

Sevdalinka Within the Framework of Bosniak Oral Literature

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Sevdalinka is traditional muslim urban song characteristic for Bosnia and Herzegovina and much of the Balkans. Love songs as part of the Bosniak oral lyric poetry have been recorded since the very first case of appearance of this lyric form known to the scientific community in the year of 1574. However, more intense collecting and general interest in oral lyric poetry in Bosnia and Herzegovina started only in the Austrian-Hungarian period when the largest collections of oral lyric poetry from Bosnia and Herzegovina were composed. This paper will first offer a historical overview of recording and interest in oral lyric poetry, and then also provide theoretical characteristics of this poetry form with a review of themes and motives in selected examples.

KEY WORDS: Lyric poetry, love song, sevdalinka, motive, theme.

Probably the most representative portion of Bosniak oral lyric poetry is made up of love songs. The first reliable information about them comes from the second half of the 16th century, and it refers to the poetic attempt of a young man from Klis named Adil, performed at the Split market. There is a recorded reference about him in the testimony of his contemporary, writer of chronicles, the Duke of Split. Although the original lyrics of the song are not preserved, we can conclude basing on the entire context that this was a lyric form of love song which has been described since the end of the 19th century with the term *sevdalinka*. Before the term sevdalinka became standard, this type of songs was parallely called

*sevdalija*¹. This term will later be used to describe an individual who lives in the spirit of the society in which this type of song was created and orally transmitted.

The first examples of literal theoretical classification of this song, albeit very summarized, were penned by literature historians Pavle Popović (1909) and Dragutin Prohaska (1911), and the rounded-up lexicographic descriptions would follow only decades later. An increased interest in *sevdalinka* emerged in 1930s, and a series of different papers on this matter were published in the 15 years until the beginning of the World War II, including the one written by Hamza Humo entitled *Sevdalinke* (1927) and the paper by Ahmed Muradbegović entitled *Sevdalinka, pesma feudalne gospode* (Sevdalinka, Song of the Feudal Lords) (1940). During the same period, we see a more vivid interest of foreigners in Bosnian traditional songs in general, and especially in *sevdalinka* – among them were Czech melograph and ethnomusicologist Ludvík Kuba, German Slavists Leopold Karl Goetz and Gerhard Gesemann, as well as French publicist Rene Pelletier. After this, we see the first translations of *sevdalinka* to Czech, German and French.

Different collections of *sevdalinka* created in period of more than a century also contributed in their own way to the theoretical classification of this lyric song. The oldest classification is the one entitled *Hercegovke i Bosanke. Sto najradije pjevanih ženskih pjesama* (Herzegovinian and Bosnian. One Hundred Sung Female Songs), written and published in Sarajevo in 1888 by Ivan Zovko, teacher and folklorist. The most recent one is entitled *Za gradom jabuka. 200 najljepših sevdalinki* (Apple Tree Above the City) written and published also in Sarajevo in 2004 by Ivan Lovrenović, author and publicist.

The period after World War II was marked by scientifically much more focused research of *sevdalinka*. Culture historian Alija Bejtić explored the historical identity of persons mentioned in some Sarajevo-based *sevdalinka* songs, and he published the results in a detailed paper entitled *Prilozi proučavanju naših narodnih pjesama* (Contributions to Research of our Folk Songs). (Bejtić 1953: 387) Bejtić thoroughly responded to the issue which was raised in literature already in 1870s – the issue of relations between the song and reality. Literature

¹ Da beide Begriffe in ihrer Wurzel das arabische Wort *sawdā* enthalten, das vom Arabischen ins Türkische und dann in einige Balkansprachen reiste, wo es in *Sevdah* umgewandelt wurde und das Abdulah Škaljić in seinem Wörterbuch mit Synonymen Liebe, amouröse Sehnsucht oder amouröse Ekstase übersetzte, ist die unvermeidliche Eigenschaft dieser Formulierung der Liebeskontext. Das Wort *sevdalija*, das bosnische Liebeslieder folkloristischer Herkunft beschreibt, wurde übrigens von Edhem Mulabdić und Safvet-beg Bašagić sowie dem serbischen Dichter Jovan Ilić in ihren Werken verwendet.

historian and folklorist Munib Maglajlić later addressed the same issue on numerous occasions.

The first comprehensive theoretical description of this song form in general was offered by Muhsin Rizvić in his paper *Ogled o sevdalinci* (Essay on Sevdalinka), which started the lyric-structural analysis of the love song with an analysis of the word *sevdah*. Describing the melancholic state of mind of the singer or listener enjoying the sevdalinka, Rizvić used a poignant essay method to emphasize some important characteristic which helped the later explorers of this lyric song to achieve a more direct theoretical explanation: “Sevdalinka, therefore, is not just a song about love, it is a song about sevdah. Its specifics and essence are immanent therein. It is a song of Slavic-Oriental emotional impregnation and merging: Oriental because of the intensity of passion, the power and potential of sensuality contained in it, and Slavic because of the dreamy, unconsolable and painful sensibility, the width of its spirituality”. (Rizvić 1969: 455)

The only one to examine the issue of function of figures of speech in oral transmission of sevdalinka in a detailed manner was German Slavist Wolfgang Eschker in his doctor thesis which was defended in Munich in 1969 and later published in the same city in 1971. Theoretical definition of sevdalinka - in line with efforts commenced by Gerhard Gesemann and Jovan Kršić before World War II and continued by Muhsin Rizvić in the postwar period – was provided by Hatidža Krnjević in the paper entitled *O poetskoj prirodi sevdalinke* (About Poetic Nature of Sevdalinka) which was published in Belgrade in 1976. This direction of exploring sevdalinka in essays based on theoretical foundations, after Rizvić and Krnjević, was continued by some other Bosnian-Herzegovinian authors, foremost composers of sevdalinka collections Munib Maglajlić and Ivan Lovrenović.

