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A Croat Forerunner of Shakespeare

*In Commemoration of the 400th Anniversary of the Death of Marin Držić
(1508—1567)*

To an English or American reader any comparison between Držić and Shakespeare may seem pretentious, for Držić is not so well known outside his own country as one would like him to be, or as he deserves to be, or as sometimes we deceive ourselves that he is. Things are slowly improving; witness also the International Symposium on "Marin Držić and Renaissance Comedy" ("Marin Držić u svjetlu renesansne komediografije") organized by the Yugoslav Academy of Zagreb and Stanford University from 6 to 12 August 1967 at Dubrovnik.¹ This was the first, national or international, gathering of its kind to be entirely and exclusively dedicated to Marin Držić.

Until very recently Držić and his work were practically *terra incognita* to all except his fellow-countrymen. An exception to this rule, to some extent, is Italy where some Slavists have always and erroneously liked to look upon the old Croatian literature of Dubrovnik and Dalmatia as upon an extension of their own. Another and still greater exception to the rule is Germany where scholarship has always been, perhaps notoriously, thorough. On the other hand, this ignorance concerning Držić has certainly been most complete in English speaking countries.

We would look in vain for the name of Marin Držić in popular English and American handbooks on the theatre or histories of drama. In Allardyce Nicoll's *World Drama from Aeschylus to Anouilh* (London, 1949) there is a very short note

¹ This essay is an expanded version of a paper read at the Symposium and printed in its original form in the Držić quatercentenary issue of the review *Dubrovnik* (X, No 3, pp. 3—11, Dubrovnik, 1967) under the title "Šekspirske teme u djelu Marina Držića" ("Shakespearean Themes in the Plays of Marin Držić").

on Držić where, unfortunately, his first name is given as Martin. There is an equally brief entry on him (20 lines) in *Cassel's Encyclopaedia of Literature* where Držić appears as a nondescript "Dalmatian" poet and playwright, where the date of his birth is wrong and where his birthplace is called Ragusa although Držić himself in his plays frequently and exclusively calls it Dubrovnik. And, as far as I know, that is all.

The first serious English contribution to scholarship on Držić is Vera Javarek's well-informed article "Marin Držić, a Ragusan Playwright", published in *The Slavonic and East European Review* (Vol. 37, No 88, London, 1958) to commemorate the 450th anniversary of Držić's birth. Four American scholars contributed interesting papers to the above mentioned Dubrovnik Symposium (August 1967): Wendel Cole (Stanford) on "Scenography in the days of Marin Držić", Albert Bates Lord (Harvard) on "The marriage of words and meaning in *Plakir*", David Bynum (Harvard) "On translating Dalmatian Renaissance literature in its own style" and Eric P. Hamp (Chicago) on "Držić and dialectology". Of these only the first two papers have so far been published in the periodical *Forum* (XIV, No 9—10, Zagreb, September—October 1967) in a Serbo-Croat translation.

I may mention in passing that it is wrong to call Držić a "Ragusan" or a "Dalmatian"² playwright, as some English and American scholars do. That gives his name some little tang of provincialism which he does not deserve. It would be just as wrong, speaking of nationality, to call Shakespeare a Warwickshire poet. He is that too, but he is much more. And so is Držić; he is the greatest playwright in the old Croatian Renaissance theatre, the best that any of the nations of Yugoslavia has ever produced and a significant dramatist by international standards. But even in his own country Držić has not always been the living presence that he is today. Until fairly recently he was offered only lip-service, being discretely read in schools and worshipped as a dead classic. It was only in the late thirties of this century, in 1938 to be exact, thanks almost entirely to the brilliant though somewhat too free an adaptation of Marko Fotez, that *Uncle Maroje* (*Dundo Maroje*) started from Zagreb on its triumphant progress through the whole of Yugoslavia and beyond its frontiers.

Coming to the main subject of this paper, which is "Shakespearean themes in the plays of Marin Držić", I must mention at the outset that Shakespeare was three years old when

² If we consult, e. g., the *Shorter Oxford Dictionary* (1933) we shall find that "Dalmatian, a" means "of Dalmatia, the Austrian(!) province on the Adriatic; whence *Dalmatian dog*, the spotted coach-dog. Hence sb., A native of Dalmatia; a Dalmatian dog". Poor Držić!

