Skenè Studies I • 3

Shakespeare and the Mediterranean • 1

Romeo and Juliet

Edited by Silvia Bigliazzi and Emanuel Stelzer

Supplement to *SKENÈ. Journal of Theatre and Drama Studies*

ISBN 979-12-210-1706-9
ISSN 2464-9295

SKENÈ Theatre and Drama Studies
https://textsandstudies.skeneproject.it/index.php/TS
info@skeneproject.it

Dir. Resp. (aut. Trib. di Verona): Guido Avezzù
P.O. Box 149 c/o Mail Boxes Etc. (MBE150) – Viale Col. Galliano, 51, 37138

Contents

Part 2 – Recirculating *Romeo and Juliet* in the Mediterranean: the New Millennium

7

"These violent delights have violent ends": Shakespearising the Balkans or Balkanising Shakespeare?

Petra Bjelica

Abstract

This essay deals with contemporary Balkan Shakespeare productions and suggests them as a new subcategory in studies of Global Shakespeare concerned with issues related to the Mediterranean. It aims at identifying some main features of Balkan Shakespeares, opening the debate on this definition and questioning whether the Balkan stereotypes of barbarity, violence and conflicts are expressed in the dramaturgic, representational and performative strategies of contemporary staging of Shakespeare in the Balkans. It focuses on two productions especially, *Romeo and Juliet* (2015) and *Hamlet* (2016), as two opposite possibilities for treating the issue at hand. While having in mind the tradition of performing Shakespeare in the Balkans with an emphasis on the ex-Yugoslav countries, this essay attempts to identify whether there is a pattern of self-representation when appropriating and adapting Shakespeare's plays in a local Balkan context. If we assume that Balkan identities are labelled as Europe's, and more generally the Western's and the Mediterranean's barbaric other, the main question is thus how this dynamic appears to be represented in Balkan Shakespeare productions: is it repro-duced or questioned? Are those productions Shakespearising the Balkans or Balkanising Shakespeare?

KEYWORDS: Shakespeare; *Romeo and Juliet*; *Hamlet*; Balkans; Mediterranean; Balkan Shakespeares

From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.
(*Romeo and Juliet*, Prologue, 3-4)

I must be cruel only to be kind.
(*Hamlet*, 3.4.178)

Shakespeare in the Balkans seemingly cannot escape the prophetic words of Friar Lawrence when he claims that "these violent delights have violent ends" (*Romeo and Juliet* 2.6.11).[1] Whether the violent history of the area resonates with Shakespeare's plays or the plays offer a poignant space for addressing the actual atrocities of recent history might be an intriguing question. Can we differentiate contemporary Balkan Shakespeare productions as a new research subcategory in studies of Global Shakespeare with special attention to the area of the Mediterranean? What would the main features of Balkan Shakespeares be? Are Balkan stereotypes of barbarity, violence and conflicts expressed in the dramaturgic, representational and performative strategies of staging Shakespeare in the Balkans today? Does the use of concepts such as 'balkanism' and 'balkanisation', *mutatis mutandis*, repeat a certain type of cultural racism?

In this essay, I address two main questions. First of all, I offer a view from within the Balkan perspective about whether Shakespearean productions and adaptations reproduce Balkan stereotypes of barbarity and violence and the mechanisms they use. Secondly, by considering an external perspective, I analyse how a hypothetical concept of Balkan Shakespeares fits into studies of Shakespeare and the Mediterranean. Moreover, could the strategies of representation of Balkan identities in contemporary productions of Shakespeare provide fresh considerations on such issues as the ethics of appropriation, cultural hegemony and racism, the dynamic between the global and the local, West[2] and East, Balkan and Europe, and lastly, the ideological role of neoliberalism, imperialism and globalism in Shakespeare studies?

Just as the terms 'Balkan', 'balkanism' and 'balkanisation' are not unified, cohesive and definite notions (as we shall see in more depth later), similarly there cannot be a singular, harmonious and

1 All quotations are from Shakespeare 2012.

2 In this essay, I am broadly using the term West as defined by Stuart Hall (2018), namely, as a system of representations created in a binary opposition to the other. As he claims, "West Europeans often regarded Eastern Europeans as 'barbaric'" (145). Consequently, I refer to the historical concept of the Mediterranean as one way of representing Western culture.

unambiguous ideological (political, cultural and aesthetical) concept of Balkan Shakespeares. However, the productions done in the Balkans are marked by their historical, cultural and geographical embeddedness, and certain interpretative and performative gestures evoke, or are coloured by, specific meanings. One of the aims of this essay is to open the debate on those meanings. To my knowledge, there has been no academic endeavour or study that deals closely with this issue to date.

I concentrate on a close analysis of two productions, *Romeo and Juliet* (2015) and *Hamlet* (2016), while having in mind the Balkan tradition of Shakespeare performances in the ex-Yugoslav countries. These examples have been chosen as two opposite possibilities for addressing my questions. The 2015 production of *Romeo and Juliet* is the main focus of my analysis, and will be set against a 2016 production of *Hamlet* as a contrastive example of ways in which a truly creative approach to Balkan Shakespeare can be envisioned within a Mediterranean context. This essay attempts to identify whether there is a pattern of self-representation when appropriating and adapting Shakespeare's plays in a local Balkan context. Why is Shakespeare used to treat local problems? What is the local context? To whom do these productions relate and for whom are they made: for the local public, or 'Western', non-Balkan audiences? Finally, what is the function of theatrical productions, adaptations and appropriations of Shakespeare in this local context? The essay suggests that an internalised Western gaze is often dominant, and that seemingly apolitical readings reveal symptoms of an internalised cultural racism towards one's own position in relation to Western culture, problems of justice, conflicts, wars, violence and political struggle.

1. What Does 'Balkan' Have to Do with the Mediterranean?

Most scholars agree that, geographically speaking, the Balkan peninsula includes the following areas: Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, part of Slovenia and Serbia, some of which geographically and historically belong to the Mediterranean culture. "Caught between Catholicism and Byzantium, Christendom and Islam, the Western powers and

Russia, the peninsula has been conceived as an unruly borderland where the structured identity of the imperial centre dissolves and alien, antithetic peripheries begin" (Hammond 2006, 7). Following Braudel's famous historical conception of the Mediterranean, according to which "there are ten, twenty or a hundred Mediterraneans, each one subdivided in turn" (2001, 14), the first way of localising the Balkans as part of a larger Mediterranean culture is through its historical region of Illyria. As Braudel claims, the "Mediterranean both gave and received – and the 'gifts' exchanged might be calamities as well as benefits. Everything was in the mixture" (16). If on the seaside and plains "life aimed for progress" (5), the mountains that surround the Mediterranean, including the bigger part of the Balkan peninsula, aimed "for survival" (ibid.). In that sense, Illyria, the older name for some parts of the Balkans, was undoubtedly directly influenced by the Mediterranean culture, while maintaining its cultural differences.