Extensive and diverse literature, as well as a series of collections of sevdalinka provided a good basis for a lexicographic analysis of the songs, and it appeared for the first time in the Volume 5 of the *Opća enciklopedija* (General Encyclopaedia) published by the Lexicography Institute Zagreb in 1969. In that way, this lyric form got its first lexicographic remark, albeit very modest one: “Sevdalinka, love song. Bosnian-Herzegovinian sevdalinka is Muslim urban song; their origin should be sought in our folk song and Islamic-Oriental music. Rich coloration, luscious melodies, free rhythm and dynamic contrasts allow the beauty of voice and intensity of impression to be emphasized rhythm. Because of their lyric sophistication and

beauty of melodies, many sevdalinka songs became popular outside the region of their origin.” (*Enciklopedija* 1969: 689)

Sevdalinka was paid a well-deserved and appropriate attention in the first literature lexicons in the Štokavian language area which appeared in 1970s and 1980s. The earliest lexicon entry in this series was published in 1971 in the *Jugoslovenski književni leksikon* (Yugoslav Literature Lexicon) published in Novi Sad. It was written by literature historian and theoretician Dragiša Živković. Relying on available earlier literature, Živković described sevdalinka as a song form which spread and grew from Bosnian-Herzegovinian to authentic Balkan phenomenon. As his predecessors, Živković assigned the origins of sevdalinka to “the ruling Muslim circles (agas and beys) in cities (Sarajevo, Mostar, Banja Luka, Travnik)”. In its secondary appearance, Živković observed three types: harem, urban-tavern and rural types, as well as contamination with “folk lyric poetry”, which resulted in shaping of a lyric form similar to the one present in the so-called folk literature – bordering between the written and oral, urban and rural lyric, whereby there is no doubt that in its “classical form”, sevdalinka belongs to the “true traditional oral poetry of the urban environment”. The central part of Živković’s note carries a brief, but remarkable historical and theoretical definition on which later scholars and literature critics relied and used it to further develop their theories on sevdalinka: “...Sevdalinka is characterized by sensuality and a specific oriental love longing and desire which are expressed with the word ‘sevdah’ (love ecstasy) after which this song was named, and even more – with the Turkish-Arabic expression ‘karasevdah’ (black sevdah, dark sevdah, great love melanchony), which generally describes a deep, sensual-melancholic and sad sense of life...” (*Jugoslovenski književni leksikon*, Živković 1971: 479) Nada Milošević-Đorđević provided her theoretical definition of sevdalinka in the oral literature lexicon from 1984, entitled *Narodna književnost* (Folk Literature). She wrote, among other things: Sevdalinka (Arabic sawdā = black bile). Muslim, urban, ‘folkloric’ love song in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Sad, but also erotic, thematically linked to the confined spaces of patriarchal society. Emotions are expressed indirectly, often as a need for relief of psychological pressure, as confession...” (Milošević-Đorđević 1984: 230) The more general *Rečnik književnih termina* (Dictionary of Literature Terminology) from 1985 - which was composed mainly by the leading experts in different literature fields of former Yugoslavia carries a lexicographic definition of sevdalinka by Hatidža Krnjević. After general information on the origin of word *sevdah*, this definition focuses on the environment in which sevdalinka originated, and its poetic characteristics: “Lyric love song created in Bosnia and

Herzegovina, in urban Muslim environment, but on basis of lyric folk poetry. The term *s.* is more recent (in use since end of 19th century) than the form it describes...The essence of *s.* consists of a specific emotion of love as unhealable pain, black sevdah and der, passionate expression of unspeakable secret love bordering with despair...” (*Rečnik*, Krnjević 1985: 715).

Finally, the most recent lexicographic definition is provided by Munib Maglajlić in a theoretically detailed and historically comprehensive way. After providing a review of the history of recording and interest in sevdalinka, different collections and critical review of the most important references in literature, this author offers his own summarized definition of sevdalinka song: “1. Folk love song created as an original musical-poetic traditional folkloric composition in urban areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as Novi Pazar, Sandžak, modeled by impact of Oriental life culture and orally transmitted probably since mid-16th century. Sang in unison or vocal harmony, mainly with so-called flat melody, usually composed in decasyllable, less frequently in symmetric and asymmetric octosyllable or 13-syllable verse, or rarely in symmetric 12-syllable or 14-syllable verse, with abundant variations of exclamations and refrains as musical accessories, without clearly distinguished stanzas, with or without support of music instruments ... 2. Songs modeled after sevdalinka; a) in the Austrian-Hungarian period – songs composed by unknown individuals who would compose melodies for poems of famous poets (S. Bašagić, O.A. Đikić, A. Šantić etc.), after which such creations would be orally transmitted and went through minor changes /.../ - b) in the period between the two World Wars – love songs with lyrics and melody similar to sevdalinka as folkloric creation, with occasionally known authors, cherished in the environment of pubs and cafes which had their patrons entertained by singers accompanied by musicians playing different instruments, with a mixed repertoire /.../ - c) in the period after World War II – love song based on folkloric poetic heritage, but also linked to the singing which existed on similar basis and in the same area during the Austrian-Hungarian period and period between the World Wars... (Maglajlić 2011: 10)

