theme of Sophocles's *Antigone* and Smole's play is obvious: Creon, king of Thebes, ordered that particularly the body of Polyneices, who had fought against Creon, should be forbidden burial on pain of death, but his sister Antigone insists on performing the funeral rites for her brother. But Antigone nevertheless carries out her decision and then she is immured. In Smole's play the search for the body of Polyneices is not finished and when the Page announces that the body of Polyneices has been found the play ends with the order of Tiresias that the Page should be captured so that the truth would not become publicly known. Although Smole's plot is based on Sophocles' play there are also some echoes which might be related to Shakespeare's plays.

⁹ A few Slovene victims who had been shot and thrown in the caves had survived these massacres and they secretly migrated to Argentina and to the USA where they published their reports about this Communist crime. A historical account was also published by John Corsellis and Marcus Ferrar (*Slovenia 1945, Memories of Death and Survival After*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2005).

So, for example, the Page describes Antigone's melancholic mood with the following description: »She lies in bed, staring at the ceiling /on which/ a brave bird /is painted/, whose wings are light and free«, 107; the Page has noticed the changed personality of the heroine, which reminds us of Ophelia's description of Hamlet's mental state: »O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown /... Th'observed of all observers, quite, quite down /..that noble and most sovereign reason ..out of tune and harsh« ...3.1.153-164). Creon, in Smole's *Antigone*, rebukes his daughter Ismene for holding the mirror in such a way that she can be seen in such light which is stronger than reality. He complains that she is distorting reality, she is »o'erdoing« her own image and she does not hold »the mirror up to (her) nature« (cf. *Hamlet* 3.2.21-22). Further on Antigone asks herself: »Where am I and who am I?« (1. 1564), which are the same type of Cartesian questions bothering King Lear (»Who is it that can tell me who I am«, *King Lear* 1.4.230; »Where am I?«, *ibid.* 4.7.52). Vasja Predan, Slovene theatre critic, suggests that Antigona asks herself such questions which also cross Hamlet's mind (Schmidt 2009: 277), but there seems to be a closer resemblance with King Lear.

After the Second World War both of the above mentioned Shakespeare's tragedies as well as Sophocles' *Antigone* were performed at the Slovene National Theatre in Ljubljana and so it is possible that Smole (as a regular visitor of the theatre) could see these plays performed, that he remembered these scenes and used some of the elements in his own play. However, such a supposition is of a rather speculative nature, without sufficient material proof and I am rather inclined to accept suggestions made by Goran Schmidt in his essay on Smole (2009: 174), namely, that Smole was especially influenced when writing his plays by Shakespeare's rich diction, by his metaphoric language, his use of Chorus and his blank verse. Even if we accept Smole's opinion that in *Antigona* there is no obvious and valid system of values (Hofman 1978: 390), his persuasion is also that even if the world is polarized between good and evil, good is always »right and winning«. This view brings Smole very close to Shakespeare's ontological concept of historical reality. This can be true only, as Smole adds (*ibid.* 391), if dramatic genre is concise, characters complete and verse »finished«, and if the work is in a harmonious composition with the intention of the author's message. These suggestions would undoubtedly be supported also by the English poet and dramatist, Thomas Stearns Eliot (see e.g. his essay »Poetry and Drama«).

3.2. MIRKO ZUPANČIČ

Among Slovene theatre historians and dramatists the name of Mirko Zupančič (1925-) is relatively unknown although he has written several interesting interpretations about Shakespeare's plays as well as eight plays. In an early play *Rombino, žalostni klovn* (publ. in 1960 and first performed by Mestno gledališče ljubljansko / The Municipal Theatre in Ljubljana on April 2, 1960) Zupančič contrasts the freedom of world of the arts and the modern, mechanized world. Rombino, a travelling actor, traditionally known in Italy as Arlecchino, searches for Columbina, the symbol of art who would bring him love and happiness. She can be linked with Shakespeare's Miranda in *The Tempest* and Rombino both with Prospero and Ariel in the same play. Zupančič must have had in mind also Ivan Cankar's play *Pohujšanje v dolini Šentflorjanski* (Scandal in the Valley

of St. Florian, see Jurak 2009: 22-24), because like Jacinta in Cankar's play *Columbina* is also condemned by the Old Man as one of the biggest sinners of all times (1960: 72). Zupančič also uses the play within a play and a group of travelling actors (like Shakespeare in *Hamlet*). When Rombino is imprisoned he is guarded by the soldiers Bum and Dum, who are drawn like Atheneian workmen (e.g. like Bottom) in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* although Zupančič's play is not a comedy but a sad picture of »a brave new world«. In *The Tempest* Prospero explains to Ferdinand that the illusions which art can produce (»These our actors / (As I foretold you) were all spirits, and / Are melted into air, into thin air«, 4.1.148-150) are only temporary, »just a play«. However, in Prospero's remark, which is expressed later on in the same monologue, Prospero compares the two worlds, the world of the arts and the world of life outside the play:

We are such stuff
As dreams are made on; and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep. (4.1.156-158)

In the translation prepared by Oton Župančič:

Iz take smo
snovi kot sanje in drobno to življenje
obkroženo je s spanjem.

These lines served as a title of several theatrical performances in Slovenia (*Iz take smo snovi*) in which dramatists and theatre directors prepared the collage of passages selected from works written by various authors (not only Shakespeare), and Mirko Zupančič's version was performed in Mestno gledališče ljubljansko on September 29, 1977. Besides passages from Shakespeare Zupančič included in this production also references to several Slovene authors (e.g. Linhart, Prešeren, Jurčič, Erjavec, Kreft etc.). Zupančič's motto in this performance was that our life is also a reflection of the theatre, of the arts, even more, of the nation's culture.

