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## THE HIGH AND THE LOW IN ORAL AND WRITTEN LITERATURE<sup>1</sup>

In the first part of the article, the author presents the literary-historical and cultural aspects of the concepts of the high and the low, starting from the Slavic mythology, poetic visions of space and theories of high and low literary styles, to two cultures (high and low) in the medieval and early modern period. The second part of the article discusses the relationships between the high and the low in Croatian poems written "in the folk style", especially those from the *Collection* of Nikša Ranjina dating from 1507.

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### 1. Literary-historical and cultural aspects

I can still remember my early school days, when we stood by our desks singing a little song which began: "High sky above/ deep sea below,/ and me in the middle (...)" As we sang, we would first point up and down, and then at our hearts in the middle.

These early naive memories come back to me now that the concepts of the high and the low, of up and down have become the object of study in their mythological, culturological, sociological, literary-theoretical and literary-historical aspects.

Reconstructions of Proto-Slavic texts in terms of binary oppositions are largely based on the contrast between up and down: the mountain (up)

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<sup>1</sup> I have been asked to write a contribution on *The high and the low: Croatian and Polish culture between the end of the 15th and the end of 18th century in Central Europe and the Mediterranean* edited by Joanna Rapacka and Dunja Fališevac. Soon after, Joanna Rapacka fell ill and died. I would like to dedicate this article to her.

— the valley (down), corresponding to the opposition between the gods of Perun and Veles (Ivanov & Toporov 1974:64, 153-154 passim). Analysing the hill name of Perun to the north-west of Poljica in Dalmatia on the basis of several medieval sources, R. Katičić found Proto-Slavic elements such as the struggle between a snake (dragon) and Perun: the snake is down, and Perun in up the hill. This evidence is further corroborated by place-names from the islands of Brač, Hvar, and Pag, as well as from Međimurje (Katičić 1988:59-61, see also: 65, 72; 1993:62-64).

A dreamy, poetic vision of the house as a vertical construct in space with its basement (down) and its attic (up), representing the rationality of the roof opposed to the irrationality of the cellar, the "dark being of the house" taking part in subterranean forces, has recently been evoked by Gaston Bachelard (2000:39-40).

Various literary-theoretical interpretations of the high and the low in poetry have been brought together in *The Hierarchy*, a collection of essays where poetic projections with their inner values, ethic and aesthetic views are revealed by means of a spatial scale. (Flaker & Medarić 1997; especially the articles of Ivan Golub, Josip Užarević, Živa Benčić, Andrea Meyer-Fratz, Sonja Ludvig, and Olga Simčić).

The spatial image of the turning wheel and its up-and-down movement, as in the well-known verses of Gundulić's *Osman (Kolo sriće uokolo... 'The wheel of fortune turns around!...)*, can be found in many versions. They range from the writings of Constantine Porphyrogenitus to medieval Russian manuscripts and epic bylinas about king Solomon, from Habdelić's Kajkavian stories to Serbian folk tales from Vuk Karadžić's collection, etc. The image is directly related to the allegorical vision of the ups and downs in man's destiny (Bošković-Stulli 1997:34-37).

Starting from the theory of Barry Schwartz, Vedrana Spajić-Vrkaš (1995) points out the sociological or vertical classification based on the principle of up and down as a symbol of power hierarchy based on the opposition between the ground level and an elevated position, between standing and sitting.

The spatial image of the high and the low and their symbolic meanings has opened the way to notions of the high, the elevated, the highborn and the high-minded as opposed to the low, the vulgar and the poor. These relations, however, are subject to change. Thus, for instance, Milivoj Solar discusses the notions of the light and the serious in postmodern literature and poetics, and views concerning the "absence of difference between high and trivial literature" (Solar 1995:30 passim). A number of articles devoted to bestsellers that have appeared in the Zagreb periodical *Zarez* bear witness to similar views. They discuss the notions of the high and the low, canons and hierarchies of literary works, the postmodern rejection of the hierarchy of genres, styles and topics, the reluctance to set standards of the high and the low, the contrast between the

high and low, the boring and the entertaining, readable and writable literature, etc. (Garner et al. 2000).

Taking Gurevich's views as his starting point, Žanić finds that the medieval world picture, based on the opposition between the high, the celestial and the elevated on the one hand, and the low, the base and the impure on the other, is at the core of dangerously aggressive literary texts which were topical during the recent wars in former Yugoslavia. According to these texts, "the poisoned cities rot in valleys", while warriors, with their faces burnt with sun and fire, live on the mountains, with their songs as pure as mountain springs (Žanić 1998:197-199).

As opposed to modern and postmodern views, the hierarchy of literary styles was rigorously upheld in earlier periods. To be sure, the opposition between up and down, the high and the low, is not conceived in terms of space, but of the value judgements concerning genres and styles. According to Aristotle, "The art of poetry became divided at the time: those of elevated spirit wrote of the noble deeds and acts of noble people, while those whose mental capacities were modest imitated the deeds of common people, composing satirical poems, while the former composed hymns and encomiums (...). Homer was not only a poet distinguished by the highest of styles (...); he was also the first writer to establish the basic models of comedy" (Aristotle, *O pjesničkom umijeću* 'The Poetics', translated by Z. Dukat, in: Beker 1979:31).

After centuries of oblivion, members of the Pléiade followed the classical literary model in their evaluation of literary genres. In his work on the defence of the French language (1549), Du Bellay distinguishes between the high style of tragedy, epic poetry and ode, and the low style of comedy and farce (Tomasović in: Vidan 1982:128-129). Boileau wrote his well-known *The Art of Poetry* (1674) based on classicist poetics. He considers that writing should be harmonious and elevated, descriptions ornate and elegant; even actors' jokes should be sophisticated. Verses should in no way be debased to vulgar witticisms and fishwife's language. The author condemns "foolish jokers, terrible entertainers, and those who indulge in vulgar word play". If they want to, would-be entertainers can amuse servants with their masquerades, rough word plays and foolishness like performers at country fairs (Boileau 1999:7-8, 17, 28, 33-34). He did not reject only some genres and styles; his contempt for the popular culture of streets and market places was general.

