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## Bugaršćice: A Unique Type of Archaic Oral Poetry

Josip Kekez

### Historical and Geographical Definition

In the context of oral literature, *bugaršćice*<sup>1</sup> represent an important and unique genre in many respects. They are, among other things, striking proof that oral literature is not simply a discovery of the nineteenth century—as was long maintained in South Slavic regions—and that two literatures, oral and written, were in contact from the earliest times in a number of ways, including the manner of their recording and study. On the other hand, we would know nothing of the genre in question and its aesthetic values if interest in oral literature had not existed from the beginning; many passages in the early literature of Croatia would have forever remained obscure, while Croatian poetry of the present day would have assumed a different profile. Scholars have not so far taken sufficient account of the fact that the poetic system of the *bugaršćica* is distinctly indigenous and in many of its features remote from other verse forms of oral literature; nor is there evidence that it existed at any time or in any national community or setting other than those discussed below.

Apart from one or two examples, all *bugaršćice* have been recorded on the eastern Adriatic strip from Istria in the north to the Gulf of Kotor in the south, so that they are geographically strictly defined. One poem was recorded on the western side of the Adriatic, in southern Italy, but it was sung in their own language by settlers from the eastern side of the Adriatic. Two actually come from the hinterland, from the edge of the Kajkavian dialectal region. In spite of their numerous Kajkavian features, these examples would not in themselves extend the area of the *bugaršćica* as

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<sup>1</sup> Pronounced “boo-gahr-shchee-tseh”; sing. *bugaršćica*. For English translations of forty-one *bugaršćice* with texts in the original, and an introductory survey and extensive bibliography of major scholarship on the *bugaršćica*, see Miletich 1990.

defined if there did not exist other evidence in written Kajkavian literature and if we did not know of a fair number of Kajkavian forms in *bugaršćice* recorded in the extreme south. Apart from the fact that they were certainly current in Kajkavian dialectal areas, the territory of the *bugaršćice* should be moved from the central and southern littoral toward the interior, as indicated by traces of their existence—particularly in medieval inscriptions—in that region. There are, indeed, theories according to which the origins of the *bugaršćice* should be sought somewhere other than on the coastal strip. These migratory theories suggest that *bugaršćice* came to the western part of the Balkan Peninsula from the East. The fact is, however, that all known examples, commentaries on them, and popular names applied to them (as well as the term, used in linguistic, literary and other published works) all derive from the western region of the Balkans, or else from areas settled by Croats. Neither eastern nor western neighbors of the Croats are familiar with *bugaršćice*.

All this might mean that the *bugaršćica* is of very ancient indigenous origin, and it might be supposed that it was known throughout the entire nation, its subsequent uneven distribution in the course of history being a consequence of geographical and political fragmentation: in some districts the course of events led more rapidly to its disappearance, in others more gradually, so that by the eighteenth century it had in fact practically vanished everywhere, and only fragmentary echoes survived into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Kekez 1978:13-14, 18). While many writers of the older period in the western area actually apply the term *bugaršćica* and use the verb *bugariti* to describe its plaintive performance, the verb with the same meaning was current in popular usage throughout the nineteenth century, again in those areas from which we have recordings and where there is evidence of its previous performance. Thus Vuk Karadžić included the lexeme *bugariti* in his dictionary, adding a note to the effect that it was used in Croatia. And two very brief fragments written down in the nineteenth century are from that area, in fact from its western most part, so that they define both the geographical and the upper chronological limit in the history of the *bugaršćica*.

### **Texts and Principal Modes of Presentation**

Fate ordained—although not without some degree of diachronic logic—that the earliest recording should be the last to be discovered. This took place only recently, and certain literary-historical values that had hitherto prevailed had at once to be revised: the poems from the manuscript collection *Zbornik Nikše Ranjine* [*Nikša Ranjina's Miscellany*]

(1507), which also include the poems of the first Dubrovnik lyric poets, can no longer be considered the oldest complete recordings of Croatian or Slavic oral poems. Nor are Petar Hektorović's two mid-sixteenth-century recordings the earliest *bugarščice*, although their literary-historical value remains considerable and their aesthetic quality unimpaired; they retain their fame as the first published examples of oral poetry. The principal character in the earliest known *bugarščica*, Janko Sibirjanin, one of the most frequent figures in oral poetry, whether *bugarščica* or not, like many characters in lyric and epic poetry who find themselves imprisoned, generally by the Turks, is languishing in a Smederevo dungeon and addresses an eagle, asking the bird whether he cannot somehow be rescued from his confinement. The poem was performed on Thursday, June 1, 1497, in the small town of Gioia del Colle, near Bari, which was at that time already inhabited by the Molise Croats (Šimunović 1984). The performance was in honor of Queen Isabella del Balzo and presented by Slavs drinking "according to their custom" and shouting "in their tongue." During the recitation they leaped like goats and whirled around. The Italian poet, Rogeri de Pacienza, courtier and eyewitness, has left us a detailed account of the performance, performers, and actual text with which Queen Isabella was welcomed. Since Italian literary historians believed that they were dealing with a minor poet, they paid no serious attention to his work until quite recently. They then came across the passage in question, which they could not understand, and turned to their Slavist colleagues for assistance. In this way the poem was discovered, identified as a *bugarščica*, and first published in our own time (Pantić 1977).

A comparison of the language of the poem with that of the Molise Croats, and of the recorded names of the performers with those of Slavic settlers in southern Italy confirms the fact that the poem shows fifteenth-century linguistic features of the Neretva region. The names of the performers also coincide with first names and surnames of the Molise Croats and other medieval Croatian settlers of southern Italy. Both sets of names belong to the same linguistic and intellectual milieu as regards origin, formation, and anthroponymical content (Šimunović 1984:53). Early features linked with the *bugarščica* have been preserved elsewhere. At the time of the Turkish wars, especially during the whole of the sixteenth century, there was an exodus northward from the northwestern mainland areas of Croatia and from its coastal strip. The emigrants, who now live for the most part along the Austro-Hungarian border in the province of Gradišće [Burgenland] and call themselves the Gradišće Croats, have preserved motifs and plots as well as stylistic and metrical characteristics of the *bugarščica* in their early songs (Gavazzi 1951; Miletich 1987).

