

**EUROPEAN SHAKESPEARE ON FILM:
JOVAN ŽIVANOVIĆ, *HOW ROMEO AND JULIET LOVED***

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Abstract. *"Anything can be projected into Shakespeare," wrote Ted Hughes in the Foreword to his Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being, insisting, at the same time, that his own discovery of a basic structural pattern (or plot schemata, fundamental, galvanic, nuclear dramatic idea) in Shakespeare's works was not a 'projection', but "had objective life, and in fact evolved from play to play with riveting consistency". He called the pattern in question Shakespeare's 'myth', and claimed to have been guided towards its discovery by two fortuitous circumstances in his life: his sustained interest in the mythologies and folklores of the world, which preceded his interest in poetry, and his work with Peter Brook, both in London's Old Vic, and the Centre for Theatre Research in Paris.*

In 1971 these experiences amalgamated with his work on the Faber edition of Shakespeare's poetry, and evolved, through the next twenty years, into the study he completed and published in 1992. The final impetus for the writing of the book, according to Hughes, came from the stimulating exchange of letters with the Swedish actress Donya Feur, who was inspired by Hughes' observations about Shakespeare to put together, in 1978, "a full length performance of interlocked verse extracts in which a solo actress relived her Shakespearean earlier incarnations, following the evolution of one of the myth's figures from play to play."

Like Feur, I too found Hughes' basic insight into Shakespeare stimulating, and, testing it against the works of film directors who have produced 'Shakespearean films', discovered that it threw a unique new light on the evolution of their oeuvre. For the past ten years I have been exploring this vastly interesting area in a course on Shakespeare and Film set up at the Women's Study Centre in Belgrade, and in the undergraduate and graduate courses I teach at the FDA. The course looks into the evolution of such artists as Bresson, Bergman, Bertolucci, Tarkovsky, Godard, Kurosawa, Welles, Altman, Polansky, Lepage, Henke, and many others (Maya Deren, Kusturica, etc.). This contribution to the ESSE 2002 conference is based on my current work on two Yugoslav directors, Jovan Živanović and Krsto Papić whose opus contains films derived from Shakespeare.

FRAMING JOVAN ŽIVANOVIĆ: WHY SHAKESPEARE?

Hypatia (370-415) particularly stressed the importance of goddesses and the feminine aspects of culture, arguing that the Mother Goddess religion conferred dignity, influence, and power on women. When consulted about the unrest in Rome, she stated that Roman men had misused their women causing the next generation to be born not through love, but through seduction and rape. This had produced violence and turmoil in the empire that could only be solved, she said, by elevating women to their former status. ...A group of fanatical monks waylaid her on the way to her weekly lectures at the university. Dragging her from her carriage, they pulled her limbs from their sockets, plucked out her organs, hacked her remains into pieces, and burned them.

Judy Chicago, *The Dinner Party: A Symbol of Our Heritage*¹

Her flesh was scraped from her bones with sharp oyster-shells and her quivering limbs were delivered to the flames. The just progress of inquiry and punishment was stopped by seasonable gifts. After this Alexandria was no longer troubled by philosophers.

Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*²

The reading of Shakespeare on which the Yugoslav film director Jovan Živanović (1924-2002) based his 1966 modern version of *How Romeo and Juliet Loved* resembles closely, in its essential aspect, that of the British poet Ted Hughes (1930-1998), elaborated in the study *Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being* (1992). The resemblance is not a projection, but a revelation. Živanović and Hughes articulated their insights differently (one using the screen, the other the page), but both connected to Shakespeare because they saw the continued importance of what they believed he had set out to do: put our civilization on trial for the criminal suppression, degradation and destruction of all aspects of being traditionally associated with the feminine. "The case is, as it were, still unfinished," claimed Hughes. In the proceedings that need to continue, "Justice is being sought by Shakespeare" (and we may add, all those who share his views) "for the different cultural tradition behind the outcry of the victim, the plaintiff, who speaks for the rejected (assaulted, murdered, escaped from murder) Goddess."³ The two references to Hypatia, with which this paper begins, are intended as reminders that the views Hughes (Shakespeare, Živanović) hold have a long tradition, but also that the tradition that long ago 'lustrated' Hypatia is still with us as well.

¹ Judy Chicago, *The Dinner Party: A Symbol of Our Heritage* (New York: Anchor Press, 1979) p. 68-9.

² Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1945) p 388.

