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## REVIEWS

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**SVESNI I NESVESNI POKRETAČI  
STVARALAŠTVA  
MODESTA MUSORGSKOG  
[CONSCIOUS AND UNCONSCIOUS  
PRIME MOVERS OF MODEST  
MUSSORGSKY'S  
CREATIVE WORKS]**

**by Dragana Jeremić-Molnar<sup>1</sup>**

The scientific monographic study by Dr Dragana Jeremić-Molnar – *Svesni i nesvesni pokretači stvaralaštva Modesta Musorgskog* [*Conscious and Unconscious Prime Movers*

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*of Modest Mussorgsky's Creative Works*] – is one of the first scientific books, if not even the first one, written and published in our midst, employing a psychoanalytic approach to a composer's biography and his creative works.

This extensive two-volume study arises from the author's original inquiry into *Boris Godunov*, the opera by Modest Musorgsky, which was, as of 2000, considerably widened towards a psychoanalytic research of the composer's almost entire work, all aimed at figuring out the psychodynamic logic of activating 'the conscious and unconscious prime movers' of his complex personal and creative development.

The paradigm of development (so unpopular in contemporary theoretical discourses!) is apostrophized here with a good reason since the study itself suggests it both with its title and its content. Volume one, titled *Iskupljenje imaginarnih sagrešenja sina: Edip i Libijac* [*Son's Expiation for Imaginary Sins: Oedipus and The Libyan*], comprises the Introduction and two long chapters – 'Prvo ispaštanje sina' ['Son's First Expiation'] and 'Drugo ispaštanje sina' ['Son's Second Expiation'], while volume two, titled *Iskupljenje imaginarnog sagrešenja oca: Boris Godunov* [*Father's Expiation for Imaginary Sins: Boris Godunov*] contains long chapters – 'Promena perspektive' ['Change of Perspective']

and 'Ispaštanje oca' ['Father's Expiation']. The order and titles of subchapters within these large parts reveal the importance of causal (developmental, psychodynamic) logic and, hence, the origin of this extensive monographic study's linear concept. It features a precise, chronologically guided 'counterpoint' of titles, in which the author's psychobiographical interpretations of the relevant biographical data (deduced from Mussorgsky's voluminous correspondence and available biographical information) and insights gained by a psychoanalytic approach to Mussorgsky's selected works alternate and complement each other.

In the introductory chapter to this monograph, the author presents a specific 'history' of employment of the psychobiographical/psychoanalytic approach to studying the composer's biography and creative work, offering to the reader at the end of the introduction her own parameters and criteria that need to be met so that employment of the psychoanalytic approach in musicology is justified and successful. (It should be pointed out that the criteria suggested by the author primarily refer to the compositions guided by a literary model.) Believing that in the case of Modest Mussorgsky's work all relevant criteria for employment of the psychoanalytic treatment have been met, the author opts for the said approach.

The author's **interpretative approach** is based on Freud's psychoanalytic method, the essentials of which she outlines, in the form of a wide digression, in the subchapter 'Sagřešenja oca i sina' ['Father's and Son's Sins'] (contained in the chapter 'Prvo ispaštanje sina' ['Son's First Expiation'], referring subsequently in the study to Freud's interpretations of hidden psychological 'mechanisms', certain symbols or major

topics in the history of culture (for example, *Oedipus the King* by Sophocles), derived from his understanding of human psychosexual development.

The **underlying idea** of this two-volume book is founded on the author's belief that Mussorgsky made considerable, personally motivated changes to the literary model of many of his works, and that unconscious prime movers of these corrections were guided by a 'jedinstvena logika potrebe za ispaštanjem i iskupljenjem (sopstvenih imaginarnih) sagřešenja...' ['unique logic of the (composer's - added by M.M.) need for expiation for (his own imaginary) sins...']. In accordance with this belief, in subchapter 'Psihoanalitički pristup delima Musorgskog' ['Psychoanalytic Approach to Mussorgsky's Works'] the author, Dragana Jeremić-Molnar, defines and afterwards consistently completes the **main tasks of her book**: 1) to reconstruct the dynamics of Mussorgsky's preoccupation with his own sins and possibilities to expiate for them; 2) to associate these preoccupations with libretto and musical solutions applied in the above mentioned works; and 3) to put these solutions into the context of Mussorgsky's health condition in the period between 1858 and 1872.

