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SVETISLAV STEFANOVIĆ'S INTERPRETATION OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE AND WORLD LITERATURE[**]

Abstract
This paper deals with Svetislav Stefanović's interpretation of William Shakespeare's plays in which he presents Shakespeare as a classic of world literature (which at the time was a Eurocentric concept). Analyzing how Shakespeare used different sources for his own plays, Stefanović applies a comparative approach and compares Shakespeare with the Bible and with Greek and Roman authors, as well as with other European writers, such as Goethe and Dostoyevsky. The way Stefanović interpreted Shakespeare is performative because he showed how Shakespeare is a classic of the world literature system, and in doing so, he symbolically included modern Serbian literature in that system, too.

Key words: classic, comparative approach, translation, world literature, Shakespeare, Stefanović

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1. Introduction

In this text I will deal with the poet and translator Svetislav Stefanović's interpretations of William Shakespeare's dramas. Stefanović was a poet, essayist and translator whose fields of interest were English and American poets.[1] Among his most important translations are those of William Shakespeare's works. His interest in Shakespeare dated back to the end of the 19th century. In the 1920s and late 1930s, new editions of his translations were published, along with his 'Forewords'. Stefanović valued mysticism highly, viewing it as one of the most important characteristics of English poetry, and it was his ambition to pass this aspect of English poetry on to Serbian poetry. He explains:

> By emphasizing the mythical spirit of English poetry, I would like it to creatively impregnate our poetry, to broaden and deepen its horizons without which no poetry, be it great or pure, is produced. More than German or any other, it was English poetry that developed out of the hymn, the prayer; that kind of poetry has a certain mythical incarnation, all the more artistic if it possesses the mythical and divine (see: Konstantinović 198: 262n).

This comment leads us into a brief discussion on the function of translation in a culture.

2. Constructing modern national literature and the function of translation

I will start from the premise put forward in translation studies that translation is fundamental in all discursive fields. Translation is a text product and at the same time a text producer (Bassnett 2014: 236). It is produced through human labor from existing texts. At the same time, it is an active agent in the production of new texts. In the past, translations

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[1] Since my paper deals with only a small fragment of Stefanović's work and is based on a close reading of the text, it should be pointed out that Stefanović (born in 1877) belonged to a group of 100 Serbian intellectuals sentenced to death for collaborating with the German occupiers and was shot in 1944. Like many others, this controversial intellectual supported Nazi ideas – the historian Olivera Milosavljević wrote about his case (see Milosavljević 2010).

were considered to be of secondary importance, but translating is now viewed as an activity that has a crucial role in the development of any national literary system as it 'involves complex processes of import and export' (Bassnett 2014: 236). Susan Bassnett wrote:

> More recently, expanding research in what is termed world literature also serves to highlight the significance of translation in literary transactions. It appears self-evident that the transmission of texts across cultural boundaries should also have a linguistic dimension, yet studies of literary transmission tended for a long time to play down or disregard the role of translation. This is understandable once we pause to reflect on the link between the construction of national histories in the nineteenth century, an age characterized by the passionate struggle to establish clearly defined and coherent national identities across Europe (Bassnett 2014: 238).

Translation is fundamental to the formation of literary systems. The usage of the notion of a system derives from the belief that 'semiotic phenomena, i.e. sign-governed human patterns of communication (such as culture, language, literature, and society), could be more adequately understood and studied if regarded as systems' (Even-Zohar 1990: 9). Every translation is a recreation and interpretation of the source text, while at the same time, 'translation is *a priori* present in every source text: to varying degrees, every literary work is made up of translations, always containing in itself a certain amount of translation work' (Mančić 2010: 13), or as Aleksandra Mančić wrote, 'translation is the site of the shaping of national literature' (Mančić 2010: 13). In the different phases of the forming and developing of national literature, it is the function of translation to provide a repertoire which exists within other, usually older and more developed literary fields. Its other function is to change the national canon and provide new models of literary production. A translation is always accompanied by discourse which gives it additional interpretations, shaping it for contemporary usages within the target culture (the target culture which receives the literary work from some other (source) culture).

I will focus my attention on Stefanović's introductions to several of his Shakespeare translations, which were written to portray Shakespeare as a great European poet, as a classic of world literature. They are important because here Stefanović practiced a world literature approach, which has a performative role in demonstrating the unity of European literature,

considered at the time to be world literature. Written within the Serbian Yugoslav bourgeois culture[2], his interpretation performatively made this culture part of the world literary system. Since some of the main principles we find in Stefanović's interpretations of Shakespeare correspond to some of T. S. Eliot's significant discussions on European literature and the notion of a great poet, I will first discuss Eliot's theses.

