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Fragments of the Utopia of Contestation in South Slavic Oral Lyric Poetry

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Introduction

South Slavic oral lyric songs are characterized by subjectivity and emotionality. They follow human life from birth to death—from lullabies to laments. When they sing about love, longing, desire, departing to a distant land for work or to war; when they are sung during work, during rituals (most of all at weddings); when they reflect mythic images, they reveal human being, the inner world of man and his relations with the outside world.

As Hatidža Dizdarević Krnjević states: "Even if it is fragmented and chronologically torn, and that is a drama of everything that exists in oral form, the lyric heritage is a celebration of the life of soul and body" (Krnjević 1986:6).[1] In the same fragmented way, the South Slavic oral lyric songs indicate the possibility of a utopia of contestation—the possibility of a different life—free and to the liking of heroines and heroes of the songs.

This paper examines fragments of the utopia of contestation in a representative corpus of South Slavic oral lyric poetry. The songs come from the wide cultural and geographical space inhabited by the South Slavs, today divided into these states: Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Northern Macedonia and Montenegro.[2] These songs were mainly written down in the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth. The songs are part of anthologies or regional collections. The anthologies were compiled either by the collectors themselves (Vuk Stefanović Karadžić for Serbian folk songs) or by editors (Croatian folk songs: Fran Kurelac (also a collector), Nikola Andrić; Bulgarian songs: Dimitär Osinin and Ivan Burin). The regional collections were compiled by collectors, and contain lyric songs from Istria, Northern Dalmatia (Frano Ženko Donadini), Bosnia (Bogoljub Petranović), central Serbia (Todor Bušetić), eastern Serbia (Savatije Grbić), Kosovo (Ivan Jastrebov), and Northern Macedonia (Ivan Jastrebov, Dimitär and Konstantin Miladinov). Some songs, from various regions, were published in journals (*Brastvo, Carigradski glasnik, Danica, Kiće*) by different collectors.

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[1] Translations from this and all other sources published in languages other than English are my own, unless otherwise noted.

[2] During this research, Slovene oral lyric songs were analyzed, but no verses from them have been cited. Although it was important to cover the widest possible South Slavic area, the main criterion for further analyses of songs was the exemplarity of the poetic images.

The utopian fragments in South Slavic oral lyric songs are discussed in this paper in multidisciplinary contexts. For that reason, the theoretical foundation is multi-layered. The utopian idea can be observed in the writings of Ernst Bloch (1986), Lewis Mumford (1922), Karl Mannheim (1929) and Ruth Levitas (2010). I give special attention to the interpretation of the utopian idea as a desire for a better life (Levitas 2010:8) and to Bakhtin's conception of the utopian potential that is temporarily realized during the carnival (1968). Considering that the focal point of this paper is the modeling of utopian fragments in oral lyric songs, the important theoretical postulate is the semiotic concept of the model (cf. Detelić 1992). Finally, I consider the oral lyric as a verbal art, based on the poetical research of Hatidža Krnjević (1986) and G. I. Mal'cev (1989). Since the 19th-century records of South Slavic oral lyric songs offer very few pieces of ethnographic information (with the partial exception of ritual songs), performance contexts are not discussed in detail in this paper.

The focal point of this paper is the model of an alternative world that is formed when oral lyric songs sing about good faraway lands, happy times of maidenhood, and defiance of the patriarchal order. That poetic world may carry fragments of utopian notions.

These songs remain connected to the real world (cf. Bloch 1986:38); the alternative images arise from the existing patterns that are being contested. However, their power to subvert existing society, to destroy it, or to prepare it for destruction (Bloch 1986:51) does not exist in reality. Lyric songs do not destroy the patriarchal order. They are not turned into action.[3] They sing about what life does not contain.[4] When they are not connected to specific rites, they do not reflect even the temporary suspension of the official system with all its prohibitions and hierarchical barriers (cf. Bakhtin 1978:104). For that matter, the transience of utopian freedom in songs sung during rituals and feasts intensifies the fantasticality and utopian radicalism of lyric images (cf. Bakhtin 1978:104), even as images in songs sung during a profane time express the unfeasibility of desires for a different world.

Since the songs were born in a community, and they were performed and passed down through generations, they are an expression of collective desires—mainly those of girls and women, since they were the ones who principally sang these songs (Karadžić 1975:559).[5] Collectivity is emphasized by the choral singing that often occurs during rituals. In any given performance, however, the songs could express the concrete desires of concrete girls (and young men) in a concrete situation, while the expression, sourced from the reservoir of collective folk notions, remains traditional. Consequently, lyrical utopian fragments are collective, since they appear during the specific process of forming traditional oral verbal art, but in every single performance, they actualize the desires of singers in a given moment as well. Accordingly, they form a poetic, subjective world of a lyrical subject, and collectivity is achieved through the

[3] On the importance of acting for a utopian mind, see Mannheim 1968:169-70; on the function of social transformation as a basic function of utopia, see Levitas 2010:196.

[4] Mannheim notes that fairy tales and myths are expressions of what real life does not contain (Mannheim 1968:167).

[5] Karadžić noted, however, that men, especially young men, sang lyric songs as well (1975:559). Regarding this data, it could be said that the desire for freedom, for a different life, is universal in these songs, and not exclusively connected with the female domain.

objectivization of the individual. Therefore, emotions (here: wishes) gain an "internal" value that comes from outside. The encounter with the traditional form provokes empathy (recognition) in listeners. The prerequisite for this recognition is the traditional form with its universality. Listeners become collaborators in the process of singing, insofar as they are included, internally, in a common lyrical universe. The emotionality itself does not become collective, but the sign that reveals the emotion of every participant does (Mal'cev 1989:89-90).