Držić died, so that there could not have possibly been any "influence" of Shakespeare on Držić. Nor could Držić have influenced Shakespeare for, as far as we know, Shakespeare could not have seen *Uncle Maroje* or read it in its original tongue. If we do not take into account the privately printed version of Marko Fotez' adaptation (translated by Margaret Flower and Oton Grozdić), which was used for his production of the play at the Belgrade Theatre of Coventry in 1958, the first, abridged, English translation of the play (executed by Sonia Bičanić) was published for the Dubrovnik Festival, to serve as an aid to English speaking playgoers, only in the Summer of 1967.

If we could assume as a hypothesis that Shakespeare was an expert in Serbo-Croat, we might write a learned Ph. D. thesis about Držić's influence on Shakespeare. We could say, for instance, that when Shakespeare wrote in *Macbeth* "To be thus is nothing; But to be safely thus" (III, 1.48—49), he was copying Držić whose *Miser*, or *Skup*, trembling for his treasure, for his "tèzōro", says: "Not to have gold is bad! To have it thus is bad and worse!" (*Ne imat zlato — zlo! Imat ga na ovi način — zlo i gore! Skup*, I, 5). Or, when *Macbeth* says: "That which should accompany old age, As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends, I must not look to have" (V, 3. 24—26), we might suppose that he was echoing Držić's Nurse (*Baba*) in *Uncle Maroje* who, speaking of the reckless young men of her days, says: "Poor you, in your old age you pay for your sins, when it were time for you to have honour and peace and recompense for your good deeds" (*A vi, brižni, u staros grijehe vaše plaćate, kad bi vrijeme od dobrijuh djela da platu, čas i pokoj imate*, III, 12).³

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

The expression of *Troilus'* desperate love for *Cressida* is, we might say, reminiscent of young *Kamilo's* wailing for his

³ This sentence, like numerous other cuts of the Dubrovnik production, is omitted also in the Festival English translation.

Andrijana at the very beginning of Act V of Držić's *Miser* where in the same context Kamilo mentions even the Rape of Helen and the War of Troy: "I know that in old days for such a thing Troy was captured. And was not Helen ravished by Paris?" (*Znam er se je za ovaku stvar u staro brijeme i Troja uzela. Pariš ne ugrabi li Elenu?*). And, finally, when the King in *Hamlet* asks: "How fares our cousin Hamlet?" and Hamlet replies: "Excellent, i' faith; of the chameleon's dish: I eat the air, promise-crammed" (III, 2. 98—99), we are reminded that fifty years before, in Držić's play, Uncle Maroje's servant Bokčilo, who is being starved by his master, had spoken of "chameleons... that feed on air" (*kamilionti... koji se jajerom hrane*. I, 1). Etc., etc.

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

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

If we leave out of account this last play, which is actually a free version of Lodovico Dolce's adaptation of Euripides' tragedy, we see that Držić as a playwright is almost exclusively a writer of comedies (his pastoral plays too are partly that), so that his work may be compared only with Shakespeare's comedies. In this field there are some striking similarities between the works of the two playwrights. Držić's pastoral plays have analogies with *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, the characters of the *Miser* and of Uncle Maroje correspond to Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*, *Pjerin*, like Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors*, is based partly on the *Menaechmi* of Plautus, and in one of his pastoral plays (*Venere*), like Shake-

speare in his narrative poem, Držić deals with the story of Venus and Adonis. It is interesting also to note that Držić took the trouble of having only his lyrical poems and his plays in rhymed verse printed (with a dedication "to his friends") just as Shakespeare himself during his life-time published only his two narrative poems (with dedications to the Earl of Southampton). Both playwrights, for different reasons, neglected to see their best plays through the press.

Ever since Wilhelm Creizenach in his *Geschichte des neueren Dramas* (3 volumes, Halle, 1894—1903) at the very beginning of this century drew a comparison, flattering for Držić, between his *Grižula* (or *Plakir*) and Shakespeare's *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* (Vol. II, 1901, p. 521), people have often tried to see affinities between the two plays. Many years ago Držić's play was performed with great success at the Dubrovnik Festival, adapted and directed by Marko Fotez under the title of *Plakir*, after the name of one of the main characters, a kind of Ragusan Puck; and since then dates the popularity of the play. Perhaps that in some details Fotez was inspired in his adaptation and production by Shakespeare's play, so that spectators were inclined to attribute to Držić what was actually Shakespeare's and to see in *Plakir* or *Grižula* more "Shakespearian elements" than in the remaining four pastoral plays of Marin Držić.