Lea Puljcan Jurić's study of Illyria in Shakespeare's time offers a detailed overview of the relations between the playwright and the Balkan area, convincingly criticising the dominant view of Illyria as a *terra incognita* in Renaissance studies. In the usual representation of Illyria in Shakespeare's time, we can trace the historical continuum of conceptualising the modern Balkan as 'other' from the Mediterranean civilisation. As Jurić demonstrates, Shakespearean scholars often wrongly assume Mediterranean Illyria[3] as a "vaguely definable mythical land" (2019, 3), a mysterious and enigmatic area. She argues that the region was instead known to Shakespeare,[4] and that "entrenched cultural hierarchies tied to ignorance, elitism, and colonial politics have informed our analyses of *Twelfth Night*" (2),

3 "At the outset, a brief clarification of nomenclature is in order. We shall see that the name 'Illyria' was generally applied in the Renaissance to the lands once included in the Roman province Illyricum and especially the eastern Adriatic region. My use of 'Illyria' as a common term for the cultural and political formations in the region is primarily a matter of faithfulness to this early modern usage that, along with considerations such as convenience, consistency, and clarity, often leads me to omit more localized or alternate place names, such as Dalmatia, Istria, Croatia, Bosnia, Montenegro, Albania, and others" (Jurić 2019, 5).

4 For a more detailed argument see Jurić 2019.

as a most obvious example. By claiming that modern regimes of knowledge concerning Balkan territories are highly influential in contemporary Renaissance studies, she identifies three practices in representing Illyria: erasure, marginalisation and negative distortion. More importantly, for the topic of this essay, she elegantly provides a link between Shakespeare's England, Illyria and the contemporary Balkan:

> Traditional denigration of the Illyrian peoples around Mount Haemus, which in the nineteenth century comes to be called 'Balkan', finds its tortuous way into modern-day discriminatory discourse that has only recently been called 'balkanism'. This does not mean that ideas about the Balkans evolved smoothly and straightforwardly from antiquity to the present day. Nor am I suggesting that pejoratives were leveled exclusively at the lands and peoples of the Balkan region. Negative conceptions were powered by different sets of political, cultural, religious, and economic interests and suppositions prevalent at various locations and times. (Jurić 2019, 14)

This consideration offers a transition to the problem of Balkanism while solidifying the historical continuum in treating this area from a Western perspective. Accordingly, it opens the space for analysing from both an internal and an external/'Western' standpoint the Balkan discourse in Shakespeare studies and performances. And lastly, by highlighting the stereotyped stigmatisation of the Balkan area in the Mediterranean civilisation, I wish to strengthen the sense of an artificial division between the Western, here broadly Mediterranean, and other related, yet 'marginal' cultures.

2. The Discursive Formations of 'Balkanism' and 'Balkanisation'

Balkan studies are now an established scholarly field that gained more critical attention and controversial interpretations after Maria Todorova's 2009 influential study *Imagining the Balkans* introduced the term 'balkanism',[5] a discourse inspired by Said's notion of

5 Matošević-Škokić 2014 offers the latest critical evaluation and presenta-

'orientalism'. However, Todorova argued that "while orientalism is dealing with a difference between (imputed) types, balkanism treats the differences *within one type*" (19; my emphasis). Todorova also analysed the pejorative implications of the term 'balkanisation' claiming that it "had come to denote the parcelization of large and viable political units but also had become a synonym for a reversion to the tribal, the backward, the primitive, the barbarian" (3). Moreover, "the Balkans have served as a repository of negative characteristics against which a positive and self-congratulatory image of the European and the West has been constructed" (189). The common Balkan denominators in the gaze of the West are backwardness, chaos, irrationality, primitivism, barbarity, violence, and a need to be held under control to become civilised, cultured, liberal and democratic. Namely, the image of the 'Oriental' Balkans was constructed upon negative and barbaric stereotypes that served to create the contrastive Other to the civilised West. The Western values were then imposed upon the Balkans, inducing in them a desire to become part of the stereotypical 'West'. Bjelić explains that these 'Oriental stereotypes', hence the aspects of local culture, "are then attributed to the Eastern neighbour, a process which activates Western orientalist stereotyping – and is also self-orientalizing" (2009, 490). In other words, it creates what Milica Bakić-Hayden has called 'nesting Orientalism':

> It may not be a coincidence that similar dissociations take place in the so-called "symbolic wars over heritage", when "the nation-builders of the region devote themselves to breaking away from regional culture" and creating a "myth of absolute autochthony". Myths of national distinction are often symptomatic of the Balkan peoples' desire to march westward and sever their ties with those portions of their past that they share with their 'primitive' eastern neighbors. Milica Bakić-Hayden has shown how Balkan nations, wanting to shed their Balkan identities and become integrated in Western Europe, project 'balkanness' away from themselves and onto their (south)eastern neighbors in the process she calls "nesting Orientalism". (Jurić 2019, 24)

The myth of autochthony develops into mutual accusations. In other

tion of the state of arts regarding balkanism.

words, all these identities are ideological formations and cultural representations rooted in history, and as such are not factual mirrors of social or political reality. The processes of democratisation and 'Europeanisation' are applied to them, even though they are part of Europe and its cultural heritage. "Hayden White considers 'Europe' a geo-political concept that exists only 'in the talk and writing of visionaries and scoundrels seeking an alibi for a civilization whose principal historical attribute has been . . . to destroy what it cannot dominate, assimilate, or consume'" (Hammond 2000, 67). But even more importantly, as Boris Buden claims paraphrasing Todorova, "precisely what we call Balkanization is in fact only a symptom of an Europeanization" (2011, 10). He emphasises her explanation of "the last Yugoslav wars in the 1990s that have been widely ascribed to some Balkan essence – tribalism, primitivism, Balkan violence, nationalism, etc. – as the ultimate Europeanization of the Balkans" (10).

The patronising attitude and culturalist racism (Hammond 2006, 19) of Western democracies go hand in hand with exploitation and influence – they continue functioning under a different ideological cloak but with the same political and economic interests. As Buden explains, post-communistic societies are treated as a regressive infant in need of tutelage and supervision (2010, 18). The project of democratisation involves cloning Western liberal democracy and the erasure of national identities. The struggle for recognition and anger of the so-called 'children of post-communism', as Buden shows, can easily be depreciated as uncivilised. Alongside actual war traumas, this complex struggle adds to the reproduction of self-loathing through Althusserian interpellation:

> By feeling addressed by this question and identifying with an attempt to answer it, we automatically become subjects of an ideologically already structured historical process. Concretely, we start to think of ourselves as those who actively make this process – in our case, the process of Westernization of the Balkans – happen. (12)

Balkan identities, in their post-communist phase, are again

interpellated as Europe's barbaric other.[6] Following Althusser's theory, a Balkan identity is perceived in that manner from the Western perspective and recognises itself as such by answering the call of the West to evolve and grow up.

