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# Artistic mobility of Miro Gavran's plays<sup>1</sup>

## Umjetnička mobilnost drama Mire Gavrana

**Summary:** By their literary and theatrical reception, the plays of Miro Gavran surpass the works of all modern Croatian men of letters, especially the playwrights, and are frequently performed in the neighboring countries' theaters, having commenced their scenic life even prior to 1990. The paper deals with a cultural mobility of Gavran's plays, explores a reception of première titles, and the characteristics of plays that have been most frequently performed in the neighboring countries.

**Keywords:** Miro Gavran, cultural mobility, Croatian drama, contemporary theater

**Sažetak:** Drame Mire Gavrana svojom književnom i kazališnom recepcijom nadilaze radove svih hrvatskih pisaca, posebice dramskih, te se često izvode u kazalištima susjednih nam država, a postavljane su na scenu još od prije 1990. Ovaj se rad bavi kulturnom mobilnošću Gavranovih drama, istražuje recepciju premijernih naslova kao i obilježja najizvođenijih drama u susjednim državama.

**Ključne riječi:** Miro Gavran, kulturna mobilnost, hrvatska drama, suvremeno kazalište

Miro Gavran started his dramatist work in the mid-1980s and has undoubtedly been the most played modern Croatian playwright so far, while a syntagm of the "well-tailored plays" that aggregate actors, directors, and viewers on various global continents and in numerous states is frequently apparent in parallel with his opus qualifications. In the international liter-

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ary fairs, he is one of the authors who manage to attract the attention of the media and mediators who want to translate and publish his works, and he did not even have time to watch the premières of all of his plays in the world. Additionally, it is possible to count approximately fifty theatrical texts of his, an almost equal number of translations in foreign languages, and nearly one hundred fifty editions in Croatia and abroad, while the plays produced according to his dramatic features were watched by roughly three million people worldwide, as it is stated on the jacket of Gavran's dramatic text book *Ljubavi Georgea Washingtona (George Washington's Loves)*<sup>2</sup>. Gavran's dramatic works had approximately two hundred fifty productions, out of which as many as one hundred ninety were the foreign ones<sup>3</sup>. Thus, it does not surprise that the Croatian Cultural Club awarded him the Annual Prize for the Promotion of Croatian Culture in the World in 2016, having issued a publication with the theatrographical lists that have already managed to get obsolete, thanks to an exceptional mobility of Gavran's dramatic works. Already at first glance, to annually have from ten to fifteen premières of the dramatic works of his abroad testifies of an impressive mobility of the dramatic works by this author.

When it became clear that Gavran's international success is neither temporary nor sporadic, the first scientific papers appeared, which tried to fathom the origin of author's accomplishment. In 1999, Sanja Nikčević argued that Gavran is an "unusual phenomenon of the Croatian theater", while she sketched his "success secret" in the well-designed characters, who are realistic and alive, isolated, near and understandable, in an intriguing account, sentiment, and affirmative thought<sup>4</sup>. Two years later, Ana Lederer wrote that, when it comes to the performances of Gavran's plays, they are "the most profitable Croatian export dramatic product, too, phrased by an unsophisticated market vernacular"<sup>5</sup>, having added that the author's success is even larger abroad than in the homeland. The Bosnian-Herzegovinian theatrologist Gordana Muzaferija authored the book *Kazališne igre Mire Gavrana*, published in 2005 by the Croatian ITI Center in Zagreb, which provoked Gradimir Gojer to repeat a thesis on Gavran as one of the "most pronounced export items of the neighboring state" in his column in the Banja Luka-based *Nezavisne novine*, but also to ask "how to treat a cultural asset as a fixer of re-

<sup>2</sup> Book jacket of M. GAVRAN: *Ljubavi Georgea Washingtona*, Zagreb 2014. Detailed data in *Godišnja nagrada za promicanje hrvatske kulture u svijetu za 2016. godinu Miri Gavranu*. Zagreb 2017.

<sup>3</sup> See: [www.mirogavran.com/published](http://www.mirogavran.com/published) [access: 02.11.2018]. Cf. the number of performances per individual countries: [hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miro\\_Gavran](http://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miro_Gavran) [access: 02.11.2018].