More recent theoretical definition of sevdalinka is provided by Enver Kazaz in the paper entitled “Unutarnji otpor kanonu i patrijarhalnoj moći – karnevaleskni potencijal sevdalinke“(Internal Opposition to the Canon and Patriarchal Power – Carnival Potential of Sevdalinka), published in the book entitled *Subverzivne poetike /Tranzicija, književnost, kultura, ideologija* (Subversive Poetry/Transition, Literature, Culture, Ideology). Kazaz starts

his paper by emphasizing the problem of ethnic nomination of sevdalinka and by opposing, in the spirit of the feminine, the subversive writing in the official poetry – not only in terms of ethnic determination, but also in terms of phallogocentric approaches to interpretation of this type of poetry which is specific for the wide area of the Balkans. (Kazaz 2012). However, regardless of the proposed title and the offered interpretation, the analyses are based in one ballad, two family songs and one wedding song. The text also omits the first lexicographic definition of sevdalinka published in the already mentioned *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije* (Encyclopedia of Yugoslavia). Kazaz's second paper published in the same book, entitled "Žensko/ženstveno stajalište u sevdalinci o lijepoj Mejri/Mari i Ali-paši – kanonski tekst u procesu razaranja kanonske norme" (Female/Feminine Point of View in Sevdalinka About Beautiful Mejra/Mara and Ali-Pasha – Canonic Text in Process of Destruction of Canton Norm) is dedicated to interpretation of sevdalinka as well. This time, the author analyses the popular sevdalinka in which, depending on the singer, the name of the lyrical subject changes. Mejra or Mara, and it usually starts with following lines: *Ali-paša na Hercegovini, / Lijepa Mara na Bišću bijaše...* (Ali-Pasha in Herzegovina/Beautiful Mara was in Bišće...). Kazaz believes that the most successful interpretation of this song is provided in the paper by Hanifa Kapidžić-Osmanagić, specifically the section referring to the highly metaphysical meaning of sevdah – the psychological-metaphysical knot which is very similar to the one in Hasanaginica ballad (Kazaz 2012).

Esad Bajtal offers a fresher interpretation of sevdalinka as love song of urban environment in his book *Alhemija duše* (Alchemy of Soul), with essayistic approach to analysis of lyrics. However, Bajtal's analyses include a number of songs which have known authors, but they lean on the traditional love song (Bajtal 2012).

Some papers dedicated to South Slavic poetry which combine theoretical and historical insights also contain valuable remarks on poetic characteristics of sevdalinka. While analyzing love components of oral lyrical poetry of the peoples who used to be connected by similar language in former Yugoslavia, Vido Latković notices a more significant connection of family and love songs with the social circumstances of the environment in which they were created compared to other genres, such as ritual and customary songs: "Indeed, just like family songs, love songs as a rule are more pervious to changes than ritual or customary songs." (Latković 1967: 196) Referring to the oral lyrical poetry of peoples living in this part of the Balkans in general, Latković does not miss the chance to provide a brief definition of

sevdalinka: “Bosnian Muslim songs about love longing often have more spontaneusness and sensuality than songs from other areas of patriarchal culture and coastal region...These songs sing about kisses, ‘ruffling hair’ (Vuk, V, 308), about ‘embracing until dawn’ (Vuk, V, 324). Although not all sevdalinka songs are so sensual, even though they often contain innocent naivety, we still can say that generally, the images decribed in them are jucier, and emotions expressed in them are more complex than in songs from other regions.” (Latković 1967: 200)

In the collection of lyrical poetry of Yugoslav peoples entitled *Jugoslovenska narodna lirika* (Yugoslav Folk Lyric Poetry), Vladan Nedić remarks that love songs, more so than other lyrical forms, have lost many of their motives with the course of time. Yet some examples have preserved the original medieval motives such as the hawk flying above city walls or girl at the city gate. In the foreword of the book, Nedić discusses folk love songs in former Yugoslavia in general, but he does not explicitly mention sevdalinka which is represented in the collection with several examples. However, he connects it in the lyrical review to something which is most representative for the repertoire of “Bosnian-Herzegovinian singer” as opposed to coastal, Macedonian or Slavonic singers: “...The lyricist of patriarchal regions is smithened by the long dark eyelashes of a girl; even more so by her modesty. Singer from the coastal region wonders if she was born by an orange, Macedonian singer wonders if she was guilded by a goldsmith. Slavonic lyricist seeks comparison for the color of her lips. Bosnian-Herzegovinian singer praises, in a woderful hyperbole, the girl who set the city on fire with the spark in her eye – *Ej, čarnim okom kroz srčali-pendžer*. (With her beautiful eye, though a glass-paned window).” (Nedić 1977: 22-23)

Jovan Deretić pays significant attention to folk love songs in his *Istorija srpske književnosti* (History of Serb Literature). Besides the claim that most lyrical folk songs sing about love, Deretić notes that love poetry which has reached us, except for some rare examples, does not show sings of great age. Commenting the different characteristics of folk love songs in different regions, Deretić briefly mentions sevdalinka as well: “Yearning, sensual love song is characteristic for eastern and south-eastern Serbia. A specific form of love song containing many Oriental elements, sevdalinka, developed in Bosnia, especially in Muslim areas. These songs spread outside Muslim areas as well.” (Deretić 2007 [1983]: 332)

Review of theoretical definitions in literature available so far leads to conclusion that sevdalinka covers most of the contetnt of different lyrical love songs of Bosniaks. Vast

number of recorded examples shows without doubt that the scope of themes and motives in sevdalinka is very wide, and sevdalinka is equally dedicated to love joy, love pain, exciting meetings and painful farewells – in endless variations, which is characteristic for love songs in general throughout the world. Although the focus is on expression of emotions, we sometimes also find surprisingly detailed descriptions of the beloved one, such as in the following example of girl's description of the desired boy from the manuscript collection of Ivan Zovko: *Pleća su mu, kano u pejika, / Ruke su mu kano u berbera, / Brci su mu dva kančela zlatna, / B'jeli zubi, dva niza bisera, / Biser usta, šćerna kutija, / Perčin mu je tura ibrišima, / Dvije oči, dvije trnjnice, / Obrvice s mora pijavice* (His chest like a rooster's, / His hands like barber's, / His moustache like to golden coils, / His theeth two strings of pearls, / Pearly mouth, a sugar box, / Hair like peace of silk, / Two eyes, two little blackthorn berries, / Eyebrows whirlwings from the sea).²