Gradually and precisely drawing the line of the composer's psychosocial development, following it ever since the composer left the military service in 1858, the author carefully notes Mussorgsky's each artistic output, finding in it traces of the composer's psychological condition. In addition to the compositions which are, in author's opinion, projections of the key moments in the composer's psychosexual and psychosocial development, those being 'Chorus of people in the Temple (from *Oedipus*)', the (unfinished) opera *The Libyan* and

the musical drama *Boris Godunov*, and to which the author (in line with their particular significance for the book's subject) dedicates her greatest attention by writing the most important and most lucid pages of her book about them, she also mentions several shorter compositions which resulted, as she explains, from current events in the composer's life. These are the solo song *Why Would You Need Words of Love?* (1861), two pieces for the piano written after his mother's death (1865), a ballad *Evil Death. Epitaph* (1874), as well as several works bearing more relevance to the book's subject – chorus compositions *Jesus Navin* (1866) and *Sennacherib's Defeat* (1867), a symphonic poem for orchestra *St. John's Night on Bald Mountain* (1866/67), and *The Marriage* (1868), the unfinished comical opera based on Gogol's work with the same title) – which, with the help of relevant (psycho)biographical data, the author associates with the composer's experience from the key compositions, analysing them as well in the context of the composer's psychosexual and psychosocial development.

The most significant contribution to consideration of the composer's personal and creative psychodynamics lies by all means in the author's psychoanalytic interpretations of the composer's corrections to librettos and musical solutions in 'Chorus of People in the Temple (from *Oedipus*)', the (unfinished) opera *The Libyan* and the musical drama *Boris Godunov*.

The crucial point of the author's analysis of this complex issue is the information about the composer's 'difuznom osećaju krivice' ['diffuse sense of guilt'] (occurring immediately after he left the military service in the summer of 1858) and 'žudnji za prevazilaženjem tog osećaja putem neke vrste ispaštanja i (samo)iskupljenja' ['his

eagerness to overcome this feeling through some kind of (self)expiation']. By figuring out the nature of this diffuse psychological content and Mussorgsky's unusual inclination in this period of his life (1859-1860) toward the subject of guilt arising from incest and parricide (Mussorgsky was deeply impressed by Byron's poem *Manfred* and Sophocles' tragedies *Oedipus the King* and *Oedipus at Colonus*), and referring to June Turner's psychoanalytic study (thus exciting a somewhat stretched controversy over this study), the author suggests that the composer's feeling of guilt came about after his father's death, as a consequence of unresolved (at that point already unsolvable) Oedipal crisis, which led him directly to creative treatment of the Oedipus myth issue (in different interpretations). With this postulate in mind, the author thoroughly analyses Mussorgsky's libretto corrections during his work on the tragedy *Oedipus* (he only wrote the chorus part), suggesting the sacral and sacrificial punishment model which Mussorgsky took over from Ozerov's drama *Oedipus in Athens*, and which offered the composer a necessary frame to emphasize his belief that only 'nevine žrtve' ['the innocent victims'] (Oedipus' children) can save the sinner's (Oedipus') compatriots. Interpreting the unconscious motivation of this libretto correction by Mussorgsky, Dragana Jeremić-Molnar concludes that in this work the composer personified and artistically articulated his 'odustajanje od uloge oca, poroda i potomstva, a kako se ispostavilo i od uloge supruga' ['giving up the role of father, offspring, and, as it turned out, the role of husband as well'], expressing this idea in music through the motif of ritual murder of Oedipus' children, Antigone and Polynices. In the author's opinion, such 'resolution' of Mussorgsky's *Oedipus*

meant the expiation for sins through art, and indeed it brought the composer's expiation to an end (and 'son's expiation for the first sin'), since Mussorgsky's metaphorical giving up the idea of having children in this context had the meaning of ultimate punishment for (Oedipal) sexual inclination toward his mother – the meaning of castration.

