

Lea Kumić

**ADULTERY, GREED, AND BETRAYAL:
SOCIAL CRITICISM IN NIKOLA NALJEŠKOVIĆ'S COMEDIES**

MA Thesis in Medieval Studies

Central European University

Budapest

May 2015

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by

Lea Kumić

(Croatia)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,
Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

Chair, Examination Committee

Thesis Supervisor

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I, the undersigned, **Lea Kumić**, candidate for the MA degree in Medieval Studies, declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

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Abstract

The *Comedies V, VI and VII* of the Renaissance Ragusan writer Nikola Nalješković are a specific social criticism heritage. In these *Comedies* he wrote about different customs and conventions of society that can be seen as close to the Ragusan one. He did it by using humour - to provoke the laughter of the audience, but also to encourage them to rethink their own personal behaviour. I analysed the characters in the *Comedies*, their communication and their language with the aim to find patterns in which social criticism occurs – concerning strained marital relations, bourgeois greed, sexual affairs among the classes, human betrayal in friendship, and love romance. I identified certain behaviour and direct and indirect criticism used by the author in that respect. I could find out that, with tackling taboos, the author's aim was not just to make the audience laugh, but also to operate didactically and make them aware of their flaws, which they may have successfully hidden by pretending a peaceful and harmonious lifestyle.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I want to thank my supervisor Gerhard Jaritz for the patient and kind leading through the research, for the advices and long talks considering the details of the study. His interest considering my topic was constant and his encouragement focused me towards the end of this research. My special thanks also go to Katalin Szende, who, in addition to being an excellent teacher, was my true guardian angel through the complete process of studying at CEU. Of course, my thanks go to the whole Medieval Studies department for exceptional support. At last, but not the least, all my gratitude goes to my dear family and friends, for all the understanding they expressed, being a true inspiration themselves.

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INTRODUCTION

The Renaissance comedies represent a discourse which intended to be humorous and to amuse its audience by inducing laughter. At the same time, satire and irony – these powerful weapons of comedies – have been regarded as an effective source to understand society. With having in mind the revealing of actual values and flaws along with disclosures of the society's structures of power, comedies could often indeed be considered as a kind of social study.¹

The goal of this study is to explore the Renaissance Ragusan writer's Nikola Nalješković *Comedies* in a specific way. In these *Comedies* he wrote about different customs and conventions of society using humour to provoke the laughter of the audience, but also to encourage them to rethink their own personal behaviour.²

Nikola Nalješković was born somewhere between 1505 and 1508 and died in Ragusa in 1587, where he lived almost his entire life. He was a very prolific writer, which is reflected in his lyric, carnival and occasional poetry and drama. Nikola Nalješković probably began his literary work with writing love poetry. He dealt with the latter - unlike most of Ragusan poets - not only in his youth, but wrote it in later periods of his life as well. His collection of love poetry contains of nearly two hundred songs. Nalješković's expression is characterized by avoiding overly conventional phrases, as usual in Petrarchan poems, and by a particular penchant to speak openly, freely, and without hesitation. This is fully achieved in his farces, comedies, and masques, where ultimate free expression and completely transparent allegory are

¹ See, Russ McDonald, *The Bedford Companion to Shakespeare* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001), 81: "Comedy moves from confusion to order, from ignorance to understanding, from law to liberty, from unhappiness to satisfaction, from separation to union, from barrenness to fertility, from singleness to marriage, from two to one". These elements are common to nearly all comedies of Renaissance, and to Nalješković's *Comedies* as well.

² Cf., Pavao Pavličić, "Farsine, farse, farsa" [Farsines, Farces, Farce], *Pučka krv, plemstvo duha* (2005): 187-204; Nikola Batušić, "Nalješkovićeva komedija peta i francuska farsa [Nalješković's Comedy V and the French Farce]," *Dani hvarskog kazališta 14* (1988): 34-43; Nazim Nasko Frndić, "Prizori iz obiteljskog života u Nalješkovićevim komedijama [Scenes of Family Life in Nalješković's Comedies]," *Dani hvarskog kazališta 14* (1988): 83-98.

actualized in carnival topics. He also wrote epistles, religious poetry, pastoral and mythological plays. As an author, he has been recognized in regional historical research of Croatian, Bosnian, Serbian and Italian scholars.³

Nalješković wrote seven pieces that he called comedies himself.⁴ I will use three of them for my analysis: *Comedies V, VI and VII*.⁵ These are the ones that entail the most elements of social criticism. Their language is the folk vernacular of medieval Ragusa, Croatian, mainly in Shtokavian dialect. Concerning their audience, this means that ordinary people could understand them well. Moreover, they generally concentrate on “low” spheres of life, such as social physiological needs, slavery, and passions. Moreover, they ridicule all social layers, also, in a non-offensive way, the nobility for their hypocrisy. With “real life” presented to the audience Nalješković became a pioneer of social critique in comic acts in the region. There could hardly exist a better way of telling people the truth about themselves than through laughter. Nalješković did exactly that thing, in a restrained but precise way as will be clarified later.

The assumption of intentionally forming the *Comedies* in a way that would include social criticism and of having a certain didactic purpose, could be difficult to connect with conservative Ragusa where being part of the strict hierarchical system was not a matter of the

³ Apart from the work of Croatian scholars, that will be cited mostly in this thesis also the other authors made valuable contributions to the analysis of his works. See, e.g., Sebastiano Dolci and Mirko Valentić, *Fasti litterario-ragusini = Dubrovačka književna kronika* [The Literary Chronicles of Ragusa] (Zagreb: Hrvatski Institut za povijest, 2001); Miroslav Pantić, “Komedija peta arecitana u Mara Klaričića na piru” [*Comedy V Performed at the Wedding of Maro Klaričić*] in *Iz književne prošlosti - studije i ogledi* (Belgrade:SKZ, 1978), 66-73. A valuable perspective of everyday life was given in an article of the Bosnian scholar Nazim Nasko Frndić, “Prizori iz obiteljskog života u Nalješkovićevim komedijama [Scenes of Family Life in Nalješković's Comedies],” *Dani hvarskog kazališta* 14 (1988): 83-98.

⁴ His term has been accepted in philology and theory of literature, thus, Nalješković's texts have always been published as comedies, that is as texts that theateralized world in immediate impression. See, Darko Gašparović, “Nalješkovićeve komedije u svjetlu suvremene dramske teorije i kazališne prakse” [Nalješković's Comedies in Light of Contemporary Drama Theory and Theatrical Practice], *Dani hvarskog kazališta* 14 (1988): 46.

⁵ Pantić confirmed towards one manuscript that *Comedy V* was written in 1541 or 1542, and the others followed it over the next few years. Pantić, “Komedija peta,” 66.

individual's choice.⁶ However, even under such circumstances humanist thought boomed in the rich city of Ragusa. It was mainly absorbed from Italy and France with which the city had its main diplomatic connections, but also with the engagement of Ragusans at European universities.⁷ Libertarian humanist thoughts could shape only under the protection of city patrons - patrician families, whose positions, yet, were not allowed to be questioned openly. Knowing what could become a problem,⁸ he wanted to astonish all Ragusan citizens without making patricians feeling offended, even though they were the subjects of his social criticism too.

In Croatian historiography themes of social history are certainly not a new phenomenon, but themes of the history of everyday life still only sporadically appear in the results of research. There are still omissions in our understanding of some of the basic processes of development of Croatian society, including everyday life that must be filled. The analysis of the social aspects of Nalješković's comedies is a perfect medium to contribute to such a task.

The main research questions that I am going to deal with are the following: To what extent do the comedies of Nikola Nalješković deal with contemporary society and did he intend to influence the life of his audience? How did his background of a merchant, scholar and writer affect his comedies? Did he aim to entertain the audience through the situations that are

⁶ On the severity of old customs, Zdenka Janeković Römer, "Grad trgovaca koji nose naslov plemića: Filip de Diversis i njegova Pohvala Dubrovnika" [The City of Merchants who Bear the Title of Nobles: Philippus de Diversis and his Praise of Dubrovnik], in Filip de Diversis, *Sabrana djela* [Collected Works], ed. Zdenka Janeković Römer (Zagreb : Dom i svijet, 2007), 9.

⁷ Cardinal Ivan Stojković (Giovanni di Ragusa), for instance, in 1420 became a master of theology at the University of Paris and later a president of the Council of Basle. Marin Držić, a 16th-century playwright, e.g., was in Siena to study Canon Law, where he was elected to the position of Rector of the University. Josip Horvat, *Kultura Hrvata* [Culture of the Croats], vol. 1 (Zagreb: Naklada Fran, 2006), 462-465.

⁸ "Besides the ideological hegemony of the patriciate, another salient characteristic of Ragusan political culture was a strong animosity towards public debate, an insistence on maintaining the appearance of harmony. In other words, the central political values were pax, concordia, even unanimitas: any form of public polemic was therefore considered scandalous and was strongly discouraged. One important consequence of such an attitude was that the vast majority of utterances regarding the community in Renaissance Ragusa had an apologetic intention, seeking to glorify and legitimize the extant social and political order." Lovro Kunčević, "The Myth of Ragusa: Discourses on Civic Identity in an Adriatic City-State (1350-1600)," Diss. (Budapest: Central European University, 2012), 18.

exaggerated and extravagant, so that his comedies can simply be called farces or do they represent more layers, in particular such that are influenced by the social life in Ragusa? Should the audience learn from his comedies? Are they didactic?

In my research I will first analyse the characters in the *Comedies* and their language and try to find patterns. I will identify certain behaviour and the direct and specific criticism used by the author. I will try to involve the participation of the audience and investigate their role in the prologue and in their comments. Finally, the author's judgement and his message to the reader/observer will be analysed. What could have motivated Nalješković to criticize society as a whole and who was this whole society for him? Was it the people of Ragusa?

Najliše gdi žene sadanjijeh vremena
Nose oplažene prsi i ramena,
Pod tužnijem skrlatom, biserom i svilom
Vezeno sve zlatom i ostalijem tamnilom.

Why the most beautiful women of these times
Appear with naked chest and shoulders,
Beneath, they wear scarlet, pearl and silk
All embroidered with gold and other decoys.

Čem bijele rukavice, od moska miris lijepi
Ali voda od ružice, čijem vas đaval takoj slijepi.
(...)
Pokli tijelo golo i nago bit će skoro ukopano
Što je kamenje pridrago u prstene ukovano?⁹

Why do you wear white gloves with the scent of musk
Or of the rosewater, with which the devil blinds you.
(...)
After all, the body bare and naked, will be buried
Why is the precious jewellery wrought in your rings?