But these elements do exist in *Plakir*, and the latest scholar to deal with them, in passing, is Professor Albert Bates Lord in his above mentioned brilliant paper on "The marriage of words and meaning in *Plakir*". After stating that the plot of Držić's play "was apparently a variant of materials available throughout Renaissance Europe", A. B. Lord continues: "As has been noted often, there is a surprising similarity between Marin Držić's *Plakir* and William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*. Now you will remember that Shakespeare was three years old when Marin Držić died. Pavle Popović, rather unnecessarily I think, remarked that Držić did not know *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, and I might observe, equally unnecessarily I hope, that Shakespeare did not know *Plakir*. Ergo, the 'stuff' of these plays must have been current in both the north and the south, ready at hand to be made into the 'dreams' of gifted playwrights such as Držić and Shakespeare".⁴

Then A. B. Lord proceeds, and here I find it more difficult to follow him, to discover similarities between Držić's *Plakir* and Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. "I might add in passing", he says, "that *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* is not the only play of Shakespeare's with elements similar to those in Držić's

⁴ *Forum*, XIV, No 9—10, p. 592, Zagreb 1967. I refer to the Serbo-Croat translation of Professor Lord's article because the original English text of it, from which I quote, has not yet been printed.

Plakir. I believe that the roles of Grižula and Omakala bear some likeness to those of the Duke and Rosalind in *As You Like It*, and Grižula might also have an affinity with Jacques in that same play".⁵

Not satisfied with having detected similarities between Držić's *Plakir* and two of Shakespeare's plays, in a spirited passage of his essay where he traces the origins of Držić's character of Plakir (or Pleasure, or Voluptas) back to *The Golden Ass* of Apuleius, Professor Lord brings into contact Držić's character and its pedigree with a stanza in Edmund Spenser's *The Faery Queene* before Shakespeare on the one hand and with a passage in Milton's *Comus* after him on the other.

Having mentioned the fact that "Pavle Popović was uncertain of what mythology Držić was following in the character of Pleasure, son of Cupid", Professor Lord (*o. c.*, p. 596) says: "Yet *The Golden Ass* of Lucius Apuleius was very popular in Europe at precisely Držić's time and somewhat before that, and you will recall that this marvellous tale of transformation contains the best known version of the story of Cupid and Psyche". And then he quotes the concluding paragraph of the story of Cupid and Psyche from book VI of the *Asinus Aureus* which ends: "Thus Psyche was married to Cupid, and after in due time she was delivered of a child, whom we call Pleasure", which in the original Latin reads: "Sic rite Psyche convenit in manum Cupidinis: et nascitur illis maturo partu filia, quam Voluptatem nominamus". We see that A. B. Lord translated the Latin "filia" by the neuter "child" in order to make it fit also Držić's male Plakir.

Spenser, more faithful to the original story, in *The Faery Queene* (Book III, Canto VI, stanza 50) calls Pleasure "the daughter of Cupid and Psyche". The stanza, from which A. B. Lord cites two lines, deserves to be quoted here in full. Speaking of Cupid, Spenser says:

And his true love, fair Psyche, with him plays,
Fair Psyche to him lately reconciled,
After long troubles and unmeet upbrays
With which his mother Venus her reviled,
And eke himself her cruelly exiled:
But now in steadfast love and happy state
She with him lives, and hath him born a child,
Pleasure, that doth both gods and men aggrate,
Pleasure, the daughter of Cupid and Psyche late.

As A. B. Lord further says, in a memorable passage in *Comus* (ll. 1001—1011) which, like Držić's *Plakir*, is "a wedding masque", John Milton provides Cupid and Psyche with twins

⁵ *Ibidem*.

called Youth and Joy of whom the first, very likely, is a boy and the second a girl:

...and on the ground
Sadly sits the Assyrian queen:
But far above in spangled sheen
Celestial Cupid, her fam'd son, advanced
Holds his dear Psyche sweet entranced,
After her wandering labours long,
Till free consent the gods among
Make her his eternal bride,
And from her fair unspotted side
Two blissful twins are to be born,
Youth and Joy; so Jove hath sworn.

