

## ON FRANATICA SORKOČEVIĆ'S TRANSLATION OF TWO OCTAVES OF TASSO, AND RELATED TOPICS

ZORAN KRAVAR

**ABSTRACT:** Franatica Sorkočević (1706-1771) was a Dubrovnik lawyer, politician, diplomat and man of literature. He tried his skill in translating Ovid and melodramas of Pietro Metastasio and Scipione Maffei, all still unpublished. He also rearranged Molière's plays. Sorkočević's translation of the first two cantos of Tasso's epos *Jerusalem Delivered* is of minor acknowledgement and fragmentary preserved. This article contributes to the study of Sorkočević's versification in translating Tasso. It examines the metrical characteristics and the specific choice of thirteen-syllable verse (4+4+5). The examples of this verse pattern are to be found in the works of the Dubrovnik poets of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth century. Sorkočević's motivation for the use of this verse is also studied here. As it is a verse of folk origin, Sorkočević's translation of Tasso is a convenient subject for drawing a parallel between Croatian artistic and folk versification with which the last chapter of the article deals with.

### I

In addition to being a lawyer, politician, and diplomat, Franatica Sorkočević (1706-1771) also delved into the field of literature - much as many other men from Dubrovnik of his standing and education did. Although his literary ac-

---

Zoran Kravar, professor at the Departement of Comparative literature of the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Zagreb. Address: Odsjek za komparativnu književnost Filozofskog fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, I. Lučića 3, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia.

---

This article has already been published in Croatian under the following title: »O dvjema Tassovim oktavama u prepjevu Franatice Sorkočevića i o dodirnim stihovnopovijesnim temama.« *Analiz Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku* 33 (1995): pp. 67-92.

complishments involved few original works, he did many translations. His opus has been saved in manuscript form, and includes translations of ten of Ovid's *Letters from Heroines*, as well as the melodramas of Pietro Metastasio and Scipione Maffei. Sorkočević also enriched the fund of Dubrovnik's eighteenth-century rearrangements of Molière's plays.

From certain minimally preserved clues, in addition to some information from Dubrovnik's biographical literature, we know that Sorkočević also translated parts of Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered*. Historical sources do not make it clear whether he actually did - or simply had planned to - translate this epic about the First Crusade in its entirety, but the general consensus is that this endeavor was left unfinished. In a monograph about Franatica Sorkočević, Nada Beritić explains:

*(...) we have no proof that Sorkočević translated Tasso's poem in its entirety. Indeed, even Dubrovnik biographers (...) include among Sorkočević's translations only a few cantos. This is actually what Appendini states. Slade, though, was less precise when he wrote that Sorkočević began to translate Tasso's epic, but that he never finished it.*<sup>1</sup>

From the copious biographical notes written down by Antun Agić in continuation of Crijević's *Dubrovačka biblioteka*, it turns out that Sorkočević's translation consists of only two cantos, and that it was begun and finished in July 1754. Still, even this low estimate exceeds that which has been preserved for us. Namely, only two strophes have been handed down for the people of today to read.

The remains of Sorkočević's work have been preserved in the version of Antun Agić and were first made public in 1873, when Ivan Kukuljević published them in the Zagreb magazine *Vijenac*.<sup>2</sup> Beritić, of course, includes them in her monograph, as well.

---

<sup>1</sup> Nada Beritić, »Franatica Sorkočević, dubrovački pjesnik XVIII stoljeća.« *Rad JAZU* 338 (1965): p. 215.

<sup>2</sup> Ivan Kukuljević, »Još nješto o prevodu Tassova Jerusolima oslobođena.« *Vijenac* 5 (1873): p. 142.

The two strophes translated by Sorkočević are thematically unconnected, because they are from two of Tasso's octaves that are contextually distant from each other: the first strophes of the first and second cantos of *Liberata*. The copyist divided each of them into two quatrains, regardless of the strophic wholeness of their models. This layout was also adopted by Kukuljević and Beritić. It explains why one can read in the literature that four strophes of Sorkočević's translations, and not two, have been preserved.<sup>3</sup> I, however, will cite and interpret this text as two octaves, and that for the following reasons: first, Sorkočević's verses are translations of two Italian octaves; second, they also adopt the rhyme scheme of Tasso's octave (ABABABCC), which, of course, was intended to be the euphonic equipment of a whole strophe.

According to the version of Beritić, but graphically rearranged according to the model of an octave, the lines of *Liberata* that Sorkočević translated go as follows:

*Pjevam milo Bogu oružje, pjevam vojvodu,  
Ko slobodi srićni ukopa grob Jezusova;  
Mnogo on podnije za čestitu dat mu slobodu,  
Mnogo znanjem, mnogo vrijednom desnom djelova;  
I zaman se pako opriječi, zaman ishodu  
Od Azije i Libije vojske iznova,  
Er pomaga nebo njega, i pod izbrane  
Svete stijege druge skupi sve poskitane.*

*Dočim hudi silnik na boj oružje spravlja  
Jedan dan se njemu Ismeno sam prikaživa,  
Ismen oni, ki pobijenu čeljad ozdravlja,  
I telesa mrtva iz groba povraća živa,  
Ki vas pako žamornijem pjesnim ustavlja,  
I istoga kralja od pakla straši i snebiva,  
I zariče na svu opaku službu hudobe  
Odrešujuć i vezujuć ih gore neg robe.*

---

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Kukuljević, in the article cited in the previous note, as well as N. Beritić, »Franatica Sorkočević«: p. 217.

As we can see, the translation sticks to Tasso's original strophe, except that the eleven-syllable verse is replaced by thirteen-syllable.<sup>4</sup>

The preserved lines (numbering 2 x 8) of Sorkočević's Tasso may well seem too insignificant a subject for scientific analysis. Besides, a good deal of the work related to them has already been completed. In Kukuljević's note about them in *Vijenac*, as well as Beritić's work, we can find everything that has been recorded about him in manuscript accounts, while Beritić has illuminated to some degree the metrical system of the two strophes. Frano Čale also discussed them in short, marking their historical place in the tradition of translating Tasso.<sup>5</sup> Thus, one's first impression would be that at this point in time nothing motivates the study of Sorkočević's *Jerusalem* and that the discovery of further verses of the same would prove sufficient for a new discussion of this work.

Unfortunately, I do not have the pleasure of notifying the public that a stroke of luck or even investigative persistence has led me to the discovery of heretofore unknown results of Sorkočević's translational undertaking. Still, I believe that in the context of the history of literature and verse in which these two preserved strophes of the translation can be considered an interesting and fruitful topic. Namely, thanks to some of its formal features—especially the atypical choice of verse and the attempt to adopt Tasso's octaves—this translation occupies a completely individual place, not only in the history of translating poetry in Croatia, but also in some imaginable typology of relationships between original and translated verse. In this topic I am not without experience, because some time ago I did write about the possible relationships between an original verse and its translated reproductions. At

---

<sup>4</sup> As a curiosity of literary history, I will mention that the scribe of Sorkočević's translated strophes mistakenly recognized them as "Martellian verse" (cf. N. Beritić, »Franatica Sorkočević«: p. 217). Martellian verse—the Italian version of French alexandrine, and which consists of two fourteeners—differs from our thirteen—syllable in both number of syllables and number of segments, thus the scribe's miscalculation was probably the result of his poor knowledge of meter. Naturally, it is not impossible that this error was the result of local patriotism—the wish, for instance, to give testimony to the cosmopolitanism of the poets of Dubrovnik and their ability to react quickly to novelties from abroad. Martellian verse was truly something new in Sorkočević's day. Its propagator, Pier Jacopo Martello (1665-1725), introduced it to the Italian literary public in 1709, the very same year, in his treatise *Del verso tragico* and somewhat later in his dramatic writings.

<sup>5</sup> »Tasso u Hrvata.« *Filologija* 6 (1970): p. 50.

that time I was confronted by Sorkočević's Tasso,<sup>6</sup> a very specific case for which it would be useful to imagine a separate classificational compartment. Indeed, I had the distinct feeling that its specificness surpassed the space in which I was able to give it consideration on that occasion.

Although, Sorkočević's translated octaves attract attention mostly due to the exceptional quality of its metrical and strophic apparatus, they do not present the more difficult methodological problems that often accompany literary history themes that are marked as atypical. Actually, all of their specificness can be clearly exhibited if one begins with their metrical forms. In addition, another condition would be that the phenomenon of verse be understood in a somewhat broader sense: the lines of Sorkočević's translation can be considered not only in terms of their metrical scheme, but also their strophic compatibility, their lexical capacity, and of particular importance, their possible folk origins.

## II

The verse that Sorkočević used in his translation of Tasso follows the plan of a three-part tridecasyllable, a syllabic meter with a 4+4+5 scheme.<sup>7</sup>

Thirteen syllable 4+4+5 verse derives from the rich metric repertoire of medieval Latin poetry,<sup>8</sup> but it was domesticated in Croatia very early, perhaps even in the pre-Renaissance period.<sup>9</sup> It was also adopted by other Euro-

---

<sup>6</sup> Zoran Kravar, »Izvorni i prijevodni stih. Tipologija njihovih odnosa.«, in: *Tema 'stih'*. Zagreb, 1993: p. 51 and ff.

<sup>7</sup> Sometimes the scheme of this meter is also noted as follows: 8+5. I consider the breakdown of 4+4+5 to be more accurate, and this is upheld by Tomo Maretić in *Metrika naših narodnih pjesama*. Zagreb, 1907: p. 18, with the following argument: "if we were (...) to place a rest only after the eighth syllable, then the first part would be even longer, that is, it would have eight syllables. We have seen, that verses (...) of eight syllables are two-part, that is, they have a rest in the middle".

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Wilhelm Meyer's detailed description of medieval Latin meters in his article »Der Ludus de Antichristo und über die lateinischen Rhythmen.«, in *Gesammelte Abhandlungen zur mittellateinischen Rhythmik I*. Stuttgart, 1905: pp. 319-320. According to Meyer's division into periods, tridecasyllabic verse belongs to the second developmental period of medieval Latin verse (12th and 13th c.).

<sup>9</sup> The anonymous poem "Naš gospodin poljem jizdi" bears witness to the pre-Renaissance reception of tridecasyllabic verse. This poem is admittedly recorded in Hektorović's *Ribanje* (completed 1556, printed 1568), but its theme returns us to an earlier period. In it, Maja Bošković-Stulli

pean literatures, including some (e.g., German literature) that during particular historical periods influenced Croatian poetry and its meter.