⁹ Mavro Vetranović, “Aurea aetas” and “Remeta [The hermit]” in *Kultura Hrvata* [Culture of the Croats], vol. 1 (Zagreb: Naklada Fran, 2006), 462.

1. SOURCES AND LITERATURE

1.1 Primary sources

Important remarks on the primary sources and secondary literature have to be made in order to understand the methodological challenges behind this research. The main primary sources are Nalješković's *Comedies V, VI and VII*. My analysis builds upon Amir Kapetanović's edition of Nalješković's work from 2005¹⁰ based on "The manuscript of Šipan," which originates from the seventeenth century and is considered to be the oldest source of Nalješković's *Comedies*. Critical notes are also registered in the earlier edition in the series *Old Croatian Writers* from 1873¹¹ and the critical additions to it by Vladan Švacov from 1976.¹²

Considering citations from the *Comedies*, the version of 1873 is preferable because it is connected to Švacov's edition, which contains the supplement of missing parts of Comedy VII. Kapetanović's edition is, nevertheless, more reliable if one considers its foundation on "The manuscript of Šipan," which was not textologically used and analysed before.¹³ Moreover, his comments related to the text are particularly useful for understanding the *Comedies* in their historical and sociological context. It was also suitable to consult his notes, where the names of historical persons and mythological creatures are thoroughly interpreted, which are also translated into Italian and Latin phrases. His edition is also accompanied by a vocabulary of lesser-known words, which enabled me to understand further relevant details. Furthermore, the works I studied that witness the past of Ragusa of fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are: Filip de

¹⁰ Nikola Nalješković, *Književna djela* [Literary Works], ed. Amir Kapetanović (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 2005).

¹¹ Nikola Nalješković and Nikola Dimitrović, *Pjesme Nikole Nalješkovića i Nikole Dimitrovića* [The poetry of Nikola Dimitrović and Nikola Nalješković], ed. Vatroslav Jagić, Franjo Rački and Đuro Daničić (Zagreb: Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, 1873).

¹² Amendment of the text missing in the end of the 1st act and the beginning of the 2nd act of *Comedy VII* in "Problem rekonstrukcije *Komedije sedme*" [The Problem of the Reconstruction of *Comedy VII*], *Mogućnosti*, 23, no. 4, (1976), 318-339.

¹³ On that matter, Kapetanović, "Nikola Nalješković" in *Književna djela* [Literary Works], ed. A. Kapetanović (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 2005), *passim*.

Diversis' *Description of the Glorious City of Ragusa*¹⁴ and Nikola Nalješković's *Dialogue about the Sphere of the World*¹⁵. The aim was to get the documentary information on Ragusa's society and Nalješković's private life in Ragusa. I also studied Giovanni Boccaccio's *The Decameron*¹⁶ and Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*¹⁷ using the method of comparative analysis with the *Comedies*.

¹⁴ Filip de Diversis, *Opis slavnoga grada Dubrovnika* [Description of the Glorious City of Ragusa], ed. Zdenka Janeković Römer (Zagreb: Dom & svijet, 2004).

¹⁵ Nikola Nalješković, *Dialogo sopra la sfera del mondo* [Dialogue about the Sphere of the World], ed. Francesco Ziletti and Antonio Orsetti (Venetia: Appresso Francesco Ziletti, 1579).

¹⁶ Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, ed. Carmelo Gariano (Potomac, Md: Scripta Humanistica, 1986).

¹⁷ Especially, "The Wife of Bath's Tale," "The Merchant's Tale," "The Shipman's Tale" in Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, ed. Helen Cooper (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1992); which deal with the problem of marital relations, adulteries and subordination of one partner.

1.2 Secondary literature

The main method of doing this analysis was to put it in the context of theatrical studies of comedy, and historical studies of the cultural and social history of Ragusa. It is important to emphasize some core studies within the broad bibliography of scholarly work on Nalješković, theatre history and social criticism in general. From the secondary literature on the beginnings of Croatian comedy and on Nalješković in general I have to highlight that Žarko Dadić's "Mathematical Views in the 16th Century"¹⁸ reveals some of Nalješković's views on contemporary life throughout his scientific work. Darko Gašparović, the Croatian theorist of theatre and literature, gives practical insights in his study "Nikola Nalješković's Comedies Enlightened by Contemporary Drama Theory and Theatrical Practice"¹⁹. Ines Srdoč-Konestra's "Contemporary Reading of Nikola Nalješković's Opus"²⁰ offers an overview from the perspective of contemporary readers' experience concerning this kind of text. Secondary literature on social criticism in late medieval and early modern literature is rather extent.²¹

¹⁸ Žarko Dadić, "Mathematical Views in 16th century Dubrovnik," *Dubrovački anali*, vol. I (1997): 25-33.

¹⁹ Darko Gašparović, "Nalješkovićeve komedije u svjetlu suvremene dramske teorije i kazališne prakse" [Nalješković's Comedies in Light of Contemporary Drama Theory and Theatrical Practice], *Dani hvarskog kazališta* 14 (1988): 43-47. Cf. with Divna M. Antonina, "Scenski kontekst komedija Nikole Nalješkovića" [The Scenic Context in Comedies of Nikola Nalješković], *Croatica et slavica Iadertina*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2005): 195-205. Stanislav Marijanović, "Nalješkovićev model audiovizualne mimodrame [Nalješković's Model of Audiovisual Mimodrama]," *Dani hvarskog kazališta* 14, (1988): 16 - 23.

²⁰ Ines Srdoč-Konestra, "Suvremeno čitanje opusa Nikole Nalješkovića" [Contemporary Reading of Nikola Nalješković's Opus], in *Pučka krv, plemstvo duha: Zbornik radova o Nikoli Nalješkoviću*, (Zagreb: Disput, 2005), 73-106. Cf. with Saša Lajšić, "Trgovačka praksa kao literarni obrazac [The Mercantile Practice as Literary Template]," *Fluminensia*, no. 2 (2005): 87-103. Franjo Švelec, "Farse Nikole Nalješkovića [The farces of Nikola Nalješković]," *Dani hvarskog kazališta* 14 (1988): 16 - 23.

²¹ See, e.g. Cary Nederman, "The Speculum Principium as Political and Social Criticism in the Late Middle Ages," in *The European Legacy: Toward New Paradigms* 3, no. 3 (1998), 18-38; Helen White, *Social Criticism in Popular Religious Literature of the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 1966); Konrad Schoell, *La Farce du Quinzième siècle* (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 1992), *passim*. On gender roles, see Laura Giannetti, *Lelia's Kiss: Imagining Gender, Sex, and Marriage in Italian Renaissance Comedy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009); Joanna Kazik, "Of all creatures women be best, / Cuius contrarium verum est': Gendered Power in Selected Late Medieval and Early Modern Texts," *Text Matters: A Journal of Literature, Theory and Culture*, vol.1, no. 1 (2011): 76-91. To study fully the history of marital issues, see Robert Stanton, "Marriage, Socialization, and Domestic Violence in *The Life of Christina of Markyate*," in *Domestic Violence in Medieval Texts*, ed. Eve Salisbury, Georgiana Donavin, and Merrill Llewelyn Price (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2002), 242-71; Marilyn Migiel, "Domestic Violence in the Decameron," in *ibidem*, 164-79; and Catherine Innes-Parker, "The 'Homicidal Women' Stories in the Roman de Thèbes," in *ibidem*, 205-22. Also, on marital quarrels provoked by adultery, see Leif Søndergaard, "Combat between the Genders: Farcical Elements in the German Fastnachtspiel", in *Farce and farcical elements*, ed. Wim Hüskén and Konrad Schoell (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), 169-188.

Furthermore, the consultation of general sources on the history of theatre was crucial to get the historical and cultural framework of the genre.²² To fulfil the goal of making a social criticism analysis, an important source for this work are studies dealing with the history of Ragusa in the period, as it was recently provided by Lovro Kunčević in *The Myth of Ragusa: Discourses on Civic Identity in an Adriatic City-State (1350-1600)*, who, in his endeavour to explore the origin of the Ragusan origin myths, also had to deal both with literary texts and historiography, such as elaborated material by Gordan Ravančić and Zdenka Janeković Römer.²³ It was especially important for my work to put Nalješković's pieces in the context of firstly Ragusan and secondly broader Croatian historiography.

²² On the history of farce, see, in particular: Bruce E. Hayes, *Rabelais's radical farce: late medieval comic theater and its function in Rabelais* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), illustrating the rich possibilities of the farsic genre and comparing them with Rabelais' work.

²³ See, e.g.: Gordan Ravančić, "Izvanbračna ljubav i ženska posluga u vlasteoskim obiteljima kasnosrednjovjekovnog Dubrovnika" [Extramarital Sex and Female Servants in Patrician Families in Late Medieval Dubrovnik], in *Hereditas Rerum Croaticarum*, Zagreb (2003): 63-68, and "Prilog poznavanju prostitucije u Dubrovniku u kasnom srednjem vijeku [A Contribution to the Knowledge about Prostitution in Late Medieval Dubrovnik]," *Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest Filozofskog fakulteta u Zagrebu* 31 (1998): 123-130; Zdenka Janeković Römer, "Post Tertiam Campanam' - Noćni život Dubrovnika u srednjem vijeku" ['Post Tertiam Campanam' – The nightlife of Dubrovnik in the Middle Ages], *Anali* 32 (1994): 7-14, "Pučka krv i plemstvo duha: Život renesansnog Dubrovnika u djelu Nikole Nalješkovića," [Common Blood and the Nobility of the Spirit: The life of Renaissance Ragusa in the work of Nikola Nalješković], in *Pučka krv, plemstvo duha: Zbornik radova o Nikoli Nalješkoviću* (2005): 43-58, and "Čast i glas grada Dubrovnika i njegova slavitelja Filipa de Diversisa [The Honour and Glory of the City of Dubrovnik and of his Glorifier Philippus de Diversis]," in Filip de Diversis, *Sabrana djela* [Collected works], ed. Zdenka Janeković Römer (Zagreb: Dom i svijet, 2007), 11-33; Lovro Kunčević, "The Myth of Ragusa: Discourses on Civic Identity in an Adriatic City-State (1350-1600)," *Diss.* (Budapest: Central European University, 2012).