³ Ted Hughes, *Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being* (London: Faber, 1992) Introduction, p. 43-4; Hughes recapitulates his thesis in similar terms on p 440: "...if the Tragic Equation beginning back there in Venus and Adonis is the story of the fundamental crime, where the secularizing, moralizing, defensive ego rejects the primeval Goddess of Divine Love, which is to say the Goddess of 'total, unconditional' Love, and if that rejection implicates the ego in a simultaneous rejection of its own soul (is in fact the same thing) and if the tragic sequence of dramas is a coherent investigation into that crime, a methodical analysis of the evidence (which Shakespeare traces into every detail of what the criminal ego thinks, feels, says and does) and is also the judgment, pronounced in that court case in *The Winter's Tale*...and if the Theophany which develops out of Shakespeare's ethical determination (his sacred shamanic mission) to heal the crime, redeem the criminal, and reconsecrate his victim (the human avatar of Divine Love, the beloved, the incarnation of the 'soul') is the whole purpose of the last four 'romances', and if these dramas achieve this atonement, redemption and reconsecration in a sacred marriage of 'new-born' souls, then...".

Contrary to the powerful school of those who believe that the portrayal of women in Shakespeare shows Shakespeare to have been an ideological collaborator and misogynist⁴, Živanović and Hughes see him as the most eloquent and profound critic of the misogyny that underlies, and explains, the history of the West. In Živanović's films, and the literary works produced by Hughes, various aspects of this violent and violating history are explored, but not endorsed.

The stages of creative development, through which these two very different artists refined their historical sense, lead them both to Shakespeare because in Shakespeare's dedication to love (in the face of destruction and hate, chronicled not exclusively in the history plays) both Živanović and Hughes found traces of the tradition to which, as individual talents, they desired to belong. Thus, in their works, as in Shakespeare, their criticism of forces that operate as obstacles to love becomes a celebration of love's centrality to our lives. Živanović directed ten feature films (two in the fifties, five in the sixties and three in the seventies). All of them are 'odes to love', but perhaps love is celebrated most memorably in his five films from the sixties (*Funny Girl*, 62; *Islands*, 63; *The Bitter Part of the River*, 65; *How Romeo and Juliet Loved*, 66; *Cause of Death Not to be Mentioned*, 68) which deal with the lamentable consequences of its growing absence from our lives.⁵

A WORLD WITHOUT JULIETS

In the documentary film that his grandson Pablo Fero⁶ made about him in 2000, Živanović stated that he could never think of the drama of life without realizing the central role women play in it, without wishing to undertake yet another study of the way in which the male and the female principles interact. Consequently, in his films, both the dramatic structure of the plot, and the surface texture of life picked up by the camera in various rural and urban settings throughout Yugoslavia (Bosnia in *Zenica*; the Adriatic coast in Croatia in *Islands*, and *Romeo and Juliet*; Belgrade in *Funny Girl* and *The Bitter Part of the River*, a mountain village in north eastern Serbia in *The Naive One*; the dam

⁴ See Michael Bogdanov's defence of Shakespeare along these lines in the interview with Christopher J. McCullough, included in *The Shakespeare Myth*, Edited by Graham Holderness (Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 89-95. Among other things Bogdanov says: "I believe Shakespeare was a feminist, and all the plays I direct analyse that matter. ...Shakespeare shows women totally abused,... bartered to the highest bidder. ...There is no question of it, his sympathy is with the women, and his purpose, to expose the cruelty of a society that allows (such abuse) to happen.

⁵ It is very useful to keep in mind that Robert Altman (whose version of *Romeo and Juliet*, structured into his 1974 film *Thieves Like Us*, will be compared with Zivanovic's 1966 version of *How Romeo and Juliet Loved*) was born in 1925, a year later than Zivanovic. Like Zivanovic, Altman also directed only two films in the fifties. From then on, the pattern of their development becomes very different. Altman had a longer period of 'adolescence' and, in the sixties, when Zivanovic was directing his five most complex and mature films, Altman directed only three. His rise to fame began in the seventies (with such films as *MASH* in 1970, *Nashville* in 1975, *Three Women* in 1977, etc.), while in the same decade Zivanovic's career as a director virtually came to an end. In the seventies Altman made thirteen films, more than Zivanovic was able to direct in his entire life. In fact, Zivanovic gave up film directing after his last three films in the seventies, and died in April 2002. Altman, on the other hand, continued to be equally productive, directing, in the eighties, additional thirteen films (eight features and four for television). He is still very much alive, and continues to unfold in his films his 'Shakespearean' criticism and celebration of life. See Helene Keyssar, *Robert Altman's America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), especially chapter four, "The Unconquered: The Feminization of Altman's Films".

⁶ Pablo Fero, *U svetu tajni*, 2000.

constructed on the Danube in *And Then God Created the Cafe Singer*) are 'justified' when they enable him to explore what interests him the most - the kind of opportunities for human interaction these vastly varied environments provide.