Lyric songs do not offer developed utopian notions, since their concise expression determines the way people conceptualize the world. There are only hints and fragments of utopian images expressing desires for a better life.[6] It is precisely through those desires that lyrical utopian fragments give indications of alternative values (cf. Levitas 2010:228), different from those dominant in the patriarchal world. In this paper, I will show how the motif of the determined, defiant maiden who refuses to abide by the rules of the society where she lives, or who refuses to marry at all or to marry undesired men, and songs about alternative family values express both a shortcoming in the society in which the songs were sung and a longing for the fulfillment of desires for a different life. The mutual dependence of desire and fulfillment in lyric songs does not lead toward change,[7] but the songs implicitly articulate dissatisfaction (cf. Levitas 2010:117). The possibility of expressing a desire for freedom carries a utopian, humanistic idea of humaneness and liberation (cf. Đurić 1997:358). For that matter, the utopian hints of lyric are as much creative as destructive (cf. Đurić 1997:359). Songs will not change the patriarchal order, but they may create the notion of an alternative world, which can become a source of utopian inspiration (cf. Đurić 1997:361).

Bakhtin discusses that alternative world in connection with the carnival, which becomes a kind of second life of the people, who temporarily enter the utopian realm of universal freedom, equality, and abundance. The temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and the established order, the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions are celebrated (Bakhtin 1978:16). Showing the town square as a place where a special form of free and familiar contact reigns among people who are usually divided by the barriers of caste, property, profession, and age, Bakhtin reveals a world where alienation temporarily vanishes, where man feels like a man among men. These truly human relations are not only a fruit of imagination or abstract thought; they are experienced. The utopian ideal and the realistic merge in this unique carnival experience (Bakhtin 1978:17). Bakhtin further points out that the universalism and freedom of medieval laughter relate to the people's unofficial truth (Bakhtin 1978:105). Laughter represented victory over fear, which was ephemeral, festive; it was followed by the fears and oppressions of everyday life, but from these brief moments an unofficial truth emerged, a truth about the world and man, which prepared the new Renaissance consciousness (Bakhtin 1978:106). This laughter was the social consciousness of all the people; Bakhtin refers to Alexander Herzen's notion that laughter contains something revolutionary (Bakhtin 1978:107).

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[6] Ruth Levitas emphasizes that utopian form, content, and function change (Levitas 2010:4), but the desire for a better way of life is a constant (Levitas 2010:8).

[7] Deficiency and the hope for fulfillment are the focal points of Bloch's concept of utopia and, consequently, his consideration of the "not yet" (*noch nicht*). "Not yet" leads from desire to fulfillment, and to change. See also Levitas 2010:102-3.

This utopia is experienced within life itself; it is strictly limited by time, the time of the feast, but for a short time, to a certain extent, this truth becomes a real existing force (Bakhtin 1978:282).

The Good Place

Although Bakhtin's remarks on utopian possibility are based on the specific time of the carnival, and lyric songs were often sung during everyday work and chores, different fragments of utopia can correspond since (lyric) singing itself involves entering into another and different reality.[8] Accordingly, several of Bakhtin's ideas correspond to some oral lyric songs.

Namely, we should bear in mind that oral lyric is not monolithic (neither is culture)—in these songs official and alternative discourses intertwine.[9] They affirm social and family norms (in the image of the humble, obedient maiden), but they cherish freedom from these norms (for example, in erotic fantasy and longing for the freedom of the body) as well (Krnjević 1986:8). This intertwining is present in the motif of the ideal land. In a wedding song, the groom's companions send word to the maiden (Karadžić 1975, no. 11)[10]:

Ajde, devojko, u našu zemlju,	Come, maiden, to our land,
u našoj zemlji snežak ne veje,	in our land, the snow doesn't fall heavily,
već sve kišica, letnja rosica.	but just the mild rain, the summer dew.

This wedding song confirms the patriarchal pattern. The groom's land represents the existing order as ideal.[11] However, when this motif is a part of the *kraljice* ("queens") song,[12] then the meaning of the ideal land changes (Karažić 1975, no. 11):

Oj snašice Nedo!	O dear sister-in-law Neda!
Otkup' ovo čedo;	Give the ransom for this child;
ako li ga mlada	if you, a young woman,
otkupiti nećeš,	don't want to give the ransom,
mi ćemo g' odvesti	we will take him away,
tam' u našu zemlju;	there to our land;

[8] Novica Petković emphasizes that the clichéd beginnings and endings of oral songs enable crossing from one level of language usage to another (poetic) one (1990:25).

[9] Aili Nenola notes that folklore can express acceptance of the dominant norms, concepts, and structures of power, but it can also offer an alternative, different worldview, in which case folklore can be seen as a culture of contestation (Nenola 1999:23).

[10] All song translations are mine and are literal to provide an insight into precise meanings.

[11] The same image exists in love songs when a lad asks a maiden to come to his (ideal) land (Miladinov 1861, no. 371).

[12] *Kraljice* ("queens") is a spring ritual that usually takes place at Pentecost in the form of processions of specially dressed and equipped female groups. Unmarried girls sang "queens'" songs during the ritual (Nedić 1977:16; see also Jokić 2012).

tam' u našoj zemlji	there in our land
po dva sunca greju,	two suns shine,
po dva sunca greju,	two suns shine,
po dva vetra veju;	two winds blow;
čedo nama treba	we need the child
kao struk bosiljka.	as a basil stem.

The ideal land is not male land anymore, and it is not real. It is a land of queens since the girls/queens sing the song during the ritual when they possess the power of the otherworld and temporarily become alien to their community (Ljubinković 2014:378). The "queens" briefly cross the boundary of the established order. As they are girls ready to be married, and the ritual incorporates elements of knightly dances with swords,[13] wedding processions, and gender inversion (since the girls carry male hats, swords, and flags), the "queens" can be observed in the context of initiation rites and the ritual symbolization of a myth of the androgyne (Čale Feldman 2001:202).[14] However, it should be noticed that the range of female representational power expands during the *kraljice* rite, allowing girls to appropriate unrestrained behavior and social powers assigned to men (Čale Feldman 2001:205). In this semantic layer, the utopian potential of lyric (*kraljice*) songs is based on patterns described by Bakhtin. During the brief duration of the ritual, the participants enter the utopian realm of absolute equality (cf. Bakhtin 1978:281), and the ideal land of queens can be observed as a mirror reflection of the ideal land of the groom. For that matter, the *kraljice* songs do not confirm the patriarchal order; rather, that order is contested in a utopian manner. The same notion (the land where two suns shine, where it does not snow or rain, or just the mild rain falls and dew gathers) denotes opposite values. Traditional notions and value systems are complex since the same women/girls can sing different variants in different circumstances, when the notions imply different practices (cf. Gal 1898:24).