2. THE AUTHOR

2.1 An unlucky Ragusan bourgeois

Nikola Nalješković was born in a wealthy bourgeois family between 1505 and 1508.²⁴ He was educated probably only in Dubrovnik²⁵. His nickname was Živonica [Givonne]. In his early youth he lost his father, who died in 1527 during an outbreak of the plague and after that event he had to take care of the family²⁶, continuing the family business as a merchant.²⁷ He traveled throughout almost the whole Mediterranean, but without much success in his business, so that in 1538 he had to declare bankruptcy²⁸. He had to spend a year in prison for this; his fiancée, Lukrecija Zuzorić, left him. Unconfirmed anecdotal evidence suggests that she fled to a monastery to escape their wedding.²⁹

Thus, in 1538, Nalješković experienced a major breakdown: a collapse in trade, imprisonment, a break up with his fiancée and the confiscation of part of his belongings. On the one hand, after such events and experiences, the poet developed an intimate, spiritual, and humanistic voice, and his motivation to write poetry intensified. The consequences were serious and this turning point resulted in finding new pursuits in a new environment, different from business and finance. In short, he found a new life with new people³⁰: writers, scientists and

²⁴ It is not known when exactly Nalješković was born, but there is consensus that it probably can be dated to the first decade of the sixteenth century. His parents got married in 1496. In 1518 he became a member of the Confraternity of St. Anthony. Kapetanović, "Nikola Nalješković," in *Književna djela*, vii.

²⁵ I will use the historical toponym Ragusa instead of the modern name Dubrovnik to correspond with the literary references in this thesis (Latin and Italian *Ragusa* and Dalmatian *Raugia*).

²⁶ Considering that he was rather young when his father, the breadwinner of the family, died, the pressure could have been part of the reason of his later bankruptcy. He had three sisters, Katarina, Anica and Marija, that he had to take care of. Maybe this was the reason why he was so sensible towards women concerning the question of dowries in his *Comedy VII*.

²⁷ He was urged to trade according to his father's will, which was traditionally the interest of the whole family. He travelled on business across the Balkan Peninsula and the east with other fellow citizens. Franjo Rački, "Nikola Stjepka Nalješković," [Nikola of Stjepko Nalješković] in *Pjesme Nikole Dimitrovića i Nikole Nalješkovića*, ed. Jagić and Daničić, v.

²⁸ On details of his imprisonment see Kapetanović, "Nikola Nalješković," viii.

²⁹ Lukrecija Zuzorić is said to have fled to the monastery in her wedding dress, indicating that she ran away on the wedding day. Nalješković was forced to return the dowry. Kapetanović, "Nikola Nalješković," ix.

³⁰ Three renowned poets of the time were Mavro Vetranović Čavčić, Nikola Jera Dimitrović and Petar Hektorović, and Nikola highly appreciated them as a Croatian poetic triumvirate. Some older and younger of Nikola's peers included poets like Andrija Čubranović, Marin Kaboga, Vlaho Vodopić, Marin Burešić, Marin Držić and Mišo Matufić in Ragusa; Ivo Parožić, Jerolim and Hortensio Brtučević and Mikša Pelegrinović from Hvar; and Ivan

scholars engaged in spirituality and art.³¹ Nalješković corresponded with them from prison. In his writings in prison, Nalješković tried to disabuse the world that had treated him unfairly in farces, masques and in realistic poems.

Nalješković was a poet socially involved in all walks of life - individuals, family, class, city, state – those are the elements which are well observed in his work. He used a variety of ways for his astute observations, depending on literary genre and form. He assumed social engagement as a kind of obligation, and he emphasized and vividly expressed events from everyday life. For this, Nalješković chose the literary form of farce, because his guiding principle was to make the audience laugh that he, as already said, simply called the *Comedies*.³²

After his release from prison he held various jobs in the public administration, where for a long period he worked as a land surveyor in Ragusa and its surroundings. Eventually, he got married in 1550, to a close cousin Nika Nalješković, with whom he had no children. He was comfortable for the rest of his life, thanks to his salary earned in service and the dowry that he received in his marriage. Finally, he had the financial circumstances that allowed him to devote more time to his writing and scientific research.

In his later years Nalješković was engaged in astronomy and mathematics. At the invitation of the pope he published his opinion on the reform of the calendar ordered by Gregory XIII (*Dialogue about the Sphere of the World*).³³ This was Nalješković's final project in the

Vidali from Korčula. In his older days Nikola saw the young Dinko Ranjina emerge as a talented classifier of folk poetry and of affective lyric poetry, whose fertility and vigor in love songs he greatly admired. Rački, "Nikola Stjepka," vi.

³¹ The breakdown affected him so deeply, that Nalješković, disappointed of the world of making money and materialism, became and remained the central figure among people who devoted themselves "to the pen and spirit" and to their literary circles. Zdenka Janeković Römer, "Pučka krv i plemstvo duha: Život renesansnog Dubrovnik u djelu Nikole Nalješkovića [Common Blood and the Nobility of the Spirit: The life of Renaissance Ragusa in the Work of Nikola Nalješković]," in *Pučka krv, plemstvo duha: Zbornik radova o Nikoli Nalješkoviću*, ed. Davor Dukić (Zagreb: Disput, 2005), 43-47.

³² In the *Comedies* the elements of the farce are clearly indicated, especially in *Comedies V* and *VI*. Nalješković's *Comedy VII* is written in the form of a domestic comedy that contains elements of Plautine comedy, but also elements of primarily Italian and French theatrical influences.

³³ In *Dialogue about the Sphere of the World* Nalješković comments on medieval astronomical research, that is, about the celestial sphere by the thirteenth-century monk astronomer Sacrobosco. Žarko Dadić, "Mathematical Views in 16th century Dubrovnik", *Dubrovački anali 1* (1997): 25.

last years of his life. Nevertheless, also then he was still engaged with poetry. In Poem 117, “Razmišljanje vrhu muke Isukrstove složeno godine 1586” [Reflections of the Passion of Jesus Christ in 1586],³⁴ one can perceive his presentiment of dying. That year was the penultimate of his life; he died in Ragusa at the end of 1587, some time before 21 December.³⁵

³⁴ “Razmišljanje vrhu muke Isukrstove složeno godine 1586” [Reflections of the Passion of Jesus Christ in 1586], *Književna djela*, 498.

Budući mnogo dni i vele godišta
 prošlo mi jak u sni, ka strajah u ništa,
 smišljat' mi čas pride, u koji iz tiela
 duša nam izide noseći sva djela,
 ka ima na Sudu višnjemu kazati
 gdje ini razlog je zaludu davati.

Since many days and ages have passed
 to me as in a dream, that I wasted in nothing,
 the time has come to think of it, in which the soul
 goes out from the body carrying all the deeds,
 to prove them to God on his Court
 where any given reason appears to be in vain.

³⁵ The little wealth that he had, he left to his wife Nika, as well as his books, astronomical devices, and a silver bowl with which he was rewarded for the *Dialogue about the Sphere of the World*. The writer had dedicated this work to the Ragusan council, under whose protection it was issued in 1579. Rački, *Nikola Stjepka Nalješković*, ix.

2.2 The man of contradictions - devotional and carnival poetry

Of all the Ragusan poets, Nikola Nalješković left the most comprehensive anthology of poetic epistles. They were sent to respectable noblemen in Ragusa³⁶ and to a few close friends of the writer. They contain a great quantity of historical and literary material. Often, especially in the expression of pain and suffering, Nalješković struggles with emotions of unrequited love throughout his lyrics. This is especially valuable for understanding the whole of his person in a historical context.

A number of his poems differ sharply from the traditional motives and display elements of pronounced realism; the poems sometimes have a decidedly documentary aspect. In one of the poems he warns his sweetheart not to read his indecent songs. He also writes about her faults, criticizes her for cutting her hair off, and so on. In a very personal tone documenting everyday disagreements, Nalješković is not idealising, but cursing the moments spent with his sweetheart.³⁷

Nalješković wrote spiritual poetry in his later period. A religious individual who often refers back to his past is a main subject of this poetry. The motifs of the Passion and Marian themes used in his composition and language are influenced by medieval poetry. Nalješković's religious poetry was associated with his membership in the fraternity of Saint Anthony. It is considered to be a weaker part of Nalješković's opus written during an extended period. These poems often revolve around the theme of life's uncertainties, under a strong influence of medieval popular devotional literature.

³⁶ Including Petar Hektorović, Nikola Dimitrović, Mavro Vetranović, Dinko Ranjina; Slobodan Prosperov Novak, *Teatar u Dubrovniku prije Marina Držića* [The Theatre in Ragusa before Marin Držić] (Split: Čakavski sabor, 1977), 41.

³⁷“Pjesan 38,” in Nikola Nalješković, *Književna djela* [Literary Works], ed. A. Kapetanović (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 2005), 61.

Ah! da je proklet svak, ko ženam vjeruje
I tko im viru pak i u čemu shranjuje.

Ah! that is cursed anyone who believes women
Who stores the trust in them in his heart.

Nalješković wrote twelve carnival songs, probably around 1547, when he spent some time in prison for causing an incident during Carnival. These display the beginnings of the social criticism of characters who represent certain layers in society. In this cycle Nalješković's ambiguous masquerades stand out. Carnival obscenity and erotic references reflect the cheerful and lascivious Renaissance carnival atmosphere in poems I to VI. The first, a sort of prologue, is spoken by the devil announcing the arrival of a company of masked performers of the rest of the songs.³⁸ They are: the baby in the womb complaining about the people who put him in the darkness³⁹, an unhappy lover who is being ignored⁴⁰, suspicious poor people⁴¹, and hot-headed servants.⁴² Then come the shepherds, Vlachs, Latins and Gypsies, who mostly admire the beautiful land of Ragusa. Nevertheless, what most of these poems are celebrating is the typical

³⁸ "Pjesan 1," in Nalješković, *Književna djela*, 457.

Što ste blijedi s malom snagom,
nemojte se vi pripasti
n'jetko zove mene vragom,
n'jetko djavlom i napasti.

Why are you so pale and powerless,
do not be scared!
Someone calls me a devil,
someone Satan and temptation.

³⁹ "Pjesan 2," in Nalješković, *Književna djela*, 434.

Svi mudri govore da diete stojeći
u majci da more koju god stvar reći,
ter da mu budu riet': bi li ti sada rad
izljesti kad na svijet? Rekal bi: ne, nikad.

All the wise men say that a child
when being in the womb can tell few things.
So, if people told him: would you like now
to go out in the world? He would say: no, never.

⁴⁰ "Pjesan 3," in Nalješković, *Književna djela*, 464.

Suđeno meni bi da služim ja n'jekoj,
u ke se izgubi sva služba i trud moj

It was meant for me to serve a lady
for whom it was futile - my service and my effort.

⁴¹ "Pjesan 4," in Nalješković, *Književna djela*, 465.

Štape ove ne nosimo
da ištemo od vas zlata,
ogrijat se mi prosimo
na čestita vaša vrata.
Blago vam jer duše vaše
Lasno mogu pokoj steći
Jednom krincom vruće kaše
A na odru vi ležeći.

