

TRANSCULTURAL APPROPRIATION
OF SHAKESPEARE IN 19TH
CENTURY SERBIA

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Abstract: This article examines a specific and unusual instance of the 19th century bardolatry in Serbia. Its focus is on the inter-textual and poetic qualities of celebratory parody as well as on the politically engaged dialogue with Shakespeare in the narrative poem *On Shakespeare's Tercentenary*, written by the Serbian romantic poet Laza Kostić in 1864. The argument of the essay is that Laza Kostić authored an original contribution to the 19th century Romantic European admiration of Shakespeare, expressing, at the same time, indebtedness to the German reception of Shakespeare on the one hand, and frustration of a Slavic culture experiencing a strong German cultural influence on the other. This particular East European appropriation of Shakespeare thus forms a transcultural triangle, including English and German centers of cultural dissemination, and an engaged response to them from the Slavic margins of Europe. The vast distance from the Serbian people, whose position could be interpreted as *mutatis mutandis* 'subaltern', to Shakespeare, glorified by the entire world, seems to be traversed by the aesthetic reception and cultural appropriation carried out by Kostić and his likes. In this transcultural exchange, Shakespeare appears as a trustworthy collocutor, with whom, in a 'presentist' manner *avant la lettre*, the Serbian poet discusses his own political and cultural dilemmas. Laza Kostić appears as a sophisticated and original bardolator and, at the same time, mediator between Shakespeare and the Serbian 'subalternity'.

Keywords: Shakespeare in Serbia, Shakespeare's Tercentenary, Laza Kostić, bardolatry, transcultural appropriation, German Shakespeare, Slavic Shakespeare, subaltern

In the age of global Shakespeare, when contributions of various world cultures to reading, translating and performing the Bard's works have been widely explored in the Anglophone academic approaches from numerous perspectives, relatively little light has been cast upon Shakespeare's afterlife in Serbia. Apart from two short pieces by Nikolaj Velimirović and Vladeta Popović in Israel Gollancz's 1916 *Book of Homage to*, two historical surveys by Vladeta Popović (*Shakespeare in Serbia* published in 1928 by Oxford University Press, and "Shakespeare in post-war Yugoslavia" (*Shakespeare Survey* 1951)), one paragraph by Zdeněk Stříbný in *Shakespeare and Eastern Europe* (2000), a recent article "Shakespeare in Serbia" by Zorica Bečanović Nikolić in *British-Serbian Relations. From the 18th to the 21st centuries* (2018), and a recent encyclopedic entry for the *Stanford Global Shakespeare Encyclopedia* by Goran Stanivuković, a reader of mainstream academic publications in English can hardly find

any account relating to Shakespeare in the Serbian cultural context.¹ Nevertheless, the Serbian Shakespeare may be worth a glance, and especially the initial 19th century instance of unusual Romantic bardolatry, which deserves more hermeneutic attention than it has received so far. At a time when Shakespeare was a reliable imperial tool of Britain in many parts of the world, the situation in Serbia was almost the opposite: Shakespeare was, actually, sought as a confidant, in the context of two other, non-Anglophone imperialisms.

An extraordinary poetic dialogue with Shakespeare was enacted in Novi Sad in 1864, on the occasion of the tercentenary of Shakespeare's birth. The author and performer was Laza Kostić, at the time a young poet, who would later become the most original, creative – energetic and eccentric – figure of Serbian Romanticism. Educated in Novi Sad, Budapest and Vienna, this polyglot with a PhD in law, connoisseur of Greek and Latin, fluent in German, Hungarian and French, was, fond of European Romantic movements, in poetry and politics alike, all his life. Additionally, however, he was keen on the culture of his homeland, much like the majority of the European Romantic poets were in relation to theirs (Фрајнд 2017: 13–18). Thus, in his youth, Kostić felt a calling to familiarize the Viennese cultural audience with the primarily folk literary tradition of the Serbs (Стефановић-Виловски 1960: 42–45). He was politically active in the circles that desired the union of the Serbs scattered around the eastern frontiers of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, at the western borders of the Ottoman Empire, and within the fragile new independent state of Serbia (which had, at the time, recently been liberated from the Ottoman Empire) (Поповић 1960: 35–41). At the same time, this poet and playwright dedicated much energy to fill in the gaps in a culture that had been deprived, during the centuries of Ottoman rule, of Western cultural content. Along with his aesthetic predilection for Goethe and Schiller, and for the ancient Greek drama, Kostić deemed Shakespeare to be a keystone platform for the intra-cultural and trans-cultural dialogues in his own works as well as across the wider Serbian cultural landscape.

Eastern Europe in the late 19th century was a multifaceted contact zone of various cultures. The German influence was dominant throughout the Austro-Hungarian lands, populated by diverse cultural entities that expressed themselves in German, Hungarian, and a number of Slavic languages. In the Slavic areas, which were part of the Austrian Empire, the Kingdom of Hungary, and after 1867, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, educated people would, along with their mother tongue, speak, read and write in German and/or Hungarian, as well as in Latin, as the languages of education. Along with the heightened awareness of national cultural

1 The *Stanford Global Shakespeare Encyclopedia* site is currently under development (its general editor is Patricia Parker). When it comes to Serbian Shakespeare topics, along with the entry on Shakespeare in Serbia by Goran Stanivuković, it will contain two articles by Zorica Bečanović Nikolić on Ljubiša Ristić, and Nikita Milivojević as theatre directors and initiators of Shakespeare festivals in former Yugoslavia and Serbia, respectively.

traditions, European Romanticism aroused and encouraged the cosmopolitan eagerness to know and appropriate the legacy of other national traditions, an attitude best expressed in J. W. Goethe's concept of *Weltliteratur*, devised at the beginning of the 19th century (Goethe 1850: vol. 1, 351). As a prominent focal point of interest and enthusiasm of the German poets and philosophers, Shakespeare reached the minds of most Slavic readers and spectators via German translations and performances, as well as with German critical insights into his works. In the 19th century, the majority of Serbian people lived in areas that were being gradually liberated from the Ottoman rule, while the northern part of the population was settled in Hungary. In both cases, the higher education was mostly tied to Vienna and Budapest, and the first encounters with Shakespeare took place via German translations, theatre and criticism.

There are two phases of the reception of Shakespeare in the 19th century Serbia: before 1859, Shakespeare was read in German, i.e. neither in the English original nor in the Serbian translation; after 1859, however, several authors dedicated themselves to translating Shakespeare, some from German, and some from English (Popović 1928: 4; Кићовић-Пејаковић 1973: 86; Bečanović Nikolić 2018: 177–181). In the early years of the century, the echoes of Shakespeare were first to appear in the form of noticeable themes, motifs and names in the translations from German by Joakim Vujić. The play *Fernando and Yarika*, written by K. von Eckartshausen (1752–1803), contained elements of plot and names from *The Tempest*, and the story *Alexis and Nadina* written by W. A. Gerle (1783–1836) included chapter epigraphs from *The Merchant of Venice* and *Measure for Measure*. The canonic founder of Serbian drama, Jovan Sterija Popović (1806–1856) was the first to experiment with scenes reminiscent of *Macbeth* in the witches' scenes of his history play *Miloš Obilić* (1828), and with an Iago-like character Negoda. In his later play *Vladislav* (1842), there are several details which recall motifs from *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *Richard III* (Popović 1928: 99–101). The playwright Matija Ban published two plays written under Shakespeare's influence in 1850/51 (Ibid: 104–106). A number of authors (S. Milutinović, Lj. Nenadović, G. Maletić, B. Radičević, J. Ristić and J. Subotić) wrote on the importance of being familiar with Shakespeare's works and his language, and some tackled the problem of the (im)possibility of translating the 'highest poetry' (Ibid: 4). The challenge of translation was there and Laza Kostić, an audacious linguistic innovator, took it up.