In Croatian artistic poetry, old and new, thirteen-syllable verse is not uncommon, but it appears in minor roles. More important for its overall fate in the Croatian linguistic area is that it was used very early in folk and popular poetry. In these genres thirteen-syllable verse is less common than ten-syllable 4+6 and symmetrical eight-syllable verse, but it was not unknown that a song sung in thirteen-syllable verse gained a high level of popularity, given the right public. Since this meter has long been connected with poetry that could be heard in rural areas and small towns, we experience it as folk verse, and the majority of its “guest appearances” in artistic poetry, as an expression of the attempt to compose in a folk-like style. Still, when its appearance in more recent Croatian poetry is concerned, we should keep in mind that, in some cases, the use of thirteen-syllable verse is due to a German influence.<sup>10</sup>

As is often the case with longer, segmented verse, thirteen-syllable 4+4+5 is written down in a variety of ways, sometimes in the form of an unbroken line of verse:

*Poslao sam zlatu mome, da ne uzdiše,  
Kitu gjula i sumbula, nek joj miriše,  
(Ante Tresić Pavičić)*

However, it is sometimes broken into independent lines. When thirteen-syllable verse is cut, it is customary for a five-syllable line to be indented under an eight-syllable line, which reminds us of its dependence:

---

recognizes “images with the inspiration of a feudal world, of knightly customs” (»Usmena književnost.«, in: *Povijest hrvatske književnosti I*. Zagreb: Liber, 1975: p. 191. Marin Frančević describes the poem as an “anachronism” due to its knightly character (*Povijest hrvatske renesansne književnosti I*. Zagreb, 1986: p. 508. In my opinion, similar origins can be proven of the tridecasyllabic poem “Izrasla je vita jela na brijeg Dunaja”, from the anthology of Nikša Ranjina, which I discuss in the fourth part of this article.

<sup>10</sup> Vraz’s poem *Pod prozorom* (“Moja pjesma krotko moli / kroz tu tihu noć”) was doubtless composed under a German influence: it is a variation of the well-known serenade by Ludwig Rellstab (“Liese flehen meine Lieder / durch die Nacht zu dir”), which was put to music by Franz Schubert. The influence of the German variety of thirteen syllable verse is probable in the case of Preradović’s *Moja lađa*, as well as Šenoa’s poems in thirteen-syllable verse.

*U kićenom perivoju  
 Stajo sjajan grad,  
 Lijepo ti ga ovjenčao  
 Miloduhi hlad.  
 (August Šenoa)*

Less frequently, the separate sections of thirteen-syllable verse are written without indentation. This is how it sometimes appears in anthologies of folk verse:

*Polje tamo je široko  
 vu njem vinograd,  
 njega čuva Drinopoljka  
 lepa devojka.<sup>11</sup>*

Sorkočević, as can be seen in the citations of his octaves, writes thirteen-syllable verse in one line.

In and of itself, the difference between the various graphic formations of thirteen-syllable verse certainly are not unimportant, but we will see later that they are at times an expression of its different possibilities for rhyming. Still, I believe that in a discussion of Sorkočević's translated strophes, this is not of primary concern. Namely, it is allowable to assume that Sorkočević decided upon complete lines while paying exclusive attention to the epic character of his translation and its original, as well as the conditional equals sign between his thirteen-syllable verse and Tasso's eleven syllable. In other words, his method of writing down thirteen-syllable verse probably is of little relevance for the history of verse, and that it cannot be interpreted as a sign of devotion towards any particular tradition of thirteen-syllable poetry. But, although I feel that the graphic representation of thirteen-syllable verses is not important for the present discussion, I do not think that it should be changed arbitrarily. For this reason, the thirteen-syllable verses not written by

---

<sup>11</sup> *Narodna lirski pjesma*, ed. Olinko Delorko, *Pet stoljeća hrvatske književnosti*, vol. 23. Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1963: p. 66.

Sorkočević will be quoted here in their original graphic form, which will require some effort from the reader to recognize the same meter among different graphic representations.

As a rule, the folk and artistic varieties of individual Croatian metrical forms differ with respect to rhyme. Whereas folk verses are usually non-rhyming, the artistic variety have the possibility of choice. In the case of the thirteen syllable 4+4+5, this rule cannot be definitively confirmed: even in folk poetry thirteen-syllable verse displays a tendency towards acoustic correspondence of final syllables. This tendency is not absolute, but it is noticeable. Often a jump is made, so that not the whole poem, but only certain lines, are affected. One explainable characteristic of poems in thirteen syllable verse is that they usually end in a baritone trisyllable: because it differs from everything that occurs in the other parts of the line, the trisyllabic clause is experienced as an exceptional acoustic occurrence that tends to be additionally marked; in addition, the tendency towards markedness is the reason for the conclusive, boundary location of the trisyllable.<sup>12</sup> The mere process of marking trisyllabic clauses rarely, and probably by chance, results in a true rhyme. More commonly are the lower forms of correspondence, such as assonance, grammatical rhyme, and homeoteleuton. Lines with acoustically related endings are usually organized according to very simple schemes, such as AAA..., AABB, etc.

Artistic versions of thirteen-syllable verse vary in terms of rhyme scheme. Some poets follow the rules of folk poetry, and consider full rhyme and weaker euphonic effects to be equally acceptable at the end of the thirteen-syllable line. This attitude is not only noticeable in the Renaissance and baroque poets, who we know made use of acoustic correspondence other than true rhyme even in other meters, but also in more recent poets. Still, more recent poets as a whole more readily use true rhyme—often exclusively masculine rhyme—which could be considered a result of German influence. Furthermore, in poets of the Croatian National Revival and the post-Revival periods (19th c.), multiple rhyme is not uncommon, regardless of the level of purity, often occurring additionally in the syllables before the caesura (7th and 8th). In such cases

---

<sup>12</sup> On alternative possibilities in forming the trisyllabic pentasyllable—which have been utilized by Sorkočević and therefore will be discussed further in this article—and on the role of the trisyllable at its end, cf. T. Maretić, *Metrika*: p. 56.



the tridecasyllable is customarily broken into two graphically separate lines:

*Gdje ptičice miloglasnim  
Glasom pjevaju,  
Gdje pčelice cvijeće krasnim  
Vrhom šetaju...*  
(*Jure Tordinac*)

The tendency towards multiple rhyming sometimes even effects the first caesura of the line, in which case the relationship of acoustic correspondence is spread to the third and fourth syllables, calling for a more complicated graphic representation:

*Mali veli  
Pozaspali,  
Tihi vlada mir;  
Nit što ori,  
Niz što zbori,  
Nit se miče vir.*  
(*Franjo Ciraki*)

Like other syllabic meters in Croatian, the thirteen syllable 4+4+5 bases its rhythmic construction on two parameters: syntactic isomerism—which means the constant arrangement of deeper syntactic boundaries—and isosyllabicity.<sup>13</sup> In other words, thirteen-syllable verse always consists of thirteen syllables that are divided into parts by caesuras. There are two caesuras, one after the fourth syllable, and the other after the eighth syllable, and they divide the line of verse into two four-syllable and one five-syllable part:

---

<sup>13</sup> For tridecasyllabic poems of Croatian poets of the post-Revival period, the demands of accentual-syllabic versification apply, which means that, besides the rules of isomerism, they are also subject to the norm of correct substitution of stressed and unstressed syllables in a line of verse. However, from the perspective of the subject under question, which in whole lies in the area of older Croatian literature and its syllabic verse, the later fate of thirteen-syllable verse and its rhythmical construction is of no great importance.

*Djevojčica / ružu brala, / s ružom zaspala.*

The caesuras, in terms of the average depth of syntactic boundary that co-occur with them, are not absolutely equal. On the basis of several thirteen-syllable poems from various anthologies of Croatian folk poetry, I came under the impression that in the second caesura, in addition to boundaries such as the half-cadence, the anti-cadence also appears frequently, while the first caesura usually has the depth of a half-cadence. Still, it should be warned that the hierarchical relationship between two caesuras varies from poem to poem. In some poems, the second caesura does not fall below the level of anti-cadence:

*Djevojčica ružu brala, s ružom zaspala,  
Budilo je mlado momče: "Ustaj djevojčice"!  
Ruža ti je uvenula, što si nabrala,  
Dragi ti se oženio, kog si gledala.*

Sometimes, in fact, the final five-syllable segment is lexically clichéd, and becomes a more or less facultative refrain in the form of a weakly varied phrase with epiphoric ending ("Naš gospodin poljem jizdi, jizda da mu je, / Na glavi mu svilan klobuk, sinca da mu je") or with an anaphoric beginning ("Dojne krave, dosta sena, lepo se doji / Dosta mleka, dosta sira lepo se živi"). There are yet other thirteen-syllable poems in which the first and second caesuras to some degree are balanced. Thus in the following example either the half-cadence (/) or the anti-cadence (//) can occur in both caesuras:

*Hvalila se / lijepa Fata / svojim konama:  
"Moje kone, // života vam, // što nijeste ko ja:  
Stasa vitka, / struka tanka, / lica rumena?"  
Bog pokara / lijepu Fatu / s hvale njezine;  
Ospice je / nagrđiše, // bolest izmori.  
Od žalosti / lijepa Fata /skoči u vodu,  
Od žalosti, // a za svojim / licem rumenim.*

Certainly, except about syntactic boundaries in caesuras, the isomerism of a tridecasyllable also depends on the type of boundary at the end of the line.

It is, just as in other verses that have been profiled in folk poetry, always deep, deeper than the internal boundaries, but has the form of a cadence or anticadence.

All in all, thirteen-syllable 4+4+5 verse is of complicated and sensitive architecture. What happens to Sorkočević's tendencies and constants? In his translational opus, in which he mainly used eight-syllable quatrains, but also twelve-syllable 6+6, Sorkočević always left the impression of a competent versificator. And his handling of thirteen-syllable verse confirms that impression. As was mentioned previously, Sorkočević solved the problem of transcribing thirteen-syllable lines in the simplest way—by writing the entire verse in one line. Considering the epic context, this is also the only logical way.