Even in songs that are sung in the course of everyday life, without ties to any particular ritual context, the ideal is a faraway land whence the bird flies. When a maiden drives away a swallow, it answers (Andrić 1929, no. 378):

Al govori tica lastavica:	But the swallow bird speaks:
Ne tiraj me, lipa Anđelijo,	don't drive me away, fair Anđelija,
ne tiraj me iz tvojeg bostana!	don't drive me away from your garden!
Ja sam ptica iz daleke zemlje,	I am a bird from a faraway land,
gdino rodi biber i naranča,	where the pepper and orange grow,
gdino drago po dva draga ljube,	where a sweetheart loves two sweethearts,
i gdino je godina bez zime.	and there is no winter in the year.

The maiden then begs the bird to take her to that land to fulfill her wish to kiss young heroes. This realization of the motif connects a geographic utopia (good, faraway land) with a temporal

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[13] On the *kraljice* dance, see Lovretić 1897:410-11.

[14] On the initiatory status of "queens" as girls ready to marry, see Jokić 2012:38.

one, formed at the moment of singing.[15] Since oral lyric poetry deals with the emotionality of people, the utopian possibility is correlated with freedom of emotions—love. When the songs sing about an ideal land, then the utopian meaning takes the form of eutopia—a good place. It is a world in itself (Mumfred 2009:19) that brings implicit criticism of the world it refers to (11). Consequently, the land where the maiden could kiss two sweethearts contests patriarchal ethics and a social system that makes it impossible for a girl to choose her future husband. That world of philosophies, fantasies, rationalizations, beliefs, and projections is real (Mumford 2009:28) since it is real for the one who imagines it, who experiences it in herself. Utopia contains compensation, but also anticipation (Levitas 2010:101). The song sings about what does not exist in reality, and about what is desired, what is longed for as well.

Since the return to the spatio-temporal matrix of the otherworld and the beginning of time has a utopian potential (Tarkka 2013:251), it is realized in songs about faraway or alien lands, during rites that repeat mythic patterns (Meletinski 1983:221), or through singing, which constitutes a discourse different from everyday speech.

The Time of Happiness

As an ideal land is a typical utopian locus, the period of maidenhood is often a reflex of temporal utopia in lyric poetry—it is the happy time of the maiden's life. The high value put on maidenhood is motivated by the fact that it represents the time when a girl has control over her life (Karadžić 1898, no. 452):

Đevovanje, moje carovanje!	Maidenhood, my reign!
Car bijeh, dok u baba bijah.	I was a tsar when I was in my father's home.

For that matter, she is not ready to renounce her reign (control over her life):

Ne ćah carstvo ni za Stambol dati,	I didn't want to give away my reign not even for Stambol,
tunofesa za Bosne vezirstvo,	A Tunisian fez for the viziership over Bosnia,
a dva oka za dva pašaluka,	two eyes for two pashaluks,
dv'je obrve za dva zainluka,	two eyebrows for two big fiefs,
dvije ruke šeher Banjaluke	two hands for the town of Banjaluka.

However, in line with the orientation of lyric songs toward the man, the maiden renounced for a young man everything she did not want to renounce for any symbol of power:

A za vrana za mlada bećara,	And for a young, dark lad,
koji nema brade ni brkova,	who doesn't have a beard or a moustache,
za nj bih dala srce iz njedara,	for him I would give a heart from my chest,
i suviše srmali jagluka,	and many sterling silver handkerchiefs,

[15] "Geographic" and "temporal" utopia are terms of Ernst Bloch (1986:38).

štono sam ga tri godine vezla,	which I have embroidered for three years,
a četvrtu biserom kitila.	and for a fourth embellished with pearls.

These lines annul the utopian image of royal autonomy, which is replaced by the readiness to surrender to the young man, readiness for marriage suggested by the motif of the embroidered handkerchief, which is part of the bride's dowry.

The wedding songs form a similar value system. When a brother-in-law asks his sister-in-law (Karadžić 1898, no. 41):

Snaho moja, od zlata jabuko!	My sister-in-law, my golden apple!
koje ti je s majkom dobro bilo,	How good was your life in your mother's home,
te s' u struku tanka i visoka,	that you are so slender and tall,
a u licu b'jela i rumena?	and in the face white and rosy?

she answers:

Moj đevere, od zlata prstene,	My brother-in-law, my golden ring,
svako mi je s majkom dobro bilo:	everything was good in my mother's home:
u večer me rano lijegala,	I went to bed early in the evening,
a u jutru dockan ustajala;	I woke up late in the morning;
od ružice đulsom umivala,	I washed my face with rose water,
bijelom me svilom otirala,	and wiped it off with white silk,
uzgojila, vama darovala.	my mother raised me and gave me to you.

The time spent in the mother's home is presented as filled with maternal love and care, the carefree time when the girl did not have so many duties (she went to bed early and woke up late). However, care for the daughter is connected with a wish for her to get married well—the mother gives her to the groom, namely to his family, in the end, and the maiden's utopian topos decomposes.

On the other hand, some variants do not mention the marriage, and only the image of a privileged birth remains (Karanović 1990, no. 72):

Kad sam majci u srcu maknula,	When I was conceived in my mother's heart,
onda majka u sunce gledala,	then my mother was looking at the sun,
pa sam joj se lijepa rodila.	so I was born beautiful.
Đulsom me je vodom omivala,	She washed my face with rose water,
a rumenom ružom otirala,	and wiped it off with a red rose,
neka sam joj bijela i rumena,	so that I was white and rosy;
a lozovom granom opasala,	she belted me with a vine tendril,
da sam majci tanka i visoka	so that I was slender and tall.