<sup>4</sup> S. NIKČEVIĆ: *Miro Gavran – temelj dobrog kazališta*. "Dometi" 2000, no. 10 (1–4), pp. 59–62.

<sup>5</sup> A. LEDERER: *Partiture za glumce*. In: M. GAVRAN: *Odabrane drame*. Zagreb 2001, p. 430.

lations among the two states when the politicians who are blind despite their eyes live around us, maximally ignorant, immersed in a claustrophobia of their own national ardency for years...<sup>6</sup>. In the article, the author advocates highlighting the cultural workers who “build and fix the bridges signifying a cultural bond among the states”<sup>7</sup>. On the other hand, G. Muzaferija analyzes in her book Gavran’s dramatic opus, emphasizing four dominant cycles in it – myth, history, the present and theater/text – from which one may discern that Gavran’s characters are not the “‘ideology models’ who demonstrate the audience onstage how to wear fascism, bolshevism, clericalism, nationalism, liberalism, anarchism or another ideology and in which historical occasion, like on a catwalk, neither in the dramas having a historical thematic nor in other dramatic texts”<sup>8</sup>. Moreover, they are insecure people, stunned in the entirely common life situations encountered by all *common* people, irrespective of their historiographically founded biographies. That is exactly an explanation why Gavran, reaching out to the historical figures, does not completely follow the checkable data but alters and modifies them slightly by his own dramatic procedures. Gavran selects his characters from an inventory of the Western cultural history, in the broadest arch of rulers and artists, and positions them in the quotidian life situations known to all people. Additionally, Gavran does not involve the known figures to unmask or confirm the stereotypes about them but to question the entirely personal situations in which every man may find himself, so one may also speak of a kind of Gavran’s democracy toward the characters of his own, who all deserve a right to a dramatic plot, being known or unknown.

When it comes to the (re)visions of a dramatic prose and theater in Yugoslavia and the new dramatic-theatrical productions in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo, Macedonia, Slovenia and Serbia, a binary process is temporally discernable in the opus by Miro Gavran: in the 1980s, the establishment of his dramatic works on the theatrical stages of the former state and the premières in the newly established states since the 1990s, parallel to the premières in the theaters worldwide and the establishment of the Gavranfest, which has factually become an international festival during the years, having changed multiple states and host cities. Gavran’s international repertoire presence is not limited to several nearer states only, like in some other playwrights, but has provided an evidence of a continuous visibility in the repertoires of different world countries for approximately thirty

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<sup>6</sup> G. GOJER: *Knjiga popravlja međudržavne odnose*. “Nezavisne novine”, 12.03.2005. The author is a Bosnian-Herzegovinian man of letters, director, and teatrologist. He directed several M. Gavran’s plays in the theaters in Sarajevo and Zenica.

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>8</sup> B. SENKER: *Primjerno čitanje dramskoga teksta*. “Novi izraz” 2005, no. 7 (29), p. 118.

years. Thus, Gavran's plays have ceased to be an export article in a former sense long time ago, and it seems that the "arcana" of Gavran's success is primarily in a strong cultural mobility, for Gavran, without programmatic political pretensions, has imposed himself not only to the Croatian but also to the international public as an author of plays suitable for a chamber scene, thespian play, and audience success. As an international reputation has been achieved in the previous decades, nowadays it is more interesting and significant to interpret Gavran's success in light of mobility, which facilitates Miro Gavran's plays to find the audience worldwide.