Mirko Zupančič was primarily interested in enriching Slovene dramatic works with Shakespeare's poetic language and with correlating ancient myths with their Renaissance adaptations as well as with their application in modern times. His play *Elektrino maščevanje* (*Electra's Revenge*, first perf. by the Mestno gledališče ljubljansko / The Ljubljana City Theatre on 27 Sept. 1988) is mainly based on the ancient Greek theme of Electra and her brother Orestes. Zupančič pays a lot of attention to Orestes, to his understanding of the meaning of life, particularly as regards the murder performed by his mother Clytemnestra of her husband Agamemnon and the role of her paramour Aegisthus and his search for power. Zupančič links this theme with Hamlet's revenge of his father's death: Clytemnestra's role is attributed to Queen Gertrude, Aegisthus' deeds to King Claudius and Orestes is given the function of Hamlet in Shakespeare's tragedy. However, Zupančič's hero does not just wish to follow the demands of the Ghost of his dead father to perform the revenge, but he wishes to actively participate in this game, to lead it (Zupančič 1997: 18). Orestes wishes to get to know reasons which led his mother to Agamemnon's murder. He cannot believe that it was only lust and her wish to gain power. She regrets her deed and she would be happy to die by the hand of Orestes, because »he will not kill her, but murder murder« (*ibid.* 34). She is aware that after one

has committed murder, this represents also the loss of one's humanity (just as Macbeth knows this after he had killed King Duncan). The responsibility for one's deeds is no longer transferred to the gods, but to an individual and his decisions. Orestes rightly estimates that »to rule and to love, or, when Aegisthus decides to pardon« this shows his empty pride, his arrogance. Orestes does not kill his mother, but he commits suicide, and Electra believes that the greatest punishment for her mother's deeds is that she remains alive and suffers (*ibid.* 39). In Zupančič's play death is the ultimate criterion of man's life and Malina Schmidt Snoj (2010: 396-398) persuasively links Zupančič's play with the philosophy of the absurd according to which man is »sentenced« to the Sisyphean task of being himself responsible for his own acts. Among other similarities between Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Zupančič's tragedy are the appearance of the ghost, the general atmosphere of fear and uncertainty in society, debauchery in Mycenae, Aegisthus' constant warnings that the state is in danger of foreign attack (although there are no reasons for such assumptions); they do not only resemble the atmosphere presented in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* but are also significant for Yugoslavia after WWII.

In Mirko Zupančič's works some minor parallels between Shakespeare's plays and the works of this Slovene dramatist may also be found in his comedy *Čarobnice* (Magic Women). The play is actually based on *Lysistrata*, a comedy by Aristophanes, in which the women take over the situation in Athens, where »men wish to have power, but do not know how to rule the country, ... and they prepare laws, but do not respect them« (Zupančič 1997: 49). In Zupančič's version the women of Athens meet on the eve of St. Valentine's day and they realise that life has become only a play and male – female relations have been turned into a commercialized bargain. The women wish to outwit their men and the playwright ends this »battle« with the call of Athenian women to oblige their men to sexual passivity: »Zdržati. Pripravljen biti. To je vse.« (1997: 60) This decision (»To endure, to be ready. This is all.«) is an ironic version of Hamlet's meditation before his duel with Laertes (»If it be now, 'tis not to come. ... the readiness is all«, 5.2.217-220). Instead of a serious decision between life and death in modern times we face the question how women use sex for their own advantage. Women in Zupančič's comedy are shown in a negative light (e.g. one of them, Sostrata, would make her husband drink his own gall; Uršula would burn her husband's hair; Greta would lock him together with rats in the cellar); they are more like the Weird Sisters in *Macbeth* (cf. 3.5.7) than like pleasant, godly creatures in Shakespeare's comedies. Their anger is not completely unjustified not only because men do not know how to rule the country and because they bring home young girls from another country, but also because men often abuse women, e.g. Norica (Nonny) sings a song about St. Valentine's day (1997: 46-48; 60-61), her birthday, when she was raped by a nobleman. This pastiche resembles Ophelia's songs in *Hamlet* (4.5) and Norica's songs end the play thus indicating the playwright's doubt about the value of love and marriage in the future.

3.3. GREGOR STRNIŠA

Gregor Strniša (1930-1987) represents with his poetry and plays one of the high points of modern Slovene literature. He graduated at the University of Ljubljana in Eng-

lish and in German. Among his plays his indebtedness to Shakespeare is most clearly seen in his play *Ljudožerci* (w. in 1972, prod. on Jan. 10, 1977, at the Mestno gledališče ljubljansko / Ljubljana City Theatre. The English title of the play is *Cannibals*.)¹⁰ Strniša indicated the main source for this play in the motto of the play in which he quotes two lines from Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* (the play was written in 1592/93) and which run in the original as follows:

And welcome, all; although the cheer be poor,
'Twill fill your stomachs; please you eat of it. (5.3.28-29)

and in Slovene translation by Oton Župančič:

Zdravi, vi vsi! Čeprav je obed bolj skromen
Ne bo nobeden lačen. Prosim, jejte!

Shakespeare was himself indebted for the plot of this play to Seneca's play *Thyestes* for cannibalism, and to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* for the tragic tale of Philomel. Strniša did not borrow the plot of Shakespeare's play but he wished to show similarities between man's nature as shown in the above mentioned classical works and the contemporary, twentieth century European man and society. Both of them abound in atrocities, but whereas there is some hope in Shakespeare's play that new society might be ethically higher we cannot find such hope in Strniša's play.

Strniša's play also has a prologue and an epilogue (which Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* does not have) in which the theme and plot of the play are given allegorical dimensions. Strniša's play ends as the Dance of Death performed by characters of his play and by Death who leads the procession and who tells his followers they should not be afraid of Him. They are then seated at the table so reminding us of the biblical scene of the Apostles having the last supper. The Prior of the church reminds his »visitors« that they should remember two axioms about man's life, »the forgiveness of sins« and that there is »the eternal life«. In this old medieval motif all people are shown as equal, but only in death. The plot of the play is set in »Križanke« (the Church of the Holy Rood, which was built in 1714/15) in Ljubljana and which belonged to the Teutonic Knights Order. The action in *Ljudožerci* takes place before the end of the Second World War. Due to the fighting between the occupying forces, the Germans and the Italians, and the partisans, two families seek refuge in the church where the Prior allows them to stay. Besides the Prior the protagonists are: Pajot, who carries out many murders in the crypt of this church, including that of his own wife and their three daughters, and his »friend« Falac, who is Pajot's aid as a cook and who prepares the meat of dead people as their own food as well as for sale. But Pajot also kills his »friend« Falac before the end of the war, because he is afraid that Falac might tell the new revolutionary authorities about his crimes.

The plot of the play includes various incidents, which show the complete loss of moral norms at the time of war: ordinary people (like Pajot and Falac) become heartless killers; people live in constant fear and are ready to betray their closest relatives and

¹⁰ Titles of Slovene theatres in English translation have been changed several times in the annual reports of the Slovenski gledališki muzej (Slovene theatre museum), therefore it is best to rely on the original Slovene name of the theatre.

friends in order to preserve their own lives; everybody envies his neighbour's luck and is jealous of him; women have sexual relations (including foreign soldiers who have occupied Slovenia). Only Marija, one of Pajac's daughters, has preserved high ethical standards and avoids cannibalism, even when confronted with death from starvation (58). Some of the representatives of the future rulers (shown in the play as the undercover fighters) are females and they are also shown as extremely cruel human beings. There are very few morally positive characters in Strniša's play, among them are the Prior and his priests who had blocked with their bodies the passage between the aisle in the church and the crypt where a young wounded woman (she was a member of the Slovene resistance movement) was hiding from the Italian soldiers. The woman escapes but the priests have to pay for their help with their lives. As the Prior says they did not give her over to the Italian soldiers because they are »God's soldiers« (24).