What other sources are there for the preservation of the *bugaršćica*? We should be grateful to those who recorded this specific literary form before it disappeared and for thus saving it from oblivion. To date all anthologies of *bugaršćice* organized chronologically have begun with recordings made by the writer Petar Hektorović (1487-1572) as the earliest and most aesthetically perfect examples of the genre. Nobleman and poet, Hektorović, who was from the island of Hvar, went on an outing in the Adriatic, even at a relatively advanced age, in the company of two fishermen, his fellow islanders Paskoj Debelja and Nikola Zet, who shared with him their knowledge of oral literature. Nearly four and one-half centuries ago, our poet spent three pleasant days with them, rowing and fishing, talking and singing, reciting poems and proverbs, and solving riddles. As they traveled through the familiar waters of their homeland, one of the fishermen sang the *bugaršćica* of Marko Kraljević and his brother Andrijaš, while the other sang the one about Radosav Siverinac and Vlatko Udinski. Hektorović interpolated into his own work two *bugaršćice*, three rhetorical oral *počasnice* (poems of praise), and one lyric poem, reproducing them, moreover, exactly as he had heard them from his informants. In this context, incidentally, Hektorović states his opinion that folk songs should be transcribed just as they are heard, a rule that ought to be considered inviolable, but that has only been strictly observed in our own time. Judging by all that has been said, we see that Hektorović is the first accomplished South Slavic folklorist. Moreover, no one before him had drawn a portrait of folk singers, described in concrete terms the situation in which songs were sung, nor defined the purpose of the singing. Hektorović does not mention when he took down the two *bugaršćice*, but it was before 1556, when his own work was written, and thus twelve years before the first edition of his *Ribanje i ribarsko prigovaranje* [*Fishing and Fishermen's Conversations*] was published in Venice in 1568. They were first extracted from *Ribanje* and published by Ivan Kukuljević in his *Pjesnici hrvatski I* [*Croatian Poets I*] in Zagreb in 1856 (pp. 100-01), and then by the famous Slovene Slavist Franz Miklosich in Vienna in 1870 in his anthology of folk epic poetry of the Croats (1870:62-65). They were subsequently included as a matter of course by Valtazar Bogišić in his anthology (1878), and ultimately in all other anthologies.

We owe the *bugaršćica* entitled *Majka Margarita* [*Mother Margaret*], one of the most moving of these poems, to a transcription made by a citizen of Zadar, Juraj Baraković (1548-1628), who incorporated it in his poem *Vila Slovinka* [*The Slavic Fairy*], published in Venice in 1614. Kukuljević also included it as a separate item in his *Pjesnici hrvatski II* [*Croatian Poets II*], published in Zagreb in 1867 (pp. 7-8). Its poetic quality has insured it a place in every anthology of *bugaršćice* published to date. Baraković makes no mention of the place of transcription. We may suppose, indeed,

that he heard it in his early youth and learned to recite it by heart. It may also be presumed that it was generally known not only in the immediate surroundings of Zadar but also in the broader coastal area, for echoes of the poem found their way into the written literature of Dubrovnik in the sixteenth century. Its popularity and wide circulation are also confirmed by its variants, which Bogišić planned to publish in his second volume, while an almost entirely literal transcription of Baraković's copy can be found in Zagreb MS. 638.

Among the papers from the trial in which Petar Zrinski (1621-1671) — governor of Croatia, politician and military leader, and acknowledged man of letters—was condemned to death together with Fran Krsto Frankopan, another well-known writer, there subsequently came to light the text of a *bugarščica* that is most frequently published under the title *Popivka od Svilojevića* [*The Song of Svilojević*]. The recording is from northwestern Croatia, and some believe that it might even have been made by Zrinski himself, who, apart from his other literary activities, was also engaged in the collection of folk poetry and was himself the hero of popular poems. It was first published by Miklosich in 1851. Later, Bogišić included it in his anthology, as did all subsequent compilers. When Miklosich published it for the first time, he did so in prose form with no mention of Zrinski, and with the statement that it had been written down in 1663 (1851). He was to publish it again in 1870 in the anthology mentioned above, only this time in the *bugarščica* meter. He initially published it in prose because it was in that form in the manuscript, which has since been lost. One ought to bear in mind that *bugarščice* were not sufficiently well known at that time as a specific literary form, although the two recorded by Hektorović and the one transcribed by Baraković had already been available. In his 1870 edition Miklosich included the poem as a *bugarščica*, stating his reason for the change: “At that time I did not recognize the meter, and probably it would not have been clear to me even now, if the Dubrovnik manuscript had not made available to me a larger number of poems composed in that same meter. . .” (71).

It is in the Dubrovnik MS., housed in the library of the University of Zagreb, that we find the largest number of *bugarščice*. Apart from them, the manuscript contains other material of interest to students of written and oral literature and linguistics. The anthology was started at the end of the seventeenth or the beginning of the eighteenth century by the writer Đuro Matijašević, who was then joined by another writer, Jozo Betondić, and a number of other unknown transcribers. Ivan Marija Matijašević (1714-1791), a Jesuit, writer, and scholar who was active in the public life of Dubrovnik, was inspired as a collector by Andrija Kačić Miošić's *Razgovor ugodni naroda slovinskoga* [*Pleasant Recreation for the Slavic People*] and added his own material to that collected by his uncle Matijašević, Betondić,

and the others. To the collected material he gave the title “Popjevke slovinske skupljene g. 1758. u Dubrovniku” [“Slavic Songs Collected in Dubrovnik in the Year 1758”].

In the Historical Institute of the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts in Zagreb, there are two manuscripts, one relatively long and the other shorter, which are known as Zagreb MS. 638 and Zagreb MS. 641. The former was written at the very beginning of the eighteenth century and contains nothing but twenty-seven *bugaršćice*, while the latter has three *bugaršćice*, mostly religious poems, and a smaller number of heroic decasyllabic poems. Both manuscripts originated in the region of the Gulf of Kotor. No one published anything from the second manuscript before Bogišić, but Miklosich published some eighteen items from the first manuscript, and later others were published at random.

Likewise, before Bogišić no one had published examples of the Perast *bugaršćice*. A manuscript was found in Perast in the home of a certain Balović, and thus became known as the Balović MS. It contains twenty-four folk songs, including nine *bugaršćice*. Both the *bugaršćice* and the heroic decasyllabic poems deal exclusively with events that took place in Perast and the surrounding area, so that in this respect they differ markedly from other *bugaršćice* or heroic decasyllabic poems. It is believed that the manuscript originated at the end of the seventeenth or beginning of the eighteenth century. Linked with the Balović MS. is the Mazarović MS., which also derives its name from the Perast family in whose home it was found. The cover bears the date 1775 as the year of origin. This manuscript does not contain *bugaršćice*, but it does have heroic poems in decasyllables, of which some are literal renderings of *bugaršćica* subjects from the Balović MS. Both the Balović and the Mazarović MSS. are in the Bogišić archives in Cavtat (about six miles south of Dubrovnik).

A number of other recordings were omitted from Bogišić’s edition, the first comprehensive published collection with a treatise on the *bugaršćica*, simply because the anthologist did not know of them. Among the omissions were two poems from the middle of the seventeenth century that were written down by the Dubrovnik sea captain Nikola Ohmućević. An admirer of Ivan Gundulić’s verse, he spent his leisure time copying that author’s *Osman*, and added as a supplement to his manuscript two moving *bugaršćice* usually entitled *Smrt despota Vuka* [*The Death of Despot Vuk*] and *Smrt kralja Vladislava* [*The Death of King Vladislav*]. They were discovered in the manuscript of *Osman* by the literary historian Armin Pavić while he was preparing Gundulić’s works for the standard edition in the series *Stari pisci Hrvatski* [Early Croatian Writers] (Pavić 1879). Ohmućević’s first transcription was published by Miroslav Pantić in his anthology (1964:61-64), and I included the second in mine (1978:203-8). I

also included there a *bugarščica* that gives a lyrical account of the Croatian governor Derenčin and his defeat by the Turks on the battlefield of Krbava in 1493 (1978:104). It was written down in 1682 by the Croatian writer and philologist Pavao Vitezović (1652-1713) and is now part of a manuscript kept in the library of the University of Zagreb. Apart from my anthology, it has not been included in other collections of *bugarščice*, but some historians have quoted it in their published studies. A *bugarščica* that describes lyrically a skirmish between Croats and Turks near Zagreb in 1593 was written down in the seventeenth century and published in the nineteenth, but has not found its way into any of the anthologies so far (Kekez 1986a:32).