In another example of modification of the same lyrical theme, the girl is infatuated by the looks and knightly posture of the often mentioned Ali-bey, who is being compared to the most shiny object which the unknown author, or a series of authores throughout generations, has seen in her environment: glow of stars and silver, shine of the sable.³

Sometimes just an unusual or special appearance or skill which sets him apart from others was sufficient to cause admiration for a boy, even if these characteristics were not the usual chivalry characteristics, the ones invoking virility. It could simply be something like the ability to play an instrument, which gave a talented and skillful boy the possibility to bring the girls into a state of infatuation: *U ruci mu sedefli šargija, / A u drugoj sajvat i nargila, / A ja mlada gledam sa pendžera, / Na njemu mi oči ostadoše, / Pa ja stadoh kano ukopana* (In his hand a šargija⁴ made of mother of pearls, / In the other hand a coffee cup and hookah, / And I, a young girl, watched him from the window, / My eyes set on him, / And I stood like

² *Komšinice, boli me srdašce*, Rukopisna zbirka Ivana Zovke (*Neighbor, My Heart Aches*, Manuscript Collection of Ivan Zovko) (1893) – *Tisuću narodnih ženskih pjesama* – M. H. 24. sv. III, pjesma br. 173 (A Thousand Female Folk Songs – M.H. 24. Vol. III, song No. 173)

³ *Beg Ali-beg ata jaše*, Smajl O. Bradarić, Ms 38 (*Lord Ali-Bey Rides a Horse*) – *Narodne umotvorine (iz Dervente i okolice većinom)* (Folk Art –from Derventa and Surrounding Area Mostly) – FAZM, Rukopisna zbirka Odjeljenja za Etnologiju, sv. V (I-V), pjesma br. 206. (Folklore Archives of National Museum, Manuscript Collection of Ethnology Department, Vol. V (I-V), song No. 206)

⁴ Šargija is a plucked string instrument similar to Turkish saz

petrified).⁵ In another example the girl – wishing to express the superiority of the boy’s appearance which has completely captivated her heart and mind – puts her beloved in alleys lit by moonlight, where he strolls with his friends just like a vizier surrounded with his dignitaries.⁶ An even more distinct image of boy-knight whose appearance takes the chosen girl into flying ecstasy is described in the lyrics of *sevdalinka* from Stolac entitled *Poljem se vija Hajdar delija*, (Brave Hajdar Runs Across the Field)⁷ in which the girl sends a message to the boy from the gates of the fortress saying that his appearance and attitude lift her spirits, and he concisely responds in a couplet which sums up his even greater infatuation with the girl: “*Ajko djevojko, i kose tvoje, / Tvoje me kose po polju nose!*” (Ajka, girl, you and your hair, / Your hair is taking me across the field).

Songs depicting beauty and desirable behavior of a boy are balanced out by songs depicting the same characteristics in a girl, such as the *sevdalinka* song originating in Sarajevo describing beautiful maiden Mulija, member of famous Dženetić family, whose beauty is compared with the beauty of tulip flower, one of the favorite flowers from the garden described in this love song. Praises for the beauty of this girl from Sarajevo-based Dženetić family is expressed in competing of three opponents whose names are known. One of them – Avdaga Bakarević – is deeply in love with the very name of the girl: “*Ko je tebi tako ime nadio, / Handžar mu se u srdašce zadio!*” (Who gave you such name, / May a knife pierce his heart)⁸. In another example of the same thematic direction, two honorable suitors are enquiring about a girl of noble origin after they heard only good tidings about her. In an extraordinary personification by the folk poet, the boys are talking to messenger pigeon, checking the rumors about Umihana’s nobility: “*Nosi l' ona mrki fesić nad očim' / Nosi l' ona od džanfeza dimije, / Nosi l' ona hazna kolan od zlata, / Nosi l' ona od hakika nalune, / Je li ona k'o što ono kazuju*” (Does she wear the dark cap above her eyes, / Does she wear silken pants, / Does she wear a precious golden necklace, / Does she wear slippers made of agate stone, / Is she what people tell she is).⁹ Since girls described in this way always became a growing challenge for boys, male imagination increasingly spun around them, as well as

5 *Mimo dvor mi mlado momče prođe*, (A young boy passed by my house) Zovko, sv. IV, br. 28.

6 *Obasjala sjajna mjesečina*, (Bright moonlight is shining) Isto, br. 173, str. 78.

7 *Poljem se vija Hajdar delija*, (Brave Hajdar Runs Across the Field) Isto, br. 781, str.176

8 *Kolika je Dženetića avlija*, Isto, br. 988, str. 212.

9 *Polećela dva bijela goluba*, Isto, str. 182, br. 813.

rivalry among the most handsome boys who were competing for affection of the girl described in a song.

Very often, mothers are also involved in shaping the oral myth about the beauty of a girl. In order to achieve their goal, they keep their daughters in secrecy of their homes, far away from curious eyes, respecting the social norm expressed in the phrase describing a desirable bride who is “as if she grew up in a bird’s cage”. Such treatment could not be pleasant for the girls. In one song, a lonely maiden confesses to a bird on a tree branch, because she cannot meet anyone else in her isolation: “*Mene majka u kafezu drži, / Da ne vidim sunca ni mjeseca, / Nit' bijela danka, nit' junaka*”(My mother keeps me in a cage, / So I may not see the sun or the moon, / No bright day, nor a chevalier).¹⁰