The parallels between Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* and Gregor Strniša's *Ljudožerci* can be seen not only in the nature of their »heroes« but also in individual cruelties which are performed. Shakespeare's play begins with Titus Andronicus's victory against the Goths. He brings back with him Queen Tamora and her three sons. The eldest among them is sacrificed by the sons of Titus to the spirit of their brother who was killed in the war. Titus is chosen Emperor of the Romans but he renounces his position in favour of the late Emperor's son. Titus marries Tamora, who soon betrays him with her lover Aaron, a Moor. Tamora wants to revenge herself on Titus for the death of her son and her sons ravish Titus's daughter Lavinia and cut off her hands and tongue so that she would not be able to tell people about their crime. A number of other cruelties are performed in the play by both sides: so, for example, in a struggle between Bassianus, the Emperor's brother, Titus kills his own youngest son who supported Bassianus in his claim for Lavinia; Bassianus is killed by Tamora's sons and his body is thrown into a cave; in order to save his sons Titus chops off his hand and sends it to Aaron in ransom, but he receives it back from Aaron together with the heads of his two sons. Titus discovers who has ravished Lavinia and prepares a plot to revenge himself: simulating a reconciliation with Tamora and Aaron. He prepares a meal with the pie made of Tamora's sons who had been captured. After Tamora has eaten her sons' flesh, Titus first kills Lavinia and then he also kills Tamora, whose body will be thrown »to beasts and birds of prey« (5.3.198), and Aaron is sentenced to be set breast-deep in the earth. Titus is also killed »for this accursed deed« (5.3.64) by the Emperor Saturninus, and then a new Emperor is elected by the Romans, the new »gracious governer« Lucius (5.3.146) the son of Marcus Andronicus, brother to Titus, whose hands are not covered with blood.

The motto in Strniša's play refers to the final »feast« in *Titus Andronicus* when Tamora eats her sons' flesh. In Strniša's play the flesh of Pajot's victims, including his wife, Marija, and his three daughters, who were killed by Pajot, are also eaten by people who are hiding in the church, but Pajot had also sold the meat to other people. Tamora, whose son was killed by Titus' sons, decides »to massacre them all«, (1.1.450), to kill the members of Titus's family. She is one of the most cruel villains in the Elizabethan revenge tragedy, and – like the Pajot's family – one of cannibals. Strniša includes into this grotesque allegory a ballad about »a young lad who had eaten another lad« (*Ljudožerci* 76-77). The plot of this ballad refers to two White guard soldiers who fled to Austria but who were returned to Slovenia by the British army and then killed by the Yugoslav

army. However, these two young lads, who were supposedly killed and thrown into a cave (see also the second paragraph on Dominik Smole's plays, above), remained alive. One of them who ate the meat of his dead companions climbed out of the cave, but he was caught by the soldiers and then hanged. The other boy, whose conscience does not allow him to eat human flesh, and who only quenched his thirst by drops of water which gathered on plants growing in the grave, succeeds to escape from the cave, »only to return to the world / to tell the peoples / how a boy ate another boy, / because there is a deep hole in the world« (*ibid.* 77). Strniša also suggests that (unlike in Shakespeare's play) the hands of the new rulers are not clean, and they need people like Pajot for their own purposes (*ibid.* 135). Pajot says that he is fed up with killing »human bodies«, therefore his future aim is to extinguish »their lights, their hopes«. (136) It is evident that the »new society« which will gain the power after the War will not be based on humanistic values. The images of water and blood in Strniša's play symbolize Christ's sacrificial death as a ransom for mankind. However, in Strniša's play his characters no longer accept Christian values, their only value is power.

Strniša's play clearly suggests the playwright's belief that mankind has not really experienced a new renaissance and that meaningless death rules the world, God has been substituted by violence, by the animalistic cruelty, which makes man devour his (and God's) substance. Marcus Andronicus in Shakespeare's play even suggests that gods are pleased with man's killings, with his death, and he meditates : »O, why should nature build so foul a den / Unless the gods delight in tragedies?« (4.1.60). The same kind of disbelief in God's love of man is seen in *King Lear* after the Duke of Cornwall orders his servant to blind the Earl of Gloucester, who laments: »As flies to wanton boys are we to th'gods; / They kill us for their sport.« (4.1.216). In *Titus Andronicus* also Aaron's mind is preoccupied with revenge (»Vengeance is in my heart, death in my hand, / Blood and revenge are hammering in my head« (*Titus Andronicus*, 2.3.38—39). But when Marcus Antonius strikes the dish with a knife and kills a fly, Titus disapproves of any killing, even of killing a fly, Titus is enraged: »out on thee, murderer! Thou kill'st my heart; / ..A deed of death done on the innocent / Becomes not Titus' brother ..«, but when Marcus apologizes and says »Pardon me, sir; it was a black ill-favoured fly, / Like to the empress' Moor. Therefore I killed him« (3.2.52-70), Titus himself becomes obsessed with the revenge and killing, and thus reveals the true nature of his character.

The German Major in Strniša's play parodies »the new version« of the Ten Commandments: »Thou shalt steal. / Thou shalt covet thy neighbour's house; / Thou shalt covet thy neighbour's wife; / Thou shalt kill thy neighbour – / But do not covet thy neighbour's flesh.« The Major's norms in life are in complete opposition to the teaching of Moses in the *Holy Bible* (*Exodus* 20.13-17), which were also accepted by Christ. The »new rules« which are accepted by Strniša's heroes show a complete devaluation of man's life, his moral norms and his belief in the meaning of man's existence. Falac and Tenente even find an ironic, rather grotesque correlative to their nihilistic attitudes in the metaphoric language of a dialogue between lovers: »Falac: A lad says to his girlfriend: I would like to eat you! / Tenente: I shall devour you, says the girl.« (100). These are farcical, grotesque comments on the meaning of the Word (cf. *The New Testament*, John 1.1: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word

was God. Not only Falac and Tenente but also other characters in Strniša's play, deny *Logos*, the divine wisdom, God's incarnation in man, his angelic side, his Deity. They are typical representatives of nihilism, completely denying man's spirituality.¹¹ In critical situation, such as war, the worst side of human nature becomes completely predominant regardless of the period when this occurs. We may reject such a negative ending with which Strniša concludes his play by quoting examples of actions of people who have shown compassion to victims and sacrificed their lives for them; however, we cannot deny that such bestial cruelty is still an inherent part of human nature; it is here and it happens now, regardless if people are aware of it or not.