We, poor ones, do not carry these sticks
to ask the gold from you.
We please you to warm us up
at your fair entrance door.
May you be blessed, because your souls
can easily acquire serenity
with one spoon of hot porridge
when you are lying on the bed.

⁴² "Pjesan 5," in Nalješković, *Književna djela*, 467.

Iz daleka sužni gremo...
Blago vaše jes veliko
Ter se neće ni poznati
Kad nam date nekolicu
Neće zatoj vam lipsati
Gospodari neće znati
A spovidjet mi nećemo.

From far away we, slaves, do come...
your treasure is truly great
and it won't be even seen
when you give us some of it.
You won't lack any of it,
the masters won't know about it,
and we surely won't tell about it.

carnival freedom and lasciviousness, including obscenity, although there are those that remain polite, some even displaying patriotic motifs.

Besides racy and romantic lyrics, Nalješković's had serious scientific interests. His major scientific report, the *Dialogue about the Sphere of the World* was issued under the auspices of the Ragusan Senate in 1579, and discussed mathematical and astronomical matters. Nalješković's treatise consists of five dialogues; the first of which was dedicated to mathematics, while the remaining four represent an astronomical commentary on four chapters of Sacrobosco's astronomy, especially the discussion on the Julian and Gregorian calendar. The introduction addresses the members of the Senate⁴³:

To the illustrious gentlemen, Mr. Rector, and The Senate of Raugia (Ragusa),

If the perfection of man consists in his virtuous actions, as Aristotle shows us, & if doing good to others is one of the most excellent things that God had granted to a mortal as Pythagoras said, then certainly, Illustrious Gentlemen, I can surely say that the Ancients, & your predecessors were humans most perfect of all worthy praise; and that they left you the same their virtues and perfections to inherit and own. Thus, when I consider the magnanimous kindness, real politeness, and the innumerable benefactions always shown to all people in a same way, either in a spontaneous way, or for some other reason, they are received in the parts of your blessed Domain; I do not know who could ever tell them in other way than by writing a great book.

Equally, Nalješković rises and glorifies also in Italian the past and wisdom of Ragusa and the beauty of the region:

Hence, not far from my noble fatherland, which without discussion can with right precede all other parts of Illyria, I own one place, which, if my appetite doesn't deceive me, although by its nature is arid and sterile, it may be preceded to many fertile places of this country.⁴⁴

⁴³ Nicolò di Nale [Nikola Nalješković], "Introduction," in *Dialogo sopra la sfera del mondo* [Dialogue about the Sphere of the World], ed. Francesco Ziletti and Antonio Orsetti, (Venetia: Appresso Francesco Ziletti, 1579), i.

"A gli illustrissimi signori, il sig. Rettore, & Il Senato di Raugia,

Se la perfettione dell'huomo consiste nelle operationi virtuose, come ci dimostra Aristotile & se il fare altrui beneficio è una delle più eccellenti cose, che il Dio habbia concessa à mortali come voleva Pithagora; certamente; Signori Illuistrissimi, io posso al sicuro affermare che gli Antichi, & antecessori vostri siano stati huomini perfettissimi & d'ogni lode dignissimi; e che habbiano lasciati voi delle medesime loro virtù, e perfezioni heredi & possessori. Percioche quando io confiderò le magnanime benignità, reali cortese, & gli innumerabili beneficij sempre usati verso tutti coloro uquali, ò spontaneamente, ò per qualche sinistro caso spinti, pervenuti stano nelle parti del felice Dominio vostro; non sò chi mai narrare li potrebbe, senza sarne un gran libro."

⁴⁴ Nikola Nalješković, "Giornata prima [First Day]," in *Dialogue about the Sphere of the World*, 4-5.

Evidently, Nalješković was a man of broad education who left behind a large and varied oeuvre, but what made him widely respected in the history of Ragusan culture were the three *Comedies V, VI, and VII*.⁴⁵ Nikola Nalješković was the first playwright to produce this type of drama in Ragusa. They all deal with the topic of illicit love within the family circle in bourgeois or noble households, topics that could become close to, if not being part of, the life in Ragusan society. In the first two (*Comedy V* and *VI*) the main conflict revolves around the actions of unfaithful husbands, and in the third (*Comedy VII*) the plot is based on the motif of marriage of errant youths.⁴⁶

“Non lungi dunque da questa mia nobil patria, la qual senza disputarla, si può meritamente anteporre à ciascuna altri a parte della Iliria, hò io un luoghetto, ilquale, se l'amor non mi inganna e anchor che sia per natura arido e sterile, si può non di meno anteporre a molti luoghi fertili di questo paese.”

⁴⁵ On the influence and significance of Nalješković's work Gašparović claims that if Marin Držić is recognized and acclaimed as the Croatian William Shakespeare, then Nalješković should be recognized as the Croatian Christopher Marlowe. “Nalješkovićeve komedije,” 53.

⁴⁶ Divna M. Antonina, “Scenski kontekst komedija Nikole Nalješkovića [The Scenic Context in Comedies of Nikola Nalješković],” *Croatica et slavica Iadertina*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2005): 198.

2.3 The pioneer of the comedies - plot and prologues, comic effects, stage directions and participation of the audience

One of the important questions is, which of the Ragusan playwrights first introduced novel literary forms, and who developed them further. To narrow the latter question: which of the two Ragusan poets of the sixteenth century, Nikola Nalješković or Marin Držić, brought comedy into the Ragusan limelight?

The assumption that it was Nalješković's achievement is based on the fact that his comedies are much more a continuation of the medieval farce: rather undeveloped and still written in verse.⁴⁷ Moreover, his dramas include lasciviousness and genre diversity with alternating paradigms of medieval, Renaissance, and mannerist poetry. Consequently, in these dramas contemporary life is shown, with its recognizable characters and situations.

Nalješković's characters and situations are described with a sympathetic naturalistic approach. Eating, drinking and sexual pleasures are spoken of very directly. Sometimes these activities are directly displayed on the stage, as evidenced by the stage directions. The plot and the scenes which happen at the same time are performed simultaneously as it was usual for medieval staging. Only in *Comedy VII* the plot is composed of complex actions that would be impossible to be staged simultaneously: the young Maro is in love with a prostitute on whom he is wasting time and money, while his mother and father are taking actions to force him to marry.⁴⁸

Nalješković often discusses how maids had affairs with the nobility. It was clearly a perfectly normal thing for a master to surround himself with female servants in his house. There

⁴⁷ Pantić, "Nalješkovićeva komedija peta," 66.

⁴⁸ With using skillful intrigue, Maro's father, the future father-in-law and his friend Frano manage to separate Maro from this woman and make him consent to the marriage. Here the influence of Plautine comedy (Plautus and Terence) is palpable, inasmuch that the play is built on conventionalized plots of romantic intrigue as a framework to the satire of everyday contemporary life." See "Fabula palliata," in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/199849/fabula-palliata>, accessed April 28, 2015.

is also much discussion about the moral implications of this specific situation, which was completely unknown in traditional farce.⁴⁹

Importantly, the prologue by a narrator was traditional in farces, but was a novelty in the Croatian literature, first introduced by Nalješković:

Pošteno molim vas, velici i mali
da biste jedan čas mirno me slišali
er vam ću rijet od nas što ćete vidjeti
i čuti vi danas; mučite vi djete.
Dvije su ostale u kući godulje,
koje su pokrale sočivo i ulje
tere će besjedâ razlicijeh činiti.
Utoj će s posjeda gospođa iziti
tu ih će karati i brže početi bit
one će plakati; pak zatim što će bit?
Doći će gospodar, koji će s ulice
začuti vas taj kar i plač od Milice
ter ju će tješiti; tuj se će gospoja
na njega srčiti da će bit do boja
Gospođa još veće žaleći sramote
gdi ljubiti nju neće neg ljubi ogote
pak se će od toga ukloniv otiti.⁵¹

I will ask you all, the big and the small,
for one hour of calm to hear my words,
now I'll tell you what you will see
therefore, shut up, kids, and hear.
Two naughty girls stayed inside the house
and there they stole the oil and lentils,
for that reason they'll have much to discuss.
But then will come the Lady in,
she will scold them, start to beat,
they will cry, what happens then?
The master will come from the outside
who heard the fight and Milica's cry,
he'll comfort⁵⁰ them; but then his lady
will crash on him – ready to quarrel.
In fear of even greater shame
for loving naughty girls instead of her,
she'll try to go away from him.

The prologue announces action and establishes a connection between the performer and the audience. Moreover, it is a conventional part of farces, which suggests the upcoming events on the scene.⁵² Here, the monologue also has the function to depict the life of the protagonists. The conversation between the actors clearly shows the simplicity of structure of the *Comedies*.

⁴⁹ This is also one reason for Pantić's suggestion that Nikola Nalješković, a carnival entertainer, tender and elegiac poet and taught astronomer and physicist, was a predecessor of Marin Držić in establishing the comedy tradition in Ragusa. "Nalješkovićeva komedija peta," 66.

⁵⁰ Here Nalješković refers to a plot development later: the consolation will be in kissing and nipping Maruša, while at the same time berating them both.

⁵¹ *Comedy V*, 240.

⁵² On this matter, Marijanović also claims that comedy as a genre appeared with Nalješković. Nalješković discovered *ab initium* its proper place in the representational scene of his hometown, in an environment of religious and folk festivals and carnival merrymaking. Stanislav Marijanović, "Nalješkovićev model audiovizualne mimodrame [Nalješković's Model of Audiovisual Mimodrama]," *Dani hvarskog kazališta* 14, (1988): 55.

A verbal layer of the farce is often a source of comedy - when one character says something, and the other interprets it incorrectly.⁵³

Comedy can be achieved either verbally, or gesticulating, for example, when the master is nipping the maid Maruša in *Comedy V*. It ends with the maid's announcement that she would steal the food to get revenge for the mistress's bullying. In *Comedy VI* the concerns get more drastic: again there is a master, a maid and a mistress, but in this *Comedy* the master makes both girls pregnant, as he did the same with the female owner of a nearby tavern. The comical effects arise from the efforts to hide the three pregnancies, and from the creative diversity of metaphors used for pregnancy and the master's and a priest's excessive behavior. And here, as in the previous comedy, the motif of food and eating play an important role.