3. T.S. Eliot and the definition of a classic and a European poet

According to T. S. Eliot, every language has its resources and limitations ('What is a classic?' 1944). However, at particular times throughout history, some languages generate moments in which unique classical poets appear, as happened in the history of Rome with the Latin language. Eliot explains:

> The maturity of literature is the reflection of that of the society in which it is produced; an individual author – notably Shakespeare and Virgil – can do much to develop his language – but he cannot bring that language to maturity unless the work of his predecessors has prepared it for his final touch. A mature literature, therefore, has a history behind it: a history that is not merely a chronicle, an accumulation of manuscripts and writings of this kind and that, but an ordered, though unconscious, progress of a language to realize its own potentialities within its own limitations (T.S. Eliot 1971: 56).

Discussing Goethe ('Goethe as the Sage', 1954), Eliot explains two crucial concepts: 'a great poet' and 'the unity of European literature'. A 'great poet' is one who unifies wisdom and poetic inspiration. Such poets 'belong, not merely to their own people, but to the world; it is only poets of this kind of whom one can think, not primarily as limited by their own language and nation, but as great Europeans' (Eliot 1971: 207). It is important for us to understand, wrote Eliot, that the unity of European literature exists, deriving from 'our common background, in the literature of Greece, Rome and Israel' (Eliot 1971: 211). He stressed that the great European poets

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[2] With this term I refer to the fact that Serbian culture during 20th century was realized within different political and economic contexts – bourgeois, socialist and post-socialist, as part of the Yugoslavian state or an independent state.

are Dante, Shakespeare and Goethe. They are proclaimed as such by two criteria: *Permanence* and *Universality*. Their work is of continual importance for every new generation in their own language as well as in others, and no one will question this importance. In addition, the influence of such a poet 'is not a matter of historical record only; he will continue to be of value to every Age, and every Age will understand his work differently' (Eliot 1971: 211). There are three characteristics that the great poets have to have: *Abundance, Amplitude* and *Unity. Abundance* means that they 'wrote a good deal, and nothing that any of them wrote is negligible' (Eliot 1971: 213), while *amplitude* means that each 'had a very wide range of interests' (Eliot 1971: 214). The third quality, *unity,* is explained as 'each of them gives us Life itself, the World seen from a particular point of view of a particular European age and a particular man in that age' (Eliot 1971: 214).

Eliot's discussion is important because the ideas he formulated were characteristic for the period in which he formulated them and they were common to European intellectuals between the two World Wars and immediately after the Second World War. Therefore, we can see that the translation of European classics like Shakespeare was necessary for the local formation of a world literature canon in a literary culture like Serbian between the two World Wars. Here I should mention that the different translations of Shakespeare in Serbian culture were accompanied by public debate concerning the fundamental question of how to translate Shakespeare and how to understand his work (Mančić 2010: 43). I will not deal with these discussions, but only with Stefanović's interpretation of Shakespeare as a universal classic of world literature in the sense Eliot wrote about.

4. Stefanović's Shakespeare as a classic and modern playwright

My review of Svetislav Stefanović's interpretation of Shakespeare's dramas will deal with the forewords he wrote for the following plays: *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Twelfth Night*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, and *The Winter's Tale*. Stefanović first explains when each play was written, suggests possible sources for the plot, and outlines what different interpreters wrote about it. Then he himself gives an interpretation of the plot and characters, compares the dramatic techniques used in the plays, and points out the

similarities and differences between the plots and characterization of characters in different dramas. Very often Stefanović calls Shakespeare a *genius* and talks about his *modernity*. The concept of modernity could refer to several conflicting ideas. It can signify something that is contemporary ('the present' or up-to-date) as opposed to what belongs to the past, but it can also signify differences within the present. In other words, the concept of modern art and literature does not only refer to 'art and literature of the modern period' because not all art and literature produced in that period can be considered 'modern'. Only certain types of artistic and literature production have the right to be called so (Fer 1993: 9). Modernity in art and literature 'is connected to a break with traditional modes of Western culture that connected the phenomenon of a work of art with the appearance of the natural world' (Đurić 2009: 23). It should also be highlighted that it is the influential literary centers of Western cultures that hegemonically proclaim what is to be considered modern (Casanova 2004). The concept of modernity is important to Stefanović because he had been advocating the modernization of Serbian poetic culture since the end of the 19th century (Manojlović, 1987: 265). Thus, it can be said that when he writes about Shakespeare, he does so for contemporary use in the context of modern Serbian literature as part of a system of world literature. When he calls Shakespeare a genius, he means that the artist is a genius because he is capable of producing universal values. A genius 'creates' artwork that transcends the time and space of its origin. I would like to stress here that the modern age concept of universality has evolved out of the humanism of the Enlightenment, that it is Eurocentric, based on the idea of universal literature which is based on the universality of the human spirit (Virk 2007: 73).