After suggesting that Držić's Plakir together with the offspring of Cupid and Psyche in both Spenser and Milton have a common origin in *The Golden Ass*, A. B. Lord reminds us that the *editio princeps* of Apuleius' work appeared in Rome in 1469; the first German translation around 1480; two French translations in 1553 and 1558; a Spanish one around 1510; and William Adlington's English translation in 1566. And so, concludes Professor Lord, "Plakir, Cupid's son was well known in European literary circles at the end of the 15th and throughout the 16th century" (o. c., p. 597).

But more important and much more to the point is A. B. Lord's next paragraph in which he draws a parallel between Držić's Plakir and Grižula (who is also a character in the play) on the one hand and Shakespeare's Puck and Bottom on the other. "Yet", he says, "Plakir as presented by Držić is closer to Puck in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* than to the over joyous and pleasant figures spoken of by Spenser or Milton. Shakespeare's Puck, like the household spirits of folklore with whom he has affinities, such as Robin Goodfellow, is capricious if not exactly malevolent or malicious. Držić's Plakir setting his trap for the Vila reminds us indeed of Puck and his tricks. They belong in the same category, just as Grižula is well paralleled by Bottom; for if the latter gains a donkey's head in transformation, the former has a sack put on his by the Vila Nymph". And then A. B. Lord adds: "A close translation of *Plakir* should be available for Shakespeare students who know no Serbo-Croatian to aid in their research into the sources of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*. There is more here than I have seen, at least, noted in the scholarship on Držić" (o. c., p. 597). I may mention that in the meantime a faithful, complete and fairly satisfactory English version of *Grižula* has been published for the Dubrovnik Festival (translated by Ljerka Djanešić and revised by Kathleen Herbert, Dubrovnik, 1967).

As I mentioned before, A. B. Lord remarks that "*A Midsummer-Night's Dream* is not the only play of Shakespeare's

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

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

U ovi grad jednome ja dođoh na Ivanjdan.

Držić, like Shakespeare after him, knew what he was doing when he fixed the time of his play on Midsummer Day, June 24, the day of S. John the Baptist, the longest day of the year when in the shortest night mischievous spirits, imps and goblins, walk abroad, when fairies take and witches have power to charm. In passing I may say that most translators of Shakespeare's play miss this point when they call it *A Summer-Night's Dream* (*Le Songe d'une Nuit d'Été*, *Sogno d'una notte d'estate*, *Ein Sommernachtstraum*, *San ljetne noći*, etc.). This is no ordinary summer night. Had Shakespeare wished it to be, he would have called it that.

Later in the play, Stanac, like Shakespeare's Bottom after him, is in danger of being transformed into an ass, and here Stanac is much more closely paralleled by Bottom than Grižula is in *Plakir* when, as A. B. Lord pointed out, he "has a sack put on his (head) by the Vila Nymph". In the *Novela od Stanca* the leading Vila or Fairy or Nymph (and it makes no difference, in fact it gives the whole procedure a more Shakespearian flavour, if "she" is a young man in disguise) calls her companions to go with her to gather magic herbs through the power of which they will turn Stanac into a donkey:

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

There is, however, a difference between the same animal in Držić and in Shakespeare. Držić's ass is no meek kindly creature seen perhaps by Shakespeare at English fairs, he is no romantic Bottom the Weaver with whom Titania falls in love and crowns his asinine ears with flowers. To Držić the donkey (for whom he has three synonyms: *magare*, *osao*, *tovar*)

is a reality, a coarse and hearty Balkan beast of burden; Držić must have often seen masses of them waiting outside the Gate of Ploče for their masters to finish selling in the City the goods which they had brought on their backs from the surrounding country.

In *Tirena*, his most ambitious pastoral play, Držić in two places takes the sated ass as a symbol of vulgar and idle young patricians. The peasant Radat says that youths have grown saucy "like sated donkeys" (II, 5):

Mlados je objiesna kakono sit tovar,

and a little before, this same Radat complains that an infernal fury has taken hold of people who, like sated asses that on S. George's Day make rude noises (Držić uses the "improper" verb), care not for honour or decency (II, 4):