Živanović is deeply aware of the potentially ambiguous interplay between *seems* and *is*. His screen may be filled with images of growth and 'progress' (new cities being erected, villages modernized, dams, power plants and careers built) but his films always question, in a muted and inimitable cinematic fashion, what such visible progress can amount to, if the construction-scaffolds hide from view the stunting of human emotions, the irreparable damage done to our fundamental bonds.

A good illustration of this strategy is the opening sequence of *The Bitter Part of the River* (1965). The camera follows a small boy's loitering about a construction sight in Belgrade, situated on one of the banks of the Danube. As the boy climbs up to Kalemegdan, a beautiful park spread over the remains of an ancient Roman camp and medieval Turkish fortress, the camera shows the panoramic view of the confluence of the Yugoslav Sava and the international Danube, including in one of the shots, behind the child's back, the slender column with the statue of the Victor on it, one of the best known identifying symbols of Belgrade. We are next shown a young couple sitting on a bench, arguing over the abortion the girl is planning to have. Her partner is not trying to dissuade her, only refusing to acknowledge his part in the conception.

The conversation is unbearably cynical, and made even more so by the camera which shows, as they talk, the small boy walking over the grass to a displayed white plaster statue of a reclining woman, on her back, with her arched stomach exposed and broken. As the talk concerning the abortion proceeds, we see the boy taking a broken piece of plaster from the statue's belly. When the guard reprimands him and chases him away, he exclaims, humiliated and hurt: "But she was not broken by me!" The sequence ends with the pregnant girl crying on the bank of the river (her bent head projected against the flowing water) the lover who had insultingly spurned her and her child gone. The title of the film appears.

We never see the pregnant girl again. (In fact, we last see her inverted image in the view finder of the land surveyor, who is not looking at her, but at the future he intends to build, unaware that in her fate lies the tragic flaw that will undermine it). She morphs into the small boy's mother, and the film develops into a very complex and subtle study of how hurt people, in their turn, hurt others. The boy we met feels rejected by his mother, and in that sense 'homeless'. He lives true to this feeling, rejects her in return, and adamantly refuses to go back to what he feels is her insincere care for him. He meets and admires a grown man, a mysterious reclusive misanthrope, who, we are lead to feel, himself must have grown out of similar experiences. The hurt woman, man, and child fail to reconstitute themselves as a family. The building of the new city around them continues.

The striking quality of this film is hard to pin down. As is to be expected, all the elements of its structure duly contribute to it (the complex plot, the spoken dialogues and the unspoken communications, the impressive cinematography that discretely leads the viewer to remember the permanence of rivers and the impermanence of cities that on its banks continue to rise and fall, the music, the editing). Yet, more than in all of these, its striking quality seems to lie in the intuition with which the actors responded to its archetypal subtext.

For recognized and admired actors to play less fortunate persons is no special challenge. In this film, however, the actors used this opportunity to release into the film, as a

very special gift, the color of their own personal, unique, inimitable private human dread of emotional homelessness, revealing the true concern of the film to be the pervasive danger of emotional deprivation and disorientation, quite distinct from the disadvantages of poverty (the rags, the rooflessness) the film seems to be putting on display.

The boy and the man run away from relatively comfortable 'homes', and mingle on the bank of the river with aspirants who are, ironically, eagerly waiting for their chance to 'move in'. But, the film seems to be asking in its poetic fashion, when something is broken, and even the mothers' bodies no longer count as homes, where will the housed-homeless find escape from their false shelters, when all the housing projects we think we need cover the face of mother earth completely?

* * *

In Jean Anouilh's play *Romeo and Jeannette* (1946) Frederic, Anouilh's modern Romeo, unexpectedly finds what love is all about not in his relationship with the conventional Julia he is about to marry, but in her scandalously unconventional sister Jeannette. In Act III he defines this newly discovered and unsuspected feeling in the following manner:

"I am contented. Not the way I was hoping for - but differently. With the sort of contentment you feel when you've arrived somewhere, even if it should be the pit of despair; when you can say: Oh, good, this is it. I'm there."

What he has come to know is the soul's joy⁷ and content absolute that Othello discovered in Desdemona⁸. Love is, metaphorically, frequently presented as a jewel, an infinitely precious grain of pearl, or diamond (such as the one Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway imagined she was given, when she knew love, and "felt, she was convinced, as strongly as Shakespeare meant Othello to feel".⁹) Implicitly, in Živanović's film *The Bit-*

⁷ In Act II, before they have actually found words for their unexpected and socially unacceptable experience, Frederick cries out to Jeannette: "I can't do it! I want to struggle, yes, but not against this part of me that's crying out. I want to struggle, but not against this joy."