3.4. VENO TAUFER

One of the best modern Slovene poets and translators is Veno Taufer (1933-). Slovene critic and dramaturge Tomaž Toporišič finds in Veno Taufer's play *Odisej in sin ali svet in dom* (Odysseus and His Son, or the World and One's Home, 1990), traces of Shakespeare's late »romantic plays«, particularly of *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest* (Taufer 1990: 81). Toporišič does not think that Taufer's motto to his play »tragicomical-historical-pastoral« is used accidentally. These concepts are a selection of the long list of attributes used by Polonius when he comes to tell Hamlet that the actors have come to Elsinore (*Hamlet* 2.2.400-407). In the critic's opinion such apparent diversity of qualifications is used because Homer's epic poem contains such elements in its motifs and themes and in Taufer's play these symbolic references denote the genre and the poetic nature of his play. It should also be pointed out that in Taufer's play the hero is shown as a ruthless, barbaric person, whereas Shakespeare concludes the final scenes of his »romances« with feelings showing forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace among all parties involved. It is also possible to compare Hamlet's search for the truth about his father's fate and that of the Greek hero, Telemach whereas Gertrude's quick marriage with Claudius does not follow Penelope's endeavours to delay the marriage with one of her suitors, who behave as drunkards who may be paralleled with drunken men present at the feast celebrating Gertrude's marriage, who behave as »drunken swine« (1.4.19-20). Tiresias in Taufer's play is the father figure, »full of high sentence«, who foretells the hero's return home, if he acts wisely »in pain, in distress, in famine, if he can resist the greed« (Taufer 1990: 30). Anticlea, the mother of Odysseus, tells her son that he should remember everything what he has seen or heard (»Zapomni si vse, kar si videl / in slišal . In drugim povej.« (*ibid.* 33), just like dying Hamlet asks Horatio he should »tell his story« ..How these things came about« (5.2.340-384). There are some minor similarities between Shakespeare's plays and Taufer's *Odysseus* although Taufer's main source of inspiration was definitely the Greek myth.

¹¹ Such characters may also be found in English and American plays, which belong to the Theatre of Cruelty and have also been performed in Slovenia by the 1970s. – There is also similarity between Major's treatment of Tenente as if he were a dog, with the relationship between Pozzo and Lucky in Samuel Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot* (1956).

3.5. DUŠAN JOVANOVIĆ

One of the most prolific Slovene dramatists after WWII is a playwright and theatre director Dušan Jovanović (1939-). It is not surprising that we may find in his works many allusions to British and French dramatists, because he first graduated in these languages and then also as a theatre director at the University of Ljubljana.

Already in one of his first published plays *Norci* (Madmen), which was written and first published in 1963, one of the characters, Vojko, paraphrases Hamlet's question regarding the main issue of man's life («To be, or not to be, that is the question», *Hamlet* 3.1.56), by asking himself whether a group of young students should oppose the new rulers or not.¹² Likewise, the Fifth Madmen's symbolic »call for light« (Jovanović 1970:28) echoes Claudius's »Give me some light-« (*Hamlet* 3.2.269) and Zorči's rhetorical question («Where is here man, his pride», (Jovanović 1970:48) may have been inspired by Hamlet's meditation »What a piece of work is a man ...« (*Hamlet* 2.2.307-312). Although these and some other echoes¹³ which may be found in *Norci* only have a rather minor importance for the whole play they are indicative as a general tendency of artistic inspiration in Jovanović's plays.

One of the most disturbing works written by Jovanović is his ludistic play *Igrajte tumor v glavi in onesnaženje zraka* (Play Tumour in the Head and the Air-pollution), which was written in 1971, published in 1972 and first performed at the Slovensko ljudsko gledališče in Celje on Jan. 9, 1976. One of the main themes of this play is the antagonism between the supporters of »the traditional theatre« and an avant-garde group of actors. The theatre critic and theatre historian Andrej Inkret points out in his article on Jovanović that the dramatist defends the autonomous nature of the theatre with self-sufficient values of dramatic literature sceptical of any conventional, a priori, ideological or aesthetic values («Everything is real and at the same time nothing is believable. Everything is the theatre, and nothing is true.» Inkret 1972: 405). We do not know whether the actors are really mad or if they only perform madness. The Director, Dular, says, for instance, that the performance is a lie, an awful lie (*ibid.* 193), whereas Hamlet considers the actors as »the abstract and brief chronicles of the time«, they represent the essence of life and they »hold as' twere the mirror up to nature« (3.2.20). Jovanović's play begins in the office of Chief Editor of the Slovene daily newspaper who reports about the incident which took place in the theatre after the performance of Shakespeare's *Richard the Second*. The mentioning of this play may not be incidental, because the subject-matter of this history play refers to the period in which the English rulers failed in performing their moral, communal and governmental responsibilities, and Jovanović may have implicitly compared the social and political situation in Richard's England and in the Slovenia (and possibly also in Yugoslavia) of the early 1970s. Besides, »the riots« take place in the theatre called »Slavija«, which is the name of the building where the secret police was located in Ljubljana.

There is another passage in the play in which Jovanović indirectly refers to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The journalists discuss whether they should take flowers to their

¹² Vojko says: »Ali ima ta nori aktivist prav ali nima? To je tu vprašanje, ...« (1970: 20).

¹³ The scene in which students interrogate and terrify their land-owner (1970: 16-17) was possibly structured on Stanley Webber's interrogation in Harold Pinter's *The Birthday Party* in Act 2.

colleague who is in the theatre and apparently pregnant (Jovanović 1981: 185). So, for example, Vesna does not think that they should send her lilies of the valley, because they are given to those who are getting ready to depart; the First Actor ironically suggests that lilacs are not suitable either, because Ida is pregnant; and the Second Journalist meditates on the significance of the colour carnations have: (»red carnations« signify pure love, »rosy carnations«, the attachment of lovers for each other, and »yellow carnations« signify a complete rejection of the person. This scene resembles the scene in *Hamlet* (4.5.174-185) in which Ophelia presents flowers to the King, the Queen, and Laertes; with this act she symbolically defines the nature of their characters. Jovanović does not refer in the play to the possibility that Ophelia was actually pregnant. The Doctor denies Ida's pregnancy and attributes it to her imagination; he refers to it as »hysterical pregnancy«, suggested by Director Dular to see if Albee's prescription really works (»Ida's child is fiction. She is artificially blown up. Hysterical. Dular is using Albee's prescription. Under Polansky's suggestion.« Jovanović 1981: 202) This explanation obviously suggests that the Director used the same kind of a situation which had been suggested by Edward Albee in his play *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* when Honey admits that her pregnancy was a fake (Act 2). Imagery in Jovanović's play shows that some scenes and characters include allusions to Shakespeare's plays.