Traditionally, we rarely have recorded examples for girls addressing boys first. On such occasions, the girl is seeking way to draw the attention of the boy, but without jeopardizing her own dignity. The task set before the girl is not always simple, especially if she is facing the boy’s obvious indifference. In one of the examples, the girl sees the desired boy who is getting ready either for wedding or for battlefield. Facing the lack of interest for her on his part, she jokingly pleads with him: *Moj se dragi po avliji šeta, / U čizmama i u kalčinama; / Da bih rekla da će po djevojku, / U njega je na blizu djevojka, / Njega sa mnoom samo perda d'jeli, / Da bih rekla da ide u vojsku, / Nema sada nigdje vojevanja* (My darling is strolling in the courtyard, / Wearing socks and boots, / So I may think he is going to get his bride, / But his bride is nearby, / Only a courtan separates him from me, / Or so I may think he is going to battle, / But there are no battles now).¹¹

Such rapturous girl sometimes must make the first move after all and send a direct message to the desired boy. In the song *Banjaluko i ravnine tvoje* (Banja Luka, You and Your Valleys)¹² the girl uses a trick to draw the attention of the boy she fell in love with, claiming that she allegedly found his lost embroidered kerchief and ducats. When her maneuver proves to be efficient, i.e. when the boy falls for it, she responds in a dominant and humorous way, openly indicating what end to the story she desires: “*Srce, dušo, Pr'jedor kapetane, / Jagluk ću ti u*

10 *Bumbul pjeva u ruži rumenjoj* (Nightingale Sings on a Red Rose), Isto, str. 107, br. 346.

11 *Jutros rano na vodicu pogjoh* (I Went to Fetch Water Early This Morning), Zovko, knj. I, br. 69.

12 *Banjaluko i ravnine tvoje* (Banja Luka, You and Your Valleys), Ibid, No. 9.

ruhu don'jeti, / A dukate pod bijelim vratom!"(Darling, sweetheart, Captain of Prijedor, / I will bring the kerchief with my dowry, / And ducats on a string tied to my neck).

Unlike girls, boys are more relaxed when expressing their desires, because traditional behavior expects much more from them in such opportunities. Still, even boys are not always successful in their feats. In one song, a worried suitor complains to the girl because he is left without any possibility to see her: "*Kuća ti je onkraj puta, / Na dan prođem po sto puta. / Što ja dušo više prođem, / Tebe dragu rjeđe viđam!*" (Your house is close to the road, / I walk by a hundred times a day, / The more often I walk by, / The rarer I see you darling).¹³

Very often, the boy dearest to the girl's heart is the one who is closest, very often it is the next door neighbor.¹⁴ In some examples of daydreaming about a perspective groom, there will be an expression of common sense and practicality, which will encourage the girl to pick the one who is closer to everyday life rather than the one who is closer to science and books: "*Pisar ljubi kad se god probudi, / Ćullah ljubi, kad mu na um dođe*" (A scribe will kiss you whenever he wakes up, / A worker will kiss you whenever he feels like it).¹⁵ Contemplating the important, fateful question: Who to marry? – the girl comes to subtle realization of different dimensions of this decision, whereby the most decisive factor should be the unquestionably requited affection: *I onu bih četvericu dala, / Za onoga jedinog u majke, / I onog bih jedinoga dala, / Za onoga kojemu sam draga.* (I would exchange all four of them, / For the one who is his mother's only child, / But I would exchange that one, / For the one who loves me).¹⁶

If the girl is not clear about her feelings or if nobody has appeared in her life who would take her heart, she will reluctantly accept what is offered to her. But if there is somebody she cannot forget, the girl will have difficulties to make new friendships. However, the situation is especially difficult when the girl does not share the affection sown towards her, while at the same time her affection for another boy remains unrequited. Following verses depict such situation: *Vazdan tuži drvlju i kamenju, / Mrkom vuku i morskom hajduku; / Kad akšamu, mraku i oblaku, / Kad jaciji, sjajnoj mjesečini, / Kad zorici, studenoj vodici: / Nek i voda moje*

¹³ *Karanfilu, sitno sjeme*, (Carnation's tiny seeds), Kuba, No. 110, pg. 67.

¹⁴ *Sve jezero, sve zeleno* (Entire Lake Entirely Green) Ibid, No. 242.

¹⁵ *Nije moje lice za ćullaha* (My face is not for a skull cap), Ibid, Vol. IV, No. 17.

¹⁶ *Da sam paša čudna zulumčara* (If I Was Pasha of a Strange Tyrant), Ibid, Vol. I, No. 98.

jade znade, / Drag me neće, a nedrag me hoće (She complains all day long to the trees and rocks, /To the dark wolf and sea pirate, / Sometimes to the sunset, darkness and cloud, /Sometimes to the night, shiny moonlight, /Sometimes to the dawn, or cool water / Let the water know about my troubles too, / The beloved one does not want me, and the unloved one wants me).¹⁷ In another example, the girl's heart is taken by a student, so compared to him, all other boys become less important; moreover, the girl is convinced that she would be pampered and respected in best possible way in marriage with the student, not just by her husband but also by her social environment.¹⁸ In other examples, the girl fantasizes about marrying a man of high social status and influence, because she expects that in this way, she would secure a high status and an easy and pleasant life for herself: *Da Bog dade da mi bude vezir, / Da veziru posjedim na krilu, / Pa da budem vezirovo zlato!* (May God give me a vizier, / So I may sit in vizier's lap, /And be vizier's darling!).¹⁹

Widely spread opinion in Bosniak love lyric is that only black eyes possess the hawk-like clarity, which makes them superior, but there are also examples of rare situations when a boy or a girl was infatuated by blue eyes. In one song, the girl wonders how it is possible that something outside the prevailing norm is happening to her: *Crne oči svakome su drage, / Meni mladoj omilile plave, / Jer su plave u dragoga moga* (Everybody loves black eyes, / But I like blue ones, / Because my sweetheart has blue eyes).²⁰ In a similar example, the boy falls in love with a blue-eyed girl, but since he feels obliged to destroy the prejudice for the blue-eyed girls, the boy comes up with a possible solution described in following verses: *Draga će surmu kupiti, / Draga će surmu podvući, / Dragoj će surma ujisat', / Dragi će dragu sevdijat'!* (My sweetheart will buy kohl, / She will apply kohl, / The kohl will suit her, /Boy will love his sweetheart!).²¹

The power of the “beautiful eye” has become almost a myth, and exaggeration about the extent of passion they can cause in the hearts of lovers, or about what kind of commotion they can stir up in general is the theme of many love songs. In a famous *sevdalinka* song, a girl

17 *Vazdan tuži lijepa djevojka* (Beautiful Girl Complains All Day Long), Ibid, Vol. IV, No. 120.