⁸ *Othello*, 2,1 lines 180-200: "O my fair warrior! It gives me wonder great as my content/To see you here before me. O my soul's joy,/If after every tempest come such calms,/May the winds blow till they have wakened death/And let the labouring barque climb hills of seas/Olympus-high, and duck again as low/As hell's from heaven. If it were now to die/Twere now to be most happy, for I fear/My soul hath her content so absolute/That not another comfort like to this/Succeeds in unknown fate/ ...I cannot speak enough of this content./It stops me here, it is too much of joy./And this (they kiss) and this, the greatest discords be/That e'er our hearts shall make."

⁹ Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), Penguin 1964, p. 39. In this novel Shakespeare is the defining presence in the minds of both Calrissa Dalloway and Septimus Warren Smith. Virginia Woolf's diaries are full of direct references to Shakespeare, and her own deeply Shakespearean insights. For instance, in 1923, while working on *Mrs Dalloway* (first called *The Hours*), she writes: "I should say a good deal about *The Hours* and my discovery: how I dig out beautiful caves behind my characters: I think that gives exactly what I want: humanity, humour, depth. The idea is that the caves shall connect and each comes to daylight at the present moment..." Two months later she adds: "It took me a year's groping to discover what I call my tunneling process...my prime discovery so far...One feels about in a state of misery, and then one touches the hidden spring". In 1924, still working on *Mrs Dalloway*, she writes how, now that she is older, it lights her up to think that she will read two acts of *King John* that night, and *Richard II* next. (August 15th). She feels that what she has written leaves her plunged deep in the richest strata of her mind (December 13th), and that she is grazing as near as she can to her own ideas (December 21). In February of 1926 she describes, with exhilaration, the speed and freedom with which she is composing her new novel *To the Lighthouse*, taking the ease to be the sign that she is on the right path "and that what fruit hangs in her soul is to be reached there". Four days later, continuing her thoughts on

ter Part of the River, love is imagined as a state of such Shakespearean content, as the place that is 'it', as the feeling that one has 'arrived', as the true home that many never find. It is not surprising, then, that Živanović decided to make the next film in his opus, *How Romeo and Juliet Loved* (1966), explicitly Shakespearean.

The story is set in Belgrade, in the early sixties, and the basic plot line concerns Zoran and Jasna (Romeo and Juliet), childhood sweethearts who, as students, continued to develop their poetic and idealistic relationship. However, during Zoran's obligatory year in the army, Jasna marries an aspiring young diplomat, who 'saves' her from discomforts of relative poverty. Zoran is thunder-struck by her betrayal and, when they meet again, and continue their now clandestine love affair, he often tries to hurt her back, and punish her for the pain she has caused him. The film covers the few days of the May the First holiday, which Jasna, her husband and their 'high class' friends, go to spend on the island of Hvar, in Croatia. Zoran follows them, challenging Jasna's pretended loyalty to her husband at every turn. Having known true love he can neither imagine life without it, nor accept any kind of compromise concerning it. Unable to win Jasna back, he commits suicide.

The reference to Shakespeare in this film is ironic, in the sense that the tragedy of Romeo and Juliet, at present, lies in the fact that there no longer *are* any Juliets willing to die for love. Modern Juliets live, willing to give up their personal feelings, and ready to consent to any kind of compromise, if it can increase their comfort or bring money and fame. Still, Jasna's pale and lifeless face reveals that being better off has not been a fulfilling experience¹⁰. Life without love has turned into a form of death, and in her newly acquired finery (her face made up, her hair fashionably cut) she looks like a doll in a dolls' house. (We see her, in one shot, passing what might be considered Miss Julie's caged canary, and reading, the first time we meet her, a crime story appropriately entitled *The Unconscious*).

Živanović complicates this ironic conception by having, in his film, three Juliets: an actress (who had acted Juliet in Shakespeare's play but discovers, as the film begins, that she is no longer eligible for the part); a ballerina (who, professionally, danced Juliet's part in Prokofiev's ballet, but who privately does not dream, does not read or love poetry, and does not waste time on sentiments but, rather, on card games which she has learned how to win); and Jasna, who unlike the other two, played Juliet only in her own private life, and gave the part up for the prestige of being the wife of a diplomat - a Yugoslav Mrs.

the soul, and the difficulty of writing about it directly, she moves into another beautifully Shakespearean passage: "Yet I have some restless searcher in me. Why is there not a discovery in life? Something one can lay hands on and say 'This is it'? My depression is a harassed feeling. I'm looking: but that's not it - that's not it. What is it? And shall I die before I find it?...Then I see the mountains in the sky: the clouds; the moon which is risen over Persia; I have a great and astonishing sense of something there, which is 'it'. It is not exactly beauty that I mean. It is that the thing is in itself enough: satisfactory; achieved....On this showing, which is true, I think I do fairly frequently come upon this 'it'; and then feel quite at rest" (February 27th).