In 1851 Josip Antun Petris recorded fifty-four songs in Vrbnik on the island of Krk, including some in the *bugarščica* meter. For my anthology (Kekez 1978:131-32) I took two brief fragments from Vjekoslav Štefanić's *Narodne pjesme otoka Krka* [*Folk Songs from the Island of Krk*], published in Zagreb in 1944; they have not been published elsewhere. Petris said that they were not complete, and somewhat less than a century later Štefanić tried to discover remnants of the fragmentary *bugarščice* in question, but even the fragments had vanished from oral tradition.

This, then, constitutes the body of *bugarščica* texts collected in the course of several centuries. Their discovery, presentation, and interpretation in modern times began with Miklosich's 1870 publication, referred to above. His collection preceded Bogišić's, and inspired the latter to search for and publish a broader range of material and to elaborate on the subject (1878). Apart from *bugarščice*, Bogišić's anthology also contains other forms of oral poetry from earlier periods. It includes altogether seventy-six *bugarščica* texts, some of which are incomplete, and, apart from two or three fragmentary recordings which are absent, it represented for some time the sole body of texts at the disposal of researchers. In the course of time, as mentioned above, entire new texts were discovered. Indeed, Bogišić states in his anthology that hitherto unknown *bugarščice*, together with variants of known texts, had come into his hands after his book had gone to press. He did not, however, include them in his book, provide sources, or say anything about them except that he would include them in a second volume, which was never published. All subsequent editors, in fact, merely published a selection from Bogišić's corpus, and all researchers were necessarily committed to his edition in their discussion of *bugarščica* texts, since there was no point in having recourse to manuscripts and deciphering early handwriting and orthography when everything was already available in one place together with relevant commentary. Bogišić's anthology assembled all material known to him at the time and provided a comprehensive and multifaceted description of the published texts. Its importance to the field is, therefore,

considerable; but, as we have seen, a number of examples are missing from his collection. Furthermore, in spite of his many valuable observations and competent approaches, he was capable of improper procedures, principally because he himself was taken unawares by the unusual features of the *bugaršćice*, and interpreted them or altered details in them to conform to notions that he had formed under the sway of other verse prominent at that time, paying less attention to the *bugaršćice* themselves in this respect.

### Definition of Terms and the Question of Origins

Until recently Hektorović enjoyed the distinction of being not only the first to write down *bugaršćice* and leave us other valuable information concerning them and other oral literature of his period and region, but also the first to call them *bugaršćice*. The term is, for the most part, identical with that used by later writers, becoming firmly established in the technical vocabulary of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Hektorović calls them *bugaršćica* and *bugaršćina*. Quoting *Majka Margarita* in his *Vila Slovinka*, as recited by “some young child,” Baraković confirms that *bugaršćica* was the customary term in the central Dalmatian region at the beginning of the seventeenth century. But in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries other etymologically related terms like *bugarkinja* and *pjesma bugarka* were frequently used. *Bugaršćice* were also called *popijevke* and *davorije*, although other songs and not only *bugaršćice* were understood by these terms.

The word *bugaršćica* and its etymological variants have prompted researchers to offer explanations of the origins of the form. In general, they may be reduced to three categories. The term has been linked by some to the adjective *bugarski*, indicating that the poems are of Serbian origin, because Croatian Humanist writers understood *bugarski* to refer to both Serbian and Bulgarian regions. Others derive the term from the Italian *poesia volgare*, or the Latin *carmina vulgaria*, because the poetry of the inhabitants of the eastern Adriatic coast struck them as popular. A third group sees the solution in a contamination of these two explanations. In the dictionary of the Yugoslav Academy, Đuro Daničić suggested that the term *bugaršćica* might be derived from the verb *bugariti*, formed from Medieval Latin *bucculare*. Daničić argued that it was difficult to believe that *bugaršćica* could stem from the national designation *bugarski*. It was more likely, in his opinion, that it sprang from an Italian word corresponding to the Medieval Latin *bucculare*, from which are derived *boccalone* and *boccalona*, that is, males and females who shout, wail, or cry; and to Romance peoples it seemed that their Slavic neighbors were shouting or wailing, even when they were merely talking; probably the



opposite was also the case.

I do not doubt that the term *bugarščica* is connected with the verb *bugariti*, the fundamental meaning of which is to sing sadly. This indicates, on the one hand, the basic mood, or, to be more precise, the mood of the subject matter as conceived by the people, regardless of the fact that certain poems have plots that end happily, if somewhat cheerlessly, and the fact that they were performed on festive occasions. On the other hand, instances of the verb *bugariti* are to be found in the works of early Croatian writers, and, more recently, among the inhabitants of the coastal region. Thus, both these factors coincide with a third, which indicates the area where the *bugarščice* originated and were performed and written down.

Another theory explains the origin of the *bugarščica* by migration from the East. It differs from the previous theories in that it is based on a few motifs and themes, and characters from the thematic cycle. I refer to the so-called Srem theory, according to which *bugarščice* were poems from southern Hungary (hence the presence of personages from the Hungarian court), whence they were allegedly adopted by Serbian noblemen in the sixteenth century; after the conquest of Srem in 1521 and the retreat from the Turks, they were taken to the coastal area. This theory, of course, has many weaknesses, which I shall not enumerate here. It is sufficient to note that the *bugarščice* of the coast are older than the critical date proposed by the Srem theory. Nor is there any reason for inventing new terms, such as *pjesme dugog stiha* [long-line poems]. On the contrary, the specific features of the *bugarščica* as a poetic form provide sufficient reason for the retention of that term, especially when it matches the poetic nature of the *bugarščica* better than any other term in literary theory matches the concept it is meant to define. The term *pjesma dugog stiha* should not displace a term that has been established for centuries, not only because it is ambiguous—not every long-line poem need be a *bugarščica*—but also because it merely stresses a formal feature of the genre, and, moreover, does not identify it geographically or chronologically. We would not expect this of a given term if we did not in fact have one that includes all that and more. Since all that is so, it should be regarded as an etymological boon. Etymological definitions of the word have led to numerous misunderstandings, disagreements, and, not infrequently, deliberate misrepresentations. The false conclusions have stemmed from fundamental methodological errors: we ought to distinguish between an etymological explanation and a definition of a literary form in national terms, especially since the latter should not be controversial. The origin of the word has still not been established reliably, and it is certainly not the only such case, but the fact is that the *bugarščica* is closely linked, etymologically and semantically, with the verb *bugariti*, and both the

nominal and verbal form have been widely used in Croatian literary and philological works in past centuries (Kekez 1978:33-38). The verbal form always denotes a plaintive, distressing, melancholy, and nostalgic kind of singing, and the *bugaršćica* is a song with precisely those qualities. And this is what constituted its attraction for the listener; even if the ballad did not end tragically—in the course of history certain changes of that kind did take place—it still retained its typical melancholy character, or at least qualities akin to it. Its distinctive features came into being through the choice of motifs, structure, versification, poetic diction, and all those other stylistic elements calculated to produce a specific aesthetic effect.

