

11/25

## Ranjina's Miscellany

In 1507 a young nobleman of Dubrovnik, Nikša Ranjina (not to be confused with the poet Dinko Ranjina) started copying down the lyrics of the Ragusan poets, finally compiling a voluminous manuscript which corresponds in character to the English *Tottel's Miscellany* (1557). The majority of the poems were written by two poets, ŠISKO MENCETIC (1457—1527) and DŽORE DRŽIĆ (1461—1501). There are also other manuscript collections of their verse. Šiško was more fertile, he left hundreds of poems, and after a wild youth and a sober merchant maturity he fell a victim to the plague at the age of 70. He came from an old patrician family, the Romance form of his name was de Menze. A sensual, »gather ye rose-buds while ye may« spirit pervades his verse, many acrostics (a feature hardly popular in Italian Petrarchistic poetry) might point to an abundance of love adventures, but it is very probable that he wrote some poems at the request of his friends. The nature of the Croatian alexandrine and its rhyming scheme hindered the development of the sonnet, which in other literatures was the most popular Petrarchian form. Some features link Šiško with the older troubadour convention, and curiously enough he twice uses the expression *frava* which is the *vrouw* of the German and Dutch *minnesang*.

Džore Držić, although he belonged to a rich family, was not a patrician. He studied law, most probably somewhere in Italy, and in 1497 he became a priest. He is more likely to use non-urban elements as a literary device, and his language tends to be nearer to the idiom of the broader mass of the population. Nevertheless, his style remains elegant and polished. A manuscript collection of his verse, newly discovered in Ireland and edited in Zagreb in 1965 changed for the better the existing image of him. It contains, among other previously unknown verse, an eclogue, a pastoral dialogue with the features of a simple play, *Radmio i Ljubmir*. Two shepherds talk; Radmio being the sober, practical one, considers love too luxurious a commodity for a peasant, and the sentimental Ljubmir is thwarted by a yearning which cannot be satisfied as his beloved is dedicated to Diana. Both shepherd characters have many realistic traits.

The ANONYMOUS FOLK-STYLE POEMS (»na narodnu«, as they were dubbed a hundred years ago by the first editor of the collection, Vatroslav Jagić) were previously attributed to Džore Držić. Some of them seem to be just recorded oral poetry, but some imitate the country-side manner with an attitude of good-humoured teasing. Some again, as *Odiljam se (Fare Thee Well)* are no doubt remnants of an older, pre-Petrarchan fashion.

There are also poems by other poets in Ranjina's Miscellany, most of whom are anonymous. We know by name MARIN KRISTIĆEVIĆ († 1531), and we attribute to him a couple of poems expressing the maiden's complaint, linked with the *barcarola* type, the girl shouting the name of her beloved to the oncoming sailors.

A number of the poems, displaying through the acrostic the name of Kata, are usually attributed to a certain ANDRIJA ZLATAR («Andrew the Goldsmith»), sometimes identified with ANDRIJA CUBRANOVIC, of whom again we know nothing except that a *zingaresca*, now attributed to Mikša Pelegrinović, was published under his name. Some of the »Kata« poems are typical of the new sentiment and style.

The sweet little *Lute Song (Leute moj mili)* in which the frustrated poet appeals to his lute to have better luck where he failed, was also once attributed to Džore Držić.

I. S.

71/25  
SIŠKO MENČETIC

## Dedication

(Posveta)

Whoe'er you be that read these rhymes, I you implore  
thereby to cheer your brow for your love's sake.  
And if I've somewhat erred, be not offended then,  
but cast aside the weed and cull the rose.  
But if now better you can do, then you compose;  
herein does lie your course: say what you can.  
And do refrain, you hear, from crunching through my bones,  
that thus I may not be still further torn.

ŠIŠKO MENČETIC

## My Confession

(Moja ispovijest)

If 'tis confession then which cleanses white each wrong,  
my conscience now must be as snow,  
for each of Venus' deeds which I've in secret done,  
I did disclose and so cry woe.  
And thus I do entreat of him who knows love's pain  
with me her joys now to repent,  
for I, you see, do view this life as one short dream,  
a summer rose that brief endures.