Njeka je vražja bijes u ljudi udrila,

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

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

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

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

Coming back to Držić's *Tirena* we may say that in it Cupid (Kupido) plays the same role as Puck does in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, and here again the parallel

between Puck and Cupid is closer than that between Puck and Plakir in *Grižula*. Just as Puck by squeezing the juice of his "little western flower" on the eyes of his victims makes them fall in love with the first person they see, so Radat "hit with Cupid's archery" wakes up and, seeing the fairy Tirena, falls in love with her (end of III, 4; III, 5 and beginning of III, 6). Radat knows that he is "translated". "My brethren", he says, "your Radat is not what he was" (III, 7):

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

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

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

Of course, all these parallels are more than accidental for they spring from a common pastoral tradition. But what is more striking than single coincidental analogies is the skillful way in which Držić in his pastoral plays interweaves the three planes, the three worlds of the fairies, of the Ragusan citizens and of the peasants from the neighbourhood of Dubrovnik, just as half a century later Shakespeare will ingeniously intertwine the world of the fairies with the court of Athens and with the "mechanicals" in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*. Speaking of *Plakir*, A. B. Lord also praises the art with which Držić brings together the world of the fairies and that of men. "The second prologue", he says, "spoken by a Vila (Nymph), emphasizes also the disparity between the world of the Nymphs and that of men, but it also brings them together for the moment at the wedding of Vlaho Sorkočević and in the smaller spaces of Pile instead of the mountains. The Vila sets the stage and divides it" (o. c., p. 592). But in *Tirena* Držić's skill with which he blends into one harmonious whole the imaginary realm of the fairies and the real world of ordinary mortals, nobles and peasants, is still more perfect and more consistent than in *Plakir* or *Grižula*.

Next to the pastoral tradition, a common source from which both Držić and Shakespeare drew was the Latin comedy of Plautus. We know that Plautus was more than likely one of the Latin authors that were taught at the Stratford Grammar School and that Shakespeare there must have read at least some of his comedies, and one of them, the *Menaechmi*, was already available in an English translation. We know also that the immediate fruit of this reading was Shakespeare's early *The*

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

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

It seems to be much more rewarding to compare the character of the miser as treated by Držić and by Shakespeare. Držić seems to have been especially attracted by the character of the miser in general because, apart from *Skup*, the play based on the *Aulularia*, he put in the centre of his best and best-known comedy another miser, Uncle Maroje, from whom the play takes its name. Shakespeare in his turn wrote his variation on the theme of miserliness in *The Merchant of Venice* and the character of Shylock is undoubtedly one of his triumphs. Nobody, as far as I know, mentions Plautus as one of the sources for *The Merchant of Venice* but it is just possible that Shakespeare, who must have known the *Aulularia* of Plautus, had in mind his miser when he penned the character of Shylock. However that be, in both Držić's misers there are analogies with Shylock.

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

thousand ducats!" (*Jaohi, pet tisuć dukata!* I, 1), and when he later meets his son in Rome, he cries: "My ducats, you thief, give me back my ducats!" (*Dukate mi moje, dukate, ribaode jedan!* II, 5).

But Shylock is not only a miserly usurer, he is also a Jew, and his Judaism complicates matters. Neither Skup nor uncle Maroje are Jews, but in the play of *Uncle Maroje* we have Sadi, the Jewish jeweller and money-lender, and if we compare Shakespeare's Shylock with Držić's Sadi we will realize the great difference that existed between the attitude towards Jews in Shakespeare's London and in 16th century Dubrovnik. To Jews Elizabethan England was less hospitable than the little Republic of Dubrovnik at the same time. "There were however Jews in Elizabeth's London", says Peter Alexander in his Introduction to *The Merchant of Venice*, "and the Queen had for a time a Jewish physician, Roderigo Lopez. This unfortunate man was executed in June 1594 on being found guilty, with what justice it seems impossible to say, of attempting to poison the Queen. Whether this event suggested to Shakespeare that a play with a Jewish character would be topical we cannot say; what is clear however is that the medieval type of story in which a Jew might figure as the villain would not have seemed in any way unnatural to Shakespeare's audience" (P. Alexander, *Introductions to Shakespeare*, London and Glasgow, 1964, p. 69).