### **The Poetics of the *Bugaršćica*, Its Performance, and Its Stylistic Metamorphosis**

Until now, most scholars have regarded *bugaršćice* as epic poems, considering them “a matter of fact” and historically credible. In short, they have concentrated on the content, while other qualities interested them less. This is evident even from some of the recordings, since some collectors left out the refrain, for example, or other “superfluous” elements. Even some who introduced the *bugaršćica* in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries omitted the refrain. Bogišić published *Majka Margarita* without the recurring verses, thus abbreviating it by almost half, with the explanation that the missing passages contained nothing new that had not already been stated in preceding verses. In the *bugaršćice* historical characters and, more rarely, historical themes are indeed present, but they are not used to express historical truth or for development of an epic plot. What was stressed, then, was content, narration, but in the *bugaršćica* these are only present for the sake of the motif. The *bugaršćica* plot never has the breadth or objectivity of the epic, to say nothing of digressions, retardation, episodes, and other related formal devices of the epic. This kind of poetry does not develop a plot in order to narrate events, to glorify the past or, possibly, personages from an epic age. On the contrary, if the heroes of epic poems do appear in the *bugaršćica*, then they are melancholy figures.

In a number of cases, the *bugaršćice* make use of a plot, but only in order to facilitate a more subtle psychological representation of the chosen motifs, and to represent all the more strikingly the human emotions that lie behind it, either of a positive or, more frequently, of a negative kind. In the *bugaršćica* about Marko Kraljević and his brother Andrijaš in Hektorović’s work, for example, the two brothers are bound by love for each other and by a joint love for their aged mother. The brothers always share their booty in fraternal fashion until they capture three fine horses,

which, naturally, cannot be divided equally. Greed makes its appearance as a motif, and Marko is so carried away by it that Andrijaš suffers a mortal wound. Remorse ensues and is followed by a renewed declaration of fraternal affection and love for their mother, but there is no return to the former happy state. In another case it is human vanity that destroys the happy community, as, for example, in the *bugarščica* of the Jakšić brothers, in which an attractive maiden loved by both brothers decides in favor of one of them. The other, seized by vanity, is driven to a tragically impulsive act and kills his brother. When he sees what he has done, he kills himself. In the poem *Kako Jele Arbanaška umori Turčina Mostaranina* [*How Jele the Albanian Slew the Turk from Mostar*] (Kekez 1978:124-26), Vojin the Albanian and the Turk from Mostar are sworn brothers and friends. As they drink wine together and pass the time in conversation, the Turk asks where Vojin got the fine, delicate shirt he is wearing. When he replies that he “has his dear Jele, his wife” who sewed it for him, the Turk blurts out wildly in typical *bugarščica* fashion that he desires the fair Jele. Vojin retorts in kind, expressing his desire for “a fine Turkish lady from Mostar.” The Turk instantly orders the other Turks present to hang Vojin. He then instructs them to entice Vojin’s Jele into his tent. But Jele is in fact the typical proud, loyal wife, intelligent and independent, who embodies all the virtues of the honorable spouse of the folk tradition, and she cunningly slays the lecherous Turk. What is typical here of the *bugarščica* is the negative human content—the motif of lechery and the vulnerability of the psyche—that motivates the balladic organization of the text and brings it to a tragic conclusion. In one of the most moving examples, *Majka Margarita*, family unity has been undermined by a brother and a son who have gone off into the world never to return again.

The *bugarščica* is apt to treat a wide range of relationships between individuals in everyday life, including those between master and servant. Here, too, some unforeseeable chance event within an established orderly community brings negative emotions and motives to the surface, disrupting mutual trust, often with a tragic outcome, whether this is caused by the master—often the king himself—or by the royal servant (by “servant,” we should understand also the king’s more elevated subjects). Life at the royal Hungarian court is merely a setting for the depiction of destructive acts against this cultivated and intimate background, with the aim of stressing the tragic egoism of an impulsive deed. The subject of Kosovo is also used to this end in the *bugarščice*, but, in contrast to its position in the epic poem, Kosovo remains in the distant background, while those events that characterize human relationships in a restricted context are acted out in the foreground.

The *bugarščica* either considers an interesting psychological subject separately or combines it in a relationship involving other individuals:

relatives, family, friends, or members of some other closely knit group. The more intimately bound the members of the group are, the more acute is the conflict, and hence the more moving the ballad. Innate evil in an individual thus disturbs the balance of the group. Even when the *bugarščica* has recourse to epic characters and themes, it is discriminating in its choice of epic material or in its use of factual events as subjects. For example, the so-called local *bugarščica* chooses only what can be integrated into its poetic design and restricts itself to the level of detailed psychological description. The long, slow-moving line is well suited for the treatment of such motifs, and so are the repetition of verses and refrains, the use of diminutives, which express intimacy, and so on. The long verses, which may be repeated wholly or in part and, as a rule, have a refrain after every other verse, are tonic in character, so that the structure of the verse, in conjunction with the refrain, emphasizes even more the mood of cheerless melancholy and nostalgia. This fondness for a tragic aesthetic system is part of the poetics of times long past, although the *bugarščica* was welcome on every occasion.

The *bugarščica* verse line varies from thirteen to nineteen syllables, but lines of fifteen and sixteen syllables occur most often; lines of twelve, nineteen, and twenty syllables are also occasionally found. The refrain most frequently has six syllables. It may occupy different positions between verses and sometimes occurs only after a number of verses. Apart from those cases in which collectors suppressed refrains, some *bugarščice* did not have them at all. Poems in which a refrain is present confirm that it is most often situated as in *Majka Margarita*:

Cvilu to mi cviljaše drobna ptica lastovica,  
                                     Ona mala ptica,  
 Cvilu to mi cviljaše drobna ptica lastovica,  
 Ona cvilu cviljaše Zadru gradu na pridvratju,  
                                     Ona mala ptica.

[Plaintively sang the little swallow bird,  
                                     That little bird,  
 Plaintively sang the little swallow bird,  
 Plaintively it sang before the gates of Zadar town,  
                                     That little bird.]