Irrespective of their thematic, Gavran's plays mostly belong to the field of "literature without a permanent domicile"<sup>9</sup>, which equally finds its sojourns in the neighboring and in the distant countries, or do not even think about borders but deletes them by virtue of its permanent transpositions. Gavran's plays are not "homeless" but are the places of movement among various theatrical and cultural environments. That may be illustrated by the awards and acknowledgements he has received in the recent years. In December 2017, he received the Dr. Alois Mock Europe Prize in Vienna<sup>10</sup>, and he was bestowed the Decoration of Honor in Gold for Services to the Republic of Austria in March 2018. Although a winner of several awards that testify to his affiliation with the European cultural circle, he was also proclaimed the first Croatian Tie Ambassador in the Europe House on the Zagreb-based European Square in 2018, what should promote the tie as a "movable Croatian, European, and global cultural heritage"<sup>11</sup>. Taking into consideration that, unlike Gavran's novels, his plays are predominantly dedicated to a theatrical performance, implied is their mobility and adjustability to various directorial styles and thespian performances. Nonetheless, in the past decades

<sup>9</sup> T. KRAFT: *Verortungsbedarf und Ortlosigkeit als Dauerzustand innerer und äußerer Migrationen*. In: *Kulturelle Mobilitätsforschung: Themen – Theorien – Tendenzen*. Eds. N. FRANZ, R. KUNOW. Potsdam 2011, p. 173.

<sup>10</sup> The Dr. Alois Mock Europe Prize has already been awarded for fourteen years, and the following distinguished Europeans were among the winners of this prestigious award heretofore: Dr. Hans Dietrich Genscher, Foreign Minister of the FRG, Otto von Habsburg, MEP, Viviane Reding, European Commissioner for Justice, and José Manuel Barroso, former European Commission President. In 2018, the Prize was awarded to the persons who especially advocate the enhancement of the European unity in their work.

<sup>11</sup> In September 2019, Miro Gavran was proclaimed the first Croatian Tie Ambassador during a professional symposium *Kravat(na) diplomacija*, held by the Academia Cravatica and the Public Diplomacy Club of the Croatian UN Association. The media assessed that event as "a step forward concerning a continuous promotion of the tie as a mobile Croatian, European, and global cultural heritage". Cf. "Nacional", 08.09.2018, [www.nacional.hr/foto-miro-gavran-proglasen-prvim-hrvatskim-veleposlanikom-kravate/](http://www.nacional.hr/foto-miro-gavran-proglasen-prvim-hrvatskim-veleposlanikom-kravate/) [access: 03.11.2018].

Gavran has been proven as a playwright who involves in his plots the historical figures, those who are historically uncheckable, those who belong to the Croatian culture and those who come from other cultures as well. Tracing the theses expounded by Daniel-Henri Pageaux<sup>12</sup>, Gavran relates to other cultures in a spirit of “bilateral exchange”, with “mutual respect and a dually recognized positive appraisal” that Pageaux calls “philia”. Besides, this observation is perhaps completely expletive in Gavran’s case, for he does not experience his *dramatis personae* as alien but as his own, what could be interpreted as a key to the recognition on the international stages. Deprived of ideological pretensions and exceptionally directed to an analysis of the complex interpersonal relations, in which the historical and unhistorical figures are both equally exposed to the challenges encountered by most people in their quotidian lifestyle, Gavran’s plays are probably beloved among the theatergoers exactly for this reason. Regarding a global literary market, however, an examination of conflicts, boundaries, and hegemony should be deferred in Gavran’s case and be directed to a “knowledge about life, biosophy”<sup>13</sup>, which predominantly classifies Gavran according to his literary profession of a playwright, thanks to the translations and premières.

The mobility Gavran establishes in cooperation with the foreign cultural environments has its starting point in the comprehension of theater and theatrical art, too, primarily in the independent theater companies and in the author’s realization of a “right to a theater performance”<sup>14</sup>, equally enjoyed by all theatergoers irrespective of their abode or sojourn, as well as by the theater life organizers. On the basis of the identical right, Miro Gavran as an Artistic Director and his spouse, the actress Mladena Gavran as an Organization Manager, established the GAVRAN Theater in 2002, a private playhouse in which Gavran’s plays are performed, characterized by an exceptional mobility. Taking part in Zagreb’s theatrical life and touring the cities and places in Croatia in which a desire and necessity for their theater is existent, the GAVRAN Theater does not neglect the foreign countries, so they probably owe a part of the exuberant foreign reception to their guest performances in Austria, Hungary, Serbia, Slovakia, Belgium, Czech Republic, Poland, and in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In other playhouses, the largest number of theater performances produced according to Gavran’s plays was

<sup>12</sup> D.-H. PAGEAUX: *Od kulturnog imaginarija do imaginarnog*. In: *Kako vidimo strane zemlje: Uvod u imagologiju*. Eds. D. DUKIĆ et al. Zagreb 2009, pp. 142–44.