I will call Stefanović's approach *comparative* because he compares Shakespeare's works with the great literature from different epochs, showing that *world literature* is one system whose parts are mutually connected, and explaining how themes, motives, and narratives travel and are formed historically in different linguistic (i.e. national) cultures. At this point, I will briefly review comparative studies and world literature. Goethe's concept of world literature can be interpreted in the sense of the post-Enlightenment and pre-Romantic idea of *cosmopolitanism*. The idea functioned as an ideology, meaning it endorsed a conviction that people are in essence all equal regardless of differences in nationality, nation-state, language, religion, class, race, and cultural affiliation (Juvan, 2008: 69). The

cosmopolitan conception on which comparative literature was based was the idea of the existence of world literature that from Goethe's time meant 'the exchange of literary goods across boundaries of language, peoples, states, entities and civilizations' (Juvan 2008: 70). Marx and Engels saw cosmopolitanism as the ideology of bourgeois capitalism that operates on the supranational globalized market, thus connecting it to world literature as a modern form of the exchange and flow of 'spiritual products' (Juvan 2008: 71). They established an analogy between the 'transnational, global expansion of the capitalist economy and the beginning of the construction of an international system of world literature' (Juvan 2008: 71). It is important to note that the canon of world literature up to the late 1970s was essentially Eurocentric. Namely, the concept of *world literature* was understood to mean European and Euro-American literature. Such ideas were clearly expressed in Eliot's texts, especially those written after World War Two, as well as in Stefanović's Forewords, which I will discuss.

In several of his Forewords, Stefanović stresses that Shakespeare's plays were written on the basis of *existing material*, claiming that that was the standard procedure used by writers. He compares them to the Bible and the literature of the classical period, as the core texts of European civilization, as well as to the great European poets and writers, like Goethe, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky and Cervantes. Thus, he shows the *unity* of world literature in the sense of European and Euro-American literature. Shakespeare appears as a *classic* whose work is universal and immeasurably valuable, comprehensive and unique. Being a classic, it was necessary for the relatively young Serbian national literature, which was going through a process of modernization, to have translations of his works available in the local language.

Below, I will outline several theses and discuss Stefanović's interpretations of Shakespeare's dramas to show how his approach is comparative when attempting to present European literature through the classic interpretation of one unified whole.

1) Shakespeare's dramas were written using existing sources

In the Foreword to *Romeo and Juliet*, Svetislav Stefanović insists on the fact that Shakespeare used stories that were already well known, much liked and popular; thus, he comments:

> It seems that Shakespeare's creativity was not enough to produce such great masterpieces belonging to the whole of world literature, but that the work of all generations of cultured peoples was needed. Thus, the themes that *Romeo and Juliet* dealt with had already been used by a series of writers before Shakespeare, which gave him not only ready-made material, but also made the plot one of the most popular (Stefanović 1928: 6).

Stefanović expressed variations on this idea of Shakespeare's creative process. Thus, in the Foreword for *Othello,* we read:

> Shakespeare took an existing story for his *Othello* as he did for the rest of his plays. He did not invent the plots of his plays, in the same way an architect of a temple or palace does not make his own bricks or other material, but takes ready-made material and uses it for his work of art. Maybe it shows a certain economy of creativity, maybe the need for one basic impulse that spurs the inspiration for further works of art (Stefanović 1921a: V).

Specifically, for example, at the beginning of his introductory text to *King Lear*, he points out that: '[the s]tory of King Lear goes back in history to the oldest mythical Celtic legends in Britain' (Stefanović 1923: V). Asserting that *The Winter's Tale* belongs to Shakespeare's last creative phase of 'great romances, dramatized fairy tales and legends which together with *Cymbeline* and *The Tempest* make up the last trilogy' but also 'the final phase of his view on life' (Stefanović 1939b: X), Stefanović mentions that the specific material was taken from the most popular novel of the time, written by Robert Green, entitled *Pandosto: The Triumph of Time*. He highlights that all the playwrights in *world literature* had done the same: used sources such as legends, myths, history, novels, or stories from everyday life (Stefanović 1921a: V).