Sorkočević used rhyme only at the ends of lines, and organized them according to the scheme of Tasso's octaves, thus: ABABABCC. In acoustic content, his rhymes are at first sight imperfect: today we would not consider lexical combinations such as "djelova"- "iznova" or "ozdravlja"- "ustavlja" to be perfect rhymes, because they do not correspond from the stressed syllable to the end. However, when the amount of acoustic correspondence in Sorkočević's rhymes is carefully measured, it seems that the intended framework of their acoustic correspondence is limited to only the final two syllables, which correspond completely in both octaves ("vojvodu"- "slobodu"- "ishodu"; "Jezusova"- "djelova"- "iznova", etc.). Of course, I do not wish to say that we can simply disclaim the status of a rhyme such as "ozdravlja"- "ustavlja" as a proper trisyllabic rhyme and reassign it as a proper bisyllabic rhyme. This is opposed by the fact that the stressed syllables of the acoustically corresponding words do not enter into the rhyme's syllabic framework. Still, Sorkočević's bisyllabic rhyming of trisyllabic proparoxitones is an apt warning of the difference between today's and earlier notions of rhyme, as well as the insignificant role of the stressed syllable in the meters of early Croatian literature. In Sorkočević's thirteen-syllable verse the limitation of the rhyme to only two syllables has a specific functional justification which becomes apparent when one realizes that some of the sixteen lines of the two octaves end in a bisyllabic clause.

Namely, three of Sorkočević's lines end with a bisyllabic word:

*Dočim hudi silnik na boj oružje spravlja...*  
*I telesa mrtva iz groba povraća živa...*  
*Odrešujući i vezujući ih gore neg robe...*

In the same group we can also include the second line of the first strophe, which ends in a four-syllable word stressed on the first syllable:

*Ko slobodi srićni ukopa grob Jezusova;*

The presence of such lines in Sorkočević's translation implies that the upper boundary of its rhyme takes into account the possibility of the bisyllabic formation of a metrical clause. In other words, the rhyme and its syllabic framework are determined by the shorter of two alternative clauses.

The mutable clause of Sorkočević's thirteen-syllable verse itself is not an anomaly. It will sound unusual only to the reader who has become acquainted with thirteen-syllable verse in the material of Croatian Revival and post-Revival lyrics. As a rule, newer Croatian poets end their tridecasyllables either with a proparoxitone:

*Prigoda se takva neće lako desiti...*

or a stressed one-syllable word:

*I danas me sobom zovu, a ja odoh rad...*  
(Tresić)

Such a range of mutability excludes the bisyllabic clause, not in fact, but in principle. The replaceability of a proparoxitone with an oxitone is based upon the isorhythmicality of the two patterns, on the possibility for both to be read with the same binary scansion. This confirms that more recent Croatian thirteen-syllable verse respects the rules of accentual and syllabic versification and that their odd and even syllables act as strong and weak positions. Against an accentual and syllabic background, the substitution of a proparoxitone by a one-syllable word passes painlessly, because it doesn't carry over the syllable stress to a weak position. On the other hand, ending a line with a paroxitone would carry the stress over to an even (twelfth) syllable; therefore, newer Croatian tridecasyllable verse excludes this possibility. The tridecasyllable verse of Croatian folk singers and earlier poets is, however, a syllabic meter that centers on the rules of isosyllabicity and syntactic isomerism, but without the division of syllables into strong and weak posi-

tions, so the appearance of bisyllabic words in at the end of the line cannot disturb anything in the pattern. For this reason, Sorkočević's bisyllabic clauses are not invalid, and analogies to them can be easily found in folk poems:

*Ovila se zlatnim žicama iz vedra neba,  
Savila se prvijencu oko klobuka.  
To ne bila zlatna žica od vedra neba,  
već to bila dobra sreća od mila boga.*

With its mutable clause, Sorkičević's thirteen-syllable verse is clearly a syllabic meter. How are the main rhythmical factors of syllabic versification, isosyllabicity and isomerism, interpreted in this meter?

The rule of isosyllabicity in Sorkočević's two octaves is of course fulfilled, but in the spirit of the peculiar vocalism of old Dubrovnik and Dalmatian versification, which tends towards the connection of adjoining vowels by synaeresis and synaloepha. For example:

*Pjevam milo Bogu oružje, pjevam vojvodu...  
Mnogo on podnije za čestitu dat mu slobodu...  
Jedan dan se njemu Ismeno sam prikaživa...  
I istog kralja od pakla straši i snebiva...*

Sorkočević also respects the rule of syntactic isomerism, taking into account a certain wavering that is characteristic of the use of folk meters in fine literature. He generally places deeper syntactic boundaries such as half- and anti-cadences at the caesuras, while the lines normally end with anti-cadences and cadences. Exceptions, though, do exist, both within the lines and between them. At the first and second caesuras the depth of the boundary in ten places falls below the level of half-cadence, as in the following lines:

*I zaman se pako opriječi, zaman ishodu  
Od Azije i Libije vojske iznova,  
Er pomaga nebo njega, i pod izabrane  
Svete stijege druge skupi sve poskitane.*

The appearance of deep boundaries in the natural rests of Sorkočević's

tridecasyllables can in most cases be considered a normal result of a literary reinterpretation of folk meter. The exceptions will be the “soft” boundaries at the end of the fifth and seventh lines (half-cadence, or intrasyntagmatic lexical boundary), which have their own justification in terms of translational style. This, however, I will deal with at a later point.

Taking everything into account, Sorkočević’s thirteen-syllable verses display much similarity, but some dissimilarity as well, with those of folk poetry, whose role as his model we probably have no reason to doubt. What can be concluded from this about Sorkočević’s understanding of thirteen-syllable 4+4+5 verse and about the foundations of his estimate that that style is capable of “acting out” Tasso’s eleven-syllable verse?

In Croatian poetry, both old and new, thirteen-syllable verse is often used in a way that does not hide—but in fact emphasizes—its folk or common origins, with the only exceptions being its appearances inspired by German models. On the other hand, the lines of Sorkočević’s Tasso take from the folk tridecasyllable exclusively their metrical pattern. Not one other feature, or rather feature of the words, sentences, and assertions that fill them, evokes either letter or spirit of the folk poem. They are arranged into strophes of foreign and at the same time high origin, while the lexical and syntactic quality of their spoken contents is adapted to analogous features of Tasso’s diction.

One’s impression, therefore, is that Sorkočević was mainly indifferent to the fact that the tridecasyllable belongs to the folk tradition, believing that, by placing it in a repertoire of artistic poetry, a folk meter can be stripped of its folk sound. Such an attitude towards folk verse is not altogether unique in the history of Croatian literature, but for Croatian poets, especially the earlier ones, it was more typical to experience folk verse as some type of “package deal”, from which individual contents cannot be separated, but that accepting one required the acceptance of the rest.

### III

The assumption, however, that Sorkočević felt the folk sound of the thirteen-syllable 4+4+5 as accidental and removable can only partially explain his unusual metrical choice: this assumption points out the reasons for which Sorkočević did not consider the introduction of folk verse for any high literary use to be objectionable or impossible. And in the event that this is a proper assumption, we are still far from the answers to all the questions that have been made about these two unusual translated strophes.

The questions that I intend to put forth and examine in the following text have been chosen primarily because of the translational character of Sorkočević's octaves. One would namely be that Sorkočević were to use a folk meter to compose poem of his own with a non-folk tone, and the other is that he uses it as a substitute to a foreign meter, specifically Italian eleven-syllable verse.

Sorkočević's octaves, when one thinks about them as translation, are worthy of interest because of their inconsistency with the main translating techniques that were customary in Croatian and other literatures. First of all, his thirteen-syllable poems sharply deviate from the standards of translating verse into verse respected by translators of today. According to the majority of our modern texts on translation, they usually choose the domestic verse of the same name or one which is metrically similar. In the most recent Croatian translation of *Jerusalem Delivered* the eleven-syllable octave has been preserved, except the original rhyme scheme, and the original meter:<sup>14</sup>

*Pobožnu pjevam vojnu, vođu smjelu  
 što oslobodi grob Isusov sveti.  
 Umom i rukom stvori mnoga djela,  
 s dobićem mnogo moraše trpjeti;  
 zalud ga omest sila Pakla htjela,  
 Azija zalud s Libijom mu prijeti.  
 Milošću Božjom pod dične je znake  
 on zabasale skupio junake.*

---

<sup>14</sup> The author of this translation (Croatian title: *Oslobođeni Jeruzalem*) is Mirko Tomasović. It has not been completed, but parts of it have been published in Croatian literary journals: the first canto in *Mogućnosti* 3-4 (1990), part of the second canto in *Republika* 7-8 (1990), and part of the third canto in *Književna smotra* 94 (1994).

What is of greater importance, however, is that Sorkočević's Tasso borrows to some degree from its own closer historical context: from the fund of translations of early Croatian literature, specifically from the translation literature of early modern Dubrovnik and Dalmatia.<sup>15</sup> In order to appreciate this difference, however, one should keep in mind the conventions that the poets of Dubrovnik and Dalmatia observed when translating foreign poetry and in general when they, in composing their own poems, responded to the challenge of foreign poetry and verse.

When they react to foreign poetic works, early Croatian writers deal with them selectively. They are positive towards the contents, and generally towards the generic features of the received text, but they ignore its verse. For example, in his own version of the first canto of Vergil's *Aeneid*, Ignjat Đurđević includes Aeneas and Ascanius, Juno and Mercury, and the storm at sea in lines 84-141; furthermore, he also makes an effort to reproduce the epic features of his model; but the verse of the *Aeneid*, hexameter, is left outside the doorway of his translation, being replaced by the eight-syllable quatrain. Our early poets act analogously also when they adopt foreign poetic forms and types: they usually prove to be sensitive to the standard themes of their genotype, and to its classificatory features, but not to its choice of meter. The lyric verse of our early Petrarchists, for example, adopts the typical themes and topoi, antitheses, metaphors, and compositional patterns used by Petrarch and his Italian followers, while rejecting the meter and poetic forms of its models (eleven-syllable sonnet, canzone, strambotto), giving the advantage to the most popular form of Croatian Renaissance literature, the twelve-syllable couplet with double rhyme. In short, in early Croatian literature, to which Sorkočević's opus of translations belongs, foreign metrical

---

<sup>15</sup> I single out the literature of the Dubrovnik-Dalmatian circle here and examine it as an independent literary subuniverse, which leads us not only to the confirmation of its separateness from the literatures of other Croatian regions during the early modern period, but also that in Croatia's different regional literatures, different customs of translating verse into verse were in practice. The translational poetics of the early Dubrovnik and Dalmatian writers, which is described later in this text, and which emphasizes functional, rather than metrical, relatedness of a translation and its original verse (cf. Z. Kravar, »Izvorni«: p. 88 and ff.), was not equally characteristic of the other regional branches of early Croatian literature. In early Kajkavian literature, metrically equivalent translations are an especially common phenomenon. The reason for this is that Kajkavian poets most commonly translated liturgical lyrics (i.e. church songs and versified prayers) that had to be translated so that they could be sung to the original melody.