ŠIŠKO MENČETIC

## The First Look

(Prvi pogled)

The dawn did summon forth the day, and glorious spring  
the grass so slight, the leaves of green and florets called;  
'twas then that I was caught by her who is so fair,  
whose form in fine array sings out her glorious song.  
Each morning, I confess, I'd look from out my window;  
my eyes there chanced to see what now does follow here:  
it seemed to me I saw no nymph so fair as she,  
a lady seated, with a garment all of white.  
At sight of me in haste she loosed her knotted hair  
and all her tresses flowed beneath her downy throat;  
upon her brow she left a lock or two of gold;  
with all the rest, I say, she bound her throat about,  
thereby to shield them from the wind; with these quite soon  
her hands did weave a wreath so fair upon her head,  
but like a doe she glanced behind and left at once;  
no harsher wormwood was, nor gall so vile as I.

SIŠKO MENČETIĆ

## Death Is My Lot

(Za me je smrt)

Oh why do I yet live? For death is now my lot,  
since I have borne the ire of Venus' true desires;  
than wormwood harsher still, she is a living death  
which, when the hound grows near, the timid hind does feel.

SIŠKO MENČETIĆ

## I Do Not Sing But Sob

(Ne pjevam već cvilim)

I pray you, floret mine, as I a lady would,  
when I am sobbing, hear, think not that I do sing;  
the fact indeed, is that I here now cry aloud.  
But since I suffer so for you, can I be glad?  
How can a song spring up from deep within my heart  
since night and day I pine away from such desire?  
With this my grieving heart is ever all ablaze,  
much like the mountain flower that's scorched by sun at noon

SISKO MENČETIĆ

## Behold How Fair She Is

(Gledajte samo kako je lijepa)

Let each in turn this glorious nymph behold  
who longs to see a creature new on earth  
and spend his life in praising her fair youth,  
as in her face all heaven's joy she bears.  
Behold her stately gait, her look so sweet!  
Who does not die nor give his heart to her?  
And when she speaks, her voice, there is no doubt,  
does melt each man in never-ending bliss.

SISKO MENČETIĆ

## My Torment

(Moja muka)

Oft have I many sundry sorrows borne,  
but tears so bitter never have I shed,  
nor have I ever felt such pain before  
as springs from this accursèd love of mine  
which robs my rest, which robs my peace as well,  
which daily tears me like the clawing beast  
or stalking hound-more blessed would I be now,  
if from my mother's womb, I had been dead.

SISKO MENČETIĆ

## The Power of Money

(Što može novac)

This lesson learn: if one old woman for a sum  
could once for her delight entice a tender youth,  
what will you not, oh man, consent to do for gold,  
which though quite mute, is yet the master of mankind?

DŽORE DRŽIĆ

## The Whole Day Through I Long for You

(Želim te povazdan)

The whole day through, my pearl so fair, I long for you,  
as does the thirsting deer for cool lake-waters clear,  
so that the sunbeams in your eyes might cure my ills  
and heal by dint of their sweet charm my secret wounds,  
which your fair gaze has wrought within my very core,  
your look of love which now deprives me of my life.  
The palor of my face reveals this wound so deep  
as also does my life, by you destroyed, my love.  
And this you see as I do by your window stroll  
and grow quite pale and chilled with constant sighing spells;  
but though too freely we must not each other see,  
we neither should so hide the secret love we keep.  
Oh God, can there be woe much greater here below  
than crying out aloud with grief for one's beloved?  
Oh blessed are they and well endowed by fortune's hand  
who oft, together joined, can consummate their love,  
and who in mere desire waste not their fairest youth,  
and do not hope in vain to joy in love's delights.  
And thus, my love, may I not slowly pine away,  
but yet do let me rest upon your lap so still,  
for tightly have you with your tresses red and fair  
my throat ensnared as would some hunter bind his catch;  
how terrifying 'tis to think of all these woes,  
but 'tis more awful still to bear them in one's heart.  
And so, my pearl, the whole day through I long for you,  
as would a thirsting deer for cool lake-waters clear.