However, Shakespeare's attitude towards the existing sources that were at his disposal changed over time. When writing *Julius Caesar*, his source was the English translation of Plutarch, translated by Sir Thomas North from Jacques Amyot's French translation. In this drama and others

from Roman history, like *Coriolanus* and *Antony and Cleopatra,* he followed his sources more literally, using not just the plot lines, but whole scenes and chunks of text. In contrast, when his sources were Italian novels (as for *Othello*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *Measure for Measure*) or when he used Holinshed's *Chronicle of English history*, he would only take 'the bare skeleton'. Hence, in *Julius Caesar* and *Coriolanus*, a whole series of scenes and speeches were mostly versified versions of North's prose text. All the characters in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* can be found in Plutarch's *Lives*. However, when Stefanović compares North's translation of Plutarch's prose with Shakespeare's version, he points out how the latter turned it masterfully into miraculously magnificent poetry (Stefanović 1939d: XV). However, there are also plays like *Midsummer Night's Dream* that are characterized as being the most liberal mixture of different elements:

> …old Greek and Roman mythology, classical heroic and Medieval romantic spirit, stiff academism and the most debauched popular traditionalism. From Plutarch's *Theseus*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, from which he took the name of Titania, from the popular Medieval novel *Huon de Bordeaux* from which Oberon was taken in the French version – Alberih from the German tradition, from Montemor's Spanish pastoral prose romances and popular Medieval miracle narratives and mysteries whose main actors were artisans and workers – Shakespeare composed the most miraculous and most charming comedy and as Sir Sydney Lee said 'conquered a new empire for art' (Stefanović 1924: V-VI).

2) The comparative approach and the transnational transmission of themes, motives and world (i.e. European) literature narratives

In order to show how themes, motives and narratives are transmitted from one epoch to another, from one local context to another, and from one genre to another, Stefanović tracks them assiduously up to their appearance in Shakespeare's dramas.[3] Thus when writing about *Othello*, he outlines the plot of the Italian novel *A Moor of Venice* by Giovanni Battista Giraldi. Mapping the different variations of this story, he returns

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[3]   The most frequently used source for this data is the book: C.K. Simrock, *Quellen des Shakespeare in Novellen*, Sagen und Märchen, 1870 (Stefanović 1921a: VII).

to Shakespeare and explains that, in terms of aesthetic values, this is Shakespeare's greatest tragedy, comparable to the tragedies of Sophocles, Aeschylus, and Euripides (Stefanović 1923: VI). He analyzes the novel by the Italian writer Luigi da Porta, printed in Venice in 1535 and the direct source for *Romeo and Juliet*, and notes that the motive of the death of two star-crossed lovers could be found in an ancient Greek novel by Xenophon of Ephesus from the 2nd century. This theme reached France with Bandello's famous version and it was via the French adaptation of this story in Belleforest's famous *Histoires tragiques* that it came to England, where it became very popular in various versions. Giving a detailed list of sources for *Hamlet* from the first mention of the Danish prince in *Saxo Grammaticus* (12th century) onwards, Stefanović mentions that Hamlet's prototype can be found not only in Roman history with the character of Brutus, but also, by going further back, in the ancient myth 'of the seasons from which so many mythological and general narrative topics of the earlier ages of European literature developed' (Stefanović 1921b: VI). He adds that Simrock had already written that *Hamlet* was the reverse of Orestes. Similarly, when discussing *Twelfth Night*, he notes that John Manningham had mentioned in his diary that this comedy was reminiscent of *The Comedy of Errors* or Plautus's *Menaechmi*, but above all of the Italian comedy *Gli Inganni*. Three Italian comedies of that name existed before Shakespeare, written by Secchia, Gonzaga and Cornaccinia, but older than these and closer to Shakespeare was *Gli Inganni,* produced in Siena in 1531 and printed in Venice in 1537. It gained world fame 'and was staged and translated in Spain, France and England, before Shakespeare began writing his comedy' (Stefanović 1922: VIII). Although the exact origin of this comedy cannot be established, one possible source could be an adaptation of this motive written by the Italian novelist Bandello, whose works were a source for playwrights of Shakespeare's time. Giraldi Centio was another Italian novelist whose novels were a source for dramatists and he adapted this theme in his *Hecatommithi*. Another more significant source for Shakespeare's play is mentioned: the story of Apollonious and Silla by Barnabe Riche, printed in the book *Farewelle to Militarie Profession*.