The comical effects in *Comedy VII* are based on the son's frivolity and boastfulness, juxtaposed by his father's agitation and his mother's nagging. In this comedy, the songs sung by Maruša and Milica⁵⁴ are also vital elements of the scenes. The author gives notes in sparse stage directions to explain what should be happening on the stage, for example: "Maruša with Milica while sitting at home are talking, since their lady is on the property," or "while singing a song, they hear the Lady going up the stairs."⁵⁵

⁵³ This is specifically emphasized in *Comedy VI*, which contains typical farcical motifs, such as the Lady of the House talking about expelling the three pregnant ladies; and the priest interprets this as her wish to expel three demons from her body. This scene also paints a picture of double standards: in urban communities the masters can do prohibited things that are kept in silence. On the one hand this works as a source of comedy, and on the other hand it contains criticism of society, the perversion of morality and marital relations.

⁵⁴ The Renaissance penchant for ambiguity is reflected even in Nalješković's choice of this example of oral folk tradition (*Comedy V*, 241-2):

Dodi da se štuješ s nami
Jer smo, Gojo, umijesile
Lojanice tri pritile. (...)
Isprosio sam Felačicu
Vele lijepu vlahinjicu,
Š njomzi hoću tanac vodit
I u dipli moje zvonit.

Come to treat yourself with us
Because we, Gojo, have kneaded
The three obese cakes (...)
I proposed Felačica
Who's a lovely Vlach girl
I want to lead the round with her
And to play on my bellows.

⁵⁵ "Maruša s Milicom sjedeći doma, budući im gospođa na posjedu, razgovaraju se," and "pojući pjesan očute gospođu di ide uz skalu." *Comedy V*, 242, 243.

In Nalješković's work every detail is included to accurately show many particularities of civic life. The realism and vitality of these features were crucial in the plays because his aim was to involve the audience in the events on stage. Such details appear frequently in his drama and they are well integrated into the text. They do not jeopardize the dynamic of dramatic action, precisely because Nalješković managed to create realism on the stage by vivid dialogues and the depictive gestures of the protagonists.

3. NALJEŠKOVIĆ'S CHARACTERS IN THE LIGHT OF SOCIAL CRITICISM

3.1 Urban life in Nalješković's comedies

According to Franjo Švelec two types of farce are known to have existed in late medieval Ragusa:

- the first type, depicting city life, featured hot-headed spouses, various scams, greedy priests etc.
- the second type contains as its main theme the antagonism of villages and towns, for instance the peasant's arrival in town that was also material rewarded by laughter⁵⁶.

Nalješković's representation belongs to the first type by their thematic and compositional characteristics. His main theme is normally a day in the life of a noble or bourgeois family.⁵⁷

Social criticism is often found in the work of the sixteenth-century Croatian writers.⁵⁸ Various phenomena appeared in their work in a negative light. The most frequently attacked trait was profligacy⁵⁹, other targets included also excessive parsimony, different status ambitions, or the desire to rise on the social ladder. A similarly frequent social phenomenon to be portrayed was the shrewd Renaissance man who sought the best possible way to live and most successful way to acquire wealth.⁶⁰ Lajšić argues that in a society where the nobility and bourgeois amassed huge amounts of money despite the difficult living conditions of the

⁵⁶ A good example for the second type is Marin Držić's "Novela od Stanca [The Jest on Stanac]," in *Dundo Maroje i druga djela* [Uncle Maroje and Other Works], ed. Mira Muhoberac (Vinkovci: Riječ, 1998). This condensed farce in verse presents the protagonist Stanac's innocent encounter with the urban world of Ragusa as compared with his native rural world in Ragusa's hinterland. In the play a Ragusan youth cruelly plays with the older and naive peasant Stanac, who comes to Ragusa to sell his goat and some cheese. Hoping that he would get younger with the help of fairies, he gets robbed by young revellers on a carnival night.

⁵⁷ Franjo Švelec, "Farse Nikole Nalješkovića [The Farces of Nikola Nalješković]," *Dani hvarskog kazališta* 14 (1988): 23.

⁵⁸ Namely, Mavro Vetranović, Nikola Nalješković, Džore Držić and Marin Držić, according to Prosperov Novak, *Teatar u Dubrovniku prije Marina Držića*, 40. Cf. with Sebastiano Dolci and Mirko Valentić, *Fasti litterario-ragusini = Dubrovačka književna kronika* [The Literary Chronicles of Ragusa] (Zagreb: Hrvatski Institut za povijest, 2001), *passim*.

⁵⁹ E.g., the young master's affair with a courtesan in *Comedy VII*.

⁶⁰ On that matter, Saša Lajšić, "Trgovačka praksa kao literarni obrazac [The Mercantile Practice as Literary Template]," *Fluminensia*, no. 2 (2005): 89-92.

surrounding areas living in fear of the Ottomans, such privileges presented a particular opportunity to enjoy what life had to offer.

But also the poor in Ragusa, maidservants and peasants, had their dreams.⁶¹ Theirs were rather simple and modest in comparison with their masters': a rich table presented the fulfilment of their wishes and a form of carnevalesque Renaissance mood.⁶²

While farce could cut and bruise the audience with its sharp humour, it could also touch their audience, that is, Ragusan citizens more deeply and painfully than what the stereotype of silly entertainment suggests. Similarly, it is possible to find dark elements in these supposed comedies. They are sometimes truly shocking and subversive plays, masquerading as farce. Taboos are tackled with the intention to teach the audience and to reveal the lives of fellow citizens.⁶³ Nalješković's other intention might have also been to provoke shame among the members of the audience by making them feel that they could be protagonists themselves. The best topics to make comedy, or more precisely in this case: farce, were related to death and sex. The following example, for instance, shows a situation where the master is approaching the maid to persuade her that intercourse is not a dangerous idea:

GOSPAR:

Čut ćemo kad bude zaskačat kamaru.

VESELA:

Izvuc' se od tude; stavi me na karu.⁶⁴

MASTER:

We'll hear her [the wife] when she locks the room.

VESELA:

Go away from me, you'll put me on the pillory.

⁶¹ E.g., the maidservant is finally satisfied with the stolen food in the last act of *Comedy V*.

⁶² E.g., the priest with more interest in having a rich dinner than giving moral advice in *Comedy VI*.

⁶³ On that matter, Nazim Nasko Frndić, "Prizori iz obiteljskog života u Nalješkovićevim komedijama" [Scenes of Family Life in Nalješković's Comedies], *Dani hvarskog kazališta 14* (1988): 90-98.

⁶⁴ *Comedy VI*, 261.

In the farce, after actions of intercourse or even kissing and making out, one may expect specific reactions on prohibited sexual affairs, which really could make people laugh, as in the following example, where the lady communicates with a healer:

GOSPOĐA:

Nu sjemo da nješto spovijem ja sve pravo;
bogme mi nije ništo, dosta sam ja zdravo;
al nemoj njemu rijet, neg mi daj ti viru
da mu ć' dat razumjet er veće umiru;
sve tej tri oslov pas er je nabređao;
uzaznah sve danas; toj mi je na nj žao.
Zatoj se u odar postavih ovakoj.⁶⁵

LADY:

Come here because I want to tell you something
there is nothing wrong with me, I feel pretty healthy.
But don't tell him that, and promise me
that you'll persuade him that I am dying.
That dog made all of them pregnant -
I found out today, I was so sorry about this
and that's why I am lying on a bier like this.

These and more examples show that the farce was an ideal choice for Nalješković to deal with deep themes in an entertaining way. The common elements of farces and Nalješković's comedies, therefore, are: the presentation of contemporary life, recognizable characters and events, and a naturalistic approach to exceptional situations of everyday life.

Nalješković's comedies were devoid of malice, or intentional offence. They were common representations of the intimate and civic life of psychologically nuanced subjects of ridicule, holding up a mirror to show events happening behind the back of the characters.⁶⁶ To underpin the personalities of the masters and their spouses, there was always a third party: servants, priests, medics, in short, recognizable people who created the plot with their actions. The *Comedies* of Nikola Nalješković reflect a kind of exaggerated everyday civic life, and

⁶⁵ *Comedy VI*, 271. This is specifically emphasized in *Comedy VI*, which contains typical farsic motifs, where the Lady is speaking of expelling three women made pregnant by her husband.

⁶⁶ That is what the Master claims in *Comedy V*, revealing a custom, which will have been common to all small communities:

“A ja ne smijući od tebe nikuda
Mnome se smijejući cijene me za luda.

And poor me, whom [his wife] you don't let go anywhere!
They mock me, they think I'm crazy.” (*Comedy V*, 252)

therefore are full of humour and free expression. They, especially *Comedies V, VI and VII*, are often referred to as the successors of the Venetian and French farces.⁶⁷

Carnival and other popular festive forms in which farces were performed were not limited to an audience those outside the establishment, but were also appreciated by the literate, cultural elite of the period. For a comparison, Rabelais's own literary production also served as a perfect illustration of the constant interaction between high and low Renaissance cultures in the early Renaissance farce.⁶⁸ In these comedies, one can find many realistic moments, just as in Nalješković's work. Nalješković accomplished these models it by gradually refining the farce over time and expanding its content (from the simple *Comedy V* to a complex *Comedy VII*). As Švelec suggests, Nalješković was approaching the comedy, and in his later work he entirely embraced it.⁶⁹

The French farce, however, remained mostly on the original level of elemental relationships in the family and did not aspire to delve into a sociological analysis of the author's and audience's environment. The circumstances of the plots are often unknown, the sites in the French farces remain unexplained and it is impossible to identify any French province or even city as a centre of the events. As Batušić concludes, adultery, stealing, diarrhoea and gluttony are possible and visible everywhere. Nalješković's originality lies in the most probably precise location of the comical substrate: he placed his characters and plot into conservative Ragusa.⁷⁰

Although certainly not completely realistic, Nalješković's plays and poems helped to address the real issues of all layers of Ragusan society. The masters were portrayed as greedy

⁶⁷ The Venetian farce, which flourished in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, was also severely realistic, cynical and immoral and a kind of model for Nalješković's work, according to Vladan Švacov, "Problem rekonstrukcije izgubljenih dijelova *Komedije sedme* [The Problem of Reconstruction of the Lost Parts in *Comedy VII*]," *Dani hvarskog kazališta III* (1976): 91. Concerning the French model see, for instance, Pavličić, "Farsine," 187-204; Švelec, "Farze," 16-23; and Batušić, "Nalješkovićeva komedija peta," 34-43.

⁶⁸ See, Bruce E. Hayes, "Introduction," in *Rabelais's Radical Farce*, 9.

⁶⁹ Švelec, "Farze," 23.

⁷⁰ Batušić, "Nalješkovićeva komedija peta," 98.

and hot-headed, ladies frustrated with their life. While the authors of the *fabliaux* were anonymous *jongleurs*,⁷¹ in this case the author is a respected man of letters and scholar who seem to have made precise observations about the everyday life around him.