When the birth of the maiden is connected to the Sun (gazing at the sun), the connection between birth and cosmic space is established. The heroine gains the characteristics of a solar being. By

drying her off with a rose and belting her with a vine tendril, the mother implicitly transmits the magic of the plants to her daughter.[16] The motif of a miraculous birth and felicitous early life models a special type of lyric heroine—conscious of her beauty and conscious of herself. Exactly these heroines will be the carriers of the utopian ideas of lyric poetry. They are the ones who defy the official order and oppose those who impose on them the life they do not want. Even when their symbolic strategies (songs and magic) cannot reverse power relations (cf. Bourdieu 2001:47), they still have the ability to express their revolt, and to contest symbolically the world that is not to their liking.

The utopian *topoi* of maidenhood are preserved when the song is sung from the perspective of a married woman (Kurelac 1871:5, no. 27):

Kad sam bila u matere,	When I was in my mother's home,
imala sam troju volju:	I had three wishes:
prva volja moja bila:	my first wish was:
činila sam, čto sam štila;	to do what I wanted;
druga volja moja bila:	my second wish was:
hodila sam, kud sam štila;	to go where I wanted;
treta volja moja bila:	my third wish was:
ljubila sam, kog sam štila.	to kiss whom I wanted.
A sad moram neg jednoga,	And now I have to kiss only one,
vazmi, bože, i ovoga.	God, take him as well.

The maiden who reigned in her father's home, the unmarried girl, had her own will—she was free to get around, to act, and to love whom she wanted. Marriage means subjugation emphasized by a change of the erotic situation—the woman cannot kiss whomever she wants but only one person—her husband whom she does not desire. She is frustrated by the loss of the possibility of free love, and that is why she invokes the death of her husband. Widowhood is implicitly shown as desirable, as the possible return to the freedom of maidenhood.

Defiance and Contestation

Determined heroines, who are neither humble nor obedient, are in the group of those who are not ideal by the criteria of the patriarchal community (Karadžić 1973, no. 15):

Budila majka Omera:	The mother was waking Omer:
Ustani, sinko Omere,	Get up, my son Omer,
pasa ti draga mimo dvor,	your sweetheart passed by the house,
udari rukom o javor,	she struck the maple tree with her hand,
poplaši konje s livade,	she scared the horses off the meadow,

[16] For ethnographic data on the transmission of magical lore about plants from mother to daughter (or from mother-in-law to daughter-in-law), see Mijatović 1901:121.

sokola s žute narandže!	and the falcon off the yellow orange tree!

The maiden who strikes the maple tree, who scares off the horses and falcon (that is, the young man, whose attributes are represented by the horse and falcon), is not obedient, she takes a stand and she is singled out since she does not behave as expected. Such a maiden carries utopian fragments within herself—by not obeying, causing hostility, she shows the possibility of a different, and more unconstrained life.

This kind of attitude can be modelled as defiance (Karadžić 1973, no. 175):

I sinoć mi draga dolazila,	And my sweetheart came to me last evening,
i u moju salu ulazila,	and she entered my hall,
i na mojoj stolici sedila,	and she sat on my chair,
i u moju arfu udarala,	and she played my harp,
i na arfi žice pokidala,	and she broke the harp strings,
i u moju baštu ušetala,	and she entered my garden,
i u bašti zulum počinila,	and she did damage in the garden,
i sve mi je cveće pokidala	and she tore out all the flowers
šimširovo i ruzmarinovo,	of boxwood and rosemary,
bosiljevo i karamfiljevo;	of basil and carnation;
jošt je jedan dragoljub ostao	only one nasturtium remained
i na njemu listak od ružice,	and on it one small rose petal,
i na listu iglom napisala	and she wrote on it with the needle
da je meni prkos prkosila.	that she defied me with defiance.

The maiden from the song is active and ready to express a complex emotional state: entering the space of the young man's house and garden, she reveals closeness with him; breaking the harp strings and tearing out the flowers, she expresses defiance, possibly caused by a love misunderstanding. The utopian is realized on two levels: as emotional, internal—as readiness to express emotions (including even resentment and anger) by acting, behaving in a way contrary to what is expected and ordered by the community; and as gender inversion—the maiden performs the traditionally male role of cutting the flowers in the garden.[17] By taking on the male role, she appropriates for herself the male freedom to act. Although songs from rural environments also sing about defiant heroines, this song is from an urban milieu (marked by a new vocabulary—"hall," "harp"), where the freer behavior is socially motivated as well.

Defiance can be an answer to rejection. When a mother advises her son not to marry a girl from Pomoravlje (a region in central Serbia; the girl is referred to as a "Moravka maiden"), since the girls from that region are sickly, the maiden proves to be quite the opposite (Bušetić 1902, no. 167):

To dočula Moravka devojka,	The Moravka maiden heard that,

[17] In the variant, the maiden curses the lad who tore the basil (Veselinović 1890:85, no. 3). The curse carries a utopian potential of defiance, of rebellion.

to dočula, pa Boga molila:	she heard that and prayed to God:
Daj mi, Bože, leto hladovito,	Give me, oh God, chilly summer,
i u leto žito položito,	and in the summer flattened grain,
da s' nažnjivam s Markom po postatu.	so that I compete in harvesting with Marko.
Bog joj dade leto hladovito,	God gave her a chilly summer,
i u leto žito položito,	and the flattened grain in the summer,
te s' popudi s Markom po postatu.	so, in turns, she gathered it with Marko.
Marko naže dvesta i dva snopa,	Marko harvested two hundred and two sheaves,
a Moravka trista i tri snopa.	and Moravka three hundred and three.

The maiden demonstrates her strength and readiness to oppose, to respond to injustice. In traditional culture, to speak ill of a girl unfairly, to prevent her from marrying, is a serious offence (Đorđević 1931:3). In this song, it is exceptional that the Moravka maiden responds by taking direct action. She is not protected by a supernatural force. During the harvest, she herself (aided by her answered prayers) reveals the falseness of the lad's mother's words.[18]

Lyric heroines cheat the young men using their affection. When a hero addresses a maiden as "my white maiden" and lays claim to her by giving her a ducat (a gold coin), she responds (*Kićine pesme* 1924:88, no. 2):

U nedelju na pendžeru,	On Sunday, at the window,
ja sam dukat po'arčila,	I spent a ducat,
za nalune i kondure.	for slippers and shoes.
Nalune sam iscijepala,	I tore the slippers,
a kondure izderala,	I wore out the shoes,
oko vrata čepkajući,	puttering around the door,
moje drago čekajući.	waiting for my sweetheart.