Jovanović's play *Viktor ali dan mladosti* (Viktor or the Day of Youth) was first performed by the Mestno gledališče ljubljansko on 6 Oct. 1989. It is an improvisation on Roger Vitrac's play *Victor ou les enfants au pouvoir* (1930). The work of this French dramatist, who is one of the main representatives of Dadaism and Surrealism, became popular in Central Europe in the 1960s and its technique as well as the author's view upon the world are close to ludism, the artistic and philosophical trend which was quite popular in Slovenia in this period. It is possible that when Jovanović was writing this play he also had in mind an anonymous Italian play from the 16th century, a typical work of commedia dell'arte, which is based on a number of unexpected turns and mistaken identities. In Jovanović's version the play is a farce on political and social circumstances in Slovenia (and in Yugoslavia) when the political élite more and more openly accepted the bourgeois way of life although it pretended that it was basically still oriented towards Communism and its values. Tito's birthday was officially celebrated on the 25th of May and the play is set on May 25, 1987 (seven years after Tito's death). The subtitle of the play is an ironic version of the slogan used by the Yugoslav government after the Second World War (»Tujega nočemo, svojega ne damo!«: We do not wish foreign (territory), but we shall not give away what is ours), particularly in connection with the border issue of the Slovene Littoral (the Trieste region). However, the Yugoslav government had to accept the decision, which did not wholly satisfy its demands. Jovanović makes fun of this slogan with his subtitle to the play: We wish what belongs to others, and we are ready to give what is ours.

The events in this play are seen through the eyes of an eleven years old boy. Viktor has namely noticed that his father is having sexual relations with their servant girl as well as with his neighbour's wife. This may be a modern parody of the relation between Claudius and Gertrude in *Hamlet*. The sentence structure of Viktor's remarks is based on Hamlet's manner of speaking, it is full of witticisms and paradoxes. So, for example, when Viktor is reprimanded by his father for the kind of languages he uses, Viktor

answers: »Words, words, words!« (*Viktor* 196); this answer was used by Hamlet when Polonius asked him what he was reading (*Hamlet* 2.2.191-192). One of the characters in Jovanović's play, the Admiral, sees in Viktor's remarks »a dangerous foreign influence«, which may result in the destruction of the political system (cf. »Something is rotten in the state of Denmark«, *ibid.* 215); such a statement was made by Marcellus in *Hamlet* (1.4.90). When Viktor is apparently dying (he has stomach problems), he again mumbles Hamlet's words, »To die, to sleep – / No more, perchance to dream« (*ibid.* 237), what is again an ironic application of Hamlet's meditation about life and death (3.1.60-69). When King Claudius prays and asks God to forgive him his sins and he uses the following metaphor: »O, my offence is rank, it smells to heaven...«, 3.3.36), Viktor links the image of the smell with the appearance of Ida, a »friend« of the family, a person known for its farting (Ida Smrtuljček, 237). Viktor's mother asks her son's forgiveness after she had slapped him, because »he was a naughty boy« (238), but Hamlet's serious condemnation of his mother's behaviour (3.4) is ridiculed in Jovanović's play by her promise to Viktor that she will go »to a nunnery«, which is actually Hamlet's advice to Ophelia (3.1.142) after she had betrayed him and allowed to be manipulated by her father and the King to spy on Hamlet. There are some other minor allusions to Shakespeare's works in this play: for example, when Viktor asks his father »to put out the light« (*ibid.* 240) the symbolism of this image in *Othello* (5.2.7) refers to his intention to kill Desdemona, or when Viktor says that he would »give his horse for darkness« (*ibid.*) the playwright's joke is in the point that Viktor is in trouble because of his stomach problems (even if they seem to him to be extremely serious) whereas the calls made by King Richard the Third (5.4.7, 13) actually denote the fateful reality, Richard's death. In Jovanović's play references made to Shakespeare's plays are given ironical connotations: something what used to be meant seriously has been degraded into a caricature, a degraded world of values even though this world is seen from a child's perspective.

3.6. VINKO MÖDERNDORFER

Vinko Möderndorfer (1958-) is a well-known Slovene author, who has published a number of collections of poems, as well as prose works and plays. In addition, he has also successfully directed several plays in theatres, as well as radio plays for children and adults. His play *Hamlet in Ofelija* (Hamlet and Ophelia) was first performed at the Little Stage of the Slovene National Theatre (SNG) in Ljubljana on October 14, 1994, and it was published in the theatre-bill for the première (1994/95, 74.2) by this theatre. Although the playwright suggests in his description of dramatis personae that Damjan is not Hamlet and that Barbara is not Ophelia the play is thematically closely linked with Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The author's subtitle to the play is just as important: he states that the play is »a small theatrical travesty for a great actor and for two ordinary young people.« Another character who appears in this play is named »Duh« (the Ghost), who has just acted in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as the Ghost of his dead father. Möderndorfer adds that this actor is »very old«, whereas Damjan is young« and Barbara »is very, very young«. The dramatist's suggestions about the age of his characters also indicate differences in their views on the art of the theatre, what is one of the main themes of

this play. As Blaž Lukan pointed out in his article »Gledališče kot mistifikacija« (The Theatre as Mistification) Möderndorfer deals in this play with the basic dilemma of the theatre, its difference between appearance and reality, between illusion and factual life (1994: 4). Characters in *Hamlet and Ophelia* do not only represent various philosophical (artistic) views on this issue but also different perceptions of the four individuals who appear on the stage. We see that the choice of names of characters for the title of the play is not incidental but also symbolical.

The setting of the play is the basement storage room of a theatre which Damjan and Barbara have chosen as a hide-out after they have both committed crimes: Damjan wished to rob the petrol station but the attendant would not give him the money and he beat him and left him for dead. Barbara, who worked at a hair-dressers shop stole the daily income and ran away. They find the shelter in the storage-room of a theatre where Damjan used to work as a stage-hand. Damjan is angry because he did not get the money, but at first they seem to be relieved of their previous tension, they play with the objects they find in the cellar of the theatre, they think they should make love. When Damjan sees among the props stored in the basement a human skull he starts to make jokes about it. The scene reminds us of the scene when Hamlet returns to Denmark at the time when two Clowns (the grave-diggers) dig a hole for Ophelia's burial (*Hamlet* 5.1.). The difference between Hamlet's sympathetic remarks about the skull of the court's jester (»Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio—a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy. He has borne me on his back a thousand times, and now how abhorred in my imagination it is! ...« 5.1.178-190), his personal, emotional approach to the skull of his dead servant, the King's jester, and between Damjan's action, is completely opposite. For Damjan the skull is just an object, a toy, used in the theatre to create an illusion of life.