During late French classicism, in the "quarrel of the ancients and the moderns", Charles Perrault was in the forefront of the latter; he is best known as the editor of a collection of fairy tales representing "a symbiosis between the standards of the salon and folk tradition, the fantastic and the rational-didactic" (Tarle in: Vidan 1982:281). To be sure, these fairy tales were far from authentic, and their writer felt obliged to assume an ironic distance and in the end provide his readers with a moral; in a way, he apologized to those who looked down upon his tales by highlighting the

moral and the authentic way in which they instructed and entertained; he claimed, however, that he was not afraid of being accused of frivolity (Perrault s.a.:20-21). Fairy tales, however, disrupted the aesthetics of the high and the low by allowing the penetration of alien, lower traditions into literature.

Boileau's *The Art of Poetry* was translated into Russian by V. K. Tredyakovskij in 1752; M. V. Lomonosov, Russian scientist and poet, elaborated a hierarchy of Russian literary genres, styles and language by describing the high, middle and low styles. Lomonosov accepted the classicist normative hierarchy, but he nevertheless allowed the use of the Russian spoken idiom in the middle, and especially the low style (Flaker 1975:272-273). In the second half of the 18th century, the high style was increasingly contested by low and simple styles and language characteristic of the literary genres that represented the everyday life of the lower classes rather than high ideals (Gukovskij & Desnickij 1947:111).

In his Latin treatise *Knjižica o ilirskom pjesništvu izvedena po zakonima estetike* (A booklet on Illyrian poetry according to aesthetic laws), which is both a late Classicist and an early Romantic text, Croatian writer Matija Petar Katančić does not refer directly to high and low styles. Girls' songs accompanying round dances remind him of Alcmanian poems; to his ears, the verses resound "in the Alcmanian pentameter, choreus and iamb" (Katančić 1984:134, 142). His collection of poems entitled *Jesenji plodovi (Fructus auctumnales)* was divided into high classicist poems, *popivke narodne* 'folk lyrics' (*Trochaica patria, in choreis*) and rustic lyrics (*Vulgaria Lyrica*); this division, however, did not correspond to later views. In this collection, he changed the hierarchical view of styles that are appropriate to individual genres under the influence of Hungarian classicist poetics, breaking away from traditional values by opening the door to folk, i.e. "low" poems, with their imitations and stylizations (Kanižlić — Ivanošić — Katančić 1940; Fališevac 1989:317-318; 1997:247). The above examples show that the classicist division into high and low genres gradually gave way to a new, pre-Romantic approach.

The notions of the high and the low, of up and down, can be approached in terms of mythology, as poetic visions of space, metaphors of human destiny, the social hierarchy of power, evaluation of literary styles, and their disruption. All these are only additions to the topic we want to explore here. We are interested in the relationship between the high and the low (primarily verbal, literary), and between the popular and upper class culture during the past centuries.

A great deal has been written recently about these two cultures in Europe, especially regarding their relationship in the Middle Ages. Recent views on high and low culture often take as their starting point Bakhtin's book on François Rabelais in the light of medieval and Renaissance popular culture (Bahtin 1978). This culture was marked by riotous carnival festivities and their rituals as parodies of the church cult,

abounding in medieval theatrical performances close to street carnival culture. The high ceremony was reduced to the material and physical plane by hilarity of medieval jesters. The high is debased by grotesque realism; the concepts "of 'up' and 'down' are restricted to their strictly topographical meaning". The face is up, while the reproductive organs, the stomach, and the bottom (...) are down; the low procreates and gives birth to something new. As opposed to the Romantic grotesque, medieval mysteries and fabliaux present the devil as "a merry ambivalent champion of unofficial views, as sacredness reversed"; he is not terrible, he is funny. Popular culture tried to overcome with laughter the concepts, images and symbols pertaining to the official culture. Rabelais applied the traditional folk method of reversing the hierarchy, turning the world upside down, using positive negation, and mixing the high and the low.

A different method is used by Jacques le Goff in analyzing the relationship between high and popular culture in the Middle Ages. He explores the intrusion of the miraculous from oral culture into the world of chivalry, the lower and middle nobility, as well the efforts of the Church to relegate the miraculous to the field of superstition, and replace the marvellous by the miraculous. Medieval traditions about the reversed world, such as the Land of Cockaigne, appeared in the domain of folklore as a form of resistance to official ideology. In his chapter on *The learned and popular aspects of travel into other-worldly realms in the Middle Ages*, the author analyzes the mutual relationship between the two cultures, finding traces of the oral source of the story. Preaching exempla, often beginning with *audivi, I have heard*, point to oral (folk) telling. Parallel motives from the catalogue of folk stories and medieval texts show a system of mutual influence between the learned and the popular. There was no clear-cut division "between the popular and the high, the oral and the written (which, among other things, is not the same)" (Le Goff 1993:122).

The third important work discussing the two cultures in the medieval period was written by Aaron Gurevich. Stories of the devil's mischief, miracles, legends of the saints, narratives of wanderings in heaven and hell, were all a part of church literature that was not intended for the elite, but for common illiterate people. Folk beliefs and notions that were sometimes far from the official world picture and even contrary to the dogma found their way into these stories. When Caesareus, bishop of Arles, preached against the devil's malice and the need to abandon pagan (i.e. agrarian) cults, scolding peasants for singing dirty, shameful, diabolic and love songs, he was addressing a lower class audiences. In addition to literature written for the narrow circle of the select, direct oral telling was the main medium for conveying information in the Middle Ages; according to Lichachov, folklore was popular also among the ruling classes. The clash between the high and popular culture is evident in the so-called "penitent books", confession manuals for priests containing questions for believers, where profound layers of consciousness can be discerned related to magic,

witchcraft, fortune-telling, ancient beliefs and customs, as well as satanic songs. This pagan practice was widespread among Christian believers, primarily peasants, who went to church, prayed and made their confessions. These books reveal a picture of everyday life, the culture of the lower classes as opposed to the official church doctrine. Medieval popular culture can be seen in terms of dialogue, mutual influences and in opposition to high culture. The dialogue was put to an end with severe suppression of religious folk practices, traditions and beliefs which were rooted out by mass persecutions of heretics and witches on the part of the inquisition, leading to the eradication of popular culture (Gurevič 1987).