Kostić translated the Capulet's orchard scene and published it in 1859. Then followed the first two scenes from *Richard III*, translated in collaboration with Kostić's friend J. Andrejević in 1860, and a translation of *Venus and Adonis* by Aca Popović, from German, in 1860. At the inaugural conference of Serbian Students' Association called *Avant-Garde*, in Budapest in 1861, Kostić gave a lecture titled *On Shakespeare and his Drama*. In 1862/63, he wrote his own tragedy *Maksim Crnojević* – a landmark

in Serbian drama – under Shakespeare’s influence, and incited a powerful stream of bardolatry in the 19th century Serbia. Other translations and theatre productions were to follow.² Throughout the nineteenth century, Shakespeare was present as a source of influence, direct or indirect allusions, references and reflections in the plays of Laza Kostić, Stefan Stefanović, Sima Milutinović Sarajlija, Jovan Sterija Popović and Đura Jakšić, as recounted by Dušan Mihailović in *Shakespeare and Serbian Drama in the 19th century* (1984). Mihailović registered the presence of 25 Shakespeare’s plays, by way of direct or indirect appropriation or imitation of Shakespeare’s plots, characters and minor details (Mihailović 1984: 319–334).

On the tercentenary of Shakespeare’s birth in 1864, Kostić wrote a 138-line long narrative poem, which served as an epilogue to the celebration held at the National Theatre of Novi Sad. When published, the poem was given a simple title – *On Shakespeare’s Tercentenary*. Its meaning and its form are, however, far from simple.

Celebratory parody: a contribution to 19th century European bardolatry

The poem begins with an inter-textual play, based on the most famous text of the Judeo-Christian tradition, *The Book of Genesis*. In the first eleven lines, Laza Kostić gives his own poetical wording to the well-

2 Translations: 1861: *Venus and Adonis*, translated by Aca Popović Zub; 1866 *Julius Caesar*, translated by Miloš Zečević; 1868: *The Merchant of Venice*, translated by Jovan Petrović; 1869: *The Taming of the Shrew*, translated by Milan Kostić; 1873: *King Lear*, translated by Milan Kostić; 1874: *King Lear*, translated by Antonije Hadžić, Giga Geršić and Laza Kostić; 1876: *Romeo and Juliet*, translated by Laza Kostić; 1878: *Hamlet*, translated by Konstantin Stanišić; 1881: *Othello*, translated by N. N.; 1882: *Measure for Measure*, translated by Milan Jovanović, *Coriolanus* and *Macbeth* translated by Mita Živković; 1884: *Hamlet* translated by Laza Kostić; *Hamlet* translated by Milorad Šapčanin and Mita Živković; 1886: *Othello* translated by Giga Geršić and Antonije Hadžić; 1891: *Julius Caesar* translated by Milorad Šapčanin; 1895 *The Taming of the Shrew* translated by Bogdan Popović; 1898: *Richard III* translated by Laza Kostić; 1898 *Much Ado about Nothing* translated by Svetislav Stefanović and *Troilus and Cressida* translated by Žarko Ilić. Performances in Belgrade: 1869 *The Merchant of Venice* (translated by Jovan Petrović from German); 1874 *The Taming of the Shrew* (trans M. Kostić, from German); 1875 *King Lear* (trans. L. Kostić from English); 1876 *Romeo and Juliet* (trans. L. Kostić, from English); 1881 *Othello* (trans. N. N. from German); 1882 *Macbeth* (trans. M. Živković from German); 1882 *Coriolanus* (trans. M. Živković, from German); 1884 *Hamlet* (trans. M. Šapčanin and M. Živković from German); 1891 *Julius Caesar* (trans. M. P. Šapčanin from German); 1894 *Much Ado about Nothing* (trans. A. Šenoa from German). 1898 *Richard III* (trans. L. Kostić from English). Performances in Novi Sad: 1864 *Richard III* (trans. L. Kostić from English); 1865 *Romeo and Juliet* (transl. L. Kostić from English); 1873 *King Lear* (trans. L. Kostić from English); 1896 *Hamlet* (trans. L. Kostić from English). Performances in Niš: 1895 *Othello* (trans. G. Geršić and A. Hadžić from German); 1895 *The Merchant of Venice* (trans. J. Petrović from German); Performances in Kragujevac: 1898 *Othello* (trans. G. Geršić and A. Hadžić from German); 1898 *The Merchant of Venice* (trans. J. Petrović from German). On the sequence of the first translations of Shakespeare and Laza Kostić as a translator of Shakespeare see also: Зоран Пауновић, „Шекспир и Лаза Костић”, *Глас* 427/30: 135–142 (2017).

known subject matter from his hypo-text: the division of light and darkness, earth and water, the creation of plants and animals, and finally, the creation of man, after God's own likeness. The poetic voice is expected to continue with God's repose on the seventh day, after the creation of man, but there, Laza Kostić adds his own hyper-textual layer to the biblical palimpsest by introducing a vivid alteration. He poses a rhetorical question: was man so admirable a creation, was he such a hard and demanding piece of work? "Oh, no!", says Kostić, "Don't you believe that!"; God, in Kostić's interpretation, was not content. Only the outer likeness of man was worthy of the Creator, and all the rest was merely weakness and misery. 'Oh, no', let us paraphrase, 'God was not in for a rest, but for more work to do: in one being, in one life, he was about to unite all the beauty of all beings, to melt darkness and light, night and day, angelic bliss and the fire of hell, unfathomable pearl-like lakes and vertiginously elevated pinnacles, nightingale's song and serpent's furious hiss, ghastly chill in the midst of summer's heat, rose's scent and poisonous smell. And all that awesome, tumultuous commotion should fit in one person and be settled in one abode. As a result – *Shakespeare* was created by God.' (Bečanović Nikolić 2018: 178–179) ³

The German Romanticism is known for frequent comparisons of the scope of Shakespeare's creation to that of God's. David Garrick, in the *Jubilee Ode* of 1769, called Shakespeare 'the god of our idolatry'. The quasi-deification of Shakespeare, as Jonathan Bate has shown in *The Genius of Shakespeare*, has its roots in the eighteenth century England: from Addison's *Spectator* articles (1702–1712), where Shakespeare was identified as an original genius, and counted among the greatest poets of all times – Homer, Pindar and the Old Testament Prophets – all the way to Garrick's *Shakespeare Jubilee* (Bate 2008: 168–169). Voltaire commented wryly that in England of that time, Shakespeare was rarely called anything but divine (Shapiro 2010: 30). In Germany, Goethe celebrated Shakespeare's

³ The original: Лаза Костић, *Песме*, Прир. Владимир Отовић, Нови Сад: Матица српска, 1989, 211–212. Lines 24–36. For another paraphrase in English, see: Pavle Popović, "Shakespeare in Serbia", *A Book of Homage to Shakespeare*. Ed. Israel Gollancz. Oxford: Oxford University Press MCMXVI, 526–527.