Držić's Sadi is certainly not an attractive character, but we cannot say that he is the villain of the piece. Shylock on the other hand, although not such a monster as, for example, Marlowe's Jew of Malta is, is not meant to be a good man either. To quote Professor Alexander once again, Shylock "is at the end an obstacle in the way of happiness and peace and has to be removed. But as a man who takes up a challenge flung at him by those who treat him as an enemy and has to play a lone hand he naturally holds our attention and makes us feel his passion . . . Shylock as an observer of the law feels entitled to all the law allows; his Judaism is uncompromising; and, although despised by the gentiles round him, he feels himself one of a peculiar people" (o. c., p. 70). He therefore feels impelled to make an apology for Judaism. "I am a Jew", he says in his famous speech. "Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions, fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?" (III, 1, 51—62).

For Sadi it is not necessary to make a defence of Judaism; he does not feel himself one of a peculiar people for he is not

treated as such. He plies his trade just as his Christian colleagues do, and in his love of money he is neither more nor less odious than either Skup or Uncle Maroje. This is because, as far as Jews are concerned, the little Republic of Dubrovnik was the most tolerant country in the world. There was no sentimentality about this, for the practical Ragusans knew how much they could profit from the Jews. We know that in the 16th century many Jews, expelled from Portugal, found a most hospitable home at Dubrovnik. Some were distinguished scholars and scientists, such as Didacus Pyrrhus (Jacobus Flavius Eborensis) and the physician Amatus Lusitanus, to mention only two.

I think, however, that on the whole it little profits to compare Držić with writers who came after him, with Molière, which has often been done before, or with Shakespeare, which I am trying to do here. If Držić is to be likened with anybody, he ought to be compared with the Italian writers of comedies contemporary with him: with Bibbiena, Calmo, Ruzzante and, on a higher level, with Ariosto, Aretino and Machiavelli. And with all of them he compares well. To conclude on a more cheerful note, with all due respect to Shakespeare, we may say that there is one point of contact between him and Držić where the latter comes favourably off. Unfortunately we cannot draw a parallel between the two plays of Shakespeare and Držić respectively which were both inspired by the *Menaechmi* of Plautus for, as I mentioned before, Držić's *Pjerin* is preserved only in fragments. But I venture to say that, as a Plautine play, Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors*, based on the *Menaechmi* and the *Amphitruo* of Plautus, is inferior to Držić's *Skup*, based on his *Aulularia*. Of course, *The Comedy of Errors* is an early and minor work of Shakespeare's while *Skup* is one of Držić's two masterpieces.

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

Even stage conditions were similar in both places. At Dubrovnik the plays were performed in the open air, most often before the Rector's Palace, in the Council Chamber of the Republic, and many were especially written for weddings celebrated in rich citizens' homes or in their gardens, just as

Shakespeare's were acted in public theatres open to the sky, in Blackfriars roofed-in theatre, at White Hall and Windsor Castle, in the Inns of Court as well as in noblemen's mansions, and some at least, we know, were especially written for weddings (*A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, for example). Another common feature to both London and Dubrovnik was the negative attitude to actors as a profession. In London they were considered the scum of the earth, and in the first Prologue of Držić's *Uncle Maroje* the Necromancer Longnose speaks of "actors, the dregs of human kind" (*glumci, feća od ljudskoga naroda*).

There was particularly one theatrical convention of the time which we find both in Držić and Shakespeare: the custom of girls dressing up as boys. In *Uncle Maroje* Pera, dressed up as a man (*na mušku obučena*) travels from Dubrovnik to Rome in search of her unfaithful fiancé Maro, just as Julia in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, in male disguise, follows her inconstant Proteus, and as so many other Shakespearian heroines do in like circumstances. "The girl disguised as a page in the service of the man she loves", says Peter Alexander, "and carrying his messages to the lady he is for the time enamoured of was made an international figure by an Italian play that was performed at the Carnival of 1531 in Siena. This was the famous *Gl'Ingannati* which was written for and staged by members of the Academy of the Intronati. Many versions and imitations of this device were acted or printed, the most famous of all being Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*; Shakespeare's first sketch however for this masterpiece is found in *The Two Gentlemen*" (o. c., pp. 55—56). Here we can definitely trace the source which was common to both Držić and Shakespeare, for it was precisely at Siena, where between 1538 and 1545 he spent several years as a student, that Držić seems to have learnt his trade as a playwright.