The maiden denies the lad the right to her, earned by the gift (a golden coin). She cannot be bought with money. She accepts the coin but does not feel obliged to the young man. She spends the coin on footwear. Showing worn-out footwear, she shows the instability of the gift. Since the ducat can be a token of a marriage proposal (Karadžić 1957:97), this song relativizes the gift and relegates it to a lower semantic register. The motif of a maiden determined to deceive a lad, take his money, and give her affection to another shows a different type of heroine and a different value system.

The woman who chooses with whom she will dance belongs to the same type (IKZ 1924:79, no. 56):

Spametil san se va gore,	When I was in the forest,
da mi je ljuba va Zadre.	I remembered that my beloved is in Zadar.
Kad ja mladi v Zadar grad,	When I came to Zadar town,

[18] In another instance of the strong and clever maiden's victory in a harvesting contest, the lad offers the girl a horse if she wins, but she has a counterproposal: if she wins, she wants him as a reward (Miladinov 1861, no. 654).

to mi ljuba s tanca gre	my beloved was coming back from a dance
s tujen junakon bez mene,	with some unknown hero, without me,
va svilnoj suknji do zemlje,	in her silk skirt that reaches the ground,
saka žica po dukat,	every thread in the skirt is worth a ducat,
a sa suknja sto dukat.	the whole skirt—a hundred ducats.

The exercise of freedom and the right to dance with another man model a different type of ethics, following women's desires. The extension of the dancing to different towns (the image repeats with varying locations) expands the space of women's movements and actions. The melancholic hero's speech reveals reversed roles—he is the one who expects fidelity and becomes betrayed. The reversal of roles in song, like the reversals that occur during the carnival and feasts, reveal new possibilities—in this case, desirable for women, less so for men.

The girl's behavior towards the young man can be humorous (Karadžić 1975, no. 442):

Pod noć pođoh gledat' đevojaka,	I went to seek the maidens in the evening,
al' đevojke sjele večerati,	but the maidens were having dinner,
dadoše mi lučem svijetliti:	they gave me the torch to light them:
Sv'jetli, momče, dokle nama drago,	Keep the light shining, lad, to our hearts' content,
pak ti ljubi, koju tebi drago.	then you kiss the one you desire.
Lake mi se noge uštapiše,	My weak legs stiffened,
b'jele ruke u smolu obliše;	my white hands were covered with resin;
u tom svanu i sunce ogranu,	then the sun rose,
i đevojke mene prevariše.	and the maidens fooled me.

The utopian character of the lyric scene is revealed in the nighttime, governed by the maidens' rules, and in the liberated nature of laughter. During dinner, by the light of the torch, the maidens are the ones who determine the rules; they order the lad to light the space as long as they want. Fooling the lad who gets humorously fatigued from standing and covered in resin, they construct their world, where they act freely and seemingly gain power over the lad, who is more powerful than they are in the official (daily) order.

The motif of rejecting a young man is another expression of female contestation of the passive position in traditional culture. In reply to the suitor's question, which is also an erotic invitation (Karadžić 1898, no. 329):

Što ti raste u njedrima?	What grows in your breasts?
Al' su dunje al' turunče?	Are there quinces or oranges?
Al' su s mora pretukale?	Did they come from the sea?

the maiden denies the lad's assumptions, answering:

Nego rastu dva goluba;	[No,] but rather two pigeons grow;
jedan muči, drugi guči:	one is silent, the other coos:
Ko me takne, al' pomakne,	he who touches me, or moves me,

kljunom ću mu izbit oči	will have his eyes dug out with their beaks
a nogama obrvice.	and eyebrows with their claws.

The image becomes dynamic: the breasts metaphorically change from quinces and oranges to pigeons who defend themselves (or attack). Unlike fruits, which the young man obtains in different realizations of the motif (for example, Veselinović 1890:76, no. 1), the pigeons/breasts are forbidden: the one who reaches out for them will have his eyes dug out. The readiness to defend herself is an expression of the maiden's desire to exercise agency, to reject, to decide what to do with her body, and to choose with whom she will (or will not) have an erotic encounter.

The rejection of the suitors is materialized by giving precedence to the parental home. When the duke asks the maiden Todora to marry him, she refuses (Donadini 1913, no. 142):

K njoj dolazi vojvoda:	The duke comes to her:
Pođi za me Todora!	Marry me Todora!
Bogme neću vojvoda,	I don't want to, duke,
volim bratu ovce pasti	I would rather graze my brother's sheep
i materi potku presti,	and spin the weft for my mother,
nego tvoja ljuba biti,	than be your wife,
u vilarima šetati,	walk in fine shoes,
kroz prozore gledati.	look through the windows.

The disturbs the patriarchal order when marriage is not (or not yet) her goal. She prefers life in the poor but loving environment of her parental home to marrying a wealthy but unloved man. She does not give preference to another suitor—the loved (and possibly poor) young man (cf. Karadžić 1975, no. 310)—but rather her unreadiness for marriage is emphasized. Once again, the life of an unmarried girl is considered better than the life of a married woman.