The appearance of the old Actor after he had acted in *Hamlet* as a Ghost of Hamlet's father brings the story of this play to another level. Barbara remembers how well this Actor played in Chekhov's *Three Sisters*. He is drunk now but he still remembers lines from various plays and he recites them to Damjan and Barbara. But he also tells them how disappointed he is with his profession because fellow-actors do not give him the praise they ought to. He believes that he should play the King (i.e. Claudius) and not the Ghost. He feels that his life has been an illusion, a mimicry, that he had not experienced »real life«, it was all a pretence.

3.7. EVALD FLISAR

Among Evald Flisar's works his most obvious reference to Shakespeare's plays is his two-act play *Hamlet in Jaz* (Hamlet and I), which was published in Slovenia by *Sodobnost* (66.10, Oct. 2002: 1340-1388),¹⁴ a review for literature and humanities. The play has a subtitle *A Comedy With a Russian Roulette*; a genre which basically differs from Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Hamlet Prince of Denmark*. Evald Flisar (1945-) lived a number of years in England and several of his plays have been produced abroad.

¹⁴ When I quote Shakespeare's text I use John Dover Wilson's text of Shakespeare's plays and my reference to Evald Flisar's text refers to the number of the page in *Sodobnost*.

The plot of Flisar's play develops in the attic of an old house (in Ljubljana). The owner of this apartment is an old, retired actor Bonifacij (he is referred to in the play as »I« but also as the »Actor« or as »Hamlet«) who has apparently put an advertisement in the newspaper in which he expressed his wish to spend a few pleasant hours with a young woman before his departure. Maja, a prostitute, was sent to this place by her pimp, David. When she comes the apartment is empty but soon the Actor appears. He does not seem to be interested in Maja's sexual activities but he tells her that he needs a secretary to sort out his documents. Soon after this »introduction« David comes to the attic, saying that he got worried what might happen to Maja. Rather unexpectedly another visitor arrives, Marko, who is employed by the state and is taking the census of the population. During the debate which follows the Actor starts playing with a revolver, telling his visitors how tired he is of life, but he occasionally also threatens them with his weapon. He also tells them that he wishes to get married to prevent the Insurance company from getting his money. As the play develops the Actor increases the sum of his insurance policy from ten to fifty million dollars. David suggests that Maja should become the Actor's wife and get the money when he dies. However, Marko also notes suggestively that he has a seventeen-year-old daughter who would suit the Actor better, because »he does not need so much a masseuse, but a companion, a person who is kind, polite, knowledgeable, who would be willing to make sacrifices, who would be obedient etc.«. He telephones his daughter Lila to come immediately to the Actor's apartment where she would get a birthday present and he tells her to bring fresh violets. In the meantime the Actor occasionally terrifies his visitors, and also mentions that he has »breast cancer«.

In Act Two the Actor begins to play with his visitors a kind of a blind man's buff. He sees that they do not really care for him and that they are only after his money. Therefore he arranges for them »a mousetrap scene«, in which Lila must beat her father and Maja kiss him. He believes that the only way to overcome death is to commit suicide, »by inventing the reality«. Everybody present should take a chance if they play the Roussian roulette. They try their luck after one another, and the revolver does not fire, but when it is Lila's turn, she does not aim at herself but at her father, and shoots him. Although she had previously accused her father of molesting her, she is sorry about her deed. After this experience Maja realizes that she can be independent and that she does not need David. Maja and David leave, the Actor and Lila remain embraced. They are two lonely people who need each other.

In terms of atmosphere of this play and given the rather sinister character of the protagonist (and partly also of the other two male figures), the play ends with an open ending. Evald Flisar's play resembles in many ways Harold Pinter's plays and belongs to the genre of »dark comedy«. The Actor, »I« (can be also explained as »the Eye«, »the Observer«) mentions in the play that he is »a crossbreed« of Shakespeare, Beckett and Pirandello (2002:1349), but Flisar's greatest debt is definitely to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.¹⁵

¹⁵ Evald Flisar (1945-) is the author of several dozens of plays and prose works. He lived for a number of years in England and in different Asian countries, where a number of his works have been translated and also staged. – Flisar's »debt« to Pirandello is primarily in the structure of the play, particularly in the Actor's frequent doubt whether they are actually playing a game (out of which they could step, or is everything part or real life) and so partly also in the very nature of his characters..

Its mixture of serious, comic, tragic, and grotesque elements may puzzle the audience, but the realistic framework of the play offers the public a link with the everyday reality.

The Actor arranges in the »Mousetrap scene« a competition between Maja and Lila, which should also show their feelings for him, their obedience: Lila must beat her father Marko, and Maja must kiss him passionately. This game results in a draw, and at this moment the Actor tells them that the only way to beat Death is by committing suicide, by »inventing the reality«. When they play the Russian roulette, the Actor also takes the role of the Ghost of Hamlet's father, who commands the situation. The tension grows because Maja realizes that David only exploits her and Lila blames her father for his false behaviour towards her (Lila had lost her mother in childhood). When Lila kills her father the »charade« ends; Maja and David leave the old Actor and Lila alone in the attic. Freud's interpretation of child – parent relationship, which is in many cases that of exchanged love and hatred, was probably in Flisar's mind when he wrote this scene.

During one of the discussions among the four characters the Actor tells his visitors that when he was a boy he once played with his father's revolver but luckily, nothing happened. Since then he has always heard two voices: »To be, or not to be«. This famous line from *Hamlet* (3.1.56) has always reminded him of a possibility either to remain alive or to end his miserable – but occasionally also happy – life (1359). Contrarily, Maja tells the group that she has adapted the criterion into »To love or not to love.« (1348) The Actor repeats Hamlet's question in the play several times, thus indicating the basic dilemma of his life. He definitely feels humiliated among other actors, because he must always play the minor role of the Ghost of Hamlet's father, whereas he would like to be one of the major actors in this tragedy and play the King, Claudius. In some scenes the Actor resembles Hamlet, and he tells his visitors that people sometimes think that he is mad. In Shakespeare's *Hamlet* there are quite a few references to the hero's madness and about possible causes for it. When Ophelia tells her father, Polonius, that she had »repelled Hamlet's letters and denied / His access to me« (2.1.106-107), Polonius thinks that maybe this had made Hamlet »Mad for thy love ?« (2.1.82), and he quickly makes a conclusion: »That hath made him mad« (*ibid.* 107). In his mannerless way he reports the news to the King and the Queen: »I will be brief – your noble son is mad.« (2.2.92). But when Hamlet teases Polonius and replies to his question, »What do you read my lord?«, Hamlet answers: »Words, words, words.« Polonius must realize that »Though this be madness, yet there is method in it.« (2.2.192-205) The Actor in Flisar's play tells David that some people do not believe that he is really mad and that they think that he, like Hamlet, only pretends to be mad (Flisar 1987: 1351). But when the Actor aims the revolver at David's head and recites: »The time is out of joint, O cursed spite / That ever I was born to set it right«, which are also Hamlet's words after his father had asked him to revenge his foul murder (1.5.188-189), the Actor's intention is not quite clear: does he mean this seriously or does he only play. The Actor also tells his visitors that he cannot find »a persuasive end« and that he is not sure about the answer to the following question: Do we live in reality or is everything an illusion of the world? Are we only Players in some game, and improvise reality? (1350) This question is quite relevant in Flisar's play, because both David and Marko are amateur players, and Maja is a theatre fan. Flisar also includes in the Actor's remarks about acting several extracts from *Hamlet* (2.2 and 3.2), especially Hamlet's greetings and his instructions to Players