In his chapter "*Up*" and "*down*", Gurevich voices his scepticism regarding Bakhtin's interpretation of the grotesque and the carnival culture of laughter. Since Bakhtin's observations refer to events taking place on town squares at the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Renaissance, Gurevich wonders whether this can be equally true of peasants in the early Middle Ages. Bakhtin sees popular culture as audaciously merry, destroying everything with laughter, as opposed to the static, ceremonious and dead culture deprived of mirth. Bakhtin indirectly reconstructed the medieval popular culture from Rabelais's novel. Carlo Ginzburg (1989:11-12) also regretfully remarks that for Bakhtin the popular culture is only expressed through the words from Rabelais's novel. According to Gurevich, the carnival existed also in the serious culture as its correlate; ambivalence was not the result of opposition between the two cultures, but of their mutual interaction. The principle of laughter existed in the official culture as well.

Bakhtin saw the medieval grotesque as a comic principle that marked a breaking of boundaries and opposition between the serious and the amusing. According to him, during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the grotesque was imbued with the carnival view of reality, which made the world merry and light by eliminating everything that was horrible and terrifying. Gurevich believes that the medieval grotesque resulted from a confrontation between heaven and earth in the ambiguous consciousness of the people of the time. The conflict between high religious tasks and the devil's intrigues on the sinful earth is presented in religious exempla. The sacred borders on the profane, the low adjoins the high. The funny merges with the terrible, and fear is overcome by laughter. In the grotesque, the high descends to the low, heaven is opposed to earth, the sacred is made profane, the highest grows close to the lowest, the boundaries between the serious and the amusing are eradicated.

Most of these features can be found in Croatian religious literature and folklore in the Middle Ages and later.

In addition to Bakhtin, Peter Burke's book (1991) is one of the cornerstones in the study of popular and high culture in pre-industrial Europe. It discusses the "great" and "small", elitist and non-elitist traditions, the high and the low, and their mutual influences. Later on, the author

himself noticed that the study suffered from lack of the concept of cultural hegemony (Burke 1988:1554). In his introduction to the Italian edition, Carlo Ginzburg points indirectly to the author's inadequate approach to the concept of hegemony, criticising the term *residuo* (residue), which the elitist culture used to label folk beliefs as sheer superstition. Ginzburg is sceptical about the concepts of the great (elitist) and small (popular) traditions, and the view that both the elite and the masses participated in the small tradition at carnivals, for instance, as if this culture were shared by society at large. Burke himself later noticed that his account of the great and small tradition (the concepts adopted from Robert Redfield) implies an excessively rosy picture of the relations between different class cultures (Ginzburg, in Burke 1980:XII-XIII). In his foreword to the German translation of Burke's book, Rudolf Schenda asks similar questions about the relationship between the two cultures, although he is less critical to Burke than Ginzburg: "To what extent does the 'ruling culture' dominate the popular culture? Is it possible for the popular culture to take over the leading role under certain historical conditions and reverse Redfield's hierarchical theory along with Hans Naumann's middle-class concept of 'submerged cultural values'?" (Schenda, in Burke 1985:9).

In the last text he ever wrote, a long afterword to the German translation of Basile's *Pentamerone*, Rudolf Schenda discusses this Baroque work as an anti-text, full of allusions and quotations from street singers' ballads and popular booklets, scenes from Baroque plays and burlesques from the Neapolitan street theatre, swarming with characters of sailors and merchants, and overflowing with images of port towns. The distance between the high and the low is not only social; it is often presented in terms of space: "Princess Zoza is standing on the balcony window on the first floor of the royal palace (...), watching its subordinate market square as if it were a stage. Coarse common people, for whom the *Galateo*, the *Cortegiano*, the *Mirror of the Princes* and all humanist pedagogy are books closed with seven seals, are playing their inappropriate, impolite and shameless folk burlesque (...) down on the square". At this point, a different world begins to penetrate the consciousness of a protected woman of noble birth. A crowd of poor beggars in rags and tatters have gone on-stage... (Schenda, in Basile 2000:481).

An analogous scene with a princess who could not laugh is found in a Croatian story: "You should know that on that day crowds of people gathered in front of the royal palace, because the king had a daughter, who would not marry (...) and who would not laugh (...). When this lad came from the forest where he was chopping wood, (...) he saw the king's daughter on top of the stairs, and there were many people down there, trying to make her laugh (...)" (Bošković-Stulli 1997a:no. 20). This simple story manages to capture an atmosphere similar to the luxuriousness of the *Pentamerone*: the princess is standing on top of the stairs, while common people are performing their burlesques down in the square, trying to entertain her.

Burke's views of the great and small tradition, relegating the small tradition to the role of the recipient of recycled products discarded by the high and mighty, as a belated culture which is permanently on the wane, were criticized even more sharply by Camporesi in his study on the popular and elitist culture between the Middle Ages and the Modern Age (Camporesi 1981:82-83). Popular culture, which has been unrecognized since the Middle Ages, and especially women's culture, the empirical knowledge and folk medicine, which gave grounds for the demonization of women and witch hunts, are discussed by Camporesi in terms of the relationship between the high and low culture. Medieval court jesters and charlatans are evoked, who were abandoned and despised by the upper classes in the 17th century, but who continued to exist in the popular open-air theatre. This scum of the earth, thieves' gangs, cripples, hunchbacks and lepers, the blind and the goitrous, had their own culture and literature: their prayers, curses, stories, songs, lullabies and their popular theatre. The low culture, born out of hunger, and inextricably bound to the stomach and the body, was vital and optimistic in its own way. Medieval churches were often turned into stages for popular theatrical performances, dancing, revelry and feasting; such abuse of sacred places was later banned, reminiscent of a similar prohibition in Dubrovnik (Bošković-Stulli 1978:215; 1991:36).