Throughout *Mrs Dalloway*, Clarissa talks of her fear of plunging (into the sea, into life, into love). Zivanovic's Romeo lives freely and fully, and when such fullness is marred, like Septimus, he refuses to accept an emotionally impoverished life, and plunges into the sea to die. "A thing there was that mattered, a thing, wreathed about with chatter, defaced, obscured in her own life, let drop every day in corruption, lies, chatter. This he had preserved. Death was defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate, people feeling the impossibility of reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them; closeness drew apart; rapture faded; one was alone. There was an embrace in death" (p. 204): Clarissa's thoughts on Septimus' death are a better synopsis of Zivanovic's film than the official one.

¹⁰ Spela Rozin, a Yugoslav actress from Slovenia, played the main female roles in both films.

Dalloway. For those who know Živanović's films the irony is increased by the fact that in *Funny Girl* (62), the same actress who plays the unfateful Jasna/Juliet played a girl who goes through the reverse process: discovers that she **can** love like Juliet, in spite of very harmful and disappointing initial experiences with men.

Živanović's three Juliets (like the three tall women in Albee's eponymous play) represent three stages of the same event: the seduction and corruption of the feminine. In Jasna's case, the betrayal she has committed is demonstrably experienced by her as a kind of death, a form of spiritual 'suicide'. A beautiful contrast to this process can be found in Patrice Chereau's film *Intimacy* (2001), where the heroine fights desperately to find a way to save herself from such death. The professional actress in Živanović's film is in a more advanced state of self betrayal. Although she still occasionally bulks and criticizes, remembering better days, she is, as we watch her, forcing herself to jig, amble, forget, compromise, pretend in real life as she has done on stage, acclimatize herself to defeat. The ballerina, however, is in this respect a true veteran. She has gone through all stages of self betrayal with flying colours (she is the only woman in the film who plays poker with the men, and is very good at winning) and she carelessly and utterly enjoys her superficiality.

The ironic reduction of the heroic scale in this film is skillfully conveyed through Živanović's use of music, especially the use of period songs to provide counterpoint, broaden the context, increase the resonance of the plot. This is an identifying feature of all his films, and shows a sensibility, in this respect, similar to Altman's. For instance, "Come night, come Romeo, come, thou day in night..." are Juliet's words from her famous invocation of the night in the second scene of act three. In the opening sequence of Živanović's film, as the credits roll, an alluring female voice sings what sounds as a modern paraphrase (or parody) of this speech, set to the musical variation of *Strangers in Paradise*.¹¹ (The camera shows a panoramic view of Belgrade on a sunny morning in late April, the cruelest month of all).

The intention of the film, however, cannot be reduced to mere clever exploitation of (ironic) parallels between the present time of the viewer, the past presented by the maker, and Shakespeare. Even when all such possible comparisons are exhausted (contrasts appreciated, satirical intentions noted, political observations and allusions understood), there is more.¹² The 'more' concerns Živanović's conception of Romeo.

The three false Juliets have their appropriate counterparts in the three men in whose company they are during the fated Mayday holiday. The positioning of the men is significant. The most politically and financially powerful is the oldest of the three, a war veteran and a relic from the decades when physical strength, endurance, and uncomplicated

¹¹ The song instructs the missing lover to stop wondering through the night, and look for the beloved where she promises to be: waiting for him at the deepest end of the unfathomable dark. Love sometimes hurts, she croons, because it is a dream that must not be looked for in places where dreams cannot survive. If he answers her call and surrenders to the enchantment of midnight, however, their dream will come true. and, for them, the night turn into one endless day of love. After the title credits and her song are over, a brass band begins to play a popular country tune and a voice (acting as the chorus in the Prologue of Shakespeare's play) guides the camera through different locations in the festive city, offering relevant information, among other things the fact that the city was raised to the ground fifty four times in the past two thousand years.

¹² This "more", as Ted Hughes realized in the case of Shakespeare, can be assessed only when the artist as the realist-psychologist impersonator is 'lifted away', and the obscured mythic poet revealed (or, when under the upper architectural marvels that we commonly concentrate on and admire, the somewhat ignored and neglected mythic tunnels, the underground deep structures, come to view). See *Shakespeare and the Goddess*, p. 38

moral choices were the order of the day. This man mentors the rise of his replacement, Romeo's usurper, the young diplomat we see working hard to carry out the responsibilities (and enjoy the advantages) his rising position in society brings. Caught between the political past and future that these two men represent is the artist, an actor, once Romeo and now, appropriately, good enough only to play Juliet's old father Capulet.

These are the men of the social and political centre. Nominally they have power, and the arrogance and intolerance that attend it. Fundamentally, however, they are unfree and insecure because the political and theatrical roles they are given to play in public have little to do with their true nature, and their true needs as private men. The only person in Živanović's film that has not dissociated his sensibility, and that is free, is the marginalized, excluded and rejected Romeo.