At the beginning of a poem, therefore, the refrain customarily comes immediately after the first verse, and then after every other verse except at the end. Refrains vary regularly within the same poem: sometimes a six-syllable syntagmatic unit from the preceding verse is used as the refrain. The poem just mentioned begins with a refrain after the first line and finishes with only a single line after the last occurrence:

“I da ti si nikadare od suz’ lišca ne osuše,  
Nit ćeš bratca dozvati, nit ćeš sinka dočekati,  
Starice nebogo,  
Nit ćeš bratca dozvati, nit ćeš sinka dočekati!”  
[“And even if the tears on your face should never dry,  
You shall never summon your brother nor welcome your son,  
Wretched old woman,  
You shall never summon your brother nor welcome your son!”]

The verses are based on clausal units and, as a rule, each unit is fixed in speech as a linguistic and semantic whole; these rhythmically based units are then linked up with one another. The *bugaršćica* verse is thus essentially associative in character and origin, and in such cases it is difficult to break it into semantically independent hemistichs or to define it by established metrical patterns. It is to some extent trochaic, but also combines trochees and dactyls as well as other feet. It is based on colloquial referents from a rural setting, and so the number of syllables must be variable since the verse is founded on the principle of semantic and rhythmic units that are composed of one or more condensed conversational formulas, whose rhythm may be further intensified by change in word order.

In the *bugaršćica* the vocative is at times used in place of the nominative case, not to fulfill the necessary syllabic requirement since the line does not depend on strict syllabicity but rather to render the sentence more manageable rhythmically, unless it has already been adopted from the heroic decasyllabic line, where that phenomenon is a regular feature. In the final phase of the *bugaršćica*'s existence, epic formulas inserted into the line served as a means of formulaic structuring. The clause is also constructed with the aid of typically oral devices: *pođe*, *stade*, *side* (inchoatives) plus infinitive (*govoriti*, *pitati*, *udarati*—“to speak,” “to ask,” “to strike,” respectively). In the same verse the verb is used with its verbal noun, and there are enclitic forms of the personal pronoun and additions such as *ere*, *e da*, *još*, to which we cannot assign the function of filling out the line. They are included in the verse as a constituent part of a metrical, syntactic, and rhythmic whole, or as constituent parts of oral or conversational syntagms. The uninformed view is that the *bugaršćica* would be just as effective without them. I mention here, too, the unprofessional assertion, sometimes emphatically stated, that the refrain serves merely to allow the singer a pause. The refrain is in fact one of the most important stylistic and structural techniques of the *bugaršćica*, without which the aesthetic effect of melancholy would not be fully achieved.

The stylistic features of the *bugaršćica* also include duplication of the preposition, a structural device used in written verse from the Middle Ages down to the present. Since medieval prose is rhythmic in character and

duplication of prepositions occurs only in Croatian poets of the early period and has not been found in prose or anywhere else outside of verse, it is maintained that it is present exclusively in poetry. The *bugarščica* very often separates the preposition. For example, instead of *u cara čestitoga* [to the honorable emperor], we find *I oni je upustiše u cara u čestitoga* [they admitted her to the emperor, to the honorable one] (Kekez 1978:162). In the same poem we find also: *Pođi s Bogom, djevojko, na tvoje na bijele dvore* [Go with God, O maiden, to your, to the white court] (163), which, outside of the *bugarščica*, would read: *Pođi s Bogom, djevojko, na svoje bijele dvore* [Go with God, O maiden, to your white court].

We cannot say that the *bugarščica*'s poetic diction is select unless we mean that it is the result of a process of abstracting linguistic data in the formation of colloquial formulas and of combining numerous diminutives with the compositional and stylistic technique of emphasis. Precisely because the language used is the folk idiom, foreign words are relatively rare, being usually of Turkish and Italian origin, a feature which is understandable in view of the geographical location of the genre. It is also natural that such an age-old poetic tradition should have a good many archaic words.

The classification of *bugarščice* is identical with their poetic definition, but if the terms of reference associated with the latter do not match those appropriate to the former, it matters little in principle. This is also the reason why the classifications proposed to date that do not take account of formal criteria have not met with success and most often have misled the reader. This is particularly true of those that are based on theme and character, since they give the subject of the poem a historical or authentic dimension, attributing an exclusively epic character to it and placing it in a diachronic context, where it does not belong. A classification based on theme and character may to some degree situate the *bugarščica* in areas where it did not originate or was not prevalent. Subject matter cannot rationally be classified chronologically (e.g., by century), because it is sparse and discontinuous; we are, after all, dealing with individual texts. If we were to start with the collector, more emphasis would fall on another important constituent (the literary-historical) and less on the former characteristics of the *bugarščice*. It is best in the end to opt for certain internal features, that is, to take as a point of departure the manner in which the poet handles his subject matter, forming it into a literary text, and to note the changes that took place in this process. In this way less prominence is accorded to externals and internal elements are safeguarded.

If we proceed thus, we can reach the following conclusions: *bugarščice* are ballads as a rule (in the course of time exceptions have

appeared); their subject matter is the internal human process, which, as a central motif, governs the organization of the text and most often ends in tragedy. The only exceptions are some of the local *bugarščice*; in these examples, however, there is a departure from the classical archaic *bugarščica* and they should, therefore, be placed in a special category. The structure of the *bugarščica* is governed precisely by its emphasis on particular, profoundly subjective human states of mind or behavior, most often of an irrational kind or the result of natural causes. Even when there is a departure from the tragic, the *bugarščica* does not abandon inner psychological workings and its melancholy tone. Moreover, thanks to its verse form, rhythm, and refrain, or to the manner of the performance and the melancholy mood, the basic characteristics of the *bugarščica* described here become even more explicitly lyrical.

In defining the genre, it should not be forgotten that the *bugarščica*'s typical lyrical content became consistently more permeated by epic elements in the course of its history. This happened particularly at the time of its relative eclipse by the ever more powerful heroic decasyllabic poem, whose themes, structure, and style were characteristic of the epic period that was closely connected with the events themselves, that is, the trauma occasioned by the Turkish invasion and presence. Hence, if we take into account the original stylistic resources of the *bugarščica* in addition to what subsequently happened to it in the course of history, we can identify four cycles of texts in the relatively meager material known to us. Apart from expressly lyrical examples, a new group can be identified that can be characterized by the infiltration of certain epic features. A third, more recent group shows a greater influx of epic elements, so that we might term them "lyric-epic." A special group is made up of those with distinctly local characteristics. These local *bugarščice* are thematically linked to events in the localities where they originated. The reference here is mainly to the Gulf of Kotor region—above all Perast—then Dubrovnik, and certain other localities. They regularly give a factual account of local events, but they do not choose just any set of events. They select those that match the qualities of the *bugarščica* as described above.

A case in point is the *bugarščica* that describes an event that took place in Perast in 1573. Its suitability as a *bugarščica* subject may be deduced from its original descriptive title: *Kako Peraštani kazniše ispan-skoga vojvodu don Karla koji osramoti dvije peraške sirote djevojke . . .* [*How the Citizens of Perast Punished the Spanish Duke Don Carlos Who Dishonored Two Orphan Maidens from Perast . . .*]. An incident described in a *bugarščica* from the Balović MS. is also from the sixteenth century. The poem was composed towards the end of the seventeenth or at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and the subject is clearly well suited to the requirements of the genre. It tells how many of the local people

perished and how love, sworn brotherhood, and the kinship of godparents were destroyed because a maiden was dishonored. The poem is entitled *Paštrovka djevojka* [*The Maiden of the Paštrovićes*] (Kekez 1978:230-32).