When discussing Shakespeare's characters, Stefanović writes about their prototypes. I will give two examples. Firstly, the unhappy queen Hermione from *The Winter's Tale* belongs to the group of unjustly persecuted women which, with numerous variants and variations of this character, probably represents the most widely-used theme of the entire early and

late Medieval period, but actually dates back to the ancient classical world (Stefanović 1939b: XXI). Secondly, Autolycus is one of the most daring and most original of all Shakespeare's characters. Stefanović traces his genealogy back to Homer's *Odyssey* and Book 11 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, with Ovid becoming popular and accessible in England through Arthur Golding's translation, of which there were several editions (Stefanović 1939b: XXIII-XXXIV).

According to Stefanović, Shakespeare's work is always modern and popular. It is the second most popular literary work after the Bible. Both embody the spirit of good and the spirit of evil, which is maybe the spirit of creation and the same spirit which leads Christ to 'Calvary, and Hamlet to torture himself and Lear to madness, and Macbeth to the witches and Othello to Iago' (Stefanović 1921a: VI). He also emphasizes that *Hamlet*, as the most famous, most studied, most often performed, most comprehensive, and most profound of all Shakespeare's plays, is, apart from the Bible, the work which has been most written about.

3) Literary devices and interpretations of Shakespearean drama

When discussing *Romeo and Juliet*, Svetislav Stefanović notes that this was the play when Shakespeare finally freed himself from the classicist poetics he had followed up to that point by rejecting the unity of character and dramatic activity, the principle of one main character-one main plot. New principles of constructing drama were established in the play, characteristic of Shakespeare and his contemporaries – the *parallelism of plot and character* (for example, the hatred of the Montagues and Capulets and the love of the young Romeo and Juliet) and the *combination of the comic and tragic* (Stefanović 1928: 9). If we compare Shakespeare's plays written in different periods, we can say that in his later period, e.g. in comedies such as *The Tempest* and *The Winter's Tale*, he showed a 'combination of realism with the most imaginary elements of folk tales' (Stefanović 1923: VII), while in *King Lear* that combination appears in the form of tragedy. In these plays, there is a *parallelism of the main themes*. In the comedies, two themes take place in parallel and very often they intersect and serve to mirror each other; the same happens in the tragedies *Hamlet* and especially in *King Lear*. In *Lear*, the tragedies of Lear and Gloucester run parallel 'crossing and intersecting each other, not following the life of one, no matter how great a man, an individual, but following the lines and essence of the human being as such

in his social and later on in his cosmic existence' (Stefanović 1923: XIII). In *Twelfth Night* there are also two parallel plots, stylistically independent and separate: Viola's comedy of situations written in verse and Malvolio's comedy of character written in prose. While sources for Viola's story can be found in Italian comedies and novels, the story of Malvolio is considered to be Shakespeare's genuine creation (Stefanović 1922: VIII). As a special device, we can single out *a play-within-a-play*, an example of which is the comedy by the Athenian craftsmen, which is maybe the funniest scene in world dramaturgy (Stefanović 1924: IX). Stefanović compares it with another play-within-a-play – the actor's performance in *Hamlet* which should reveal the crime of Hamlet's uncle. In *Midsummer Night's Dream,* the play-within-a-play presents the tragic death of Pyramus and Thisbe and can be understood as an 'unrestrained parody of all that is painful and tragic in human life, a play of imagination or the spirit where the deepest pain of tragic love, the pain that drives the desperate to suicide, is nothing more than a farce' (Stefanović 1924: IX).

Stefanović presents other interpretations of Shakespeare's works. Coleridge, for example, considered *Othello* a tragedy 'of a very primitive man who does not yet differentiate what seems to be from what is reality' (Stefanović 1921a: XI). Dealing with the discourse of primitivism as Coleridge did, Stefanović explains that the play is about a tragic conflict, about a hero who belongs 'to a different, foreign, lower race and who pays a high price for elevating himself' (Stefanović 1921a: XI). Comparing the Italian novella *Moore of Venice* with Shakespeare's *Othello*, he concludes that, in contrast to the Italian novella where people appear as they are in real life, in 'Shakespeare's tragedy the very same people become expressions of all mankind: a whole world can be constructed from each of them; and a world can be fitted into each of them' (Stefanović 1921a: X). Stefanović includes the character of Iago in the ranks of Shakespeare's great analytic characters like Hamlet and Macbeth. He knows life like Hamlet and understands the noble nature of Othello and the unbridled goodness and generosity of Desdemona. While Iago is a stereotype in the Italian novel, in Shakespeare's play 'he has become a grandiose figure thanks to the force of his will and intellect, as if in one figure he has become Hamlet, condemned to be the avenger, and philosopher and hero Macbeth, driven and condemned to be a criminal' (Stefanović 1921a: XIII). It all leads to the conclusion that Shakespeare had out of tragedy made jealousy:

> ...a gigantic conflict of good and evil and a tragedy of conflict between the primitive and primordial virtues of the human race and refined culture that goes as far as enjoying evil and crime itself and finally a tragedy dealing with the issue of race. Faced with these greater tragedies, the issue of jealousy almost disappears, i.e., in these greater and bigger tragedies it is elevated and sublimed (Stefanović 1921a: XI).