Marriage is highly valued in the patriarchal community, but in some songs it is postponed because maidenhood, as we have seen, means a time of freedom. By postponing marriage, the carefree life in the parents' home is prolonged (Andrić 1929, no. 294):

Nek' se žene mlađa braća moja!	Let my younger brothers marry!
Nek s' udaju mlađe seke moje!	Let my younger sisters marry!
Koja mi je hitnja udavati?	What is the pressure to get married?
Tunja ni'jesam, istrunuti ne ću,	I am not a quince, I will not rot,
ni jabuka, izagnjiti ne ću.	nor am I an apple, I will not decay.
Čisto srebro po'rđati ne će;	Pure silver will not rust;
srebru će se kujundžija naći,	there will be a blacksmith for silver,
i meni će suđen danak doći,	and my wedding day will come,
il jesenas, ili će večeras;	this autumn, or this evening;
udat ću se i pokajat ću se,	I will marry and I will regret,
spominjat ću carstvo djevojačko,	I will remember my maidenly reign,
i ovako sebi govoriti:	and I will speak to myself thus:

Car ti bijah, dok djevojka bijah,	I was a tsar while I was a maiden,
a sad n'jesam ni car ni djevojka.	and now I am neither a tsar nor am I a maiden.
Udadoh se i izgubih carstvo,	I got married and I lost the realm,
a da mi se dadu povratiti,	but if I could regain it,
umjela bih istom carevati!	I would know how to rule.

In this song, two temporal levels intertwine. Before marriage, the maiden is confident about her beauty, comparing herself with a quince and an apple, with shining silver. She is not worried that she will not marry; she just wants to postpone her marriage. Then, the image of a utopian realm of maidenhood changes. The heroine speaks from the perspective of a married woman who is no longer a maiden nor does she have power (she is not a tsar). What is at first just the postponement of marriage becomes regret for not having enjoyed more fully her time of freedom (not knowing how to reign). In this way, the annulment of a utopian layer can be observed, since the original contestation of marriage ends in subjugation.

The contestation of marriage in general in songs is more often configured as the contestation of marriage with an unloved man, giving rise to the utopian motif of free choice.[19] While in the patriarchal family, parents decide who their daughter will marry (cf. Karadžić 1957:95-96), in songs the maidens can refuse to marry someone they do not desire. The utopian image becomes radicalized when the maiden threatens to contest her parents' choice (Andrić 1929, no. 46):

Ako mene dadeš za nedraga,	If you give me to someone unloved,
uvik ću ga sidić dočikati,	I will always welcome him while sitting,
nogom ću mu stolac namišćati.	I will place his chair with my leg.
Ako mene dadeš ti za draga,	If you give me to my sweetheart,
uvik ću ga stojeć dočikati,	I will always welcome him while standing,
desnom rukom stolac nemišćati.	I will place his chair with my right hand.
Milo ću ga k sebi, majko, zvati:	Mother, I will sweetly call him to come to me:
Odi k meni, draga dušo moja,	Come to me, my dear sweetheart,
da ja vidim crne oči tvoje,	let me see your black eyes,
koje su me u majke gledale!	that were watching me when I was in my mother's home!
Da ja vidim brze noge tvoje,	let me see your fast legs,
koje su me često oblazile!	that were visiting me often!
Da je vidim medna usta tvoja,	Let me see your sweet lips,
koje su me u majke ljubila!	that were kissing me when I was in my mother's home!

Threatening disobedience, as opposed to the socially prescribed obedience of a woman to which she usually consents, the maiden expresses her emotions and desires. Although she is ready to obey the family's command, by expressing her will, she relativizes that command. The image of the freer love life of a maiden who, before marriage, has erotic encounters with her sweetheart is

[19] Lotte Tarkka points to the genre of Carelian oral lyric (*voik*), in which girls expressed their sorrow and pain at their parents' choosing future husbands for them. The songs emphasize the importance of love and sexual attraction in choosing a husband (Tarkka 2013:285).

formed. In oral lyric poetry, there are two parallel worlds: in one, strict obedience is required from women, and in the other free erotic encounters are possible. That, once again, confirms the complexity of the lyric world and its values. Marrying the one with whom she was intimate, the maiden alleviates the subsequent lack of freedom.

Marriage is also contested by the motif of the maiden's running away to freedom (Petranović 1867, no. 200):

Još zorica ne zabijeljela,	The sun hadn't come up yet,
ni Danica pomolila lica,	nor had the Morning Star shown its face,
Al' povika sa grada dizdare:	But the *dizdar* shouted from the town walls:
Ko je ovdi na vodi brodare?	Who is the ferryman on this water?
Ko je jutros preveo djevojku?	Who has ferried the maiden this morning?
Sinoć me je oženila majka,	My mother married me off last evening,
a jutros mi utekla djevojka,	and this morning my maiden ran away,
ni ljubljena ni omilovana,	she was neither kissed, nor cuddled,
ni junačkom srcu privijena,	nor was she brought to the hero's heart,
i ukrala đuzdan iz njedara,	and she stole the wallet from me,
u đuzdanu stotinu dukata.	and in the wallet a hundred ducats.
Dok povika sa vode brodare:	Then shouts the ferryman from the water:
A bogami, sa grada dizdare!	O *dizdar* from the town, I swear
Ja sam jutros prevezo djevojku,	I have ferried the maiden this morning,
dala mi je četiri dukata,	she gave me four ducats,
dukat dala da joj lađu dadem,	she gave me one to give her a boat,
dukat dala da joj drume kažem,	she gave me one to show her the roads,
treći dala da je ne prokažem,	she gave me the third not to give her away,
a četvrti da je ne obljubim.	and the fourth not to make love with her.

A utopian image is here given from the male perspective. The unloved one, from whom the maiden runs away, witnesses the maiden's escape. It is indicative that the maiden runs away from the *dizdar* (warden or commander of a town or fortress). It is doubly frustrating for him—he is frustrated as a man and as a soldier. The maiden's aspiration is modeled on two levels as well: she refuses to obey the unloved man; and by stealing the gold coins, she secures the means for her escape. Since she is endangered on the road, she pays the helper—to show her the way, not to give her away, and not to make love to her. In this manner, she secures her passage and guards her virginity. The desire for freedom is a trial—an exposure to the dangers of an unknown space and a powerful man. When she surmounts the obstacles, the heroine of the lyric song, just like a heroine from a fairy tale, crosses to the other world, the one across the water,[20] implicitly to the utopian realm of freedom.[21]

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[20] On the motif of running away to freedom across the water, see Vukmanović 2020:165-66.