Since the feast of St. Bassane, the local patron, coincides with the carnival, parodist rituals were often enacted linked to the submerged, but ineradicable folk calendar. In an earlier article I wrote about three strange wild masks: Čoroje, Vila and Turica, that were paid by the authorities to perform in front of the prince's palace in Dubrovnik on the feast of St Blasius (3 February). I tried to account for the incongruity of their performance for a church patron's feast by its coinciding with the carnival (Bošković-Stulli 1991:22-23). Ivan Lozica disagrees with the view that the masks that made their appearance on the feast of St. Blasius' were taken over from the carnival. He refers to similar customs of some European nations on the feast of the same saint which are accompanied by masks and other rituals as remnants of shepherd and agrarian festivities dedicated to a former pagan patron. He believes that "the strict separation of the patron saint's feast from the carnival merriment and revelries is a result of the centennial Christianisation process" (Lozica 1997:182-184). His observations are certainly to the point, since this cannot be accounted for by the mere temporal proximity of two events, although this might have a certain influence. An additional conclusion can be drawn from the example of St. Bassane, and the prohibitions of masks on the saint's day in Dubrovnik on some occasions and their financing on others. Namely, the Christianization was not a unidirectional process; it comprised a parallel existence of two overlapping cultures, one of which had distant pagan roots and managed to push its way into the high culture, from where it was gradually expelled. Lozica's view that festivities of St. Blasius brought the town and its surrounding country together is along the lines of this



argument. The mask of Turica offered resistance for a long time, but "in the end, like Držić, he had to flee from the town, together with Čoroje and Vila" (Lozica 2002:116).

In the early days, country priests were firmly integrated into their community: they visited taverns, took part in entertainments, organized comedies and music performances, carried arms, consorted with women, wore masks at carnivals, etc; they were close to folk culture, and ignorant in matters of the church. Following the Council of Trent, pastoral instructions warned against such wickedness and excessive closeness to the life of the common people, so that parish priests gradually became respectable, learned and isolated (Camporesi 1981:131-136). During the Baroque period, priests who had for the most part become elevated and educated deliberately interspersed their sermons with stories which were easy to understand for common people, and which later spread through oral tradition (Moser-Rath 1964). Thus, as Camporesi has vividly put it, a part of the "minor" history of the Church and of Italian popular culture were buried in the grave of the parish priest Arlotto, the author of famous *facezie*, who was not an ignorant man. Much later, the Croatian priest Kujiš exemplified the comic type of the uneducated country parish priest, deeply rooted in the past (Bošković-Stulli 1991:76-92; 1991a). The same can be said of countless European and Croatian stories about funny ignorant priests, bringing together centuries of popular and high culture.

According to Camporesi, an enormous part of popular culture, which has usually passed unnoticed, was created and transmitted by country women, who made songs of love and work. Besides, it is through them that members of the "great tradition" 'invented' new poetic forms such as the *pastourelle*, which has been interpreted by Camporesi as a poetic sublimation of rape. Thus, hidden under the idyllic cover of a codified artistic form, a lovely pastoral composed by Guido Cavalcanti, a bitter and melancholy man, who was Dante's friend and a fine poet, reveals amorous moods arising from the circle of undisputable feudal privileges. They include the possession of the body of a subordinate, a barefoot girl bathed in dew, who suddenly finds herself in an unexpected embrace on the fresh leaves, when the poet says to himself: this is the season to pick this shepherdess... (Camporesi 1981:91-92).

## 2. The age of Croatian lyrics "in the folk style"

A ti, divojko šegljiva,  
sapni putašca do grla,  
da ti se dojke ne vide,  
da mene želja na bude.  
Na tvoje dojke gledajuć  
vranoga konja zakovah  
i moje družbe ja ostah  
i mojega gospodina (...)

You, playful girl,  
button up your dress  
so your breasts do not show  
to provoke my desire.  
Watching your breasts,  
I saddled my black horse,  
left my company  
and my lord (...)

This is the first part of a poem from the surroundings of Zadar in Dalmatia, which was recorded at the beginning of the 17th century. It was discovered and published by Franjo Fancev (1929 and 1932:21), who noticed the same initial verse in *Planine* (Mountains) by Petar Zoranić. This well-known work includes the author's instruction according to which shepherd Grapko's song *Pasite drobne travice* (Graze the good grass) should be sung to the tune of *A ti, divojko šegljiva* (You, playful girl). According to the same instruction, the song *Bižite želje ljuvene* (Flee, love's desires) should be sung to the tune of the *Drazi mi goru projdoše* (A love couple passed the mountain) (see Delorko 1979:109-118).

The brief instruction by Zoranić refers to the beginning of the song, which was evidently very popular in his time, and was probably close to the version that was later recorded in Zadar. Fancev refers to it as a folk song. The Zadar text continues as follows:

A ti, divojko šegljiva,	You, playful girl,
vazmi vidarce na glavu	Put a bucket on your head,
a vidričice u ruku,	And take a pail in your hands
te mi dva pojmo na vodu	Let us go to fetch water
kroz te mi luge zelene	Through the green groves
na one hladne studence (...)	To the cold well (...)

The girl suggests "Let us sleep in the green grove", but the young man hesitates because they "are both very young and foolish," they could oversleep the dawn, and will be scolded by their mothers. The girl is not afraid because she has a "nightingale in her bosom" and he has "his nightingale" that will wake them up early. They overslept all the same, and were scolded by their mothers.