The second point of the central 'triangle' in this scientific monographic study by Dragana Jeremić-Molnar is her psychoanalytic interpretation of libretto and musical solution in *The Libyan*, Mussorgsky's opera based on Flaubert's novel *Salammbô* following up the issue of the 'Chorus of People in the Temple (from *Oedipus*)' with its theme of guilt and expiation. Competently examining the psychological consequences of the events from the composer's life immediately preceding commencement of his work on *The Libyan* ('moralno zaglibljenje u vezi sa jednom ženom' ['moral sinking because of a woman'] in 1861), in this opera's libretto the author sees Mussorgsky's clear projective identification with the leading character (the Libyan Matho), who expiates and is punished, on one hand for his love for Salammbô which is sinful since the love rests on the theft of goddess Tanit's 'mysterious veil', and on the other hand because of his (rightful) fight for liberation from tyrant Moloch, in which he was defeated. The author interprets these two coexisting major motifs as a projection of an unfortunate affair with Maria Shilovska which left Mussorgsky with restored guilt of parricide and new guilt resulting from seducing a married woman, at the same time being fully aware that he failed to and never would take over another man's wife (mother) and thus 'harm' her husband (father). This explanation also served the author to draw a

direct analogy between the composer's and Matho's experiences, believing that Mussorgsky fell in love with Shilovska because he recognized his mother's reflection in her, just as Matho fell in love with Salammbô 'onda kada mu se ona ukazala kao velom zaogrnuta reprezentantkinja boginje Tanit' ['when she appeared to him as goddess Tanit's incarnate draped in a veil']. Finally, the author gives a psychoanalytic interpretation of the motivation shared between the composer and his leading character, stating that both Mussorgsky and Matho were sons who wanted to take over something that belonged to their fathers and which they were not entitled to, this being a sexual intercourse with their mothers. However, the resolution in *The Libyan* did not involve a ritual death sentence for Matho. The opera was not finished because, in the author's opinion, the dipsomaniac episode Mussorgsky fell into after his mother's death (1865) completely suspended his need to seek his atonement through art – dipsomania was already sufficient punishment for all 'sagřešenja sina' ['son's sins'] and death, as the expected punishment for such guilt, was no longer an imperative either in his life or in his works.

Mussorgsky's awareness of his ultimate failure to resolve the Oedipal crisis could only lead to one more outcome – resolution of relationship with his father. In Dragana Jeremić-Molnar's opinion, Mussorgsky resolved his internal struggle and finally reconciled with his father in *Boris Godunov*, the opera to which most of this monographic study's volume two is dedicated.

In a methodologically clear and historiographically correct analysis of Mussorgsky's libretto corrections in comparison with two sample models – Pushkin's trage-

dy *Boris Godunov* and an excerpt from Karamzin's *History of the Russian State* about the czar Boris Godunov, the author concludes that the first version of Mussorgsky's opera was written 'pod većim Karamzinovim uticajem' ['under greater Karamzin's influence'], while the national and historical setting in the second version is 'mnogo bliža Puškinu' ['much closer to Pushkin']. The scene of Boris's madness is singled out as the most significant libretto correction, since it is not included in either of the used models. The author rightfully feels and convincingly argues that Mussorgsky incorporated the madness scene into his opera following Verdi's *Macbeth*, and also that the composer came to his 'složene predstave operskog ludila došao samostalno, svojim osobenim putem, koji je prethodnim tretmanom operskog ludila bio samo omogućen, ali ne i uslovljen' ['complex presentation of the opera madness on his own, which was only made possible by the previous treatment of the opera madness, not conditioned by it']. Convincingly arguing her thesis that Mussorgsky 'transferred' his relationship with his father to his attitude towards Boris Godunov, the author claims that Boris's character was depicted as a 'univerzalni očinski lik' ['universal father figure'] who bears the burden of guilt for the murder of 'jednog jedinog deteta sa tri lica' ['a three-faced child'], 'ono najvažnije lice' ['the most important face'], according to the author, 'upravo ono kojeg u operi nema - lice samog Musorgskog' ['being just the one missing in the opera - Mussorgsky's own face']. Closing her presentation, the author expresses her opinion that Mussorgsky saw his father as the main culprit of all negative things that had happened in his life, so for the last time 'kanališući sadržaje svog nesvesnog kroz svoju umetnost' ['channeling