patterns were replaced by domestic ones, both in translations of poetry and in the reception of foreign literary types characterized by a fixed choice of meter. But this lack of metrical correspondence between original and translation was not felt as a disturbance; in fact, the same criteria for the creation of verse were observed during the early modern period in other European literatures as well.<sup>16</sup>

The practice of translating poetic works or of “naturalizing” foreign literary genotypes without adopting their meter is one of the many themes in the field of literary science that demonstrates how the provocativeness of a literary fact is dependent upon one’s historical, cultural, and geographical perspective. The contemporary Croatian literary historian is a participant in a literary culture that, in the field of translating poetry has long since accepted metrical correspondence as the rule. For this reason, he will experience every appearance of noncorrespondence between an original verse and its translation as a deviation from the rules, and thus as a theme worthy of analysis. However, in older European literature, the standards on the basis of which metrical noncorrespondence of foreign and domestic poetic works or genotypes would be recognized as unusual or even a philological problem either did not yet exist or were not broadly applied. This, of course, does not mean that the former practice of replacing foreign verse with domestic came about without the possibility of justification and implicit logic. On the contrary, it would be prudent to assume that behind this practice lies an entire philosophy of interliterary relationships—a specific attitude about the relationship between domestic and foreign in the field of verse and poetic form that is alien to us, yet neutral in value. Using the language of today’s discussions about “literature as system”,<sup>17</sup> this attitude could be reconstructed in the following way: in a “passive” literary context, that is in one that accepts outside influence and responds to the challenge of foreign meter, a verse is seen as a phenomenon that is equally foreign and native, like a domestic linguistic medium; the same—from the perspective of a passive context—is true of the relationship between verse and language in the system from which an influence comes; in accordance with this, a foreign work or genotype can enter

---

<sup>16</sup> Cf. my article cited in the previous footnote, p. 96 and ff.

<sup>17</sup> Term of Cl. Guillen.

domestic literature through its thematic content and generic characteristics, while outside the door it has to leave not only its language (which is self-evident to us), but its meter as well.<sup>18</sup>

The understanding of verse and the repertoire of verse as internal aspects of a given literary system, which influences the metrical choice of early Croatian writers and makes decisions about their metrical dilemmas, probably does not belong to the order of basic literary historical facts, but rather derives from certain more general complexes of historical circumstances, and interacts with other, broader determinants of early Croatian literature. I would prefer to avoid questions in relation to this problem, because without them a considerable amount can be said about such an individual topic as the appearance of thirteen-syllable verse in Sorokočević's translation of Tasso. Still, I would not like to miss the chance to point out one fact that is important in the history of literature and which is found, if not in a cause-effect relationship, then in strong correlation with the poetic transferral that is typical of Croatian pre-Revival literature. I am referring to the syllabic character of early Croatian versification.

In order for the syllabic nature of early Croatian verse and the aversion of the Croatian Renaissance and baroque poets towards foreign meters to be mutually dependent, it follows, on one hand, out of the technical possibilities of syllabic verse, and on the other, out of the experiences of literary science with these two historical facts and their mutuality. In terms of the technical aspect of syllabic verse and its influence on the behavior of poets and translators in contact with foreign meters, it is important to stress the following: syllabic verse bases its rhythmical regularity, and its versification in general, on isosyllabicity and on syntactic isomerism;<sup>19</sup> a poem composed in some syllabic meter, for example, in eight-syllable 4+4 or in thirteen-syllable 4+4+5, has the form of a string of rows that correspond in number of syllables and in the arrangement of deeper syntactic boundaries; on the other hand, syllabic verse does not take advantage of the rhythmical potential of prosodically marked and unmarked syllables and their periodic exchanges in the individual line of verse, upon which quantitative and accentual verse strongly rely, al-

---

<sup>18</sup> On this point I go into more detail in another article, »Inozemna politika stihom.« *Vijenac* 1/15 (1994): p. 14. See also Svetozar Petrović, »Problem soneta u starijoj hrvatskoj književnosti.« *Rad JAZU* 350 (1968): p. 5 and ff., especially the closing paragraph.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Zoran Kravar, »Ritam u retku i ritam redaka.«, in: *Tema 'stih'*: p. 19 and ff.

though each in its own way; In other words, in syllabic verse there is no division of syllables into strong and weak positions.

Because of its specific rhythmical construction, equally because of its positive and privative features, syllabic verse cannot be naturally inserted into the procedures of metrically corresponding translation of poetry and generally into attempts at reproducing the meters of other languages. The metrical schemes of other languages are usually imported in such a way that some already existing domestic verse is adapted to them: "Upon the appearance of new models, a traditional verse is found and is then used as a grafting base."<sup>20</sup> Syllabic meters, however, are poorly equipped for the role of "grafting base" in any kind of transferral of verse: it is difficult to adapt them to foreign syllabic meters, inasmuch as they are not already related, because then syllables would have to be added and rests moved, which brings into question the sensitive balance of their syllabic framework and syntactic division; while quantitative and accentual verses are distanced from them by the inborn lack of rhythm in the line; being different than accentual verse, which can approach foreign quantitative verse so that the substitution of long and short syllables is conjured up by substituting stressed and unstressed syllables, syllabic verse, as I have already stated, has no strong and weak positions, and thus nothing with which to "act out" the rhythm based on the periodic exchange of long and short or stressed and unstressed syllables.

The connectedness of metrical traffic as practiced by the early Dubrovnik and Dalmatian poets and their attachment to syllabic verse is indicated not only by proofs of metrical and morphological nature, but also by the facts of literary history.

Thus, for this discussion it is above all significant that the period of the first mass penetration of foreign metrical types in Croatian translation and original literature—which occurred in the beginning of the last third of the nineteenth century—chronologically corresponds with the dying out of syllabic meters in Croatian versification.<sup>21</sup> A similar proof is given by the tra-

---

<sup>20</sup> Ivan Slamnig, *Hrvatska verzifikacija*. Zagreb, 1981: p. 144.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Svetozar Petrović, »Semantika srpskog i hrvatskog stiha u drugoj polovini devetnaestog vijeka.«, in: *Oblik i smisao* (Novi Sad, 1986): esp. p. 303, where it is written that Croatian "verse of the second half of the nineteenth century" characterize the penetration of syllabotomism and the affirmation of the translating techniques that "require that the meter of the original, i.e., the metrical characteristics of the original verse, be respected".

ditionally closed repertoires of verse in the Romance linguistic regions, where the dominance of syllabic verse is unquestionable.

According to everything that I have written until now in this chapter, it turns out that the metrical “foreign policy” of early Croatian poets produced only deficits: the meters used at home display a lack of adaptability, while the translations and adaptations of foreign literary genotypes differ greatly from their models in terms of metrical form. Still, the early writers of Dubrovnik and Dalmatia kept account of at least one aspect of comensurability between foreign and domestic verse: they made sure that the verses chosen in the process of translation or acceptance of foreign influence corresponded at least in level or means of functional specialization, that is, in the function that they normally served in a domestic literary context. Two examples that were cited earlier illustrate this fact: Đurđević’s eight-syllable quatrain is functionally analogous to Vergil’s hexameter, because in the Dubrovnik-Dalmatian cultural world during the Baroque period it was considered the normal metrical attire of the epic, having been promoted to this function by Gundulić’s *Osman* in the 1630s. Furthermore, the double-rhyming twelve-syllable verse was imposed by our followers of Petrarch and the Italian Petrarchists as a natural solution, because it was a very common form in the Croatian lyric poetry of that time.

Many literary and historical facts point the fact that the disregard for metrical and rhythmic substance of foreign verse, coupled with the attention paid to functionality (which I will hereafter refer to as “ethos”),<sup>22</sup> can be regarded as the typical way in which Dubrovnik and Dalmatian literary culture reacted to foreign poetry and its versification. These two isolated octaves of Franatica Sorkočević’s translation of Tasso are interesting precisely because in them the age-old “ethos yes, meter no” formula has been dropped. Namely, Sorkočević’s metrical pattern is decidedly not the Croatian functional equivalent to Italian eleven-syllable verse, which means that this translation differs from its model in terms of ethos. However, these unusual translated octaves also put under question the second part of the formula (“meter no”). True, thirteen-syllable 4+4+5 is metrically speaking considerably dissimilar to

---

<sup>22</sup> For a more detailed explanation of the category of ethos in verse, which is perhaps self-understood, I direct the reader to the introductory chapter of the already cited study »Izvorni i prijevodni stih«.

eleven-syllable verse, but it is closer to it than the customary metrical patterns that the poets of Dubrovnik and Dalmatia used in their translations of eleven-syllable verse in the seventeenth century and the first half of the eighteenth.

#### IV

In keeping with the literary and historical facts just laid out, when analyzing and evaluating the standard translations of the early Croatian writers, it is recommendable to “squint” when discussing the level of metrical correspondence between a translation and its original, and to open one’s eyes when the functional similarity between original and translated meter is under question. In the case of Sorkočević’s Tasso, however, one should close and open one’s eyes (i.e., account for the expected difference and evaluation of correspondence) in the opposite order.

Squinting—and doing so decisively—is recommended in light of the truly great functional dissimilarity of the two verses that have been found in the dishes of Sorkočević’s translational scales. In folk thirteen-syllable poetry, which was probably Sorkočević’s metrical model, we find nothing that could legitimize the decision to use the 4+4+5 scheme in a heroic epic poem.

Unfortunately, we do not know which circles of folk poems Sorkočević made use of as his source of metrical instruction. Such data is not to be found nor should be expected in biographical sources. Furthermore, as I have stated, in the lines of the two translated octaves, nothing but the 4+4+5 scheme is even reminiscent of the spirit of folk poetry, which means that no trace of any specific thirteen-syllable tradition could be found either. We can only guess that Sorkočević had come into contact with some of the numerous thirteen-syllable poems that were recorded by Vuk Stefanović Karadžić in the immediate and greater Dubrovnik surroundings at the beginning of the nineteenth century and included in his anthology of “various lyrical songs”,<sup>23</sup> such as, for example, the following one from Konavle:

*Izvila se zlatna žica vrhom iz mora,  
Savila se prvijencu oko pojaza.*

---

<sup>23</sup> *Srpske narodne pjesme I*. Wien, 1841.