Comparing Goethe's *Faust* with *Othello*, he wrote that unlike Goethe, who strives to elevate man to the world of spirits, Shakespeare seems to lower the whole world of spirits into the human sphere, which is a greater artistic process. The intention to bring the spiritual into the human sphere shows that Shakespeare's drama evolved out of the rituals of the Christian church (Stefanović 1921a: VI).

When discussing those plays dealing with Roman history, *Coriolanus, Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, Stefanović sees them as a trilogy. *Coriolanus* deals with the founding of Rome and *Antony and Cleopatra* with Roman decadence and the beginning of its collapse (Stefanović 1939d: XVIII). He stresses that these plays do not only deal with the tragedy of the characters themselves, but are tragedies dealing with 'the great Roman epoch – with human history' (Stefanović 1939d: XVIII). However, they are also 'tragedies of certain great, powerful, spiritual driving forces of human life and history' (Stefanović 1939d: XVIII). Here again we can see the then dominant Eurocentrism, where the history of all mankind is equated with the history of the beginning of Western civilization.

As A. Brandl noted, in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shakespeare parodies his youthful 'moving, tragic history of *Romeo and Juliet*' (Stefanović 1924: VI). Both plays deal with the devastating power of love. While the lovers in *Romeo and Juliet*[4] really do kill themselves, in *Midsummer Night's Dream* the killing takes place on the Athenian craftsmen's stage in 'Pyramus and Thisbe' and is carried out with a stage knife used by actors. By using this comic device, Shakespeare showed the drama of love as the most devastating, tragic force that seizes not only the human world and life on earth, but also the divine and cosmic world. Explaining the infatuation of gods and men with love, Stefanović uses Nietzsche's terminology conceptualizing it as:

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[4] Stefanović thought that from the time of *Romeo and Juliet* up to Goethe's *Werther,* love had not been portrayed in such tragic tones as that in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet,* thus giving love its expression for centuries to come.

> …the contrast between the quiet beauty of the classics and the chaotic beauty of romanticism, between the Apollonian and Dionysian spirit. While passions infatuate the gods and humans, so they talk nonsense, argue, fight, insult each other, become evil – wisdom subdues love and all other passions, and is overfilled with beauty, beauty that flows from Theseus' words and Hippolyta's mouth like the perfect harmony of the Good and the Beautiful (Stefanović 1924: VII).

In addition, Puck, as the mediator between the supernatural world and the world of mortals, gives special power to this Shakespearean play, as well as to the mythical characters of Titania and Oberon. Stefanović thinks that he is one of the most beautiful of all Shakespeare's creations and the most daring match to the ethereal and tragic Ariel from the *Tempest*. As a kind of airy, forest and domestic spirit, Puck is the 'eternal, mild, kind, never bitter always smiling irony of the higher powers that oversees man and his destiny, even the destiny of the gods' (Stefanović 1924: VIII-IX). While many of Shakespeare's characters had earlier versions, Lear's Fool is entirely Shakespeare's creation. He is a human type somewhere between Sancho Panza and Mephisto. Half cynic, half person of common sense, the eternal companion of human tragedy, 'with all the power of realism the chorus of the Greek tragedy has been brought to life' (Stefanović 1923: XVII). One of the great paradoxes of Shakespeare's genius was, explains Stefanović, to have transformed a comic figure from his earlier play into a profoundly tragic one. He compares Lear's Fool with the fool Feste from *Twelfth Night*, who 'is the noblest and most beautiful of Shakespeare's creations in the comedy genre just as Lear's Fool is his highest creation in the genre of tragedy' (Stefanović 1922: XIII). Stefanović pays special attention to the character of Hamlet, which surpasses the artistic representation of an individual because 'he is a type representing all cultured mankind; cultured first of all' (Stefanović 1921b: V), stressing that Hamlet represents a type of culture, i.e. high culture. When Hazlitt listed his character traits, he spoke about a type of man, about a cultured type (Stefanović 1921b: V). According to Stefanović, Faust and Hamlet are parallel works of world literature. They connect the lowest, deepest foundations and the highest peaks of literature and culture with the same artistic expression. Like *Hamlet*, *Faust* also came out of popular stories and legends after previous attempts to adapt and stage it. There was an older *Hamlet* than Shakespeare's and there is a preserved *Hamlet* from popular stories where only the contours of the main characters of his play exist (Stefanović 1921b: VI-VII).