We know that the roles of Shakespeare's Julia (*Two Gentlemen of Verona*) and Viola (*Twelfth Night*) and Rosalind (*As You Like It*) and so many other girls in his plays who dress up as boys were actually acted by boys. And here is yet another link with the theatre of Marin Držić, for not only that in his *Novela od Stanca* male maskers appear disguised as fairies (*Ovdi dohode maskari obučeni kako vile*), but we have good reason to believe that also female characters proper, such as Petrunjela and Laura in *Uncle Maroje*, were acted by boys or young men; for the first real women actresses are mentioned at Dubrovnik only early in the 18th century.

This probably accounts for the relatively small number of female parts in most of Držić's plays, just as it very likely explains why there are so few women in the plays of Shakespeare. The *Novela od Stanca* has an all-male cast, *Tirena* and *Venere* have two female characters each, in *Arkulin* there are

three female parts against nine male ones and the two major comedies, *Uncle Maroje* and *Skup*, have four women each, the first of them having twenty-two male characters and the second ten. An exception to this rule are partly *Mande* and *Grižula* where women are more numerous and their number is fairly well balanced with that of the men.

Finally we find also some stylistic features common to both Držić and Shakespeare. This has been first noticed by Professor Lord who, after pointing to the similarity between the "stuff" of Držić's plays and some Shakespearian themes, remarks: "But that is not my main theme, fascinating as it would be to pursue it more closely. I wish rather to turn to a characteristic of Renaissance literary style, an element of the pyrotechnics of rhetoric, in which both Shakespeare and Držić were extremely adept". And then he continues: "Word play is of great importance in *Plakir*. Particularly effective is that form of it that is called antithesis and which itself, as you know, has a number of manifestations, including oxymoron at one end of the spectrum and the general presence of antithetical ideas in a passage, or in an entire production, at the other end". After giving a detailed analysis of *Plakir* from this point of view and after calling attention to the fact that in Držić's play "chaste Diana and amorous Cupid on the supernatural level represent the bride and bridegroom" so that we have in the central idea of the play itself an antithesis, Professor Lord concludes that "Držić's skill in this word play and in the juxtaposition of characters cannot but call forth our admiration" (o. c., pp. 592, 595).

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

In Scene 5 of Act IV young Kamilo's uncle Niko and Niko's friend Dživo speak about the engagement of Kamilo to the Miser's daughter Andrijana whom her father wishes to marry Kamilo's maternal uncle Zlati Kum who is rich and old. Dživo

asks: "Have you heard that Kamilo is engaged to be married?" and Niko replies: "Bad news come though uninvited; heard and not heard; I hear in order not to hear if even I hear what is better not heard". To this Dživo retorts: "What is better not heard? One hears of greater things than these, it seems to me. It is worse to hear that Zlati Kum is engaged as an old man than Kamilo in his youth".

And here is the dialogue in its original Croatian:

Dživo: Kamilo nam se vjeri; jes' li čuo?

Niko: Zli glasi i nezvani dohode; čuo i ne čuo; i čujem da ne čujem ako i čujem što nije za čut.

Dživo: Što nije za čut? Čuju se i veće stvari neg su ove, meni pàrā. Grubše je čut da se je Zlati Kum star vjerio neg Kamilo mlad.

Here we might be listening to Polonius addressing the Queen in *Hamlet*:

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

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

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

(II, 2, 92—104)

The technique of Držić's punning in the above quoted dialogue, on a much higher and more serious level, is reminiscent also of Hamlet's "If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come — the readiness is all" (V, 2, 213—216). Here also both Držić and Shakespeare after him follow the same fashion which was common to all Renaissance literatures of Europe.

And, in conclusion, a word about the setting of Držić's plays. The action of *Uncle Maroje* is nominally set in Rome but practically all the characters of the play are natives of Dubrovnik, and the reader or spectator feels that he is continually in Dubrovnik just as he does in Držić's other plays. In the same way in Shakespeare's plays, no matter what the nominal indication is, the place of action is always England, and his

characters, whatever be their avowed nationality, are always English. All the same, it is in the Republic of Dubrovnik, in Držić's native city, the scene of all his plays, that Shakespeare chose to locate the loveliest of all his comedies; for, as I tried to prove elsewhere,⁶ the "City in Illyria" of *Twelfth Night* is Dubrovnik about which Shakespeare seems to have known much more than is generally supposed. And that perhaps is the most significant link between Držić and Shakespeare.

⁶ See my *The Setting of Shakespeare's Plays* (with special reference to Illyria in *Twelfth Night*) in the Shakespeare Issue of SRAZ No 17-18, Zagreb, 1964).