18 *Ječam jesam, a karišik n'jesam* (I Am Barely But I Am Not Mongrel), Ibid. No. 134.

19 *Sretna li mi godinica dode*, (What a Happy Year I've Had), Ibid, Vol. II, No. 76.

20 *A moj dragi, moj biserli cvitu* (Oh My Darling, My Pearly Flower), Kurtagić, Vol. VI, No. 127.

21 *U gori ruža procvala* (A Rose Blooms in the Mountain), Zovko, Vol. II, No. 31.

from Travnik sets the city on fire “with her black eye through a glass-paned window”,²² and in another *sevdalinka* a girl from Derventa seduces the entire neighborhood with her hawk’s eyes;²³ A girl from Mostar is beloved by the entire Mostar because of her eyes, and “beloved the most by Alajbeg”.²⁴ In another example, a black-eyed girl is admonished because she caused inadmissible chaos: “*Sve si momke do jednoga, / Svojim licem primamila, / A divojke rasrdila, / Crnim okom i pogledom!*” (All the boys till the last one, / You enticed with your face, / And you made all girls furious, / With your black eyes and your gaze).²⁵

When it comes to expression of unleashed sensuality, it is more present in the male perspective, i.e. in the songs which can be described as “male voice”, but there are also examples of girls very openly singing about their desires. Still, the open expression often follows after a subtle gradation. In verses of the song *Uzor' mi dragi ravnine* (Sweetheart, Plow My Fields),²⁶ the girl tells the boy that her heart belongs to him, no matter what he does: *Te posij dragi, jadove, / Ako ti nikne šenica, / Šenuću, dragi, za tobom, / Ako ti nikne miloduh, / Miluj me, dragi, tvoja sam* (Darling, sow the sorrows, / If you grow wheat, / Darling, I will go crazy for you, / And if you grow hyssop, / Caress me darling, I am yours).

Since the society which gave birth to *sevdalinka* considered shyness a virtue, there are only few recorded instances in which girls openly speak up about their desires. Such songs were composed in solitude, in all-girls gatherings, over silent work, embroidery or cradle, in any case far away from male audience. As a rule, girls rarely confided in anybody, and if they did, they carefully chose the listener. Because of life experience and wisdom that comes with age, as well as closeness to their daughters, understandably mothers had the possibility to be the first ones to reach the secrets of the daughter’s heart. However, just like with anything else, exaggeration in shyness can be fatal for happiness of the girl, as described in the song *Tri su vile kroz goru letile* (Three Fairies Flew Across the Mountain). Such belief makes the theme

22 *Što se ono Travnik zapalio* (Why Is Travnik on Fire) Stevo K. Kukić, Ms 102 – *Narodne pjesme iz Bosne* (Folk Songs from Bosnia)– FAZM, Manuscript Collection of Ethnology Department, No 40.

23 *U divojke oči sokolove* (Girl Has Hawk’s Eyes) Bradarić, Vol. V, No. 261.

24 *Što s' na Mostar sinja magla svila* (Why is Mostar Covered By Dark Fog), Zovko, Vol. II, No. 38.

25 *O djevojko karakašli* (Oh Girl With Dark Eyebrows), Ibid, Vol. II, No. 25.

26 *Uzor' mi dragi ravnine* (Sweetheart, Plow My Fields), Bradarić, Vol. I, No. 169.

of a song. While two sisters achieved their goals by openly showing their affection and openly expressing their desire, the third sister, the shy one, had to accept the remains.²⁷

Besides shyness, pride can also be a cause for severe love pain. Very often, girls would be much abstained in expressing their affection for boys because of pride. Consequences in such circumstances would often be dramatic. Namely, very often a picky girl who had the most suitors would remain unmarried in the end. Most noticeable testimony of such unpleasant development of events is provided in sevdalinka *Kolika je šehar Banja Luka* (How Big is City of Banja Luka).²⁸ Heroine in novel with basically the same lyric theme, Avdaga's daughter Fata from Velji Lug near Višegrad, is the tragic character of Ivo Andrić's novel *Bridge over the Drina*. In this novel, Andrić provides interesting observations about origins of songs such as Višegrad's sevdalinka about the beautiful but unhappy Avdaga's Fata.

In folk songs, girls most frequently confide in their mothers telling them about their love grief. In many examples, the girl mourns her lost happiness, complaining about intrigues aimed against her. Sometimes she does realize that the cause for her grief is unrequited love, which was frequently troublesome reality for both the poet and the song. In many songs, the girl mourns because her sweetheart unexpectedly married another girl. Struck by the unwanted event, the girl often comes to conclusion that somebody slandered her in front of the beloved one. Often, the culprit was the boy's mother or brother.

One of the extremely frequent motives in Bosniak oral poetry in general, including love poetry, is the motive of girl's curse which can be real and apparent or pretended. The form and the meaning of the curse can be different. In the primarily meaning, the girl is putting real curse on the boy who crossed her. In the other meaning, based on the principle of the opposite of what is expected, the form of curse is used to strongly emphasize what is desired: may the boy be imprisoned in a dungeon - not a dark and dump one, but imprisoned in girl's embrace; may he be chained – not with iron chains but with hands of the beloved one; may he be thrown into shackles – not heavy steel shackles but shackled by the girl's bracelets; may he be bitten – not by poisonous snakes but by girl's white teeth; may he be carried away by water –

27 *Tri su vile kroz goru letile* (Three Fairies Flew Across the Mountain), Kurtagić, Vol. I, No. 50.