who have come to Elsinore. The Actor receives Marko in his shabby apartment with his greeting »Welcome to Elsinore« (1355).

The Actor advises Lila not to believe anybody, not even himself, because »I am myself indifferent .. very proud .. revengeful.«, and tells her to go to a nunnery. He asks Lila »Where is your father?«, the same question which Hamlet asks Ophelia, and then he tells her: »Let the doors be shut upon him that he may play the fool no where but in's own house«. (3.1) These references indicate the parallels between Ophelia's obedience to her father, Polonius, and his manipulation with her, and, on the other side, the unsound, false relationship between Marko and his daughter Lila (Marko may even have a pedophilic feelings towards his daughter). Just like Hamlet the Actor also denies that he has given any presents to Lila (1364). Hamlet says to Ophelia: »No, not I, / I never gave you aught« (3.1.95-96), and the Actor repeats his statement. Lila's father Marko scolds her for bringing withered violets, which the Actor throws away (1364). In *Hamlet* Ophelia cannot give violets to Queen Gertrude because »they had all withered« (4.5). Violets symbolize faithfulness and as John Dover Wilson explains Ophelia's situation: she gives Queen Gertrude rue, which should symbolize her sorrow and repentance (*Hamlet*, p.226). In both cases, in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and in Flisar's play flower's indicate the person's nature, her/his moral values.

The Actor's demand that Maja's pimp, David, should undress himself may be interpreted from different points of view (1353). First of all, David uses Maja as a prostitute who has to undress herself before her customers and the Actor's demand may be his revenge on David's immorality, particularly because David hesitates to do this. Secondly, this demand may have a symbolic connotation, David must »discover« his true self not only to Maja but to all who are present; and thirdly, the Actor's demand may show that he has homoerotic inclinations.

When Marko arrives upon the scene the Actor greets him with words Hamlet uses when he expresses his welcome to the actors who have come to Elsinore (2.2.373; 1355). When Marko tells the Actor that he is an amateur actor, the Actor responds: »Are not we all?«, and then he tells him, »..how people saw the air too much with their hands« .. and »do not suit the action to the word«, how »we o're step .. the modesty of nature and the purpose of playing...«(3.2.1-22). He also quotes Polonius and his praise of the group. The Actor is rather egocentric and he believes that he will join the common lot when he returns to dust, which is a parallel with Hamlet's meditation about Alexander the Great (5.1.197-206; 1356).

In both plays the Mouse-trap scene represents one of the dramatic climaxes: Hamlet discovers in it King's guilty conscience (3.2) and the Actor tries to see the loyalty of his companions (1360). This is also the moment when the Actor intends to see their views on life and death. The Actor himself also accepts the role of the Ghost of Hamlet's father so that the whole passage simultaneously deals with his revenge and his »o'erlasting question« of man's life and death. The Actor meditates about this topic by quoting from Hamlet's monologue, »Whether 't is nobler in the mind to suffer / The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, Or to take arms against a sea of troubles, / And by opposing end them,« (3.1.57-60; 1374).

After Lila had killed her father she embraces his dead body, she cries and tells everybody that she really loved him, that she did not wish to kill him, the Actor com-

ments this scene with Hamlet's words, which Hamlet uses after he has seen the Mouse-trap scene and is persuaded about Claudius' crime: »'Tis now the very witching time of night, / When churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes out / Contagion to this world: now could I drink hot blood, / And do such bitter business as the day / Would quake to look on..« (3.2.391-395). But he defend's Lila's action saying that actors continuously break the rules, because »..we live in an illusion that nothing is real that everything is temporary, valid only until the next performance« (1388). Flisar ends the play as a tragic-comedy, with an open but still relatively happy ending. When Lila asks the Actor how they are going to survive in life, the Actor answers her: »With a smile«.

In the Afterword to the play Aleksandra Schuller presents her interpretation of Flisar's play »Njegov Hamlet in jaz« (His Hamlet and myself«; *ibid.* 1389-1398). She mentions that Lila also raises the question whether Hamlet's spirit has been revenged. The Actor tells Lila that this will never happen, because »too heavy burden was laid on too weak shoulders«. Hamlet namely regrets that he had been chosen for this task: »The time is out of joint, O curséd spite, / That ever I was born to set it right!« (1.5.187-178). The critic concludes that Flisar's »Hamlet« has achieved a *surprise*, which was not given to Shakespeare's hero and that everything what counts in life – in spite of everything that has been done and experienced in life – is man's renewal of his hope and love (1398). William Shakespeare would have probably agreed with this conclusion, because even after many murders, which occur in his tragedies, there is always a slight hope for better future.

4.0. CONCLUSION

The research has shown that a number of Slovene playwrights were also inspired by Shakespeare's plays in the period between 1930-2010. This is the period in which several productions of plays written by foreign dramatists, who made in their works allusions to Shakespeare's works or adapted them, were produced in Slovene theatres. A short list of adaptations by Slovene authors and theatre directors is included in the Introductory chapter. It varies from simple shortenings of Shakespeare's texts to transformations in puppet plays, musicals (revues), parodies, and even to a stand-up comedy of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

Although it is possible to surmise that quite a few important Slovene dramatists not only knew Shakespeare's plays but that they were also inspired by them, they are not included in this presentation unless such an assertion could be based on specific evidence. Authors, who are dealt with individually, included in their plays diverse thematic and poetic elements from Shakespeare's plays, which clearly show their debt to this great playwright. However, the level and the frequency of their allusions and borrowings differ quite strongly. It is also important to stress that in plays written by Slovene dramatists before the 1980s, such references were mostly made according to the original semantic meaning represented by Shakespeare, whereas more recent examples are often used as controversial statements, ironic references or parodies of the original text. There can hardly be any doubt that due to the artistic greatness and the spiritual and ethical value of Shakespeare's plays a direct or indirect influence will also be present in new plays

written by Slovene playwrights in the future.