The main question of the article is thus how this dynamic appears to be represented in Balkan productions: is it reproduced or questioned? Moreover, why use Shakespeare to address these local problems? In order to give a better answer, a brief overview of the tradition of Shakespeare's studies and performances is offered.

3. Shakespeare in the Balkans

Talking about reprisals of Shakespeare's plays in Eastern Europe, Pavel Drábek offered an informed introduction to that complex cultural and political context[7] "in which Shakespeare's works have long been at home in the region of what is intuitively tagged Eastern Europe" (2016, 747), arguing that the phenomenon is "both foreign and 'our contemporary' (to cite Jan Kott)" (759). Following the tradition established by Jan Kott and researched by Zdeněk Stříbrný, Balkan Shakespeares belong to the same paradigm. Generally speaking, Shakespeare arrived in the Balkans in the nineteenth century and studies of Shakespeare are now an established field in the region, especially in the Romanian and Bulgarian cultures,[8] but also in the countries of Former Yugoslavia. Shakespeare has been one of the most loved, read and influential playwrights, as the scarce

6 "After the initial euphoria of 1989, the post-communist peoples were quickly re-imagined as an uncontrollable mass – of criminal gangs, traffickers, prostitutes – that threatened the imminent destruction of Western stability" (Hammond 2006, 13).

7 "The term, it is important to remember, is almost exclusively used in Western cultural-political discourse, from a perspective that is external to the region itself. In what follows, the use of 'Eastern Europe' is already conditioned by this Western perspective, as well as being (too often) unsettlingly muddied by the influence of political networks and spheres of influence" (Drábek 2016, 747).

8 See Findlay and Markidou 2017; Golemi 2020; Hattaway, Sokolova and 1994; Matei-Chesnoiu 2006; Shurbanov and Boika 2001.

but informative studies in English demonstrate.[9] However, the idea of and the theoretical discussions about Balkan Shakespeares are neither considered nor systematically approached. If we follow the main distinction analysed by Ivan Lupić (2010) between textual and performance studies in Shakespearean scholarship, we may notice that in the Balkans, especially in the ex-Yugoslav countries, productions of Shakespeare are much more attractive for analysis than the use or critique of foreign scholarship.

Nevertheless, not until recently there has been the need to unify few performances into an entity dubbed "Balkan Trilogy" (a Serbian, Albanian and North Macedonian production) for the occasion of the "Globe-to-Globe" festival in 2012. Aleksandar Saša Dunđerović's review aptly summarises the role of Shakespeare for the rise of Balkan national consciousness as part of Romantic movements across Europe all through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries:

> Nations recently liberated from the Ottoman empire appropriated Shakespeare as a way of connecting themselves with the wider framework of European culture. Moreover, in translation Shakespeare's iambic pentameter sounds like epic heroic poetry, which dominated the oral tradition in Serbian, Macedonian and Albanian cultures. This greatly helped to localize Shakespeare within people's experience, making the plays sound like the stories from their national cultures. (Dunđerović 2013, 161)

More importantly, Dunđerović brings to attention the fact that The Globe created the concept of the Balkan trilogy "based on national contexts (some might say prejudices) that suggested which nations could best understand Shakespeare's *1-3 Henry VI*" (161), demonstrating that such a concept *de facto* is a Western rather than a local invention. The Balkan trilogy included *1 Henry VI* by the National Theatre of Belgrade, Serbia, directed by Nikita Milivojević; *2 Henry VI* by the National Theatre of Tirana, Albania, directed by Adonis Filipi, and *3 Henry VI* by the National Theatre of Bitola, North Macedonia, directed by John Blondell. Additionally, in recent scholarship, Sara Soncini has used the phrase "the Balkan

9 See Brautović 2013; Bryner 1941; Klajn 1954; Popović 1928 and 1951.

Shakespeares" for other "Shakespeare inflected responses to the war in the former Yugoslavia", openly taking "an outsider's viewpoint and show[ing] a clear awareness of the problematic implications of this discursive positioning" (2018, 27). Despite this awareness, Soncini inherits a biased perspective on the Balkan wars. Namely, in describing the ethical responsibility of Western authors[10] to "bear witness to the Bosnian crisis", she describes the area as "this European heart of darkness" (28). If the allusion to Conrad's novel was intentional, it ironically implies a possibly unintended cultural racism. Because of the mentioned examples, an assessment of the concept of Balkan Shakespeares should be approached by having in mind a local perspective on recent productions that have dealt with local conflicts.

4. The Historical and Political Context of the Conflict over Kosovo

Both plays that will be discussed here refer to the Balkan wars, more precisely to the ex-Yugoslav and Serbian-Kosovo conflicts. However, *Romeo and Juliet* is directly put in the context of the ongoing Serbian-Kosovo problematic relationship. The dispute between Serbians and Albanians over the territorial rights of the region of Kosovo (in Albanian Kosova or Kosovë, and Serbian Kosovo i Metohija) has a long and contested history that can only the recalled in brief here. The starting point concerns territorial and identity issues. The Albanians claim to be descendants of the ancient inhabitants of Western Balkans, the Illyrians, or more precisely the Dardanians, and thus declare to have an ethnic priority over the land. On the other hand, the South Slavic tribes inhabited the area in the sixth and seventh centuries. The first independent Serbian medieval state and the Serb Orthodox Church were created in the late twelfth century and the most important event was the battle of Kosovo (1389) against the Ottoman Empire, which is regarded as a constitutive episode in the historical construction of the Serbian national identity. These historical facts and religious heritage were

10 Soncini 2018 analyses her 'own Balkan trilogy' including Katie Mitchell's *3 Henry VI* (1994), Sarah Kane's *Blasted* (1995) and Mario Martone's *Teatro di guerra* (1998).

nevertheless severely misused on both sides' twenty-first-century nationalistic propaganda as the ultimate right for claiming the territory.