Ultimately, Živanović's film is about heights and depths, those areas of feeling and consciousness that the 'central men' are asked to sacrifice. It is of these forsaken heights and depths that Živanović's Romeo is the master. The 'powerful' (men and women) we meet in his film glide over surfaces in fancy cars, sleeping-car compartments, yachts. Romeo soars and plunges. Throughout the film he craves heights over which his views, his dreams, his poems can expand unobstructed.

The most memorable scenes in the film are those where we see him leaning over the rails of the television tower that once overlooked Belgrade from the volcanic mound of Avala (raised to the ground in the fifty-fifth destruction of Belgrade, carried out in 1999 by eighteen European members of NATO's 'partnership for peace') reminding his unfaithful Juliet that the force of love that brought them together is the same as the force that guides the waters of the Sava towards the Danube¹³.

The camera shows him in an identical vertiginous position on the island of Hvar, when he entices Jasna to the top of the ancient city walls overlooking the Adriatic, and tries to make love to her in the midst of the splendid Mediterranean sunrise. He impetuously wishes even the sea to be more fully alive and shake off its kitsch postcard stillness. The other three men never once immerse themselves into the sea, during their seaside holiday (one is pushed, precipitating the final show-down of the film). Only Zoran/Romeo is completely at one with it (swims in it, dives from high places into it, navigates it). Finally, when in spite of everything, (and after a direct confrontation with the 'usurper'), it becomes clear whose side his Juliet is on, he ascends the highest rock above the place where the 'high class' yacht is anchored and, addressing the three couples for the last time, plunges into the sea and his certain death.

ROMEO BECOMES HAMLET

Even in Shakespeare there are connections between Romeo and Hamlet. Both alarm their parents by their conspicuous withdrawal from the common pursuits and preoccupations of their peers. The distance they impose is disquieting to others not so much be-

¹³ The two rivers, joining their waters under the walls of Belgrade, are used in Zivanovic's films as metaphoric reminders of the proper relationship of the male and female energies in life. The single mother of the boy in *The Bitter Part of the River* has dreamt all her life of being taken, by the man she loves, to the island at the centre of the confluence. But, at the moment when she is lead to believe that such love might yet be possible, the waters have risen and the island does not exist because it has been flooded. In this film, as in Shakespeare (as Ted Hughes had observed), the visual image includes her fate.

cause their lack of happiness is pitied, but because their dissent from accepted norms threatens the conception of happiness the others have decided to believe in, and pursue. So, Benvolio and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are sent to assist their return to the 'normal'. In Živanović's film, as in many other new works inspired by Shakespeare, the title may establish connection with one specific Shakespearean character or a play, but the work usually displays the author's free use of his/her entire impression (or 'reading') of Shakespeare. The transformation of Živanović's Romeo into Hamlet is an example of this.

From his first film *Zenica* (1957), Živanović's central preoccupation is: women and 'progress'. The building of the foundry in Zenica, filmed on location, records a specific stage in the historical development of Yugoslavia, but also skillfully activates a deeper understanding of what is at stake in the universal march of progress in the second part of the twentieth century. The film shows the extremely difficult work of the men in the foundry, but the intention behind the action is to convey the understanding that the results will be meaningless unless women willingly and actively engage themselves in the effort to change the world. (In one brief but most impressive scene in the film an old Muslim looks at an old minaret from which a mullah is intoning the traditional Muslim prayer, and then gazes at what appear to be identical slender columns, in fact - distant factory chimneys. The silent juxtaposition is very powerful, and raises numerous questions about 'modernization' that have not ceased to be relevant today.)

From its very beginning (the unexpected arrival of the young engineer's wife to Zenica) the film subtly explores the ways in which the previously unwanted creative energy of women can be invited to participate in the reshaping of the world. Of the two women whose 'awakening' the film follows one is a beautiful Muslim girl who defies her father, takes off her veil, finds work in the factory, becomes literate, and is helped by her friends to continue her search for the next thing she could become. The second storyline follows the process which the upper class wife of the young and idealistic engineer has to undergo. She, too, has to free herself from different but equally reductive bourgeois roles for women, and remember that she has abilities she can use to make more than just a decorative contribution to life.