<sup>13</sup> O. ETTE: *Zwischen Welten Schreiben: Literaturen ohne festen Wohnsitz*. Berlin 2005, p. 42.

<sup>14</sup> Z. VIDAČKOVIĆ: *Pravo na kazališnu predstavu*. “Vijenac”, 23.11.2006, qtd. in M. GAVRAN: *Književnost i kazalište: eseji, razgovori, zapisi i nostalgična prisjećanja*. Zagreb 2008, p. 47.

performed in Poland<sup>15</sup>, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovakia, Czech Republic and Slovenia. Approximately ten performances were recorded in India, United States of America, Russia and Serbia, a slightly lesser number in Germany, France, and Bulgaria, and Greece, Albania, Italy, Latvia. Lithuania, Kosovo, Rumania and Austria are listed with a couple of premières. The Netherlands should also be mentioned as the first theatrical première of *Kreontova Antigona* (*Creon's Antigone*) abroad, as well as Macedonia, Rumania, Hungary and Belgium, the distant countries of Australia, Chile, Brazil, Argentina and Japan.

Likewise, this is perchance the first principle from Greenblatt's manifesto<sup>16</sup> on a literally comprehended mobility, according to which an artistic mobility of Miro Gavran's plays may be interpreted: the encompassment of center and periphery in Croatia, beginning with his hometown of Nova Gradiška, in which the preview performances still take place prior to their Zagreb staging. Furthermore, that mobility also encompasses the foreign premières, both in the major and in the minor playhouses. Gavran began to pave his theatrical pathway by the première of *Kreontova Antigona* in Zagreb's Gavella Drama Theater in 1983. Though Croatia was a constituent republic of the former state at that time, a foreign reception of Gavran's dramas began as early as during the author's dramaturgy studies, when Gavran's professor and teatrologist Nikola Batušić, then also the editor of an issue of the Novi Sad-based "Scena" journal, dedicated to the contemporary theater, offered his student to publish *Kreontova Antigona* in 1984<sup>17</sup>. Gavran's drama published in that journal was read by Tone Patrljič, then the president of the Writers' Association of Slovenia and a dramaturge of the Slovene National Theater in Maribor, so *Kreontova Antigona* saw its first première outside Croatia in that playhouse in 1985. Subsequent to the favorable reactions, *Noć bogova* was also published in the Novi Sad-based "Scena" in 1986, being exceptionally successfully received and played in several theaters in Montenegro, Slovenia, Serbia and in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The publication of *Ljubavi Georgea Washingtona* (*Scena*, 1989) and again a successful première followed.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. J. DZIUBA: *Drame Mire Gavrana iz zbirke Razotkrivanja i njihova percepcija u Poljskoj*. In: *Krležini dani u Osijeku 1998.: Hrvatska dramska književnost i kazalište u europskom kontekstu*, 2<sup>nd</sup> bk. Eds. N. BATUŠIĆ, B. SENKER. Zagreb–Osijek, Institute for the History of Croatian Literature, Theater, and Music, Division for the History of Croatian Theater, Zagreb–Croatian National Theater in Osijek–Teachers' Training College, Osijek, 2000, pp. 222–30.

<sup>16</sup> S. GREENBLATT: *A Mobility Studies Manifesto*. In: *Cultural Mobility: A Manifesto*. Eds. S. GREENBLATT et al. Cambridge 2010, pp. 250–53.

<sup>17</sup> "Scena" 1984, vol. 2. An Afterword to this drama was written by the then dramaturgy student Dubravka Vrgoč, currently the Theater Manager of the Zagreb-based Croatian National Theater.

All of that contributed to the publication of other two dramas in the English language in a special edition of the "Scena" journal as well, from which it is discernable that Gavran's presence abroad has parallelly proceeded in the neighboring countries and in the more distant states.