With the establishment of Yugoslavia in 1945, Kosovo became a part of Serbia. In the 1963 Constitution, it was raised to the rank of an autonomous province, and in 1974 a new Constitution approved Kosovo as an autonomous region with "the institutions of legislative, executive and juridical power" (Nikolić 1998, 13). Even though the Albanian population was being discriminated against, these new autonomies seemed threatening to the increasing Serbian minority and opened the space for the rise of Serbian nationalism in the '80s and '90s, inspiring both repressions over the Albanian population and strong separatist movements. Daskalovski explains:

> On the one hand, the Serbs interpret: that after the fall of communism Kosovo became Serbia's internal matter and that based on this fact they can decide whether to 'give' Kosovo Albanians rights to self rule or not. Kosova Albanians, on the other hand, construe that due to the disintegration of former Yugoslavia, Kosova's autonomy was upgraded to an independent status, and that therefore Serbia has nothing to do with the province and should withdraw its 'occupational forces'. (2004, 20-2)

Slobodan Milošević, the former president of Serbia within Yugoslavia (1989-1997) and of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1997-2000), abolished the autonomy of Kosovo causing tensions foreshadowing civil war in 1990. Nevertheless, and apart from occasional armed attacks on both sides, the situation escalated only at a later stage, in 1998, when the armed struggle broke out between the so-called Liberation Army of Kosovo, the UCK, and the Yugoslav Army. In 1999, after the unsuccessful Rambouillet talks between Serbian and Kosovo governments and all relevant international institutions led by the EU and the United States, NATO started the aggression on Yugoslavia on the 25th of March that lasted three months. The outcome of the NATO aggression, rather cynically named the Noble Anvil, resulted in the complete withdrawal of Serbian forces from Kosovo and huge damage to the infrastructure and loss of civilian lives on both sides. Kosovo became a region under the protection

and government of a peacekeeping force called KFOR led by NATO and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). However, the international missions in practice did not provide security to both ethnicities and their cultural heritage. Meanwhile, the diplomatic talks resulted in the Declaration of Independence of Kosovo in 2008, still unrecognised by the Serbian government. Thus, the so-called 'Kosovo knot' still remains unresolved and a source of ongoing tensions.

In this light, the question that immediately arises is whether this complex history of political struggle and violence should be treated as just another Balkan 'ancient grudge'. In a recent article, Semenov comments that writing a brief history of the Kosovo conflict is an extremely ungrateful task, thus he rather resorts to "show that the pendulum swings from 'the Serb aggressors – the Albanian victims' to 'the Serb victims – the Albanian separatists' every couple of decades: both sides can be singled out for opprobrium" (2020, 377). Yet, this binary distinction into Serbians and Albanians as only fighting sides for the territory of Kosovo is highly reductive since it excludes the involved international community.

Talking about the Western gaze, Guzina highlights that "caught between two 'truths on Kosovo'– the Serbian one and the Albanian one – analysts often seek refuge, as Julie Mertus observes, in three lines of rhetoric: complexity, denial or Balkan primordialism" (2004, 29). And thus, the nationalisms of both sides are treated as primitive, backward and barbaric, in opposition to the civilised, developed and cultured Western societies. This perspective is myopic and selective in excluding the wider geopolitical context which would reveal that Western powers were directly responsible and engaged in the creation of the political disorder in the territory long before the more recent Balkan wars.[11] Thus, the concept of balkanisation is created for the justification and beautification of the Western hegemony in the region.

11 For a more detailed history of the involvement and the influence of the international community in the region see Hammond 2006.

5. *Romeo and Juliet* (2015)

In 2015, William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* was adapted and staged as a collaboration between Kosovo and Serbia aimed at demonstrating the symbolic reconciliation between two conflicting entities. The performance was a joint production between two companies (Belgrade's Radionica Integracije and Priština's Qendra Multimedia) and it has been performed in different Balkan National Theatres, including Belgrade, Priština and Tirana. The main director was the Serbian actor/director Miki Manojlović who asked Jeton Neziraj, the director of both Qendra Multimedia and the National Theatre of Kosovo, to join and co-produce the play.[12] *Romeo and Juliet* premiered on 5 April 2015 at the National Theatre of Belgrade. The actors performed on an X-shaped stage, symbolically representing the Serbia-Kosovo conflict and the crossroad between the two communities. The stage became "a crossroad of love and hate, a life and death union between Romeo and Juliet, and a division of Montagues and Capulets" (Kadija 2014, 85). Manojlović explained that "*Romeo and Juliet* itself is an unsolvable formula of existence, life, love and hate, and of all that man is and that's why I made that X on the stage because X is almost always a part of every formula" (qtd in Kadija 2014, 85). In the same way, the decision of playing a bilingual performance aimed to reflect the diversity of the two groups and to highlight their problems in communication, trying to make the play more in tune with the political and social reality. The cast was composed of outstanding actors from both Belgrade and Priština, alongside some actors from Tirana and New York.

The play was opened by a clear signal of the setting and focal point of the show, having the actress that plays the Prologue exclaim: "Europe, Italy, Verona, Via Calamari 33, Casa di Giulietta". At the very beginning of the production, a Western ideological position was established, although what followed was the reduced and adapted version of the Prologue, given in both Albanian and Serbian. In order to identify the reasons for such choices, we should

12 See Eric Nicholson's essay in this volume also for a different perspective on this production.

ask whether the melodramatic and romantic aspects of *Romeo and Juliet* may have been wrongly used to erase the ethical and political aspects of the historical context in which the play was performed. In other words, we should ask whether this production of Shakespeare, and of *Romeo and Juliet* in particular, may be appropriate vehicles for exploring the complexities of the ethnic conflict between Serbians and Kosovo Albanians that escalated into an international war and the NATO aggression in 1999, with visible consequences both in 2015 and today. Have perhaps the play and the cultural capital of Shakespeare been misused as politically duplicitous propaganda tools?

The decision to employ both Serbian and Albanian languages was received by the media as meant to reveal the misunderstandings between the two communities, but also, and contrariwise, as a form of collaboration. Doubtless, it was an innovative and daring choice, showing the intricacies of cultural in-betweenness and hybrid identities, but the problem was its realisation. First of all, the creators suggested that, although the audience might not understand one of the languages, the performance was still comprehensible. They did not provide subtitles or translations, which put the aim of the project into question: what kind of social purpose did this choice have in 'breaking down the wall' when the audience did not fully understand what was being said? Second of all, at its outset it seemed that the dialogues were going to be divided equally, or at least one expected the Capulets to speak Serbian and the Montagues Albanian, but Serbian was more often heard on stage.