The films Živanović made in the sixties continued to center on the fate of the feminine. They began with *Funny Girl* (1962), a film which looks into the first effects the contact with the 'new' has had on women. The funny girl from the title is this 'new' woman, beautiful, independent, and desired by all the men in the film. We do not know where she comes from. We meet her on a train, because Živanović is interested in exploring her journey into adult life, the destination she has set for herself in the future. At the beginning of the film she is cynical and unconventional but, behind her manifest 'freedom', traces of bitterness and despair can be detected. Later on in the film we find out that she was seduced by one of her professors, who charmed her by posing as an artist, a guardian and promoter of creative life. The professor would like to continue the relationship, but she rejects him, just as she rejects the marriage proposal of a bachelor journalist, a kind and decent man who even has his own apartment, a luxury for most people in the war devastated Yugoslavia. She finally recognizes as her true mate a young medical student who is, unlike her, very ascetic and dedicated to his studies, but also, like her, fundamentally independent and uncompromising. And also poor. Again, the underlying belief of the film is that the future depends on the ability of women to avoid the path of least resistance, and recognize and fight only for what is truly valuable in life.

In Živanović's next film, *Islands* (1963), the test of the feminine continues, but the corrupting force shifts from male agents of patriarchy to the demonized figure of the mother. As in Shakespeare, the short-hand notation for the corrupting principle is money, which the woman who is the mother gives, and the woman who is the seductress takes, in the joint plot to bring an estranged son back under control. One of the most haunting scenes in the film is a sequence of shots of Elke Sommer (who plays the mercenary) taken in the narrow streets of the island town of Hvar - surreally made to seem empty of any other female inhabitants - where she appears menacingly cornered by the staring local men around her, who gaze at her in absolute silence from the windows, balconies and doorways of their homes.

In many ways this film, made in 1963, prefigures Bertolucci's *Last Tango in Paris* (1973), another film with a modern version of *Hamlet* incorporated into its structure (discussed in an earlier chapter in this book): Živanović's girl, who calls herself Eva, keeps returning to the uninhabited island even though unpleasant things happen to her there; the agonized face of Peter Van Eyck, the misanthrope she goes to find there, closely resembles Brando's in Bertolucci's film (or rather vice versa), etc. However, the important point to note here is that although in Živanović's work the pressure on the feminine steadily increases from film to film, the central woman in this film, Eva, like the 'funny girl' before her in the previous film, manages to shed all temptations easily. She returns the money she has taken, because before the love she has unexpectedly found on the desert island, it loses its 'magic' and becomes worthless paper.

The turning point in Živanović's exploration of the fate of the feminine in the modern world is reached in *The Bitter Part of the River* (1965) and *How Romeo and Juliet Loved* (1966). In these two films the original feminine has been destroyed, and the sons and lovers bitterly betrayed by the surrogate women this civilization has installed in its place. In the first film (except in the 'prologue', where the question who broke the white plaster statue of the woman in the park is asked) all the questions related to this process are raised implicitly, through juxtaposition of images and incidents. In the second, Živanović is as explicit as Shakespeare in *Hamlet*: Zoran, his Romeo/Hamlet asks Jasna, his Juliet/Gertude, very directly: How could you? By what judgment were you led to fatal self betrayal?

In the claustrophobic closet scene in *Hamlet*, in order to answer such questions Gertude is forced to look at two pictures, and explain to her son by what judgment she was led to make her second choice of love and life. Živanović's whole film explores the difference between the two options (life styles) modern man can choose to follow. At one point, the contrast between these is dramatized through the juxtaposition of fashionable Venice (where Jasna is taken on her honeymoon by the man who will always see her only as a useful prop for the main role he exclusively intends to play) and Leningrad, the Venice of the North that Zoran once playfully asks her to conjure up in her imagination, in a desperate attempt to turn even the cold in their student room into fun. Jasna's husband is shown having great problems learning French: Zoran knows Yesenin by heart, and recites him to Jasna in Russian, with great passion, to help along their imaginary flight.¹⁴ *The Bitter Part of the River* was shot in black and white, the wonderful depths

¹⁴ The connection between the betrayal of private dreams and ideals, and the betrayal of the ideals of socialism, together with all the other political aspects of Živanović's films, will be presented through a comparison with the relevant aspects of Krsto Papic's films, in a special section entitled POLITICAL SHAKESPEARE: LORD, WE KNOW WHAT WE ARE, BUT KNOW NOT WHAT WE MAY BE. Still, it is interesting to note, in

and nuances that this kind of photography can achieve matching perfectly the psychological complexities the film had set out to explore. *How Romeo and Juliet Loved* was filmed in colour, foregrounding, in its use of it, the surface brightness and the essential thinness of the brave new world it explores.

Živanović's films from the sixties can be seen as a paradigm through which he gradually unearthed the operation of the same process Hypatia believed was causing the downfall of civilization in her own time: men misusing women and causing the next generations to be born not through love but through seduction and rape, causing violence and turmoil. The paradigm culminates in Živanović's film *Cause of Death Not To Be Mentioned* (1968), wholly preoccupied with denouncing the unrecognized destructive 'myths' we live by, and war, the fruit they inevitably bear. It is the only war film in his opus, and it is highly stylized and almost unbearably powerful. As the title indicates, it is about denial, and it traces, masterfully, the ethical corruption that, step by seemingly insignificant step, turns men into creatures capable of unconscionable destructiveness.