*Izvila se zlatna žica vrhom iz mora,  
Savila se starom svatu oko strmena.*

In Karadžić there is also a considerable number of thirteen-syllable poems collected in the area of the Bay of Kotor (in Risan) which always was in contact with Dubrovnik. Furthermore, from some anthologies of Croatian folk poetry, for example, from the *Hrvatske narodne pjesme* published by Matica Hrvatska, it is evident that thirteen-syllable verse is also common in the lyrical songs of Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>24</sup> Sorkočević could have come across models of Bosnian thirteen-syllable poetry even in Dubrovnik, and perhaps even Bosnia itself, in Travnik, where he was carrying out diplomatic duties.<sup>25</sup>

Sorkočević, however, certainly came up with the idea of using thirteen-syllable meter for an epic verse without the suggestions of folk poetry, or even in spite of them. For, as is evident from simply leafing through the appropriate anthologies, folk poets use the tridecasyllable mainly in lyrical poems, which means in shorter poems of lyrical tone. This impression remains even after more detailed study of the material collected in the anthologies. A cautious summary of the information I gathered in examining several larger folk anthologies could be expressed as follows: in South Slavic folk poetry the tridecasyllable verse belongs to the lyrical register, where it acts as a multi-purpose meter; still, some of its affinities towards particular types of poetry are suspected, especially in the field of non-narrative lyrics, of which wedding and drinking songs are particularly prominent; its narrative lyric forms often are of balladesque character, where the characters speak more than the narrator; regardless of its type and subtype, the theme of the thirteen-syllable folk lyric often is a male-female relationship, with points of the poem usually, but not always, being bright and humorous, at times even ironic. Finally, thirteen-syllable poems, about which we learn more from studying live experiences with Croatian folklore than from folk poetry anthologies, are often sung, either accompanied by original melodies, or to music composed after the fact.

---

<sup>24</sup> Cf., for example, Matica hrvatska publication *Hrvatske narodne pjesme*, especially vol. 7, edited by Nikola Andrić (Zagreb, 1929).

<sup>25</sup> "As envoy of the Republic he [Sorkočević] went to Travnik in 1752, to the divan of the Bosnian pasha (...)" (N. Beritić, »Franatica Sorkočević«: p. 17).

The ethos of the tridecasyllable, as I have just attempted to outline it, is present or is in some way revived even in the uncommon thirteen-syllable poems of the poets of Dubrovnik and Dalmatia older than Sorkočević. For example, the unfinished poem no. 591 from the collection of Nikša Ranjina (“Izrasla je vita jela na brijeg Dunaja / pod njom moma ružu žela, rodom gizdava”) is in some way reminiscent of the balladesque thirteen-syllable poetry that can be found in collections of folk poetry: if it were complete, it would be short, and its theme is a male-female conversation in the form of courting. It is distanced from average folk poems by the stylistic level of its metaphorical language, which perhaps betrays the influence of Petrarchan love poetry:

*U nje su mi ličca bila, rajem gojena;  
oči ima kako i strila kim jad zadava.*

The bisyllabic rhyme at the end of the middle segment (“jela”-“žela”, “bila”-“strila”, etc.) also derives from the inventory of artistic poetry. Finally, the high status of its feudal aristocratic characters make it seem non-folkloric (“moma [...] rodom gizdava”, “gospodin”).

With its feudal sound, from the perspective of the thirteen-syllable folk poem, *Vita jela* in some sense approaches the rather small circle of mainly anonymous poems from the anthology of Nikša Ranjina that make use of meters other than the tridecasyllable (which is the most common metrical option in the anthology), and that our older philologists considered to be “folk-like”,<sup>26</sup> even though their themes and plots imply that they may well be re-

---

<sup>26</sup> I am referring to texts from anthologies, with the assumption that we are dealing with revised folk poems, set apart by Milan Rešetar: “Then again, although it is very likely that before M[enčeti]ć and D[rži]ć there were no poets in Dubrovnik who delved in poetry in the vernacular with such intensity, there were poems, both artistic and folk. We should not actually have to prove that there were folk poems, but we have proof in the 6 poems (no. 571-573, 591, 601, and 635) that Jagić set apart as ‘folk poems’, and that in content, diction, and tone are indeed folk poems that have been minimally retailed (...),” (introduction to the book *Pjesme Šiška Menčetića i Đore Držića i ostale pjesme Ranjinina zbornika*. Stari pisci hrvatski II, Zagreb, 1937: p. LXXXVII). Besides their “content and diction and tone”, these poems from the standard lyrics of Ranjina’s anthology, which are in double-rhyming dodecasyllabic verse, differ both in meter (eleven-syllable, fourteen-syllable 4+4+6, a combination of nine-syllable and eleven-syllable verse, and, in the case of poem no. 591, *Vita jela*, which was discussed above, thirteen-syllable verse). Franičević also writes about the meters of these poems in his article »Ritmička osnova u stihu hrvatskih pjesnika 15. i 16. stoljeća.«, in: *Studije o stihu: Sedam stoljeća hrvatskoga vezanoga stiha*. Zagreb, 1986: p. 115 and ff. Franičević also does not doubt the folk origin of the poems in question and their verse.

mains of medieval worldly lyrics. This implies that *Vita jela* could even be older than the thirteen-syllable poems that we know from Karadžić's and Matica's anthologies, or even than their protomodels, and that in this poem the ethos of the tridecasyllable is more likely initiated than inherited. Of course, here I would rather leave open the complex question of whether the thirteen-syllable poems of Nikša Ranjina's anthology are the ennobled offspring of some very early folk tradition, or a model of poetry according to which the folk thirteen-syllable poem relates as a "fallen cultural treasure". I will simply stress that, when reading a poem and experiencing its verse, we will probably not miss the feeling that induces us to think, "that's it", in the sense of an affirmative intuitive grade about the harmony of its formation and other components.

Thirteen-syllable verse makes a different impression in the most well-known thirteen-syllable poem of seventeenth-century Dubrovnik-Dalmatian literature, the comic poem *Radonja*, by Vladislav Menčetić, although here as well its appearance is well motivated. While it is difficult to say whether *Vita jela* presumes a thirteen-syllable folk ballad, or represents its creation, *Radonja* already belongs to a culture that has a consciousness about folklore and its variation: all of the aesthetic efficacy of the poem, especially its humor, is based on the feeling of dissimilarity between the world of the country, to which the story of the hen-pecked Radonja and his ill-tempered wife belongs, and the world of literary media through which the story offers the reader from Dubrovnik as a participant in a higher cultural life. It is in the emphasis of this dissimilarity that the thirteen-syllable 4+4+5 verse found its meaning, for in Menčetić's time it was most likely more strongly marked as a folk meter in opposition to the usual metrical repertory of the Dubrovnik and Dalmatian poets, than at the time when the poem about the meeting of the young couple in *Vita jela*.

As we know, Menčetić's *Radonja* is not the only comic work of early literature in which situations from country life are depicted as something a priori funny.<sup>27</sup> It is striking to note, however, to which extent Menčetić allows the rural vernacular to enter the literary medium. Whereas, for example, in Bunić's *Gorštak* the humor derives from unrealistic, almost hypothetical

---

<sup>27</sup> For Croatian and foreign parallels to *Radonja*, see Svetlana Radulović-Stipčević, *Vladislav Menčetić, dubrovački pesnik 17. veka*. Beograd, 1973: p. 127 and ff.



speech constructions uttered by the lovesick shepherd which violate the intricate rhetoric of the Petrarchan grievance of love,<sup>28</sup> *Radonja* has a reconstructive attitude towards rural language: the text of the poem is saturated with the nomenclature of the country household, the characters' lines are peppered with vulgar exclamations and curses ("lele bijedni", "ah, pečali", "zmijom ti se o vrat vješam", "bogom brato"), and the conversation between Radonja and his wife follows the scenario of a rural domestic spat. This reconstructive treatment of language - in which the poet uses the rural dialect as an exhibit rather than as an object of stylization or as a location for quotations - is where we should seek the reason for *Radonja*'s metrical rusticity as well. In Bunić's *Gorštak*, which utilizes a highly literary combination of lines and strophes (quatrains of eight-syllable lines), the choice of meter is motivated by a literary type that the character Gorštak is not qualified to strive for. For Menčetić, however, the literary type amounts to the very framework of the medium, and thus the choice of meter must be appropriate for the ethos of the character - i.e. for Radonja's rough nature and his vernacular means of expression.

In *Radonja*, therefore, the thirteen-syllable meter acts foremost as a verse with a rustic sound, which absolutely corresponds with its status at that time. I believe, however, that the poem also reveals signs of the author's sensitivity to some of its more individual connotations. Perhaps, for example, the appearance of thirteen-syllable verse in a poem about the bitter marital experiences of the peasant Radonja can be interpreted as an ironic reversal of the fact that folk singers like to use this same verse in wedding songs, in which they sing festively, putting marital relations in a positive light. Of course, this is conjecture based upon the assumption that the thirteen-syllable epithalamiums that we read today in anthologies no more than one century old existed already in Menčetić's time. We should also note, given that we further misuse the assumption that folklore is timeless, that the lexical similarity between the first line of Radonja's final part ("Mladoženje koji mome

---

<sup>28</sup> The same can also be said, of course, about Ignjat Đurđević's *Suze Marunkove*, only that it appeared after *Radonja*, and for this reason I will give them no further mention in this work. In interpreting the humor of Dubrovnik's comic poems and their parodic attitude towards the conventions of expression of the love lyric, I rely upon the observations discussed in Pavao Pavličić's article, »Parodijski aspekti baroknih komičnih poema.«, in: *Rasprave o hrvatskoj baroknoj književnosti*. Split, 1979: p. 129 and ff.

/ na stan vodite”) and the beginning of the well-known thirteen-syllable nursery rhyme about the voracious *moma* (“girl, maiden”):<sup>29</sup>

*Sinoć moma dovedena  
malo večerala,  
jednu ticu prepelicu,  
ticu gospodsku.*

In this poem, which Karadžić recorded in the vicinity of Dubrovnik, the male fear of irreparable damage caused by choosing the wrong mustache hides behind its absurd humor. If it did exist in the seventeenth century, then it could have confronted the author of *Radonja* with very pointed intertextual connotations.

It follows from the above—granted, more in the form of conjecture than proven fact—that Menčetić’s *Radonja* justifies its choice of verse, and its consequent divergence from the traditional Dubrovnik and Dalmatian metrical repertoire, through metaliterary instructions in the direction of literary folklore. For us, these directions serve as proof that in Dubrovnik and Dalmatian culture a century before Franatica Sorkočević, thirteen-syllable verse had a clearly recognizable rustic sound. And in terms of even earlier periods of Dubrovnik and Dalmatian literature, the thirteen-syllable *Vita jela* from the collection of Nikša Ranjina serves as a fairly strong indicator of the same.