his unconscious thoughts through his art'], in the opera *Boris Godunov* he had to punish him with death, and what's more horrible, with insanity - 'psihičkim košmarom koji je i sam u realnosti preživio zaslugom oca' ['the psychic nightmare which he suffered in reality owing to his father']. Consequently, Dragana Jeremić-Molnar concludes that in the scene of Boris's insanity Mussorgsky accomplished what he failed to in real life: to identify with his father and finally reconcile with him.

Rounding off her psychoanalytic research of Modest Mussorgsky's works, in her closing reflections Dragana Jeremić-Molnar draws an analogy between Freud himself and Mussorgsky, concluding that in the process of 'postepenog nadomeštanja mrtve majke majčicom Rusijom' ['gradual substitution of his dead mother for mother Russia'], complemented with reconciliation with his dead father in *Boris Godunov*, the composer's spiritual world eventually assumed 'antejevsku konfiguraciju' ['Antaeon configuration'].

Viewed as a whole, despite its seemingly numerous digressions, the book is quite coherent, homogeneous in its presentation, competently guided and written in a scientific language with its beauty preserved. It is dedicated to a complex issue and therefore classified under the genre of scientific monographic studies.

The focus of this review is the red thread of conclusions about conscious and unconscious prime movers of the composer's creative works which the author skillfully weaves, while her complex dialogue with the writings used is deliberately left aside.

Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that the list of selected writings used for this extensive research is truly comprehen-

sive, including the titles covering the period from Mussorgsky's life to this day.

In our scientific circles, this book bears the importance of a pioneer undertaking in the field of psychoanalytic approach in musicological research.

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**TEMATSKI POTENCIJALI  
LEKSIKOGRAFSKIH JEDINICA  
O MUZIČKIM INSTITUCIJAMA:  
ZBORNİK RADOVA**

**[THEMATIC POSSIBILITIES  
IN LEXICOGRAPHIC UNITS  
ON MUSICAL INSTITUTIONS:  
COLLECTION OF PAPERS]<sup>1</sup>**

The collection of papers titled *Tematski potencijali leksikografskih jedinica o muzičkim institucijama* [*Thematic possibilities in lexicographic units on musical institutions*] (Belgrade: Fakultet muzičke umetnosti and IP *Signa-*

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ture 2009, 170 pages) contains the works, presented at the eponymous meeting organized by the Department of Musicology of Faculty of Music (FMU) in Belgrade, and held in April 2007 at the Arts University in Belgrade. The collection was edited by Vesna Mikić, PhD, and Tijana Popović-Mladenović, PhD. The collection contains fourteen studies and joins the research efforts of nine lecturers at the Department of Musicology of FMU, one retired lecturer at the Department, three lecturers at the Department of Theory of FMU, as well as the contemporary (2007) director of Serbian MIC (Music Information Centre), the institution which, unfortunately, no longer exists.<sup>3</sup> Most of the works were simultaneously realized within the five years long (2006–2010) scientific project *Svetski hronotopi srpske muzike* [*World Chronotopes of Serbian Music*], financed by Ministry of Science and Environment of Republic of Serbia. The same ministry financially supported the publishing of the collection itself. The circulation is three hundred copies.

Somewhat unusual subject of the meeting (and the collection) was meant to point to how many (possibly) unexpected and interesting data of far-reaching significance for Serbian music and musical life, but also culturological turbulences and nuances in the functioning of musical life, can still be described, explained, categorized, systema-

3 This fact supports an opinion that many subtle, but also dramatic lamentations in certain papers in the collection were not woven as platitudes. Regarding this, the article SOKOJ-MIC (Muzički informativni centar SOKOJ-a) na putu od propagande ka promociji i difuziji savremene srpske muzike [SOKOJ-MIC (Music Information Centre of SOKOJ) on the Road from Propaganda to Promotion and Diffusion of Contemporary Serbian Music'] should be particularly noted.