However, one basic question still remains open: can we believe in a better future of mankind if we remember Seneca's *Thyestes*, Sophocles's *Antigone*, William Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, Dominik Smole's *Antigone* and Gregor Strniša's *Ljudožerci* (Cannibals)? But let us be optimistic and hope that people will be like like Miranda and will be pleasantly – even if somewhat naively – surprised and exclaim together with her:

O wonder!
How many goodly creatures are there here!
How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world,
That has such people in 't!

William Shakespeare, *The Tempest* (5.1.181-183)

Is it too much to hope that the mankind will share Miranda's optimism? Did not Prospero leave Caliban on an uninhibited island? Or, is he still with us?

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SUMMARIES IN SLOVENE – POVZETKI V SLOVENŠČINI

UDK 821.163.6–2.091«1930/2010»:821.111–2.091Shakespeare W.

Mirko Jurak

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE IN SLOVENSKI DRAMATIKI (III): 1930 – 2010

V razpravi o vplivih in o odmevih Shakespearovih dram v delih slovenskih dramatikov, ki so nastala oziroma bila prvič uprizorjena v obdobju med leti 1930-2010, ugotavljamo, da je bilo teh primerov sorazmerno veliko. Pri tem velja še opozoriti, da so v tem obdobju slovenska gledališča (vključno z ad hoc skupinami in eksperimentalnimi gledališči) uprizorila tudi vrsto del tujih avtorjev, ki so se v svojih dramah zgledovali pri Shakespearu oziroma v njegovih umetninah črpali motive za svoje ustvarjanje. Tak vpliv opazimo tudi v raznih priredbah slovenskih avtorjev, ki jih omenjam v uvodnem delu te študije. Pri tem ne gre le za različne predelave, okrajšave ali za izbiro odlomkov iz različnih Shakespearovih dram v novo dramsko delo, temveč tudi za priredbe iz specifično dramskega, klasičnega žanra, v druge gledališke zvrsti, kot npr. v muzikal, v revijsko odsko priredbo, v lutkovna dela itn. Nekatera tovrstna dela (predvsem iz zadnjih treh desetletij) so tu faktografsko navedena, niso pa detajlno obravnavana. Prav tako niso vključena dela tistih slovenskih dramatikov, pri katerih je Shakespearov vpliv morda posreden, nimamo pa zanj konkretnih vsebinskih ali dramsko-oblikovnih dokazov. Vendar lahko z gotovostjo trdimo, da so v obravnavanem obdobju mnogi slovenski dramatiki dobro poznali Shakespearove drame in da so te na njihovo ustvarjanje tudi posredno vplivale.

Med slovenskimi dramatiki, ki so v svoja dela vključili odlomke ali aluzije na Shakespearove drame, so v razpravi posebej predstavljeni naslednji avtorji: Matej Bor, Jože Javoršek, Ivan Mrak, Dominik Smole, Mirko Zupančič, Gregor Strniša, Venko Taufer, Dušan Jovanović, Vinko Möderndorfer in Evald Flisar. Podrobnosti o teh vplivih so razvidne pri analizi Shakespearovih vplivov v delih omenjenih avtorjev. Med značilnostmi, ki so v razpravi navedene, lahko ugotovimo tudi, da sta stopnja in pogostnost aluzij na Shakespearova dela oziroma citatov iz njegovih dram v slovenskih tekstih zelo različna. Medtem ko so bile do osemdestih let dvajsetega stoletja reference iz Shakespearovih dram

v veliki večini semantično enakovredne originalnemu tekstu, so bile od tega obdobja dalje pogosto uporabljene ali kot kontroverzne trditve kot tudi predstavljene v ironičnem podtonu ali kot parodije originalnega Shakespearovega teksta. Glede na izredno visoko duhovno, umetniško in etično vrednost Shakespearovih dram ni dvoma, da bodo tovrstni odmevi in vplivi prisotni v slovenski dramatiki tudi v bodoče.

UDK 81'255.4:821.111(73)-311.6Wallace L.=03=163.6

Darja Mazi – Leskovar

BEN HUR V SLOVENŠČINI: PREVODI AMERIŠKEGA ROMANA O VEČKULTURNIH VPRAŠANJIH

Roman *Ben-Hur* ameriškega pisatelja Lewisa Wallacea se uvršča med tista literarna dela, ki so bila večkrat prevedena v slovenščino in so zanimiva že zato, ker vsak posamezni prevod govori o stanju jezika in duha ter odprtosti za kulturo, ki ji pripada izvorno delo. Kadar se prevedeno besedilo ne nanaša le na eno kulturno izročilo, je za prevajalca dvojen izziv, saj priča o večkulturnih stikih in vsaj posredno razkriva pričakovan odnos ciljnih bralcev do predstavljenih medkulturnih vprašanj. Tako delo je *Ben-Hur*, saj se pripoved odvija na Bližnjem vzhodu, tako da prevodi ne pričajo le o tem, v kakšni meri naj bi bili ciljni slovenski bralci seznanjeni z ameriško kulturo in predvsem z njeno književnostjo, temveč tudi o njihovem poznavanju Bližnjega vzhoda in judovsko-krščanskega izročila. Študija prevodov iz let 1899, 1908, 1931, 1974 in 1997 osvetli prevode v časovni kulturno-politični perspektivi in prouči priredbe predvsem v luči domačitvene in potujitvene prevajalske strategije.

UDK 821.111(73)–31.09Faulkner W.

Nataša Intihar Klančar

FAULKNERJEVA "SOUTHERN BELLE" - MIT ALI RESNIČNOST?

Članek postavi pod drobnogled glavne junakinje Faulknerjevih romanov *Svetloba v avgustu*, *Absalom, Absalom!*, *Krik in bes*, *Nepremagljivi*, *Mesto* in njegove kratke zgodbe "A Rose for Emily." Lik lepotice ameriškega Juga, ki ga v svoja dela vpelje Faulkner, zaznamujejo krhkost, lepota, ustrežljivost, skromnost, odkritost, položaj v patriarhalni družbi in njihova izguba nedolžnosti. Družba Juga jih sooča z raznolikimi pričakovanji, normami in zahtevami, ki se jim tako ali drugače uklanjajo in jih bolj ali manj uspešno sprejemajo. Trpka leta vojne prinesejo številne prepreke in izzive, ki sooblikujejo njihove osebnosti in način življenja. Nove naloge in obveznosti se kopičijo, nekaterim se uspe vključiti v nov sistem, medtem ko ostale tega ne zmorejo in se zlomijo.