Despite his social standing, he was able and interested to show the lower spheres of life: obsession with food, drink, sexual pleasures, rough gestures and a specific verbal inventory. Furthermore, just as it is usual in French farce, Nalješković operated with a simple and uncomplicated plot, a small number of characters, as well as immediate comic effects on the audience who were not required to have knowledge or skills to enjoy the plays. Pavličić also points out that Nalješković's plays do not lack farcical elements, but they are exceptional due to the fact that they contain much more than an ordinary farce.⁷² According to him, one of their “bonuses” is this certain dose of social criticism, which is the subject of the next subchapters.

⁷¹ The performers were both the composers of the songs and the authors of the stories they performed. One of the most popular plots of the *fabliaux* and accordingly the farce was a love triangle. Contrary to Nalješković's plays, in the *fabliaux* the adoring husband is normally shown to be deceived by a tricky wife. Another one of the most commonly used plots was that of a trickster who deceives, but then gets deceived by someone else. The fifteenth-century play, *Pierre Pathelin*, is a prime example for this. The play features a lawyer who tricks a merchant, and is then cheated by a peasant. Oscar G. Brockett and Francis J. Hildy, *History of the Theatre* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2003), 93.

⁷² Pavličić, “Farsine,” 202-204.

3.2 The analysis of relations: extramarital affairs of a husband, pregnant maidservants and a debauched son

Social criticism plays an important role in many genres of medieval and early modern literature.⁷³ It is often put in opposition to the compliance with social norms.⁷⁴ Using such oppositions is the most common way of Nalješković when he created his characters. This is particularly true for his construction of gender relations, especially those between husband and wife.⁷⁵ An example for Nalješković's method to comment on gender relations is the quarrel between the lady and her husband, the master in *Comedy V*:

GOSPODA:

[...]

Kako ću bit živa od ove sramote,
gdje mi muž celiva na oči ogote?

GOSPAR:

Nu mi rec' kad Krila Frančeska upazi,
nie li pokрила i sve toj ugasi?
a Stiepa kad Nika na Stani ugleda,
kako no vladika nikomu znat' ne da;
a ti tu cipariš kako no jedna zvir;
činit ću da udariš glavom za to u mir.⁷⁶

LADY:

[...]

How will I survive this shame
My husband nipping them before my eyes?

MASTER:

Tell me, when Krila saw Francesco [with maid],
didn't she cover the room and put the lights off?
And when Nika sees Stjepo on Stana,
she keeps the secret like a priest;
and you cry out here like a beast!
I will hit your head in order to have peace.

⁷³ See, on social criticism, Cary Nederman, "The Speculum Principium as Political and Social Criticism in the Late Middle Ages," *The European Legacy: Toward New Paradigms* 3, no. 3 (1998): 18-38; Helen White, *Social Criticism in Popular Religious Literature of the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 1966); Konrad Schoell, *La Farce du Quinzième siècle* (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 1992), *passim*.

⁷⁴ Cf, e.g., Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, ed. Carmelo Gariano (Potomac, Md: Scripta Humanistica, 1986), Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, ed. Helen Cooper (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1992).

⁷⁵ Cf., on marital relations and gender roles, Joanna Kazik, "Of all creatures women be best, / Cuius contrarium verum est": Gendered Power in Selected Late Medieval and Early Modern Texts," in *Text Matters: A Journal of Literature, Theory and Culture*, vol.1, no. 1 (2011): 76-91, Leif Søndergaard, "Combat between the Genders: Farcical Elements in the German Fastnachtspiel", in *Farce and farcical elements*, ed. Wim Hüskens and Konrad Schoell (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), 169-188, Laura Giannetti, *Lelia's Kiss: Imagining Gender, Sex, and Marriage in Italian Renaissance Comedy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009).

⁷⁶ *Comedy V*, 251. The comedies are published in Nikola Nalješković and Nikola Dimitrović, *Pjesme Nikole Nalješkovića i Nikole Dimitrovića* [The Poetry of Nikola Dimitrović and Nikola Nalješković], ed. Jagić, Rački, and Daničić, 240-59, 260-75, 276-96. (Henceforth: *Comedy V*, VI, VII. References will be made to this Jagić edition). Compare with Nikola Nalješković, *Književna djela*, ed. Kapetanović. In my translation, I tried to stay as much as possible to the original text, thus, even the expression and colloquialisms in Croatian are translated according to their literally meaning in the English vernacular. Where the words are missing, brackets are used in which the context is explained.

The development of the plot can similarly be interpreted as Joanna Kazik's analysis of an English carol in which "the woman's irritating behaviour sanctions male aggression that is premeditated, organized and incorporated into the framework of social organization."⁷⁷ In the relations between husband and wife, expressed in the character's justification of his violence against his spouse, Nalješković presents this kind of male behaviour as it would be displayed by an average citizen of Ragusa.

In *Comedy VII*, both the protagonists and the supporting characters show their cultural backgrounds and beliefs in an emotional, and sometimes excessive, way, following classical comedies. For example, Petar, the father of the girl who is supposed to marry Maro, is an extremely emotional figure. His traditional beliefs are evident from his personality and are rooted in his deep religiosity, scrupulosity and thoughtfulness. In the scene where Maro's father Dživo states that his son was having an affair with a prostitute, Petar responds:

PETAR:

Pod' na slavu božju, kontent sam i toj dat,	For the glory of God, I'm pleased to give it [the dowry]
Za ljubav ku t' nošu, ništa ne ću gledat.	out of my love to you. I am not a quibbler;
Dvije mu tisuće i trista sve dati	two thousand and three hundred [ducats]. I'll give
prije neg prag od kuće bude mi spontati	them before coming to your entrance door.
Nu bud' mi daj sade prijatelj, svrš' mi toj,	Thus, be a friend now, finish with that [story],
ne gledaj ti mlade, gleda' ti poso tvoj. ⁷⁸	don't worry about the young ones, but care
	for your own deals.

In his paternal role, the emotions towards his daughters are highlighted, but he is also honest in giving the dowry. The average observer may perceive Petar this way, but Nalješković's intention was to present him as a good-hearted fool who will yield to the greedy father and his son, and suffer the consequence of giving his two other beloved daughters to the nuns because there was not enough money for the dowry for each of them.

⁷⁷ Kazik, "Of all creatures", 82.

⁷⁸ *Comedy VII*, 281.

Few of the characters in *Comedy VII* are developing consistently and comprehensively. Maro's behaviour, for example, is strongly motivated by the sexual pleasure from his lover, but as the comedy is approaching its end he changes his priorities due to his greedy and injured ego. His main characteristics are stubbornness and impudence which is apparent in a number of scenes, such as in a conversation with his father Dživo:

DŽIVO:

Marine, što takoj činiš me žalosna?

Marin, why are you making me so sad?

Jesi li ti sin moj?

Are you my son?

MARO:

Majka toj sama zna.⁷⁹

That's what mother knows.

He is also showing childish disobedience, especially when playing stupid, but yet he is being easily influenced when his ego is compromised:

DŽIVO:

Ti sprdaš, er si vas u vjetru, Marine;

You mock me, 'cause you're acting like wind.

vidiš li začic vas gdi mi život gine?

You see now why I'm going to die?

Zločesti sinu moj, htio sam svu bradu

My naughty son, I wanted to pluck my beard,

oskubsti, gdi inoj nije čut po gradu

when I heard nothing else in town

neg tvoje sramote, o kijek svak govori.

but your disgrace from everyone's lips.

Ajmehi! daj što te zla smrt ne umori!

Oh my, you should have died!

MARO:

Per amor di dio, što hoć' riet, ne znam
ja.⁸⁰

For God's love, what you want to say, I don't know.

The character of Maro's friend Frano is also multi-layered; his main attributes are acting manipulative and shifty, changing his approach depending on the mood of Maro:

FRANO:

Alla ffe' Maroje, žo mi je, er mi s' drug,

In good faith, Maro, I'm sorry, my friend

er ti ću rijet, to je veličak jedan rug;

I tell you it's a great shame:

kurvine deserte, putane smrdeće,

a disbanded whore, a smelly prostitute!

⁷⁹ *Comedy VII*, 292.

⁸⁰ *Comedy VII*, 292. All parts in the Italian language in this subchapter and below are given in italics.

Da ona tej berte čini ti i smeće!
Ino mi nije žao, neg kako trpiš toj.

She's creating only spites and harms you!
For anything else, I do not care, but I wonder
how much you suffer for it.

MARO:

Ja ne bih pošao za vas svijet veće k njoj. I wouldn't go to her for the whole world.

FRANO:

Bez kurve ti biti ne moreš, ja te znam.⁸¹ Oh, you can't be without the whore, I know you.

The minor characters are also nuanced, which is one of the main characteristics of *Comedy V*. One may notice that the maidservants are caustic, malicious, lazy, gossipy, and yet often in mutual conflict and fight for the pole position in the house, but are also cooperating when in need. This is particularly shown in a conversation between the two maidservants Maruša and Milica when discussing about a broken saucer:

MARUŠA:

Izmidjer sude ti.

Take the dishes out.

MILICA:

A što ih ti sama
ne umiješ izeti? ne imaš daj srama,
neg vazda na menje htjela bi jahati;
a kad je da se ije, dobra si svijati,
umiješ i moje hljebine dohitit;
nut vražje gospođe, ka me će jošte bit.

Why can't you take them yourself?
Don't you have shame, when
always riding my back, but
when it's time to eat, you can bend well
end reach for my bread too. Oh,
here comes the Lady, now she will beat me.

MARUŠA:

Ja ve ću poč varit, nu mi da' ožicu.

Now, I'll go to make fire, give me that rabble.

MILICA:

Naj. Što ću sada rit za onu pliticu?
(Spravivši sude Milica govori gospođi)
Oto ti tuj sudi i novi i stari
hoću li poč k vodi, Maruša čijem vari?⁸²

Here, what will I say about the saucer?
(After cleaning the dish, Milica says to Lady)
Here are the dishes, the new and the old ones,
shall I go for the water, when Maruša heats?

There are further interesting details in the same *Comedy V*: the lady states that she will complain to her brothers about the maidservants' behaviour and also threatens to complain about her

⁸¹ *Comedy VII*, 290.

⁸² *Comedy V*, 243.

husband's behaviour. Not even concerned about the consequences, as the head of a patriarchal family, the Master mocks her intention:

GOSPOĐA:

Er su tej mahnite, ter ću ja još biti?
Bogme ti prem ni te ne bi s čijem popiti.
Bogme ću puknuti, da brat[j]i od prve
kom bude svanuti ne skazem do mrve.⁸³

LADY:

Because the maids are mad, should I also be?
Who would agree to that behaviour?
Oh, I'll get mad, if I don't tell to my brothers
at first light everything – from first to the last
word.