Up to the end of the 1990s, Gavran's plays have been performed in almost all republics of the former Yugoslavian area: in Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Noć bogova* (*Night of the Gods*, National Theater, Mostar, 1987, and Chamber Theater 55, Sarajevo, 1989), *Urotnici* (*The Conspirators*, Chamber Theater 55, Sarajevo, 1989), and *Ljubavi Georgea Washingtona*, one of the most performed plays (National Theater, Tuzla, 1990); *Noć bogova* (1986) and *Kreontova Antigona* (1989) in the Montenegrin National Theater in Podgorica; in Slovenia, *Kreontova Antigona* (Slovene National Theater, Maribor, 1985) and *Noć bogova* (Slovene National Theater, Maribor, Cankar Center, Ljubljana, 1988); in Serbia, *Noć bogova* (Zoran Radmilović Theater of the Timok Valley, Zaječar, 1987, and Toša Jovanović National Theater, Zrenjanin, 1988) and *Ljubavi Georgea Washingtona* (Kruševac Theater, 1989). By virtue of these plays, Gavran has represented himself as a playwright who simultaneously thematizes a relationship between the authority and power and reinterprets the historical figures<sup>18</sup>. It is not insignificant that *Ljubavi Georgea Washingtona* is one of the Miro Gavran's plays most performed abroad, with more than thirty stage settings, so that it was represented by fourteen premières in the territory of the former state as well. Though *Kreontova Antigona* is a work to which the domestic professional public acknowledges a high value and categorizes it in the canonical drama selections<sup>19</sup>, it has seen four premières in the territories of the former state. When Miro Gavran dealt with the issues of power and authority, a foreign interest in his dramas was slightly lesser. However, having mixed the historical figures and the issues of unrefined political manipulation, *Noć bogova* has seen ten inscenations ever since the 1980s and the premières in Macedonia (2006) and Kosovo (2010) as well, having become one of Miro Gavran's most played theatrical performances in the former state's territories. One of the least represented premières in the area is the drama *Kako ubiti predsjednika* (*How to Kill the President*), with the opening night in the Zagreb-based ITD Theater in 2004<sup>20</sup> and additionally premiered in the Chamber Theater 55 in Sarajevo in 2005 only. It is interesting that it was firstly published in the Slovak language and then in Croatian in 2003.

<sup>18</sup> Sanja Nikčević has divided Gavran's plays in three thematic cycles: the topics of authority and power, the topics of love, and the topics of arts, mostly the literary and theatrical ones. Cf. S. NIKČEVIĆ: *Miro Gavran – temelj dobrog kazališta*. "Dometi" 2000, no. 10 (1–4), pp. 59–62.

<sup>19</sup> B. SENKER: *Hrestomatija novije hrvatske drame (1941.–1995.)*. Zagreb 2001.

<sup>20</sup> The Zagreb staging has seen approximately 40 repeat performances.

An inclination to comedy and to a postmodernist forfeiture of history, to toying with the two footholds – *history* and *story*, as emphasized by M. Babiak<sup>21</sup> – have contributed to the performance of Gavran's plays in the former state's constituent republics. In relatively regular intervals and in different areas, i.e., in various playhouses, eighteen plays of his were performed in Bosnia and Herzegovina, sixteen in Slovenia, and fifteen in Serbia. A reception in Macedonia commenced in 2006, and three Gavran's plays have been performed so far, with four of them been performed in Kosovo ever since 2010. Thereby, most performed are *Ljubavi Georgea Washingtona* (15), followed by *Noć bogova* (10), *Sve o ženama* (*All About Women*, 7), *Pacijent doktora Freuda* (*Doctor Freud's Patient*, 5), *Kreontova Antigona* (4), *Muš moje žene* (*My Wife's Husband*, 4), *Čehov je Tolstoju rekao zbogom* (*Chekhov Says Goodbye to Tolstoy*, 3) and *Sladoled* (*Ice Cream*, 3). *Tajna Grete Garbo* (*Greta Garbo's Secret*) premièred in 2008 in Trnava, Slovakia, and although it did not premièred in Croatia, it has seen its premièred in the Serbian Madlenianum Opera and Theater in Zemun in 2012. Analyzing the foreign performances of Gavran's plays, it is easy to perceive that the former state's regions are not privileged concerning the number of premièreds when compared to other countries in Europe and in the world and that two or even three premièreds are simultaneously prepared in different parts of the world. This is probably the reason why Gavran does not discriminate between the premièreds of his text in the proximate and in the more distant neighboring countries in any interview.