Sorkočević, therefore, was able to ascertain that the thirteen-syllable line was inappropriate as an epic meter - not only from examples of thirteen-syllable folk poems, but he could have also learned this from the works produced by his own literary tradition. Why he did not take this lesson into account could be, in my opinion, interpreted with the following hypothetical

---

<sup>29</sup> It would perhaps be better to say that this poem is based upon—rather than written in—thirteen-syllable 4+4+5. Namely, the eight-syllable (4+4) and the five-syllable become graphically independent and are not used symmetrically, so that, while the number of five-syllable lines remains the same, the number of eight-syllable lines increases with each new strophe. This is due to the enumerative composition of the poem: in each consecutive strophe, the catalogue of foods eaten by the “moma” grows by one, invariably eight-syllable, line. The final version of the catalogue contains six eight-syllable lines: “Sinoć moma dovedena / malo večera: / devet pogač’, deset sira, / osam volov’, sedam krava, / šest ovnova, pet gusaka, / četir’ patke, tri goluba, / dvije tice jarebice, / jednu ticu prepelicu.”

reasons: first, we can assume that his choosing thirteen-syllable verse as an alternative for Italian eleven-syllable verse, although it seems almost absurd as long as we appraise it along the lines of the “ethos yes, meter no” doctrine of translation, offered particular advantages in terms of preserving as much formal similarity with the original as possible; secondly, Sorkočević probably opted for the thirteen-syllable line under literary and historical conditions in which poetic translations with an emphasis on ethos had begun to lose their persuasiveness. Finally, Sorkočević's decision to deviate from the traditional translating method and try out thirteen-syllable verse also may have been additionally motivated by the obvious weaknesses of an older Dubrovnik translation of Tasso. I am referring to a translation of the first two cantos of Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered*, which Đuro Körbler included in the appendix of his critical edition of the collected works of Ivan Gundulić.<sup>30</sup> This still anonymous translation is a prime example of the “ethos yes, meter no” translating method: in this work the eleven-syllable octave of the *Liberata*, which is a normal epic strophe in Italian literature, is substituted by the “standard” epic strophe of Dubrovnik and Dalmatian baroque literature - Gundulićesque eight-syllable quatrain with an ABAB rhyme scheme.

## V

As we confront Sorkočević's thirteen-syllable and Tasso's eleven-syllable in terms of their ethos, it is best to squint with both eyes. However, even when the formal correspondence of the two meters occurs, this idea of correspondence should not be accepted without limit. Namely, even in terms of form, thirteen-syllable 4+4+5 verse and eleven-syllable verse are very distant. Besides the fact that we can consider both forms to be products of syllabic versification—while not forgetting the specificness of both Italian and Croatian syllabification—they have many differences. These differences are easily noticed, and for this reason I will only mention them: the two meters differ in their number of syllables, in their number and placement of caesuras, and in their line endings (thirteen-syllable verse sometimes having trisyllabic and sometimes bisyllabic rhyme, with eleven-syllable verse having as a rule bisyllabic endings); furthermore, whoever believes in the

---

<sup>30</sup> *Djela Điva Frana Gundulića*, ed. Đuro Körbler. Stari pisci hrvatski, vol. 9. Zagreb, 1919.

“rhythmical inertia” of syllabic meter may add that an eleven-syllable line is iambic, and a thirteen-syllable line is trochaic verse.

Certainly, however, Sorkočević’s approaching Italian eleven-syllable verse should be evaluated as a bending of the rules, keeping in mind the above-mentioned closedness of early Croatian versification to meters from foreign poetic repertoires, and the slim possibilities for a syllabic meter to adapt to the rhythmic line of a foreign model. The possibility of reacting to a foreign meter by constructing an “appropriate” meter, whose model coincides by the criteria of isosyllabicity and isomerism, is utilized by our translators from the 1870s, and is based upon the existence of accentual verse. For Sorkočević, a participant in a literary culture equipped with syllabic verse, this possibility was missing. On the other hand, he refused to be content with exclusively functional equivalence between the translated and original meters. Thus he was left with the possibility of turning to the Croatian poetic repertoire and choosing the domestic verse that was, according to the criteria that he put the most weight upon, most similar to eleven-syllable verse.

From the translated strophes that we have, we can deduce that, in search of such a verse, Sorkočević gave precedence to two parameters: the length of the line of verse, and its pliability in terms of building strophes. In other words, he tried to find a verse that would be comparable to eleven-syllable verse in its lexical capacity, and which at the same time could be constructed into octaves.

In all likelihood, Sorkočević’s need for a verse of sufficient lexical volume was based upon the tendency to translate as literally as possible. By its exactness, Sorkočević’s version of Tasso positively stands out, based not only upon the foundations of Dubrovnik and Dalmatian literature, which never really differentiated between translation and free paraphrasing, but also in the context of the entire body of Croatian translation literature. The general impression is that Sorkočević followed the text word for word, paying attention along the way to the placement of its syntactic segments in the space of the line and the strophe. Cases in which he left out, broadened, or altered Tasso’s formulations are relatively seldom, and in very few places does he cause any obvious damage or deficit. To the reader sensitive to the stylistic implications of Tasso’s vocabulary, for example, “srićni grob” from the second line of the first strophe of the first canto may seem too weak an equivalent for Tasso’s “gran sepulcro”, and even the replacement of the Savior’s name (in Sorkočević “Jezus”, in the *Liberata* “Cristo”) could be said to ignore the

theological nuances of the original expression. In addition, his leaving out the phrase “glorioso acquisto” in lines I, 1, 3-4 is for some an example of overly free translation:

*molto egli opro co'l senno e con la mano,  
molto soffri nel glorioso acquisto.*

Sorkočević helped himself out with the “proper freedom” of Jesus's tomb, with which the syntactic contents of lines 3-4 related too strongly with the content of the second, which Tasso did not bring about. It is less harmful that in Sorkičević's version the order of propositions in lines 3 and 4 is reversed, while the attention dedicated to Tasso's anaphora deserves full praise:

*Mnogo on podnije za čestitu dat me slobodu,  
Mnogo znanjem, mnogo vrijednom desnom djelova;*

On the other hand, it is unfortunate that Sorkočević failed to preserve equally important anaphora from strophe II, 1, based on the the wizard Ismena's name:

*Ismen, che trar di sotto a i chiusi marmi  
puo corpo estinto, e far che spiri e senta,  
Ismen, che al suon de' mormoranti carmi  
sin ne la reggia sua Pluton spaventa*

*Ismen oni, ki pobijenu čeljad ozdravlja,  
I telesa mrtva iz groba povraća živa,  
Ki vas pako žamornijem pjesnim ustavlja,  
I istoga kralja od pakla straši i snebiva,*

Here we have also lost the subtle periphrasis “che spiri e senta”, and it probably meant something to Tasso to name Pluto directly, rather than to make use of a Gundulićesque periphrasis like Sorkočević's “kralj od pakla”. In “žarmonijem pjesnim”, however, he finds an excellent translation of Tasso's difficult, onomatopoeic syntagm “mormoranti carmi”.

In addition to the fact that that he respects Tasso's formulations, Sorkočević

also makes a point of placing them in particular zones within the lines and strophes. A handsome example of this effort can be seen in lines 5-8 of the first octave:

*I zaman se pako opriječi, zaman ishodu  
Od Azije i Libije vojske iznova,  
Er pomaga nebo njega, i pod izabrane  
Svete stijege druge skupi sve poskitane.*

In the above verses, each syntactic phrase strides over to the next line: from the fifth to the sixth line, and from the seventh to the eighth line. In both cases the translation is justified by the constellations that appear on the line defining the relationship between verse and syntax in the original work:

*e in van l'Inferno vi s'oppose, e in vano  
s'armo d'Asia e di Libia il popol misto;  
il ciel gli die favore, e sotto a i santi  
segni ridusse i suo compagni erranti.*

Following Tasso in the setting of syntactic boundaries at the edges of the lines as well, Sorkočević pays above-average faithfulness to the original. Namely, for Tasso this striding is not a stochastic alternative to sententially rounded lines or the by-product of a rhyme hunt. It is rather a conscious signal of a stylistic type, or better put, an expressive means of diction that Renaissance rhetorical and poetic literature (relying upon Roman rhetorical terminology) referred to as rough (*oratio aspra*), related to high style (*genus grande*). Tasso himself, his *Discorsi dell'arte poetica*, in the chapter covering stylistic types, puts the striding of verses (*rompimento di versi*) in the category of rough style and thus *genus grande* as well: "Magnificence multiplies with roughness, which is born out of (...) the breaking of lines".<sup>31</sup> I believe that Sorkočević, in reproducing Tasso's strides, had in mind not only their factuality, but also their exhibited value (i.e., that he reproduced them

---

<sup>31</sup> Quote based on *Opere di Torquato Tasso I*, ed. Bartolomeo Tommaso Sozzi. Torino, 1955: pp. 682-683.

in order to, decode *Liberata*'s stylistic type, and therefore considered this to be an exercise in translation).

If we return now our discussion of the history of verse, it comes out that Sorkočević chose the thirteen syllable 4+4+5 verse in an attempt at translational perfection, and that the translational exactness of the end-product justified his choice of meter. Equipped with the thirteen syllable, Sorkočević translates with surprising accuracy, reproduces the original line for line, and even reproduces Tasso's arrangement of expression within the boundaries of line and strophe.

Not only did Sorkočević's desire for accuracy create the need for a meter that would be comparable in length to the Italian eleven-syllable, but it also excluded the possibility of choosing the meter that was probably its most traditional representative in Dubrovnik and Dalmatian translations - the eight-syllable 4+4. That is, choosing the eight-syllable would have made all of the essential demands of Sorkočević's translating conception impossible from the start. For the sake of example, let us examine the above-mentioned seicentistic Dubrovnik translation of Tasso eight-syllable quatrains. The inadequacies of that work, in which the author otherwise impresses the reader as being well acquainted with the *Liberata* and generally an accomplished versemaker, are mainly the result of the incommensurability of the original and the translated meter. Rejecting the possibility of fitting Tasso's eleven-syllable in eight-syllables, the author of the seicentistic translation assigned each line of the original two eight-syllables in translation. In doing this, however, he created too much space that had to be filled up with unnecessary adjectives and adverbs. In the fragment of this work shown below, which is a translation of Tasso's lines I, 1, 5-8, I have underlined the words and phrases that are not represented in the Italian original.

*i zalud se njemu otprije  
strašni pakao nesmiljeni,  
 i od Azije i Libije  
 puk s oružjem sjedinjeni;*

*zašto nebo u pokoju  
 u pomoć se njemu objavi  
 i bjeguću družbu svoju  
 pod sve svete stijege stavi.*

The additional words, aside from the fact that they change the meaning of the passage, alter Tasso's diction, its lexical economy, and its distribution of old vs. new information in the sentence and the text (theme - rheme). Considering the absolute dissimilarity between the Italian eleven syllable octave and the Croatian eight syllable quatrain, the author of the seicentistic translation of *Liberata* would not even have considered the possibility of imitating the relationship between verse and syntax in the original.