Fancev did not notice, however, that these asymmetric octosyllabic verses belong to two different poems; I was not aware of this either in an earlier article about the same text. The first poem evokes a feudal milieu with a procession of knights on horses; a young member of their company leaves his companions when he sees a girl he is attracted to and starts following her — the atmosphere is similar to that of the pastorals discussed above. There was no such feudal milieu in Dalmatia, so it can be assumed that the poem is not of the native origin. The second part does not correspond to the logical sequence of events, the social milieu and the relationship between the lovers. A young man and a girl, evidently of peasant birth, set out together to fetch water. They are afraid of their mothers, and not the lord who is mentioned in the former poem. The metric form and style are well-balanced, the flippant mood is similar in both poems, which obscures the incongruities of meaning and the important difference in social levels. The style of the written version is refined with respect to the assumed oral model. However, if we compare two of the more recent oral variants, representing two separate poems, and taking into consideration the long duration of folk traditions, their initial differences become evident.

The first four verses can be found among the poems collected by Vuk Karadžić (1975:no. 571) and Ludvik Kuba from Bosnia, with minor differences:

Oj djevojko đavole,  
sapni puce pod grlom,  
da se lice ne bijeli,  
da me srce ne boli.

(Kuba, Cf. Grgec 1944:42)

You, devilish girl,  
Button up your dress,  
So that your face does not shine,  
And break my heart.

The old epithet *šegljiva* 'playful' has been replaced by "devilish" (in Vuk, by "sweetheart"). "Breasts" have been replaced by "face" (or "neck", in Vuk); the shy replacement of "desire" by "heart", and "breasts" by "face" (which is illogical), point to the censorship on the part of the recorder. Despite this, and the replacement of the octosyllabic verse by the heptameter, the text is very close to the early written record from the Zadar manuscript. It can be assumed that the chivalric, aristocratic text of the poem gradually changed having been adopted by members of the low social milieu in different geographical areas.

The second poem has come down to us in versions which were recorded in the Croatian Littoral, along the north Adriatic coast, and the Gorski kotar region situated in its hinterland in the 19th century (Štefanić 1944:88-89; Delorko 1963:no. 55; Žganec 1950:no. 26). All three poems are very similar in verse, subject-matter, language, and geographical setting. Some similarities can also be found in a poem from Slavonia (Andrić 1929:no. 454). In all the three texts, the young couple embrace in a "small wood" (*mala dubrava*) or in a "small green wood" (*zelena mala dubrava*), which corresponds to the "green grove" (*lug zeleni*) in the 17th century written record from Zadar. The "green grove" and the "green wood" are settings for the playful encounter of two young lovers. They are far from the groves and woods in lofty idyllic allegories taking place "in the pastoral spring setting in the works of Croatian petrarchists" (Bogišić 2001:821). All three folk texts have the same type of asymmetric octosyllabic verse as the 17th century record from Zadar. There is no doubt that the early text is already set in the rural or pastoral milieu. In Štefanić's text, the girl makes excuses to her mother saying "that her pearls got scattered and she had to collect them all night" (*da bi se biser rasipal, /da si ga vsu noć zbirala*), while the young man tells his father "that his horse went wild, and he had to tie it to a tree, a small pine-tree" (*da ti se konjić razigrtal, /da si ga svezal za kitu, /za kitu malu borovu*). This, however, does not refer to aristocratic luxury, and should be taken metaphorically. In the 17th century manuscript, the former poem belongs to the high milieu, while the latter reveals its humble origins, although they became merged in the written record. Both continued their separate existences in later performances and both were presumably sung.

Slamnig assumes that "melodies spread across ethnic and linguistic borders adopting different words along the way, as is the case with modern

pop music" (Slamnig 1965:78). This may account for the similar types of verse and subject-matter in Croatian coastal and other Mediterranean songs.

It has already been pointed out that the feudal social system and chivalry did not exist in Dalmatia. In Dubrovnik, the knight's title was a token of honor received from foreign rulers, but it was not in keeping with "the aristocratic and republican understanding of nobility" (Janeković Römer 1999:247-249). However, not only does *A ti, divojko...* ('You, playful girl') but much earlier poems evoke the ideals of chivalric court poetry. The 14th century Glagolitic *Pisma svetoga Jurja* (St. George's Poem) depicts the future saint as a young man taking part in chivalric tournaments, fully integrated into the feudal world and life at royal courts. The poem reflects the ideals of the Middle Ages at the time of the Crusades. It was probably created and performed in central Dalmatian towns. Its model may have been introduced at the time of the First Crusade, when "the crusaders were followed by various medieval artists, such as minstrels, jugglers, actors, musicians, and various singers" (Fališevac 1997:33-34; Slamnig 1965:66-67).

Nikola Banašević believes that the Serbian and Croatian heroic epics are an offspring of the influence of the French and Italian chivalric poetry. He bases his conclusions on the available information concerning jugglers and musicians at Bosnian courts, and Ragusan artists who went to Bosnia together with artists from southern France and Italy (Banašević 1926 and 1935; Bošković-Stulli 1978:59). It can be seen from the minutes of the Ragusan Great Council that "players of fife, trumpet and lute" were sent to Dubrovnik by Bosnian rulers to honor the festivities of St. Blasius in 1456 and earlier (Janeković Römer 1999:302).

In some of the lyrics and lyrics "in the folk style" from Ranjina's Collection (*Zbornik*) Slamnig (1965:48-49) finds pronounced affinity with Spanish romances, especially regarding their verse. The poems also share a similar — aristocratic — social feudal milieu. "King Albus, in the company of many great lords, is sailing in a golden ship across the sea". *Albus* corresponds to *Alfons*, which was a frequent name of Spanish and Neapolitan rulers. The ruler's right to spend the night with his vassal's wife is very feudal. The social milieu evoked in these songs differs from that in which they continued to exist and in which they were actually performed. The poems, with their feudal topics, may have come from other cultures, but in humbler milieus they developed characteristics of their own.

Ragusan performances, ranging from songs and short stories to carnival merry-making "in which the aristocrats took part as well, but which was primarily a part of common people's culture, their life and history" are discussed in greater detail in my article on folk happenings in Dubrovnik. They bear witness to the important role of common people in such events (Bošković-Stulli 1991:41).