In Miro Gavran's drama *Kako ubiti predsjednika*, Igor reminisces a former resistance to socialism and a desire for the Iron Curtain to fall, so that the world could abandon the arms race, ideological confrontations, and exploitation. Nonetheless, the West has done everything to purchase the leftovers from the former socialist countries, while the model of liberal capitalism was "equally putrid, corrupted, and effete in its substance as was the socialism model", and "it is now assisted therein by the former socialist politicians, who have instantly converted themselves from the ardent communism ideologists to the advocates of the free market and globalization, what is most ridiculous"<sup>22</sup>. Criticizing the consumer society and globalist capitalism, Igor opposes to Robert and also to his beloved wife, but the male – female relations, typical of a considerable part of Gavran's dramatic penmanship, have apparently lost their strength, being confronted with an explicit criticism. It is interesting that this drama premièred in the countries of the German-speaking area, in the Viennese Brett Theater (2004), in the German Sensemble Theater in Augsburg and in the Und So Fort Theater in Munich (2006),

<sup>21</sup> M. BABIAK: *Postmoderna u dramskom opusu Mire Gavrana*. "Kazalište" 2003, no. 7 (13–14), 2003, p. 185.

<sup>22</sup> M. GAVRAN: *Kako ubiti predsjednika*. "Kazalište" 2003, no. 7 (13–14), p. 286.



and in the Japanese ITI Center in Tokyo (2009). It was exactly this performance, produced by the ITD Theater from Zagreb, that Croatia featured at the Sterija Theater Festival in Novi Sad in 2004, for the first time subsequent to the breakup of the former state, i.e., in the non-competitive selection, as well as the performances from Germany, Poland, and Switzerland. In a concise review of this guest performance, Gavran commended the host's hospitality and emphasized that they mostly conversed about theater, having mutually avoided politics, but it was also an opportunity for an encounter with the guests and festival theatergoers from Slovenia, Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina<sup>23</sup>. In an interview to the Novi Sad newspapers, Gavran ironized the heterogeneous, contrastive interpretations of his ideological commitment. In fact, the theatergoers from the former Eastern Bloc experience Gavran as a rightist, while he is perceived as a leftist in the West, for which reason he replies as follows: "Of course, I am none of them, I am an author who has had a mind of his own during his entire lifetime and tries to discover all the mechanisms of rulership, life, interpersonal relations"<sup>24</sup>.

On the other hand, Gavran's *Deložacija*, a play characterized by the Croatian 1995 postwar reality, did not premiere abroad, what may be interpreted in light of Greenblatt's thesis on an elided and concealed mobility, which is rather pierced by mediation, e.g., by *Kreontova Antigona* and *Noć bogova*, in which more is concealed and expressed under a disguise of intertextuality or paraphrase of the historical and literary figures than by a direct capture of the Croatian reality of the 1990s. In spite of the fact that many would emphasize that Gavran's texts are deprived of the daily political actualities, and might not be wrong at first sight, it is worth stressing that Gavran's plays are political, as it is specific to the theater, but it seems that *Kako ubiti predsjednika* is the only Gavran's political drama<sup>25</sup>. It is intrinsic to Gavran's plays that their author "declaratively does not want to take a stand"<sup>26</sup>, as he claimed himself, or that he says that he is "annoyed by the model of an European omniscient author, who has a solution to all social problems"<sup>27</sup>. Yet, Gavran accentuates that he does not escape from the demonstration of his own attitude and that it is necessary to do so when it comes to the top-

<sup>23</sup> M. GAVRAN: *U međunarodnoj konkurenciji*. "Hrvatsko glumište" 2004, vols. 1–2, pp. 10–11.