After he had warned her, threatening with violence about the possible consequences of her reaction, the Master interjects:

GOSPAR:

Je...te brate i tebe još š njimi,
a nuti gledajte gdi brat[j]om prijeti mi.
Pođ' dokle s' tej volje, ter im se istuži.⁸⁴

MASTER:

I will fuck your brothers and you with them!
Oh, look how she threatens with her family.
Go, if you want, and tell your complaints.

The characteristics enlisted here in one bourgeois family were probably familiar for masters of similar Ragusan households, but merrymakers, craftsmen and apprentices could have known these characters from their own life too. Thus, such communication must have been familiar to the audience.

GOSPAR

Tako ti i mene snahode sad ljudi:
Što ti je od žene, jel još zle ćudi,
dal ti se ži ti bog miješat u ognjište
ali ti još razlog i od toga ište.
[...]
Navlaš mi govore, sada je duga noć!
Hodimo nebore gdi godi za čas poč -

MASTER:

That's why people come and ask me:
What's up with your wife, is she still ill-willed,
does she easily let you interfere at home
or does she ask for the reasons why you want to.
[...]
They [his friends] keep telling me, now the night is long!
Let's go, man, somewhere for an hour - and

⁸³ *Comedy V*, 252.

⁸⁴ *Comedy V*, 252.

a ja ne smijući od tebe nikuda. poor am I, whom you don't let go anywhere!
 Mnome se smjejući cijene me za luda.⁸⁵ They mock me, they think I'm crazy.

In another example from *Comedy VI*, when Vesela, a maidservant who is pregnant from her master, is lamenting about her condition, he comforts her by reminding her of the gifts he gave to her. When Vesela replies: “and a belly like this (i trbuh ovaki)”, he says: “Don't worry about that at all; nowadays that's what each master does to the girls (Da t' nije za to har; djevojkam toj svaki čini sad gospodar)”.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, the girl is nervous and afraid of her condition and of the Lady's reaction as well. The master is wealthy and considers sending the pregnant woman outside Ragusa to give birth there:

<p>GOSPAR Činit ću da u Ston otideš jemati, U Đonti ja imam kmeticu tuj koja će činit vam svaki red: nut miruj.⁸⁷</p>	<p>MASTER: I'll organize for you the delivery in Ston I have one bondmaid in the countryside who will do everything right: be calm.</p>
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When eventually the wife does find out, of course, a quarrel breaks out between her and the husband. In this conversation Baba gets involved, who is also pregnant with his child, but wants to appease the wife, and says “She ate a lot of hot bread this morning. (Ona se jutros najela vruća kruha.)”⁸⁸

Nalješković uses a priest's fascination with the devil as a farcical device. The priest is also obsessed with food and sex, and wants a rich dinner as payment for exorcism and for the maid Vesela as well. The exorcism scene escalates into pure farce as the priest sets out to Satan:

⁸⁵ *Comedy V*, 254.

⁸⁶ *Comedy VI*, 261.

⁸⁷ *Comedy VI*, 262.

⁸⁸ *Comedy VI*, 266.

POP:
Izljezi iz nje ti, bogme te zaklinam.
GOSPOĐA:
Iždeni one tri.
POP:
Nut tri su, nie sam.⁸⁹

PRIEST:
Come out from her body, I order you.
LADY:
Expel those three [women].
PRIEST:
So, there are three [devils], he's not alone.

In Nalješković's *Comedies*, life is often painted with merciless cruelty. The recognizable freedom of speech is characteristic for any type of humanist literature.⁹⁰ It is understandable in such context; even if the rhetoric does not adhere to the poetical aesthetic expected in some situations of the comedy, it is still interesting, important, and motivating for the audience, because these situations make every scene in the *Comedies* appear to be real and every word to be true.

⁸⁹*Comedy VI*, 273.

⁹⁰ See, especially on domestic violence, Robert Stanton, "Marriage, Socialization, and Domestic Violence in *The Life of Christina of Markyate*," in *Domestic Violence in Medieval Texts*, ed. Eve Salisbury, Georgiana Donavin, and Merrall Llewelyn Price (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2002), 242-71; Marilyn Migiel, "Domestic Violence in the Decameron," in *ibidem*, 164-79; and Catherine Innes-Parker, "The 'Homicidal Women' Stories in the Roman de Thèbes," in *ibidem*, 205-22.

3.3 Social status, language, and vocabulary

One of the methods to examine the characters is an analysis of the diversity of their language. There are different vernaculars used for the masters talking among themselves, young men provoking each other, or maids gossiping. In this respect, even the innermost spaces of homes, the marital beds, and eventually the relations of noblemen and ordinary citizens are not excluded.

The Croatian linguist Milan Rešetar devoted most of his working life to the problem of old Ragusan vernacular and its relationship to contemporary literary practice. His theory of this problem and its basic settings were built relatively early, by the end of his life he did not have them substantially revised, but until today, most of his findings are accepted.⁹¹ According to him, Ragusan vernacular has always been Jekavic-Shtokavian. Ikavisms and Chakavisms in literary work are the result of external influences, which have left their mark only in the literary language, and not in the ordinary or everyday vernacular. These dialectic influences decreased in the literary language over time. In Nalješković's time, it was almost pure Jekavic-Shtokavian vernacular, which can be seen in the choice of these variations in his *Comedies*. It is very often a variation with *ije* or *je* (*Rijeka*, *rijet*, *hljeb*, *vidjeti* meaning *Rijeka (town)*, *to say*, *bread*, *to see* or in rare cases with *e* or *i* – in *celov*; *ovi*, *gori* meaning *kiss*; *this*, *above*).⁹²

Nalješković uses subtle differences on the linguistic level of his characters' speech. For example, while the mother and the maid speak a very clean vernacular, old and young men are constantly switching between Italian and Croatian:

⁹¹ According to Davor Dukić, "Jezik i književnost u Dubrovniku u 16. i 17. stoljeću (kontinuitet i promjene) [Language and Literature in Dubrovnik in the 16th and 17th Centuries (Continuity and Changes)]," GraLis (2002): 1-17. <http://www-gewi.kfunigraz.ac.at/gralis/Dukic%202002.htm>, accessed April 13, 2015.

⁹² See Milan Rešetar, *Ispravci i dodaci tekstu starijih pisaca dubrovačkih* [Corrections and Amendments to the Text of old Ragusan Writers] (Zagreb: JAZU, 1894), *passim*.

MARO

Što ino negoli lašnje će primat moć
za koga me poli govrim svega sinoć.

Oh, she could easier receive the one,
For whom she spilled me with shit last night.

FRANO

Polila, ha, *cazzo*?

Spilled, ha, *fuck*?

MARO

Polila; da što mniš?

Yes, spilled, what do you think?

FRANO

Tu mi par un pazzo, ako ju ne pustiš.⁹³

You seem to be nuts, if you don't leave her.

Elsewhere, Croatian passages contain words borrowed from Italian with a little twist. For example, to comfort his friend Frano says “A *miser* Marino, *amanca* kurva nije (Oh, *poor* Marino, your *lover* is not a whore.)”⁹⁴ In *Comedy VII* Italianisms, or even whole Italian sentences appear often when characters greet each other. In one scene, for instance, Frano greets Maro cordially just an hour before disguising himself to attack Maro before his *amanca*’s door to make sure that Maro would not come any more: “*Good night, Maro! I believe that I will also go home*”⁹⁵. (*Buona notte, Maro / Afé anche io a casa andarò.*)”⁹⁶

Here, it is especially interesting that Nalješković insists on rhyming to obtain a special sound effect which is never gained in Croatian-only passages. In the following examples he rhymes an Italian line with a Croatian line:

DŽIVO:

Brigata Addio.

Thank God!

Vi ste sad kumpanji, a ja sam s ocem bio.⁹⁷

Here you are, friends, I spoke with the father.

⁹³ *Comedy VII*, 289.

⁹⁴ *Comedy VII*, 288. Italian *amante* is replaced by *amanca* in Croatian, which indicates the female gender of the lover.

⁹⁵ *Comedy VII*, 287.

⁹⁶ For Ragusa's nightlife, see Zdenka Janeković Römer: “Post Tertiam Campanam' - Noćni život Dubrovnika u srednjem vijeku” [‘Post Tertiam Campanam’ – The Nightlife of Dubrovnik in the Middle Ages], *Anali* 32 (1994): 8: “Yet in the daytime it was a predominant image of an ordered and bustling city. At night, the steep and narrow streets took the place and Ragusa appeared on the scene with all kinds of pleasures, but also with violence. On the day the center of the events was on the main road, the Placa (Stradun today), as well as in other places where the merchants gathered. The night scenes were played in more remote, darker roads that were committed rarely to the guard. At these social events the foreigners were participating as well as the young men who belonged to all social classes and who were still looking for their place in society.” Cf. with Gordan Ravančić, “Prilog poznavanju prostitucije u Dubrovniku u kasnom srednjem vijeku [A Contribution to the Knowledge about Prostitution in Late Medieval Ragusa],” *Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest Filozofskog fakulteta u Zagrebu* 31 (1998): 123-130.

⁹⁷ *Comedy VII*, 291.

When describing Maro's lover, Dživo says:

DŽIVO

Kad počne mazati oni nje obraz star,	When she starts to put the make-up on her cheeks
veće kole strati neg Dživo bokarar;	She uses more material than Dživo the potter
ali ti jes bolje <i>far vita con quella</i> ,	But you would rather <i>live with her</i>
<i>O pigliar la moglie onesta e bella.</i> ⁹⁸	<i>Than have an honest and beautiful wife.</i>

The audience or the reader had to know Italian to understand the details of the play, but also they must have been aware that such compounds would never be used in everyday life. This mixed language subordinated to the stylistic levels had certain effects. What appears to be the case here is the reception of these texts in a way that they were determined more with their form than with genre features.

If one puts aside the occasional deliberate indication of the social status of characters by Nalješković, he can also really see into the everyday life of his characters by offering a rich description of clothes of that time. The following section is valuable for the differentiation of the status of rich women in comparison to maidservants. The husband lists all the clothes that his wife has, who is, according to him, very well taken care of, and possesses many carefully chosen dresses and accessories:

GOSPODAR:

Ti imaš sajune, košulje, kolete,
rukave, kordune, prstene, frecete,
razlike još veze, kuplice, ubruse,
s biserom podveze, naprske, janjuse,
pantufe, cokule, bječve pletene,
što nijesu obule do danas vik žene,
daj suknje pak brune, daj modre, crljene;
a nut sad gdi kune kad dodje za mene.⁹⁹

MASTER:

You have scarves, shirts, collars,
gloves, ribbons, rings, earrings,
then different laces, buckles, handkerchiefs
garters with pearls, thimbles, pendants,
slippers, boots, knitted stockings,
what women did not put on until this day
I gave her dark skirts, blue and red ones;
And now she swears the day when she came.