На особит оправљао се рад:
у једном лику, једном животу,

створења сву да смести дивоту,
светлост и мрак да стопа, ноћ и дан,
анђелску страст и пакленички плам,
непроникнута бисер-језера
уз недогледна виси урнебес,
славуја глас, сикута гујског бес,
сред летњег жара зимогрозан јез,
уз ружин мирис отрован задај;
и све то чудо, сав тај комешај,
у један лик да сложи, у један лог,
и учини – Шекспира створи Бог.

Day in 1771 with, as Ewan Fernie says, “a playfully liturgical emphasis, one which echoes the spiritualized quality [...] observed in the Garrick Jubilee”. Goethe, continues Fernie “was concerned to hail the Bard with something like religious awe” (Fernie 2017: 149). In opposition to the influential French neo-classical poetics of drama and its normative exigencies, which collided with Shakespeare’s dramatic practice, the Romantics throughout Europe, including France, with Victor Hugo, began to praise Shakespeare’s imagination, genius and originality (Bečanović Nikolić 2018: 179). “With Romanticism”, says Bate, “poetry was elevated into a secular scripture, Shakespeare into God” (Bate 2008: 184).

Closer to the Serbian instance, Sándor Petöfi (1823–1849), the Hungarian Romantic poet and revolutionary, translator of *Coriolanus* (1848), also praised Shakespeare by relating him to God’s creative power. In 1847 he wrote:

Shakespeare. Change his name into a mountain, and it will surpass the Himalayas; turn it into a sea and you will find it broader, and deeper than the Atlantic; convert it into a star, and it will outshine the sun itself.

It would seem as if Nature had once created a genius to be increased by interest year after year, and, having grown into enormous wealth with the passage of millennia, this colossal spiritual endowment could crush the canopy of heaven with its weight and so fall into the poor hovel of a wool-trader in the little English town of Stratford at the very moment when that good man’s son William was to be born into the world, to inhale with the first breath that which showered down on him from heaven.

Much more could be added which might seem to be ridiculous exaggerations; they aren’t, by far. Shakespeare himself is half of Creation.

Before his appearance the world was incomplete, and when creating him God said, “And behold him, oh men, from now on you shall never doubt of my existence and greatness, if ever you dared to doubt!”

Neither before nor after Shakespeare did a bird in flight or human mind soar higher. Pearls hidden in the ocean of the human heart were brought to light; the tallest flowers of imagination’s giant tree were picked – all by him. He robbed the Nature of its beauty; we have been gleaning and gathering what was left for us by his whim or what he didn’t deign to take. (Petöfi 1964: 48–49)

It is very probable that Kostić was familiar with the source of this quotation – Petöfi’s essay written on the occasion of a benefit performance of *Richard III* by Gábor Egressy on the stage of the Pest National Theatre in 1847. Petöfi’s prose may even be Kostić’s implied inter-textual reference as well. The hyperbolic superlatives and the images of the opposite extremes are the obvious common traits of the Serbian poet’s verse and the Hungarian poet’s prose. Both parables are weaved around the notion of the divine Creation: Petöfi presents Shakespeare as “half of Creation”, and Kostić first as an addition to the created world, an infinitely superior

version of man, a masterpiece of God's craft, only to promote him, a little later, into a fellow-Creator, God's human continuation, someone with whom God is willing to share the pride in creation. Shakespeare, according to Kostić, was a grateful and generous son of his heavenly father, for he shared what had been given to him. Kostić's poetic contention is thus: Shakespeare couldn't let the received entirety wither within him, but had to engender a new world and to amplify the world known to the humans by doubling it up (Lines 70–75). It looks as if Kostić had taken up Petöfi's theme and some of his motifs to develop them playfully, while striving to exceed Petöfi in praise, wit, and poetic artistry.

An experiment in two languages

Kostić is obviously partaking in the common Romantic tendency to deify Shakespeare, but the form he employs to revere the Bard is entirely his own, an experiment in Serbian. The dominantly trochaic rhythmical phrase of the Serbian language is substituted by the iambic rhythm, as this poem, like Kostić's translations of Shakespeare, is composed in iambic pentameter. Serbian has very few monosyllabic words and a multitude of polysyllabic ones, which inevitably requires a longer meter. Furthermore, there are hardly any words with the stress on the last syllable. It was upon these arguments that Bogdan Popović, the arbiter of literary matters in Serbia at the beginning of the 20th century, based his case *against* Kostić's translations of Shakespeare in iambic pentameter. These translations, nowadays rarely published, still provoke polemical tensions, especially when it comes to rhythm and meter, for they sometimes sound unnatural in Serbian. Nevertheless, when it comes to difficult knots of poetic ambiguity – let alone quibbles and puns, which were an irresistible challenge for the Serbian poet – serious scholarly analysis has shown that many of the subsequent translations owe a lot to Kostić (Petrović 2007: 308–315), a full-blooded poet in his own right, who creatively resolved the transition of meaning from English into Serbian.⁴

In this poem, the iambic rhythm creates a special ascending melody, with the effect of lifting up the listener's spirit, characteristic of Kostić's late poetic masterpiece *Santa Maria della Salute* (1909). The complexity and fullness of this sound was praised by the twentieth century poet, playwright and translator Jovan Hristić (Hristić 1994: 54). Likewise, Kostić's iambic pentameter has been regarded as the most original verse of the classical period of Serbian versification (that of the Romantic poetry) by the literary critic and philosopher Leon Kojen (Kojen 1996: 199). Another Shakespearean poetic device which Laza Kostić applies in this poem is

4 On the latest experiences with translating Shakespeare's verse: Зоран Пауновић, „Шекспир и Лаза Костић”, *Глас*, 427/30: 135–142 (2017). On Kostić's use of metaphors: Владислава Гордић Петковић, „Мегафоре у српским преводима Хамлета”. *Зборник Майице српске за књижевност и језик*. 54/1: 7–12 (2006).

alliteration, not very characteristic of Serbian prosody: “славуја ілас, сикуйиа іујској дес” (l. 31), “зимоірозан јез” (l. 32), “вешіака вечноі” (l. 1), “сійворења су да смесіи дивоуіу” (l. 26).

However limited by his imprecise knowledge of English language – which was his fourth non-native language, and not mastered to a sufficient degree, especially not for creating verse – Laza Kostić tried to give the lines of his poem an English version as well. The rough draft, which has been discovered recently⁵ (leaving us a hope that there might exist a final draft somewhere, yet to be found) contains several relatively satisfactory efforts in English. These are the initial three lines in Serbian:

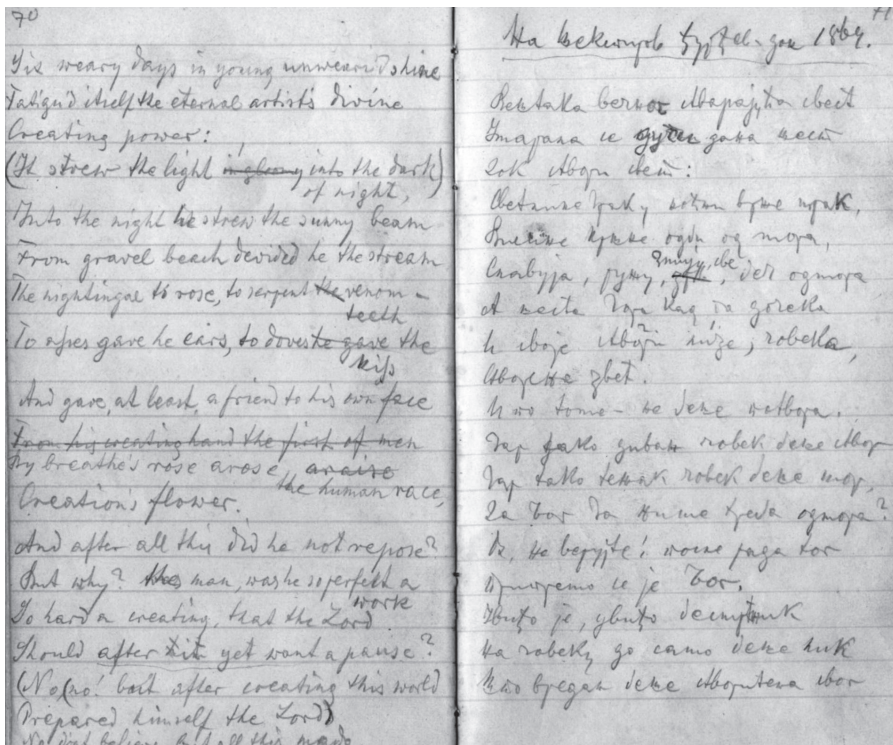


Illustration 1: Kostić’s manuscript, pp. 70-71.
Matica srpska Manuscript Department M 11.272

5 Manuscript No 11.272 of the Matica srpska Manuscript Department. In 2014, the present author located the rough English draft in Kostić’s notebook, which, until then, had not been recognized as a manuscript containing this attempt in translation. For the research itinerary that led to this find, as well as for a description of the manuscript and a detailed, parallel analysis of the Serbian and English versions, see Зорица Бечановић Николић, „Песнички експерименті Лазе Косіића на српском и на енїлеском: два аутоіографа концевіића іесме О Шекспіровој шрісїаїодішњици“, *Компаративна књижевност: теоріја, шума-чєња, іерсїектїве*, ур. Адријана Марчетић, Зорица Бечановић Николић, Весна Елез, Београд: Филолошки факултет, 2016, 281–296. Abstract: Zorica Bečanović Nikolić, “Two autographs: Laza Kostić’s experiment in writing a celebratory poem *On Shakespeare’s Tercentenary* in Serbian and in English”, 297.

In one existence, in a single life,
Creator's greatest wonders would he hire
He melted night with light and fire with ice,
The hell he drew into the paradise.

The wholeness of the Creation, including all the natural opposites, Vladieta Popović translates thus:

The unfathomed deep of the pearly lakes
And the thundering peaks that escape the sight,
The nightingale's voice and the serpent's hiss,
The torrid heat amidst the ice,
The scent of the rose and the smell of poison;
And wishing to lodge in one man
All this wonder, all this turmoil,
God the Almighty created Shakespeare. (Ibid: 38)

And this is how Laza Kostić writhes while making an effort in English: the rough draft contains crossed out variants, mistakes, unclear lexical forms and choices with meanings which are hard to discern, but also a very Shakespearean surreal image of ass-like ears on philosopher's temples, which disappeared from the final version in Serbian as well:

And pearle-breeded, deeply founded, lakes,
Arounding a high that heaven blushing makes
And dove like kisses noseby [?] to be smell'd
With serpent venom's devil [setor tetor ?] smell'd
On philosopher's head temples asslike ears,
And all this mingled systemized strain,
In one brest hart he put, in one a brain,
The Lord did it, and men call it –
Shakespear's (Illustration 2).

The allusion obviously refers to Bottom, who can hardly be associated with a philosopher, but, at the same time, it is to Bottom that Shakespeare assigns the Erasmian irony and the inverted mystical image from Saint Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians (2.9), thus invoking the possibility of mystical experience, all-encompassing perception and supra-intellectual knowledge. In the same downgrading manner, Bottom is the one to call upon the power of poetry, by toying with the idea of Quince's poetic version of his own ineffable temporary love experience with the Queen of Fairies, and could thus be perceived as a parodied philosopher of aesthetics. Although the literal meaning of this line is surreal and later discarded from the final version in Serbian, the related semantic possibilities demonstrate a whirl of Shakespearean associations in the young poet's mind.

The experiments in two languages are of utterly different nature and on opposite levels. Introducing iambic rhythm into the dominantly tro-

chaic prosody of the Serbian language and poetry is a demanding task for a connoisseur with a keen poetic ear. On the other hand, an attempt to compose verse, exhibiting a tenuous, intermediate writing competence in one's fourth non-native language is an example of youthful poetic audacity, if not sheer folly, although not entirely without significance for the reception of Shakespeare in Serbia, as well as for the study of curiosities of 19th century European bardolatry.

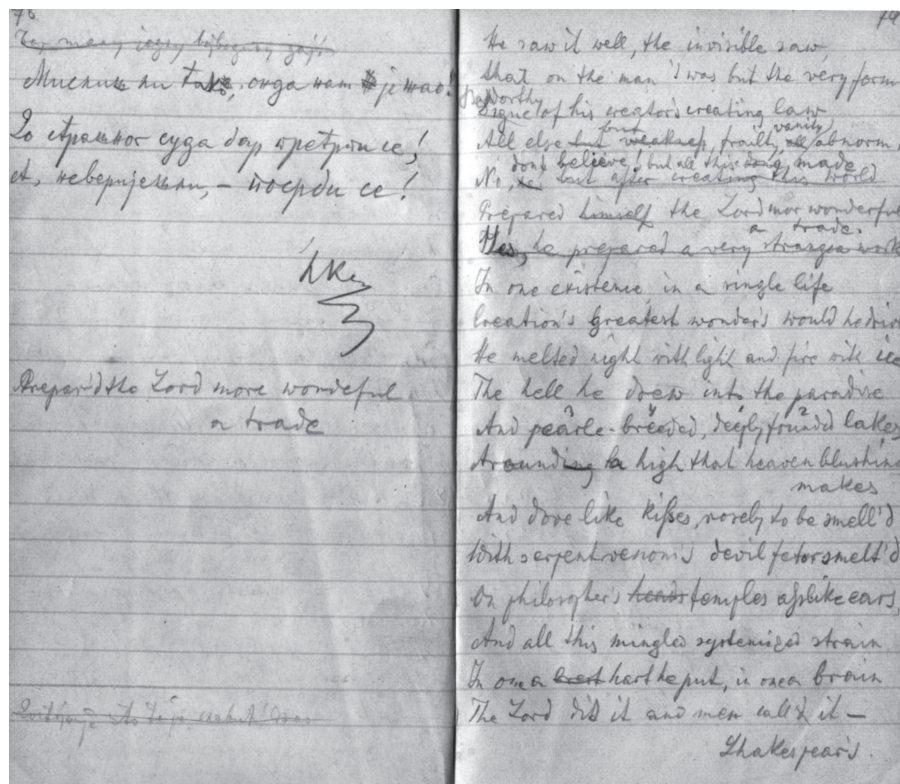


Illustration 2: Kostić's manuscript pp. 78-79.
 Matica srpska Manuscript Department M 11.272