In many interviews, both Manojlović and Neziraj made clear that *Romeo and Juliet* is not a political performance, even though it has to do with politics. In an interview made by Sarah Edwards, the Executive Producer affirmed that: "we didn't want to deal with this particular social and political context. We were working on Shakespeare's play, and we just used this real political and social context to work with Albanian and Serbian actors in this performance" (Edwards 2016, 22). In response to this statement, Edwards' comment was urgently necessary: "having both Albanian and Serbian actors on stage together speaking their native languages is a political message in itself, thus making the performance political" (23). This production sparked off a debate about the artistic

intention to remain apolitical while 'just using' the actual political and social context, revealing a possibly unintended hypocrisy behind the empty signifiers of universalism. Interpretations with similar ideological roots were reproduced by the media from all over Europe, highly praising the production. Gillet's article for *The Guardian* highlighted the curative power of reconciliation in this performance, recollecting a series of statements by actors expressing belief that *Romeo and Juliet* would have been a success in challenging barriers and building bridges (see Gillet 2015).

However, the production was financed by different institutions, the Serbian and the Kosovar governments, the European Union, some private embassies and two private Open Society foundations. As Taneja suggests, "perhaps the choice of Shakespeare even influenced the major financial backers for Neziraj and Manojlović's project: as both places vie towards accession to the European Union, €130,000 ($142,000) came from the EU offices in both Serbia and Kosovo" (2016, 45). Beka Vučo, the regional manager for the Western Balkans at the Open Society Initiative for Europe argues that:

> The uniqueness of this production is manifold, from the two languages that are spoken in the show to the myriad symbols that the production employs, thus breaking through communication and cultural barriers. Even the sources of funding for the production represent a spirit of breaking down walls . . . This Kosovar Serbian *Romeo and Juliet* is a strong piece of art. And, as with all artistic creation, whether one likes it or not is a matter of personal choice. However, it would be difficult to deny its powerful message. (Vučo 2015)

Having in mind the source of financial support, these types of statements directly point to the geopolitical, neoliberal and cultural colonialism of the ideological project behind the production. More importantly, they imply the cynical hypocrisy towards the actual citizens affected by the war or still living in Kosovo to whom the performance should have been addressed, to put aside the universalist and exaggerated rhetoric of Vučo's glorification.

The project soon started showing its cracks from within. While Jeton Neziraj said "I think this is going to mark the end of the Serbia-

Kosovo conflict, symbolically" (qtd in Gillet 2015), the Albanian actor playing Romeo, Alban Ukaj, was precautious not to fall into similar overstatements by lamenting that "the play was covered by the media as *the first* performance of this kind" and claiming that "in the past I've worked with plays in which issues were dealt with more harshly, more directly, with more pain – Bosnian-Serbian coproductions, Serbian-Albanian coproductions" (qtd in Halili 2018). In the end, Ukaj withdrew from the project, disagreeing with the type of propaganda around the advertising of the show. He protested against "camouflaging things to the extent that the whole problem is relativized for the sake of getting money" (ibid.). For Armanda Kodra Hysa, the initial idea of artists cooperating and engaging in common projects was exciting, but she also did not support the propaganda surrounding the event, arguing that *Romeo and Juliet* ended being as "arranged couples, catching the right moment, using the right language for sponsorship, and have absolutely zero impact on the wider public" (Kodra Hysa 2015). She then expressed a desire for a better conceptualised and less problematic *Romeo and Juliet* production in the future, "until then, *Romeo and Juliet* will just be make up on the dead body of normal ethnic relations" (ibid.).

To further underline the complexities of this issue, it may be recalled that the general response of the audience was usually very positive. As Nicholson's essay in this volume highlights, Taneja's recollection of the delighted reactions of the audience should induce us to acknowledge the positive potential of reflecting on the conflict and reconciliation through cultural collaboration – and Shakespeare's role in it. In that sense, such a response witnesses a strong need for addressing these problems. However, without denying or diminishing this honest reaction, I wonder whether it might in fact imply falling into the trap of a self-serving satisfaction by feeling personally engaged with painful topics. Releasing emotional tension by watching the tragic love story of Romeo and Juliet as represented in this production is also a way to shift the focus away from its political engagement. Despite the good intentions and the significance of a Serbian and Kosovan collaboration, as well as the quality of the performance, the production had its shortcomings. It was problematic because of

oversimplifying and banalising the historical context and treating it without enough ethical responsibility. Did not it paradoxically amount to erasing the authentic local experiences it claimed to be promoting, all in the name of dialogue, diversity and love? Even though the performance had many good qualities (acting, scenography, music), the dramaturgical, theatrical and promotional choices were emancipatory only on the surface. In fact, they perpetuated a politically problematic position of empty signifiers of democracy, reconciliation and dialogue.

6. *Hamlet* (2016)

On the other hand, one of the latest Serbian productions of *Hamlet* in the Yugoslav Dramatic Theatre in Belgrade, which premiered in 2016 as part of the global marking of the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death, offered an alternative solution. *Hamlet* was directed by Aleksandar Popovski[13] and played by Nebojša Glogovac in an adaptation by Goran Stefanovski. By choosing 'Live, die, repeat' as the motto of the production, Popovski created Hamlet as a figure that returned from the grave, revealing a continual circle of injustice. And yet, by closing with the paradoxical line "I must be cruel only to be kind" (*Ham.* 3.4.178), Popovski offered a Hamlet that stood for the struggle of the oppressed against this injustice, despite its doom to failure.

The focus of my analysis is the political potential of such a disillusioned struggle. Namely, I am questioning whether the adaptation perpetuates 'barbaric' stereotypes of Serbian and Balkan identities in the Western gaze or Popovski's *Hamlet* offers a counterpoint, a local appropriation that deconstructs this binary division – a sign of a paradoxical identity, of being at the same time in and out of the Mediterranean and Europe, as part of both East and West. By envisioning Hamlet as a leader of the rising dead, Popovski's Shakespeare aims to make the play achieve a cleansing and cathartic function, both on a national and a universal level.

13 It is worthwhile mentioning that Popovski directed *Romeo and Juliet* in 2021 at The Slovene National Theatre. However, I did not have the chance to watch the performance.

Popovski's *Hamlet* takes into consideration a larger piece of history, signalling the period of Yugoslavia by using on stage a book of *Hamlet* that was printed in 1959 by a famous editing house from Belgrade. Thus, the performance refers to the period of Yugoslavia until the contemporary consequences of wars. Also, in opposition to Balkan political appropriations of *Romeo and Juliet* in the region, *Hamlet* has a rich staging history in ex-Yugoslavia and Serbia.[14]

As in many other nations, the play functioned as a way to examine contemporary cultural, social and political circumstances (Portmann 2018b, 173). During the 1970s and 1980s, metatheatrical devices and political readings were dominant as markers of resistance to the socialist regime. In contrast, during the 1990s and ex-Yugoslav wars, productions of *Hamlet* avoided overt political connotations. Throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century, after NATO's bombing against Yugoslavia and a regime change that pushed the country into a post-socialist transition, the atmosphere in high cultural circles changed. *Hamlet* was appropriated as a sign of hope, an opportunity to end the circle of violence, embracing the values of Western democracy and cultural prosperity (cf. Portmann 2018b). However, Popovski's 2016 *Hamlet* demonstrates a disillusionment with such hopes by taking up and enriching a Serbian long-standing tradition of metatheatrical and political interpretations of *Hamlet*, which suggests a need to revise binary ideological constructs of an Eastern barbarism (Serbian, Balkan, post-communist) and a Western, Mediterranean, civilisation.

