

NIKOLA NALJEŠKOVIC

In Ruins They Lie Upon Me and My Tender Age

(Pale su vrh mene i moje mladosti)

In ruins lie upon me and my tender age
all love's desires and with them all her bitter pains,
and all because of you, my chosen floret fine;
so do love's pangs on your account destroy me now,
in which I find myself, my one and only love,
because of your fair charms, which do forsake me now;
the cure for this on earth nor under heaven none
can give to me if 'tis not you alone, my love.
And so do linger not, oh dearest lady fair.
I plead with you, do heal me ere I breathe my last.

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Marin Držić (1508-1567)

MARIN DRŽIĆ is the greatest Croatian writer of comedies. He went to study in Siena in 1538 where he took part in the theater life there. He wrote highly treasonable letters to the Duke of Tuscany, conspiring against the government of the Ragusan Republic. He died in Venice as a chaplain to the Archbishop. His best-known comedy is a Plautine play, *Dundo Maroje* (*Uncle Maroje*). The action takes place in Rome. Dundo Maroje, a rich but stingy Ragusan merchant comes to Italy to find his son and to try to save the ducats the young Maro is spending on a Roman courtesan, instead of trading in Florence. Pomet, the servant of Maro's rival, Ugo the German (Ugo Tudešak), starts the intrigue, somewhat countered by Maro's servant Popiva. Bokčilo, the ever hungry servant of the Dundo, follows Pomet's precepts, giving them, to Pomet's amusement, a twang of his own. There is also the inevitable ruptured man from Kotor, a town in the neighbourhood of Dubrovnik, whose name in accordance with tradition has to be Tripče, here a *comicus senex*, a soulbrother of the old stingy Maroje («Take my ducats from me and you have taken my life»), and a legion of different characters from the other coast, are gathered suddenly in Rome. As Laura, the courtesan, is actually the lost daughter of a merchant from Augsburg, which is proved by a birthmark that happens to be a mole under her left breast, we guess that she finally joins her compatriot Ugo, and the old Maroje and the young Maro, pursued also by his fiancée, disguised as a boy, go back to Dubrovnik reconciled; the very end of this prose comedy is namely missing.

The plays in verse had a better fate. The author had three of them printed, together with some poems. *Tirena* is a pastoral with double action: the sentimental story is the one of Ljubmir in love with the nymph Tirena. He is wounded by a satyr, who is madly in love with the same nymph. Tirena thinks Ljubmir is dead and swoons, but they both revive and the story ends happily. But the woods are full of real peasants who also fall in love, youths, sober old people and even children, as Cupid does not like his might being questioned.

Novela od Stanca (*Stanac Tricked*), a carnival play in verse, is outstanding for its scenic composition. The simple action consists in the reckless Dubrovnik youth pulling a practical joke on an old peasant. Expecting to be rejuvenated by the nymphs to please his young wife, Stanac is shaven and smudged with soot. Although the witty dialogue is in the same metre, it is in two styles and neatly outlines the two disparate mentalities (urban versus rustic).

Držić wrote other Plautine and pastoral comedies several of which are not preserved and all the prose comedies are truncated. He also wrote polished love lyrics, and some mourning the death of friends.

MARIN DRŽIĆ

Who'er in Heav'n above Does Wish to See on Earth

(Tko hoće zgar s nebes pozriti na svit saj)

Who'er in heav'n above does wish to see on earth
 angelic beauty whole, should look upon this nymph,
who with her tresses fair and cheeks so blushing red,
 though she intends it not, does move all hearts to love;
and by her look so sweet, with which she takes my life,
 alas, to marble cold she does set ardent flame.
Do fix your gaze, oh youths, the ornament of earth,
 upon this blossom fair while yet 'tis given you,
for cheeks that shine as hers, do lose their glow with time;
 a sun such as is this does e'er so rarely rise.

MARIN DRŽIĆ

So Pleasant 'Tis, Indeed, before the Light of Dawn

(Slatko ti 'e, bože moj, pri danka zorome)

So pleasant 'tis, indeed, before the light of dawn
 just so to wend one's way along this hill of green,
where springtime does her fields with finest grass array,
 and flowers every kind do mingle on all sides,
and where there sing of love so many nightingales
 that with the morning star, I'd say, they do converse;
on every slope the scent of roses rises sweet,
 and so the traveler is not weary nor in pain,
and gentle breezes play about upon the fields
 while blades of grass do stir about in pure delight,
with water fresh and cool, dry leaves on every side,
 around which tiny birds pursue the joys of love.
Oh lovely florets mine! How pleasant is your scent!
 Such sweetness makes the soul, the heart as well to sigh.
With such delight upon this flower-covered bank
 might any lover live his days with his beloved.

(Beginning of Tirena's monologue
from first act of *Tirena*)