<sup>24</sup> A. MUSTAPIĆ: *Moja je drama intelektualni krik*. "Slobodna Dalmacija", 07.03.2004, dugirat.com/Gospodarstvo/80-posto-hrvata-vie-ne-kupuje-novine-v15-16271.html [access: 04.11.2018]. Gavran also expressed a similar thesis in the interview: *Kapitalizam vulgarnog tipa*. "Dnevnik online", 13.06.2004.

<sup>25</sup> On a difference between a politicized and a political theater, cf. D. LUKIĆ: *Kazalište u svom okruženju: kazališni identiteti*. Zagreb 2010, pp. 189–201.

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem, s. 189.

<sup>27</sup> Z. VIDAČKOVIĆ: *Pravo na kazališnu...*, p. 50.

ics related to his profession: "I have relatively clear political attitudes and weltanschauungs on numerous issues that are essential to the Croatian and European reality, but I have never considered myself a person who should be a spokesman of a political option"<sup>28</sup>.

In one of his conversations, Gavran emphasized that – pursuant to the third Greenblatt's thesis on the contact zones that facilitate the goods exchange – the first readers of his new plays are his friends, among whom were the translators this time, having also prompted the recent examples. Miro Gavran's foreign success is a permanent locus in the domestic reporters' interviews, so the author himself joked adducing this question as the eighth among the ten questions most frequently asked: "How have you succeeded abroad?" or its subvariant "How important are the literary and theatrical agents who represent you for your foreign success?"<sup>29</sup>. To such questions Gavran responds in a similar fashion: that he had two or three very good agents and approximately ten relatively inert agents and that there is a statutory obligation in certain countries to have an agent, for one may contact the performances or the publication of a translation only through their mediation<sup>30</sup>. Moreover, when Greenblatt mentions festivals and even tourism and hospitality industry as the ways to cross the borders, one should definitely think of the Gavranfest, a Miro Gavran's drama festival performed by the Croatian and foreign playhouses, launched in 2003 in the Slovak city of Trnava and continued in 2004, 2006, and 2009, to be held in Cracow, Poland in 2013 and to proceed annually in Prague, Czech Republic ever since the year 2016, while it was held in Germany in 2019 to additionally expand the imagined borders of an international reception. In nine festival iterations, performed were two Slovene and one Serbian play. A curiosity is that it pertains to the only foreign festival that stages the performances of a foreign author. Michal Babiak, a theatrical director and a university professor from Bratislava, is one of the initiators of the Gavranfest who has underlined that a social climate of the countries in which the author's works are most performed is crucial for the performance of Gavran's plays, especially in the Slavic countries, in which Gavran's plays have appeared in the mid-1980s and toward the end of the 1980s, when both the theater and the theatergoers became saturated by the regnant political circumstances. A saturation by

<sup>28</sup> N. OŽEGOVIĆ: *Miro Gavran: "Živim odmjerenim životom obiteljskoga čovjeka koji pripada neupadljivoj srednjoj klasi"*. "T-portal", 01.11.2018, [www.tportal.hr/kultura/clanak/miro-gavran-zivim-odmjeranim-zivotom-obiteljskoga-covjeka-koji-pripada-neupadljivoj-srednjoj-klasi-foto-20181101](http://www.tportal.hr/kultura/clanak/miro-gavran-zivim-odmjeranim-zivotom-obiteljskoga-covjeka-koji-pripada-neupadljivoj-srednjoj-klasi-foto-20181101) [access: 03.11.2018].

<sup>29</sup> M. GAVRAN: *Deset najčešćih pitanja*. In: Idem: *Književnost i kazalište...*, p. 77.

<sup>30</sup> S.V. ANTIĆ: *Pravi teatar nije ni lažno moderan ni mrtvački staromodan*. "Vjesnik", 13.11.2007, qtd. in M. GAVRAN: *Književnost i kazalište...*, p. 39.

politics and war in the territories of the former state has contributed to the reception of Gavran's plays, which distance themselves from the actual war and postwar reality while offering an opportunity for laughing at human defects and imperfections, being concentrated on interpersonal relations.