[21] The motif of running away also appears as part of a love game, when the maiden outwits the lad by taking his herd, a donkey with a loaded pack-saddle, and the *kaval* (a type of flute) (Osinin and Burin 1962, no. 470).

The maiden may try to contest patriarchal family relations using magic. Before a wedding, girls sing in the bride's house (Grbić 1909:156):

Pošla Tija uz tijo Dunavo,	Tija goes along the quiet Danube,
te nabrala kitu tenjinu,	and she picks a bouquet of *tenja*,
da joj je tija svekrva,	for her mother-in-law to be silent,
da joj je tija jetrva,	for her sister-in-law to be silent,
da su joj tiji deveri,	for her brothers-in-law to be silent,
da su joj tije zaovice.	for her sisters-in-law to be silent.

The magic code is activated on two levels. Firstly, by drawing parallels between the girl and the Danube, the girl is shown as powerful. Her name (Tija) corresponds to the nature of the river (*tija/tiha*, "silent"). Secondly, the use of the magic of words (the sonorous repetition of words invoking silence) and plants (manipulation of the plant *tenja*, whose botanical identity is not clear) commands the silence of the women (the groom's mother, sister, and sister-in-law) and the brothers-in-law in the new house where the bride needs to enter. It is important in her new life that those who are in a position of greater power than she is (cf. Karadžić 1957:138) treat her with kindness. By her determination to organize familial relationships according to her own will, the lyric heroine relativizes typical family relations.

The patriarchal community generally sets a high value on large families (cf. Vuletić 2012:241). Some songs, however, take a different attitude when the maiden desires a husband (Karadžić 1898, no. 453):

koji nema oca ni matere,	who has neither father nor mother,
niti ima brade ni brkova,	nor does he have a beard nor a moustache,
niti brata za ručna đevera,	nor does he have a brother to be my brother-in-law,
ni snašice, meni jetrvice,	nor a sister-in-law to be my sister-in-law,
ni sestrice, meni zaovice	nor does he have a sister to be my sister-in-law.

Two alternative values are expressed together: the freedom to choose a young man (without a beard and a moustache), and the freedom to choose one who has no relatives (parents, brother, sister, sister-in-law). The maiden desires a young husband who will stand by her, with whom she will live alone, and not in a big household in which her position is part of a complex network of relations (cf. Tripković 1989:98-99). The utopian fragment contains an alternative view on love and family life.

These verses about three sisters-in-law who drink wine also offer an altered image of the patriarchal family (Karadžić 1975, no. 596):

Pile su mi vince do tri jetrvice,	Three sisters-in-law drink wine,
slatko je vince, medno je vince,	the wine is sweet, it is sweet like honey,
al' je medna godina,	and the year that brings it
koja ga je rodila.	is a sweet one.
Prva je popila tanan vaćov s glave,	The first drinks away a fine scarf on her head,

druga je popila zlatni prsten s ruke,	the second drinks away the golden ring on her hand,
treća je popila svoga gospodara.	the third drinks away her master.
Prva je popila, pak je govorila:	The first drinks and speaks:
Imam seju mladu i prelju i tkalju,	I have a young sister who is a spinner and weaver,
otkaće mi vaćov i tanji i lepši.	she will weave me a finer and nicer scarf.
Druga je popila, pak je govorila:	The second drinks and speaks:
Imam brata mlada dobra kujundžiju,	I have a young brother who is a goldsmith,
skovaće mi prsten i veći i lepši.	he will forge me a bigger and nicer ring.
Treća je popila, pak je govorila:	The third drinks and speaks:
'Dok je moje glave, biće gospodara.	As long as I have my head, I will have my master.

When sisters-in-law throw away the symbols of social status (scarf and ring) and enter the public sphere, they abolish the hierarchical order, as well as the distance between male and female strengths. They also disobey the norms of standard behavior since they declare that the symbols of the hierarchy can be replaced. The order of the social structure of the patriarchal family is thrown off balance since blood kinship is valorized over affinal ties: the sister and brother are given an advantage over the husband's family. The disruption of the patriarchal order is presented gradually since the negation of the master (husband) confirms the woman's confidence that she can rule her own life and her readiness to assume an active role in the world. Not only does the song offer a possible psychological release valve, but it also sows seeds of the possibility of creating a social utopia (Karanović 2010:325-26).[22]

The further contestation of basic values of the patriarchal community can be observed in the motif of negative wishes. When Ali-paša asks a maiden if she is married or unmarried, she answers (Andrić 1929, no. 112):

Cv'jeće sam, cv'jeće, dok nemam djece;	I am flowers, while I don't have children;
ruža sam, ruža, dok nemam muža;	I am a rose while I don't have a husband;
kad uzimam djece, uvenuće cv'jeće,	when I have children, the flowers will fade,
kad uzimam muža, opasti će ruža.	when I get a husband, the rose will wither.

While marriage and motherhood are the highest goals for a woman's life in traditional culture, the heroine in lyric song acquires another world view, where she with her beauty, symbolized by a rose, is the measure of all things. Not wanting to marry and have children, she undermines the order of the community in which she lives. The radical force of this contestation of community values is arguably attenuated by the fact that these verses are spoken in answer to the alien man (the Turk). For that reason, they can be understood as an implicit rejection of the Other, the rejection of an undesired heterodox man. Since, however, the maiden does not show bigotry to the man, her speech is more likely the expression of a utopian desire for a different reality. If we

[22] A married woman wins her freedom when she takes over male roles—when she goes to the pubs and taverns, drinks brandy and wine, smokes a Turkish pipe, and rides a Turkish horse (Veselinović 1890:77, no. 5). Acting this way, women conquer the public space (pubs and taverns) and gain the symbols of free behavior (drinking and riding). Such verses thus carry the utopian potential of freedom, which women in everyday life (as opposed to the heroines in the songs) did not enjoy, or enjoyed only exceptionally (cf. Tripković 1989).

bear in mind that marriage is highly valued in traditional culture and that one of the basic reasons for getting married is to produce offspring (Đorđević 1930:10),[23] then these lines gain importance, emphasizing the sharp contrast with dominant notions of family life.