Typical examples of the lyrical *bugaršćica* persist all the way to the upper limit of its chronological existence, but there is infiltration of epic elements to some degree as early as the sixteenth century. Infiltration may have begun even earlier, but we lack textual evidence for it. The influence of epic poetry was most pronounced in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Its influence can be seen in the example of the *bugaršćica* about Jele the Albanian and the Turk from Mostar, referred to above. Verse, expression, and choice of motifs are handled in the customary *bugaršćica* manner, but the text has obviously been influenced to a marked degree by the epic principally in its plot, and to some extent in its verse line. For instance, the long *bugaršćica* line may be based on a heroic decasyllabic line or on a formula taken from it. Thus, many epics begin with the formulaic heroic decasyllable *Vino piju do dva pobratima* [Two sworn brothers are drinking wine]. The first line of the *bugaršćica* in question reads *Vino dobro pijahu do dva mila pobratima* [Two dear sworn brothers were drinking fine wine]. Some subjects are shared by both the *bugaršćica* and the epic, but not, as in the previous example, as the result of the epic's marked influence on the style of the *bugaršćica*. Thus the *bugaršćica* creates its own version of the epic poem *Banović Strahinja* [*Governor Strahinja*] because the theme of female infidelity fits into its typical framework of destruction of familial solidarity. The character of Strahinja is more appropriate for its melancholy aesthetic system than it is for the epic. The Strahinja portrayed in the *bugaršćica* is similar to the melancholy characters of our own time, whether we encounter them in everyday life or in contemporary novels and films. There are certain obscure passages in the epic, especially, for example, the question of Strahinja's pardon of his unfaithful wife, a matter that is frequently discussed but never answered satisfactorily. In the *bugaršćica* the issue is sufficiently clear. It is once more for its own intrinsic reasons that the *bugaršćica* deals with the problem of political betrayal, as, for example, in *Knez Dabisav izdajnički predaje Samobor Turcima* [*Count Dabisav Treacherously Surrenders Samobor to the Turks*]. The *bugaršćica* *Kad je Hodžulo, ban skradinski, poginuo s ostalim Skradinjanima* [*When Hodžulo, the Governor of Skradin, Perished with the Other Men of Skradin*] is in fact a thematic variation of the epic *Smrt bana Derenčića* [*The Death of Governor Derenčić*], which refers to the Krbava disaster of 1493. What is missing in the epic and is present in the *bugaršćica* is the negative aspect of one of the national heroes, who was in fact a coward, and was responsible for the death of one of his relatives in the battle.

The mutual relationship between the *bugaršćica* and the epic is



evident from the manuscripts from the Gulf of Kotor region, which reveal literal adaptations of *bugarščica* subject matter. In the southern coastal area the *bugarščica* was influenced not only by the heroic decasyllabic epic but also by the octosyllabic lyric, which was also current there, and elsewhere it was influenced by the dodecasyllabic lyric. In the two nineteenth-century fragments from the northern littoral already referred to, there is a somewhat pronounced influence of lyric song in the Čakavian dialect. In a few cases, the influence of the lyric in the mainland areas was so great that it eclipsed the typical features of the *bugarščica*, although only one text of this kind has appeared with *bugarščica* subject matter (Kekez 1978:94-95). Otherwise, in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the octosyllabic lyric and especially the heroic decasyllabic epic became dominant socially and in the context of performance until they finally displaced the *bugarščica*. But two centuries later, in our own time, both these formerly dominant types suffered the same fate.

Two factors are, therefore, uppermost in a stylistic definition of the *bugarščica*: there are only relatively few of them and it is important to consider them not statically but in the context of a diachronic process. *Bugarščice* are fewer in number than other extant oral forms not because they actually were sparser, but because few have been preserved, and everything that is stated about them is thus based on insufficient material.

*Bugarščice* were popular on all occasions, even the most cheerful. Most of the evidence suggests that they were sung at weddings, an impression confirmed by information found in written literature. But it is also evident from texts of the *bugarščice* themselves, which have at the beginning or end—in *bugarščica* meter—usually two verses with an intervening refrain in which the host is exhorted to continue the festivities. Even the first recorded *bugarščica* of 1497 was performed on a festive occasion, in spite of the fact that the mood of the poems is, as a rule, melancholy and cheerless. Wherever people came together, the *bugarščica* had an audience. This again suggests how common the *bugarščica* was and how widely it was diffused throughout Croatian regions. Even wedding toasts and toasts in honor of guests were sung in the *bugarščica* form. The experience of mourning and melancholy and the aesthetics of tragedy were essential to the poetics of earlier ages, and in this respect the *bugarščica* proved attractive to many. It must still today be regarded as a very successful artistic genre, and here I part company with the majority of those who have studied it and have concluded otherwise. On the other hand, I do not claim that it was much more successful than the epic, for example, as has been stated by some who go to the opposite extreme now that the epic is relatively out of fashion. Every literary form, apart from its specific poetic character, has a specific aesthetic system of its own, and we appreciate the fact that our own age is inclined to favor the lyric in

general, and hence the *bugarščica*, rather than the heroic decasyllabic epic that was accorded mythological status at the time when the *bugarščica* was first being interpreted in scholarly circles.

### Traces of the *Bugarščica* in Written Literature

Like other oral forms, the *bugarščica* left its mark on the language, style, motifs, and themes of written literary works even in earliest times. If written and oral literature had not come together at an early stage, as mentioned above—inter alia, in the way they were collected—we would be the poorer for lack of an exceptional genre of true aesthetic worth. Early Croatian writers relied on oral literature in their own works, performed it, commented on it, and recorded it. The *bugarščica* was also involved in these processes. Interaction between written and oral literature occurred in the earliest written monuments; that is, even medieval literature in its origins and continued existence was sustained by the spoken word (Kekez 1977; 1978:44-45).