The plot is very unconventionally conceived, but concentrates on the fate of a dyer who (lake coffin makers and chandlers) is in a position to profit greatly by the war. Such temptations assail him as we watch him turning all the beautifully coloured cloth in his store into black, the traditional colour needed by the women, and the old, to mourn the men and boys systematically wiped out by the enemy throughout the land. The war in the film is all wars (World War I and II, Vietnam), an appalling sign of failure of love (indicated by the love of profit we see replacing love of one's neighbor, or the creative love of wife or child becoming compromised, eroded, gone). The rape of the feminine (of two women: a wife, and a bride to be) is most horrendously presented as the symbolic equivalent of both the cause, and the nature of war. In this film the stylized use of local colour invests the struggle of the dignity of man-the-creator against the demonic 'divinity' guns confer on the destroyers, with 'local habitation and a name', but the resonance, and the relevance of the film are universal.

The next three films Živanović directed in the seventies (*And Then God Created the Caffe Singer*, 72; *The Naive One*, 75; *Radio Vihor Calling Andjelija*, 79) repeat in a somewhat lighter but interesting fashion the views (warnings, celebrations) already explored in his previous films. The 'repetition' foregrounds one more time many of the important issues Živanović was concerned with throughout his career (the uses and abuses of music, art, love, the media) but his essential 'Shakespearean statement' evolved and matured in the films he created in the sixties.

P.S. A study of Živanović's films authored by Bogdan Zlatić is awaiting publication. It will contain biographical details, production histories and several interviews with the author.

Original titles of Živanović's films are: *Zanica*, *Gorki deo reke*, *Ostrva*, *Čudna devojka*, *Kako su se voleli Romeo i Julija*, *Uzrok smrti ne pominjati*, *Naivko*, *I Bog stvori kafansku pevačicu*.

connection with this nostalgia for socialist ideals, that in the transposition of Herman Melville's novella *Billy Budd* in the French film *Beau Travail* (directed by Claire Denis in 1998, and awarded the Louve d'Ore in Montreal in 1999) the role of the good sailor Billy is assigned to a young Russian, who is forced to join the French Foreign Legion because of the turmoil in his country, but whose nature and upbringing make him disobey inhuman commands professional mercenaries are expected to carry out unthinkingly.

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**EVROPSKE VERZIJE ŠEKSPIRA NA FILMU:
FILM JOVANA ŽIVANOVIĆA
KAKO SU SE VOLELI ROMEO I JULIJA**

Ljiljana Bogoeva Sedlar

U ovom zborniku prikazan je samo prvi deo rada pod ovim naslovom, posvećen analizi filmskog opusa režisera Jovana Živanovića (1924-2002), posebno njegovom filmu Kako su se voleli Romeo i Julija iz 1966. godine. Rad prati kako se kroz Živanovićeve rane igrane filmove postepeno razvija kritičko 'čitanje' savremenog načina života veoma blisko stavovima koje je u svojoj studiji o Šekspiru engleski književnik, pesnik laureat Ted Hjuz (1930-1998), definisao kao pokretačku snagu i razvojnu paradigmu čitavog Šekspirovog opusa. Ta zajednička, umetničkim jezikom istraživana premisa je svest o važnosti onoga što se u patrijarhalnom društvu određuje kao Žensko, i interesovanje za odnos prema ženskom (i u užem smislu prema ženama) manifestovan tokom razvoja zapadne civilizacije. Negativne odlike zapadne civilizacije (i svih sredina koje ona obuhvata), po ovakvom tumačenju proističu iz stalnog sputavanja i nasilnog preinačavanja Ženskog, iz odbacivanja ljubavi kao prave veze medju polovima, i ustoličavanja, deklarativno i dalje u ime ljubavi, raznih sistema kontrole i dominacije. Ovu uzurpaciju, odustajanje od oblika identiteta koji bi se razvio iz života inspirisanog ljubavlju, mirenje sa onim sto od života ostane kada se sposobnost za ljubav osakati i ne razvije, Šekspir istražuje u dramama koje se bave svim ratovima obeležinim istorijskim epohama koje su prethodile vremenu u kojem je sam živeo. Živanovićevi filmovi, koji prate razvoj Jugoslavije posle drugog svetskog rata, iza istorijske verodostojnosti koju postižu, razvijaju neprestano pomenuto arhetipsko 'šekspirovsko' razmišljanje, koje im daje posebnu vrednost i povezuje ih, preko istorijskog i nacionalnog, sa univerzalnim zapisima o sudbnini savremenog čoveka.