Oration to the Bard

After the quasi-biblical, extra-diegetic third person narrative, the poem takes a turn towards dramatic oration addressed to the English Bard. The Serbian poet identifies the Bard as an elevated spirit, and himself as a representative of a young nation. In the 18th century, German intellectuals were aware of the (relative) newness of their culture, and struggled to overcome the French cultural superiority by finding support in Shakespeare's original genius. In the second half of the 19th century, Kostić, a representative of the nation in the process of liberation from the

centuries-long Turkish colonization, with a part of it (including Kostić himself) under the domination of another, Austro-Hungarian, empire, speaks on behalf of one of the nations that are newly born, in the process of being birthed, or as yet unborn. The research into Kostić's reading and commentaries proves no references to *Julius Caesar* (Милановић 1999: 239), nor to the famous line uttered by Cassius about "the states unborn and accents yet unknown", which would be the best explanation of his position in relation to Shakespeare. He invokes Shakespeare with his people's situation in mind: the need for recognition, self-recognition and self-understanding. Along with the need to be understood by others, there was the necessity to reconcile controversial inner tendencies. Kostić asks Shakespeare to help them – by the capacity of his art – to 'dilute the whirl of passions, reduce the intensity of base habits, weaken arrogant and haughty scoundrels' cries, face their own shameful glories and glorious shames' (lines 42–48). Everything the poet requests should lead to painful and palliative self-interrogation, as a result of the encounter with Shakespeare's art. On the other hand, he asks for just recognition as well, and expects Shakespeare not to demean what is truly 'eternally glorious' in his people's achievements (ll.49–50). As a performative utterance and speech-act, this section of the poem is actually inciting the audience to approach Shakespeare with such cathartic intentions.

Having uttered the worshipful appeal, the poetic voice wonders where the reverent demand would reach Shakespeare. The Bard succeeded so many times to elevate *us*, the humble recipients of his words, to the heights of Heaven, so one should expect an inconceivably higher and incomprehensible, other-worldly abode for Shakespeare himself. Kostić's superlatives are overabundant from the very beginning, and they continue to be. Even if Shakespeare were to be found in the deepest pit of Hell, punished because he dared do the heavenly work, this would not be credible either. He, who could fashion all the fervor found in his plays, would manage to pacify the infernal blaze, as well. So, a more intense place has to be found for Shakespeare, and Kostić sees it in the unique realm of Bard's works. In that kingdom, Shakespeare – kinglike and godlike – rules himself, surrounded by his heroes, regarded by the Serbian poet as saints. The way to mediate the confident appeal is to bestow it upon Shakespeare's characters, and expect them to pass it on to the Bard-King-God.

By conveying his plea to Hamlet, Juliet and Richard Gloucester, Kostić actually gives micro-interpretations of the two plays he had by that time tried his hand at translating, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Richard III*, as well as of *Hamlet*, which he obviously knew intimately and would translate two decades later, in 1884, the same year he translated *King Lear*. Hamlet is first understood as a martyr, and only afterwards as a skeptic. Juliet is also a martyr, a saint and a faithful lover, whose maidenly breath Kostić imagines as the medium through which his words would be communicated to the Bard. The third one to speak to the Bard is Richard Gloucester, the icy

hedgehog with horrifying desires, whom Kostić asks to bend his knee in Shakespeare’s presence when passing on the Serbian poet’s epistle.

Similar laudatory intonation is to be found in the identically entitled poem from the same year, written in England by Robert Bridges (“Ode on the Tercentenary Commemoration of Shakespeare by Robert Bridges, Poet Laureate”). The links between the two poets and Shakespeare, are, expectedly, entirely different. Bridges speaks on behalf of the English people as children of Shakespeare, who “strengthen with pride” England’s “sea-born clans”. Shakespeare’s genius is presented as a generator of Britain’s political and naval power (Bate 2008: 195). The Serbian nineteenth century ‘Shakespeareance’, on the other hand, involves cultural distance from Shakespeare, which had to be traversed. The existential situation displayed by the Serbian poet is that of a troublesome struggle for recognition, which becomes evident in the penultimate of six stanzas. Kostić fears that the king of poets might not be sufficiently honoured by such an insignificant offering. He looks for the qualities to dignify his festive commemorative contribution. Why would the British Bard, asks he, protected by ‘a sharper halberd’, care for ‘one or another obscure tribe’? This evidently shows that Kostić didn’t have in mind Cassius’s line from *Julius Caesar*, for it would have given him a hope that Shakespeare wasn’t entirely unaware – even if in playful ambiguity – of such communications as the one Laza Kostić is designing in one of the “states unborn and accents yet unknown”. According to Kostić, the entire West envies Britain for Shakespeare’s legacy. In the same stanza, Kostić first affirms the faith of the Serbian people, which is surpassed only by their stubbornness, then he reveals their sentiments, which are as tender as their pride, and finally, evokes the sharp wit of his people, which Shakespeare might find worthy of respect. All the rest is lowly and poor, determined by down-to-earth toil, lacking advancement towards ‘heavenly treasures’. Kostić begs Shakespeare to teach his people to elevate their eyes, mind and spirit (ll.125–128). In Serbian, and in Kostić’s own attempt in English, the poem communicates:

Сиротиња смо; гинућ за благом,	We are so poor; we after treasures reach,
земаљска блата ријемо још низ,	But, gravng (digging) into earthly deepness still,
још нисмо вични продирати вис	We have not yet the sky gravng skill:
за благом небним. Ти, науч’нас том!	We now beseech, o, teach us that, o teach!

At the very end of the poem, Kostić voices the frustration of a minority culture in the influence-zone of the Austrian cultural domination. A paraphrase of the final lines would be: the poet is aware that “other people”, in the sense of another nation, knew better how to pay tribute to Shakespeare. The Bard might be more pleased by their creative offerings, but Kostić can’t see his people as being willingly integrated and blended into a dominating culture. Not even for Shakespeare. They want to remain

what they are, true to their name. They want to refrain from an overflow of already heavily spilled blood of the medieval king Dušan [Nemanjić], into the veins of the people who could speak to Shakespeare with more confidence and praise him with more dignity (ll: 130–135). The medieval blood had been spilled during the long colonization by the Ottomans. The current ‘overflow’ hints at the Austrian/German cultural assimilation of the minorities. If, by any chance, the English Bard doesn’t believe him, doesn’t understand the aggravation the Serbian poet is speaking of, Kostić invites him to become one of the Serbs (ll.136–138). This final invitation is more of a challenge than of plea. A plausible incredulity concerning the troubles his people had been through along their history, which could be expected even from Shakespeare, a Western poet, is met with the Serbian poet’s conviction that all shall be clear after the Last Judgment (l.137). Kostić tacitly admits that it may be hard to understand the described conditions and state of mind, and regrets this. However, at the same time, it is implied, if *anyone* could understand these misfortunes and sufferings, it would be the omniscient Shakespeare.

While the hyper-textual Genesis-like beginning brings a glorious eulogy full of sincere, vibrant and energetic fascination with the Bard, the oration slowly approaches serious and sombre political matters, which is clearly expressed only at the end of the poem: a call for attention to the subaltern position of the Serbian people in the second half of the 19th century. Aware of the finally successful gradual liberation from the five-centuries-long colonial domination of the Ottoman Empire, and conscious of the medieval heroic heritage, the Serbs of the North, at the end of the 19th century a national minority first in Hungary, and then in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, were in danger of being assimilated within the dominant culture, and Laza Kostić invokes Shakespeare as a much-needed all-knowing and all-seeing collocator. Kostić obviously needs to share with Shakespeare both his fears of cultural assimilation and his defying approach to such a condition. A capacity to communicate with Shakespeare’s works is seen as a kind of proof of cultural maturity, or at least of cultural emancipation. Shakespeare’s mind, on the other hand, is invoked as a projected witness with superior capacity for comprehension of ethical and political aporias, as shown in many of his works. Is this an instance of simple Romantic nationalism, or of a more complex Romantic cosmopolitanism? Or, perhaps, another instance of youthful poetic boldness to defy the centres of widely recognized cultural achievements by challenging their comprehension of the cultural periphery? If the position of the Serbian people, on whose behalf Kostić is speaking at the end of the poem, is comparable to the much later theoretically conceptualized *subaltern* social position, what is the poet, as a representative of the aesthetically educated intelligentsia, doing by addressing Shakespeare?