Referring to the fourth Greenblatt's hypothesis, in which the mobility studies should deal with a tension between an individual activity and structural limitations that cause the persons to demonstrate obstinacy while aspiring to move autonomously, Gavran indubitably was an initiator. Subsequent to his operation as a Managing Director of the ITD Theater at the beginning of the 1990s, when he launched the Contemporary Croatian Drama stage in that theater and rendered his assistance to many juvenile dramatists to affirm themselves, he has decided to turn himself into a freelance artist. In one of the colloquies, he said that "an author who selects writing as a destiny has to be a freelancer, has to be brave, no matter what cost"<sup>31</sup>. Therefore, Miro Gavran is one of the better examples of contemporary artistic mobility expressed on the other side of a sessile and nomadic locus and motion concept, pursuant to the modern theory. Particularly, Gavran's premières are also staged in his private GAVRAN Theater, as it happened in the Epilog Theater, but his plays are also present on the repertoires of the institutional Croatian theaters, with more or less pronounced exceptions. The year 2018 is one of the more prolific ones in that sense, so subsequent to a première of his play *Tajkuni (The Tycoons)* in the Histrion Actors' Company in Zagreb, a première of *Parovi (Couples)* was held in the Split-based Croatian National Theater, while toward the end of the year his new play *Svaki tvoj rođendan (Every Birthday of Yours)* premiered in the Zagreb-based Croatian National Theater.

Mimi Sheller and John Urry suggest seven methods to reconnoiter mobility and stress that a reciprocity of personal character, deterritorialized personality, journalization with the punctual time and venue entries, search of the Internet and all the networked information sources, attention to an affective subject dimension and its performance, incorporation of the culture of recollection/memorization and an examination of the space between the here and there, the so-called "points of transfer", are primarily necessary<sup>32</sup>. In all the quoted categories, an artistic mobility of Miro Gavran's plays may also be explored. He mostly departs to his foreign premières and collaborates during the production of a performance, and a fact that it frequently happens that the same or the other playhouse may perform yet another play of his subsequent to a première provides evidence that he has a developed

<sup>31</sup> Ibidem, p. 39.

<sup>32</sup> M. SHELLER, J. URRY. *The New Mobilities Paradigm*. "Environment and Planning" 2006, vol. 38, pp. 207–226.

networked of personal contacts that guide him not only to the new premières and the new persons but also to the new translations. Certainly, while avoiding the actual and local daily political thematic and paying attention to the general issues, Gavran is one of the authors who write for a versatile audience that would equally principally react to the quotidian question of interpersonal relation maintenance, be it the male – female, familial, amicable, collegial or the neighborly ones. According to the aforementioned data, Miro Gavran's plays are deterritorialized so much that they may not be watched in Croatia only but also in the neighboring states, which, on the other hand, would not experience them as a political provocation but would gladly host them or stage them in the inclement first half of the 1990s and ten or twenty years later. What is more, he is among a limited number of the Croatian contemporary writers who update the data on their domestic and foreign achievements on the websites of their own and appreciatively respond to an interview invitation, in which they announce the new premières and punctually reminisce the previous ones. For Gavran, mobility and travel from one part of the world to the other are apparently a favorable opportunity for a journey and acquaintance with different landscapes, peoples, and traditions, which undoubtedly reconfirm that the people, peeled off of their local customs and habits, are similar and congenial in their identical aspirations anywhere. Gavran's transfer points are a few good friends and translators who would gladly market a play of his in a foreign linguistic culture, and he would respect their observations and readily amend the text, all in the interest of a high-quality theatrical performance.

Eventually, the fifth Greenblatt's thesis on mobility stages that cannot exist and make no sense without a relation to the sensation of locality and inveteracy, what might sound paradoxical at first glance, is exactly what approves Miro Gavran's plays as the artistically expressively mobile ones within a framework of the Croatian drama – not because Gavran fits into this framework, but because he changes it.

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