In 2016, numerous unsuccessful protests occurred both in Belgrade and in North Macedonia, complaining against the parliamentary elections as an alleged fraud, the suspicious death cases of civilians connected to illegal demolition of buildings supported by the Serbian government, corruption and money laundering, the ruling oligarchy, wiretap scandals, state control of media and autocratic premiers, to name just the most important reasons. Moreover, the process of transition to liberal democracy, alongside some positive improvements, mostly brought about

14 For a more detailed overview of the history of performances of *Hamlet* in the region, see Portmann 2015.

disastrous consequences for East European countries in general. In the name of progress towards the EU, national property and goods were sold to foreign investments or the private sector, leaving the vast majority of citizens in poverty, unemployment and in a severe economic and dignity crisis. On the example of the Czech Republic, Kostihová neatly summarises the paradoxical situation of a post-communist state in transition:

> In the simplest sense, any *rhetoric of human rights*, however well-intentioned, seems suspect in the face of *the material results of EU policies* that effectively and systematically disenfranchise the majority of citizens through enforced layoffs in the name of 'flexibility' and 'efficiency' of the labour force, inequality in applying EU subsidies for key economic sectors . . . discriminatory application of nominally universal rights to seek employment internationally within the EU, and diminishing social security provisions, while wealth evaporates upwards towards a small wealthy elite and/or international corporations dispatched by Western governments ostensibly to assist with the transitional process. (Kostihová 2010, 5; my emphasis)

Popovski's *Hamlet* fights against both local and global influences: he mocks the local elites, repesented by Claudius, and fights the hypocritical politics of neoliberalism with cruel justice. In the director's words:

> Mi smo nepravdu otkrili mnogo puta. Jednom smo imali demonstracije, pa revoluciju, pa drugu revoluciju, pa treću, pa nas je ovaj prevario, pa onaj. . . Kao što je moja generacija prošla – kad sam kao klinac gledao raspad socijalizma u kasnim osamdesetim, pa rat i raspad Jugoslavije, a od tada više ne znam da nabrojim . . . (Kovačević and Stojanović, 2016, 6)

> [We have encountered injustice many times. Once we had demonstrations, then the revolution, then the second revolution, then the third, after which we were deceived by this one, that one . . . As my generation witnessed – as a kid I was watching the collapse of socialism in the late 80s, after that, the war and collapse of Yugoslavia, and from that moment on I cannot even count all the injustices . . . (my translation)]

Adding to the deconstruction of these injustices, Popovski identifies the problem of neoliberal capitalism at the core of his *Hamlet*:

> Kao u prošlom veku: Prvi svetski rat nije završen, zato se desio Drugi. Tako mi se čini i ovo. Istumbali smo sve, premestili sisteme, sklonjen je komunizam. Sad je užasna potreba da se on izjednači s fašizmom, da je totalitarizam, što meni ne ide baš, da sad izjednačujemo Mengelea sa Stanetom Dolancom, to mi se ne uklapa. Niko ne govori o ovom materijalno-kapitalističko-liberalnom sistemu – da vidimo šta ćemo s ovim svetom koji stoji na velikoj nepravdi. To Hamlet govori. U tom smislu on je pozitivan lik. (3)

> [The First World War did not end, that is why the Second happened. That is how I see this as well. We have mixed everything, alternated systems; communism is removed. Now there is a huge need to equate it with fascism, totalitarianism, which does not quite stand for me, equating Mengele with Stane Dolanc, it does not fit in my opinion. Nobody is talking about this *materialistic, liberal capitalism* – let's see what to do with this world that is *based on such huge injustice*. That is what Hamlet is saying. And in that sense, he is a positive character. (my translation and my emphasis)]

Following the assumption that every aesthetic choice also entails a political one, Popovski's relationship with the Shakespearean text is proof of as a resistance to the cultural capital of Shakespeare, to fidelity to the original and traditional type of performances. What type of a hero[15] is Popovski's Hamlet? The audience witnesses a fifty-year-old, disillusioned Hamlet, a wise, deeply emotional, and rough buffoon, fluctuating from furore to playful irony: a powerful performance of Nebojša Glogovac, who was improvising and twisting lines and whose resistance to an imposed cultural 'sanctity' of or fidelity to Shakespeare's text was a theatrical device itself:

> [The production] goes on to have all manner of fun with the key speeches…when Hamlet embarks on his 'What a piece of work is

15 For an analysis of the representation of Balkan masculinity and heroes see Pittman 2015.

> man' speech, he does so in a parody of Shakespearean acting, all heightened emotion and sonorous line reading: Glogovac's Hamlet is fully aware of the weight of expectation that accompanies every line, the sense of anticipation. (Tripney 2016)

Shakespeare's text is mocked, colloquialised, destroyed, localised.

When he appears on stage, Hamlet rises from the grave asking the gravedigger: "How long will a man lie i'th'earth ere he rot?" (5.1.154). He comes back to life with an awareness of the barbarity of materialistic, liberal capitalism and destroys the illusion that it can be dealt with democratically. "I must be cruel only to be kind" can thus be read as a retaliation of justice, outside a lawfully organised community, which is exposed as a scam in this performance:

> Hamlet is something that is born every few years, which is why he always returns and climbs out of his grave . . . Hamlet is here to tell us that injustice has been committed, to shed light, to stir up the ghosts. Hamlet *comes together with the ghosts to shake things up a bit* . . . And, he brings spring. (Kovačević and Stojanović, 2016, 27; my emphasis)

Read in this way, Popovski's *Hamlet* offers a valuable counterpoint to the naïve universalism of the 2015 *Romeo and Juliet*, and a basis for a nuanced consideration of the role of contemporary Balkan Shakespeare productions in creating a self-image in relation to Western culture.

Conclusion

As we have seen, the first problem to crop up about the 2015 *Romeo and Juliet* production we examined is the reduction of the Serbian-Albanian relations to the 'ancient grudge' between two families 'both alike in dignity'; a production that reduces the 'grudge' into a primordial Balkan conflict that needs foreign (especially financial) intervention. As such, it repeats the stereotyped cultural racism towards the Balkans from the perspective of a more developed and civilised West. The second problem arises as a consequence of it, and consists of the lack of ethical, political and historical responsibility

of the production in the face of much more complex, silenced, yet ongoing struggles of the oppressed people of both ethnicities, in whose name the performance was actually created. Lastly, the utilitarian use of the cultural and symbolic capital of Shakespeare and appropriation of *Romeo and Juliet* as a universal love story that erases differences and brings reconciliation in fact masks the problems that are supposedly addressed.