Summarizing the numerous interpretations of Hamlet's character from Coleridge and Goethe up to the time the introductory notes were written, Stefanović groups them into three categories on the basis of which Shakespeare constructs Hamlet's character. The first discusses Hamlet's intellectual heights, the second talks about his paralyzed will, while the third deals with his melancholy that develops into simulated madness (Stefanović 1921b: XI). Hamlet is 'the end of the past and the beginning of something new'. He was the first to feel what is termed after Nietzsche disgust over the misery of human existence; we can find similar thoughts in *Macbeth*. There are numerous copies of *Hamlet* from German romanticism to the Russian Hamlet in Ivan S. Turgenev's stories. Stefanović points out that apart from the Bible, *Hamlet* was and has remained the fundamental book of importance for the spiritual life of the modern world (Stefanović 1921b: XVII). An insight into the religious spirit of modern man cannot be gained without the *Bible*, just as the philosophical and moral thought of modern man cannot be understood without *Hamlet*, even if both ideas are later rejected. He develops his thoughts in the following way:

> Hamlet is a great elevation of man above himself, the first great rotation of the value of human life after Christ's, the kind that even Dante, the greatest poet of the Christian epoch, did not do; and which firstly Goethe without the Christian spirit, in the sense of a vain attempt at resurrecting the old Hellenic spirit, and then Nietzsche, similarly in a vain attempt to resurrect the Dionysian spirit, tried to do. In their own way, the first with his aspiration for harmony and the cult of harmony, the second with his aspiration for power and the cult of power, both Goethe and Nietzsche actually tried to elevate some values that were not new, but were those that Hamlet had toppled: the value and cult of harmony and the enjoyment of life and the value and cult of power. We say that Hamlet had toppled these values once and forever. He was the first to feel that harmony was actually the harmony of baseness of general life, human beings and human nature, and what is called enjoyment in life is actually enjoyment in the baseness and transience of all life. He was also the first to feel that the path of power is really the path of evil and crime and not the path of the happiness he is striving for. He elevated the value of the human spirit above these values: he was the first prophet, the first oracle of the gospel of the spirit, none other

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than the spirit of knowledge. The greatest aspect which brings man closer to God is the one that Hamlet already knows – the power of knowledge (Stefanović 1921b: XVIII-XIX)

Shakespeare probably liked *Hamlet* more than his other plays because he constructed the whole play carefully as well as certain parts of it and the significant scenes, especially those Hamlet appears in. This is confirmed by the existence of three versions of the text, where Shakespeare painstakingly 'modeled, corrected, supplemented, changed and improved the text' of the theme in accordance to his inner thoughts (Stefanović 1921b: XIX). Hamlet is a complicated character with an endless number of nuances. He was the first prototype of the great tragic characters that would appear hundreds of years later. Hamlet was a genius of skepticism to a number of commentators, and a genius of fantasy to others. However, Stefanović thinks that it is crucial to note those of his attributes that give precedence to the spirit, that elevate the spiritual above all other values. That was the belief of a genius, of Hamlet, but above all of Shakespeare, who preaches that 'only the spiritual is eternal' (Stefanović 1921b: XXI). Hamlet shows how Shakespeare saw the future and in it 'the life of mankind, cultured, and although it evolved from past forms lacking culture, it can never go back to these forms and never will' (Stefanović 1921b: XXI). One phase of mankind ends with him and a new one begins. Hamlet is spirit fighting matter and Stefanović predicts only 'spirit can overcome matter' (Stefanović 1921b: XIX).

4) Problems of translation

One important aspect of Shakespeareology is to show the genealogy of Shakespeare's themes, narratives, motives and characters and this is what Svetislav Stefanović has done in his texts on Shakespeare's plays. Following these genealogies, we see how the themes, motives, narratives and characters migrate and are transformed from one context to another by means of translation. Thanks to translations, a text of one culture can become accessible to another. Translations are the foundation on which the literary practice of a language is constructed; they enable and broaden the literary repertoire. Stefanović's comparative method applied to Shakespeare's dramas shows the dynamics of cultural transactions that take place through translations.