The stylistic device of prepositional duplication necessitated by the demands of meter, referred to above, is a common feature in the early writers of the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries: Mavro Vetranović, Nikola Nalješković, Ivan Bunić, Ignjat Đurđević, and many others (Kekez 1977). There is a strong tendency for the preposition to be separated in this way in medieval inscriptions. Although such texts—for example, those on the medieval tombstone (*stećak*)—are in prose, the preposition is separated in syntagmatic units that impart a rhythm to the clause similar to that of the *bugarščica*. The preposition is separated in one of the oldest Croatian monuments, the inscription on the stone from Baška on the island of Krk (ca. 1100). It has recently been treated by scholars not only as an important paleographic and cultural monument but also as a text founded on rhythmic principles. Father Dobrovit tells how he and nine other priests built the church, in a text in which the arrangement of words, the separation of prepositions, and the rhyme and rhythm differentiate it from everyday speech. The conjunction *da* [that] is also adopted from the *bugarščica* for the same purpose and given a meaning that is no longer current. It occurs in two proverbial formulations in the inscription on the Baška stone, serving as an emphatic particle in the sense of *thus*, *hence*, *but*. In the *bugarščica* this stylistic element stands at the very beginning of the verse: in one of Hektorović's recordings alone, it occurs four times. This feature and others similar to it, typical of the *bugarščica*, are prevalent in a number of medieval texts and also appear in Croatian Renaissance poetry. In the case of Vetranović's double-rhymed twelve-syllable verses, it is more the rule than the exception. Other elements of

the *bugarščica*, especially poetic diction, diminutives, syntagms, and the like, as well as general features of the *bugarščica*, are all scattered throughout his works. In his sixteenth-century *Posvetilište Abramovo* [*Abraham's Sacrifice*], the dramatization of a Biblical subject, the lament from *Majka Margarita* in adapted form is applied to the tragic figure of Sarah. This is a *bugarščica* that was not to be written down by Baraković until the beginning of the following century.

The first Croatian poets recorded oral lyrics but also wrote many poems themselves in that same style. The celebrated Slavist Matija Murko (1931:240) said that the first *bugarščica* in Croatian literature was some seventy years older than the two transcriptions of Hektorović, which were traditionally regarded as the oldest examples. Admittedly, it is written and not oral. The reference is to a poem in long lines, "Odiljam se" ["I Take My Leave"], attributed to Džore Držić. It is composed in sixteen-syllable lines on the model of other *bugarščice*, with the same refrain recurring after seven distichs, which is taken from the beginning of the first and second strophes and is repeated also at the beginning of the last two verses. In order to illustrate its *bugarščica* style and mournful mood, it is sufficient to quote the opening lines:

Odiljam se, moja vilo, Bog da nam bude u družbu;  
plač i suze i moju tužbu da bi znala, moja vilo!  
Odiljam se a ne vijem komu ostavljam ličce bilo.

[I take my leave, my nymph, may God go with us both;  
if only you knew my sobbing and tears and sorrow, my nymph!  
I take my leave, and know not to whom I leave your sweet white face.]

Držić skillfully exploits the external features of the *bugarščica* and its balladic melancholy mood, which is characteristic of the love poetry of that period.

We might likewise associate with the *bugarščica* a fragment from the dramatic ritual of the discovery and adoration of the Cross on Good Friday in the so-called second Glagolitic missal of Vrbnik of 1462. At the beginning there are instructions that the text must be sung mournfully in the manner of wailing women. The *bugarščica* can contribute to a plaintive dramatic performance of this kind by its analogous mood, and it can thus play its part in shaping the text. From the Middle Ages down to the present day this text has been intoned in Vrbnik on the island of Krk to mark the day of Christ's passion and death.

In addition to two *bugarščice*, Hektorović interpolated a number of other complete works from oral tradition. He also had recourse to oral literature in shaping the content and style of his *Ribanje*. Baraković proceeded in similar fashion in his *Vila Slovinka*, in which he incorporated

the moving tale of *Majka Margarita*, using various other elements of oral literature, including some from the *bugarščica*. In the heraldic documents composed and published in Venice in 1663 for the use of the Ohmućević family—which valued folk literature highly and recorded it—there is mention of songs: “come si canta nelle poesie de detto conte Hreglia e delli suoi egregij fatti, ch’in lingua illirica chiamano Popieukigne . . .” [“as is sung in the poems about the said Count Relja and his remarkable deeds, which in the Illyrian language they call *Popijevkinje* (*popijevke*) . . .”]. For some writers and ordinary people who had left their country, the *bugarščica* was a means of nostalgic communication with their native land as was epic poetry for the emigrants of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Dubrovnik citizen and poet Jaketa Palmotić and Stijepo Gradić used to sing a song about Marko Kraljević when they were in Rome. In letters written in 1679, Palmotić quotes entire verses from *bugarščice*. Juraj Križanić inserted verses from the *bugarščice* of his homeland as linguistic illustrations for the Pan-Slav grammar he wrote during his Siberian exile. He also commented on the performance of *bugarščice* at court celebrations and incorporated verses with a *bugarščica* flavor in the few poems he wrote.

In his literary works Vitezović showed a great love of oral literature, devoting critical attention to it and valuing its aesthetic qualities. One example of such activity is his recording of the *bugarščica* about Governor Derenčin, referred to earlier. Petar Zrinski and the *Popivka od Svilojevića*, mentioned above, show that epic heroes in an epic age meet the requirements of the *bugarščica* as a lyrical rather than epic genre. This is also clear in Vitezović’s epic, *Odiljenje sigetsko* [*The Szigetvár Farewell*] (1684), where there is ample evidence of oral poetry in general, and where *bugarščica* syntactic patterns and versification are used to articulate an emotional identification with the tragedy of Szigetvár and its principal character (Kekez 1986b). Petar Zrinski refers to the performance of a *bugarščica* in Szigetvár, as does also Brno Karnarutić in his narrative poem *Vazetje Sigeta grada* [*The Capture of Szigetvár*] (1584): Nikola Šubić Zrinski holds a great feast in honor of the victors at which *davorije* are sung, that is, martial songs accompanied by a war dance glorifying the triumphant warriors. The soldiers sing these songs in their native Croatian tongue. That the reference may be to ancient *bugarščice* can be deduced from the fact that Križanić speaks in similar terms of their performance and that for some earlier writers the term *davorija* is synonymous with *bugarščica*. At one point in Karnarutić’s poem, Zrinski also prepares a feast at which *bugarščice* are sung. The fact that the reference is to the performance of the same songs as in Petar Zrinski’s and Križanić’s writings is evident from the fact that Karnarutić calls them *bugarkinje* (Kekez 1986b:174).

In Dubrovnik in the second half of the seventeenth century, interest in oral literature was revived, and the *bugarščica* was admirably suited for the poetic sensibility of the period. The smooth, gallant, and gracious style of the Arcadian age restored the practice of oral recitation and thus the oral poem became fashionable. This was also the era of encounter in matters of style between the literary north and the literary south, both of which made use of oral literature (including the *bugarščica*) on a large scale and in the same manner, even when they did not serve as models for each other. Franjo Krsto Frankopan in the north and Ignjat Đurđević in the south are especially good examples of this phenomenon (Kekez 1981). A fellow townsman and close friend of Đurđević, Antun Gleđević wrote the dramatic work *Porodenje Gospodinovo* [*The Nativity of Our Lord*], in which shepherds glorify the newborn Lord by singing a *bugarščica* melody and refrain. Somewhat earlier, Gundulić had demonstrated his practical and theoretical allegiance to oral poetry and fondness for the *bugarščica* in his *Osman*. He refers fairly often to the *bugarščica*, mentions its chief characters, and even explains its origins. In Gundulić's company we might also place his contemporary and fellow citizen Junije Palmotić, the baroque dramatist, who, according to the testimony of Stijepo Gradić in the year 1670, was given to visiting places where people gathered and took part in folk dances. Palmotić would join in the *kolo*, or round dance, during which folk songs were sung, and he himself would improvise *poskočice*, that is, folk songs for the dance. Palmotić's interest in oral literature is also manifested in his use of typical characters from the *bugarščica* in his dramas—a collection of Slovene, Hungarian, and Bosnian gentlemen, for example (Stjepan Herceg, Janko Sibirjanin, Đurđe Branković)—and also characters from the heroic decasyllabic epic; incidentally, Gundulić also did the same thing. In other ways, too, the Croatian baroque, as we have seen to some extent, was fond of recasting, adapting, and remaining close to the form and content of the *bugarščica*.