"Musicians and entertainers, mimes and masked young people (...) participated in the street theatre in Dubrovnik. (...) "Regardless of their origin, participants took part in a special communal event involving both townspeople from various social classes and visitors from the surroundings of Dubrovnik who came to join the festivities and merrymaking" (Batušić 1978:31).

Although the subject matter and formal features of these performances were adopted from foreign sources, they were not always part of high literature in their countries of origin, and even less so in humble local milieus where they were transformed and recreated. In some periods, however, they had an impact on high literature. The adoption of such models required at least some degree of bilingualism. Who were the bilingual speakers: foreign performers who settled in Dalmatia, especially those coming from Bosnian courts, "worldly" commoners, or members of the lower nobility? Nobody knows.

It was perhaps due to such contacts and occasions that fishermen Paskoj and Nikola, or probably someone before them, found the inspiration for a chivalric topic of their eulogy dedicated to Petar Hektorović:

Naš gospodin poljem jizdi	Our lord is riding through the field
jizda da mu je.	Let him ride well
Na glavi mu svilan klobuk,	He is wearing a silk hat
sinca da mu je.	Let him enjoy its shade
U ruci mu zlatne knjige,	He is holding golden books in his hands
družba da mu je.	To keep him company.
Prid njim sluga pisan poje,	A servant is singing a song
na čast da mu je.	In his honor.

Another eulogy from *Ribanje* (Fishing) depicts "a knight leaping from one stone to the next, showing his face behind his bright shield" (*bila lišca pokazuje iza ščitka perenoga*). Horse riding, the silk hat, the servant's song, the bright shield, and partly also the golden books (unless they refer to the poet himself, they might be an allusion to his notary) are elements that evoke the chivalric feudal world which did not exist in Dalmatia. Similar eulogies, however, were recorded in earlier manuscripts on the islands of Korčula and Brač, as well as in Boka Kotorska. They can also be found in recent peasant performances on the island of Šipan, in the Dubrovnik littoral (Bošković-Stulli 1978:190-195).

Hektorović's eulogies are "a distant echo of Western chivalric poetry (...)", like "pictures from the life of travelling knights" (Jensen 1903:432).

After a period in which popular culture continued to exist adopting some of the "higher" forms, the time came when "low" songs and customs were discovered in "higher" circles as the greatest value. The Humanist admiration for classical culture was followed by the idealized discovery of the distant noble savage. In the 16th century, Montaigne praised the innocent natural poetry of peasants from Gascony and songs created by

the illiterate. A century before Montaigne, Juraj Šižgorić, a bishop's vicar from Šibenik and a Latinist poet, who studied in Padua where he was deeply influenced by Humanist ideas, wrote a treatise on his home country (1487), which was only published four centuries later. He praises "Illyrian proverbs", wise like Solon's laws, funeral laments more touching than those of Thetis and Eurial's mother, wedding dances and songs surpassing those of Catullus or Claudian, love poems finer than those by Tibullus, Propertius, Lichoridis Gallus or Sappho, shepherd songs sung by the olive-press comparable to those sung in the competition between Dameta and Menalca. This was the first rational and enlightened view of the "low" Croatian culture, or to be more precise, of the great value of folk poetry, written in Latin according to the highest classicist standards. At the same time, another Croatian Humanist Latinist poet from Dubrovnik, Ilija Crijević, saw his own mother tongue as "Illyrian yelling". Laments, which Šižgorić found to be so touching, were officially prosecuted and banned even in Šižgorić's home town, Šibenik. To be sure, Šižgorić's admiration aestheticized popular culture according to high Humanist standards without coming closer to it (see Bošković-Stulli 1978:49, 152-157; Novak 1997:122).

In an earlier article I wrote that oral performances of medieval epic or lyric poetry can be considered to belong to folk poetry if their invariant elements are oral, regardless of their social milieu. Although not entirely wrong, the statement certainly lacks precision because it does not indicate the difference between performers and their audience. According to I. Slamnig's lucid observation, "A classification of oral poetry in terms of its milieu is crucial for the early literary history. It could be divided into: 1) artistic oral, 2) folk oral, 3) artistic written and 4) popular written (Slamnig 1997:56-57). The classification is precise, but it is slightly impractical. On the same occasion Slamnig included the poem *A ti divojko šegljiva* ('You, playful girl'), which was discussed above, as well as poems from Ranjina's *Zbornik* ('Collection'), which Jagić labelled as 'folk-style', into "artistic oral literature". The question remains whether the origins of the poems were "high" or "low".

Ragusan Nikša Ranjina started recording lyrics for his manuscript collection in 1507, after Šižgorić's praise of Šibenik folk tradition, but his collection of love lyrics is completely different, being far from the learned Humanist tradition. In addition to Petrarchan poetry, it contains a group of lyrics "in the folk style". The reasons that some poems were later included in this group are not always clear; the fact that they had not been selected by Ranjina resulted in the lack of uniformity in their sequence and number. There are notable differences between the first and second edition of the *Collection* (Menčetić and Držić 1870 and 1937); in addition, some of the poems, such as *Lovac loveći diklice* (A hunter goes hunting, maiden) and *Ljub'me dušice mladahna* (Love me, young sweetheart) were included later. Kravar (1998) is right in attributing the former poem to a poet who was familiar both with Croatian petrarchianism and folk poetry;

Slamnig has noticed the same uncertainty (1965:48). The fluidity in the range of poems "in the folk style" inevitably leads to the question of their beginning and criteria of their selection.

Medini, Vaillant, Pantić, Petrović, and Slamnig discuss the role of folk poetry in the poetry of Menčetić and Držić and in the group of lyrics "in the folk style". Conventions of petrarchan poetry have been observed in lyrics "in the folk style"; the versification and rhymes have been revised. Poets themselves playfully elaborated the same theme in different styles, "elevated" and "in the manner of round dance" which shows that they were aware of some of their sources (see Bošković-Stulli 1978:157-168).