The Godlike Genius and the National Poet: appropriation and re-appropriation

Both in England and in Germany, the elevation of Shakespeare to the status of an original creative genius, and therefore metaphorically comparable to God the creator, coincided with the adoration of Shakespeare as a national poet. In England, according to Jonathan Bate, it was in relation to the emergent nationalism, popular Francophobia, and aristocratic Francophilia (Bate 2008: 169). Developing his argument from Isaiah Berlin's analysis of nationalism as "a response to patronizing and disparaging attitude towards the traditional values of a society, the result of wounded pride and a sense of humiliation in its most socially conscious members, which in due course produce anger and self-assertion" (Berlin 2013: 436), Bate concludes that "the veneration of Shakespeare as English national poet was in the first place a response to a patronizing and disparaging attitude towards his works on the part of French critics and a Francophile court taste" (Bate 2008: 169). Curiously enough, Shakespeare's genius seems to have served the same purpose for Germans as well, and again in relation to French culture, in many ways regarded as superior in sophistication. While J. C. Gottsched's contention was that the best model for a German national theatre should be French neoclassical drama, Johann Elias Schlegel opposed that opinion, and championed Shakespeare as the constructive model for German drama. G. E. Lessing in *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* supported the same argument. Goethe wrote on Shakespeare most enthusiastically in the well-known passages in *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1795), but elsewhere as well. In his early twenties, on the occasion of the aforementioned Shakespeare's Day in 1771, Goethe wrote and recited *Shakespeare's Birthday* oration (Gildehaus 1805: 9–43), which can be read as his standing up for Shakespeare in opposition to the French classicist normative poetics of drama. The entire celebration *Schäkespears Tag* is regarded by Ewan Fernie as "a break for freedom – freedom from the overwhelming cultural authority of France" (Ferne 2017: 147). Herder wanted German culture to distinguish itself from those who "ape ancient drama" by turning "to the *toto divisis ab orbe Britannis*, and their great Shakespeare" (Herder 2009: 27). At the end of the 18th century, August Wilhelm Schlegel famously called him '*unser Shakespeare*', '*ganz unser*'. Ewan Fernie argues that "German repatriation of Shakespeare was much more than a crudely nationalistic appropriation" (Ferne 2017: 148) and that "[a]t its best, the German vocation for Shakespeare is based on the non-possessive ease with which non-English enthusiasts can access and speak for the Bard's more transcendent significance" (Ibid: 153). Thus, the transcultural appropriation appears as a reliable way of estimating poetry's, drama's or any art's transcendent significance. On the one hand, the transcultural appropriation serves as an aesthetic touchstone, and on the other, it produces a cosmopolitan hy-

bridization of national cultural identity. Shakespeare's 18th century European journey brings about a proof of the aesthetic communicability of his art, while, at the same time, producing a peculiar intercultural triangle, on the one hand fertile in translations, migrations of themes and motifs, inter-textual semantics, cultural exchange, but on the other hand shadowed by evident English-French-German tensions regarding self-perception and the perception of another (rival) culture.

Appropriated by Germans, Shakespeare was, consequently, re-appropriated by other cultures. The Serbian reception was, like those in other Slavic cultures, as well as in Hungary, influenced by the German Shakespeare to a great extent. Laza Kostić read Shakespeare in German and in English, and while translating, he relied on the German translations as literary inter-media. He was familiar with the critical commentaries by Georg Gottfried Gervinus (Милановић 1999: 171) and Nicolaus Delius, the editor of Shakespeare's works in German (1854–1860) and the co-founder of the Shakespeare Society in Germany (Ibid). At the same time, just like the German poets and philosophers, who sought in Shakespeare a foundation for their culture's self-affirmation and liberation from the overwhelming French cultural influence, and just like the Hungarian revolutionaries and freedom fighters Lajos Kossuth and Sandor Petöfi, who found in Shakespeare the encouragement and motivation for their politics of freedom (Ferne 2107: 160–161) against the Austrian German speaking dominance, the Serbian poet, in a dialogue with Shakespeare, indirectly seeks support for the Serbian culture's emancipation from the German cultural domination.

Shakespeare's works, thus, appear as a forum for testing and creating both individual and cultural identity in the process of interpretation and appropriation of the form and meaning of his plays and poetry. In the first sentence of *Shakespeare for Freedom*, Ewan Fernie asks "What good is Shakespeare?" and throughout the book argues that "Shakespeare means freedom", especially the central kind of freedom in the Western tradition – the freedom to be oneself (Ferne 2017: 1). Later, as a conclusion to the essay on the Hungarian freedom fighter Lajos Kossuth, Fernie asserts that "Shakespeare matters [...] because of his power to inspire others, including this Hungarian freedom fighter, to be or become themselves" (Ibid: 46). The argument is to be found *passim* the entire book. Fernie's chapter "Freetown-am-Main", quoted above, investigates Goethe's inspiration, found in "the greatest wanderer", for individual creative work and for creative living, by sharing "in the wanderer's wayward freedom" (Ibid: 150) and Herder's comprehension of Shakespearean freedom of "being fully" and being historically (Ibid: 154). "To Herder and Goethe alike, Shakespeare is a shot in the arm: the transfusion and advent of a richer and deeper sense of history and historical possibility within history" (Ibid: 156). Laza Kostić's poem implies a discernible negative tension towards German culture – which reflects the author's historical being, his political

awareness, and a ‘presentist’⁶ urge to tackle a current, local, social problem in dialogue with a literary classic – but not without paradoxical admiration for the same German culture at the same time: “*that people*” (it is not specified *who*, but Serbian readers know that it must mean: the Germans) knew better how to praise Shakespeare, they can speak to Shakespeare with more confidence. He may have thought of Goethe and Herder. Kostić behaved, read and composed this poem in accordance with Goethe’s ideals of existing fully, intensely, creatively, and with Herder’s conviction that both individuals and peoples are always determined by their historicity: thence the current political moment. In that sense, he eventually continued the spirit of German bardolatry and dialogues with the Bard in Serbian language. Nevertheless, alongside, by way of a double-bind, he was refusing a smooth and uncritical acceptance of the German influence. In the same manner as the Germans refused the paralyzing and culturally deadening effects of the French classicism, Laza Kostić was, actually expressing the individual and collective cultural freedom to be oneself – ‘no more nor less’.

Marginal identity or the subaltern otherness vis-à-vis Shakespeare

In answer to the previously introduced question – is the poem an expression of nationalism or of cosmopolitanism – it could be said that Kostić’s dialogue with Shakespeare is an instance of Romantic nationalism blended with Romantic cosmopolitanism, a double-bind not unusual for the period. It is, at the same time, an attempt to defy the German cultural centrality from the Slavic cultural periphery. What were the reason and the source of such an inspiration?