I will discuss another aspect of translating Shakespeare that Stefanović dealt with at the end of his Foreword to *Macbeth*. Shakespeare's language is dense and complex; thus, each translation is at best only an interpretation. This is reinforced by the fact that some of his plays have reached us in very poor condition, which makes translating them all the more difficult. In his own translation, in order to demonstrate this, Stefanović mentions the translations into other languages of a few verses from Macbeth's famous monologue in which he decides to kill King Duncan. Comparing the French, Italian and German versions of this fragment by Maurice Maeterlinck, Benjamin Laroche, August Wilhelm Schlegel, Ludwig Tieck and Cino Chiarini, and those from the Serbian, Croatian and Slovene translations by Vladimir Nazor, Oton Župančič and himself, he concluded that not only did each translator express himself differently, but each had a different understanding of the controversial details:

> Understanding of the meaning spans extremes that I have cited in my comment: If the (brutal) murder encompassed (as if in a net) all the consequences and thus insured success for itself; or: If the murder excluded, prevented all the consequences – by entangling them in a net, capturing them – and thus with this act ensured success for itself. By one understanding, the murder casts a net on all of its consequences and in that net, in that catch gains success; according to the other understanding, the murder liberates itself from all the consequences because it entwines them in a net and does not allow them to act, but by the very execution of the murder attains success (Stefanović 1939a: XXI).

Apart from the problem of understanding the meaning of the verses and their interpretation, he also warns that much of the word play in not translatable. Stefanović gives an example: the original two verses from the last scene of Act III in *Macbeth*:

> Strange things I have heard that will to hand
> Which must be acted ere they can be scann'd
> > > (cited in: Stefanović 1939a: XXII).

Numerous examples of French translations are given in their original French form with the Serbian translation, followed by Stefanović's comment that all translations convey the same meaning, that they all have the same words, but there are incredible differences in the shades of meaning. It

shows how simple verses can be translated and their meaning expressed in many different ways, but 'not one of the cited versions, apart from retaining the meaning and all the key words, has retained the versification and rhymed verse; thus, it does not express what the original does in the shades of meaning: some say more and some say less, but all in a different way to the original' (Stefanović 1939a: XXIV). He says that there is a French translation by De Roquigni that stops the tradition of prose translation by translating *Macbeth* in rhymed verse; it is a concise and shorter version, closer to the spirit of the original. He adds that Schlegel's German translation is actually an adaptation in accordance with the drama conventions of the age he lived in. He also discusses the translations of 'us – the Yugoslavs' (Stefanović 1939a: XXIV). He gives examples of how Shakespeare's problematic verse is worded in his own Serbian translation, written in 1902, then in the Croatian translation by Nazor from 1917 and the 1921 Slovene translation by Župančič. Of his own translation, he says that it is almost literally true to the original. Nazor's version is most extensive and least true to the original because the translator has omitted the rhyme and changed the rhythm, the form of the verse, because he did not translate from the English original but from an Italian prose translation. Župančič's is among 'the most concise' of our translations and although he exceeds the number of verses in comparison to the English original, he used 'iambic decasyllables with retained rhyme in verses' (Stefanović 1939a: XXVIII).[5]

5. Conclusion

Shakespeare's works have been present in Eastern Europe since the 17th century with the first translations made from German texts. Particularly interesting were the translations of Shakespeare written from the 18th to the 20th century at a time when European national identities were being formed (Stříbrný 2012: 57-76).

Svetislav Stefanović wrote his texts on William Shakespeare from the perspective of the central, hegemonic position of European literature as

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[5] Vladislava Gordić Petković's analysis is interesting. She compared how Konstantin Stanišič, Laza Kostić and Svetislav Stefanović translated Shakespeare's metaphors in regards to: 'whether they retell the meaning and change the meaning, reveal the original or on the contrary hide it from the reader' (Gordić-Petković 2006: 8).

world literature, which was standard procedure up to the 1970s. Stefanović treats Shakespeare as a classic, which means that he accepts the assumption that his work is universal and always modern because each new generation recognizes its worth. He emphasizes that his works were created on the basis of existing sources. By using the comparative method, Stefanović shows how themes, motives, narratives and characters migrate from one context to another, which indicates the unity of European literature (regarded as world literature). Translation plays a key role in this process. Stefanović's interpretations have a performative effect: Shakespeare's work became a part of Serbian literary heritage and at the same time Serbian literary culture is shown to be a part of the world system because Shakespeare is one of the most significant classics in that system as the Forewords show in detail.

Translated by Vanda Perović

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Дубравка Ђурић

ВИЛИЈАМ ШЕКСПИР У ИНТЕРПРЕТАЦИЈАМА
СВЕТИСЛАВА СТЕФАНОВИЋА И СВЕТСКА КЊИЖЕВНОСТ

Сажетак

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Кључне речи: класик, комаративни приступ, превод, светска књижевност, Шекспир, Стефановић