Zoran Kravar has pointed to the uncertainty of the Croatian folklore sources of the lyrics "in the folk style": the earliest Croatian love poets have become acquainted with quindecasyllabic verse through dance songs, since they often refer to the round dance. These non-petrarchan love poems from Ranjina's *Collection* are usually considered to be more or less stylized folk songs and it is disregarded that analogies can easily be found in medieval Latin and vulgar lyrics, in addition to the similar meter of Croatian folk poems. Their plot is close to the forms of late medieval low poetry — the medieval Latin vagrant lyrics, the low "Minnesang" or the popular pastoral (*pastorela*, *pastourelle*) (Kravar 1995:178).

In his article *S dna Ranjinine torbe* (From the bottom of Ranjina's bag) (Kravar 1998), the author discusses the lyrics "from the bottom" and their thematic and metric features which have been confirmed "in the verse repertoire of South Slavic folk poetry". Lyrics "in the folk style" were closely related to local traditions in their lexical and phraseological elements and formulaic expressions, but they also contain motifs, linguistic and formal features from the Croatian petrarchan lyrics. A folk song is quoted containing inserted petrarchan elements; in another example, the reverse procedure was applied.

Both at the time when Ranjina's collection of lyrics was compiled and later, young Ragusan nobles sometimes joined country round dances, sang dance songs and at times got into fights (Bošković-Stulli 1978:214, 216). This might be the reason why they referred to their own poems as "round dance" poems.

In addition to Ranjina's *Collection*, many variants and songs similar to the lyrics "in the folk style" were found in earlier manuscripts. Manuscript texts could have been transmitted in written versions, or taken from rural and popular performances to which they sometimes returned.

The three similar and geographically close variants of the second part of the poem *A ti divojko šegljiva* ('You, playful girl') might have followed similar paths.

The poem which I recorded on the island of Šipan in 1953, published by Olinko Delorko, contains the following verses:

Livada se uresila  
s bjel'jem cv'jetom i rumenim;  
tudar junak konja jezdi,  
toj livadu kopljen mjeri,  
prignuo se, ubro cv'jetak  
ubro cv'jetak, svio v'jenac,  
pa proklinje toj livadu (...)

The meadow is adorned  
with white and red flowers  
A knight comes riding on his horse  
And measures the meadow with his spear  
He bows down, picks flowers,  
Picks flowers, makes a wreath  
And curses the meadow (...)

He curses the meadow because there is no "young maiden" to wear his wreath.

Al mu nešto veli ž duba,  
tihi slavić od razuma:  
"O, mladiću premgizdavi,  
ti ne kuni toj livadu,  
livada ti nije kriva,  
svrni konja put ištoka,  
put ištoka sunčanoga,  
srest će te dobra sreća,  
b'jela vila i đevojka,  
uzmi vile za sestrice,  
a đevojke za ljubovce."  
(Delorko 1956, no. 54)

But a voice came from a tree,  
It was a quiet little nightingale:  
"Fine young man,  
Do not curse the meadow  
It has done you no harm  
Turn your horse to the east  
Where the sun rises  
And you will find your good fortune,  
A white fairy and a maiden,  
Let fairies be your little sisters  
And the maiden your sweetheart.

The language, the refined style, and the setting — the meadow adorned with flowers, the knight riding his horse, picking flowers, making a wreath, and meeting the quiet nightingale, resemble lyrics "in the folk style" from Ranjina's *Collection*. Moreover, a similar poem from another, later manuscript was included by Jagić into his edition of Ranjina's *Collection*, containing the same initial verse ("the meadow is adorned"), and the same dialogue with the nightingale. The vocabulary with numerous diminutives and the atmosphere are the same. The only difference lies in the fact that the wreath is made by a girl; judging by its continuation, it is an authentic wedding song. In this manuscript there are no mythological images of good fortune and the fairy sister which are found in the recent record of an oral version (both texts are in Bošković-Stulli 1978:165-166). The relationships becomes increasingly complex if we compare both songs to the variant collected by Vuk Karadžić in the "Upper Littoral" (the Montenegrin coast). The beginning is similar, although it differs in some respects:

Livade su urešene  
b'jelim cv'jetom i crvenim.  
Mladi Jovo konja igra,  
u livadu kopje mjeri,  
a vila ga s gore gleda (...)

The meadows are adorned  
with white and red flowers  
Young Jovo comes riding his horse,  
Measuring the meadow with his spear  
A fairy is watching from the mountain (...)

The fairy tells Jovo to turn his horse to the east, where he will find his bride to be. The subject matter and tone are in keeping with well-known folk wedding songs (Karadžić 1975:no. 92).



The intonation of the song from the island of Šipan is similar to a much earlier manuscript text that was included among lyrics "in the folk style", while the continuation of the wedding song is missing from the text. Vuk Karadžić's text from the Montenegrin littoral is stylistically far both from the early manuscript poem and the recent version from the Dubrovnik area, but its subject matter is much closer to the recently recorded oral narrative on Šipan. Moreover, it seems that all three songs have low origins as folk wedding songs, but their paths have diverged.

How did the version from Šipan retain the basic subject matter of the "low" folk song assuming at the same time the "high" style close to the language of Ragusan poets? This may partly be explained by the well-known high cultural level of common people in the area, but another, more direct stylistic influence is also present. The text "in the folk style" from the manuscript which was included by Jagić among similar poems in his edition of Ranjina's *Collection* had its origin in a folk song performed at weddings. Later on, it returned to its sources in a linguistically and stylistically elaborated form.