Goethe, it is well known, recognized the European necessity to acknowledge the world literary traditions and therefore inferred the uniqueness and particular cultural liberty of every tradition. When it comes to Serbian poetry, in 1775 he translated the ballad *Hasanaginica*, which Herder included in his anthology of folk poetry *Volkslieder* (1778). Fifty years later, in 1825, in *Conversations with Eckermann*, Goethe compared the Serbian folk lyrics to the *Song of Songs* and authored journal articles about them in *Kunst und Altertum* (Goethe 1850: 195–197). Goethe’s idea of *Weltliteratur* did not imply the totality of world literary production, but the ensemble of original and universally communicable aesthetic qualities that different literary traditions could contribute to world literature. *Weltliteratur*, according to Fritz Strich, comprises the works which mediate between and among national literatures and nations, an exchange

6 On the current concept of presentism in Shakespeare studies: Ewan Fernie. “Shakespeare and the Prospect of Presentism”. *Shakespeare Survey* 58 (2010): 169–184; Зорица Бечановић Николић. „Гумачења Шекспира из перспективе презентизма”. *Аскејкии времена у књижевности*. Ур. Лидија Делић. Београд: Институт за књижевност и уметност, 2012. 181–199.

of their ideal creations, a web of literary bridges across the dividing gaps (Strich 1957: 5; Milutinović 2005: 206). Laza Kostić was aware of Goethe's interest in Serbian poetry, which was an important validation for Serbian culture as a whole. Furthermore, he evidently embraced the German passion for Shakespeare enthusiastically, actively pursued it, and enjoyed lending it his own touch. His frustration lies elsewhere – in the general treatment of the minor non-German-speaking, non-Austrian cultures in the Central and South Eastern Europe, which were in danger of colonial assimilation. In his address to Shakespeare, he recognized communication with great works of art, such as Shakespeare's, as a liberating experience. He didn't pretend that the culture on whose behalf he was speaking was, at the moment, anything but deprived, rural, almost subaltern, as expressed in the poem (ll.125–128), but his Shakespeare-inspired libertarian enthusiasm incited him to include the articulation of the above depicted anxiety in the celebratory poem. Faced with this Anglo-German-Serbian triangle, we necessarily encounter the problem of the intertwined political and cultural aspects of any intercultural, or, in this case, transcultural exchange. Understood in Goethe's ideal and idealistic terms, the passage of literary works of art across national borders creates the bridges of understanding, crosses the gaps. Nevertheless, this poem offers a glimpse into deep anxieties of existential or political kind that transcultural literary experience can trigger.

Within comparative literature studies, the relations between influential literary traditions and those of the periphery have been approached in many ways. The analyses of zones and centres (Pageaux 1994: 26), of the literary space, with its centres and periphery (Casanova 1999: 455–466; Милутиновић 2005: 208–214; Marčetić 2015: 141–178) and, therefore, asymmetry in international power (Moretti 2004: 150), indicate the power relations in both political and cultural terms. The dissemination of Shakespeare's art across the world in the 19th century was in many ways a colonial cultural and ideological strategy. On the other hand, in Serbia, as well as in other East-European cultures, the knowledge of Shakespeare was freely and individually sought for, was deemed a matter of intellectual challenge and ensuing pride, and thus appropriated with eagerness. Not rarely, “the destiny of a culture (usually a culture of periphery [...])”, says Franco Moretti, “is intersected and altered by another culture (from the core) that ‘completely ignores it’” (Ibid). All these concepts, as well as examples, are – in the narrow or wider sense – applicable to many an intercultural exchange between the major European traditions and the minor ones, European or non-European. Our poem, with its poetic address of a poet belonging to a culture from ‘periphery’, aimed at a great poet of a centrally influential literary tradition, presents an instance of a complex encounter, with its open admiration for the great poet and open acknowledgement of the humbleness of ‘periphery’. Moretti in “Conjectures on World Literature” shows that “[t]he study of world literature is

– inevitably – a study of the struggle for symbolic hegemony across the world” (Moretti 2004: 158). It seems that Laza Kostić, in his enthusiastic bardolatry, had nothing against the *symbolic* hegemony regarding Shakespeare, nor, implicitly, against the *symbolic* hegemony of the German poets and philosophers, whom he obviously followed. Nevertheless, he had to express the frustration originating in the social, political, and colonial hegemony of the Habsburg Empire in Central and South Eastern Europe.

The issue of intercultural and transcultural encounters thus displays its two dimensions: one is political, implying power relations, while the other concerns aesthetic, ethical, or, as Fernie put it ‘transcendent’, significance of art and literature, and occurs within the sphere of symbolic/poetic/aesthetic exchange. The Serbian poet, thus, in the ‘political’ dimension, fears that the British Bard, protected by “sharper halberd”, wouldn’t care for or ask after “one or another tribe”, and in the dimension of symbolic dialogical exchange he admits that his own spirit has been elevated by Shakespeare’s, and feels free to address the Bard as someone who will understand the lack of freedom. As regards the German intermediary culture, in the aesthetic dimension of the free exchange of spirit, the Serbian poet admits that the German poets and philosophers knew better how to praise the Bard, and willingly follows them by composing his own laudation, but in the political dimension, he expresses the need of the Serbian barely literate people to be recognized as different, with freedom to express their (subaltern) alterity.

Could the position of the Serbian people in this poem be regarded as subaltern, and what is the poet, as a representative of the aesthetically educated intelligentsia, doing by addressing Shakespeare? In Gramsci’s “History of the Subaltern Classes: Methodological Criteria” the subaltern, or inferior in rank, are defined as social classes which are inevitably in “active or passive affiliation to the dominant political formation” (Gramsci 1971: 52). The intellectuals for Gramsci are “the dominant group’s ‘deputies’ exercising the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government” (Gramsci 1996: 12), but he also envisages a new type of philosopher, who has a role in “active social relationship of modification of the cultural environment” (Gramsci 1971: 366). *Mutatis mutandis*, the Serbian Romantic poet Laza Kostić could be seen as *conceptually* akin to Gramsci’s “democratic philosopher”, who proposes to modify the cultural environment (Ibid. 365–366). The cultural environment being, in this poem, a multicultural empire with intercultural divergences and anxieties. After Gramsci, the concept of the subaltern has been taken and developed by the Subaltern Studies group, and then by G. C. Spivak. In both cases the concept of the subaltern as “inferior in rank” has been extended to include the aspects of the colonized, the aspects of race and gender. For Ranajit Guha, in “On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India”, from 1982, the subaltern, says G. C. Spivak, “was indistinguishable from ‘people’” (Spivak 2012: 431). Later on, other members of the Subaltern

Studies Group refined the distinction, and the subaltern came closer to a social position without identity (Ibid). Among various considerations of “the subaltern” scattered *passim* in G. C. Spivak’s works, we find a succinct and precise definition of the word that interests her in *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*: “to be removed from all lines of social mobility” (Spivak 2012: 430). Both in the text “Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular” (Ibid: 429–442) and in the “Introduction” to her 2012 book, G. C. Spivak comes close to Gramsci’s attitude that the subaltern needs to be the subject of a humanist education (Ibid: 29). She concludes her Introduction with a ‘false hope’ that her readers would perhaps “learn to parse the desires (not the needs) of collective examples of subalternity” (Ibid: 34), and in another article, she says: “From within the humanities, I want to claim the traditional healer’s sense of all history as a big now; I want to claim sense of myth as being able to contain history, and keep de-transcendentalizing belief into the imagination” (Ibid: 441).