As Alexa Alice Joubin notes, "for both conservatives and innovators, the genre of Global Shakespeare is politically expedient in a neoliberal economy" (2020, 26). This production is a very good example of a conservative and politically expedient Balkan appropriation of *Romeo and Juliet*. Taking this perspective into account, the performance might be seen as a commodification of the myths of universal love, peace and reconciliation in *Romeo and Juliet* while participating in a network of economically and politically driven agendas. In other words, the brand of Shakespeare and *Romeo and Juliet* seem to provide the perfect makeup for attracting funds and cultural visibility. This does not entail questioning the actual good intentions of the people involved or the quality of the performance. However, in the face of sensitive topics such as the Serbian-Kosovo relations, issues of ethics and responsibility cannot be evaded as they are crucial when appropriating Shakespeare.

In this respect, Popovski's *Hamlet* proves to be an interesting foil by offering a better elaborated and conceptualised theatrical experience, with a developed political consciousness that deals sophisticatedly with the given problematic of historical injustice and interpellation of the Western gaze. The 'I must be cruel only to be kind' motto criticises this interpellation by channelling the legitimate anger of the Balkan people into a struggle for paradoxical justice. As such, the performance destroys the Western self-serving myth of a clear-cut division between civilisation and barbarity and embeds this performance in the wider context of the treatment of post-communist countries in Eastern Europe. Although Popovski's Hamlet never actualises justice on the stage, the remaining political potential stirs the dominant geopolitical discourse of neoliberalism and some of its empty signifiers as democracy, human rights and rule of law by emphasising, with bittersweet mockery, the unquestioned disillusionment with them. Lastly, Glogovac's charisma and public

image of a people's man had a powerful cultural resonance for delivering a sense of moral and emotional integrity, displaying bravery to delve into morally ambiguous realms in the name of justice, never losing a sense of humour.

Manojlović's *Romeo and Juliet* repeats some of the crucial problems addressed by the term "balkanism": the erasure of the native culture and history, internalised cultural racism, and "the problem of the sensibility of the observed being aware of being observed" (Todorova 2009, 60), or in other words, the problem of cultural stigmatisation. On the other hand, Popovski's *Hamlet* elegantly and subtly incorporates local history and culture, fights against internalisation of cultural racism and lastly, deals with the third, one might say, typically Hamletian problem of being both observed and aware of being observed, and does so with parody, humour and emancipated political awareness. Moreover, in quoting T.S. Eliot's *Hollow Men* at the beginning of the show, Popovski discretely but clearly invoked Conrad's Kurtz from *Heart of Darkness*, suggesting a link between Shakespeare as a tool of imperialism and colonialism, and the setting of *Hamlet* as a colonised space.

Thus, while *Romeo and Juliet* represents the most problematic aspect of 'politically expedient' Shakespeare productions and stages the Balkan space as an unruly and violent Mediterranean area, my reading of the 2016 *Hamlet* invites the audience to re-evaluate a practice in which the cultural capital of Shakespeare is used as a prolongation of neoliberal ideology under the façade of universal values and a selective appliance of studies of otherness, defying the dichotomies between the Balkans and the West. This consideration brings us back to the initial question: whether the two productions here discussed represent a practice of Shakespearising the Balkans or Balkanising Shakespeare. In unintentionally staging *Romeo and Juliet* as a political tragedy, Manojlović unfortunately missed the opportunity to escape the colonial aspect of Shakespearising the Balkans. On the other hand, Popovski's *Hamlet* offers an example of how Shakespeare may be Balkanised – a committed local response and a fruitful Balkan appropriation of Shakespeare. As such it might be a guiding thread for a more thorough research on creative contemporary Balkan Shakespeare productions within a 'Mediterranean context'.

If we return to Braudel's description of the seaside and plains of the Mediterranean, where "life aimed for progress" (5), and, more importantly, to the image of the Balkan Mountains that are on the margins of the Mediterranean, where life is aimed "for survival" (ibid.), we identify the same dualism between the civilised West and the Balkan 'barbaric other'. However, Shakespeare's plays often, if not always, defy any clear dualism, and *Romeo and Juliet* in particular demonstrates the inextricable mixture of opposites. Interpreted from this perspective, Friar Lawrence's warning that "these violent delights have violent ends" (*Romeo and Juliet* 2.6.11) should not only be appropriated as suitable to describe a possible outcome of an 'ancient grudge' in a Balkan context. Rather, it can guide us to seek for paradoxes and adopt a critical stance towards any ideas of cultural autonomy and purity.

The essay is devoted to the memory of Nebojša Glogovac and Vlasta Velisavljević (the ghost of Hamlet's father), with kind gratitude to Aleksandar Popovski and Jovana Stojiljković (Ophelia)

Works Cited

An. 2016. "'Romeo e Zhuljeta', shfaqja serbo-shqiptare mbërrin në Tiranë". *BalkanWeb*, June 1, http://www.balkanweb.com/site/romeo-e-zhuljeta-shfaqja-serbo-shqiptare-mberrin-ne-tirane/ (Accessed 8 August 2021).

An. 2016. "'Romeo dhe Zhulieta', që 'rrëzuan'muret në Ballkan". *OraNews*, March 23, https://www.oranews.tv/romeo-dhe-zhulieta-qe-rrezuanmuret-ne-ballkan (Accessed 12 August 2021).

An. 2016. "Shfaqja serbo-shqiptare, pasion erotik mbi pellgje gjaku". *Dritare*, June 9, https://dritare.net/shfaqja-serbo-shqiptare-pasion-erotik-mbi-pellgje-gjaku (Accessed 12 August 2021).

Bataković, Dušan T. 2009. *Kosovo and Metohija: Serbia's troublesome province*. Belgrade: Institute for Balkan Studies.

Bideleux, Robert, and Ian Jeffries. 2007. *The Balkans: A post-Communist History*. London: Routledge.

Bieber, Florian, and Židas Daskalovski, eds. 2003. *Understanding the War on Kosovo*. London: Frank Cass Publishers.

Bjelić, Dušan, and Obrad Savić, eds. 2002. *Balkan as Metaphor: Between Globalization and Fragmentation*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press.

Bjelić, Dušan. 2009. "Immigrants as the Enemy: Psychoanalysis and the Balkans' Self-Orientalization". *The Slavonic and East European Review* 87 (3): 488-517.