The Case of an Old Woman

Just like girls, old women also contest the official order in oral lyric songs. In the culture of folk humor, the grotesque image of the body shows two bodies in one: the one giving birth and dying, the other conceived, generated, and born (Bakhtin 1978:35). Consequently, parallel erotic encounters with a maiden and an old woman can be understood as two aspects of the same encounter. In the inverted model of reality, free erotic behavior is connected to those who have fulfilled their biological function (old woman) or those who have not yet fulfilled it (girl), to those who do not have that kind of experience, which brings them to marginal spaces and spaces of ritual inversion (Karanović and Jokić 2009:64). As Bakhtin noticed, these inverted images of sexuality have the utopian potential of contestation and freedom. This viewpoint finds its poetic reflection in a song describing a young man's two (erotic) encounters: first with a maiden and then with an old woman. When the hero finds an old woman in the beans he planted, he humiliates her (Karadžić 1975, no. 480):

Ja poseja gra po dolu,	I planted the beans in the valley,
ne obiđo za tri leta,	I haven't visited it for three years,
za tri leta, za četiri;	for three years, for four years;
kad ja odo da obiđem,	when I went to visit it,
al' u grau babetina,	but there was an old woman,
obrnu je, prevrnu je,	I turned her, overturned her,
prevrnu je, popljuva je,	overturned her, spat on her,
pa je turi u koprive.	then I put her in the nettles.
O radosna u gra pošla!	Being jolly, you went into beans!
Popljuvana kući došla!	Being spat upon, you came home!

Then she revenges herself:

Ž'o se babi učinlo,	The old woman was offended,
ode baba u brdine,	she went to the hills,
u brdine, u doline,	to the hills, to the valleys,
da nabere kostoloma,	to pick agrimony,
kostoloma, vratoloma,	agrimony and "neck-breaker,"
kad nabrala kostoloma,	when she picked the agrimony,
kostoloma, vratoloma,	agrimony and "neck-breaker,"

[23] On the discourse of motherhood in Serbian traditional culture, see Radulović 2009:202-21; on the discourse of anti-motherhood, Radulović 2009:221-34.

postavila u lončiće,	she put them in the pots,
lončić krči, momak trči,	a pot is boiling, a lad is running,
ka'no pašće preko bašče.	like a dog across the garden.
[…]	
Al mu baba odgovara:	But the old woman answers:
Počekaj me, kurvin sine,	Wait for me, you son of a whore,
rasplela sam rusu kosu,	I untangled my red hair,
rusu kosu do pojasa.	my red hair to the belt.
Kad je vrata otvorila,	When she opened the door,
ognjištu ga domamila,	she lured him to the hearth,
očima je zažmurio,	he closed his eyes,
dok je babu poljubio;	as he kissed the old woman;
kad je baba opazila,	when the old women noticed it
žarilom ga izvijala,	she chased him away with a poker
pa mu onda besedila:	and she spoke to him:
Idi sada, kud ti drago!	Go now, where you want!
Dosta meni, što si doš'o,	It is enough for me that you came,
i ljubio, što s' pljuvao.	and kissed what you had spat upon.

The relations of power are dynamic: the young man was mighty and arrogant at the beginning and defeated in the end, and the old woman took revenge on him for humiliating her. The conflict happens at the erotic level—the old woman is sexually undesired to the point of contempt, and an erotic encounter that happened with the maiden in the first part of the song is transformed into the act of spitting.[24] The culture of contestation is realized in magic: by using magical plants with symbolic names (agrimony is called *kostolom* in Serbian, which means, literally, "bone-breaker"; *vratolom* is a mythical plant that does not exist, but its name means "neck-breaker"), the old woman gains power over the young man. In the hero's altered vision, the old woman, from being despised, becomes irresistible. By untangling her hair and luring the man to the hearth, she gains the features of a witch (Čajkanović 1994:277). The crucial moment of revenge—the kiss—happens by the hearth as the central place in the microcosm of home and the dwelling place of the spirits (Uzenëva 2004:604). When the hero kissed the one he had spat upon the insult was magically cancelled. Through action, the old woman ensured her satisfaction. A utopian fragment of acting, resisting, and contesting is constituted by the magical code of manipulation with plants and the topological code of a marked place.

Conclusion

The analysis of South Slavic oral lyric songs from the selected corpus has shown that fragments of the utopia of contestation are mainly (but not exclusively) preserved in the alternative women's world constituted during ritual singing (for example, in *kraljice* songs), as

[24] In the culture of laughter, the opposite bodily fluids mix (Bakhtin 1978: 351).

well as in poetic images of lyric heroines who contest the social order. These fragments are distinguished by the motifs of a good place or the happy time of maidenhood, or by the characters of the defiant and determined maiden, who differs from the exemplary patriarchal model of a humble and obedient girl/woman. Just like the heroes and heroines from fairy tales, these heroines, although weak, humiliated, and subordinated, triumph over the mighty and oppressive enemy in the end, using wit and trickery, wisdom and pertinacity, tactics and tricks (Antonijević 2013:19-20) to form an alternative world. That world has its coordinates in utopian spaces (for example, the land of "queens") and utopian time (the time of ritual freedom and the time of maidenhood), and has its own, distinctive order. In that order, girls and women contest the world that is not to their liking: they deceive men, reject undesired suitors, run away from undesired men, establish an alternative family order where they are their own masters, where they have more intimate relations with their husbands and fewer constraining bonds with their husband's family, and where they express a different (negative) attitude towards motherhood. In that female world, which corresponds with the carnival and ritual world described by Bakhtin, the old woman, as a heroine in the song, regains dignity and triumphs over the men who abuse her.

This alternative utopian world is a poetic model, not a real place. Aspects of it might correspond to reality in some circumstances, but what is more important for oral lyric songs is that they offered the utopian possibility of contestation of a world that singers did not feel as their own, that songs could express desires even when those desires remained unfulfilled (or unattainable). This lyric longing for the freedom of the body and spiritual liberation (Krnjević 1986:8) is essentially utopian in the South Slavic oral lyric songs analyzed in this paper.

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