Until recently it was not believed that archaic *bugarščice* were present in the Kajkavian dialectal area. A case could not be made merely on the basis of the few examples, referred to above, that show infiltration of Kajkavian linguistic features and that stem from the border of Kajkavian and Čakavian dialectal areas. There is, however, one epic, the *Pjesma o Sigetu* [*Song of Szigetvár*]—a title added later since the beginning was missing—that has some *bugarščica* features. It is found in the *Prekomurska pjesmarica I* [*Prekomurje Songbook I*], which is from the end of the sixteenth or beginning of the seventeenth century. It displays some of the features of a *bugarščica* dealing with Szigetvár, from the Gulf of Kotor region where we do in fact find a certain number of *bugarščice* with Kajkavian dialectal features. The *Pjesma o Sigetu* does not conform to the external features of the *bugarščica*—versification and form—but it does

reflect its internal characteristics: rhythm, poetic diction, syntactic constructions, clausal structure, and the relationship of characters. A number of these features are either general or coincident with those of the *bugarščica* about the death of Nikola Zrinski in Szigetvár. Since certain general imitations of the *bugarščica* are found in the *Prekomurska pjesmarica I* and in some other poems, and since the *bugarščica* served as a pattern for poems in the first published anthology in the Kajkavian dialect and in Latin, the *Cithara octochorda*, published in Vienna in 1701, we may conclude that the *bugarščica* frequently circulated in the Kajkavian area. This fact explains some hitherto obscure passages in the *bugarščica* corpus (typical of Kajkavian) and also offers a new view of its origins and historical development (Kekez 1986a).

It is self-evident that early Croatian writers frequently encountered the *bugarščica*, for it is to them that we owe the preservation of texts. Persons who wrote them down were certainly familiar with the genre and we have not listed them in this section. Nor have we mentioned the numerous works, particularly of writers from the coastal regions, in which the term occurs, or the majority of lexicographical works in which the entry *bugarščica* or the verb *bugariti* appears (Kekez 1978:33-38).

In our own time Croatian poetry has frequently had recourse to the age-old *bugarščica* with a specific purpose, although it is some hundred years ago that it vanished from oral tradition. As in earlier periods when written examples were found, the *bugarščica* is once more becoming part of written literature. Not only does written literature use its poetic elements, but an entire body of poetry is emerging that is modeled totally on the *bugarščica* technique and that contains no conspicuous elements of written literature, to which it otherwise naturally belongs. This is the case in Dubravko Horvatić's poem "*Bugarščica*," from his collection *Baščina [Heritage]*, published in Zagreb in 1982, the opening verses of which read as follows:

Zgorila je gusta česta, moj brajene, lug i gvozdi u dolini  
i u onoj vilin-gori visokoj, moj brajene  
kojuno sta prohodila i lipo sta drugovala, pisani vitezi.

[The dense young scrub is dry and withered, my dear brother, and  
the young wood, too, and the mature wood in the valley  
and in the high hills, where the fairies are, my dear brother,  
where finely decked-out knights often walked by and enjoyed friendship.]

Horvatić's "*Bugarščica*" is cast in the long verses of the oral *bugarščica* and makes use of its archaic poetic diction, phrasing, morphology, syntax, and language in general. It too is a ballad, but it synthesizes the national balladic tragic identity and thus creates the customary melancholy

atmosphere of the oral genre in question. It employs motifs from a number of oral examples of the genre, and, in addition, adopts a title documented by collectors of and commentators on the *bugarščica* from the sixteenth century right up to the present.

Horvatić's approach to the ancient *bugarščica* is part of a general trend in contemporary Croatian prose, poetry, and drama to make use of the language of ancient settings. In this literature the language of ages past establishes a bond with contemporary culture. This linkage has a dual function: it serves to place time and space in an absolute context, interpreting history as the eternal recurrence of the same phenomena; and it renders time absolute and space concrete in that it interprets Croatian balladic history as a constant return to the same reality. These two variants of one idea are typical, as I have said, of postwar Croatian literature, and a historical identity is virtually created from oral factors, either factual or visualized in real terms, but invariably ancient and primeval. As a rule they derive from the Middle Ages, but sometimes they go back to the remote Croatian past, hypothetically even to the first appearance of the human race, or the very beginnings of Croatian history. The subject matter of the *bugarščica* is an integral part of the most venerable Croatian cultural data, and it is eagerly accepted and employed, especially in poetry. Unlike the example taken from Horvatić, the *bugarščica* is mostly used in modified form. The *bugarščica* entitled *Majka Margarita* thus appears in fragmentary form in Josip Pupačić's anthology of poems *Moj križ svejedno gori* [*My Cross Burns Nevertheless*], published in Zagreb in 1971.

The use of the *bugarščica* in postwar poetry is particularly well illustrated in the collection *Kameni spavač* [*The Sleeper of Stone*] of Mak Dizdar, whose poetic work is regularly inspired by medieval gravestones, or *stećci*—from which this collection takes its title—or by the inscriptions and drawings on them or by oral narratives, especially legends and related traditions. Thus, the entire anthology is couched in the language (morphology, syntax, poetic diction) and reconstructed style of the medieval period. This involves literal transcriptions of the gravestone inscriptions referred to above and other epigraphs or the incorporation of old documents and oral literature, including *bugarščice*. In terms of versification and communication, the *bugarščica* in more or less modified form is used to shape a number of Dizdar's poems. The mode of expression and the stylistic devices already identified indicate clearly the presence of the *bugarščica*. Besides age-old diction, rural speech, folk ideas, proverbial expression, and the *bugarščica*'s use of the conjunction *da* at the beginning of the verse, we find fairly common duplication of the preposition, for instance, *u tome kratkom u ljetu* ["in that brief, in summer"]. The oral literary element represented by the *bugarščica* in this poetry reconstructs the language, thought, and life of the Middle Ages and

establishes communication with the present age. To render this reconstruction more complete, Dizdar not only frequently uses duplication of the preposition but—in contrast to the *bugarščica*, which merely duplicates it—intensifies the medieval oral style by repeating the preposition several times: *u ovom dobrom u radosnom u bijelom u svijetu* [“in this good, in this joyful, in this white, in this world”]. Thus the ancient *bugarščica* finds its way into our own age, not merely as something of historical and aesthetic value, but also as a device that shapes contemporary literature. At the same time it is transformed from an oral to a written literary form.<sup>2</sup>

*University of Zagreb*

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<sup>2</sup> On this point see further Kekez 1983.



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