28 *Kolika je šehar Banja Luka* (How Big is City of Banja Luka), Bajraktarević, No. 8. This sevdalinka served Ivo Andrić nicely to revive the memory of historical figure of Avdaga's Fata from Velji Lug in his novel *Bridge Over the Drina*. Her remarkable fate became part of collective memory through a song.

not to a faraway and dangerous place but to the girl's home; may he be hanged – not on an evil tree but on sweetheart's neck; may a gun shoot him – not with led bullet but with girl's ducats...

One of the most beautiful compositions of verses depicting girl's curse can be found in Vuk's collection of Bosnian songs in a song beginning with the verse *Djevojka je livadu gojila* (The Girl Grew Grass Field).²⁹ In this example, noble Mujo plucks flowers infatuated by the girl's beauty, and she uses curse to call illness upon him, but in reality she wishes him love encounter and seducing care: “*E da Bog da, ljepši bolovao! / Ja ti mlada ponude nosila: / Šećer s mora, smokve iz Mostara, / I janjeta prije premaljetja, / Zeljanice prije kukavice, / Karašlame u medu kuane...*” (May God give you illness, / So I can bring you gifts, / Sugar from the sea, figs from Mostar, / Lamb meat before spring, / Spinach pie before dawn, / Black cherries cooked in honey...).

Love lyric also preserves the memory of rare occasions when the cheated boy curses the girl. Male curse is different than the female: it speaks, almost without exception, about strong anger and desire for revenge. In one such song, the boy wishes the girl the same painful suffering that he is experiencing: “*Ti si mene mlada prevarila, / Prevarila, u zlu ostavila, / Da Bog dao, zlo te sustignulo, / Kao što je mene sustignulo!*” (You cheated on me, / Cheated and left me in ill state, /May you encounter evil, /Such as I have encountered!)³⁰

Unpleasant developments between two lovers caused by the boy's departure are also depicted from the perspective of a witness to the girl's grief. In many verses, the oral poet deals with such state of an individual. Similar to the themes of some ballads, a lyric song describes words of a boy who confides in a message from the afterworld as he tells his mother: *Nije meni crna zemlja teška, / Nisu meni šimšir daske mračne, / Nisu meni zebanije strašne, / Već su teške divojačke kletve* (Black soil is not heavy on me, / Boxwood planks are not dark, / Hell's guarding angels are not scary to me, / But girls' curses are difficult).³¹ Such verses influence the folkloric belief that the one who betrays a girl will in the end meet her - and her family's – tears and curses spoken out in moments of heavy and painful anxiety.

29 *Djevojka je livadu gojila* (The Girl Grew Grass Field), St. Karadžić, pg. 119, No. 180.

30 *Znaš li mila, kad si moja bila* (Do You Remember, Dear, When You Were Mine), Zovko, Vol. II, No. 54.

31 *Sine, Mujo, je li ti zemlja teška?* (My Son Mujo, Is the Soil Heavy on You?), Bradarić, Vol. V, No. 381.

But boys also feared girl's betrayal or her possible infatuation with a stranger or an attractive marriage proposal for her. Therefore, the boy, often secretly, inquires about the events in the home and life of his sweetheart while he was away. In one example, the brave boy inquires his hawk – his trusted companion in battlefield and hunt and dear friend at home in times of peace – about what the hawk could spy with its sharp eyes inside the beloved girl's home, and about the way she treats the gifts he brought her from his journey: "*Nosi l' Fata od džamfeza dimije, / Nosi l' Fata od kadife jeleke, / Nosi l' Fata od sedefa papuče, / Ima l' Fata sad k'o dosad prosaca?*" (Does Fata wear the silken pants, / Does Fata wear the velvet waistcoat, / Does Fata wear the slippers decorated with mother of pearls, / Does Fata have many suitors like she used to have).³² The trusted bird usually responds affirmatively, because the reality of life often provided many examples of kept promises and faithfulness of the girl even in cases when the boy was absent for a long time, away on battlefield to which he was called by royal edict. On the other hand, the girl is under influence of the prevailing conviction of the society at the time that breaking a promise is unacceptable.

Everyday, harmless and relaxed encounters of young people leave no room for jealousy which was a frequent occurrence in courtship, usually caused by hurt egos, doubts and anxieties. On the other hand, unwritten rules for courtship and meetings on the window, at the gate, at the fountain...included certain rights and certain freedoms which were not subject to public condemnation. This is reflected in one of the songs which shape and preserve the basic foundations of sevdalinka love codex, where the girl responds to jealousy of her sweetheart: "*Ako sam ga okom pogledala, / Nisam njega srcem sevdicala!*" (If I looked at him with my eye, / I did not like him with my heart).³³ In another example with similar there, the surprised girl expresses the same conviction in a slightly different form, in a more recent rhyme: "*Oči moje svakog gledat mogu, / Ali srcem sevdicalat ne mogu!*" (My eyes can look at anybody, / But my heart cannot love them!).³⁴

In cases when a boy is involved in courtship with more than one girl, which was not a rarity in the lives of sevdalinka poets, jealousy is often suppressed by curiosity and wish to find out

32 *Oj Boga ti siva ptico sokole* (Oh Grey Hawk), Ibid, No. 112.

33 *Ne čudim se mraku ni oblaku* (I Am Not Surprised by Darkness or Cloud), Ibid, Vol. VI, No.132.