Sorkočević could have learned equally well about translating longer verses with the eight syllable from his own attempt at Ovid's versification of *Epistulae Heroidum*, which was based upon the substitution of Ovid's elegiac dimeter with eight syllable quatrain. Indeed, it seems that, already in that translation and its metrical strophic demands, Sorkočević began to impose the problem of the commensurability of original verse and its translation and their semantic dimension. This becomes apparent if one notices the differences between his earlier and later versions, based upon Beritić's reconstruction of their order. In the earliest translation (epistle no. 14), two eight syllable quatrains represent one of Ovid's elegiac dimeter, which, of course, results in a "torrent of words" and numerous "additions, elaborations and explanations of the original".<sup>32</sup> In later translations, however, Beritić notes that Sorkočević makes an effort to keep the proportions of the original verse in his translation:

*It seems that Sorkočević increasingly strove to free his work from excessive decoration and elaboration of the original, to limit his abundance of words to the right amount, and to stick to one particular norm when translating. He apparently aimed at including the contents of the Latin dimeter in just one eight syllable quatrain, and in general (...) he succeeded.*<sup>33</sup>

But Sorkočević's desire to translate Tasso exactly and stylistically appropriately does not quite offer us the answer to all questions concerning the two translated octaves. It explains why the translator's combinations yielded the eight syllable, but not why his final solution turned out to be the thirteen syl-

---

<sup>32</sup> N. Beritić, »Franatica Sorkočević«: p. 196.

<sup>33</sup> N. Beritić, »Franatica Sorkočević«: p. 200.



lable 4+4+5. For, the metric repertoire of early Croatian poetry offered yet another verse type that was similar in length to the Italian eleven syllable and also very common and familiar: the twelve syllable 6+6. Sorkočević knew this meter as it was traditional in Croatia, and he even used it himself, in his translations of Metastasio's melodramas and other works.<sup>34</sup> In his translation from the *Liberata*, he could avoid it for technical reasons, one could say, due to its syllabic deficit in comparison to the thirteen syllable, although this seems an improbable reason. Of greater importance would have been Sorkočević's acceptance of Tasso's strophe, the ABABABCC octave, for which the twelve syllable might have appeared less suitable than the thirteen syllable. It is true that, in the traditions of both meters, there is no proof that it was considered appropriate to connect them into strophes longer than a dimeter. Still, in the case of the twelve syllable, the inappropriateness (because of the considerable number of examples of this verse type in Dubrovnik and Dalmatian poetry) was plain to see, and perhaps even strengthened the obligation.<sup>35</sup> When Sorkočević was translating Tasso, he probably considered the thirteen syllable as a possible new member of the Croatian metrical repertoire that would be used outside of obligating traditions, so that it would not be inappropriate to use it for unusual tasks.

## VI

When we come up against forms that are atypical in a particular literary and historical context, at first we are surprised, but after our initial reaction we may then ask ourselves whether their appearance is due to the possible exhaustion of the literary culture on the basis of which their atypicalness is noticed. Applied to the example of the two octaves of Tasso's translated by Franatica Sorkočević, this logic would lead to the following question: Can't we say that, within the history of Croatian literature, the eighteenth century

---

<sup>34</sup> According to Beritić, Sorkočević used twelve syllable verse in the following translations of Metastasio: *Minteo*, *Čiro spoznan*, *Didione*, and *Artaserse* (N. Beritić, »Franatica Sorkočević«: p. 214).

<sup>35</sup> It is true that, according to Beritić, Sorkočević did not write this meter in the usual way, in couplets with double rhyming; instead, he freed them of rhyme (cf. N. Beritić, »Franatica Sorkočević«: pp. 214-215). Despite this fact, however, in the context of early Dubrovnik and Dalmatian poetry, the non rhyming twelve-syllable was also a traditional meter. For example, Dinko Ranjina used it in his own poetry, as did Dinko Zlatarić in his versified translation of *Elektra*.

was a time of innovations; doesn't Sorkočević's unusual metrical choice prove that in his time the traditional philosophy of translation and metrical practice of the Dalmatian and Dubrovnik poets had begun to grow old?

Unfortunately, when Sorkočević's Tasso is concerned, this interesting thesis cannot be applied without a certain amount of conjecture, or even contrafactual speculation in pondering over what might have happened if certain events in the past had not occurred. Namely, southern Croatian literary culture experienced such a decline in the eighteenth century that, at least when works written in Croatian are concerned, from today's perspective we can no longer detect how authoritative a role was played by tradition, nor the extent to which non-traditional solutions had repercussions. Therefore, any estimate of the literary-historical significance of Sorkočević's Tasso must take into account the fiction of literary context, since the Dubrovnik and Dalmatian writers of the eighteenth century were few in number. In other words, if we attempt to discuss Sorkočević's thirteen syllable translation using terms such as norm and deviation, then we are overrating to a certain degree Dubrovnik and Dalmatian literature of the eighteenth century.

Yet, within sight of the southern Croatian eighteenth century period, we also find some facts that encourage us to take the above-mentioned risk of contrafactual speculation and lead a discussion about the peculiarities of Sorkočević's translation being intentional and not exclusively personal provocations of tradition. Not one the peculiarities of Sorkočević's Tasso remained a completely isolated literary fact: in spite of the narrow-mindedness of local literary life, *curiosa* similar to those that I have found in Sorkočević's two octave translation show up here and there in the work of Sorkočević's contemporaries.

In fact, the eighteenth century witnessed several attempts at employing the thirteen syllable 4+4+5 in translations of, among other meters, Italian eleven syllable verse. Towards the end of the first half of the century, probably somewhat before Sorkočević began translating Tasso's epics, Marija Dimitrović Bettera translated the collection *Sette canzonette in aria marinaresca sopra principali feste di Maria sempre Vergine Madre di Dio*, by the Italian poet Girolamo Tornielli, under the title *Sedam pjesanca o poglavitijeh sedam blazijeh dneveh Pričiste Bogorodice*.<sup>36</sup> In this work she translated Italian

---

<sup>36</sup> Milano, 1738.

eleven syllable couplets into Croatian thirteen syllable meter. Quite some time after Sorkočević's Tasso, but (to use the words of historiographers who favor the periodization of literary history) within the horizons of that period, Đuro Hidža made use of the thirteen syllable when translating several of Horace's odes in various lyrical strophes.<sup>37</sup>

The thirteen syllable verse of Marija Dimitrović, besides the fact that it also serves as a substitute for Italian eleven syllable verse, in principal is similar to that of Sorkočević also because of its being unburdened by a strong folk component. Torielli's *Sette canzonette* seem an example of the popular baroque historical stylistic complex, for which I earlier suggested the descriptive expression "baroque as a fallen cultural period".<sup>38</sup> Therefore its Croatian translation, regardless of the popular origin of its verse, was written in a high style that is removed from the usual diction of folk poetry.

Yet, I believe that Dimitrović, as opposed to Sorkočević, who gave way to the thirteen syllable for purely technical reasons, to a certain degree relies upon the folk and popular legitimization of the meter, specifically the general aspects of that legitimization. First of all, like the majority of literary works that exhibit characteristics of the belated or "fallen" baroque, *Sedam pjesanca* as well as its original stand on the borderline between poetry as an esthetic practice and poetry as functional literature. Here it goes without saying that their wish is to reach the reader with a limited literary education. Their choice of meter could therefore be interpreted as if it rests upon the author's speculation about the metrical competence of the literarily uneducated populace, to whom thirteen syllable verse would have had to be closer and more attractive than eight or twelve syllable verse. Secondly, the thirteen syllable is, as I have already mentioned, a lyrical verse that is very singable, and thus, in the foundation of that choice for the metrical attire of *Sedam pjesanca* might lie a notion of its being accompanied by some folk melody as a substitute for the *arie marinesche* of Torielli's canzonettas. And finally, it is possible that the thirteen syllable meter for Torielli's Marian canzonettas was also recommended as the meter (or more correctly, one of the meters) of a well-

---

<sup>37</sup> This he did within his translation of Horace's lyric poetry that was published posthumously in Dubrovnik in 1849 (Hidža died in 1833).

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Zoran Kravar, »Barok kao potonulo kulturno doba.«, in: *Nakon godine MDC*. Dubrovnik, 1983: p. 161 and ff.

known Christmas carol:

*Veseli se majko Božija puna milosti,  
veseli se i raduj se rajska svjetlosti.*

Counting, in her own way, on the folk origins of thirteen syllable verse, Dimitrović, on the other hand, offers no evidence that her metrical choice would depend upon the imperative of an exact translation. And as I attempted to prove in the previous chapter, the imperative of writing an exact translation did motivate Sorkočević's choice of thirteen syllable verse. Zdenka Marković, the author of a fairly large study on Marija Dimitrović, after an exhaustive analysis of the relationship between *Sedam pjesanica* and its original came to the following conclusion:

*For the most part it is a very free translation. Namely, the author stuck to the contents of Torielli's work, but altered a lot: she often elaborated, while here and there she even shortened the text. Although she did this with great skill, her changes marred the entirety of the poems, but also damaged their poetic beauty.<sup>39</sup>*

Not even in the case of Đuro Hidža's demanding translation of Horace's lyric poetry was the thirteen syllable chosen to insure a literal translation. The academic literature on the subject regularly stress the fact that Hidža tended to translate freely and adapt Horace's motifs.<sup>40</sup> It is true that, in choosing the thirteen syllable, Hidža perhaps wanted to enlarge his already impressive metrical repertoire, all in the hopes of calling upon the metrical and strophic wealth of Horace's odes.<sup>41</sup> Still, this assumption is somewhat weakened by the fact that the thirteen syllable in Hidža, as is the case with the other me-

---

<sup>39</sup> »Marija Dimitrović (Dimitri) Bettera.«, in: Zdenka Marković, *Pjesnikinje starog Dubrovnika*. Zagreb, 1970: p. 166.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Vladimir Vratović, »Horacije u dubrovačkom pjesništvu 18. i 19. stoljeća.« *Rad JAZU* 357 (1971): p. 316 and ff., in which even earlier literary works are mentioned.

<sup>41</sup> Even Vratović stresses how in Hidža one always feels the presence of a tendency in which, through the variation of meters and strophes, one somehow penetrates Horace's lyrical expression (V. Vratović, »Horacije«: p. 326).

ters, does not always serve the same purpose, that is, it does not always represent the same metrical strophic form in Horace's original. Rather, it is used to translate poems written in various different lyrical strophes (alcaic, Sapphic, Asclepiad).