The fragment of the following poem "in the folk style" in Ranjina's *Collection* is roguish and charming. It is at the same time a reflection of the motive of aristocratic pastorals symbolizing the sexual intercourse:

Na junaku su zlate ostroge, a na djevojci tanka košulja, i zadješe se zlate ostroge za djevojčinu tanku košulju.	The knight had golden spurs The maiden was wearing a thin dress The golden spurs got caught On the maiden's thin dress.
---	--

(Menčetić and Držić 1937:no. 601)

In the 19th century, several songs were recorded containing the same image:

Zade mi se ostrug od čižama za bijelo krilce divojačko. Idoh, majko, ostrug otkučivat, privarih se, obljubih divojku.	My spurs got caught On a maiden's white lap I tried to disentangle them But I got confused and made love to the maiden.
--	--

(Novi Vinodolski)

In another version, the knight riding a horse encounters a girl called Anđa, who refuses to get out of his way, and the horse's shoe gets caught on the girl's silk skirt:

I ja pođoh da potkov odjedam uhvatih je za bijele ruke, uhvatih je, poljubih se s njome, a ljubeći ujedoh za grlo.	I wanted to remove the horse-shoe And took her white hands, I took her, and kissed her, And bit her on the neck
---	--

(From the surroundings of Dubrovnik)

A similar song, only with Muslim characters, was told by the informant Jela Bukvić, a Christian from Popovo in Herzegovina; Meho's mother is looking for him in the bazaar and she finds him in a tavern. He tells her the following story:

Idoh sinoć iz pjane mehane,  
lijepa Fata iz vruća hamama.  
Sretosmo se u tijesnu klancu,  
a ja odoh da prođem mimo nju;  
zape moja kovča od tozluka  
za njezine gaće šarovite,  
a ja odoh da kovču odapnem:  
zape moj nož i sindžiri  
za njezini p'jevac od bisera.  
A ja odoh da nože odapnem,  
zape moja puca od dečerme  
za njezine dv'je dize bisera.  
A ja odoh da odapnem pucu,  
zapeše se brci i solupi.  
Tu padosmo, mila moja majko,  
tu padosmo i tu osvanusmo.

As I was leaving a drunken tavern last night,  
Lovely Fata came from the hot Turkish bath.  
We met in a narrow pass  
I wanted to pass her by,  
But my buckle got caught  
On her bright dress  
As I was trying to unfasten the buckle  
My knife and chain got caught  
On her pearl necklace  
As I was trying to disentangle my knife,  
My button got stuck  
On her strings of pearls  
As I was trying to disentangle my button  
My moustache and whiskers got stuck.  
We fell down, dear mother,  
We fell down and stayed like that till dawn.

(Andrić 1929:no. 425 — the other examples quoted  
are from the same collection, p. 272-273)

The similarities between the three poems are evident in the subject matter and partly in the type of verse (decasyllabic verse in all three poems; but in Ranjina's *Collection* the caesura is at the point 5+5, while in the other three it is at 4+6). The greatest similarities can be observed between the text from the *Collection* and the one from Novi Vinodolski; the text from the surroundings of Dubrovnik is also similar. The Muslim poem is completely different in setting, its long, characteristically eastern description, accumulating details of the love scene. However, it is striking that a similar motif, which is not very common, is found both in a Ragusan collection with pastoral overtones dating from the beginning of the 16th century, two later songs from the coast, and in a completely different Muslim milieu (which, however, was not geographically distant). How did these similarities arise? Were the poems taken from the high into the low literature or was it the other way round? How did they appear in cultural and social milieus that were so different? It is improbable that they had independent origins. It may be assumed that they were performed by travelling singers, probably foreigners, and gradually assumed a life of their own, changing in each of these milieus. Once we have "golden spurs", then the humbler "boot spurs", the "horse shoe" and finally the "buckle".

Is it possible that a folk, oral variant included in Ranjina's *Collection* returned to oral tradition in a refined form (which does not exclude the role of travelling singers)? Such paths seem to be possible. The important point is the creative productivity of cultures where even motifs that had probably been adopted acquire specific and independent forms. The continuous variation, transformation and recreation is one of the basic characteristics of the "low", i.e. oral, folk literature.

In my book *Usmena književnost* (Oral literature) (1978) I have analyzed the mutual influences between Croatian oral and written literature before the mid-19th century. Although the relationship between the written and the oral does not correspond to the concepts of the high and

the low, they are frequently very close. The book discusses the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, with chapters on religious and didactic literature. It discusses concepts of the oral vs. written and, indirectly, the low vs. high, in writers such as Ferić, Kačić, Reljković, Katančić, Fortis, and Lovrić, and the literature of the Croatian National Revival. My book *Priče i pričanje* (Stories and story-telling) (1997) discusses similar issues related to oral prose.

Recent studies on the high and the low in Croatian literature before the National Revival have focused on various topics, such as the work of M. Držić from the anthropological viewpoint (Gulin 1996, 1999); genres of Croatian narrative literature in verse and epic poetry at the turn of the 19th century (Fališevac 1997); Đurđević's *Marunko* and Ivanošić's *Zvekan* (Fališevac 1995); Croatian Baroque verse as a social phenomenon (Pavličić 1995); *Fructus auctumnales* by M. P. Katančić between Classicism and pre-Romanticism (Fališevac 1989) and *Satyr* by M. A. Reljković (Pavličić 1991; Fališevac 1989 and 2000).

All these articles contain important, although sporadic insights concerning the high and the low. This article focuses on the high and the low as the central topic by analyzing a relatively small segment of the history of Croatian literature.

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## VISOKO I NISKO U KNJIŽEVNOSTI USMENOJ I PISANOJ

### SAŽETAK

Prvi dio članka bavi se književnopovijesnim i kulturnopovijesnim aspektom pojmova *visoko* i *nisko*: od slavenske mitologije, preko poetskih vizura prostora te teorijâ o visokim i niskim književnim stilovima, do dviju kultura (visoke i niske) u srednjem vijeku i ranomu novovjekovlju. Drugi dio članka razmatra odnose visokoga i niskoga u hrvatskoj poeziji pisanoj "na narodnu", poglavito onih u *Zborniku* Nikše Ranjine iz god. 1507.

(Članak se objavljuje i na hrvatskom jeziku u drugome proširenom izdanju autoričine knjige *O usmenoj tradiciji i o životu*, Zagreb 2002.)

Ključne riječi: visoko i nisko, kultura donjih i gornjih slojeva, narodna poezija, pjesme "na narodnu", hrvatska petrarkistička lirika