34 *Umori' se ruže trgajući* (I Got Tired Plucking Roses), Bradarić, Vol. III, No. 30.

who the favorite girl is. This inquiry in order to detect the dangerous opponent can sometimes bring true relief, such as in the cheerful argument of the lovers in the song *Istrgoh stručak sa zemlje* (I plucked a Bouquet) where the worried girl asks: “*Tako ti neba i zemlje, / Imáš li dražu od mene?*” (By heaven and by earth, / Do you have anyone you love more than me”) – and the cheerful boy replies teasingly: “*Imam ih devet i tebe, / Ti si mi, draga, najdraža!*” (I have nine and you, / You are my sweetheart I love most!)³⁵

In many examples, the girl is troubled by doubts caused by jealousy, so she makes inquiries about her boy, anxiously asking water, her girlfriend, mountain, hawk, mother, as well as hidden mythological creatures – anyone whom she may tell her secrets even in phantasy – What is her boy doing? Often she does not tell him directly what she wants to tell because she fears that her open, unhidden desire could bring her apart from her beloved.

Only the encounter with the beloved one can heal the wounds caused by longing and unfulfilled dreams, so in verses of a song, the saddened girl, pressed by excruciating loneliness, wonders: “*Što moj dragi za sunca ne dođe, / Što ne dođe, da mi kahar prođe?*” (Why didn’t my sweetheart come during the daylight, / Why didn’t he come, so my sadness may go away?).³⁶ Longing for the beloved one leads to creation of enticing daydreams, so typical for *sevdalinka*, soaked in sensuality and filled with erotic dreams. In one of examples providing a variation to this theme, the girl wishes she could miraculously become “sugar box” and spill her content on her darling’s mattress, so that her desire can come true: “*Kad se prene, neka šećer bere, / Kad se budi, nek me mladu ljubi!*” (When he startles, may he pick up sugar pieces, /When he awakes, may he kiss me!).³⁷

Lifted by ecstatic sweetness of closeness of her beloved, one self-confident girl raises her voice in praise of the boy, ending it with an exclamation: “*Pram tebi je šerbe gorko, šećer gorčiji, / Muhamede ti si sladak od sveg najsladi!*” (Compared to you, sherbet is bitter and sugar bitterer, / Muhamed, you are sweet, sweeter than anything!).³⁸ Various adventures related to courtship led to the conviction – shaped with numerous variations in Bosniak love

35 *Istrgoh stručak sa zemlje* (I Plucked a Bouquet) Kuba, No. 625, pg. 152.

36 *Kamen gori, a biser govori* (Stone is on Fire, and Pearl Speaks) Zovko, Vol. II, No. 202.

37 *Da sam Bog d'o kutija šećera*, (I Wish I Was a Sugar Box), Ibid, Vol. III, No. 28.

38 *Muhamede, šećer puće* (Muhamed, Sugar Button), Ibid, Vol. II, No. 107.

lyric poetry – that girls cannot do without courtship. Something that they surely cannot do without is linked in song verses to the major Bosnia and Herzegovina's cities, whose young folk produced the highest number of most beautiful sevdalinka songs, mentioning different locations of the cities as stage for their love adventures. Inevitability of love affairs in lives of young people – described in female song about irresistible attraction of courtship – is compared to the force connecting birds with mountains and fish with water. This important component of love codex is described in following decasyllable verses, cut and shaped by numerous generations of poets: “*Sultan' Selime, car gospodine! / Može li biti riba bez vode, / riba bez vode, ptica bez gore? / I Banja Luka bez kadiluka, i šehar Travnik bez vezirluka? / I Sarajevo bez gaziluka, a ja djevojka bez ašikluka?!*”(Sultan Selim, master and emperor! / Can fish be without water, / Wish without water, bird without mountain? / And Banja Luka without court, and city of Travnik without vizier's palace? / And Sarajevo without heroism, and I without courtship?!).³⁹

Literature about sevdalinka notices that this song form – besides describing local events related to courtship, which were also witnessed by chronicles and annuals of the time – also mentions numerous personalities which stood out because of something. The main differential characteristic of sevdalinka song, compared to love songs in neighboring oral literature traditions, is the description of numerous cities of Bosnia and Herzegovina or Sandzak, or description of individual locations in these cities. It is also noticeable that the overall sevdalinka heritage can be divided in two basic groups: one consisting of lyric expression of lovers or their conversation, sometimes even competing, and the second one consisting of songs with local characteristics in different forms. (Maglajlić 1978)

Sevdalinka songs with direct expression of love were closer to the intimate world of the lyrical subject, with differences in regard to gender of the author. Songs that could be heard from male singers were created in circumstances different from the circumstances which shaped the female lyric expression. Male songs were mainly created in larger family gatherings – often over a glass of alcohol, or rarely in solitude or during courtship under girl's window, where even an odd explicit or sensual verse could come up in the relaxed atmosphere. Female songs were mainly created in romantic solitude or during all-female gatherings, but in any case far away from the ears of the object of desire. Rather than sad,

³⁹ *Djevojka više s visoka brda* (Girl Shouts From a High Hill), *Meraklije*. Prepared by Vehid Gunić, Zagreb – Tuzla 1994, pg. 46. Sung by Hanka Paldum.

lonely, mainly female songs, the songs sung at larger gatherings and social events had much merrier themes, such as the songs praising cities and their picturesque scenery, which often mentioned famous individuals from the local society of the poet.

To sum up the review of Bosniak love lyric poetry, we may say that love song is the most widely spread lyric form, with definitely the largest number of recorded examples, based on numerous different themes and motives. The basic emotion in these songs is love of the boy for the girl or vice versa, rarely it is love between spouses. It varies between longing, subtle tremors and loving glances, and extremely open, sensual and sexual emotion. In this form of Bosniak lyric poetry, this endless love emotion is described in different styles and meters, and it ranges from joyful encounters and meetings, to unexpected difficulties and obstacles, from anxious waiting and longing, to painful farewells and deep disappointments, and even despair.

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