If, with all the inferred dissimilarities, we introduce a variant of Gramsci’s and/or Spivak’s term *subaltern* to this discussion, it could imply the socially and politically inferior Serbian collectivity struggling from the Ottoman imperial dominance and within the Austrian imperial dominance. A sense of identity is there, and the notion of subaltern is not entirely applicable, but the poet insists on the poverty and deprivation of a collectivity which is hardly recognized in the European political context. He represents this collectivity as aware of their glorious medieval past, but as, at the moment of the poetic utterance, hardly literate and deprived of the sublime contents, which Shakespeare could offer them, and with needs and desires to live up to these contents. Poetic expression thus, appears at the same time as a personal interaction of an educated young poet with Shakespeare’s works and as mediation between Shakespeare’s poetry and the illiterates whom Kostić wants to familiarize with the great poet. Not unlike Spivak’s parsing “the desires (not the needs) of collective examples of subalternity”, not unlike “the traditional healer’s sense of all history as a big now”, not unlike “de-transcendentalizing belief into imagination”. Not unlike another of Spivak’s points regarding the role of the aesthetic – “the right to the metonym/synecdoche performance of collectivity” (Spivak 2012: 437). “Reasonable agency”, according to her, is nestled in permission to be figurative” (Ibid).

Laza Kostić, thus, attempts to configure the representation of the people on the social and political margins of an emerging state on the overlapping peripheries of 19th century Europe and the dissipating remains of the Ottoman Empire – and does so in dialogue with Shakespeare. Kostić’s position calls to mind Gramsci’s projected intellectual, who should help the subaltern’s cultural and political movement and partake in determining the production of history as narrative (Spivak 1999: 269). Comparable to the Gramscian attitude that the subaltern need to be the subject of a humanist education (Spivak 2012: 29), Kostić, in the name

of his barely literate fellow compatriots, asks Shakespeare to teach them (“Teach us that, oh, teach!”) to elevate their eyes above the down-to-earth toil. And Shakespeare’s ‘teaching’ occurs through the aesthetic capacity of his poetry and drama. Thus, the aesthetic education of the ‘subaltern’, pertinent to the worldview of the Serbian Shakespeare enthusiast of the 19th century expressed in this poem – a nationally coloured fusion of the European Romanticism and European Enlightenment – appears as a way to “resolve double-binds by playing them” (Spivak 2012: 1). Resolving double-binds by playing them produces a Romantic *concordia discors* (itself a double-bind), which resounds a Shakespearean *concordia discors*. By playing the double-binds of centre/periphery, influential/marginal, world-famous-Shakespeare/anonymus-Serbian-subaltern, German/Serbian, English/Serbian, all in a celebratory poem, the poet attempts to undo, deconstruct and resolve them through a responsive aesthetic and hermeneutic encounter between Shakespeare and himself, and, consequently, by way of poetic mediation, between Shakespeare and a socially and politically inferior/subaltern people with a tradition of oral folk poetry, by then already recognized by Goethe as worthy of partaking in *Weltliteratur*.

The subalternity implies a lack of formal education and a lack of direct access to works of art. The aesthetic literary expression, achieved in a language – and thus communicable to cultures other than the culture of that particular language in translation – and in the form of story, drama, verse, in *narrative* (in Paul Ricoeur’s broader sense, conceptualized in *Time and Narrative*), can, to a certain extent, bridge cultural gaps (Bečanović-Nikolić 1998: 72–84). A translated narrative (story, drama, verse) offers an alternative possibility of cognition, and Shakespeare’s narratives – some would also say ‘modern myths’ – have been made communicable to many a subaltern. The passage of communication requires mediators and inter-media. In this particular case, Shakespeare first reached the Serbian intelligentsia and then, eventually, the Serbian subalterns, who, in Kostić’s opinion expressed in the poem, should participate in this communication. It all happened via German translations and the overall German reception of Shakespeare, and then, via Serbian translations and interpretations. The subalterns appeared here as subjects of an informal aesthetic education. On the other hand, the poet (per) formed an instance of creative bardolatry and playful Romantic undoing of double-binds inherent in this particular transcultural appropriation and re-appropriation of Shakespeare.

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Предмет испитивања је необично оригиналан пример шекспировске бардолатрије у Србији у деветнаестом веку. Поема Лазе Костића *О Шекспировој ирисјаодигињици* (1864) разматра се у контексту европског, енглеског, немачког и српског глорификовања Шекспира у осамнаестом и деветнаестом веку. У процесу кружења Шекспирових дела по европским националним традицијама оглашавале су се интеркултурне напетости и сукоби између кључних европских култура као што су енглеска, француска и немачка. У тај мозаик се смешта специфичност рецепције Шекспира у српској култури, која је најпре била посредована немачким преводима и критичким тумачењима. Сваки од ових примера културне апропријације Шекспира у себи садржи како елементе национализма, тако и елементе космополитизма, што је била идеолошка комбинација својствена романтизму. У чланку се разматрају интертекстуална и песничка својства свечарске пародије и политички ангажован дијалог са Шекспиром у поеми *О Шекспировој ирисјаодигињици*. Посебна пажња је посвећена чињеници да се млади песник, упоредо са писањем на српском језику, окушао и у препевавању сопствених стихова на енглески, који му је био четврти страни језик. То се детаљно сагледава посредством анализе рукописног концепта са паралелно исписаним верзијама на два језика, који се чува у Рукописном одељењу Матице српске (М 11.272). Тврди се да је реч о посебно креативном доприносу европском романтичарском разумевању Шекспира у виду интелектуално и естетски сложеног двојезичног поетског поигравања обликом и смислом. На идејном и идеолошком нивоу, Костић, истовремено оглашава дуг рецепције Шекспира на немачком језику и изражава nelaгоду словенске културе у вези са искуством подређености немачким културним утицајима. Песник призива и чињеницу да се то искуство надовезало на дуготрајни период отоманске колонијалне доминације. Пример сложене српске апропријације Шекспира у себи садржи транскултурни троугао који обухвата енглеске и немачке центре културне дисеминације и ангажовани одговор са словенских маргина Европе. Расправа се у том аспекту у великој мери ослања на теоријски концепт субалтерности, развијен најпре у марксистичкој политичкој теорији Антонија Грамшија, а потом у постколонијалној књижевној теорији Г. Ч. Спивак. Велика раздаљина између српског народа, чији би се културни положај, *mutatis mutandis*, могао протумачити као 'субалтерни', и Шекспира, кога је у то време глорификовао цео свет, бива премошћена рецепцијом у сфери естетског и културног апропријацијом, коју су спроводили Лаза Костић и њему слични познаваоци европских култура. За разлику од улоге наметнутог културног идеала коју је Шекспир имао у британским колонијама у деветнаестом веку, у Србији се елизабетински бард појављује као саговорник од поверења, с којим, у 'презентистичком' маниру *avant la lettre*, српски песник разматра своје политичке и културне дилеме у вези са једним другим унутар-европским културним империјализмом. Лаза Костић се с једне стране појављује као Шекспиров креативни, духовити обожавалац, а с друге као политички самосвесан посредник између Шекспира и српске 'субалтерности'.

Кључне речи: Шекспир у Србији, Шекспирова тристагодишњица, Лаза Костић, бардолатрија, транскултурна апропријација, немачки Шекспир, словенски Шекспир, субалтерно