⁹⁸ *Comedy VII*, 292.

⁹⁹ *Comedy V*, 253.

On the other side, the maidservants made complaints to the Lady for not giving them all the needed accessories which other girls who serve in town had:

MARUŠA:

Djevojke još sade sajune sve nose
a lijepo zaglade i u prodio kose;
a da toj koja nas učini, tuj veće
užeže, da grad vas ugasit pak neće.

GOSPOĐA:

Neću bo da mene u crkvi zarad vas
malinjaju žene, er mi toj nije čas.¹⁰⁰

MARUŠA:

All the girls even now wear scarves,
nice hair is smoothly parted;
And if one of us made it,
the whole town would be on fire.

LADY:

I don't want in the church, for your sake, to be
gossiped by women, 'cause I don't need that.

The audience may have perceived that the realism of the situation was sometimes sacrificed for the formal features of the text, which was carefully shaped in rhymed octosyllables. However, the following two subchapters will show the dialogues that might have been most typical and representative considering the features of contemporary Ragusan society.

¹⁰⁰ *Comedy V*, 246.

3.4 An atmosphere of materialism

Philippus de Diversis said that the people of Ragusa, when using their trade skills and entrepreneurship, converted the poverty of their region into an advantage. With disgust, following the position of his humanistic worldview, he claimed: “If one is allowed to say, they clearly believe in the judgement that happiness is in wealth and all the virtues are in the acquisition and accumulation of greedy.” An early form of mercantilism was present in this rich, trading, maritime city.¹⁰¹ An atmosphere of mercantilist materialism also dominates some parts of the plays. All the objects that are mentioned have their price and all characters of the comedies are trying to get to something on someone else's account:

MARUŠA:

Al zlje t' bih ja stala i bila prem luda,
da peču ukrala ne budem od gruda;
a ima i ckvare ovamo pod skalom
veće pô bokare pritopljene s salom;
toj bogme nije mala, ter ću t' poč zamesti
toliko prikala, što mogu izjesti.¹⁰²

It wouldn't be a good thing but crazy indeed
if I don't steal a piece of the batch;
there are also the grain grits under the stairs
more than half of a jug melted with the fat;
God knows it's not a bit, so I will make
as many cakes, as I can eat.

People have their price too: in the negotiations of the possible marriage of Maro, his father Dživo and Petar, the father of his future wife, are only concerned about the amount of the dowry. “Toj ve znaš er sade dinari varaju i stare i mlade, svi dinar gledaju (You know that nowadays money deceives everyone, the young and the old ones)”: this is the statement of Maro's father about his own son, who wants 2000 ducats in addition to the thousand offered with the house. The young and the old ones, they all look out for money. When the parents discuss their son's adventures, their concerns and anger are initially expressed as fear that he

¹⁰¹ Zdenka Janeković Römer, “Čast i glas grada Dubrovnika i njegova slavitelja Filipa de Diversisa [The Honour and Glory of the City of Dubrovnik and of his Glorifier Philippus de Diversis],” in: Filip de Diversis, *Sabrana djela* [Collected Works], ed. Zdenka Janeković Römer (Zagreb: Dom i svijet, 2007), 15-16.

¹⁰² *Comedy V*, 259.

will spend all the money. They are also worried that their son will get the “French disease” – that is, syphilis – which was incurable at the time.

MAJKA:

Nješto si zlovoljan, čudo t' bi toj bilo
da dođeš jedan dan veselo i milo.

OTAC:

Ostani me se tja jer kad bi ti čula
što sam sad čuo ja, pala bi t' gočula.
Sin nam je dezvijan i k vragu pošao
ter nam će rasut stan, toga mi je žao.
A nut još ovoj stav' na pamet ter gledaju
gdi nam će doć francav. Ah, Bože, ti ne daj.¹⁰³

MOTHER:

You are moody, what a miracle would be
for having been once cheerful and sweet.

FATHER:

Stay away from me, if you would hear
What I have heard, you'd have a stroke.
Our son is deviant and has gone with the devil,
he will ruin our home, that's what I regret.
And you have in mind that all folks will see
how Frenchy he would become. Forbid, God!

Maro's father's avarice is noticeable and most apparent in the dialogue with Petar negotiating on the amount of dowry: “Help God, if you can marry her with two thousands. (Da bogme ne mož' nju udat s dvije tisuće.)”¹⁰⁴ Maro describes his future wife to his neighbour as “beautiful as a flower, with two thousand and three hundred [ducats]”, Maro's father, before defending the choice of marriage for his son, explains how extremely wasteful the bachelor Maro is. Only the character of Petar stands out in the atmosphere of materialism. His emotions are honest, emphatic and almost idealized, although he seems a bit silly in comparison with Maro and his father. His naivety is best expressed in the dialogue with the father of the future bridegroom:

PETAR:

ter za kćer za moju, i rijeh mu dat kuću,
u kojoj ja stoju, i dukat tisuću
Ali mi najprije on reče čudnu stvar
odluka da ga nije vjerit se ikadar.¹⁰⁵

For my daughter, even the house I'll give
Where I live, and a thousand ducats.
But I witnessed a strange thing he said,
That he [Maro] would not like to marry at all.

¹⁰³ *Comedy VII*, 282.

¹⁰⁴ *Comedy VII*, 281.

¹⁰⁵ *Comedy VII*, 280.

All these examples clearly show that one of Nalješković's aims was to elicit his audience's laughter by presenting the avarice of his protagonists to be compared with Ragusan bourgeoisie, without overtly condemning the negative parts of the described situation. A mercantilistic spirit dominates that is one of the domains of comedy and laughter through which one seeks to detect the greed, in a way that Marin Držić described as “*Amor* is not *amor*; gold is *amor*.”¹⁰⁶

All the social and family relation management is shown as resulting from commercial practice or rather being dependent on the skills and abilities that are used to gather income. Trade laws direct life in the comedies laughter, as a weapon of social criticism, is also used to expose the greed and avarice originating from such a situation.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ The old man on *amor*, in comedy “Skup”, in: Marin Držić, *Dundo Maroje i druga djela* [Uncle Maroje and Other Works], ed. Mira Muhoberac (Vinkovci: Riječ, 1998), 256.

¹⁰⁷ On that matter, Saša Lajšić, “Trgovačka praksa kao literarni obrazac” [Trade Practice as a Literary Template], *Fluminensia*, no. 2 (2005): 87-103.

3.5 Reality or exaggeration - Ragusan society in Nalješković's *Comedies*?

Nalješković deploys countless devices to create his farces in which burlesque elements mix with the grotesque in a realistic way. For the average observer in the audience it could, for instance, have been rather hard to decide whether the women in the comedies were just being funny or described in a satiric-didactical way offering the advice: Look at these crazy ladies; make sure that the ones in your community will not move into such a direction.

Did Nalješković want to say something particular about everyday life in Ragusa? Franjo Švelec makes an interesting point and states that Nalješković neither provided a commentary nor offered a solution but presented facts in a literary form, by revealing the existing darker side of human relationships in the community.¹⁰⁸ In the characters' discussion on marriage, love and family Nalješković presents double social standards, pragmatism and open hypocrisy. For the audience who laughs at his comedies, the characters and plot may have been close to their own homes.

The questions may remain whether there is more than “laughter from the heart,” that is, pure entertainment in Nalješković's comedies and to what extent there are traces of reproach or convictions referring to the Ragusan society.¹⁰⁹ One cannot give clear and undisputed answers in this respect. But, encountering the recurring satirical motives of the difficulties of family life in his comedies, it is justifiable to argue that he constructed a life-like image of the actual situation in the city's society that was meant to create didactical effects on the basis of social criticism.

¹⁰⁸ Švelec, “Farse,” *Dani hvarskog kazališta* 14 (1988): 23.

¹⁰⁹ Zdenka Janeković Römer, “Pučka krv i plemstvo duha: Život renesansnog Dubrovnika u djelu Nikole Nalješkovića [Common Blood and the Nobility of the Spirit: The life of Renaissance Ragusa in the Work of Nikola Nalješković],” *Pučka krv, plemstvo duha: Zbornik radova o Nikoli Nalješkoviću*, (2005): 55.

Conclusions

The main research problem that I dealt with in this analysis was the following: to what extent did the comedies of Nikola Nalješković deal with contemporary Renaissance society? Was it the model of Ragusa that he used? Did he intend to influence the life of his audience? My assumption was that Nalješković wanted to use and understand the everyday life that surrounded him and the actions of his fellow citizens.

The accent of my analysis was put on studying the social aspects shown in Nalješković's *Comedies*. My idea was to deal with the problematic relations in society, which Nalješković described in them. By extracting suitable examples, I tried to complement previous studies and supplement them with my own observed patterns.

The general result of my analysis is that the author wanted with his *Comedies* to come close to aspects of actual examples of negative life situations in sixteenth-century Ragusa. All layers of society bear and show signs and consequences of a variety of their immoralities. That way, Nalješković's *Comedies* are an expression of critical realism in a dramatic form. In his work one may recognize details of everyday life that could have been clearly near to the ones in Ragusa. In my understanding, the aim of writing about them was, besides giving the audience a reason to laugh, also to tell them the "bitter truth" about themselves. Nalješković criticized the people and customs of an era, in which people were bonded more to pleasure and wealth than to moral principles.

In the scenes about family life one can notice a kind of refined psychology. Some main problems are the relations of higher and lower classes, of rich and the poor. Nalješković also outlines the relationships in a typical noble family very clearly: the father is rigid and somewhat violent, and the mother is more inclined to negotiate. With writing on the problem of dowries, Nalješković points at a purpose in life determined by the acquisition of money. He also shows,

however, that not everyone, including himself, was lucky enough to acquire enough for living and having a family.

Nalješković repeatedly emphasizes the motives of poor country girls who come to serve in wealthy homes. He shows that they are completely unprotected from their masters. However, if they are in a position to manipulate him with their sexuality, they can gain protection and then the lady of the house cannot is not able to compete with the younger maids and has, therefore, no concrete authority in the home.

I hope that my findings and interpretations will be a contribution to the research into the problems that are subjected to the social criticism of Nalješković in particular and to Renaissance authors in general. One can expect that future analysis will be able to offer further results concerning the life in medieval and early modern Dalmatia and the context with its literary representations.

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