Furthermore, Hidža's thirteen syllable verse clearly echoes at times the sound of its folk predecessor, which fact also differentiates him from Sorkočević. This occurs most frequently in his translations of those poems of Horace that, either through literal motifs or in the lexis of its comparisons, touch upon the realities of country life. As an example I will quote a comparison of the aged Lydia and the erotically aroused "horse's mother" from Sapphic ode I, 25, in which Hidža clearly aided by thirteen syllable meter, its simplified syntax, and appropriately humble vocabulary gives a rustic and common tone to Horace's urban sarcasm:

*Na mjestu ćeš potištenu stara sidi  
i odmetne tve hotime gorko cviliti,  
navlašt oko mijene kada mrazne iz strane  
plahi sjever vrlovito dmiti ustane,  
čim ti utrobu pozledjenu teškom u vaju  
Požar bludni i gorušta ljubav trgaju  
jak bies bluda žestokoga draži kroz silu  
uzamljenu bez pastuha vruću kobilu.*

It is interesting to recall Dimitrović's and Hidža's thirteen syllable verses at the edge of a discussion of Sorkočević's Tasso, because both bear witness to the fact that in eighteenth century Dubrovnik and Dalmatian poetry, freedom of metrical choice was on the rise. If this had not been the case, verses such as "Pjevam milo Bogu oružje" certainly would not have been composed. However, neither Dimitrović's translation nor that of Hidža do we see a complete syndrome of translation methods as appears in Sorkočević's octaves. Only in this work is the choice of thirteen syllable verse in correlation with a rise in the exactness of translation.

But Sorkočević was not the only writer of his time to display such an explicit propensity for exact translation. He was the only one who in this propensity chose the thirteen syllable over other meters, although this has occurred since then in at least one other interesting case (in which the thirteen

syllable was employed in combination with an even less traditional choice of meter). Namely, Marko Bruerević, a late eighteenth century poet and translator from Dubrovnik, went even further than Sorkočević in terms of the faithfulness of his translations to the original texts in his renditions of Horace's odes (a fact which Vratović made note of in 1954). Not only did he translate "with a propensity for (...) making his text as close to the original as possible, both in his choice of phrases and in the faithful transposition of the original sense",<sup>42</sup> but he also attempted to reproduce Horace's meters and strophes, constructing Slavic ("slovinske") copies of them.<sup>43</sup>

As I have already mentioned, in the eighteenth century the literary culture of Croatia's southern communes was no longer on the same level as it had been a century or two before. Had it by any chance continued beyond 1700, then translations such as Sorkočević's, and even more so Bruerević's, which gave priority to literal accuracy while accommodating their metrical apparatus thereto, would certainly have had strong reverberations and far-reaching effects. For, in the literary culture that formed the historical background of Sorkočević's translated octaves, translations were not judged according to their accuracy and faithfulness. Indeed, it can be said that in translating, a certain degree and type of distortion of the original was methodically acceptable. Today, when we weigh the problems and non-problems of early translators in terms of similarity between the translation and its original, it comes out that in early Croatian literature the translation was legitimized based upon how close it came in style and meter to native Croatian literary works. Sorkočević's attempt at the crusader's epic and Bruerević's at Horace's odes clearly break with this tradition of sticking to the domestic poetic idiom. Rather, both of these works reflect the modern conception of translation that was developed in the end of the nineteenth century, whereby a translation is legitimized by semantic, stylistic, and formal similarity to the original text.

Finally, Sorkočević was also not the only Croatian writer of his time to be influenced by folk poetry. As we have seen, Marija Dimitrović and Đuro Hidža were also doing the same. Indeed, in Hidža, in addition to thirteen-

---

<sup>42</sup> V. Vratović, »Horacije«: p. 343.

<sup>43</sup> On the metrical side of Bruerević's translation see V. Vratović, »Horacije«: p. 341. On Bruerević's original poetry in classical meters cf. Ante Petravić, *Klasična metrika u hrvatskoj i srpskoj književnosti*. Beograd, 1938: p. 33 and ff.

syllable verse, we also come across non-symmetrical ten-syllable verse, while around 1800 Marko Bruerević used ten-syllable meter as well. Only, while in the works of the above-mentioned poets the thirteen-syllable and ten-syllable verses keep at least one small part or their folk ethos or at least something of their original functionality,<sup>44</sup> Sorkočević consistently strips these forms of their extra-metrical folk verse features. This characteristic of his attitude towards folklore deserves to be examined in the context of the literary history of a wider area than just Dubrovnik and Dalmatia, and also in terms of what literary events were to occur subsequently. True, we should beware that the future that was called upon by Sorkočević's selective relationship towards folk verse, and that experienced its maximum characteristics in the poetry of the Illyrianist movement, was exhausted fairly quickly. It then left behind a lasting doubt in the possibility of transplanting folk meters into serious literature.

Taking only the metrical form from the thirteen-syllable folk verse, Sorkočević had in mind a means of utilizing folk verse that was considerably different from that which earlier poets aimed for, even from that which was imposed by his contemporaries. When speaking of his contemporaries, the difference is perceptible when comparing Sorkočević to Hidža or Bruerević, but also to the main users of folk versification of that time - i.e., Croatian enlightenment poets such as Kačić and his colleagues from Makarska and Zaoštrog, Relković and his Slavonian followers.<sup>45</sup> All things considered,

---

<sup>44</sup> For Marija Dimitrović I attempted to show that she counted on at least the receptive range of the original thirteen-syllable, while in Hidža I made a point of noting specific rural sounds. It is even easier to notice associated occurrences of "folk" singing in Bruerević's ten-syllable verses, which, regardless of its non-folk theme and purpose (excluding the 4+5 meter) also retain the typical phraseology of ten-syllable poetry ("Žalosna ti majka", *Istomu Petru*; "vrijeme (...) / rukom čudnovitom / jednom gradi, drugom razgrađuje", *Poslanica prijatelju*).

<sup>45</sup> Here I would like to mention that by no means do I believe that Sorkočević differs to the same degree and for the same reasons from all of the Croatian eighteenth-century poets. However, grading the nuances of such differences would require a much more in-depth overview of the uses of folk verses in Croatian artistic poetry. There have been a number of attempts in this direction (cf. S. Petrović, »Semantika«; Maria Dambrowska-Partyka, »Folklor u funkciji književnog subkoda.«, in: *Komparativno proučavanje jugoslavenskih književnosti II*, ed. Ernest Fischer and Franjo Grčević. Zagreb-Varaždin, 1987: p. 34 and ff.; Davor Dukić, »Katančićev deseterac.« *Narodna umjetnost* 27 (1990): p. 121 and ff.). However, Croatian literary theory had not devised a systematic way of studying the borrowing by high literature of elements from the repertoire of Croatian folk poetry.

Sorkočević believed that the metrical scheme of folk verse could be easily transplanted from a folk into a high literary context, while the Croatian enlightenment believed to the contrary: according to them, folk verse was appropriate only where it functioned naturally; they would bring their own instructive content and ideological messages of non-folk origins down to the level of folk or popular poetry, breaking into, so to speak, its network of communication.

More reminiscent of Sorkočević's Tasso and its versification was the metrical practice of Croatian poets from the second third of the nineteenth century, the contemporaries and successors of the Illyrianist movement. They also believed in the possibility of reworking folk verse into a normal, neutral instrument of artistic literature, which accounts for the dominating presence of non-symmetrical ten-syllable verse in all of their poetic work, including those poems that do not have folk overtones and are based upon foreign models.<sup>46</sup> Among the Illyrianists, such a choice of meter, suppressing any possible negative effects, was upheld by preromantic and romantic theories that the uneducated masses were the protectors of the national language and spirit or that the poetic "voices of peoples" were natural sources of artistic literature. Of course it is not impossible that the educated Sorkočević overcame an aristocratic aversion to the folk meter, in accordance with some philosophy of history which put a positive value on folk poetry, for such theories did exist already in his time. However, based on the behavior of Croatian poets of the period after the Croatian Revival, and based on their ever more negative attitude towards folk verses and their ethos, it is apparent that in the meantime the general attitude in Croatia that utopias that depend upon the elimination of differences between low and high, folk and artistic, should not be arbitrated within questions of verse and literary expression. Comparatively, that is, with the introduction of folk meters into high literature, we always hear again the voice of their true owners, the Balkan villager or bourgeois man, who fills their ethos with the indestructible difference of his world view and esthetics. This is indeed the case with the thirteen-syllable 4+4+5 as well.

If Sorkočević's opinion about the movability of thirteen-syllable meter from folk to artistic poetry were correct, then today we would, for example, be able

---

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Marin Franičević, »O nekim problemima našega ritma. Nacrt za tipologiju hrvatskoga stiha XIX. stoljeća.« *Rad JAZU* 313 (1957): p. 179 and ff.



to recite Hamlet on stage in the following way:

*Da se bude il ne bude, to je pitanje  
je li bolje, svojom dušom, mirno ponijeti  
sve strelice i udarce krute sudbine,  
il se dići na oružje protiv nevolje...*

Probably every generation of urban Croatians in the period from Sorkočević's time to today have experienced a use of thirteen-syllable verse in which its combination with high literary material gives way to an unbearably absurd result. Such encounters, in spite of the rise in urban culture during particular periods of Croatian history, were not missed even in my generation. Thus, upon hearing the words "Pjevam milo Bogu oružje" the idea of this as a thirteen-syllable verse that makes fun of Sorkočević's choice of meter comes to my mind. I will quote for the sake of example the following lyrics which, if I remember correctly, I memorized in the early 1960s from various private or semi-private sources of musical sound (the neighbor's phonograph, public address systems of workers' summer resorts, etc.):

*A gdje ti je stara majka, ne bilo ti je?  
Otišla je u đul-baštu cvijeće da bere.*

Indeed, even generations younger than mine can run across samples of popular versification such as those that awaken skepticism towards Sorkočević's Tasso - or towards a hypothetical thirteen-syllable Hamlet. I am assured of this fact by some of the songs echoing from stands at city markets where patches and badges bearing national symbols are sold. For example:

*Slušajte sad poruku od svetog Ilije:  
nećete u Čavoglave, niste ni prije.*

Therefore, chances are that the perception of verses such as thirteen-syllable 4+4+5 or ten-syllable 4+6 will depend less and less on the poetry composed by members of the Dubrovnik nobility or the burgers of old Zagreb, and more and more on the messages formulated in these meters by the people of today. But then that is yet another subject in the science of versification.