Braudel, Fernand. 2001. *Memory and the Mediterranean*. Trans. by S. Reynolds, Alfred A. Knopf. New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group.

Buden, Boris. 2011. *What to do with the question "What will the Balkans look like in 2020?" / Was tun mit der Frage "Wie wird der Balkan im Jahr 2020 aussehen?"*. Vienna: Erste Stiftung.

— 2010. "Children of post-communism". *Radical Philosophy* 159: Jan/Feb. https://www.radicalphilosophy.com/article/children-of-postcommunism (Accessed 15 May 2020).

Edwards, Sarah. 2016. "Reconciliation as a form of Cultural Catharsis: The Role of Theater in Revitalizing Kosovo-Serbian Relations". *Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection* 2319: https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection/2319/ (Accessed 10 August 2021).

Gillet, Kit. 2015. "Borrowing Cupid's wings: *Romeo and Juliet* helps heal the scars of Kosovo war". *The Guardian*, April 5. https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2015/apr/05/romeo-and-juliet-kosovo-war-shakespeare-serbia (Accessed 5 August 2021).

Halili, Dafina. 2018. "Alban Ukaj: The Problem is that the Artistic Community is Conformist". *Kosovo 2.0*, September 28, https://kosovotwopointzero.com/en/alban-ukaj-the-problem-is-that-the-artistic-community-is-conformist/ (Accessed 11 August 2021).

Hall, Stuart. 2018. *Essential Essays. Volume 2: Identity and diaspora*. Edited by David Morley. Durham: Duke University Press.

Hammond, Andrew. 2006. "Balkanism in Political Context: From the Ottoman Empire to the EU", *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture* 3 (3): 6-26 (Accessed 15 May 2020).

Hopkins, Valerie. "Leading man: Alban Ukaj on being an actor in a post-Yugoslav space". *Prishtina Insight*, October 20. https://prishtinainsight.com/leading-man-alban-ukaj-mag/ (Accessed 12 August 2021).

Joubin, Alexa Alice. 2020. "Others within: Ethics in the age of Global Shakespeare". In *The Routledge Handbook of Shakespeare and Global Appropriation*, edited by Christy Desmet, Sujata Iyengar, and Miriam Jacobson, 24-36. London: Routledge.

Jurić, Lea Puljcan. 2019. *Illyria in Shakespeare's England*. Madison-Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.

Kadija, Refik. 2014. "Juxtaposition and Improvement in Retranslating *Romeo*

and Juliet into Albanian". Paper submitted for "Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet in European Culture" at the University of Murcia (Spain). LCPJ Publishing. https://www.lcpj.pro/skedaret/1463955208-w.%20LCPJ%207.2_C.2.pdf (Accessed 12 August 2021).

Kodra Hysa, Armanda. 2015. "The Serbian-Albanian Romeo and Juliet: Makeup on the Dead Body of Normal Ethnic Relations". *Balkanist*, April 9. https://balkanist.net/the-serbian-albanian-romeo-and-juliet-makeup-dead-body-on-normal-ethnic-relations/ (Accessed 5 August 2021).

Kovačević, Jelena and Gorčin Stojanović. 2016. "Iskusan čovek / s Aleksandrom Popovskim razgovarala Jelena Kovačević", Beograd: Službeni glasnik.

Kostihová, Marcela. 2010. *Shakespeare in Transition: Political Appropriations in the Postcommunist Czech Republic*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Murati, Violeta. 2016. "Miki Manojlović: S'janë serbët dhe shqiptarët që urrehen, por politika e shteteve". *MAPO*, June 8. https://gazetamapo.al/miki-manojlovic-sjane-serbet-dhe-shqiptaret-qe-urrehen-por-politika-e-shteteve/ (Accessed 12 August 2021).

Nikolli, Fatmira. 2016. "Romeo Dhe Zhuljeta". *Gazeta Shqiptare*, June 8. https://www.pressreader.com/ (Accessed 11 August 2021).

Pittman, Monique. 2015. "Heroes, Villains, and Balkans: Intertextual Masculinities in Ralph Fiennes's *Coriolanus*". *Shakespeare Bulletin* 33 (2): 215-44.

Popovski, Aleksandar. 2016 *Hamlet*. Jugoslovensko dramsko pozorište, Službeni glasnik, Beograd. [Shakespeare, W. *Hamlet*. Dir. Aleksandar Popovski. Yugoslav Dramatic Theatre, Belgrade].

Portmann, Alexandra. 2015. *"The time is out of joint": Shakespeares "Hamlet" in den Ländern des ehemaligen Jugoslawien*. Zürich: Chronos Verlag.

2018a. "Hamlet in Times of War: Two Appropriations of Shakespeare's Tragedy in Former Yugoslavia in the 1990s". In Aneta Mancewicz and Alexa Alice Joubin (eds.), *Local and Global Myths in Shakespearean Performance*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan,

— 2018b. "Shakespeare's new contemporariness, or *Hamlet* in the Yugoslav Drama Theatre of the 21st century". *Cahiers Elizabethans: A Journal of English Renaissance Studies* 96 (1): 172-84.

Radionica integracije. 2018. *Romeo and Juliet full theater play*. Video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qKx6V7Wp0Uo

Semenov, Andrej. 2020. "Kosovo: A Silent European Consensus". *International Studies* 57 (4): 375-390.

Shakespeare, William. 2012. *Romeo and Juliet*. The Arden Shakespeare Third Series. Edited by René Weis. London: Bloomsbury.

— 2016. *Hamlet.* The Arden Shakespeare Third Series. Edited by Ann Thompson, and Neil Taylor. London: Bloomsbury.

Taneja, Preti. 2016. "Star-Crossed Actors: What Happened When Theatres in Kosovo and Serbia Performed A Joint Take on *Romeo and Juliet*". *Sage Journals*, April 5. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0306422016643019 (Accessed 12 August 2021).

— 2017. "Friar Lawrence in the Balkans". *Lacuna Magazine*, February 17. https://lacuna.org.uk/war-and-peace/friar-lawrence-balkans/ (Accessed 12 August 2021).

Todorova, Maria. 2009. *Imagining the Balkans.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tripney, Natasha. 2016. "Is Our Reverence of Shakespeare Holding Us Back?". *The Stage*, December 5. www.thestage.co.uk/opinion/natasha-tripney-is-our-reverence-for-shakespeare-holding-us-back (Accessed 12 August 2021).

Vučo, Beka. 2015. "Romeo and Juliet Finds New Life in Serbia and Kosovo". *Open Society Foundations*, May 19. https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/voices/romeo-and-juliet-finds-new-life-serbia-and-kosovo (Accessed 5 August 2021).